



Axel Gouala
Portfolio
2023

Introduction

Hidden behind the three thick roots of the Aristotelian poetic genres' family tree; the tragedy, comedy and the epic, one finds their often-forgotten sibling, the parody.

Scarcely addressed by Aristotle himself, at least in the surviving literature, the French literary critic Gérard Genette sat out to reclaim the parody into the literary fold with his 1982 seminal work *Palimpsests: La Littérature au second degré*. Genette presupposes two modes of production that engenders parody, namely imitation and transformation, and it is the latter which seems to best describe the process behind Axel Gouala's metamorphic sculptural objects.

Where Ulysses recalls the Odyssey, or plaster copies their marble originals, Gouala humorously transforms materials much more familiar to the denizens of the 21st century: Plungers playing palms, palms playing coatracks, a mop turned snake slithering away from its bucket. It is precisely the intimacy with which we greet these familiar materials and made-to-be-held design objects that makes the viewing of Gouala's works an almost haptic affair.

Extract from text of Gustav Elgin paru dans BE Magazine #28, traduit de l'anglais



Bio

Axel Gouala is born in Paris in 1987, living between Rome, Strasbourg and Paris. He graduated with a MFA from the Haute École des Arts du Rhin in Strasbourg in 2014.

His work has been recognized with several Prizes in France, Switzerland and Italy, including the Special Prize of the Society of Friends of the Arts and Museums of Strasbourg (France, 2014), the Kunstart Prize of the François Schneider Foundation (France, 2018), Contemporary Art Prize from the Rotary Clubs of Strasbourg, Bonn and Novara (France, Germany, Italy, 2018), the Prix Kunst Preis Riehen (Switzerland, 2022) and the Prix Premio Fondazione Cultura e Arte, Sezione Internazionale (Italy, 2023).

He has received support from recognized cultural institutions such as the French Ministry of Culture, the Goethe Institut, the French Institute and the Bureau des Arts Plastiques of Berlin. He has been hosted in international residencies including the Kunstlerhaus Bethanien in Berlin (2020), the Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris (2021) and the Meetfactory in Prague (2015).

He has exhibited in several Biennales and prestigious venues in France, Switzerland, Germany, Italy and Luxembourg, including the CEAAC Strasbourg, the Kunsthalle Basel, the Casino Luxembourg, the Kunstverein Freiburg, and the Mattatoio Roma.

Falaise

Falaise è un'opera site-specific che cattura l'immagine di pareti rocciose plasmate da mattoni scolpiti. Questa fusione di costruzione e decostruzione enfatizza le qualità plastiche del materiale, creando un fluire armonioso con il soggetto. Il mattone, originando dalla terra stessa, diventa protagonista. Falaise si configura sia come paesaggio che come rovina ma è anche una visione di viaggio, un intreccio di paesaggi mediterranei, coste bretoni e montagne del Sichuan. L'idea nasce dalla materia stessa, il mattone alveolare, osservato durante i suoi viaggi in America, Asia, Cina e Africa. Questo materiale estratto dalla terra crea un ciclo creativo: dall'estrazione nasce un negativo, che io trasformo in positivo e poi nuovamente in negativo. Inizialmente concepito come un modello, è poi stato realizzato su larga scala. Falaise è un'ode alla connessione tra materia e terra, un viaggio ciclico che prende forma attraverso l'arte.

Falaise is a site-specific piece that captures the image of rock walls shaped by sculpted bricks. This fusion of construction and deconstruction emphasizes the plastic qualities of the material, creating a harmonious flow with the subject. Brick, originating from the Earth itself, thus become the protagonists of the piece, making it appear both as a landscape and as a ruin but also a travel vision, a mix of Mediterranean landscapes, Breton coasts, and Sichuan mountains. The idea comes from the material itself - the honeycomb brick - observed during his travels to America, Asia, China, and Africa. This material, extracted from the earth, creates a creative cycle: from the extraction a negative is born, which I transform into positive and then back into negative. Initially conceived as a model, it was then realized on a large scale. Falaise is an ode to the connection between matter and earth, a cyclical journey that takes shape through art.



Sofia Di Gravio

InsideArt Magazine
October 2023

Falaise (5)

briques, plâtre, bonzäi
245 × 307 × 91 cm

Mattatoio, Azienda Speciale PalaExpo
Roma

2023



Falaise (4)-Cathédrale, briques, 225 × 301 × 138 cm, 2022



Mostro

polystyrene, plaster, metal
162,5 × 83 × 174 cm
2014



P.V.C.33

polystyrene, plaster, acrylic, nacre, metal
118,8 × 33 × 33 cm
2023



Peau de Palmier (1)

ceramique, bois
23,5 × 27 × 21,3 cm (céramique)
2023

Peau de Palmier (2)

