



Autonome Masse 6/23 2005. 72 x 52 cm. Lacquer on coated paper. (Private collection)

Miguel MARAJO

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Translation: Melissa Thackway © ADAGP / www.miguel-marajo.com 1



Artist Miguel Marajo focuses on the alienating uniformity of Western society's aesthetic criteria.

Playing on lines, he generates an authenticity liberated from beauty canons.

With caustic humour, poetry, and lucidity, his work explores cultural relations' abundant wealth.

Born in Le Havre, Miguel Marajo spent most of his youth in Martinique where he embarked on his artistic career before moving to Paris.

Actively engaged with the Caribbean intellectual milieu in all its diversity, he works with and through all the cultures that live within him.

Marajo's work explores the paradoxical, which is why his creations are always in movement. They play on floating and friction, on notions of a mobile articulation, on a sensual play on colour and forms. They thereby suggest that, despite all that might restrict our identities, an unnamed, underlying life exists in all of us, one that pulsates deep down and manifests.

Miguel Marajo lives and works in France.

Miguel Marajo's world is an authentic, true, and confident one infused with poetry, humour, Eros, people's existences, everyday life, the infinite treasures of the imagination, social and historical reality, and society's happenings. It is also nourished by his incursions into what constitutes our culture, his analyses of our country's ideological, artistic, intellectual, and political avant-garde, and his forays into the theories of the Negritude movement, modern-day marooning, Créolité, and the Whole-World, which he decants, assimilates and transforms into a contemporary visual language. Such is the universe into which Miguel Marajo immerses us.

Miguel Marajo gives form to a vigorous, frank, abundant, resourceful oeuvre, in which painting, drawings, assemblages, painted objects, installations, and poetic texts converge, harmonise, and entwine. They form an indissociable ensemble in which Marajo brilliantly demonstrates his skills, deploying and experimenting with techniques, exploring a plethora of mediums, developing his exploration of forms, introducing unexpected elements into the iconography, and giving form to flourishing new expressions. The experimental and methodical paths that this ensemble's boldness and explorations take, its political force as the innovative power of its aesthetic, and the sensibility it creates all reveal Marajo's stunningly vivacious inventiveness. They demonstrate his incredible fecundity and total freedom, his executorial talent, unveiling the creative workings that guide him and offering glimpses of the influences he embraces. They attest to the artist's ceaseless and highly personal fine tuning of his investigations, his constant strengthening of his work's colouration as he consolidates its textures and expands its range.

From his first brightly coloured paintings and their exuberant forms spilling with joy and vitality, to the pointillist meticulousness and poetic atmosphere that shrouds his most recent pieces, via his compositions loaded with a luxurious sensuality, different orientations follow in uninterrupted and continuous succession. These turns give rise to creations that share a protean, fevered, fluid style that is full of life and relief, shored up by the consonance of original hues, unusual harmonic arrangements, and coils that undulate in circumvolute cadence. They permeate the surfaces like effusive entwining plants in a refined play of innumerable, filiform curves and twists and turns that, in their varying degrees of tightness, are charged with active tension. Modulating with the soaring of his soul or moments of enthusiasm, Marajo's style oscillates between minimalism and profusion, and is infused with the power of fascination characteristic of improvisation.

Improvisation indeed systematically feeds Miguel Marajo's creative process. It reinforces the intensity of the work in its quest for rhythmic exaltation, its sense of nuance, the headiness of mobility, movement, and transitions, its particular treatment of tonalities, and the vibrant density of the pictorial and graphic matter, the inflexion of whose contours disrupts formal arrangements.

It demonstrates a jazz-like approach to visual creation that flourishes in the eruptive bursts of chromatic constructions. It triumphs in the regular beats, the fugitive pulsations, the phrasing of movements, and in all the tempos that traverse this ensemble. It imbues it with a richness, force, sonority, the musicality of colours, and a just intonation. It infuses the plenitude of a subtly organised, admirably intoned warm breath, and the nuanced modulations of bluesy climes, in which we perceive the sudden palpitations of the flights of Miguel Marajo's interior life and the explosions of his sensibility.

