

Amadou Sanogo | LES POINTS DE L'INDIVIDU

Exhibition from 27th February 2017
Vernissage 25 February at h 19:00

The VOICE Gallery is pleased to invite you to the private view of *Les points de l'individu*, the first solo exhibition of Amadou Sanogo in Morocco, on the 25th of February, at 7 pm.

Amadou Sanogo was born in Segou, Mali, in 1977. He studied at the Institut National des Arts Plastiques in Bamako. During that time, the director, Malian artist Abdoulaye Konaté, quickly noticed him.

After graduating (2003), he experimented with various mediums before concentrating on painting. He mainly uses textiles as background, sourced from his environment, often working through paint with his fingers, as if working the soil.

Amadou Sanogo is in a perpetual quest for identity as a human being, Malian, African, as well as an artist. How does one exist, as an artist in a country where the value of art is questioned whilst a primal need for food is not fulfilled? To this question, the artist answers cleverly: *'All food does not have to go through the mouth'*.

This positioning in a country in difficulty marks his political, economic and social involvement, and can be seen in his work as well as the projects he associates himself with.

Amadou Sanogo talks about himself whilst using universal questions and a universal language.

What are the relationships of human beings with themselves and among each others? His work brings the viewers to question themselves with the same subjects.

The environment he creates favours introspection without imposing answers. To this aim, he supports an identity outside the predefined codes and boundaries attributed to African artists. Defining a new reality, liberated from a certain European ethnographic tradition, his aim is to evolve outside preconceived ideas. In this, Amadou Sanogo places himself outside of any physical or metaphorical frame.

The artist elaborates his own visual and material language, influenced by different aspects of the surrounding culture, as the Bambara proverbs, in leaving those sometimes headless characters playing with their bodies.

In opposition to these figures, headless puppets devoid of spirit and thought, the viewer is invited to search for solutions for today's absence of future vision, as imposed by international leaders.

He invites those who pronounce these 'truths' without background and no context to find themselves in art. As he explains: *'art cannot exist without questioning and research!'* Art then becomes a mean of identification in a world subject to perpetual change.

Amadou Sanogo is in constant search for his own painting technique through the development of simplified almost naive forms that produce a childlike caricatural effect. We are witness to a kind of figurative painting at the limit with abstraction. The figures are reduced to 'forms' not losing their meaning. Underlined by vast colour fields, the artist drives the viewer back to the essential. He uses colours that impose themselves in a process of creation and destruction, creating an opening with the colour fields: in this manner, codes are transformed to build a *'reinvented imaginary of tradition'*, with a present capable of forming the past, through moving away from standards and creating a symbolic subjectivity.

CG : In your paintings, you use and depict dots in a recurrent manner. They are a characteristic, identifiable trait. Why did you choose to use this sign in particular?

AS : *I use the dots as a questioning image. Following the numerous socio-political problems, I asked myself how to understand certain questions and how to express my concern with these difficulties. It is a mean to question my own approach and offer some keys of thought to the viewer.*

CG : You explained that the headless figures depict politicians, leaders, or whatever their profession, men devoid of vision who steer us towards an uncertain future. What do you think could be the visions?

AS : *My headless figures are for me a means to describe the lack of thinkers to answer the great contemporary questions. Heads are made for thinking. On the contrary, I notice that the world is orphaned of intellect. In that respect, I feel and see myself in a deficient world.*

CG : In the work, you resort to more elementary shapes. You achieve your figures with the help of simple lines, often produced with your fingers. The figures become almost geometrical, abstract. Can you talk about how you deconstruct your figures, and why do you use these child-like shapes?

AS : *I use my figures to break off with a certain conventionalism. I am in awe of the capacity of children to get to the point without holding on to details.*

CG : Observing your work and your « actions », you seem to have a true sense of belonging to your country. Your own personal identity seems to reflect that of the African Individual; how do you introduce this idea of universality in your paintings and to what extent consciously?

AS : *My process of thinking relies on the fact that if men/women are the reflection of their environment, shouldn't they try to influence it in return? How do we identify to our world? There is a proverb that says we never stop learning from others, though to do this, we have to put aside what we know. Travelling, discussing, observing, meeting people can only awaken our questioning.*

CG : Through the creation of l'Atelier Badalian 1 in 2014 in Bamako, your interventions in the public space, and your taking part in the last edition of the Biennale de Dakar, you have been working with numerous African artists, specifically artists from Mali.

AS : *The Atelier Badalian 1 (whose name comes from the neighbourhood and means « dry river ») was a project that came to me after a brief reflection. I could not wait to be given everything, quite the contrary, I wanted to offer something. I invited other artists to work in a space without constraint. I felt, amongst the young Malian artists, a quest, a need for freedom that seemed stifled. I felt as if it was my duty to encourage in them the urge to surpass themselves.*

Amadou Sanogo by Marta Carrascosa

If one was to judge a country by its colours, Mali would be a country of complete joy.

Red sienna earth, ultramarine blue sky fragmented by the electric green leaves of the orange and red mango trees. The streets seem like a pantone display, a stream of everyday colourful gowns in carmine red, indigo, turquoise, cherry, purple or cobalt green. Colours overwhelm you everywhere you go.

At first glance, Amadou Sanogo's work comes across as very joyful and simple and pleasant, with the urging presence of bright, pure and soft colours used with *wide open arms*.

But, as for Malian society, his work is not what it seems. One has to scratch on the superficial nature of aesthetics to understand its essence. Since his beginnings, the artist's career path is guided by a soft denunciation.

In his work, it takes the shape of strange figures, distorted characters –by a kind of rust- that become the central pieces of his discourse, to challenge the conservatism, apathy and selfishness that surround him.

With the elegant gestures of his fingers, Amadou expresses on the canvas his innate generosity and refinement. With the humility of those who are quietly engaged, following his path, without asking anyone anything.

To our friendship.

To Mali.