

Fuir [to flee, to run away]

Curated exhibition - Foundation blachere Apt France
Dates - 25 May 2017 - 6 June 2018



Installation view, with both series of work. Foundation Blachere

This group show of ten artists was curated by Justine Bernardoni and was exhibited at Foundation Blachere in Apt, France.

Foundation Blachere is a corporate foundation, which aims to promote African contemporary art through, exhibitions, residencies and workshops. Apt is an industrial town an hour away to the north from the port of Marseilles.

I was invited to make work for this exhibition and received a residency that allowed me to work at Blachere studios to make the works on site. The focus of the exhibition was on issues of exile and migration, the movement not only of large numbers of people as seen in news reports but also of the hopes and dreams of individuals searching for a better life, particularly in Europe.

In 2017 Europe was still undergoing a wave of migration from displaced refugees from Syria, Libya and North Africa although fewer numbers were arriving than in 2015 when hundreds of thousands fleeing war and persecution clogged roads and support networks.

The show explored ideas of movement, of both people and things, of disillusion and disenfranchisement occurring before and after immigration. A number of the artists on the show had been migrants themselves and were then based in Europe.

Africa has an extensive history of human migration in both directions. For hundreds of years masses of immigrants from Europe streamed into the continent seeking wealth and land for better lives, some even fled from religious persecution (French Huguenots for example). Yet simultaneously

millions of Africans were being moved in the other direction, sold, enslaved and transported to the markets of Europe and the Americas.

My response to this residency and show resulted in two distinct bodies of work. The series 'the grass is always greener' was a set of charcoal and ash drawings that although developed as individual drawings were intended to function as a triptych. The drawings set out to explore different aspects of migrant conditions including options of running or fleeing from situations.



The Load – from series- *the grass is always greener*
Charcoal on paper - 190 cm x 135 cm

'The load' depicted the stereotypical image of the burdened woman carrying her child, her possession and a massive load upon her head. The leaking cloud of hopes and expectations, heavy on her head, cradles a small community and includes the ideas and histories carried in and on her head. The charcoal dust leaks out of the structure, showing the impossibility of transporting all the ideas and history of a culture in each individual traveler.



The weight of ideology – from series - *the grass is always greener*
Charcoal on paper 190 cm x 135 cm

The second panel - 'The weight of ideology' played with ideas around the migration of those persecuted by religious discrimination, the burden of their beliefs dragged behind them like the trollies of the street gleaners collecting waste, dragging their ideologies into the new cultures and countries that they invaded.

The third panel - 'The grass is always greener' took a more cynical view of current trends of immigration, those dissatisfied and wealthy enough to move and seek new homes elsewhere. South Africa has many prospective migrants researching their possible migrant status to the greener fields of other postcolonial outposts like Australia or Canada. Their need makes them vulnerable to exploitation - the grass is rarely as green as the cheerleaders and marketing campaigns paint it to be.



Migrants – from the series - *the grass is always greener*
Charcoal on paper 190 cm x 135 cm

The second body of work the *floating world* was a series of fragile disembodied heads, four large smoke drawings depicting floating heads of swimmers, similar to those shown alongside refugee boats displaying the implied decapitations inflicted on swimmers in deep water. I used images of

the heads of swimmers, floating, apparently disconnected from their bodies. Smoke, as a drawing medium, is not that controllable a medium and results in slightly unfocused and partially translucent images, where the white of the supporting paper invades the image. This displays some of the vulnerability of the heads, isolated, fragile and disconnected from their surroundings. They were intended to float in the large space of the foundation gallery disorienting the viewer.

'The load' and the series of heads, 'the floating world' was taken up into the permanent collection of the Fondation Blachère.

<http://www.fondationblachere.org/expositions/fuir>

A Catalogue was printed by Fondation Blachère

Series of smoke drawings, the floating world



Panel two - smoke on paper 140 cm x 174 cm



Panel 1.



Panel 2



Panel 3, smoke on paper [all panels 140 cm x 175 cm each]





fuir

exposition

Fondation Blachère - Centre d'Art
du 24 mai 2017 - au 06 janvier 2018

Diane Victor
Ephrem Solomon
Mamadou Seydi
Aimé Mpané
Nelson Makamo
Mohamed Lekfeti
Mouhamadou Dia
Soly Cissé
Nidhal Chamekh
Clay Apenouvon

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fondationBlachère

www.fondationblachere.org
entrée gratuite
ouverture du mardi au samedi de 14h à 18h00
dimanche de juillet à août et décembre
de 14h à 18h30

AIRFRANCE