

**RENÉ
TAVARES**



RENÉ TAVARES

MIGRAÇÕES E COISAS, RETALHOS DE UMA HISTÓRIA SÓ

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Curadoria:

Graça Rodrigues e Sónia Ribeiro

A Galeria Banco Económico, em parceria com a This Is Not a White Cube, apresenta de 21 de Março a 27 de Maio de 2020, a primeira exposição individual que o artista santomense, René Tavares, realiza em Angola.

"Migrações e coisas, retalhos de uma história só" integra cerca de 40 obras produzidas entre 2012 e 2020, muitas das quais inéditas e expõe, através de dois núcleos distintos, uma variedade significativa de meios que vão da pintura ao desenho, passando pela fotografia e pela instalação.

Através destas, o artista explora os temas da migração e do património que têm sido, ao longo dos anos, um motor consistente de inovação e criatividade na sua produção artística.

A persistência do conceito de layer e do conceito de miscigenação define a estrutura principal da exposição, numa visão transposta da própria obra de René Tavares, que introduz reiteradamente combinações conceptuais inevidentes, referências culturais e patrimoniais cruzadas e soluções plásticas compostas.

Os múltiplos estratos que, material e plasticamente se somam em cada obra de René Tavares - seja ela pintura, fotografia ou desenho - encontram uma reciprocidade na sua estruturação conceptual.

O processo de aglomeração de camadas, decorre da transposição para a obra de um olhar que se pode definir como arqueológico ou estratificado sobre a cultura ancestral santomense do Tchiloli - espetáculo tradicional santomense de origem europeia -, que o artista recupera, representa e reinterpreta plasticamente.

O resgate da imaterialidade do Tchiloli, visto à lupa da produção artística contemporânea que René Tavares consubstancia, é declarado neste exercício que documenta o cruzamento entre as narrativas pessoais - dos actores que o interpretam - e as narrativas históricas mais abrangentes - que os personagens encenam nas ruas de São Tomé e Príncipe.

"Two lives Tchiloli" é a série fotográfica mais antiga que integra a exposição e talvez aquela que, de forma mais clara, consubstancia esta ideia de encontro entre o passado e o presente, entre o individual e o colectivo, entre as narrativas pessoais e as narrativas históricas, numa dupla, mas uma composição, traduzindo visualmente o encontro entre três povos - o português, o francês e o santomense - e a herança que daí adveio.

As fotografias de carácter documental que lhe estão na base remetem-nos a um passado histórico e a uma tradição cultural que importa recuperar, mas empurram-nos simultaneamente para o palco da contemporaneidade, onde se debatem concomitantemente ideologias e conceitos ligados à noção de território e de identidade e onde se contesta a pertinência das fronteiras físicas e ideológicas erguidas entre as civilizações.

A memória colectiva dos povos e a herança decorrente dos seus cruzamentos voluntários e involuntários, que René Tavares endereça ao primeiro núcleo expositivo, traduz-se num corpo de obra que nos conduz física e intelectualmente a um outro núcleo, subsequente, mais actual e comprometido com a visão factual e futura de um continente que, na era da globalização, prossegue na recuperação das suas tradições, na reafirmação das suas raízes e na consolidação de uma revisão da

História que hoje, académica e politicamente, se opera no palco internacional.

Ao centro "Fantastic African Union" da série "Thinking about Africa's future" interpela-nos, colocando-nos entre a revisão crítica de uma distópica concepção da identidade do continente e a exigência da afirmação de um olhar renovado sobre as várias áfricas que África encerra dentro de portas e na diáspora.

A obra de René Tavares socorre-se de um manancial de arquivo para nos lançar incontáveis desafios intelectuais, e a sua prática propõe a redefinição dos campos de expressão artística trazendo à pintura, técnicas, gestos e materiais que reportam ao desenho e transferindo para o desenho a gestualidade e teatralidade que é apanágio da pintura. Esta hibridização das linguagens plásticas é ainda transferida à fotografia, reivindicando para a arte um traço de absoluto.

Graça Rodrigues e Sónia Ribeiro, 2020



RENÉ TAVARES (b. 1983, São Tomé e Príncipe) - RT58-3

Two Lives Tchiloli, 70x50cm, 2012

Fotografia em papel de algodão e película de polipropileno. Ed. 1/6

Photography on cotton paper and polypropylene film. 1/6

"MIGRAÇÕES E COISAS, RETALHOS DE UMA HISTÓRIA SÓ"

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In partnership with the Banco Económico, This Is Not a White Cube, presents from March 21 to May 27, 2020, the first solo show of the Santomean artist, René Tavares, in Luanda, Angola.

"Migrações e Coisas, Retalhos de uma História Só", integrates around 40 works produced between 2012 and 2020, many of which are unpublished and exposes, through two different central nuclei, a significant variety of media ranging from painting to drawing, including photography and installation.

Through these, the artist explores the themes of migration and heritage that have been, over the years, a consistent engine of innovation and creativity in his artistic production.

The persistence of both the concepts "layer" and "miscegenation" define the main structure of the exhibition, in a transposed view of René Tavares' own work, which repeatedly introduces inevitable conceptual combinations, crossed cultural and heritage references and composite plastic solutions.

The multiple strata that materially and visually add up in each work by René Tavares - be it painting, photography or drawing - find a reciprocity in their conceptual structuring.

The process of agglomeration of layers results from the transposition into the work of a look that can be defined as archaeological or stratified on the ancestral Santomean culture of Tchiloli - a traditional Santomean spectacle of European origin - which the artist recovers, represents and reinterprets visually.

