



EXHIBITION – SEPTEMBER 1st, 2019 to NOVEMBER 30th, 2019

PRESS SHEETS

THIEMOKO CLAUDE DIARRA

(MALI / BELGIUM, 1974)

Born in Mali in 1974, Diarra lived between Bamako, Brussels and Dakar. His father is a *Bamana* sculptor and his mother was a nurse from Belgium. Thiémoko Claude Diarra sits right at the crossroad of these two cultures, between the sacred art of his ancestors and the heritage of those who advanced Western medical science through the centuries.

His most recent expansive project, *Anatopia*, is an absurd scientific analysis which brings new life into classical African art. Far from the usual vectors of anthropological, social or cultural studies of traditional African art, *Anatopia* looks at this immense heritage from an artistic point of view. By surgically dissecting Malian, but also Congolese or Ivorian statues, the artist aims to create an infinite cabinet of curiosities which challenges viewers to think and re-think their understanding of (African) art, like a mirror distorting reality so we may better grasp its reflection.

Diarra's sculptures, drawings, painted photographs and installations are like a mad cocktail of impressions blended from the improbable encounter between a *Baoulé* beauty, Andreas Vesalius (1514-1564), an anonymous Belgian colonizer and Berlinde de Bruyckere (1964), whose work the artist admires. A protégé of *surrealist* artist Jean-Michel Folon (1934-2005), Diarra also worked in fashion and started his career by painting tales in miniature on watches and on canvas.

Through an ensemble of artistic series like *Bastards*, *Cultural Shock*, *Comparative Animism*, *Lost Power Relics* and *Vesalius's Dream*, *Anatopia* appears to be the long-awaited final bridge between classic and contemporary African art. On this bridge, like an explosive modern Nganga (spiritual healer), Thiémoko Claude Diarra creates his visions of Europe and Africa, their past and the future they hold for each other.



VESALIUS'S DREAM 02 (2018), INK AND PENCIL ON PAPER, 50 x 70 cm

THIEMOKO CLAUDE DIARRA - ANATOPIA

Anatopia is an exploration universe created by Thiemoko Claude Diarra to investigate his own identity, that of his surroundings and that of his heritage, so as to reinterpret them artistically into new living forms and forces. A direct reference to the sublime and ground-breaking *Anatomy* illustrations of the XVIth century Flemish anatomist and physician Andreas Vesalius (1514-1564), as well as to the artist's own *Utopia* where the best of all worlds combines into hybrids and bastards of a new age, announcing the coming of a modern global animism, *Anatopia* is a modern Cabinet of Curiosities.

Working and operating at the crossroads between his Malian father's almost-sacred vocation as a sculptor, and the rather-rational upbringing of his Belgian mother who would delve into anatomical books while studying to become a nurse, Diarra perfectly embodies this dichotomy. In his own words, he was born of these differences, of the love that attracts opposites, forcing them to collide and generate new forms, both in life and in art. With *Anatopia* as a long-term project, the artist has truly come of age. Declined into several series in different media, the last two years have seen Diarra's work throw bridges between Classic and Contemporary African Art, but also between the North and the South, between Animism and Christianity, even between Life and Death.

His indestructible bridges bear different names. The [Bastards](#) series is a provocative dissection of traditional African sculpture where the patients come out transformed, sometimes handicapped, sometimes evolved, but never the same. Diarra uses the word "bastard" in its adjective meaning, describing a person (or a thing) no longer in its pure or original form; debased. His creations are indeed new forms, testifying of the impact of colonization on indigenous African cultures that were often stripped of their beliefs and ceremonial objects which were burnt or thrown into lakes by the incoming cultures. But the works also question the effects of contemporary immigration on European cultures.

Yet animism survived the *Culture Shock* (which is the title of another series of mixed media sculptures) and the artist celebrates it by using a panel of artistic tools that symbolize this painful survival.

In [Culture Shock 04](#), he takes a *Punu* mask and cuts it in half with a chainsaw, he then burns another half of a *Baoulé* mask and on the inside of those, he paints a vivid and organic mass of fluids with oil paint, plastic waste and organic matter. It almost seems like these two halves are about to merge into a new being, drawn together by the blood of life. This complex artistic process bears similarities with some functions of the traditional *Nganga* (the spiritual healer in *Kikongo*), who often charged *Nkisi* (Power Figures) with spiritual forces. In his own way, Diarra heals the spirits of his ancestors by trying to create a new world, at peace with the past, because it acknowledges and remembers that past.

The *Lost Power Relics* series is a new ensemble of mixed media works which further study the artistic heritage of Christianity and other religions within traditional African contexts. We are proud to present six of these more recent works.

[Lost Power Relics 01](#) is the negative shape of a *Bamoun* statuette, which is printed into a terracotta mold and reminds us of the image of Christ printed onto the *Shroud of Turin*, thus questioning the sacrality and soul of objects. The [second relic](#) is a anonymous African statuette which the artist surgically bandaged. Through the bandages, a stain of dried blood transpires from the face. This blood

is the made of oil paint, which is symbolic of the blood of the artist, who once again merges African and Western iconographies to generate new symbols and ideas.

The third work in this series was finished only a few days ago and instantly dubbed [Saint Sebastian of Gabon](#). This almost-sweating *Fang* statue seems to be drained of its ritual fluids by the arrows of science, which the artist made out of test tubes. But instead of being a mere representation of the rule of reason over belief, the work becomes a new being, an authentic modern spirit, one of these bastards which Diarra needs to give birth to so as to remind himself that one plus one always equals more than two. *Lost Power Relics 04, 05 and 06* are also fresh out of the hybridization incubator.

The exhibition also features works from the [Comparative Animism](#) series and from the [Vesalius's Dream](#) series.

The former is made of real animal bones which are integrated in typical XVIIth century drawings made for comparative anatomy, the study of similarities and differences in the anatomy of different species that became so important for evolutionary theories and modern biology. Theories which in their beginnings also lead to race science and racism. Here, Diarra circumvents this heavily charged subject by ironically suggesting associations between found animal bones and famous details of African artefacts associated with animism. The second series is made of larger and more elaborate drawings in ink and pencil, borrowing from the style made famous by Vesalius in his anatomical illustration of the *Fabrica* (1543), which he published at the young age of 29. As a homage to the father of Modern Anatomy, Diarra imagined the physician's dreams about the dissections of the African statuary, in search of its Life and Soul.

On top of these 5 series mentioned above, *Anatopia* is also declined in singular pieces that are more intricately linked to Belgium, like [Antwerpen](#) or *Manneken Piss Gang*.

The first work is made of a broken arm of a statue that seems to have been thorn off its body. Not an uncommon sight if one was walking in the Antwerp harbour during colonial time, when the port was a transit hub for so many statues and other artefacts from Africa into Europe and beyond. Perhaps unwillingly, *Antwerpen* also reminds us of another tragic journey, that of some contemporary African migrants who try to cross the Mediterranean but never make it.

[Manneken Piss Gang](#) is made of three heads transplanted on the statue of *Manneken Piss*, a famous fountain in the centre of Brussels, the work becoming a testimony to our contemporary hybrid society, to our evolving Western culture in which Africa is increasingly present - a cultural biodiversity which is also paramount in the work of other Belgian artists like Koen van Mechelen (1965). Although they never met, [Ornitopia](#) is a formal illustration of what binds Diarra and van Mechelen in their work. Yet the former's artistic process bears more essential similarities with that of Berlinde de Bruyckere (1964), who he claims is a never-ending inspiration.

Beyond all comparisons, Thiemoko Claude Diarra's *Anatopia* clearly stands out as a carnal call for unity in all our diversities. His slow-building Cabinet of Curiosities, like Noah's Ark before it, welcomes witch doctors and medieval physicians, ancestors and prophets, body and soul, the part and the whole, in all its energies and mystics, to bring us together and build a new world, truly universal.

