Painting with Textiles: Abdoulaye KonatÃ©

Description

Abdoulaye KonatÃ©, â??Croix de lumiÃ¨reâ??, bazin teint, 2012. Source: Revu

Whether abstract, figurative, or somewhere in between, the epic, shimmering and painterly fabric installations made by African-born artist Abdoulaye KonatÃ© reflect on Africaâ??s great history with textiles, and the political implications bound into every single stitched layer. Currently living and working in Bamako, he says, â??My works witness and speak of power struggles which have happened for generations in Mali â?? and beyond, of course. These topics will always be inherent in life and therefore have occurred throughout my practice.â?•

KonatÃ© was born in 1953 in Dire, Mali. He began his career by training as an artist in a varied, multidisciplinary approach, with a leaning towards painting, as he explains, â??I studied Fine Arts in Bamako and at the Institut SupÃ©rieur des Arts in Havana. During those years, I used acrylics, oils, screen printing and old earthenware techniques. I did a lot of acrylics, screen printing, a bit of etching, watercolours and a lot of installations.â?•

Abdoulaye KonatÃ©

Following graduation, KonatÃ© took on a series of high-profile curatorial roles in the arts; he ran the Exhibitions Division at the MusÃ©e National du Mali from 1985 to 1997 before moving on to manage the Palais de la Culture in Bamako and Rencontres Photographiques de Bamako from 1998 to 2002, and later became head of the Conservatoire des Arts et MÃ©tiers MultimÃ©dia â??Balla FassekÃ© KouyatÃ©â?• in Bamako, Mali.

It was during the 1990s that KonatÃ© found his way into working with richly woven tapestries, and they have remained at the centre of his practice ever since. â??What I love about textiles,â?• he says, â??is the sensory as much as the visual aspect. I use it in its entirety, as a material medium but also for communication.â?• Even so, his practice has retained the same painterly language of his earlier practice, with playful explorations into colour, texture, pattern and form, which he expands outwards into all-encompassing creations.

Abdoulaye KonatÃ©, Ghana 1 kente, poids et couronne (Ghana 1 Kente: Weigh

KonatÃ© draws on the African history for acting as an aesthetic language and potent means of communication, and as such, he creates exquisitely crafted works of art that reflect on potent political issues, ranging from the devastating effects of war, to the AIDS epidemic, and even the ramifications of ecological changes. But he insists that his artworks remain open to interpretation, as visual objects that speak of history and artistry, observing, â??They reflect on a more general sense of time and transition, and how these transitions are often revisited throughout generations, but they do not offer answers.â?•

KonatÃ© works predominantly with upcycled fragments of woven and dyed clothes that already have a rich and varied history, and their own inner stories to tell, as he explains, â??I work mainly with quality textiles, even though I mix a lot of textiles, but these are materials that have been worked, that are the result of a designerâ??s labour. The material itself adds value to the work of art, and there are several layers of interpretation in my work.â?• Recently he has collaged together fragments of cotton-based Kente cloth â?? which has a strong Ghanaian heritage â?? with a series of tie-dye and metallic finishes that have traditional roots in Mali. In doing so, he imagines what can happen when different cultural traditions and aspects of visual knowledge are merged into one.

Abdoulaye KonatÃ©, Vert Touareg, 2017

While KonatÃ© continues to work with woven fabrics, he remains open-minded about the development of his practice into the future, and this is refelctee in the open, spirited nature of the textiles he creates. He says, â??Today Iâ??m at a stage where Iâ??m working with textiles,â?• before adding, â??Is this my final stage? I donâ??t really know. I really like working with textiles because it gives me so many possibilities. But I always have painting in mind. As far as Iâ??m concerned, Iâ??m painting with textiles, Iâ??m using the same steps, the research work, the sketches, and so on.â?•

CATEGORY

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Date Created
December 9, 2024
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