The rescue of Tchiloli's immateriality, seen through the lens of contemporary artistic production that René Tavares embodies, is declared in this exercise that documents the intersection between the personal narratives - of the actors who interpret it - and the broader historical narratives - that the characters stage in streets of São Tomé and Príncipe.

"Two lives Tchiloli" is the oldest photographic series that is part of the exhibition and perhaps the one that, most clearly, embodies this idea of a encounter between the past and the present, between the individual and the collective, between personal and historical narratives in one composition, visually

translating the meeting between three cultures - Portuguese, French and Santomean - and the heritage that came from that.

The documental photographs, that are at the base of Réne's research, remind us of a historical past and a cultural tradition that needs to be recovered, but simultaneously push us to the contemporary stage, where ideologies and concepts related to the notion of territory and of identity and where the relevance of the physical and ideological boundaries came between civilizations is disputed.

The collective memory of the peoples and the heritage resulting from their voluntary and involuntary crossings, which René Tavares addresses to the first part of the exhibition, translates into a body of work that leads us physically and intellectually to another nucleus, subsequent, more current and committed to the factual and future vision of a continent that, in the age of globalization, continues to recover its traditions, reaffirm its roots and consolidate a revision of history that today, both academically and politically, operates on the international stage.

As a central piece "Fantastic African Union" part of the "Thinking about Africa's future" series, we are challenged by the idea of placing ourselves between the critical review of a dystopian conception of the continent's identity and the demand to affirm a renewed look at the several Africas that the continent encloses inside doors and in the diaspora.

René Tavares' work relies on a wealth of archives to send us countless intellectual challenges, and his practice proposes the redefinition of the fields of artistic expression by bringing to painting, techniques, gestures and materials that report to drawing and transferring to drawing the gesturalism and theatricality that is the prerogative of painting. This hybridization of visual languages is still transferred to photography, claiming for art an absolute feature.

Graça Rodrigues and Sónia Ribeiro, 2020

RENÉ TAVARES (b. 1983, São Tomé e Príncipe) - RT58-1

Two Lives Tchiloli,

Fotografia em papel de algodão e película de polipropileno. Ed. 1/6

Photography on cotton paper and polypropylene film. 1/6

70x50cm, 2012



RENÉ TAVARES (b. 1983, São Tomé e Príncipe) - RT58-2

Two Lives Tchiloli,

Fotografia em papel de algodão e película de polipropileno. Ed. 1/6,

Photography on cotton paper and polypropylene film. 1/6

70x50cm, 2012



RENÉ TAVARES (b. 1983, São Tomé e Príncipe) - RT58-4

Two Lives Tchiloli,

Fotografia em papel de algodão e película de polipropileno. Ed. 1/6,

Photography on cotton paper and polypropylene film. 1/6

70x50cm, 2012



RENÉ TAVARES (b. 1983, São Tomé e Príncipe) - RT58-5

Two Lives Tchiloli,

Fotografia em papel de algodão e película de polipropileno. Ed. 1/6,

Photography on cotton paper and polypropylene film. 1/6

70x50cm, 2012



SOBRE RENÉ TAVARES

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René Tavares René Tavares traduz em pintura e desenho, através de traços, linhas e manchas, uma síntese pessoal da sua própria identidade, sempre em processo ("inacabado"), posicionando-se em constante movimento entre referências passadas e presentes.

Interessa-lhe aprofundar a permeabilidade das fronteiras entre histórias, linguagens e técnicas e partilhar esse percurso exploratório. É um artista que reflecte nos seus trabalhos a sua própria experiência de deslocação ou deslocalização contemporânea entre as diversas zonas de contacto pós-colonial.

Em muitos dos seus trabalhos está presente o que o artista apelida de "l'imagerie comun", a simples representação de um objecto ou forma vulgar que se insere num espaço pictórico de pura abstracção e que permite o tratamento das linhas com técnica de desenho e com técnica de pintura, onde várias referências aparecem matizadas, expressas de forma ambígua, como que numa transposição do próprio funcionamento da memória.

Recentemente os seus trabalhos têm assumido uma componente político-cultural, através da qual o artista chama a atenção para a realidade quotidiana, transferindo referências da memória, da identidade e do património para o contexto contemporâneo. Imparcialmente, René Tavares intervém no desenvolvimento sociopolítico, não por via de uma vontade de assumir discurso político, mas porque a política se inscreve necessariamente no regime da realidade quotidiana.

Formado na Escola de Belas Artes de Dakar, no Senegal, ganhou em 2008/09 uma bolsa para

estudar na École de Beaux Arts de Rennes (França) onde desenvolveu um programa intenso de pesquisa. Integrou paralelamente o curso de fotografia do projecto ARC/Rennes e frequentou em 2011 o Mestrado em Ciências de Arte e do Património na Faculdade de Belas Artes da Universidade de Lisboa.

A sua obra tem sido exibida internacionalmente, em vários países, de entre os quais se destaca São Tomé, Portugal, França, Bélgica, Alemanha, Angola, África do Sul, Estados Unidos da América e China.

Em 2008 participou na exposição coletiva "Africa Now", em Washington, organizada pelo Banco Mundial, e em 2015 integrou a exposição internacional "Lumières d'Afrique", no Palais Chaillot, em Paris - França.

