

DETRITUS & ART / A personal point of view on Environment and Art by Rainer Stegmann

Artists seldom provide an interpretation of their own work; they leave this to the observer. Each of us will have his/her own individual view of a specific piece of art, seeing different contents and experiencing a range of own feelings and emotions. Bearing this in mind, I created this page where you will find regularly selected masterpieces from different epochs and I express my thoughts on what the work conveys to me personally. My interpretation will refer specifically to the theme "Environment". Any comments or suggestions regarding this column should be addressed to stegmann@tuhh.de.



FABRICE MONTEIRO AND DOULSY JAH GAL / The Prophecy #1, 2013 (© VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2021).

Fabrice Monteiro was born in 1972 in Belgium and lives in Dakar, Senegal; he has a Benin father and a Belgium mother. Doulsy Jah Gal, is a young African stylist and fashion designer of Senegalese origin born in the 1980s and lives in Dakar.

"We live in this hyper-consumerist system where profit comes first, and the links to our origins and the ancestral source of life is slowly being dissipated. While making this work, I tried to rebuild and strengthen that link" – Fabrice Monteiro.

This quote says a lot about the artist and helps understanding his art work. He also notes that the indigenous people he met in Australia and Texas *"are the ones who are truly grounded and respectful of nature."* He hopes that his work connects art with culture and politics and *"a sense of awareness and collective ethical concern will be ignited"*.

When I first this photo I was quite excited, this photo cast a spell over me, it got my immediate attention. There is a magic in this picture.

We often talk at conferences about the disastrous situation of open dumps in Africa with people on site searching for goods, that can be sold. Scavengers are exposed to dust, toxic gases and fumes, and come in contact with

hazardous waste, syringes, broken glass etc. In addition, unwritten hierarchies among the scavengers on the dump often cause conflicts. Since decades the problematic of open dumps and scavengers is well known but not much has happened.

Complete remediation of dumps is technically demanding and costly. As immediate actions the main emissions gas and leachate should be captured and treated. Scavengers should not be any longer present in the unhealthy atmosphere of the waste dump, and should work on a controlled site to recover reusable materials from the incoming waste before it is dumped. By these means they may still make their living from recovered materials but in a healthier more organized way. But I get lost in details.

Now coming back to the photo or better to the photo installation of the two artists: the oversized magic and mystical woman beautifully dressed in colorful plastic waste pieces on a dump. The dress merges with the plastic on the surface of the dump and shows the beauty and value of the discarded plastic as a symbol for other dumped reusable waste components. The woman seems to "grow" out of the dump, as being a part of it, bringing displaced plastic to the surface. It shows the beauty and the ugly; on one side the abundance of plastic production but also – looking at the mystical woman – the potential for plastic recovery. The woman moves upright and self-confident to the edge of the dump ...



In the background we see fumes from fires inside the dump that escape into the sky, the landscape is getting dark while the sun goes down. By these means the bright colors of the mystic dump scene become even brighter. As Fabrice Monteiro indicated the African culture plays an important role in this photo installation e.g., looking at the hair arrangement of the woman. We should highlight Doulsy (Jah Gal) who took care of this phantastic fashion arrangements designed from discarded plastic.

So let your mood sink in, internalize the clear message, but also enjoy the atmosphere, the special beauty and the spirit that emanates from this picture.

The next art work I will present is "The Bride of Beirut" which was created by sculptor, Engineer Hani Tabsharani, in Gemmayzeh, Lebanon. This statue is made from rubble and broken glass as left overs from the August 4 2020 explosion in the harbor of Beirut.



HANI TABSHARANI / The Bride of Beirut (2020).