Klaus Pas

September 2019



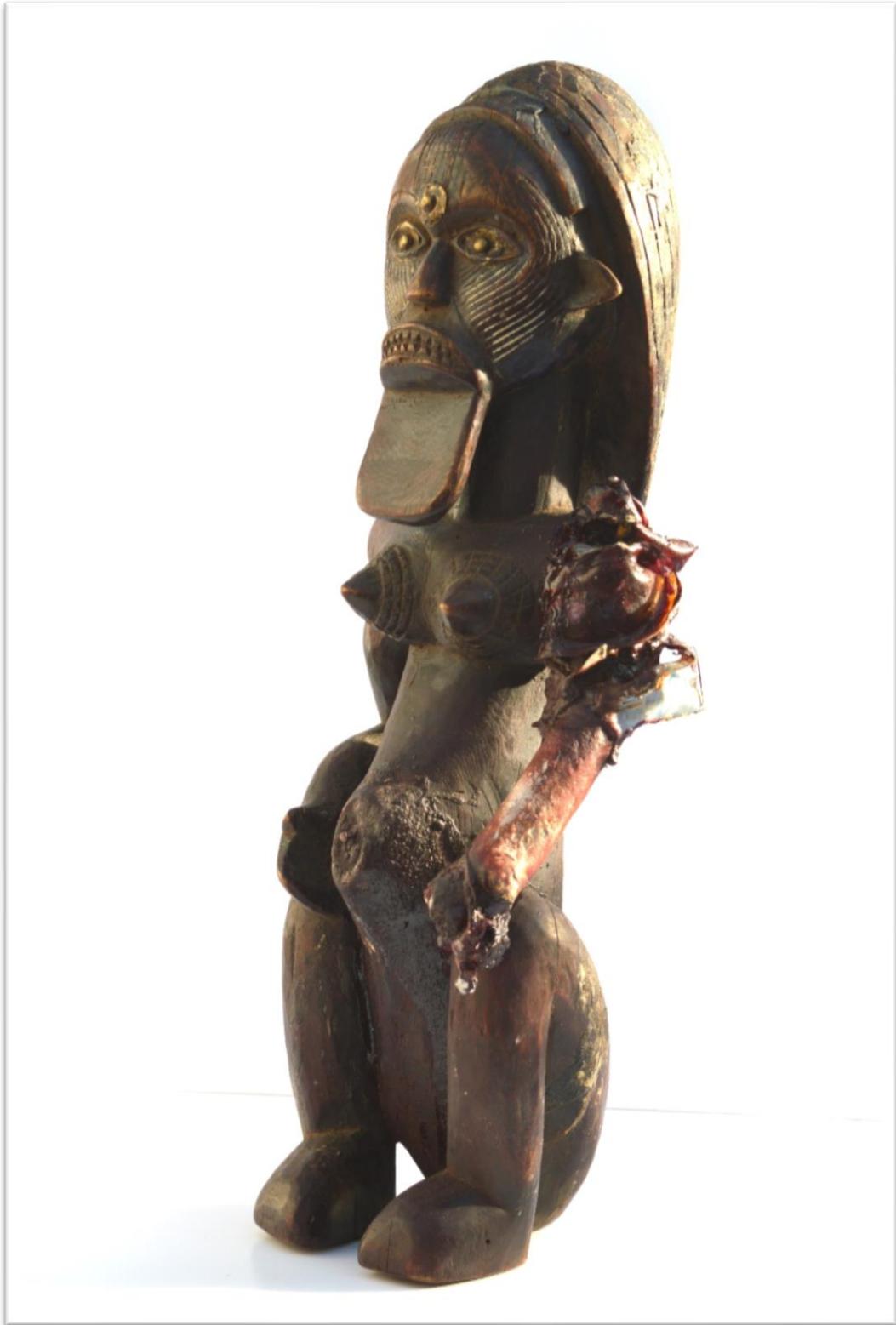
ORNITOPIA 01 - 2019 - 32 X 15 cm - PAINTED WOOD AND IRON