Mais recentemente foi nomeado para o "AFRICA'S MOST INFLUENTIAL NEW ARTISTIC TALENT | FNB, Joburg Art Fair 2018.

Actualmente vive e trabalha entre São Tomé e Lisboa e a sua obra é representada pela galeria This is Not a White Cube.



ABOUT RENÉ TAVARES

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René Tavares translates into painting and drawing, through lines, lines and stains, a personal synthesis of his own identity, always in process ("unfinished"), positioning himself in constant movement between past and present references.

He is interested in deepening the permeability of the borders between stories, languages and techniques and sharing this exploratory path. He is an artist who reflects in his works his own experience of displacement or contemporary relocation between the various post-colonial contact zones.

In many of his works, what the artist calls "l'imagerie comun" is present, the simple representation of a vulgar object or form that is inserted in a pictorial space of pure abstraction and that allows the treatment of lines with drawing technique and with painting technique, where several references appear nuanced, expressed in an ambiguous way, as if in a transposition of the very functioning of memory.

Recently, his works have taken on a political-cultural component, through which the artist draws attention to everyday reality, transferring references from memory, identity and heritage to the contemporary context. Impartially, René Tavares intervenes in socio-political development, not through a desire to assume

political discourse, but because politics is necessarily part of the regime of everyday reality.

Graduated from the School of Fine Arts in Dakar, Senegal, he won a scholarship in 2008/09 to study at the École de Beaux Arts in Rennes (France) where he developed an intense research program. At the same time, he took part in the photography course of the ARC / Rennes project and in 2011 he attended the Master of Science in Art and Heritage Sciences at the Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Lisbon.

His work has been exhibited internationally, in several countries, including São Tomé, Portugal, France, Belgium, Germany, Angola, South Africa, United States of America and China.

In 2008 he participated in the collective exhibition "Africa Now", in Washington, organized by the World Bank, and in 2015 he took part in the international exhibition "Lumières d'Afrique", at the Palais Chaillot, in Paris - France.

Most recently he was nominated for the "AFRICA'S MOST INFLUENTIAL NEW ARTISTIC TALENT | FNB, Joburg Art Fair 2018.

He currently lives and works between São Tomé and Lisbon and his work is represented by the This is Not a White Cube gallery.

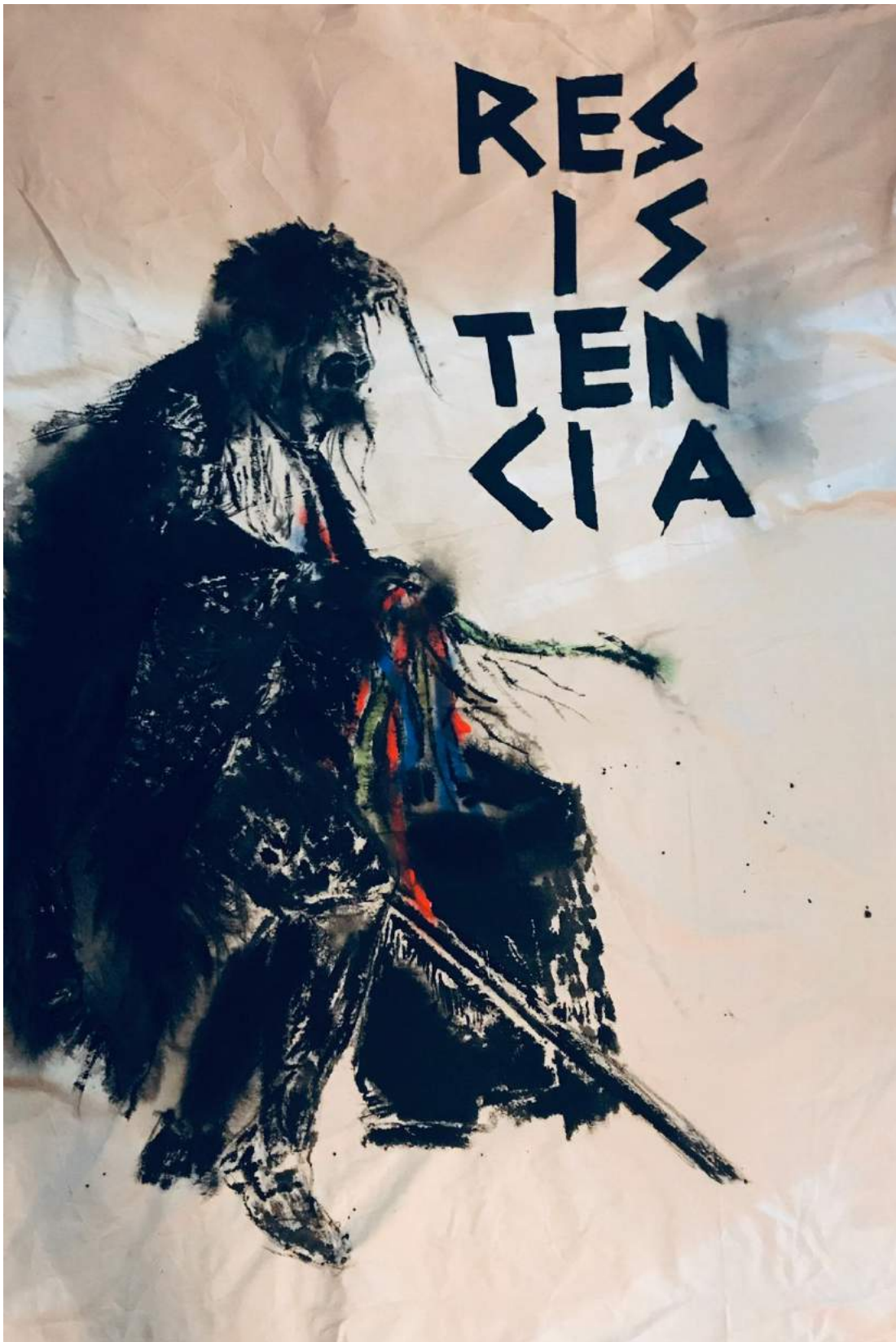
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Tchiloli Unlimited



