

ROMUALD HAZOUMÈ

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Romuald Hazoumè – Botero, 2020
Plastic, feather duster and copper
40 x 19 x 19 cm
© Romuald Hazoumè, ADAGP, 2021
Courtesy Galerie MAGNIN-A, Paris.



Romuald Hazoumè – J'aime la couleur, 2019
Plastic, feathers, rubber and copper
30 x 34 x 32,5 cm
© Romuald Hazoumè, ADAGP, 2021
Courtesy Galerie MAGNIN-A, Paris.

Romuald Hazoumè's work has been remarkably showcased this year, with two major exhibitions at the Château des Ducs de Bretagne in Nantes and at the Musée du Quai Branly as part of EX-AFRICA. 2021 is also the occasion for the artist to present his latest creations at the MAGNIN-A Gallery, Paris.

From October 21 to December 3, 2021, Romuald Hazoumè's universe spreads out in sculpture, painting, photo and video through the spaces of 118 boulevard Richard-Lenoir. From his famous masks and key installations such as ZoCooter to a selection of photographs and paintings, this exhibition reflects the artistic plurality of Romuald Hazoumè and marks 33 years of complicity with André Magnin.

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Since his first exhibition in 1989, Romuald Hazoumè's works have conquered collectors, first and foremost Jean Pigozzi, and institutions all over the world: MoMA (New York), British Museum (London), Guggenheim (Bilbao), Fondation Louis Vuitton (Paris)... This success was recognized by the Arnold Bode Prize at Documenta 12 in Cassel.

Born in 1962 in Porto-Novo, Benin, Romuald Hazoumè is Yoruba and descends from a prestigious lineage. Deeply influenced by Voodoo, his ancestor was a Babalawo, a high priest of the Fâ from Nigeria at the court of the king of Porto Novo. Romuald Hazoumè creates works from materials, scraps and obsolete objects, which he uses as they are, which he shapes or distorts, to deliver his vision of society and express himself on current and global events.

If Romuald Hazoumè has made the gas can masks his signature, his research is also translated into monumental and striking installations, pointing out his commitment against all forms of enslavement, corruption and trafficking. The question of migration and its consequences has become central to his latest works and questions both the Western and African worlds while raising the question of the inequality of exchanges.

For this exhibition at MAGNIN-A gallery, the artist unveils new masks. Gasoline jerry cans or other cans that the artist recovers and diverts from their primary use to metamorphose them into masks adorned with feathers, pearls, hairstyles and colors. Through this practice, Romuald Hazoumè perpetuates the statuary tradition and inscribes himself in the contemporary history of art by asking the question of the function of an object and its diversion.



Romuald Hazoumè - ZoCooter, 2019 - Metal and glass - 200 x 120 x 118 cm
© Romuald Hazoumè, ADAGP, 2019 Courtesy Galerie MAGNIN-A, Paris.

Animated by a satirical spirit, he denounces the illegal but commonplace traffic of gasoline smuggling between Benin and neighboring Nigeria. A constant preoccupation in the artist's work that can be found in the installation *ZoCooter*.

This small motorcycle evokes the traffic of the "Kpayoman", young Beninese traffickers, who transport insane quantities of gasoline on the forest tracks. Real rolling bombs driven on roads to escape the authorities and controls of which the photographs of the artist from *Kpayoland* series are a testimony.

With the installation *Antidépresseur*, Romuald Hazoumè makes fun of the so-called quality of life of our Western societies, always ready to give lessons in governance but whose populations are eaten away by stress and stuffed with psychotropic drugs. Through this work, he also questions the ambivalent behavior of his fellow citizens attracted by the Western way of life without perceiving all the wealth of their territory. He also criticizes the exploitation of the continent's resources and the impossibility for its populations to have access to them, such as cocoa.

"We have everything we need here, on our continent, but we do nothing and we wait for others to come and do it for us! Antidépresseur represents a Senoufo bed placed on a carpet of cocoa beans behind which there is a screen that projects a video of the sunrise and sunset. In Africa, we have the sun, cocoa, which is one of the best antidepressants in the world, and a bed to solve some of our problems." Romuald Hazoumè.

Romuald Hazoumè has also chosen to present, to complete this exhibition, a selection of paintings, research work on the divinatory geomancy of the Fâ, which he has continued to study and develop for many years.



Romuald Hazoumè - *Antidépresseur*, 2013 - Senoufo bed, cocoa beans, video (16:9, color, sound) - 260 x 412 x 396 cm
© Romuald Hazoumè, ADAGP, 2013 Courtesy Galerie MAGNIN-A, Paris.

Romuald Hazoumè

Born in 1962 in Porto-Novo, Republic of Benin.
Lives and works in Porto-Novo.

Romuald Hazoumè grew up in a Catholic family of Yoruba origin which remained in contact with the cult of the ancestors, such as voodoo, a practice which deeply marked him. After high school, during which he discovered a passion for drawing, he wanted to study medicine for a while, but he decided to become an artist.

Because of his dual cultural background, Romuald Hazoumè's work, which does not strictly speaking follow the Yoruba tradition, reveals a syncretism based on recycled materials. In the mid-1980s, he created his first sculptures of plastic cans, which subtly reveal his critical vision of African figures and political systems. In 1989, he exhibited *Masques Bidons I* at the French Cultural Center in Cotonou and became a very prominent figure in Benin.

Romuald Hazoumè assembles materials, scraps and obsolete objects, which he uses as they are or which he shapes or distorts, to represent his vision of society, events or global issues. The artist reinvents history and his research, which translates into monumental and striking works, testifies to his commitment against all forms of slavery, corruption, trafficking and political abuses.

"There were travelling artists called "aré", who were in charge of bringing culture from one kingdom to another. I totally recognize myself in this appellation."

Hazoumè considers himself as a guardian of his own Yoruba culture, where mask production plays an important role. Attached to the territory, the artist is committed to his fellow Beninese by seeking to raise their consciousness around cultural values. Not without humor, he thwarts the clichés about Africa and criticizes the throes of globalization. Of great poetic and political content, and rich in moral values, his most recent works question migration and its consequences, the inequality of exchanges present in the Western world as well as in Africa.

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ROMUALD HAZOUME

Solo Show - From October 21st to December 3rd, 2021
Free admission - Tuesday to Saturday, from 2 to 7 pm.

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