VESALIUS'S DREAM 01 - 2018 - 50 X 70 cm - INK AND PENCIL ON PAPER



BASTARDS 05 - 2019 - 31 X 14cm - LACQUERED BONES AND WOOD



BASTARDS 01 - 2017 - 56 X 19cm - OIL PAINT, PLASTICS AND GLASS ON WOOD

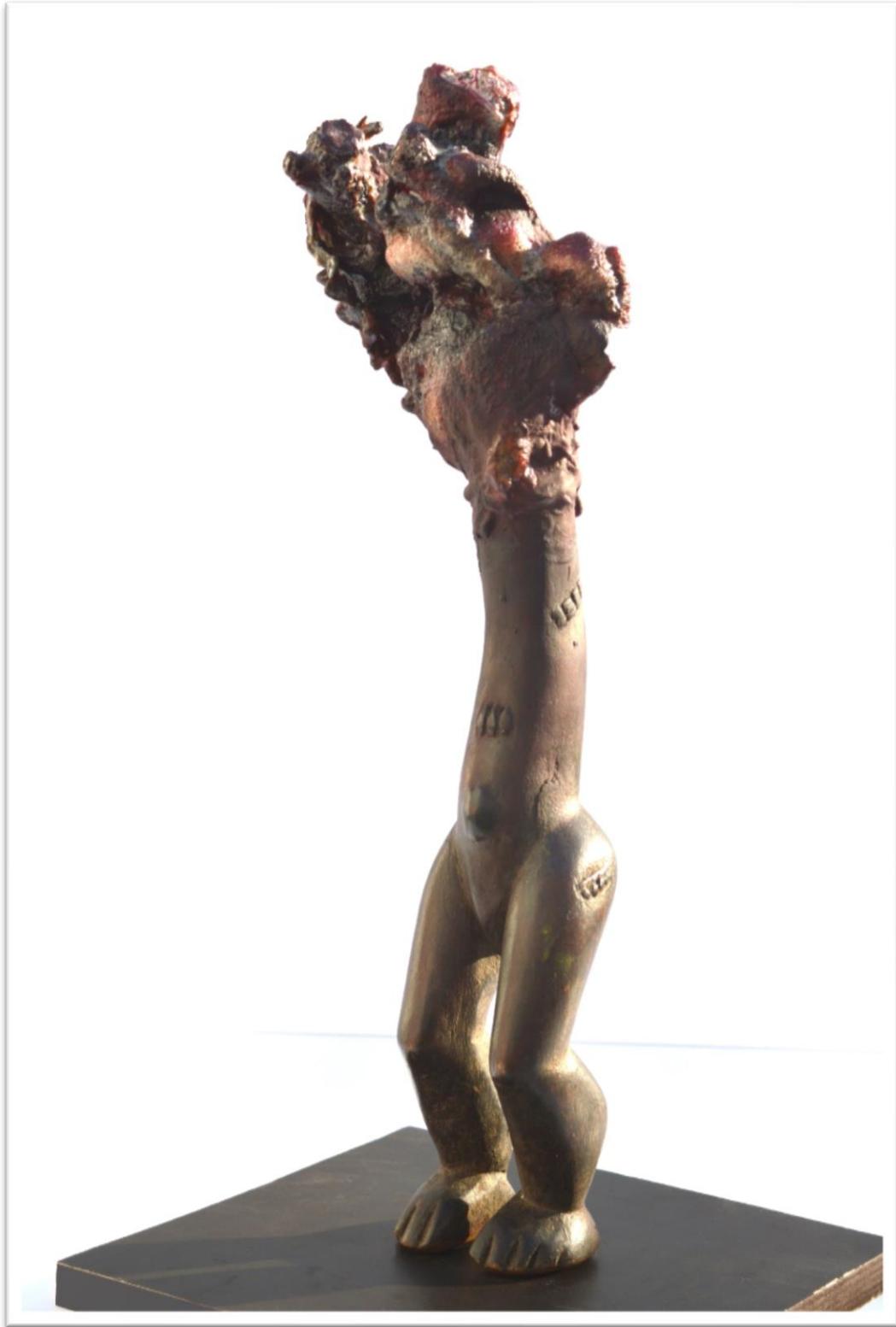


ANTWERPEN - 2018 - 22 X 43cm - OIL PAINT AND PLASTICS ON WOOD

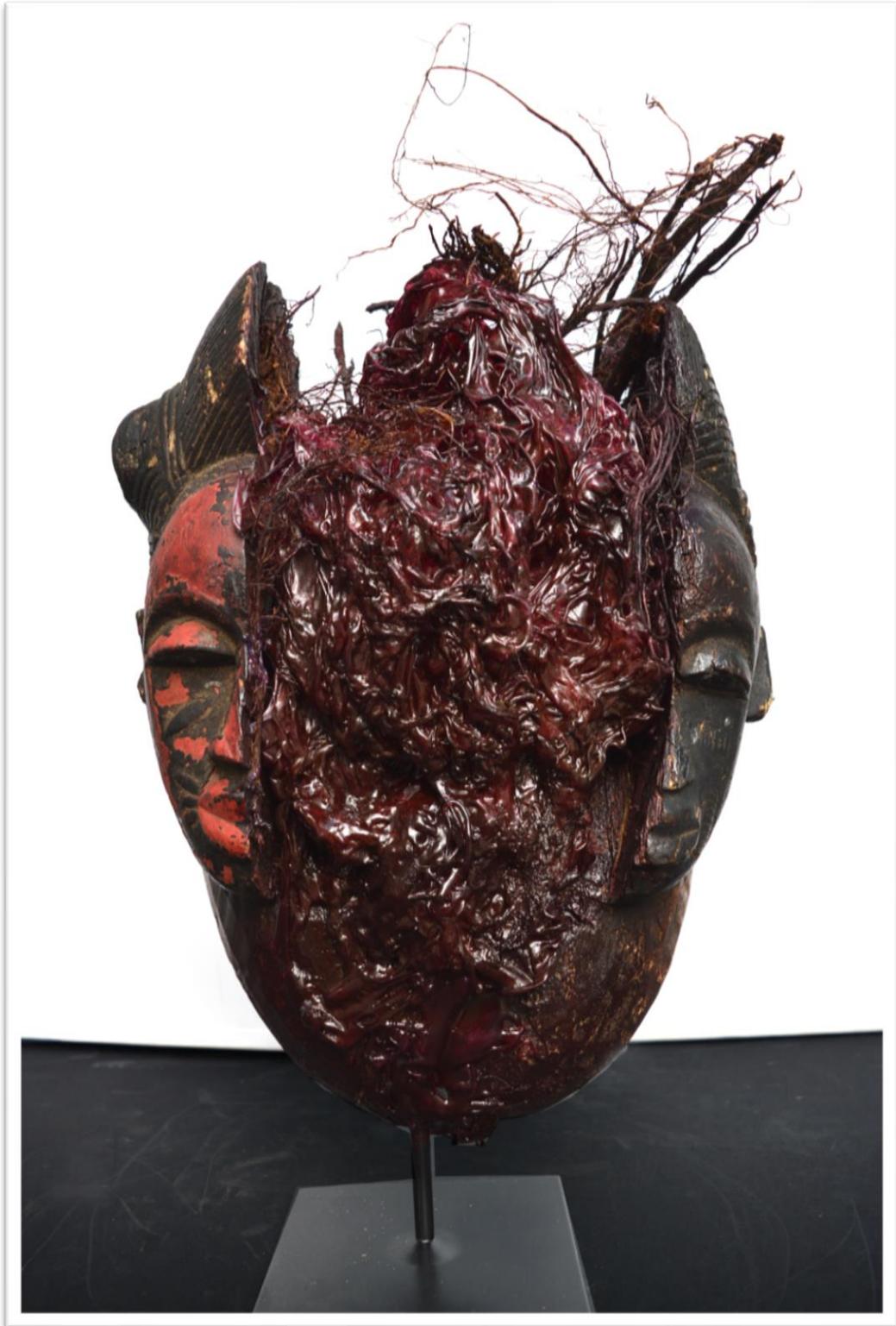




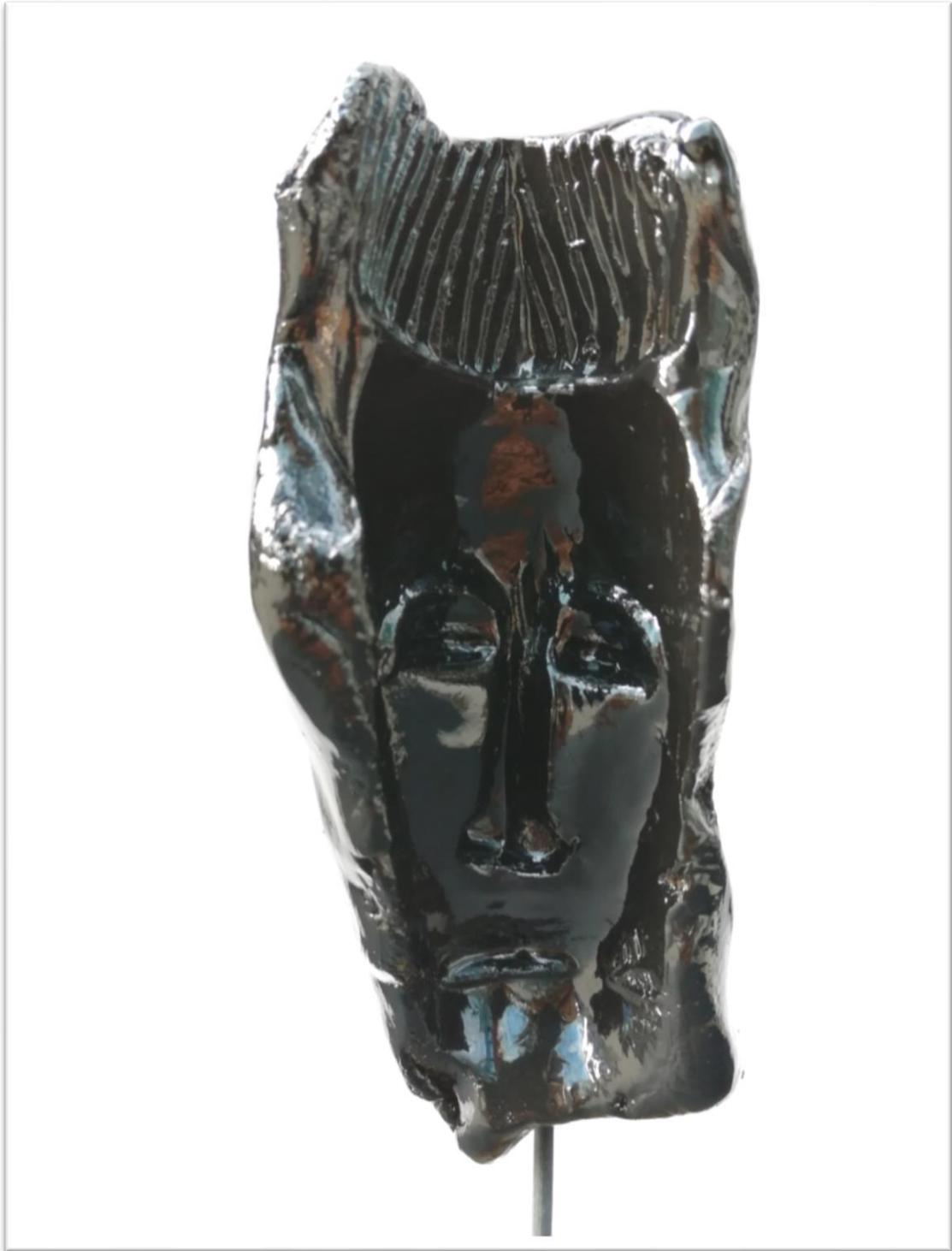
VESALIUS'S DREAM 02 - 2018 - 50 X 70cm - INK AND PENCIL ON PAPER