RENÉ TAVARES (b. 1983, São Tomé e Príncipe) - RT32
Tchiloli Unlimited - cartazes,
Técnica mista sobre linho / *Mixed media on linen*
165x110cm, 2019



RENÉ TAVARES (b. 1983, São Tomé e Príncipe) - RT33
Tchiloli Unlimited - cartazes,
Técnica mista sobre linho / *Mixed media on linen*
165x110cm, 2019



RENÉ TAVARES (b. 1983, São Tomé e Príncipe) - RT34
Tchiloli Unlimited - cartazes,
Técnica mista sobre linho / *Mixed media on linen*
165x110cm, 2019



RENÉ TAVARES (b. 1983, São Tomé e Príncipe) - **RT22**
Tchiloli Unlimited,
Técnica mista sobre linho / *Mixed media on linen*
165x180cm, 2019



RENÉ TAVARES (b. 1983, São Tomé e Príncipe) - RT23
Tchiloli Unlimited,
Técnica mista sobre linho / *Mixed media on linen*
165x180cm, 2019



Tchiloli Family



RENÉ TAVARES (b. 1983, São Tomé e Príncipe) - RT25-1

Tchiloli Family #1,

Fotografia sobre papel de algodão 310gr, 2/6,

Color photograph printed with archival jet print on hahnemulle cotton paper 310gr, 2/6

75x50cm, 2011



RENÉ TAVARES (b. 1983, São Tomé e Príncipe) - RT25-2

Tchiloli Family #2,

Fotografia sobre papel de algodão 310gr, 2/6,

Colour photograph printed with archival jet print on hahnemulle cotton paper 310gr, 2/6

75x50cm, 2011



RENÉ TAVARES (b. 1983, São Tomé e Príncipe) - RT25 -5

Tchiloli Family #5.

Fotografia sobre papel de algodão 310gr, 2/6,

Colour photograph printed with archival jet print on hahnemulle cotton paper 310gr, 2/6

75x50cm, 2011



RENÉ TAVARES (b. 1983, São Tomé e Príncipe) - RT25-6

Tchiloli Family #6,

Fotografia sobre papel de algodão 310gr, 2/6,

Color photograph printed with archival jet print on hahnemulle cotton paper 310gr, 2/6

75x50cm, 2011



PT

ACTOR NOT AN ACTOR, 2019

Integrado no Projeto "Tchiloli Unlimited", a série *Actor Not An Actor* incorpora uma pesquisa pessoal que René Tavares tem vindo a desenvolver ao longo dos anos no contexto do seu trabalho de pesquisa e produção em torno de património cultural de São Tomé e Príncipe.

Recorrendo a uma linguagem multidisciplinar, que tem por base a fotografia, a pintura e o desenho, René Tavares questiona a realidade histórica e social do seu país e os seus aspetos mais contemporâneos. Encontra no Tchiloli um espaço abtangente de reflexão e de expressão alusivo à identidade da sociedade são-tomense.

O Tchiloli é um tipo de representação teatral de herança europeia, renascentista, reinventada pelo povo de São Tomé e Príncipe, que se tornou um símbolo de resistência face à anterior dominação colonial portuguesa. É actualmente reconhecido como uma das mais ricas tradições culturais do país.

A série *Actor Not An Actor* traduz um espaço de memória colectiva que confronta dois tempos, e mostra-nos como a permeabilidade da História alimenta os valores sociais e culturais.

Cada fotografia é uma encenação que aproxima cada "actor" da recriação da história e exalta o ambiente no qual este assume a função de guardião do seu personagem, tanto na vida real como no teatro.

É um lugar de fruição estética e lúdica, e a teatralização de uma ontologia, uma reflexão em acto sobre os valores morais, sobre diferentes concepções do ser e do seu lugar no mundo; sobre o mundo e as suas fronteiras.

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ACTOR NOT AN ACTOR, 2019

Integrated into the "Tchiloli Unlimited" project, the series "Actor - Not An Actor" incorporates a personal research that René Tavares has been developing over the years in the context of his research and production work around the cultural heritage of São Tomé and Príncipe.

Using a multidisciplinary language, based on photography, painting, and drawing, René Tavares questions the historical and social reality of his country and its more contemporary aspects. In Tchiloli, he finds a special space for reflection and expression, alluding to the identity of São Toméan society.

Tchiloli is a type of theatrical representation of the European Renaissance heritage, reinvented by the people of São Tomé and Príncipe, which became a symbol of resistance to the previous Portuguese colonial rule. Today it is recognized as one of the richest cultural traditions in the country.

The series ATOR NOT AN ACTOR translates a space of collective memory that is confronted twice and shows how the permeability of History feeds social and cultural values.

Each photograph is a staging that brings each "actor" closer to recreating the story and extols the environment in which he assumes the role of guardian of his character, both in real life and in the theater.

