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Olson, Kimberly, "Shelf Life: Adaline Kent: The Click of Authenticity," *Luxe Magazine*, February 13, 2023

SCENE

WRITTEN BY KIMBERLY OLSON



INSPIRING MIND

NATASHA BECKER



In 2020, the Fine Art Museums of San Francisco hired Natasha Becker as its first dedicated, full-time curator of African art. The South African native, who has spearheaded numerous exhibitions and international initiatives, brings to the role substantial knowledge of both art history and African history. *Luxe* sat down with Becker to learn more about her vision moving forward. famsf.org

interpretations to the historical while also responding to the current moment.

Is there a contemporary artist you're especially enthused about showcasing?

Lhola Amira [on exhibit at the de Young Museum through December] is a South African artist making an impact by showing that we are all connected historically—Africans, African Americans and descendants of Africans; Native American and Indigenous people; and descendants of European settlers. By drawing on all these cultural stands, they are inviting everyone into their work of cultural healing.

What excites you about your role? One of the biggest transformations in the past 15–20 years in the field is the growth of contemporary African art. Essentially, I was hired to deepen visitors' knowledge of and connection with the historical collection. But I proposed we bring contemporary artists into the mix. It was an exciting challenge to bring new critical

Why should someone explore African art? Africa is considered the birthplace of modern humanity. It is the site upon which all our ancestors first expressed abstract thoughts in visual terms. Because of the continent's extraordinary diversity and artistic heritage, it takes time to explore. Africa cannot be understood in one exhibition. Unpacking that will be exciting to someone who's not familiar with it.

SHELF LIFE

Adaline Kent: The Click of Authenticity

In one of her notebooks, sculptor Adaline Kent wrote of her artistic process, "I want to hear the click of authenticity," an idea that fueled her work. After studying under sculptor Ralph Stackpole in San Francisco and Antoine Bourdelle in Paris, Kent set up a studio in North Beach in 1929. Her abstract pieces were influenced by everything from her travels to the concept of infinity to the natural world. She became one of the midcentury's most innovative creators, her name linked to modernist artists like Ruth Asawa and Mark Rothko. Out January 31, *Adaline Kent: The Click of Authenticity* is the first major monograph of the artist to be published in 60 years and includes an extensive chronology of her work, text by scholars, and a selection of sculptures, photographs and rarely seen pieces. rizzoliusa.com



INSPIRING MIND PHOTOS: LEFT, COURTESY S/MAC GALLERY; LHOLA AMIRA, RIGHT FORBAME, COURTESY ELSABETH SWOLARZ; SHELF LIFE PHOTOS: COVER COURTESY RIZZOLI NEW YORK; ARTWORK, ADALINE KENT, 1947, COLLECTION OF JULIA HELGARD RITTER, PHOTO BY RON JONES.