

SUNUGAL

Guaté Mao

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I'm Guaté Mao, an artist with a passion for discovering new cultures and forms of artistic expression. I draw inspiration from my travels and experiences to create works that aim to captivate and question our view of society.

My artistic journey has been marked by curiosity and experimentation. As a passionate self-taught artist, I began exploring art in the vibrant streets of Montpellier, but it was in Saint-Denis that my work really came into its own. However, my thirst for travel soon led me to settle in Benin, where I've been living for the past six years. Thanks to my many trips to West Africa, I've been able to exhibit my work in countries such as Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal and, of course, Benin.

In this collection of works named *Sunugal*, meaning "our canoe" in Wolof, I wanted to explore an emblematic element of Senegalese culture: the canoe. Much more than simple boats, they are powerful symbols of the identity, history and traditions of the country's coastal communities. Each pirogue, with its brightly-colored paintings and richly-meaningful motifs, tells their own stories, and is also intended to protect fishermen from the dangers of the sea, attract good luck and guarantee a fruitful catch.

Through my encounters in the neighborhoods of Yoff and N'gor, I've captured the glimpses and emotions of a community made up not only of fishermen, but also of saleswomen, children and all the diversity of people who contribute to the life of the port. These glimpses and moments of life are my source of inspiration for my work.

In this series, I emphasize values that are dear to me: diversity and the strength of humanity. My works are imbued with this vision. They are testimonies to today's world and an invitation to reflect on our own identity and place in society, through these glimpses that aim to convey an emotion. My aim is for each piece to transport the viewer and open a window onto the stories and traditions of Senegal's coastal communities and fishermen, who seem so far away but at the same time so close to us.

How to cite this paper:

Mao, G. (2024). *SUNUGAL*. *Global Africa*, (6), p. 37.
<https://doi.org/10.57832/n0hq-4330>

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