It also embodies Miguel Marajo's physical participation, generating a tactile, gestural, and postural repertoire. Here at once find expression a founding subjectivity that mobilises, stimulates the faculties of the mind, and a bodily promptitude that bears the density of what is at stake for the subjectile.

In his desire to reach the horizon of the Caribbean dream of emancipation and freedom, to come as close as possible to their authenticity, Miguel Marajo sounds out his memory, questions the weight of his heritage, revisits its tragedy and fragility, at times with humour and irony, and scrutinises his relation to the real.

Drawing on the history and the imaginations of bodies hidden behind their tangible appearance, Miguel Marajo addresses the aesthetic, political, social, and racial issues that negative opinions, derogatory and stigmatising sentiments, preconceived and caricatural ideas about Black people raise.

He explores powerful themes in which questions of identity meet those concerning the body (Black features, hair, skin colour, sexuality, eroticism, and so forth). In lyrical or narrative compositions charged with the plenitude of the Black body, its morphological and gestural expression, Marajo exposes both historical subjects and subjects concerning contemporary issues.

Miguel Marajo gives Black bodies back the pride of their identities. He liberates something elusive in them, something raw, intact, something that is deeply human, an original reality, a place of power. He gives them back their way of being rooted, the beauty of what is natural to them, their hereditary, specific, inimitable behaviour. He frees them from appearances foisted on them by a Westernisation that lauds Caucasian beauty, and from the shackles of low self-esteem; he releases them from the mechanisms of alienation in operation. He awakens a sense of the body that renders to all the condition of freedom and determines the transfigurations that take place in those who invent themselves, the construction of their own bodies, and the reconstruction of a place in the world.

Jean Marie-Louise

Its spikiness notwithstanding, the acanthus leaf was one of the most appreciated ornamental motifs in the West for centuries.

Here, the decorative function of its ornamental forms are subverted to evoke humankind's sway over a nature that it transforms and codifies.

The decorative appearance of the rinceau is opposed to the free and voluble aspects found in nature.

This nature is often described as wild. Equally, certain natural traits of the human body are subjected to attempts to regulate them through dominant aesthetic criteria, making them obey a certain conformity.

By associating subjects with the diversity of vegetal elements, an aspiration to an authentic freedom, in all its singularity, is expressed.





*« Manifestly alive skin
at first sight, from afar
funny at first,
intoxicatingly so.
A bearing from afar,
from foreign shores,
the first, even reproachless
magniloquent marker.»*







2. Nature's Revenge

Miguel MARAJO

An escape from the confines assigned to ornamental motifs to embrace the natural. Here the landscape is, and is in, the subjects. They infuse the sky, trees, or water with a transfiguring energy.





Lee Anne 2017. 116 x 89 cm. Oil on canvas mounted on a wooden frame.

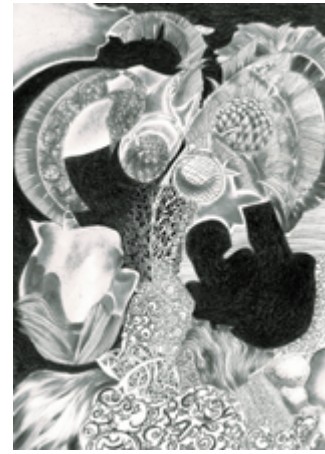


Des coupes vertes 2018. 81 x 65 cm. Oil on canvas mounted on a wooden frame. (Private collection)