BASTARDS 02 - 2018 - 48 X 24cm - OIL PAINT AND PLASTICS ON WOOD



CULTURE SHOCK 01 - 2018 - 44 X 25cm - OIL PAINT, BRANCHES, PLASTICS ON WOOD



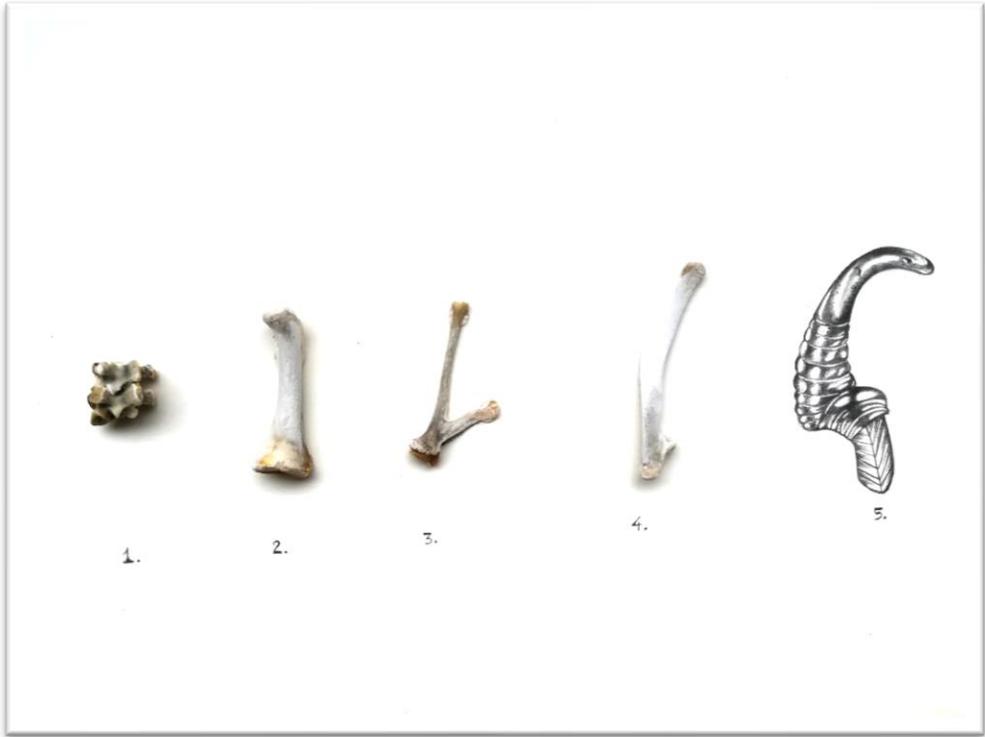
LOST POWER RELICS 01 - 2019 - 27 X 6cm - LACQUERED TERRACOTTA



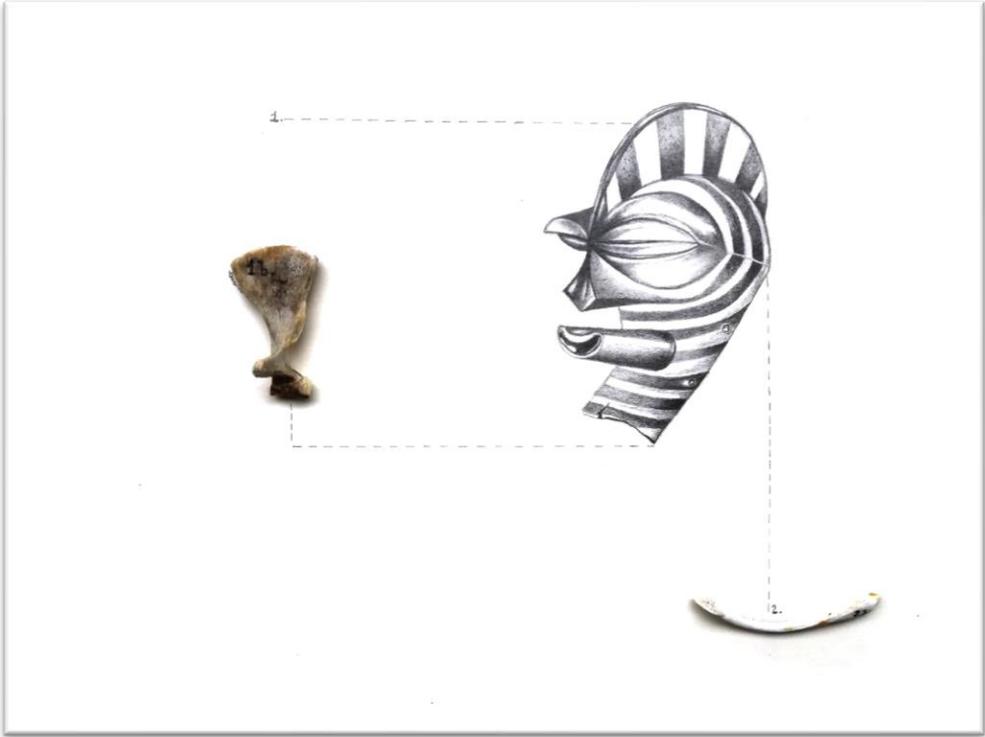
BASTARDS 04 – 2019 - 45 X 14cm – OIL PAINT AND PLASTICS ON WOOD, UNDER GLASS DOME



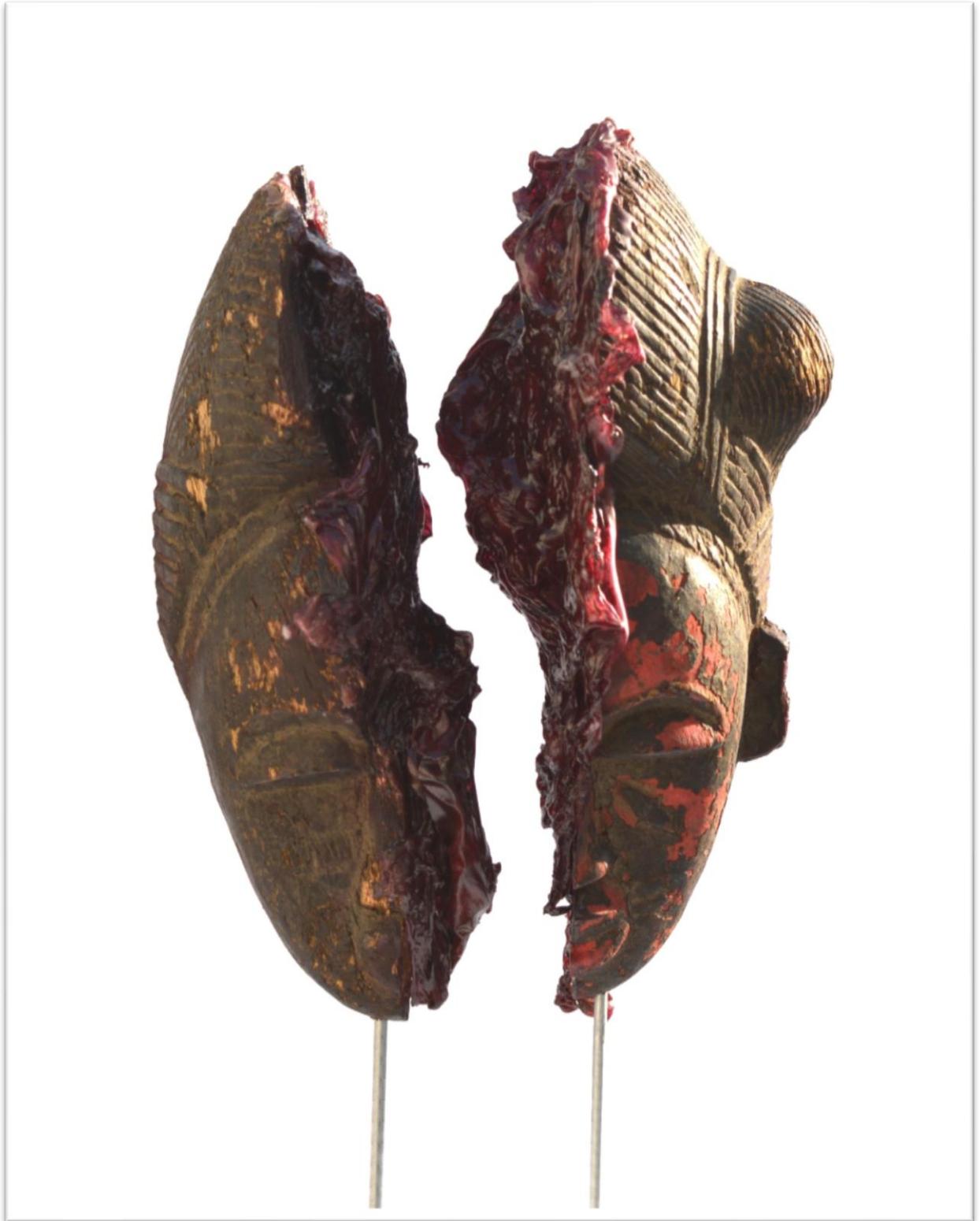
CULTURE SHOCK 02 - 2018 - 45 X 30cm - OIL PAINT AND PLASTICS ON WOOD



