

21 Jul
2018

PRINT ARCHIVE

New Establishment: Amadou Sanogo

Based in Bamako, Malian artist Amadou Sanogo works his own cultural terrain into the medium and subject matter of his paintings. Painted in acrylic on unstretched, repurposed cloth he finds at his local market and peopled with distorted, tragicomic figures, these are at once vivid and stark, and suggestive of subversive narratives of power informed by national and international politics and social media. Words by Muriel Zagha





Smile a Bit, 2015

Sanogo's earliest experience of drawing was outside a television shop in his home town of Ségou, and perhaps this was the origin of his method of seeking his subject matter through television. Sanogo is both an artist and a tenacious critic of society, declaring: "Not all food should pass through the stomach. Food that passes through the mind is as important. This is symbolized in my work by the importance of the head."

How did you become a painter?

In 1997–98 I passed the entrance exam to get into the INA (Institut National des Arts) in Bamako, Mali, and graduated in 2003. That brought me among artists. The desire to paint came to me in my second year of art school, through one of my professors who encouraged my curiosity about painting. My inspiration comes from the world around me, from the ways in which people behave and think. I am a part of this

world, and questioning myself leads me to challenge what I see. Painting is for me a means of projecting this questioning onto a specific space.

Who are the expressive yet enigmatic figures that people your works? Why are they so often distorted and even headless?

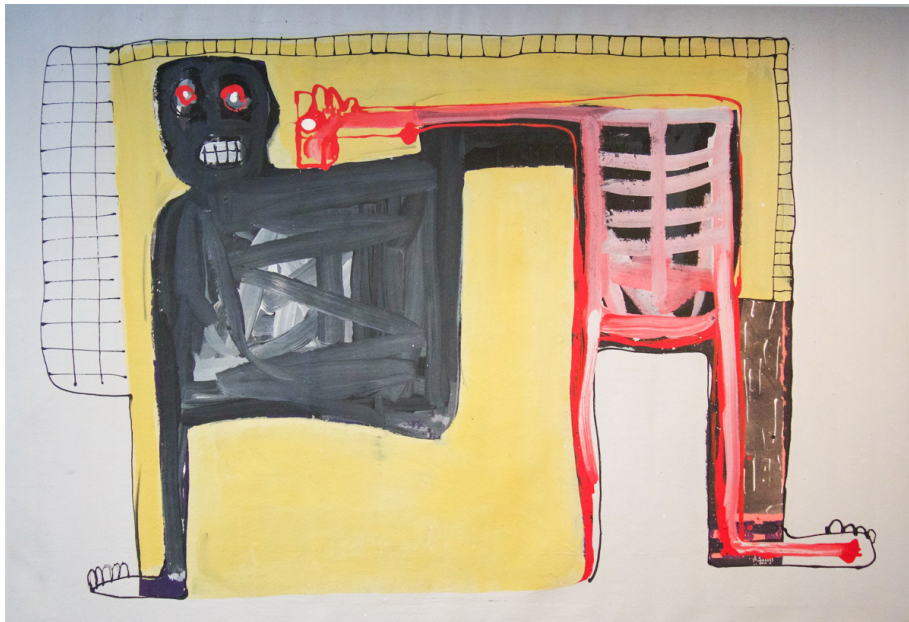
The expressive figures featured in my work represent the relationships a person will have with himself, with his surroundings and with other people. I distort them because we all have flaws: I can't create perfect forms because they don't exist. I behead my characters because nowadays we're faced with such a dismal reality that it feels as though we've lost our heads. Everything is muddled; nothing is clear. The so-called leaders, whether political, economic or humanitarian, have nothing to offer, and people are bewildered. I see all this as a body without a head, without the ability to think or project a vision. Today's world leaders love nothing more than to deceive people and lead them towards an uncertain future. So, according to me, our head is missing!

“I behead my characters because nowadays... it feels as though we've lost our heads”

Can you tell me a bit about your use of colour,

which feels at once joyous and menacing?

Each painting is a playful struggle in which I engage when I'm faced with a piece of cloth. There are some works that I manage to subdue early on in the process, and there are many others that resist me, though in most cases I will eventually succeed. The way I paint is by building up and destroying until I achieve the shapes I want.



Sans Tete, 2016

You have said: “Mali needs me.” What role does the artist play in a country where a large proportion of the population lives in poverty?