2.5 Nature's Revenge

Miguel MARAJO



3. Hair Straightening and Alkaline Poetry

Miguel MARAJO

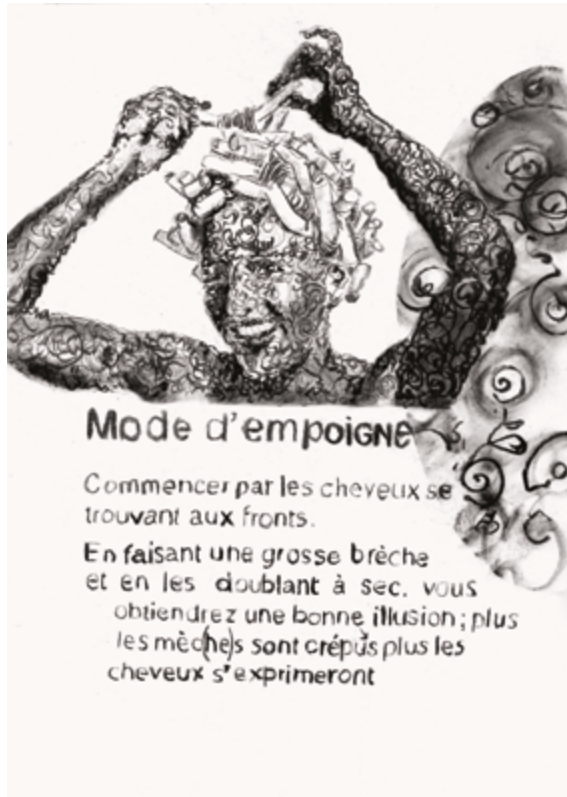
There is ongoing scientific research into the abnormally high proportion of Black people suffering from health problems because of hair straightening practices.

Paradoxically, certain beauty product manufacturers claim that straightening Afro hair is a form of care.

Here, the instructions of hair straightening products are subverted, keeping their consonances while denouncing their fallacies.













L'enseignement 2018. 160 x 130 cm. Charcoal and watercolor on paper.

La coupe 2014. La 29 x Ht 78 x Pr 29 cm. Metal, marble, doll, wood, steel wool, lacquer + detail.





Rouleaux rouleaux 2015. 150 x 120 cm. Charcoal on paper.

Bigoudi magique 2021. 154 x 59 x 40 cm. Wood, metal, cardboard, painted cement roller.



La forge des choses 2018. 73 x 92 cm. Oil on canvas mounted on a wooden frame.
La pince à boucler 2020. 3 x 26,5 x 6 cm. Painted metal pliers.



5. Going Bananas

Miguel MARAJO

After the James River water pollution scandal in Virginia, the United States banned chlordecone in 1975. In France, it was not banned until 1990.

Yet after several derogations, this ban did not come into effect in the French West Indies until 1993.

Exotic fruit par excellence, here the banana evokes the complexity of these two worlds' whirling relationship.





Every object has its own story: dented, broken, smashed to pieces.

Forged by this absolute necessity, a duty of resilience,
shaped by the shock of the apparent imprescriptibility of the impasse,
repair is essential.

The principle of a rebound - which in certain circumstances seems vital -
and of a passage through the unknown, generate a new creation for a rebirth.







Marajo repurposes discarded objects picked up on the street, on piles of rubble, or other murky corners.

Their fortuitous and often astonishingly just juxtapositions display an incredibly perfect complementarity: they accord in an alchemy of thought, a secret and intimate operation.