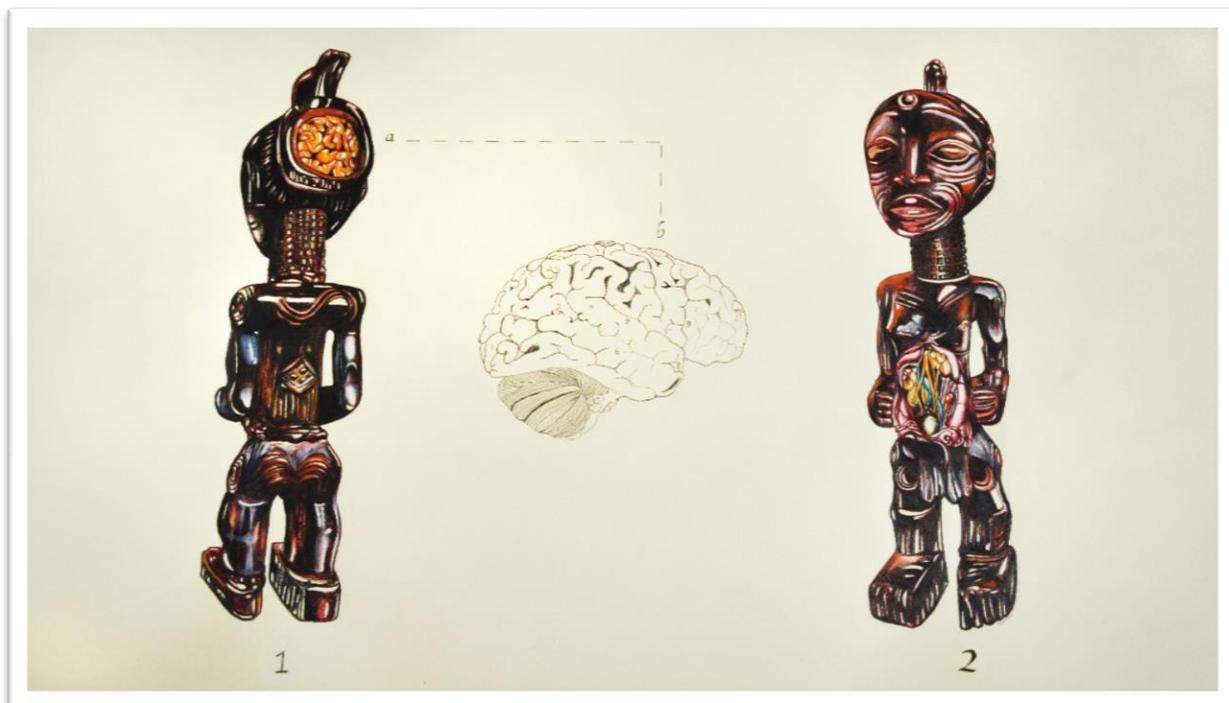
COMPARATIVE ANIMISM 01 - 2018 - 21 x 30 cm - BONES, INK AND PENCIL ON PAPER



COMPARATIVE ANIMISM 02 - 2018 - 21 x 30 cm - BONES, INK AND PENCIL ON PAPER



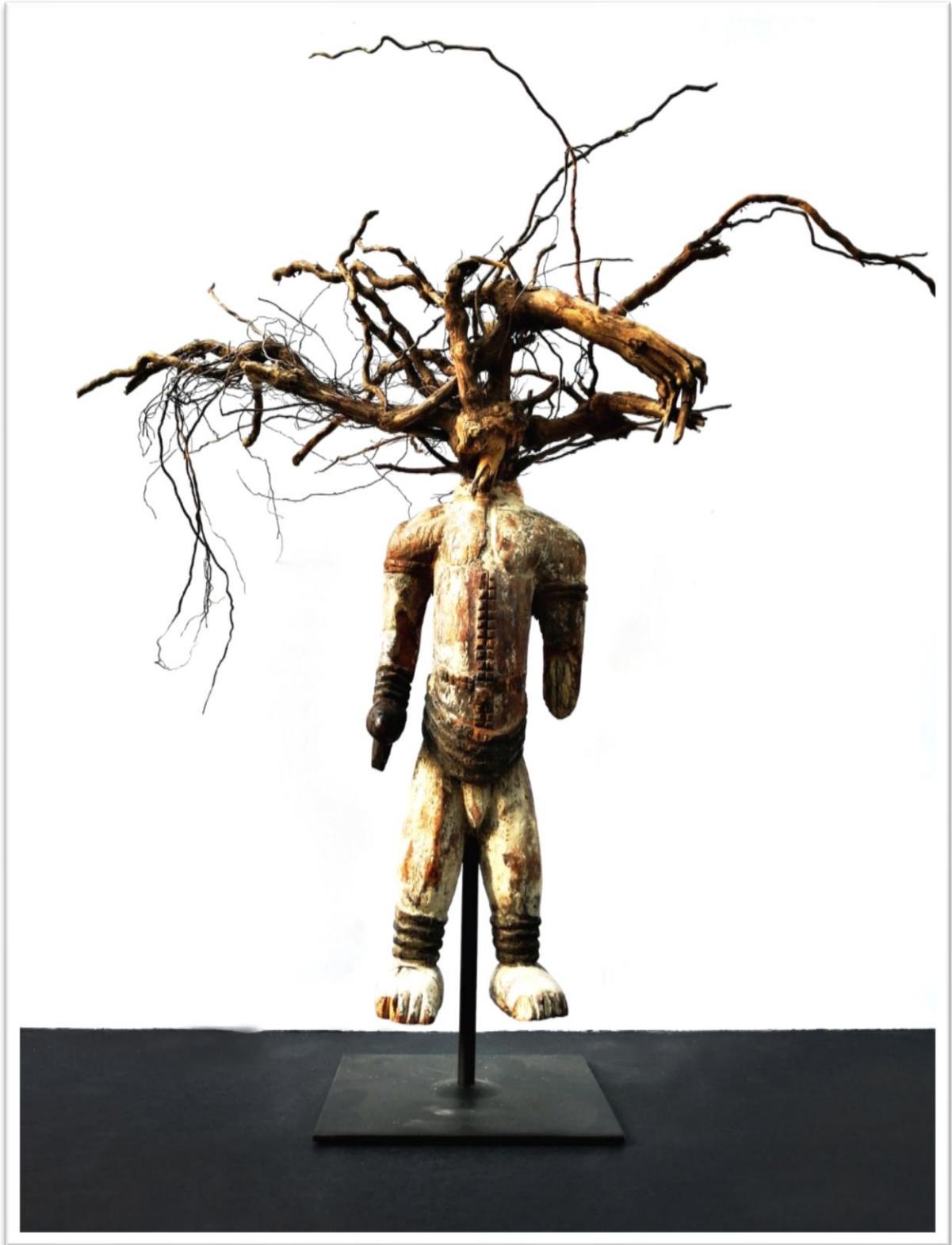
CULTURE SHOCK 04 - 2018 - 35 X 21 cm - OIL PAINT, BRANCHES, PLASTICS ON WOOD



VESALIUS'S DREAM 03 - 2018 - 50 X 70 cm - INK AND PENCIL ON PAPER



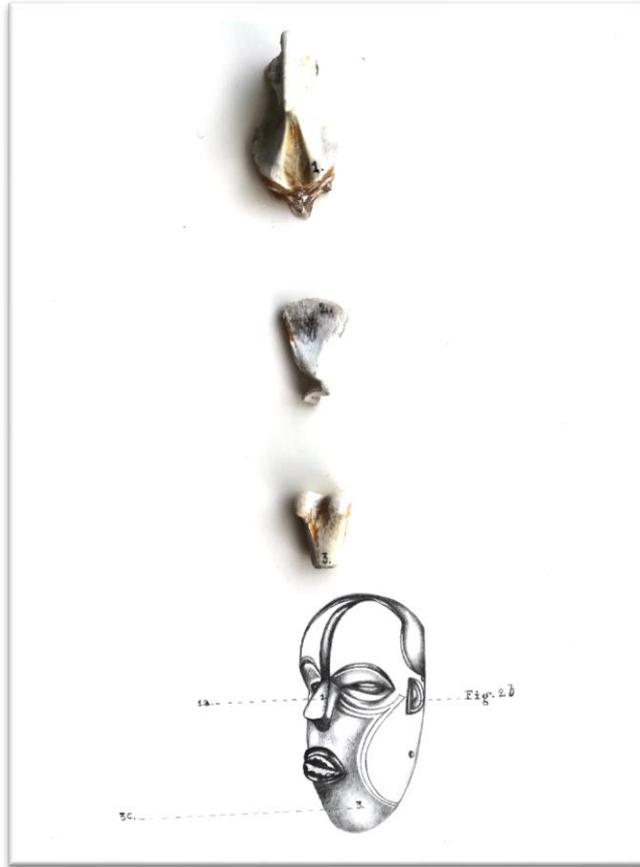
VESALIUS'S DREAM 04 - 2018 - 50 X 70 cm - INK AND PENCIL ON PAPER