ceramique
49,6 × 24 × 23,6 cm
2023





Clic

céramique
6,7 × 10,9 × 22,5 cm
2023

avec le support de la Région Grand Est et de la DRAC Grand Est



Langage, détail

céramique, clavier, acrylique et métal
13,4 × 46,5 × 16 cm
2023

avec le support de la Région Grand Est et de la DRAC Grand Est

Axel Gouala, Be Magazin 28#

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Here, one may paraphrase Walter Benjamin's *Einbahnstraße* (1928), that reading a text compared to copying it, is what flying over a landscape is to walking its streets. Gouala's transformative copying not only echoes the metaphor, but seemingly translates it into the literal in his exhibit *SkulpturAtlas, Temple et collection personnelle*. For the polystyrene onto which Gouala has carved details from classical cast copies found in the Bode Museum and the Neues Museum, was collected from the streets by the artist, and subsequently returned to them in the window-display on Künstlerhaus Bethanien's ground floor. Since one must only have unpacked a television or stereo set to judge the weight and feel of the polystyrene replica, or what it would take to snap it in half for that matter, curious passersby walking down Kottbusser Straße during the latter months of 2020 were themselves invited to tactiley take part in an unfolding copying and transformation of classical sculpture and philistine design – freed from the vantage of the museum.

Gustav Elgin

Curator at the Künstlerhaus Bethanien Berlin
Be Magazin, Yearly Catalog
Berlin
October 2021



Copyshop, Atlas Mnemosyne

emballages polystyrène sculptés
165,5 × 140 × 140 cm
2020

Nos îles

Palmier gantés, à roulette, parsemés de fourrure...Les drôles de créatures végétales d'Axel Gouala (né en 1987), à mi-chemin entre la sculpture, le totem protecteur, et aux accents farceurs sont nés en 2018, autour d'une réflexion commune sur la notion de voyage, avec d'autres artistes, s'inscrivant dans une actualité mouvementée sur la crise migratoire. Ce corpus de palmiers sculptés, détournés, ou dessinés par Axel Gouala, s'inscrit dans une recherche sur l'ailleurs , les vacances, l'exotisme, par opposition au travail et aux tâches du quotidien. Symbole d'un imaginaire collectif, des îles désertes, de l'Orient rêvé et d'un Hollywood glamour le palmier se transforme, posé sur ces socles inhabituels, de chaises à roulettes ou d'aspirateur. L'artiste opère une confrontation entre deux réalités, l'une vérifique, fonctionnelle, la seconde plus onirique et fantasmée : le labeur quotidien vs la détente sous un cocotier. Dans sa structure même, ce mat planté et érigé, tel les fétiches aux abords de villages de multiples continents évoque une certaine puissance, le patriarcat et des formes de domination. Domination du colon , domination de l'homme sur la femme qui assume le travail ménager retrouvé dans les objets détournées par l'artiste. Avec les totems d'A. Gouala, nous voyageons dans nos esprits et sommes transportés vers différentes préoccupations du monde actuel.

Axel Gouala est diplômé de la HEAR en 2014, il travaille en volume, dessin et peinture, revisite les motifs végétaux ou décoratifs et introduit de plus en plus la couleur sans son œuvre.

Marie Terrieux
Director and head curator of Fondation François Schneider
March 2022



Totem-Voyage 10, Palmo

technique mixte
123 × 99 × 89,7 cm
2020



The Snake
a.k.a. the_great_escape
mixed materials
71 × 45 × 245 cm
2020



Banana Gloves

céramique
gant 2 (haut sur l'image) : 6,3 × 10,4 × 26,3 cm
gant 1 (bas sur l'image) : 7 × 15 × 26,6 cm
2023

avec le soutien de la Région Grand Est et de la DRAC Grand Est

O.D.N.I. / U.D.O.

Axel Gouala est issu d'une double culture qui le pousse à porter un double regard sur les choses. Les objets anodins qu'il présente dans l'exposition sont extirpés non seulement de leur contexte d'utilisation mais aussi de leur décor. On réalise dans ces installations combien notre esprit associe un objet à un univers et à quel point cette détermination est fragile et superficielle. En isolant les objets, les détournant légèrement ou les associant différemment, Axel Gouala ouvre de nouvelles pages, entrevoit de nouveaux mondes dans lesquels travail et voyage se côtoient, clichés bourgeois et exotiques s'assemblent, motifs ethniques et objets impersonnels se confondent.

Pour ODNI, il associe la figure du palmier ou la chaise de bureau à des matériaux ou des matières qui leur sont à priori étrangers et suggère ainsi de nouveaux récits.

Sandrine Wymann

Director and head curator of La Kunsthalle, CAC

Mulhouse

November 2018



Totem-Voyage 12, Aspiration Vacances

technique mixte
267 × 63,5 × 120 cm
2020

Totem-Voyage 07

technique mixte
207 × 103 × 110 cm
2018



A Tooth for an Eye

curated by Elena Filipovic, Renate Wagner and Claudio Vogt

Kunsthalle Basel

Basel - CH

2018

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Axel Gouala

<http://www.axelgouala.com>

contact@axelgouala.com

+ 33 6 67 53 24 73