If Mali is in need, it isn't because I am Amadou Sanogo, but because the political, economic and social system is driving a whole generation of young people to give up, and my own questioning has made me realize that

running away isn't a solution. We need to face up to our reality in order for things to change. That is why I felt moved to become a leader for young artists, who I believe are among the worst off. Now I'm getting a bit more international recognition, I'm trying to gather the younger generation around me.



Sans Tete, 2016

Could you tell me a bit about Badialan 1?

Badialan 1 is an artists' collective that I founded in 2014 to bring about a change in people's mindsets and attitudes. In view of the many problems faced by young artists I met in Mali, notably the diffusion of their work and the lack of opportunities for dialogue with other artists, I began to think about sharing my own slightly wider exposure with others. And so we

decided to set up Atelier Badialan 1 (AB1), naming the studio after the Badialan neighbourhood where we congregate. The collective is made up of about fifteen visual artists all working in the studio and sharing resources with others such as art critics, gallery owners and promoters we might know. And it's such a mad set-up that we've even been joined by several playwrights and musicians: in other words, our studio belongs to all artists.

This feature originally appeared in issue 29

BUY NOW

Liked this post? Share it on social!



SUBSCRIBE AND SAVE

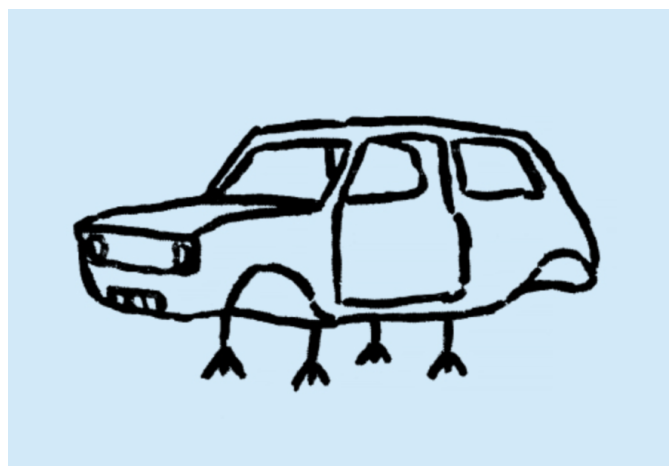
MORE TO READ

STUDIO VISIT

Janet Currier on Picturing Plaque and Bacteria

"It's been really nice to have the space to be speculative." Janet Currier discusses microbiology, the language of

[READ MORE](#) nce as
artist.



PRINT ARCHIVE

OOO! The Return to Objects

Ben Eastham looks at contemporary phenomena ranging from Object-Oriented Ontology (OOO) to the

[READ MORE](#) between URL

PRINT ARCHIVE

Selfie with Parthenon

For his column, What We Talk About When We Talk About Art, Ben Eastham takes a (notional) snap of himself beside

[READ MORE](#) f Greek



WHAT WE LEARNED THIS WEEK

Bill Viola Meets Michelangelo and Monet's Cat Comes Home

The video artist makes for a sacred match with the Renaissance master,

[READ MORE](#) cat resurfaces la go on show.

Keep in the loop

Enter email

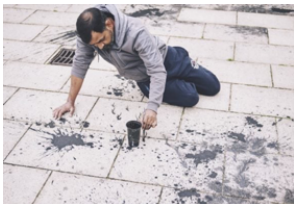
SUBSCRI

Get our weekly newsletter straight to your inbox



HUNGRY FOR MORE?

ALL EDITORIALS



PRINT ARCHIVE

**Imran Qureshi:
Blooms amid
the Bloodshed**



SHOWTIME

**Land of Lads:
Celebrating the
Female Avant-
Garde**



PRINT ARCHIVE

**New
Establishment:
Mira Dancy**



STUDIO VISIT

**Unlearning
America's
History with
Torkwase
Dyson**



PRINT ARCHIVE

A Legacy of Freedom



PRINT ARCHIVE

New Establishment: Prem Sahib



INTERVIEW

Melike Kara: Body Language



PICTURE GALLERY

Eight Artists to Watch: MA and MFA Shows 2017



Out Now: Issue 37 - Mothers Versus Machines

In this issue we meet five artists who explore creation and the ever-growing trend of humans playing God—well, at least until the machines are officially Mum and Dad.

£12.00

[MORE INFO](#)

[BUY ME](#)

[ABOUT US](#) [ADVERTISING](#) [PUBLISHING](#)

[FOLLOW US](#)

[PRIVACY POLICY](#)



We use cookies for all the usual reasons. Click Accept and this message will go away.

[Accept](#) [More Info](#)