BASTARDS 03 - 2018 - 49 X 44 cm - OIL PAINT, BRANCHES, PLASTICS ON WOOD



LOST POWER RELIGS 02 - 2019 - 37 X 11 cm - OIL PAINT AND BANDAGES ON WOOD



COMPARATIVE ANIMISM 03 - 2018 - 21 X 30 cm - BONES, INK AND PENCIL ON PAPER



COMPARATIVE ANIMISM 04 - 2018 - 21 X 30 cm - BONES, INK AND PENCIL ON PAPER



CULTURE SHOCK 03 - 2018 - 68 X 32 cm - OIL PAINT, BRANCHES, PLASTICS ON WOOD

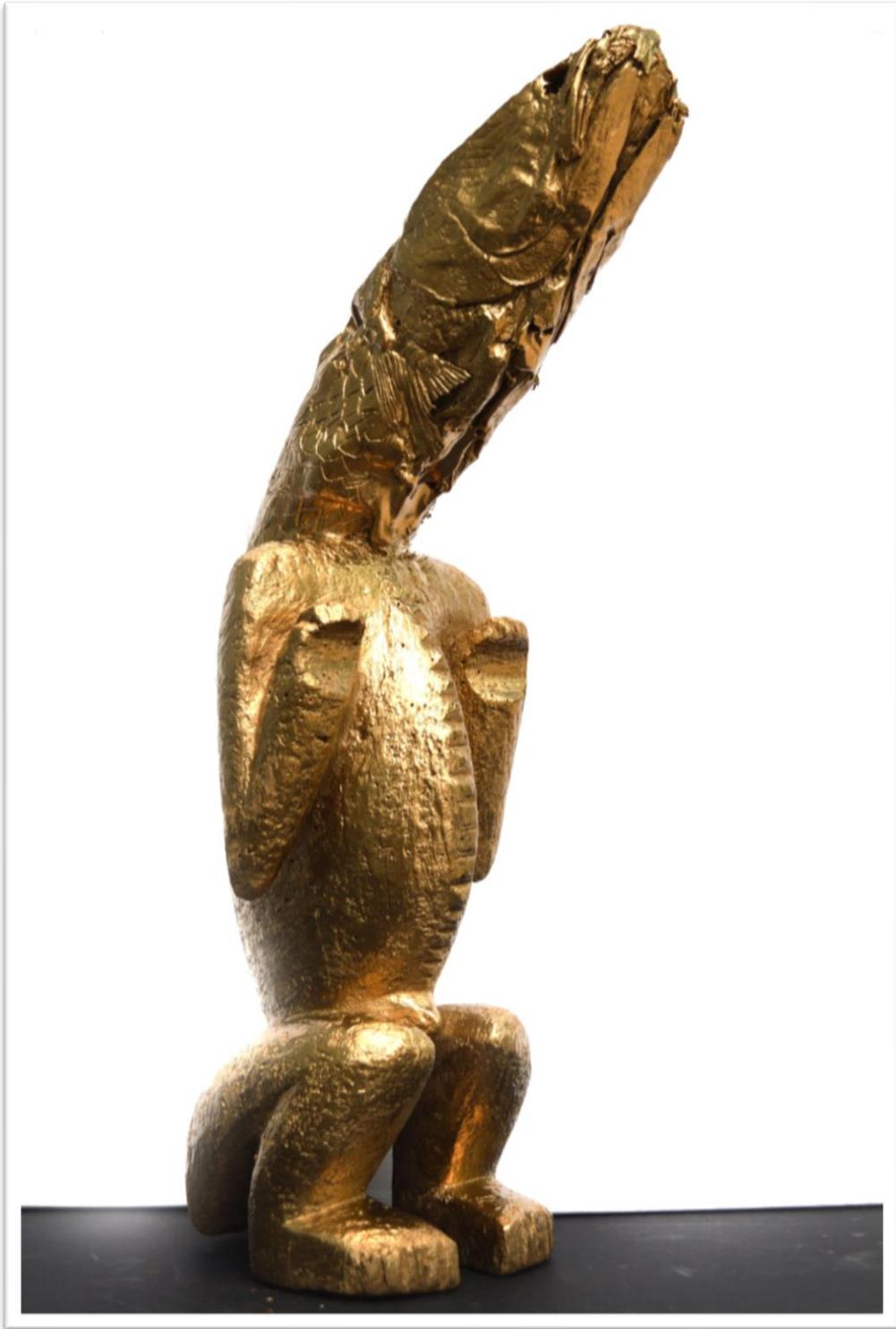


MANNEKEN PIS GANG - 2019 - 60 X 30 cm - POLYMER AND WOOD FOUNTAINS



LOST POWER RELIC 04 – 2019 – 45 X 14 cm – PORCELAIN, PICTURE AND WOOD UNDER GLASS DOME

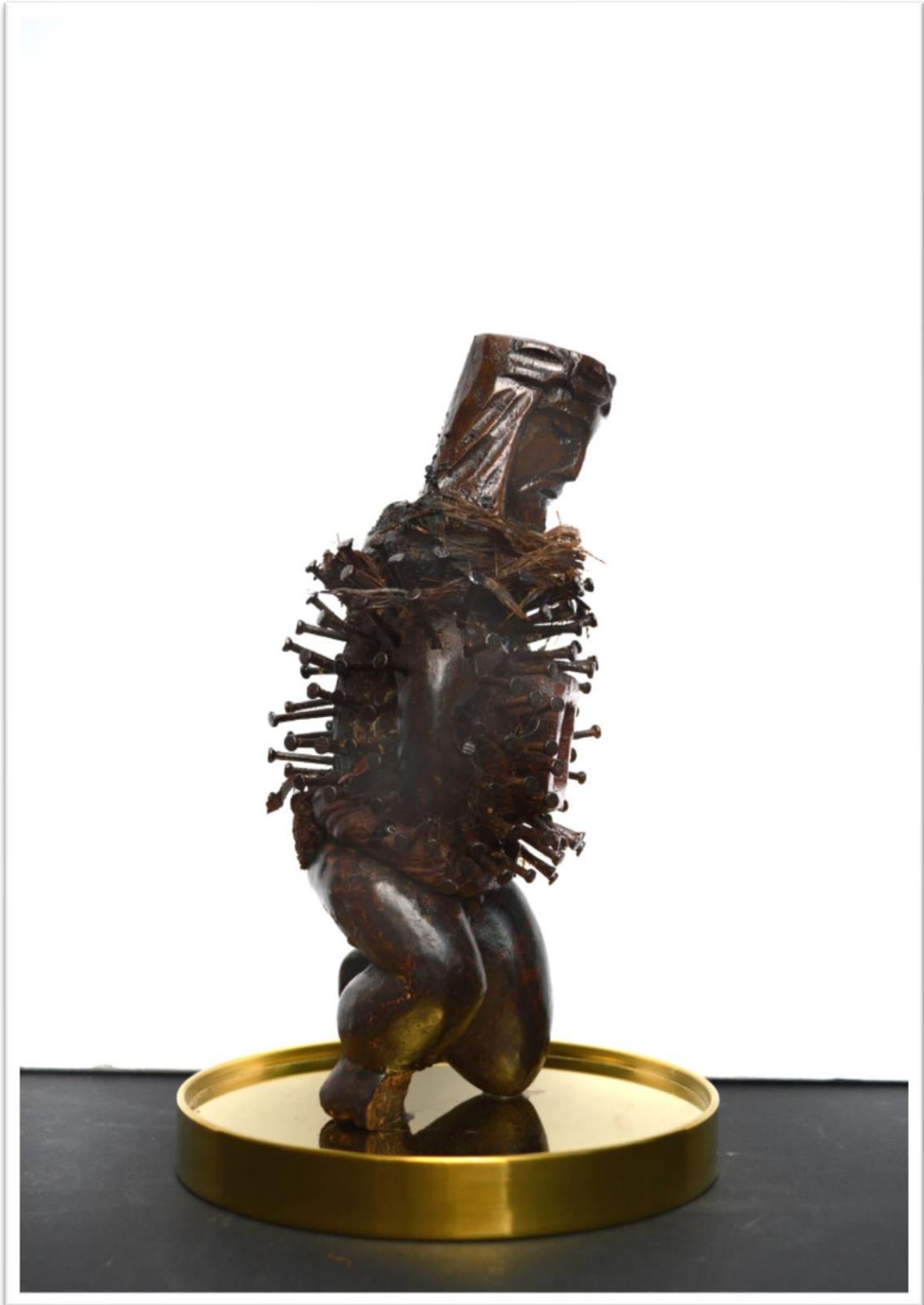




BASTARDS 06 - 2019 - 57 X 30 cm - TAXIDERMIA, WOOD AND ACRYLIC



LOST POWER RELICS 05 - 2019 - 87 X 14 cm - POLYMER AND WOOD