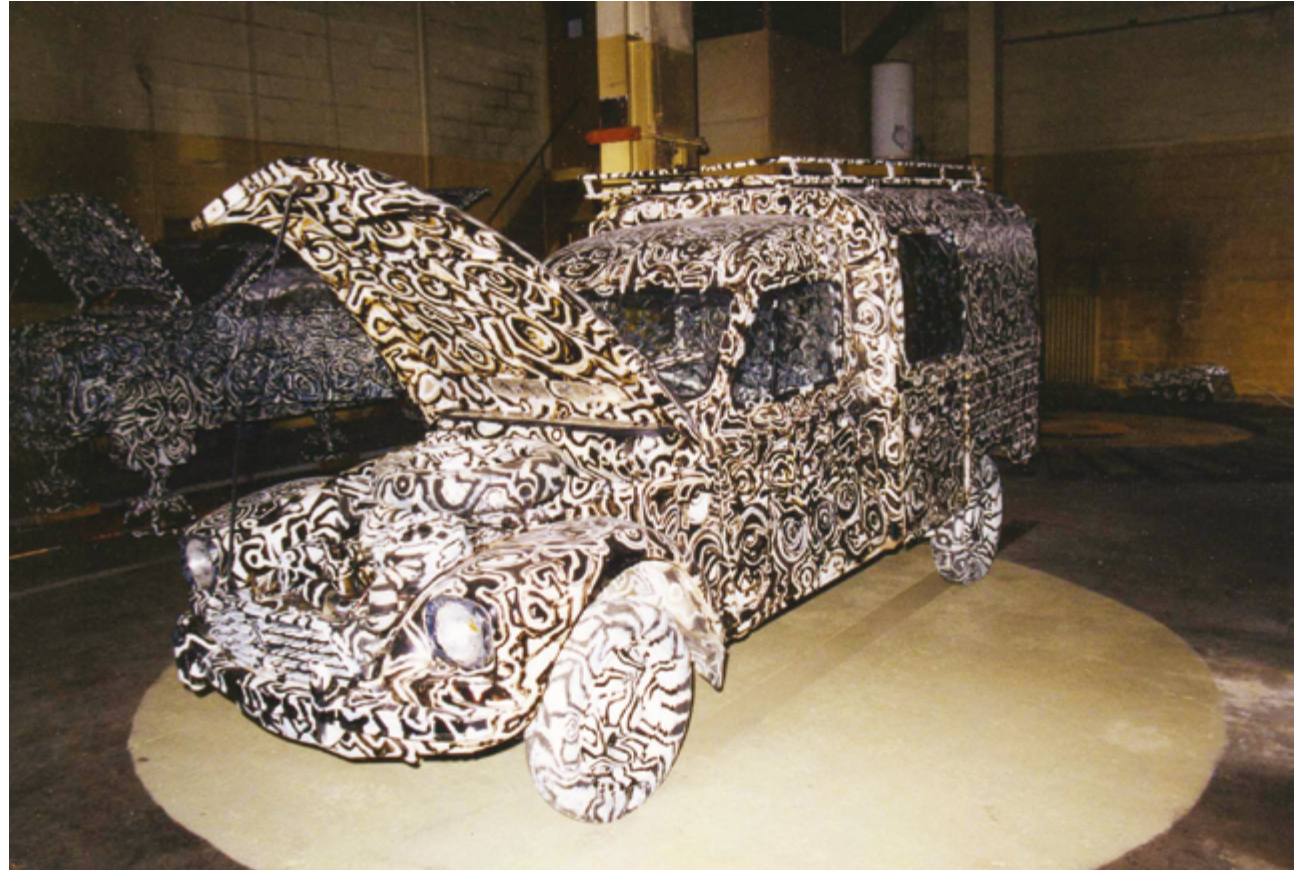
Here we again find lines teeming with circumvolutions, their profligacy mimicking hair and echoing its free and natural character. Nature is present everywhere, subjacent in curving gestures that rhythm the totality of these works, invading them in a complex movement that continues to exist beneath the dance with which Marajo's gesture infuses them.



Le chef de la bascule 2021. Assemblage of painted chairs, a bottle of water, earth, and plants.







Vis ta mine 1997. Austin Metro entirely covered in anti-rust paint.
Acadia Ego 2001. Citroën Acadiane entirely covered in anti-rust paint.

8. Portraits, a Pretext for Twisting Lines

Miguel MARAJO

In a choreography of bodies that seeks to encounter the living in its entirety, the artist invests objects with a sacred energy, infusing them with symbolic value.

He incorporates them into self-portraits as prolongations of hair, cornucopias or antelope horns, vivacious branches of springs, or rinceaux.

Their charge vibrant, the inhabited objects infect the canvas with their energy and, fulfilling another imperative than the injunction of the model, liberate themselves.



