

Stories by Joachim K. Silue

modern and romantic painter / sculptor:

Modena / Abidjan a round trip

The loud and shrill sound of his voice as well as his piercing eyes moving and alive - that lead to the contrasting slow physicality of his long and thin body - are the characteristics that strike you in the first meeting and in the relationship with Joachim K. Silue.

From his extreme height, this man looks at people and things that make the world (in which he has always been rooted as a tree in the wind) with smiling but voracious interest and helpfulness.

In the end, when you come to know him, his behaviour and his way of facing life can already be evident in his attitudes towards his interlocutors and towards events in general. In the same way, after having appreciated his works of art, you will think if the history of art is a "piece" of a wider human history, for Silue the creative work is an integral and inseparable part of his being and of his existential history.

There is nothing new in asserting an interacting relationship between the work of art and the author's inner world as a result of his life experiences, in the case of Silue who is both African in skin color, hair and behaviour, and even fully European in his geographic location and cultural contamination, this is particularly true.

Honestly, I have never met anyone who has managed to combine his cultural origin to knowledge acquired in the second half of his life regardless of any immediate response or profit...

Concretely Joachim has always followed different fields of interest arising from the need for survival in a new world. I'm thinking of the Academy of fine arts and of the quantity surveyor diploma as well as refining the working techniques of iron, wood and glass... His entire artistic production spans the past decade: from several paintings characterized by an anecdotal realism, to the figurative expressionism of the big crayons exposed in 2004 in Modena where he has decided to live.

They are convincing because of their strong communicativeness – also symbolic – and because of the bright colourfulness of their figures related to the world of his African origins captured from unexpected and eloquent perspectives. In the same period and shortly after, this work is combined with graphic experiments carried out in the laboratories of the Academy press in which he exposed sheets where different material interact with cids and traditional ink in order to create a new alphabetic basis of his uprising informal language. In recent years, the first absolute blacks are combined with those colors – ochre, sand, reddish earth – that recall the warm light and heat of the soil of his motherland in Silue's memory and imagery. This tendency not only expresses the need of *evoking* his motherland in his memory, but also to bring it concretely *back to reality*.

As a consequence to this fact, he produces sandy doughs ploughed by signs found in his memory/story of a young man brought to his home village to "recover" and to maintain forever and everywhere the values of the spirit of the world and the knowledge essential to live life...

That phase is characterized by works of art that are evidence of a shift towards the convinced and determined use of materials such as the earth – mother of every other

element- as well as both “hot” elements such as sand, wheat sheaves, textiles, pieces of wood, pumpkins and iron ... and “cold” elements typical of our technological era such as plexiglass or neon. This represents a way to translate into paintings or sculptures/installations his need to speak figurative words.

At this point we find a pivotal aspect in Silue’s artistic production that becomes intertwined with his art: the need of a concrete three dimensionality in his paintings. From this moment on (we are in 2005/06), he translates his paintings into material forms physically plastic. He leaves aside the traditional figurative practices easily recognizable through the conscious awareness derived from the mediation of the canons produced by the occidental history of art. He shapes a very personal kind of artistic language.

Indeed, the artistic practice is fundamental in Joachim’s life. It is an existential need as breathing that cannot be left aside even in bad times. Painting/sculpting allow him to watch, understand, accept and live life as well as to describe to everybody his inner world, his multilayered soul.

The fact that he got the forms, techniques, modes and illusions of western world, which he has decided to live in and which he is still discovering with inexhaustible curiosity, has allowed him to “accumulate” different types of knowledge. Through them, he reveals a strong attitude and willingness to combine all the narrative forms *deriving* and *derived from* his two worlds.

It is for this reason that the Avant-gardes and the Neo-avant-gardes, studied and approached with enthusiasm, have found fertile ground in Silue thanks to his growing technical knowledge that gives birth to new (paths) /outcomes right after a violent break (maybe just an apparently motionless pause), i.e. “*Equation du Premier Degré*” (2006). The thrill of a high and violent scream emerges from a deafening silence of white space in which signs but also shadows, ropes and a noose hanging from tree trunks dominate some large paintings of this period. They are clear evidences of a zero-expressive period that represents an industrious pause coinciding with other important choices of his private life (buying a house, his marriage, returning with his daughter...)

