

VERBS AND PROVERBS

DE PAROLES EN PARABOLES, ON SE SERT

AMADOU SANOGO

exhibition from 26 May to 30 August 2020*

* The exhibition was originally scheduled for 21 March – 31 May 2020.

Entrance conditions have been adapted in line with the obligatory preventive measures.

At La Criée Centre for Contemporary Art Amadou Sanogo is presenting a group of thirteen large paintings specially created for the occasion. They add up to an incisive, La Bruyère-style portrait of contemporary Malian society, polarised between its rich cultural heritage and the energy and complexity of the present.

Stylistically direct and wide-ranging, Sanago's paintings are immediately recognisable: a figure – occasionally two – is set against a monochrome background, on which is overlaid a square or rectangle often bearing repetitive patterns. The dark, sometimes fractured bodies are complemented by highly symbolic items including flowers (the importance of harmony between people) and gloves (the need to stand up and resist).

Sanago's characters seem in a state either of suspension or precarious balance. The misgivings, not to say disquiet, they convey are counterbalanced by the strong background colours, the touches of white, red and yellow, and the vibrancy of the repeated motifs – mostly circles and dots. Almost all based on Bambara proverbs, the paintings on display at La Criée are echoings of the artist's daily life: conjecture, personal incidents and the social, political and economic contexts. To cite one example, *Ka kun kolo di mama nika nekun minena* (*They left him his head but tore out his tongue*), which shows a figure sitting at a table on which lies a tongue, illustrates both a Bambara proverb and a recent event: at the opening ceremony of the last Rencontres Photographiques de Bamako the biennial's director was literally deprived of the right to speak. The same goes for *Mes observations face à la situation* (*My Observations on the Current Situation*), painted in Rennes last March, a few days before the opening of the exhibition – which in fact was pushed back two months. The artist portrays himself as a venerable sage observing Rennes residents' fear as the Coronavirus arrives.

For Amadou Sanago education and transmission are fundamental human and artistic values. This is why he is devoting the art centre's second exhibition room to drawings he made with children from the Tregain primary school in Rennes during his residency there in March 2020.

Rooted in the ups and downs of everyday existence, Amadou Sanago's works have a critical and humanist reach made even more striking by their philosophical detachment. This is wisdom in paint.

Amadou Sanogo

born in 1977 in Segou, Mali
lives and works in Bamako, Mali
represented by MAGNIN-A gallery

Amadou Sanogo was born near Ségou, in the south of Mali, in Senoufo land, to a Bambara mother. He has been living in Bamako for 20 years, but returns very regularly to his home village. He feeds off (and contributes to) his double heritage as much as the multicultural effervescence of the capital, notably through the Badialan shared workshop, a place of creation and collective projects for young Malian artists, which he opened in 2014.

curator Sophie Kaplan

production La Criée centre d'art contemporain, Rennes

This exhibition is the third in the La Criée cycle *Lili, the Rozell and the Marimba*, which looks into popular knowledge systems, local productions and contemporary creativity.

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