

ARMAND BOUA

OVER THE PAST 5 YEARS ARMAND BOUA HAS STEADILY BEEN EXPANDING HIS PRACTICE THAT REFLECTS ON THE CHALLENGES FACED BY THE STREET CHILDREN OF ABIDJAN IN CÔTE D'IVOIRE. FEBRUARY WILL SEE BOUA EXHIBITING AT THE INVESTEC CAPE TOWN ART FAIR AS REPRESENTED BY LKB/G. ART AFRICA SPOKE TO ARMAND WHO SHARED SOME INSIGHTS REGARDING HIS CREATIVE PROCESS AND THE SUBJECTS THAT INHABIT HIS WORK.



ABOVE

Les Badès (Les amis), 2017, acrylic & collage on canvas, 160 x 219cm.
Courtesy of the artist & LKB/G.

ART AFRICA: It is said that your work is the result of cultural and social entanglements. What are some of the issues that you reference in your work?

Armand Boua: The street children in Abidjan is a phenomenon that has increasingly become a major social crisis in Côte d'Ivoire. It was five years ago that I decided to dedicate my work to this issue constantly working with and developing this subject through my works. I first got interested in this subject during my time at the National School of Fine Arts in Abidjan.

You work with found objects, acrylic paint, and even tar. Why do you use these materials in particular?

I use a mixed media technique ("mixed" for me means a bit of everything) to reflect everything you can find on the streets from my materials, the street scenes, and my subjects too. I chose this subject and create works that are my interpretation and reflection of the challenges these children face and how they actually live on

the street. For example, I like to find and use torn posters – because I like the expressive nature and how the ripped and jagged edges help in developing my jagged compositions. Destruction is also inherent to my works: I add, I remove, I add, I remove – until I build up something that reflects the children's living conditions.

Can you tell us about your working process and how you develop your pieces?

My work begins by selecting a scene from the streets in Abidjan which I then photograph. The photographic image is then manipulated on a computer, and then projected onto the canvas or cardboard surface of the work. Then I begin to paint and combine the painted surface with found posters, or materials from the streets. It is in this process that the works undergo stages of deconstruction and reconstruction until I am happy with the final work.

How is your work received in your own country given the subject matter. Has it helped to highlight the plight of street children there?

My work has been very well received in my country and I feel that as an artist and painter I continue to achieve my goal of highlighting the plight of Abidjan's street children.

You have exhibited extensively abroad and were even included on the 'Pangea II' exhibition at the Saatchi Gallery, London. How do you think this exposure has helped to highlight the plight of your subjects and what effect has it had on building your career?

Thanks to the 'Pangea II' exhibition I gained great visibility very quickly which benefitted both my work and the subject matter I focus on. The Saatchi Gallery is an extremely well known, and very important gallery in the art world, so that gave my career a major boost as I was contacted by several galleries, collectors, journalists, and art dealers. This helped spread my practice globally and got my message out to many more parts of the world. This also allowed me to present my work and the plight of my subjects to many new audiences internationally.