Sera ci 2020. 69,5 x 63 x 28 cm. Painted prunus branch, springs and balls, on charcoal.
Le Myrobolan 2021. 95 x 73 cm. Oil on canvas mounted on a wooden frame.

8.2 Portraits, a Pretext for Twisting Lines

Miguel MARAJO



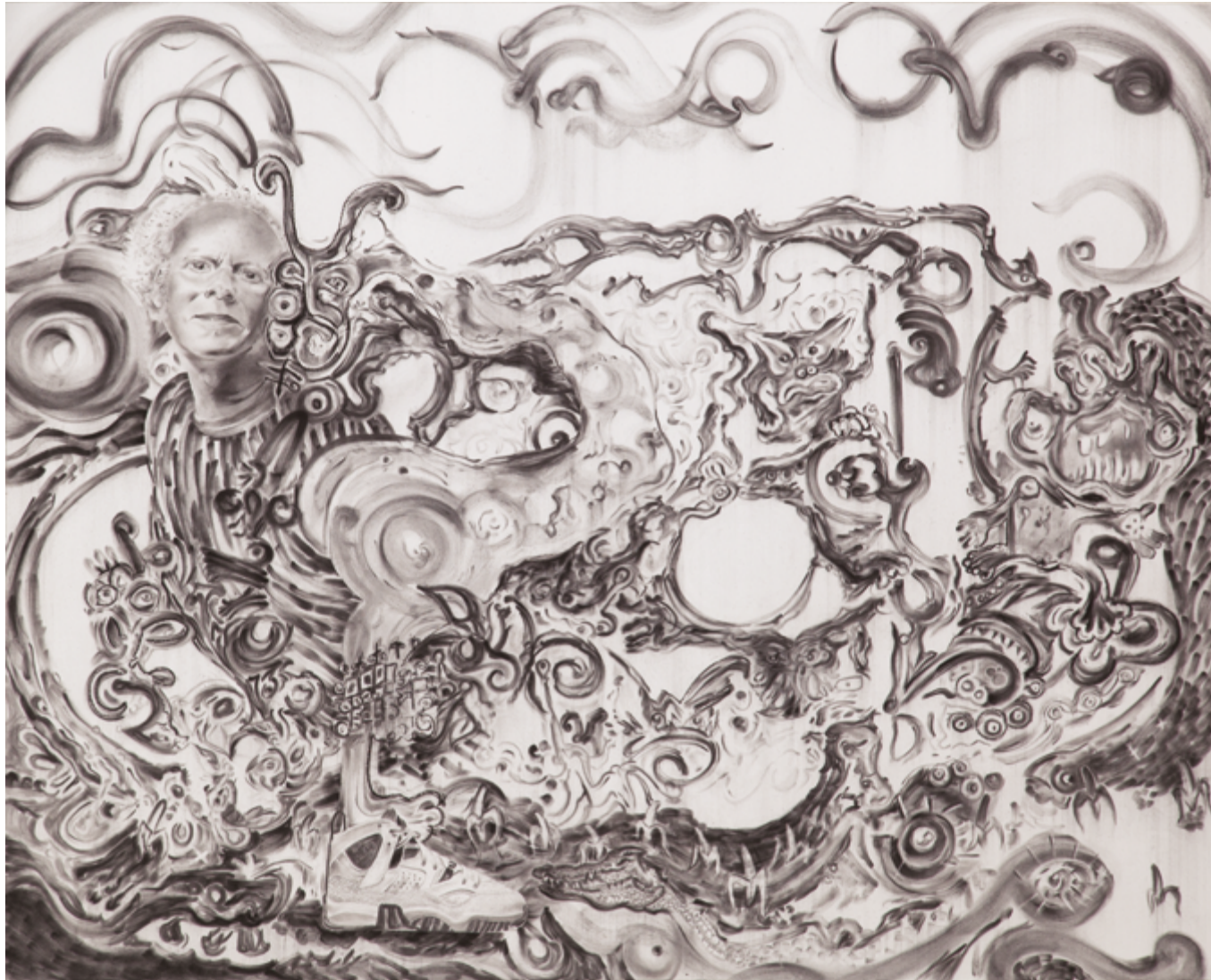
Prise de terre 1997. 120 x 60 x 60 cm. Wood and anti-rust paint on metal.
L'élan 2022. 144 x 116 cm. Charcoal on Arches paper.





