



Eroticism and Creolity

by Frédéric-Charles Baitinger

“The phenomena of creolization are important phenomena because they allow us to practice a new spiritual dimension of the humanities. Yet, creolization assumes that the cultural elements brought together must necessarily be of “equal value” for this creolization to actually occur.” Edouard Glissant



Miguel Marajo 2012. Series “Calimpsus” 20*28 cm, oil on canvas.



Miguel Marajo 2012. Series "Calimpsus" 46*55 cm, oil on canvas.



Miguel Marajo by Michel Lunardelli.

Born to a father of Brazilian origin (hence his name, Marajo), and a French mother (great-granddaughter of Antonia Lumière, sister of Auguste and Louis, the “Lumière Brothers”), Marajo lived most of his childhood in Fort-de-France, Martinique, where he began his life as a painter. Frequenting the Caribbean intellectual milieu, he attended, at barely twenty years old, the first conferences of Edouard Glissant, and knew and worked with Aimé Césaire and some of his children in numerous cultural events, notably in the Sermac (then directed by Jean-Paul Césaire) where he was co-founder of Totem. He was also a student of Olivier Debré and Henri Cueco during his training at the Beaux-Arts in Paris. Commenting, retrospectively, on the evolution of his work, Marajo says: *“I am of a generation whose aim has been to overcome ‘negritude,’ to make cultural diversity an asset. My pictorial production can only be understood as a reaction to these issues—it is these questions themselves that gave my work the dynamics implicit in its style, — rather than, as some may think, an attempt to answer these questions.”*

Without claiming to give a comprehensive overview of the work of this painter of Creolity— who has now cumulated more than twenty years of production— I will, in the short space of this text, highlight at least three aspects.

The first, which I would place under the idea of a “search for self”, certainly applies to Marajo’s series of Afro-Cubist portraits that invite us to visually reflect on how it is possible to exceed, artistically, the idea of “negritude”— understood as an affirmation of black racial identity (Senghor)— in favor of a more open vision of the concept of identity (Glissant). For it is clear that despite the idiosyncratic features that these portraits contain, they nonetheless seek, at the same time, to hold together, in multiple complex layouts, the cultures and energies that oppose each other, or at least, are very difficult to form into a unified whole.



Miguel Marajo 2011. Series “Nanadiplose”
41,5*29,5 cm, acrylic on canvas.



Miguel Marajo 2011. Series "Nanadiplose"
73*100 cm & 47*55,5 cm, acrylic on canvas.

“My painting is about the paradox of trying to accept all the cultures that I am composed of, without ever trying to forge a single entity. If I had to condense my research into a formula, I would say that I try to see things in multiple ways. This is why, incidentally, my paintings are always moving. They are an attempt to bring into play, in the vacillation of the materials, the idea of a movable joint, a sensual play with color. I would like my paintings to convey the idea that, despite that which limits our identities, there is the presence, in each of us, of an anonymous and underlying life that moves in the depths and that seeks to manifest itself.”

The series of works entitled *Nanadiplose* seems to touch upon this “anonymous life” that Marajo speaks of, this recumbent life residing beneath the masks of our identities.

Superimposing the presence of the female sex (the “dark continent” as Freud called it) onto the vestiges of the masks of his first aesthetic period, it is thus no longer only the representation of his pluralized identity that Marajo confronts us with, but something like an erotic experience of merging bodies whose union as lovers coincides with the pure and simple vanishing of their individual identities.



Miguel Marajo 2011. Series “Nanadiplose”
73*100 cm, acrylic on canvas.

Miguel Marajo 2011.
Series
"Petits Arrangements"
76*57 cm,
acrylic on paper.



Indirectly echoing his pictorial reflection on the possibility of a Creole identity, the *Nanadiplose* series (whose name, incidentally, echoes the figure of speech anadiplosis, that consists of repeating the last word of a sentence at the beginning of the next sentence) brings to light a kind of sidelong solution—no longer the idea of a peaceful and harmonious coexistence of diverse elements which converge in the center, but rather the will to abolish the limits of all identity.

That is why, despite the “success” of this series, it is with the most recent series of *Petits Arrangements* (*Small Arrangements*) that Marajo’s work will be able to reach its fully matured critical sense, since it is in this series, featuring figures who are integrated into the world around them, that the idea of an open identity, an identity whose essence is based on the notion of relationship (not on the abolition of the principle of identity), is embodied with more depth.

Miguel Marajo 2012. Series “Petits Arrangements”
24*32 cm, acrylic on paper.





Miguel Marajo 2012. Series "Petits Arrangements"
32*24 cm, acrylic on paper.

Much like what the poet Edouard Glissant calls a *process of creolization*, what Marajo suggests here is that the problem of identity, the moment it is seen in terms of a meeting of cultures, can only be resolved (outside the erotic encounter of bodies) in the form of a poetic of relation, an implementation of the All-World.

It is precisely to this practice, to this sensitive site of the All-World in which man is the environment and vice versa, that the latest series of paintings introduces us.



Miguel Marajo 2012. Series "Petits Arrangements"
32*24 cm, acrylic on paper.

"I had fun creating, in such a gestural manner, the fusions of colors. I wanted my figures to be made in the paint material itself, and that within this porosity between the figure, its limits, and the material that composes it, is born a feeling that takes the middle ground between anguish and fascination. Because if my characters wear gas masks, if they try to isolate themselves, it remains that no matter what they do, the color that surrounds them always finds a way to invade them, to come and overwhelm their insularity. To be in the paint up to the neck. To see it permeate the eyes. That's what I tried to do."

Frédéric-Charles Baitinger
Translation :
Cassandra Katsiaficas



Marajo

*“Relation, driving humanities
chaotically onward, needs words
to publish itself, to continue.
But because what it relates, in reality,
proceeds from no absolute,
it proves to be the totality of relatives,
put in touch and told.”*

Edouard Glissant,

Poetics of Relation, Translated by Betsy Wing
The University of Michigan Press
Gallimard, 1990.

Miguel Marajo 2012.
30*40 cm,
acrylic on paper.

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Cover: Miguel Marajo 2011. Series “Nanadiplose”
41,5x29,5 cm, acrylic on canvas.