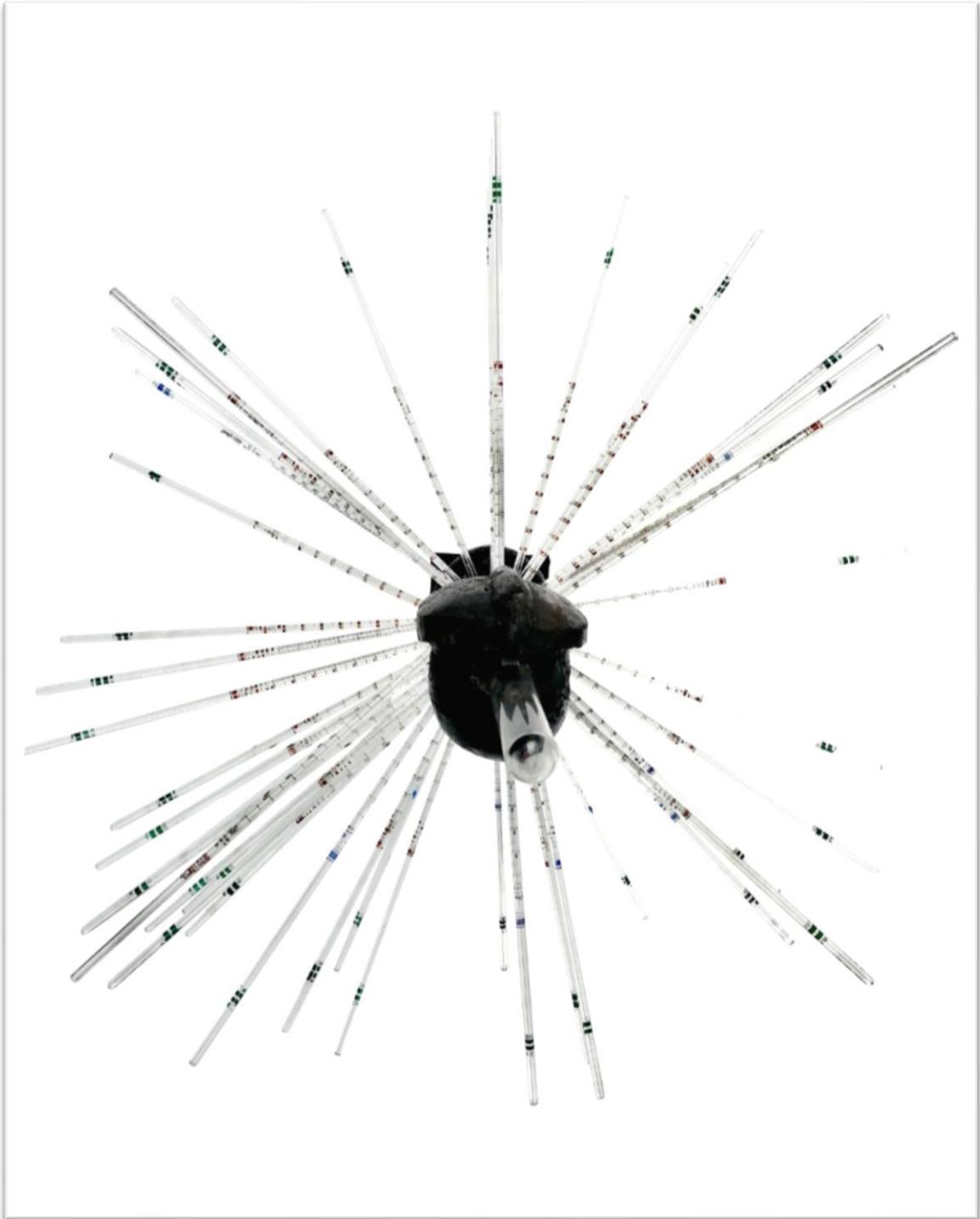
LOST POWER RELICS 06 - 2019 - 28 X 12 cm - NAILS, ROPE AND WOOD



LOST POWER RELICS 03 "SAINT SEBASTIEN DU GABON" - 2019 - 59 cm and 73 cm diameter

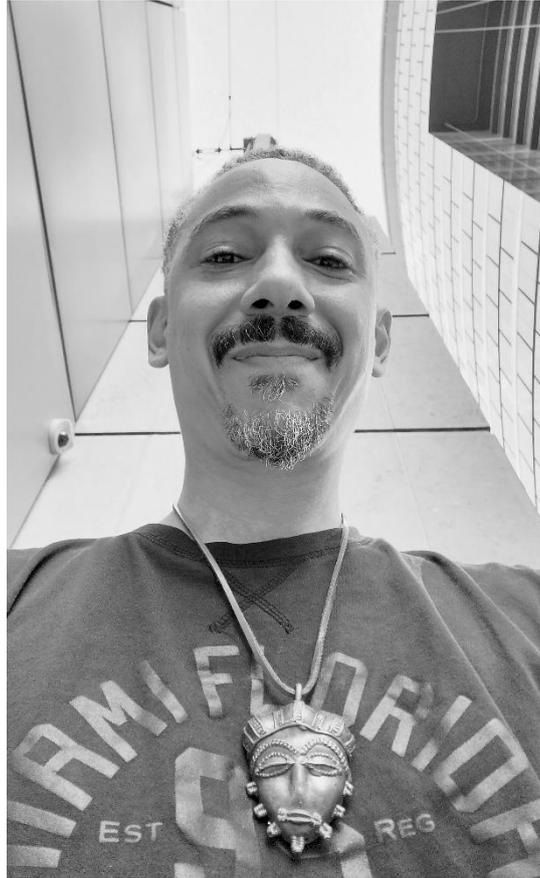
TEST TUBES AND WOOD

NEXT PAGE: TOP VIEW



TO THE EXHIBITION

ASK FOR PRICE LIST



Master in Graphic Design at École de Recherche Graphique of Brussels (E.R.G.), Belgium
Training in reverse glass painting (known as *suwere* or *verre eglomise*) in Dakar, Senegal

Selected Exhibitions & Collections

Solo exhibitions (selection)

- 2019 Kloser Contemporary Art, Online
- 2018 Cécile Kerner Gallery, Brussels, Belgium
- 2017 Cécile Kerner Gallery, Brussels, Belgium
- 2016 “*Dolce Vita*” in situ Fresco at the Paris Match Summer Night, Belgium

