

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

In this edition I want to introduce two examples of contemporary art from Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRK), Africa. Young artists direct the attention about the severe waste problems in their country to the public by creating human waste sculptures. Kinshasa struggles with their own produced waste but also imported used goods from Western Countries that are already or become waste as e.g. used textiles and also flip flop shoes, and used cars.

The artist and social activist Eddy Eketé (*1978) from Kinshasa, DRK, founded in 2015 the artist collective "Nda-ku Ya, La Vie Est Belle"; the name was intentionally chosen as a provocation. Eketé creates living installations on persons in their environment in Kinshasa highlighting specific waste problems that can be watched in the real world and on videos (www.eddyeketeblog.wordpress.com).

Stephan Gladieu (*1969) is a self-taught famous photographer who lives and works in Paris documenting the conflicts and social issues that agitate the world. "I chose to shoot their portraits in the streets of Kinshasa, with set-

tings and characters that form a dialogue", said Stephan Gladieu (<https://www.festivalphotolagacilly.com/en/photographes/stephan-gladieu>). The two examples of the photographers work I present here are from his photo collection "Homo Detritus". The expressive Flip-Flop Man photo is in my view self-explaining, showing a person covered with Flip-Flop shoes as a symbol of an abundance society. The photo emits a special esthetics, showing the hidden beauty of a sad situation. Using these wasted shoes makes the dilemma of rich countries obvious that divert their used products to poorer countries. It is an outcry against the dramatic volumes of wastes present in the streets of Kinshasa and worldwide, an outcry against affluent societies in parts of the world and an outcry against the inaction of administrations to solve this problem.

Another piece of art from the "Homo Detritus" collection is the photo of a person that is covered with pieces of rubber tires carrying a used tire. He poses himself before a yellow wall which again provides this subtle esthetics.



Flip-Flop Man by Patrick Kitete from the Artist Collective "La vie est Belle" (photo by Stephan Gladieu, courtesy of the artist).



Tire Man by artist Savant Noir, (photo by Stephan Gladieu, from the photo collection "Homo Detritus", courtesy of the artist).

This art photo shall make people aware of the inadequately managed large quantities of old tires; it protests also against the immense exploration of natural resources in the DRK. Beside several valuable metals as gold, copper, coltan and cobalt also huge amounts of extracted latex is used to produce rubber tires.

In my view, these photos find the right balance between the esthetical art work and the desired statement. This combination makes the photos very attractive to spread the message as a request for reducing/avoiding “waste” import and a more effective waste management. These art photos are relevant also for other countries in a similar situation but also for the rich export states.



In the coming issue I present to you a Chinese picture from the Museum in Zhangji-ajie-Yongding with a very special technique I have not seen before.