

## Centre Pompidou Alice Anderson: “The body is at the centre of my practice”

By Sabine Mirlesse, November 15, 2020



Portrait of Alice Anderson, 2020  
© Photo by Manuel Braun

In a world where artificial intelligence is determining the destiny of mankind, what do we have to learn from our bodies as they relate to the universe and to their own “algorithms?” wonders Alice Anderson. Anderson’s work is a hybridisation between the symbolic profusion of ancestral cultures and the inventiveness of the technological world. Sabine Mirlesse meets the Franco-British artist, nominated for the 2020 edition of the Prix Marcel Duchamp.

In resonance with the ancestral practices of the Kogi Indians of Sierra Nevada in Colombia, where Anderson has often stayed, the artist creates her works through dance-performances, sometimes dazzling, sometimes meditative. Activating technological objects or architectural fragments with precise gestures, the artist “memorises” objects with copper wire a symbol of digital connectivity. The objects are then transformed into ‘Spiritual Machines’: contemporary statuettes or totems, or into iconic paintings whose metallic surfaces are woven with coloured wire.

During her ‘Geometric Dances’, Alice Anderson establishes, either alone or with co-performers, a deep communication with large canvases by using painted elements taken from architectural data to create rhythmic patterns. These works find an extension with ‘The Ritual of the Shapes’, dance-performances during which these monumental paintings, manipulated, folded or crumpled, are then transformed into sculptures.

Centre Pompidou  
Alice Anderson:  
“The body is at the  
centre of my practice”

By Sabine Mirlesse,  
November 15, 2020



Alice Anderson, installation view of 'Sacred Algorithms' at Centre Pompidou, 2020.  
© Photo by B. Prévost

**Tell us about the work you are presenting for the exhibition.**

**Alice Anderson** - I have proposed a body of work that included sculptures and paintings. The works were all created through performances, either individual or collective. The performances place the body at the centre of the work as a vector of humanity in a contemporary world committed to technology. In a context where machine-learning and algorithms preside over the destinies of humanity, what do we have to learn from our bodies in their own algorithms and relationships to the universe? How do we give substance to the intangible dimensions that inhabit us?

The body is at the centre of my practice. As I sought to understand the connection between bodily and neural movement, I began to study the ancestral culture of the Kogis in Colombia. The tribes have a particular ritual of 'reweaving the world' using cotton thread every day. This community lives in cosmic harmony with its environment. Their ecological struggles, their conception of existence, their rituals and their customs have shaped my reflection on the changes in civilisation that we are experiencing. In 2011, I developed my 'memorisation' technique using copper wire, the copper symbolising neuronal and technological connections. These movements have resulted in my weaving around objects, fragments of architecture, geometries. The movements generate different forms of thought.

**You are Franco-British, can you tell us about your beginnings, and your career?**

**AA** - Art is a universal language that has no nationality or border. I have always thought in images and always seen in geometry. From a young age, objects and spaces resonated with me in a very particular way and it was through painting and dancing that I began to understand space and the objects that inhabited it. My journey started from there. I began with Art above all else. Art is my vocation and nothing can change that.

Centre Pompidou  
 Alice Anderson:  
 "The body is at the  
 centre of my practice"

By Sabine Mirlesse,  
 November 15, 2020



Alice Anderson, installation view of 'Sacred Algorithms' at Centre Pompidou, 2020.  
 © Photo by B. Prévost

### What work of art has marked your practice?

**AA** - The Chauvet-Pont-d'Arc cave, in Ardèche, certainly. With its convex surfaces that give a particular movement to paintings made of red ochre or charcoal. I found similar reliefs, crevices and geological rhythms of the cave in the Sierra Nevada, Colombia. Young Kogis do their initiation in caves for years before becoming "mamos", shamans. For these cultures, the cave represents the beginning of the world.

"I don't differentiate between art and life, art and nature, art and the cosmos."

— Alice Anderson

### How do you work?

**AA** - I do not make any differentiation between art and life, art and nature, art and the cosmos. I work everywhere and all the time, but I like going to the studio every day. When I can't work, the day seems wasted. Art manifests itself to me in surprising ways. I achieve altered states of consciousness whether through slow, meditative movements with wire sculptures or through rapid movements generated by my painting practice. I perform and dance on several surfaces at the same time, until I no longer know where I am. These moments are unique, and I require time to "come down", to return to 'reality'. I only eat when I return home after completing projects. I hardly ever go out, so I start again very early the next day. Seen from the outside, it may seem austere, but in fact what I experience in the studio is transcendental and so essential to me that the rest appears secondary.

"I sincerely believe that, in the changes of societies that we are experiencing, art plays an essential role. Culture is one of the most precious assets of mankind."

— Alice Anderson

Centre Pompidou  
Alice Anderson:  
“The body is at the  
centre of my practice”

By Sabine Mirlesse,  
November 15, 2020

**What do you believe in?**

AA — I believe deeply in art, in this superior force which generates form and thought. I sincerely believe that, in the changes of societies that we are experiencing, art plays an essential role. Culture is one of most precious assets of mankind.

**Your practice is associated with the “post-digital” movement...  
What does this term mean to you?**

AA — My work is a hybrid of the symbolic profusion of certain ancestral cultures and the incredible inventiveness of the technological world. In fact, the period in which we live is postdigital. It is clear that we are living through one of the greatest, if not the most significant revolutions of mankind. For what tomorrow? I wonder about the imbalances and inequalities that these upheavals are generating and also about the place we should give them. Technology offers us progress in many areas, but how can we not think of the exploitation by artificial intelligence of all our personal data stored in databases which, moreover, consume so much energy and contribute to global warming, and to GAFAMs which “direct” our lives? This highlights a major democratic problem. What kind of humanity do we want? What society do we want to achieve? What place will humans hold there? And the place of the body? The body, as a place of resistance? Kiki Smith once said that “All of the history of the world is in your body”. It should be noted: from stardust to virtualisation ... Without nostalgia, I try to memorise a world that is in the process of disappearing, a world that digitisation is swallowing up like Atlantis. For me, this material world holds an integral connection with our physical existence.

**What does it mean to be exhibit at the Centre Pompidou, with these three other artists nominated for the Prix Marcel Duchamp?**

AA — Being nominated for the Prix Marcel Duchamp is an important step in my career and it is a privilege to salute the memory of Marcel Duchamp, a visionary being.



Alice Anderson, installation view, of ‘Sacred Algorithms’ at Centre Pompidou, 2020.

© Photo by B. Prévost