

# Aboudia's Chap Chap reflects on environment in globalised world

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By ELIZABETH UWANDU

When Art Twenty One, was opened at the expanded wing of Eko Hotel and Suites, Victoria Island, Lagos, its promoters, said that it was designed to lift the city as an 'art destination, and ever since then it has attracted a lot of art collectors, promoters and lovers with interesting array of works. Recently, the centre opened its doors to a solo exhibition by Ivorian artist Abdoulaye Diarrassouba, a.k.a Aboudia, entitled Chap Chap, in collaboration with Galerie Cécile Fakhoury in Abidjan. The exhibition which follows the artist's continued interest in exploring the urbanity of Abidjan's cityscape and the culture of the "Nouchi", a pidgin language that emerged in the Ivory Coast in the early 1980s, opened on February, 13 and will run till end of March, 2016.



Featuring over 20 works in diverse media, through which the artist displays his expressive paintings executed in a

• One of the untitled works by Aboudia

spontaneous manner akin to street art and graffiti. Chap Chap, meaning "fast" or "rapid" in Nouchi, reflects the fast-paced environment and wired connectivity of a globalized culture. It is a fusion of French language and several local languages of the Ivorian, a pidgin language that emerged in Ivory Coast in the early 1980s.

As a social commentator, the artist examines daily life in Ivory Coast, with particular attention to its history of conflict. His recent works explore his experiences as a cosmopolitan artist as he moves between spaces and cultures. Viewers were held spell bound by the sterling works of the young Aboudia that reflect the fast-paced environment and wired connectivity of a globalised culture. In the body of works, Aboudia compares this cross-reference of styles to the organic formation of the "Nouchi". Through overlapping planes of images, symbols and paint, he creates an ambiguous visual imaginary, highlighting the complex relationship between tradition and modernity that defines the ethos of the "Nouchi" culture.

The artist explained that, " Nouchi as a malleable language, one must keep up with the newest expressions and trends of the Nouchis as the language constantly develops, that spans popular culture and music. In other words, the exhibition title, Chap Chap, reflects the fast-paced environment and wired connectivity of a globalized culture.

Again, Chap Chap, executed in a simplistic yet emotional manner, whose figures are created with crude brush strokes, protruded facial features and elemental forms. It also includes mixed media works appropriating photographic images from magazines and newspapers. Layered with marks, sketches and texts, depicts diverse cultural references spanning the historical archive, the tradition of masks and wood sculpture.

Generally, the paintings evoke the urban life of West Africans where everyone is in a hurry to do or get things done. Chap Chap which means fast or rapid also tells the inter-woven connection of the interaction of high and low in the society through a medium- the Nouchi language. Which is neither French, nor completely Ivorian local languages ; but a symmetry understanding of communication. The paintings and mixed media encapsulates the consciousness of Africa to adapt to changes and new inventions.

It also tells the story of the survival of the human spirit in the face of challenges, and the happiness that accompany adaptations; such as the coming together and interaction of the Ivorian and French people.

Aboudia gained attention for his series of paintings depicting the Battle of Abidjan, which has been exhibited in prominent exhibitions worldwide. His work is included in prestigious permanent collections including the Saatchi Gallery. Aboudia lives and works in New York and Abidjan. Speaking about the works, Joseph Gergel, Curatorial Projects, expressed delight over the high creativity of the artist in bringing seemingly different elements together in creating a new meaning.



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