

Shapes of Humanity

Ajarb Bernard Ategwa - Aron Demetz

Curated by Alessandro Romanini

December 2nd, 2021 - January 29th, 2022

Opening on Thursday December 2nd from 6pm

Giovanni Bonelli Gallery and Lis10 Gallery are pleased to renew their partnership with this second double solo show which continues to compare contemporary Italian and African artists. To close this year's cycle, inaugurated with the bi-solo show by Massimo Kaufmann and Gonçalo Mabunda in February 2021, a new exhibition that puts in dialogue the wooden sculptures by Aron Demetz and the paintings of the Cameroonian Ajarb Bernard Ategwa. Alessandro Romanini -curator of the show- says: "Whether it is polychrome silhouettes or figures carved in wood, paintings attributable to the Pop world or hieratic sculptures with a totemic presence, the main interest of the two artists is the human being in its multiple declinations and in the social aspects. And art is the tool to investigate this articulated existential universe in a participatory way."

About ten big paintings and equally sculptures will dialogue and confront each other with their very personal investigation. The expressive work of both artists is united by the use of anonymous figures, deprived of the somatic traits and, for this reason, symbolic and representative of all humanity.

Ategwa selects his figures from the frenetic multicultural and multiethnic life of the crowd on the streets of Douala - the largest city in Cameroon - where gender and race cancel each other out. The chromatism of Ategwa's works blends the exotic explosion of colors of his land with pop echoes, spread in saturated backgrounds, alternating with watercolor areas. The outlines are marked by a graphic stroke - sometimes colored - which enhances its symbolic and therefore universal value.

In stark contrast to these paintings, the wooden sculptures by Demetz stand out in the gallery space, characterized by more subdued and "natural" shades and by an outline - especially in the very latest works - characterized by broken lines that redefine the original form - that of bodies humans - with incredible strength, almost rarefying the space around them in their capturing all the light in an incredible game of full and empty spaces which, formally, tends to interrupt the realistic dimension to ascend to the existential one. The dialogue between the two generations is open and our gaze can find, declined in two different ways in the sculptural forms and pictorial images, a yearning for the great themes of existence, of permanence in the here and now.

Ajarb Bernard Ategwa (1988, Kumba, Cameroon. Lives and works in Duala, Cameroon)

Ategwa's work is characterized by the use of bright colors and everyday subjects taken from recurring city scenes in his city. The artist defines himself as a "witness" of his time and translates into painting - in ways close to pop art - everyday scenes where man is the protagonist. Barely thirty, he exhibited at the National Museum of Cameroon (2019) and at the Cairo Biennale (2019). Important exhibitions were then held at Espace Doual'Art, Douala (2020); Zuzeum Art Center (2020) and at the Jack Bell Gallery, London (2021). The Milanese exhibition represents the artist's first solo show in Italy.

Aron Demetz (Vipiteno, 1972. Lives and works in Selva di Val Gardena, BZ)

Demetz's works have always been characterized by an indisputable manual skill in working with wood, his material of choice but not exclusive. Over the years, the artist has specialized in the creation of androgynous figures that alternated extremely worked profiles with points of raw material that became, for this reason, the object of symbolic reflection on the profound meaning of the human being and of one's own existence. In 2009 he was invited to the Venice Biennale and, in recent years, his works have been exhibited with solo and group exhibitions at various international institutions including: the OMM Foundation, Turkey (2019); Museum of Contemporary Art in Cluji Napoca, Romania (2019); National Archaeological Museum of Naples (2018); Civic Gallery of Trento (2017); Taipei World Trade Center, Taiwan (2016).



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