

MESTREPROJECTS

Press Release:

Mestre Projects is pleased to present “Between the Two”, a solo exhibition of works by Senegalese artist Kassou Seydou. This exhibition will be the artist’s second solo show at the gallery. The exhibition features fifteen large paintings. The works conceived by Kassou Seydou for this exhibition constitute a new corpus in the artist’s last decade of creation. They are both a continuation of his research and inaugurate a new technique of representation.

“Between the Two” exhibition essay by Delphine Lopez

“For his second presentation at Mestre Projects, Senegalese artist Kassou Seydou unveils a new series of paintings in his solo show Between the Two.

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As a faithful observer of contemporary African societies, Kassou Seydou’s new series focuses on the resilience of civil societies in the struggle to preserve the gains of democracy. From one work to the next, the painter evokes the demonstrations and struggles that have punctuated Senegal’s recent history, often confronting the excesses of the political powers at the time. 1989, 2011, 2021, 2024: a series of dates that remain engraved in the artist’s memory for the violence they symbolize and the societal issues they raise. Hostility towards Senegal’s Moorish population, often traders, exacerbated by a difficult economic context, the defense of freedom of movement during the prolonged confinement and censorship of social networks in the context of Covid 19, or discontent with political maneuvers aimed at challenging the principle of a limited number of presidential mandates: all circumstances that saw the Senegalese

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people rise up and demonstrate in the streets. The defense of these rights has each time ended in disastrous news of injury and death. Often, the opposition appears as that of a new generation seeking to assert itself. Established tradition challenged by the desire for change and a place for one's own.

In these contrasts, however, Kassou Seydou captures the essence of a society on the move, evolving in the continuity of its history. The scenes painted by the artist echo press images gleaned here and there, snapshots taken in the moment that Kassou Seydou revisits by stepping sideways. In each canvas, the tension is more or less palpable, the fists are clenched, the arms outstretched, the group is a united body standing as one. The energy is captured in its full force by the artist. Yet nothing is directly violent in the picture, neither the harmony of light colors typical of Kassou Seydou's palette, nor the natural setting that serves as a backdrop to the scenes, like an immutable presence and a neutral witness to history.

While the directly spiritual elements - statuettes, totem animals and fetishes - present in the former works are gradually giving way to a more refined décor, Kassou Seydou's work continues to link the role and actions of each individual to traditional heritages, which must be reconciled with modernity if they are to be perpetuated. The world is a tightly-knit whole, as embodied by the spirals that make up the bodies of beings and things in the artist's paintings. The line of each is part of the score of the whole. The movement of the world and the history of mankind are one and the same; in the image of the great symphony of colors that serves as a backdrop to the works and that we see appearing here and there, humbly reminding us of the presence of a great energy that transcends us."