8.4 Portraits, a Pretext for Twisting Lines

Miguel MARAJO



Utopian projections, resistance: it isn't only colonial trauma we suffer from; our heads are rife with borders too. A process of memory, of history is necessary therefore, a voluntary purification.

These object-actions are turbulent formulations, trembling with the desire to erupt and to escape being buried beneath the injunctions of universality.



L'énigme du trou blanc 2021. Performance : 30 minutes. Les Nouveaux Collectionneurs, Espace Voltaire, Paris.
Installation: colonial helmet, 4 pistols, encyclopaedias, poska drawings on paper, a wooden table on wheels.



Mur mûr capillaire 2022. Performance : 30 minutes. African Art Book Fair (AABF), Dakar (Senegal).
Installations: cloth, paper, string, surgical scissors, painted hat, books, and poska drawings on paper.

Born in Le Havre (France) on 4 January 1963.

SOLO SHOWS

- 2024 • *Rêves interactifs* Les ateliers de Chatressac, Chaillevette.
- *Éclosions hardies* Centre d'art Tropiques Atrium, Fort-de-France, Martinique.
- 2023 • *Solo show* DDessin {23}, Paris.
- 2019 • *Entre les plis des feuilles* Le Hublot, Ivry-sur-Seine.
- 2017 • *Danse nuptiale de la gâchette* Houilles.
- 2016 • *Criclos* Le Hublot, Ivry-sur-Seine.
- 2015 • *Volubilis* Centre Culturel Max Juclier, Villeneuve-la-Garenne.
- 2011 • *Petits arrangements* Lizadie Taste, Neuilly-sur-Seine.
- 2010 • *Force frisottis* Ministère des Outre-mer, Paris.
- *Don Quichotte, Odalisque et autres figures* Galerie Acabas, Paris.
- *Culture et Conscience* on the initiative of Juliette Sméralda, Martinique.
- 2007 • *Accrochage* Galerie Sépia & Imagine Café, Martinique.
- 2003 • *Mécanisme paradoxal* Lizadie Taste, Neuilly-sur-Seine.
- 1998 • *Polylogue 0* Association Polylogue, Paris.
- 1997 • *Sans Pur Sang* Confluences, Paris.

PERFORMANCES

- 2022 • *Mur mûr capillaire* African Art Book Fair (AABF), Dakar (Senegal).
- 2021 • *Machine aveugle ! Les révoltes silencieuses* Palais de Tokyo, Paris.
- *L'énigme du trou blanc* Performance, LNC, Espace Voltaire, Paris.
- 2019 • *L'entre-deux monde, l'art comme arme de guérison* Les Lilas.
- 2007 • *Partir à neuf, 8, 7,...* Polylogue 1789 Carré de Baudouin, Paris.
- 1998 • *Le pousse trace* Association Polylogue, Paris.
- 1997 • *Peinture en direct* Biennale de Lyon, Place Bellecour, Lyon.
- *Le cycle* Confluences, Paris.

ARTIST RESIDENCIES

- 2024 • *Chivé Grennen* LPO Victor Anicet - Martinique
- 2023 • *HeadMade Factory* Marigot - Saint-Martin
- 2010 • *Résidence Festival Rumeurs Urbaines* Ville de Colombes (Hauts-de-Seine).
- *Résidence Semaine du Handicap* ESAT Ville d'Argenteuil / Hispano-Suiza.
- 2000 • *Résidence Insensé* Ateliers municipaux / Ville de Sens (Yonne).