It is a place of aesthetic and playful pleasure, and of the theatricalization of an ontology, a reflection in action on moral values, on different conceptions of being and its place in the world; about the world and its borders.

RENÉ TAVARES (b. 1983, São Tomé e Príncipe) – RT26

Actor not an actor,

Fotografia sobre papel de algodão 310gr, 2/6,

Color photograph printed with archival jet print on hahnemulle cotton paper 310gr, 2/6

60x90cm, 2019



RENÉ TAVARES (b. 1983, São Tomé e Príncipe) - RT27

Actor not an actor,

Fotografia sobre papel de algodão 310gr, 2/6,

Color photograph printed with archival jet print on hahnemulle cotton paper 310gr, 2/6

60x90cm, 2019



RENÉ TAVARES (b. 1983, São Tomé e Príncipe) - **RT31**

Actor not an actor,

Fotografia sobre papel de algodão 310gr, 2/6,

Color photograph printed with archival jet print on hahnemulle cotton paper 310gr, 2/6

60x90cm, 2019



RENÉ TAVARES (b. 1983, São Tomé e Príncipe) - RT36

Encontro anual de entre o rei, o guarda e a curandeira - Série migrações e coisas,

Óleo, pigmento e carvão sobre lona de algodão / Oil, pigment and graphite on cotton canvas

130x140cm, 2019-20



Thinking about Africa's future



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Thinking about Africa's future é uma das mais recentes séries de pintura de René Tavares, através da qual o artista promove uma reflexão sobre como o futuro da África tem sido projetado à luz dos interesses de outras potências econômicas. Visualmente trata-se um imponente conjunto, integrando principalmente telas de grande dimensão, com uma forte componente de humor e sarcasmo.

EN

Thinking about Africa's future is one of the most recent series by René Tavares, which promotes a reflection on how the future of Africa has been projected under the light of other economic powers' interests. It is visually a very imposing series, integrating mainly large-scale canvases and a strong component of humor and sarcasm.

RENÉ TAVARES (b. 1983, São Tomé e Príncipe) - RT41
Champion from atlantic. Série: Thinking about Africa's future.,
 Técnica mista sobre tela / *Mixed media on canvas*
 180x204cm, 2019

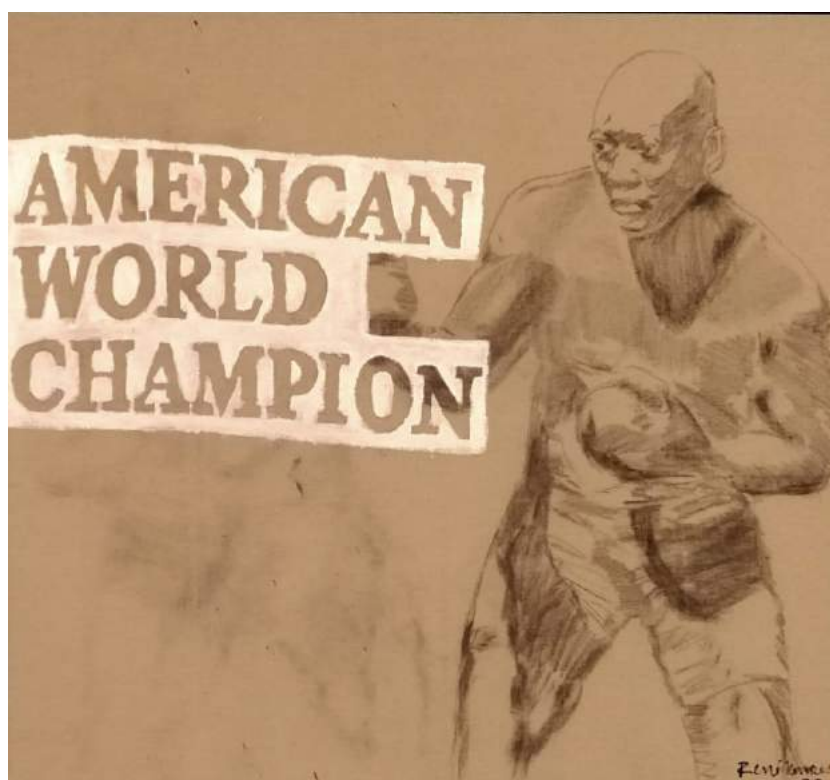
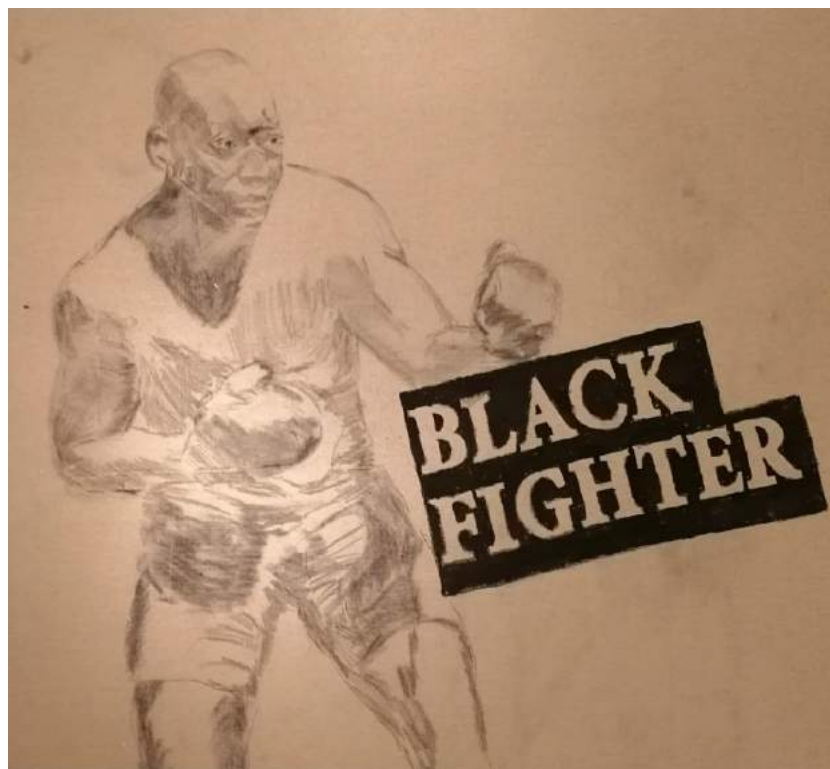


