ALMINE RECH

Joël Andrianomearisoa
Litanie des Horizons obscurs

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Joël Andrianomearisoa can consider with the same clarity a volume, a flavour, a feeling or a gesture. To quote his own culinary metaphor, "I am guided by broad principles, but I am not interested in the recipe". He does not let rules or classification sway him, relying instead on his intuitions, but also on the world's vibrations as with a seismograph. In a seemingly minimalist chromaticism, his approach focuses on revealing the poetic potential of "worthless [things and objects] that bear the dignity of the everyday"[1].

But far from solely valuing objects for their aura in relation to the contemporary world, Joël, who has worked for nearly twenty-five years with seasoned artisans, is passionate about know-hows and traditional techniques. From his native city, Antananarivo, to Udaipur through Aubusson, he likes to let his artist gesture bend under the influence of the artisan's. The admiration he feels for these keepers of miraculous traditional recipes (more than for the recipe itself) is on a par with their physical commitment, their technical rigour and a certain cult of the detail – many qualities that Joël himself has adopted. He likes to tell of "happy accidents that happen from time to time", or smiles about a result that has lost all connection with the original project, but whose deviated path has led to new work hypotheses – without believing in the magic of chance, or seeking to escape the great cosmogonic rhythms that govern matter, the earth and its custodians. What fascinates him the most is the artisan's uncompromising disposition towards certain principles, and ultimately, the exquisite sophistication that each of their creations displays. Was it not Walter Gropius himself who, in the April 1919 Bauhaus manifesto, deemed the artist as nothing more than an "inspired artisan"? Between Madagascar where he grew up and France where he studied architecture before settling there, although rarely spending more than six consecutive days there, Joël has travelled around the world in search of new partners.

While on a research residency in Morocco in 2021, Joël met artisans with whom he (re)discovered shapes, motifs and materials beyond the touristic offerings that have come to prevail. He has subjected his energetic nature to the rigour of embroidery, brought together his words and the incandescence of ceramics, but his greatest challenge has probably lain in a technique that he is nevertheless familiar with: wickerwork. When Joël first entered Yassine El Harda's workshop in Marrakech, he examined, felt, handled, frayed, felt the weight of things... taming the material that he intended to bend to his will. "It is Morocco that brought me back to my connection with the hand", he admits. He then decided to try his hand at the entanglement of vegetal fibres and textiles.

LITANIE DES HORIZONS OBSCURS emerged from the union of ancient know-how[2] and a weaving technique that appeared in the rural areas of Morocco in the 1960s, consisting in making rugs using old textiles[3]. Here, the usually knotted recycled cloths are twisted, then arranged as a set of boards of absolutely identical measurements, as if honouring the repetition of a secular gesture. Unusual nuances are created in the composition: ochre cottons, silvery jerseys and golden viscoses intertwine in the black and white monochromes, emblematic of the artist's work, to display a kinetic variation in nine stages.

Once again, the artist faces the creative hand. In addition to the challenge of scale, which mobilises a considerable and, for this kind of work, fairly unusual quantity of material, there is the complexity of the synchronisation of a production that is restricted by the laws of physics. Multiple experimentations peppered with unknowns punctuate the hundreds of hours of work, but the structure is never questioned. Joël clearly preserves the general architecture of the project, the

deep conviction of a relation to space that he probably owes to his initial training. However, he allows the mood of another's hand to prevail and enjoys the communion of a multi-voiced creative process. In a joint exploration, Joël Andrianomearisoa and Yassine El Harada's workshop have achieved a marriage between fragility and rigour, freedom and precision, reminding us that "the hand that slaps"[4] is also the one "that caresses" in order to challenge together the subtle boundaries that transcend dualities[5].

At the heart of the exhibition, like a break in the wandering around the rigid boards, there stands a monumental, vaporous patchwork made in a palette similar to that of the wickerwork series. This chromatic likeness refers to the constant journeys between Marrakech and Antananarivo that have punctuated the artist's last two years of production. The monumental piece had its material sourced in Madagascar thanks to industrial textiles meant for exportation, acquired at the manufacturing test stage. Imperfect printed fabrics, as if to remind us that mistakes shape us. Multiple textures to evoke the powerful patchwork metaphor of our individual stories, characteristic of Toni Morrison's literature.

Joël Andrianomearisoa's bold explorations transcend geographies and art classifications. Beyond any explicit formula on the link between artist and artisan, Joël sees himself as one who, through art, shapes his own life. *Litanie des horizons obscurs* creates a dialogue between the ancestral and the industrial, in a multi-voiced canon, offering an incessant journey between art and craftsmanship to stress the power of their symbiosis. The artworks condense the artist's relationship with architecture, the poetic gesture and a passion for the work. Like a variation, the exhibition highlights the transformative ability of Joël's artistic fabric through different formal processes that, separately or simultaneously, relate to matter, text and chromaticism, while leaving the original theme discernible.

— Meriem Berrada, MACAAL Artistic Director and Curator of the exhibition *Our Land Just Like a Dream*

[1] *Boucharouite*: from the Arabic "pieces of rag", a knotted-rug technique practised by women of modest income, using old textiles, yarn, nylon threads, etc., today used for all kinds of upholstery.

[2] From the text in the artwork *ET SI LA MAIN ÉTAIT L'HISTOIRE*, Joël Andrianomearisoa and Clotilde Courau, 2022.

[3] ITALO CALVINO, *Les villes invisibles*, Seuil, 1974. p. 188.

[4] SENTIMENTAL PRODUCTS is a series of conceptual objects made in 2010 by the artist blending art, design and fashion – a reflection on the status of the artworks as a means of communication and their meaning.

[5] Traditional weaving technique with dry palm leaves (in Arabic: *Doum*).