Here we come back to our initial assumption: art and life, eternal combination, sometimes denied but impossible to be left aside for this artist. Since 2007, Joachim K. Silue begins again a period of constant and intense work; a work of art as “Balance” which well represents the reconciliation between his two souls and cultural worlds. It also stands as a loud declaration of the new languages of his paintings.

In “Balance”, a wooden bolt combines two paintings into a diptych: one made of the substance of an “*objet trouvé*” washed by time and brought back to life and color by Joachim; the other marked by the traces of gestures and by a figure quickly drawn on the poor surface of a cardboard, related only to *his* life. Together the two parts create a strong work of art, full of narratives, that open up to the future of the copious others in the last two years.

During this period, we find the series of large talkative canvases painted white in which there are pieces of wood with their old seasonal forms associated with ferruginous elements and strong signs of broad gestures left in the space of the painting.

The figures that appear in the work of art (or on emerging from the timeless space of the imagination. They are reduced to essential forms through which Joachim refers with

passionate intensity to a distant world as well as to his contemporary life by putting them in a constant dialectical time-space relationship.

From the reference to old tools and hard work – as in “Sans Titre”, “Goutte”, “Hold up”- we move towards characters from ancient stories or *from* current events – as in “La marche des Géants”, “At Work”, or “ST” “The Dialogue”, “The company of Kenneth” or “the future of every people”, to name just a few works of art of 2008 and 2009.

In these works of art, Silue alternates the thoughtful report on the life conditions of that *elsewhere* still present in him to the awareness of *where* and *how* he lives *now* as well as to his personal thoughts. These elements are translated into the vigorous force of figures always a little off field that give a surprising compositional balance to the wide spaces of his canvases. Spaces that, through their constructive force, become allusive to the vastness of inner landscapes.

Works of art like “the young man” or “ST” of 2009 demonstrate the achieved ability to use all the expressive means and materials he has experimented with in recent years with the aim of translating into painting every fold of his imagination and every part of his life. Furthermore, we cannot forget that lateral and parallel to this fruitful production of large canvases, there is an endless sequence/narrative of works on cardboard.

This last one is more attractive and colourful considering the materials used (various textile fabrics, pigments, wires or small objects becoming figures) and it shows even more clearly the narrative purpose always present in Joachim’s work. The successful conjugation of way emanates a particular charm that tells, says, repeats explains and sometimes even whips the persistence of certain behaviours.

In fact, behind the apparent irony of the smile, in excited forms or blatantly spread on surfaces of slightly corrugated paper, enlivened by dense clumps of dark pigments or lights of decisive *gestures* connected while *drawing* of a narrative continuity of episodes.

See in this regard works such as “Grève” “Delta” “Pauvres Riches” with the whole series of the so-called various actions which take place freely in a tireless and continuous account given for individual frames such as “Clean”, “Il Capo”, “Il Manovale”, “L’amour” and thousand others, even dealing with critic prone way of life as “Mauvais tradition” or “Circumcision”...

To conclude the reflection on Silue, romantic artist and unstoppable African storyteller, we must deal with his last production.

Suddenly but well aware of his artistic means, Joachim Silue closes with the first phase of his journey through art and life, painting and history, Africa and Europe, history of art and personal experiences showing how his inner roundtrip from Modena to Abidjan and backward is carried out in works of art of 2010 as “Sans titre”, “50 kg net” “Due Libri in pergamena” ART NO: 100 150 RD (baguettes broulées et bouteilles vides, “la casserole”, “La bouteille, la poubelle, la marmite” and many more...)

They are *still lives* but real “life stops” according to the right lesson. Scenes in which objects and remains of objects, desolate tracks of everyday banality, emerge from their silence and take up space and life through the intense eye of painting that and through the creative force of lumps of various materials and the synthesis of fast signs, returns surprising pieces of reality.

What can we say at this point about the journey of this African man so intelligent and helpful as well as so attentive to the world and to its reasons and about the fact that he has taken a genre historically European with absolute excellence?

Silue is able to grasp and merge into a single inextricable dimension the oral storytelling – wholly African – and the languages that, from one continent to another, flowing from the mental landscapes to the artistic spaces, create through the painting surface and plastic arts an immense potential of feelings, visions and human words.

In conclusion, we can therefore recognize in Joachim K Silue the quality of an artists without any label or passport, worthy of our admiration and attention. He retraces his inner journey between two distant worlds and at the same time he offers us the possibility of approaching or coming into them through the eloquent translation of his imaginative painting.