

FRAGILE BALANCE

"I just realized that I was standing on the same spot 8 years ago, but then to open this gallery. It seems normal that I can still stand here after eight years, but it is not. African art may be on the rise internationally, in the Netherlands it makes more sense to talk about a faltering escalator. It does not really work out here, mainly because the big museums in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, but also Utrecht, they fail. They should give the stimulating push, but they are still stuck in the Western canon.

I was particularly curious about this exhibition, because it is put together by an artist, **Myriam Mihindou**.

I am convinced that the sensitivity and creativity of an artist leads to other, more surprising and more individual and unusual choices. Besides that, Myriam Mihindou will not be guided by commercial motives. For a long time she did not even want to sell her own work, I have read somewhere.

The title of the exhibition is **Fragile Balance**. This probably refers to the delicate themes that the artists present in their work.

The 2 big themes seem to be engagement and identity. The vulnerability is lurking in both themes.

Many people are addicted to their own desires. They are guided, or better, manipulated by the media, especially the technological media. These media make vulnerable, because they do damage the identity of people. They redeem originality for imitation. To put it in other words: These people buy their identity from others. **Van Andrea + Boris Anje Tabufor** deal with this issue in their work and they do so in the figurative language of the mass media.

Identity is also the main theme of the work of a number of other artists. However, their work has a different origin.

Pelagie Gbaguidi tries to get rid of a colonial past by deconstructing stereotypes and stripping the history from prejudices and lies. She is looking for an honest identity in a different society. **Miguel Marajo** promotes cultural diversity, because he is convinced that pure identity does not exist. The diversity seems to materialize in his style: a mixture of abstraction, figuration and surrealism. **Alex Mawimbi** engages herself in her works on paper with ethnographic objects, in order to illustrate her hybrid identity.

Kahambo Kitenge Patsheli shows his commitment, his engagement, by turning against armed conflicts and against the rulers and dictators who cause them. He does so in a clear, recognizable, Pop-Art-like style. He wants to be sure that his message gets across.

Because of the way most of us live, as if we are masters of the universe, we make the natural environment vulnerable. It must be protected. It needs a talisman to survive. **Myriam Mihindou + Hervé Yanguem** make this problem subject of the work they show in this exhibition.

Mihindou does so in abstracted, more conceptual images, Hervé in surrealistic, figurative images.

Ori Huchi Kozia is more difficult to fit in . In his video, in fact a filmed performance, he gives a new version of a historical figure. By doing that, he distances himself from the past and confronts and challenges the population of Brazzaville with this adaptation. He makes himself vulnerable because he undermines the normality of daily life. For this video he has just won a prize.

Fragile Balance is a varied exhibition that encourages reflection about actual and important themes. It is also an exhibition with artists who are not, or not very well known in the Netherlands, but who certainly deserve that reputation.

I would like to congratulate Myriam on this exhibition. I hope you will act as a curator more often. I thank the artists for the satisfaction and surprise that their work gave to me.”

Rob Perrée

November 2017.