

# BIOGRAPHY OF THE ARTIST NEL TACHART

Nel Tachart, whose real name is Léonel ZADJI, is a self-taught Beninese visual artist, born on March 1, 1997, in Cotonou, Benin. He grew up near Place de l'Etoile Rouge in the city center and currently resides in Dèkounbé, a working-class neighborhood in Cotonou, where his world is confined to a workshop.

He specializes in creating works of art on transparent glass and is also known for starting his works behind the glass, painting above and below the glass. To the amazement of the public, he begins his painting on the glass with the details and ends with the background to obtain a breathtaking final result that releases energy and reveals as many expressions and morals to remember. Deeply involved in body painting, portraits, abstract art, clothing design (for which he released two collections), and murals during the first five years of his career, he opted for the creation of creative and abstract works of art in order to leave a tangible legacy that resonates with everyone, conveys emotions, and promotes the teachings of African culture.

His artist name, Nel Tachart, was inspired by the stains left by paint on his clothes while he worked, combined with the diminutive form of his first name, Léonel. From a very young age, he was fascinated by painting, which he discovered thanks to his father, himself a visual artist with whom he began to develop his talent in his first year of middle school, when he had just turned 10. His father would be a source of motivation and a repository of knowledge with whom he would take his first steps, driven by the curiosity and pride he felt in the final results of his works.



He studied architecture at the Coulibaly Technical High School in Cotonou, where he graduated with a DTI (Diploma of Technology) and a BAC F4 (Fourth Diploma of Advanced Studies) in 2016. Léonel discovered painting on clear glass at the high school and became so interested in it that he decided in 2018 to focus entirely on this passion after a two-year university course, increasingly drawn to art in all its forms. Former classmates and his address book would then be the source of his first commissions. At the time, his income came from body painting, portraits, clothing painting, and small abstract paintings, since he was no longer dependent on his parents. Thus, during 2018 and 2019, the artist participated in the Fresque Murale Competition, the Afrik Mod'Arts Festival, and exhibitions such as the International Day of Plastic Arts, celebrated in several countries in the sub-region, as well as Racines, which took place from November 28 to 30, 2019, at the Novotel Cotonou. In addition, in 2020, Nel Tachart participated in the AFRODISIAC exhibition. That same year, he created an

abstract portrait of a lion on clear glass for the JAWUNTAA communications agency, producer of the first reality TV series in Benin. He then became one of their sponsors for seasons 3 in 2020 and 4 in 2021 of the show DIS MOI QUI EST LA MOST BELLE, offering a glass painting to each Golden Queen. This puts him in the spotlight internationally through Canal 3, the TV channel that broadcasts the show, which can be received with Canal+, which means a large audience has noticed the publicity of Nel Tachart's work.

Léonel is recommended to produce portraits for various personalities starting in 2021, including the French Congolese singer SINGUILA and the former Beninese Minister of Sports Oswald HOMEKY, to gain popularity. This strategy has proven itself because in 2022, it will be the turn of the leaders of several companies such as the Société des Investissements du Bénin, PYRAMID GROUP, AZUR COURTAGE, CCIBénin, Master Class MCI, S.A. PHOENIX AFRIQUE and S.A.S. ALBATROS, to carry out their portrait commissions, which they have really appreciated. During that same year, 2022, the artist offered an abstract painting to Romarick Atoké, a renowned architect who became one of his mentors. These actions encouraged Beninese international player Steve Mounié to commission one of his poetic works from his residence in France, since he plays for the Stade Brestois club.



In 2023, he presented portraits of successful and renowned entrepreneurs in the field of Arts and Culture in Benin, such as Richel ADJOVI and Corneille ADJOVI. That year, he also created an abstract painting for the Vallet Foundation, which exhibited it in the Calavi hall, one of 11 libraries entirely funded, built, and equipped by the foundation across the country. That same year, he was named Best Visual Artist at the Open Conscience Awards, a local recognition to encourage his initiatives and innovations in the field of art.

Nel has been interviewed several times on the national television channel ORTB, such as Espace 12 heures and Week-end Matin with Steve FACIA. He also appeared on the program Art et Culture, invited to give his opinion on the theme "BODY PAINTING IS A DARING ART."

Aside from portraits, his art is very rich, expressive, and full of emotion. He has a wonderful story to tell, as his decision to pursue a career and personalize his unique style is inspired by the everyday life linked to our values that are being lost, namely the basic African education system, which is gradually crumbling with the new trends that younger generations are embracing.

His goal is to materialize this state of affairs to raise general awareness as a call to collective action, using symbols, geometric shapes, and even recycling—techniques that remind us of our origins, such as the use of numbers and numerology, to create striking and expressive characters with strong energy, because Nel always says that numbers never lie.



Influenced by a year in which he often noticed even numbers around him, whether on calendars or clocks. After extensive research, he understood that numbers have a profound meaning and that they convey emotions, feelings that only humans can feel or understand. The artist therefore decided to draw inspiration from them to convey through his paintings a quality of message that essentially evokes the daily problems of Africans as well as the solution he proposes, namely the revival of education from the past through collective memory.

His pictorial language draws on materials such as transparent glass, acrylic paint, varnish, fabric, sand, water, shells, and the recovery of objects, whether mechanical or organic. He draws inspiration from everything circulating on social media, music, dreams, and his own emotions. Sand, an unusual tool, and water, a source of life, are an integral part of his work. His philosophy is to bring his works to life. Sand allows him to expressively shape his vision of the work and materialize the Memento homo of the work by injecting a breath of fresh air into his creation. "Remember, man, that you are dust and to dust you shall return." Gen. 3:19. These components make his technique much more practical, which is also very complicated because he begins painting detail by detail, before building the background until he achieves the final result.

His goal is also to instill a taste for art and creativity in children by pointing out the colors, numbers, symbols, and recycling elements in his works of art.

His favorite color for painting remains yellow because it is beautiful and radiant, like the sun. According to him, this color conveys peaceful emotions of joy, hope, enthusiasm, and perseverance that his works convey. They also spread positive vibes and send a strong message that we can live and endure hard, even horrible things and still come through if we recognize that the most important thing is not to lose the cheerfulness and joy of living that make us constantly evolving humans destined for greater goals.

His art will also experience memorable moments such as his encounters with the art-loving public, private interviews with prominent figures, and insightful discussions with fellow artists from his country and elsewhere. His works speak for themselves and reveal his thoughts on the world today.

When he uses his hands, God inspires him; he is a true talent that deserves public attention and the support of well-placed people. Aware that he still has a long way to go, he maintains faith in his work and is determined to improve. With divine grace, he will make his family proud, especially his father, who is also in the field. His



works will cross borders and go beyond oceans to represent his country in Africa and around the world through his transparent glass art, which remains a little-known activity until now.

Nel aims to awaken children's creativity by attracting them with colors, numbers, and symbols. He sees his art as a means of conveying powerful messages about education and African culture.

In 2023, he was awarded Best Visual Artist at the Open Conscience Awards.

In 2024, he was approached by Mr. Dieudonné METONOU, promoter of the Détour par Gogotinkpon tourist site. On the occasion of the 5th edition of the FESTILUM Gbakpèzogbin, Nel Tachart was invited to give the community's children an introductory art workshop followed by an exhibition of his works on the lake during the holiday season.

Nel Tachart is a rising artist, determined to represent Benin on the international art scene. With an unwavering belief in his work and a desire to continue evolving, he aspires to touch hearts and minds through his unique transparent glass art.