RENÉ TAVARES (b. 1983, São Tomé e Príncipe) - RT59-60

Black Fighter - American World Champion. Série: Thinking about Africa's future,

Técnica mista sobre tela (diptico) / *Mixed media on canvas (diptych)*

93x100cm (cada), 2020



RENÉ TAVARES (b. 1983, São Tomé e Príncipe) - RT48

African plan by third parties. Série: Thinking about Africa's future,

Técnica mista sobre tela / Mixed media on canvas

205x220cm, 2019



RENÉ TAVARES (b. 1983, São Tomé e Príncipe) - RT40

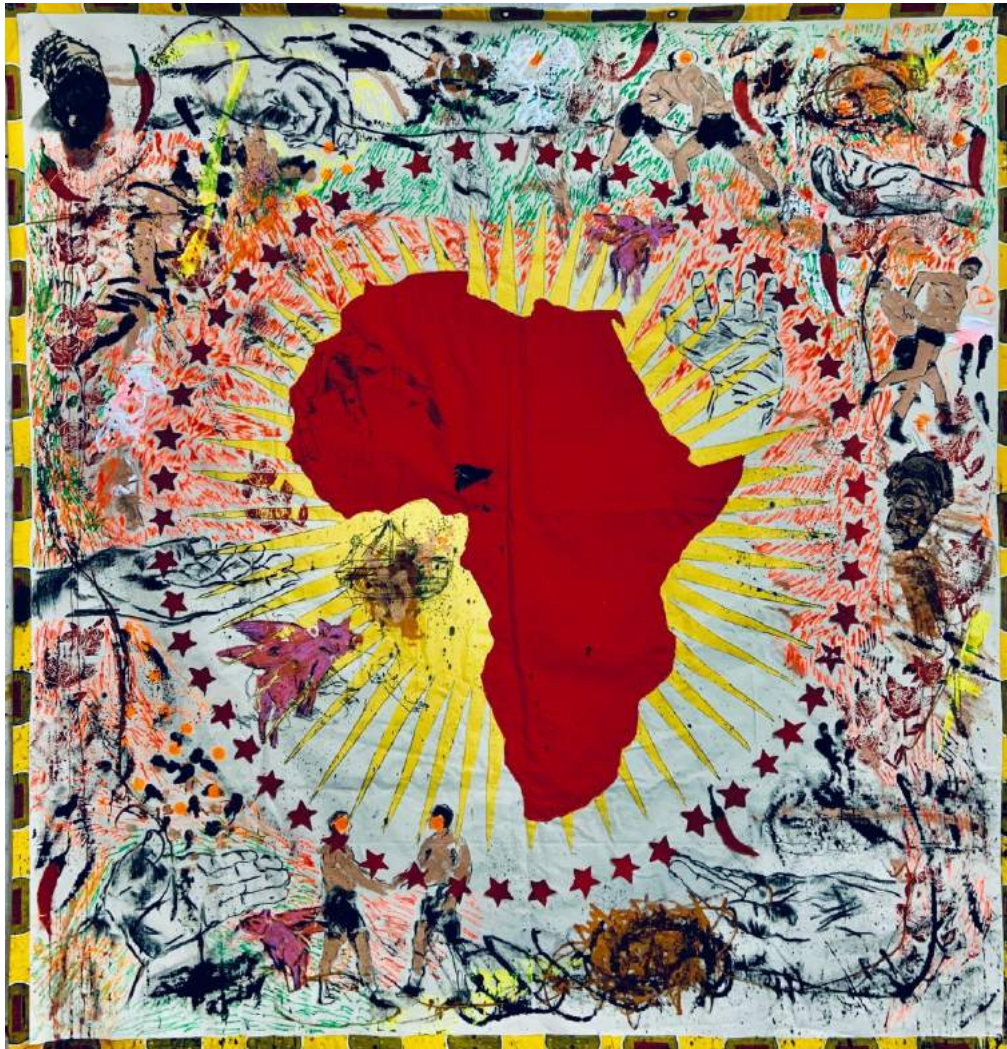
Unknown person from Global Society. Série: Thinking about Africa's future,

Técnica mista sobre tela / *Mixed media on canvas*

160x148cm, 2019



RENÉ TAVARES (b. 1983, São Tomé e Príncipe) - RT24
Fantastic African Union.
Série: Thinking about Africa's future,
Técnica mista sobre tela / *Mixed media on canvas*
200x190cm, 2020



PT

É hora de África perceber que deve construir o velho sonho da União Africana.
Hora de reconstruir o sonho perdido dos grandes pensadores africanos.
Hora de refletir e fortalecer a produção em África e fazer crescer o mercado regional
para criar uma economia sólida. E defender-se dos planos de terceiros, para ganhar
seus próprios motivos e força, recuperando o sonho da União Africana.