GROUP SHOWS

- 2025 • *Paris Noir* Curated by Alicia Knock, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.
- 2024 • *Nouvelles Perspectives* Salon AIAP 2024, Monaco.
- *Salo XII* Curated by Laurent Quénéhen, Paris.
- *Amers remarquables* Barge, Poses then Amfreville-La-Mie-Voie.
- 2023 • *Explosion* Curated by Cindy Olohou and Chris Cyrille, Pharmacie des âmes, Paris.
- 2022 • *Éditer pour ne pas rester dans le silence* Curated by Pascale Obolo, African Art Book Fair (AABF), OFF Biennale Dak'Art, Senegal.
- *La beauté* L'Approche - A New Perspective On Art In Molenbeek. Brussels, Belgium.
- 2021 • *Sublime objet* NUIT BLANCHE La Maison de l'Air, Paris.
- *Homme Univers* HCE Galerie, 6B, Saint-Denis.
- *Frontières* Curated by Les Nouveaux Collectionneurs, Espace Voltaire, Paris.
- *L'art de collectionner* Curated by Jean Marie-Louise, Musée d'Art Contemporain de Martinique MACMA.
- 2020 • *Amours II* Curated by Laurent Quénéhen, Galerie Héloïse, Paris.
- *Solidariteitstentoonstelling* Curated by L'Approche, Brussels, Belgium.
- *Subjectile* HCE Galerie, Saint-Denis.
- 2019 • *DDessin {19}* Galerie Marie Jaouen, Paris.
- *La vie de l'esprit* Curated by L'Approche, Brussels, Belgium.
- *Une brève histoire de l'ornementation* La Belle Absente/presents [Hervé Ic & Miguel Marajo], Paris.
- *Chien ou Chat* Galerie Popy Arvani, Paris.
- 2018 • *Artists SANAA Selected!* Galerie Sanaa, Utrecht, Pays-Bas.
- *Utopies Fluviales* Dans le sens de la Barge, La Maréchalerie, CAC, Versailles.
- *Quoi de neuf ?* Curated by Myriam Suriam, La Baleine, Pantin.
- 2017 • *Équilibre fragile* Carte blanche Myriam Mihindou, Galerie Sanaa, Utrecht, Netherlands.
- *Utopies Fluviales : prologue* MuséoSeine Caudebec-en-Caux, then Nanterre and Le Havre.
- 2016 • *True Mirror* Curated by L. Egloff & R. Renaud, Galerie des Communes, Paris.
- *Le Musée du Tout-Monde & Agora Mundo* Curated by Sylvie Glissant, Hélène Lassalle and Catherine Kirchner-Blanchard, Cité internationale des arts, Paris.
- *MIA* Galerie Joseph, Paris.
- 2015 • *Les Dessins Partagés* Atelier de l'OPH, Ivry, then Bar Molitor, Paris.
- 2014 • *Névralgies I* Carte blanche Myriam Mihindou", Galerie Maïa Muller, Paris.
- *Tout va bien #3* Curated by Jean-Michel Marchais, Galerie Quai Est, Ivry.
- *Télégramme* Curated by Saïdou Dicko & Gastineau Massamba, Pierrefitte.

GROUP SHOWS (CONTINUED)

