

PRESS RELEASE



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A CHRISTMAS GIFT TO REMEMBER: unorthodox portraiture; work by H el ena Kanout e on show at Magnet caf e, Covent Garden, London

Magnet Caf e presents an exhibition of portraits by H el ena Kanout e: *unorthodox portraiture*. The exhibition will open on 12 September 2004 and continue until late November. With Christmas coming up it will be a unique opportunity for the public to view and commission unconventional portraits of their friends/family, pet or ... favourite star. Indeed, for an even more out of the ordinary gift, Helena will sketch your favourite star. She will then entrust Stephen, the owner of the memorabilia store, Lavants, next door to the Caf e, to obtain a signature by the celeb in person! Stephen's enviable connections in the industry are a quasi-guarantee to obtain a personal autograph.

This exhibition of the French-African artist features three large works of art representing a snapshot preview of her versatility and her unusual approach to portraiture. Drawing on her scenic artist background, Kanout e sparingly and tastefully adds volume to her paintings in an unusual manner. For example, the 3D form of the artist's own torso, firmly grounded in the canvas, rises out of the surface in fragments. Shadow play, trompe l'oeil and vibrant colours are selectively used for emotional impact: "*I use bold paintbrush strokes to reinforce the sensuality of the curves and the mixture of soft and rough surfaces to add interest and depth*". In the portrait of her 2-year-old niece, *Sol ene*, the girl holds out a bunch of flowers, which spurs out of the canvas in a flow of colours, urging you to take them. The third piece demonstrates staggering classic draughtsmanship: It is a 'monochrome' earthy pastel sketch of the professional dancer and choreographer *Miles Elkington*, who has been working with Peter Darling on the film "*The Phantom of the Opera*", due for release later this year.

"My ambition in this life is not to be remembered by posterity but to use my talent to transform people's lives... Small sparks of joy can have major ripples further down the path"

Magnet Café is located between Covent Garden and Bloomsbury, behind the Shaftesbury Theatre, 218 Shaftesbury avenue, London WC2H 8EL. The café with its high ceiling and bright natural light offers excellent exhibition space and open daily between 9:00 and 19:00 (Close Sunday).

Lavants Memorabilia is located 216 Shaftesbury, London WC2H 8EL and is owned by Stephen Jones, who has been gathering autographs for more than ten years and now owns one the finest collections in the world. Lavants, in association with IPDA (In Person Dealers Association) is a member of the UACC (Universal Autograph Collectors Club). The store opens daily from 11:00 until 19:00.

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Editor's notes

1. Héléna Kanouté was born in 1969, in Dakar/Senegal, in West Africa, where she grew up until she was 17. She moved to Europe to pursue qualifications in business studies, but after working for some years returned to her artistic vocation in 1995. She completed a BA (Hons) degree in scenic arts at Rose Bruford College (University of Manchester) in July 2000, and is now based in south-east London. She has since undertaken a series of freelance commissions within the entertainment and interior industries for private and corporate patrons. Kanouté has gained Kudos during her two previous exhibition *des corps et des hommes* at Manto (now G.A.Y. bar), Soho, in March 2001 and The Box, Covent Garden, in winter 2002 and is now developing a following among private collectors of original works of art and will undertake commissioned pieces
2. To obtain electronic copies of this press release and photos of the artworks on display go to www.artwiz.eclipse.co.uk > press room

Contact

3. For more information about the artist, Héléna Kanouté (Artwiz Ltd), call 07770 573 187 or email: helena@artwiz.eclipse.co.uk
4. For more information about the venue, call the Magnet Café 020 7836 7777
5. For more information about Lavants, call 020 7379 0123 or 07815 205 773