EN

It is time for Africa to realize that it must build the old African Union dream.
Time to rebuild the lost dream of great African thinkers.
Time to reflect and strengthen production in Africa and grow the regional market to
create a solid economy. And defend yourself from the plans of others, to gain your
own motives and strength, recovering the African Union dream.

RENÉ TAVARES (b. 1983, São Tomé e Príncipe) - RT35
Cabrito is the new black,
Técnica mista sobre tela / *Mixed media on canvas*
157x143cm, 2020



RENÉ TAVARES (b. 1983, São Tomé e Príncipe) - RT46
African auction,
Técnica mista sobre tela / *Mixed media on canvas*
138x155cm, 2020





New Colony of White African and Black European



RENÉ TAVARES (b. 1983, São Tomé e Príncipe) - RT50-1
New Colony of White African and Black European,
Técnica mista sobre papel / *Mixed media on paper*
70x50cm, 2020



RENÉ TAVARES (b. 1983, São Tomé e Príncipe) - RT50-2
New Colony of White African and Black European,
Técnica mista sobre papel / *Mixed media on paper*
70x50cm, 2020



RENÉ TAVARES (b. 1983, São Tomé e Príncipe) - RT50-3
New Colony of White African and Black European,
Técnica mista sobre papel / *Mixed media on paper*
70x50cm, 2020



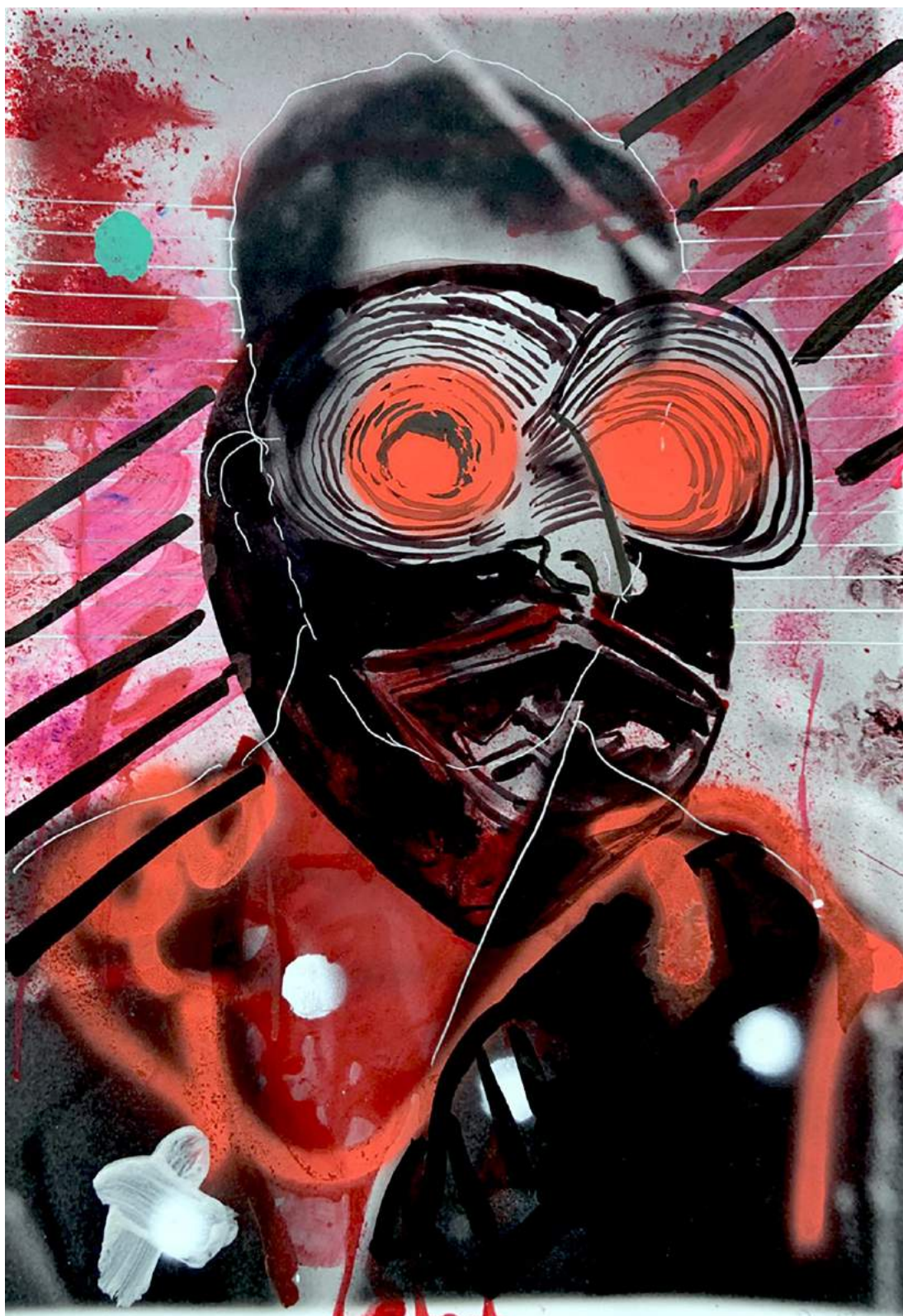
RENÉ TAVARES (b. 1983, São Tomé e Príncipe) - RT50-4
New Colony of White African and Black European,
Técnica mista sobre papel / *Mixed media on paper*
70x50cm, 2020