- 2013 • *Exposition d'œuvres sur papier & autres* Curated by Jean-Michel Marchais, Galerie Quai Est, Ivry-sur-Seine.
- 2012 • *RendezVous focus painting* Travelling exhibition: Capetown, Franshoek, Bloemfontein, Grahamstown, Oudtshoorn, Pretoria et Johannesburg, South Africa.
- 2011 • *Un Jardin en Outre-Mer* Paris.
• *Roommates – The Mute Opera* by Paul Boulitreau, curated by Gordon Froud, North West University, Potchefstroom, South Africa.
- 2010 • *Artothèque* Curated by Jérôme Letinturier 2Angles, Flers.
• *Tout bouge autour de nous* CNM auprès de l'UNESCO, Monaco.
• *Haïti Action Artistes* Curated by E. Barthelemy, Ministère de la Culture, Paris.
• *Robe / enrobe / dérobe* La Loge de la Concierge, Paris.
- 2009 • *Anadiploses* La Loge de la Concierge, Paris.
• *Art Protects* Galerie Yvon Lambert, Paris.
- 2008 • *20 artistes pour Haïti* Collectif Images 2004, Springcourt, Paris.
• *Salon du Dessin* Galerie Trafic, Paris.
- 2007 • *La peinture en Martinique* Conseil Régional, Martinique.
- 2006 • *Triennale de la gravure* AMAC Chamalières.
- 2003 • *Bicentenaire de Toussaint Louverture* Théâtre de l'Épée de Bois, Paris.
• *Triennale de la gravure* AMAC Chamalières.
- 2001 • *Empreintes Labyrinthes* La Loge de la Concierge, Paris.
• *Insensé* Bâtiments municipaux, Sens.
• *Carnaval, Polylogue 25* Espace Beaurepaire, Paris.
- 2000 • *Triennale de la gravure* AMAC Chamalières.
- 1998 • *Impressions de Hong Kong* Fringe Festival, Hong Kong.
- 1987 • *GEP Totem* Travelling Exhibition, Martinique.
- 1986 • *GEP Totem* Centre Matisse, Paris.
- 1983 • *GEP Totem* Exhibitions in Martinique, Guadeloupe, and Port of Spain, Trinidad.

INSTITUTIONAL COLLECTIONS

Association Mouvement Art Contemporain (AMAC) Chamalières,
Musée d'art contemporain de la Martinique (MACMA), CTM Martinique,
2Angles Flers.

PUBLICATIONS

- 2024 • *Miguel Marajo par Jean Marie-Louise* preface by Cindy Olohou, Ielivredart edition.
• *Éclosions hardies* Exhibition catalogue, Centre d'art Tropiques Atrium.
• *Nouvelles Perspectives* Exhibition catalogue, AIAP 2024, Monaco.
- 2022 • *Mes révoltes silencieuses* Book-Object, created in partnership with Stéphanie Dargent and presented at the AABF, Dakar Biennale.
- 2021 • *Les Révoltes Silencieuses* Revue AFRIKADAA 14.
• *Frontières* Exhibition catalogue, LNC.
- 2020 • *Subjectile* Exhibition catalogue Galerie HCE.
• *Curly Kepone Vitae* Focus Point Contemporain by Georges Guidet.
- 2019 • *L'entre-deux monde, l'art comme arme de guérison* AFRIKADAA 12 magazine.
- 2017 • *Danse nuptiale de la gâchette* Exhibition catalogue.
- 2016 • *Art de l'Amérique latine et des Caraïbes.*
Le Musée du Tout-Monde & Agora Mundo Exhibition catalogue.
- 2015 • *Volubilis* Exhibition catalogue.
- 2012 • *Érotisme et créolité / Eroticism and Creolity* Frédéric-Charles Baitinger.
• *Pratiques artistiques contemporaines en Martinique*
Esthétique de la rencontre 1 – Dominique Berthet – Édition L'Harmatan.
- 2011 • *Rendezvous Art Project – Focus Painting* Exhibition catalogue.
- 2010 • *Tout bouge autour de nous* Exhibition catalogue.
- 2009 • *L'art contemporain martiniquais de 1939 à nos jours. La naissance d'une histoire de l'art dans un contexte postcolonial.* Marie Louis.
- 2007 • *La Peinture en Martinique* Édition HC.
- 2001 • *Insensé* Exhibition catalogue.
- 1984 • *Pédagogie artistique édition du SERMAC* René Louise with the GEP Totem.

EDUCATION

- 1991 • DEA Diploma, Visual Arts Department
Université de Paris-I Panthéon-Sorbonne.
- 1990 • Masters, Visual Arts Department, Université de Paris-VIII.
- 1988 • Bachelor's degree in Fine Arts (DNSAP)
École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts de Paris
(in the studios of Olivier Debré & Henri Cueco).
- 1980 • SERMAC, founding member of the GEP Totem, Martinique.