- 2014 Mural Painting "*The Coronation of Aeolus*", Brussels, Belgium
- 2014 "*Way to Happiness*" at Parfum d'Ambre Le Châtelain, Brussels, Belgium
- 2014 Espace 27 Septembre, Molenbeek Art Tour, Brussels, Belgium
- 2013 "*Art is a Gift*" at Maria-Clara Art Point Gallery, Brussels, Belgium
- 2013 "*The Disjointed Tales*" at Molenbeek Centre Communautaire Maritime, Brussels, Belgium
- 2012 "*Half-Closed*" at Maison des Cultures de Molenbeek, Brussels, Belgium
- 2010 Tag Gallery, Brussels, Belgium
- 2010 « *Millenium Development Goals* » at Centre International pour la Ville, l'Architecture et le Paysage – and at Théâtre Molière, Brussels, Belgium

Group exhibitions (short selection)

- 2019 « *Polarité* » with Soly Cissé, Dimitri Fagbohun and Dati Bendo at the Boondael Chapel, Brussels, BE
- 2014 « *Showcasing in Belgium* » at the Belgian Embassy in L.A., USA
- 2011 "*Stripping*" at Dérapages Gallery, Brussels, Belgium
- 2009 « *L'Un vers l'Autre* » with Aimé Mpane at the Cultural Center of Ottignies, Belgium

Awards & Collections

- 2010 Prix des Commerçants de Saint-Gilles, Parcours des Artistes, Brussels, Belgium
- Works in the Collection of the Molenbeek Museum, Brussels, Belgium

Press & Other Media

http://www.parcours1080.be/fr/artistes/Diarra_Thiemoko/2162/

http://www.lamaison1080hethuis.be/fr/agenda/83/Thiemoko_Diarra/

[https://vimeo.com/search?q=thiemoko diarra](https://vimeo.com/search?q=thiemoko+diarra)

<https://youtu.be/4ZIA7j9bIY4>

https://www.rtb.be/vivacite/emissions/detail_bruxelles-matin/accueil/article_une-expo-qui-fait-la-difference?id=10225257&programId=6116

spécialmontresmatch

CADRANS D'ARTISTE

Diarra s'empare des 'oldies' qu'il colore de ses tableaux micro format.
PAR CATHERINE MALAISE



Une 'out of time', habilement assemblée. Les aiguilles ont été personnalisées, le collage d'une aiguille 'petite seconde' offre un nez pointu au fantastique personnage central.



FOLON LUI A DONNÉ DES AILES

Ce funambule de l'encre et de l'aquarelle a su charmer Folon au point d'être engagé dans sa Fondation de 2001 à 2009. L'espiègle et bavard Diarra y assurera les visites guidées et ateliers avec les enfants. « Folon les adorait et aimait terminer leurs dessins ! Il m'a expliqué beaucoup de choses qui me servent aujourd'hui, souvent prêt et donné du matériel. C'était un gars super, d'une bonté et d'une gentillesse rares. Folon restera, avec Luc Schuiten (le père du dessinateur Jean-François Schuiten), celui qui m'a le plus appris et aidé ». Depuis, Diarra joue au bernard-l'hermite. Comprenez qu'il investit toutes les 'coquilles' et supports sur son passage : objets, réveille-matin, pendentifs, meubles et « oui - des grandes toiles ! ». Même avec un tableau 1 x 1 m, je reste un peintre miniaturiste. La miniature n'est pas liée au format mais plutôt au regard, à la perspective et un amour immodéré du détail ». La précision de son art illustre parfaitement convenant néanmoins particulièrement aux montres, Diarra rêve d'une collaboration avec une marque horlogère. On fait passer le message...
DiarraT@gmail.com - www.facebook.com/DiarraT

Profession : graphiste, enseignant et peintre miniaturiste. Passion (dévorante) : récupérer toutes les montres mécaniques fatiguées par le temps pour les booster d'images et de couleurs. Les cadrans sont les toiles où s'aventurent son imagination, sa sensibilité et son (très fin) pinceau. Depuis qu'il a investi ce support, Diarra a appris à en utiliser les défauts, les griffures, les effacements. Plus la montre est abîmée, plus elle lui plaît. « Le cadran, une fois poncé, m'offre un bel espace de jeu. Je me régale ». Enfant d'ici et du Mali, Diarra mêlisse gaiement ses inspirations. Sa légèreté naturelle lui permet de faire le grand écart entre poésie narrative et ironie décalée.

PETITES CONFIDENCES ENTRE AMIS

Ne lui dites pas qu'il 'customise' ses trouvailles. L'art de la miniature, c'est autre chose : « accorder à chaque détail l'importance de l'infini ». Pour le reste, l'artiste explique volontiers sa manière de travailler. Oter le verre, soulever le cadran avec une pince d'horloger, prélever délicatement les aiguilles avant de passer de longues heures à dessiner, rêver et appliquer ses touches d'émail. Le tableau réalisé file dans un four à 120° et sera protégé, ensuite, d'un plexiglass flambant neuf. Manipuler les montres ne lui pose aucun problème. Après avoir vérifié leur fonctionnement pendant 15 jours, il les fait réviser par un horloger aussi passionné que lui. « Jeune, j'ai été tenté par l'horlogerie mais j'ai étudié le graphisme à Saint-Luc ». Les tocanes, si elles sont irréparables, se métamorphosent en 'out of time' : des bijoux poétiques, des récits portatifs qui invitent au temps suspendu et au voyage de la pensée.

Les montres rondes des années 50, 60 et 70 re-flaquent en couleurs : création 'All Eyes'.



Folon - ami et mentor avant d'être le patron de Diarra, pendant ses sept années à la Fondation Folon.

PARIS MATCH DU 19 MAI AU 25 MAI 2016

Polarité



Dans le cadre d'une rencontre d'art contemporain, quatre artistes originaires de la diaspora africaine ouvrent le dialogue avec des élèves de l'école professionnelle Edmond Peeters (EPEP).

Ce projet est une démarche artistique visant à sensibiliser les élèves d'Arts graphiques à la diversité de l'art et des cultures, en tenant compte des particularités de chacun.

L'EPEP étant une école d'enseignement spécialisée, c'est tout naturellement que ces artistes se sont orientés vers ce type d'enseignement en proposant des thèmes comme la diversité des cultures, l'identité et la lutte contre les inégalités.

De plus, un des artistes est enseignant d'arts graphiques au sein de l'EPEP,

ce qui permet de travailler en amont sur le thème de l'exposition.

Plusieurs projets sont à l'honneur et les élèves ont l'occasion de travailler sur les différents thèmes et techniques utilisés par les artistes.



03.05 > 26.05

Jeudi au dimanche • 14:00 > 18:00
Vernissage 02.05 • 18:00 > 23:00

EXPOSITION



de Thiémoko Diarra (détournement de l'image médicale ou botanique, en relation avec un mot ou une phrase réalisée en collaboration avec le cours de français) ainsi qu'un projet de sculptures et d'installations autour du travail de Dimitri Fagbohoun (masque ou mascarade).

La permanence de l'exposition est prise en charge par les artistes et les élèves afin de

communiquer et participer au mieux à cette expérience commune.

In het kader van een ontmoeting rond hedendaagse kunst gaan vier kunstenaars van de Afrikaanse diaspora de dialoog aan met leerlingen van de beroepsschool E.P.E.P. Het project wil de leerlingen van de afdeling grafische kunstnauwer kennis laten maken met culturele en artistieke diversiteit.

Tentoonstelling waarbij de kunstenaars en deelnemende leerlingen aanwezig zijn om deze gezamenlijke ervaring te kunnen toelichten.

Inspiration

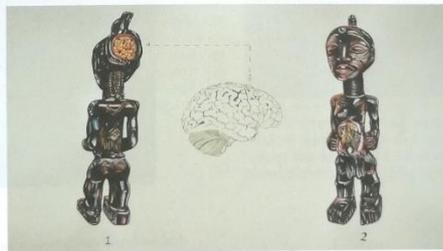
19.05
14:30 > 16:30
Gratuit

Atelier créatif de 3 à 97 ans. Venez vous inspirer du travail des artistes de l'exposition pour créer un visage.

Un atelier multi-techniques à faire seul, entre amis ou en famille.

L'exposition accueille un projet photographique basé sur le travail de Dati Bendo (autportrait, introspection et narration visuelle), un projet de peinture autour du travail de Soly Cissé (mythes et légendes d'ici et d'ailleurs, radiographie de la peinture en relation avec notre corps).

La Chapelle abrite également un projet d'images médicales détournées autour du travail



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