RENÉ TAVARES (b. 1983, São Tomé e Príncipe) - RT50-5
New Colony of White African and Black European,
Técnica mista sobre papel / *Mixed media on paper*
70x50cm, 2020



RENÉ TAVARES (b. 1983, São Tomé e Príncipe) - RT50-6
New Colony of White African and Black European,
Técnica mista sobre papel / *Mixed media on paper*
70x50cm, 2020



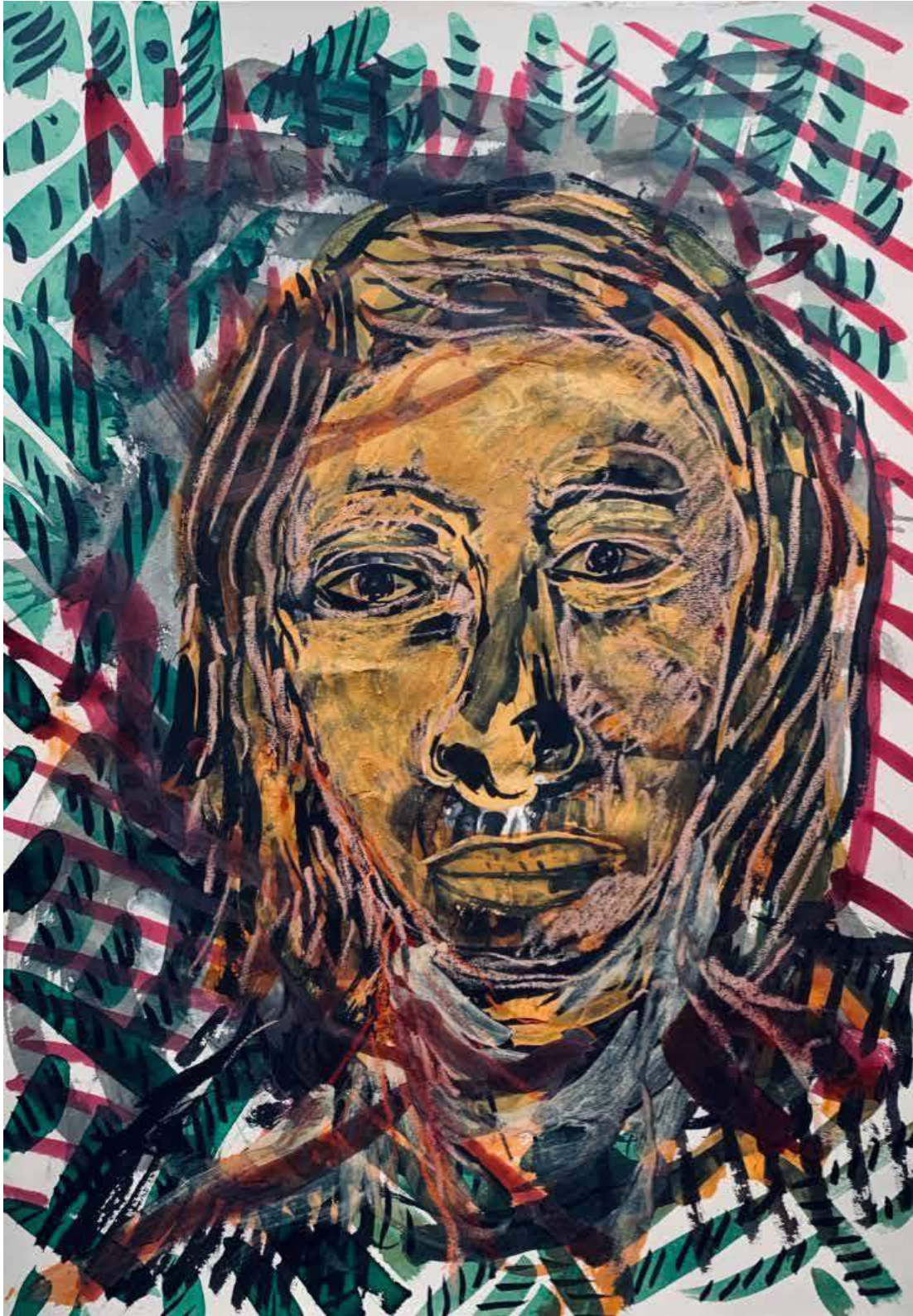
*Unknown potraits.
Ritual to forget enemies*



RENÉ TAVARES (b. 1983, São Tomé e Príncipe) - RT51
Unknown portraits. Série: ritual to forget enemies,
Técnica mista sobre papel / *Mixed media on paper*
70x50cm, 2019



RENÉ TAVARES (b. 1983, São Tomé e Príncipe) - RT52
Unknown potraits. Série: ritual to forget enemies,
Técnica mista sobre papel / *Mixed media on paper*
70x50cm, 2019



RENÉ TAVARES (b. 1983, São Tomé e Príncipe) - RT53
Unknown portraits. Série: ritual to forget enemies,
Técnica mista sobre papel / *Mixed media on paper*
70x50cm, 2019



RENÉ TAVARES (b. 1983, São Tomé e Príncipe) - RT54
Unknown portraits. Série: ritual to forget enemies,
Técnica mista sobre papel / *Mixed media on paper*
70x50cm, 2019



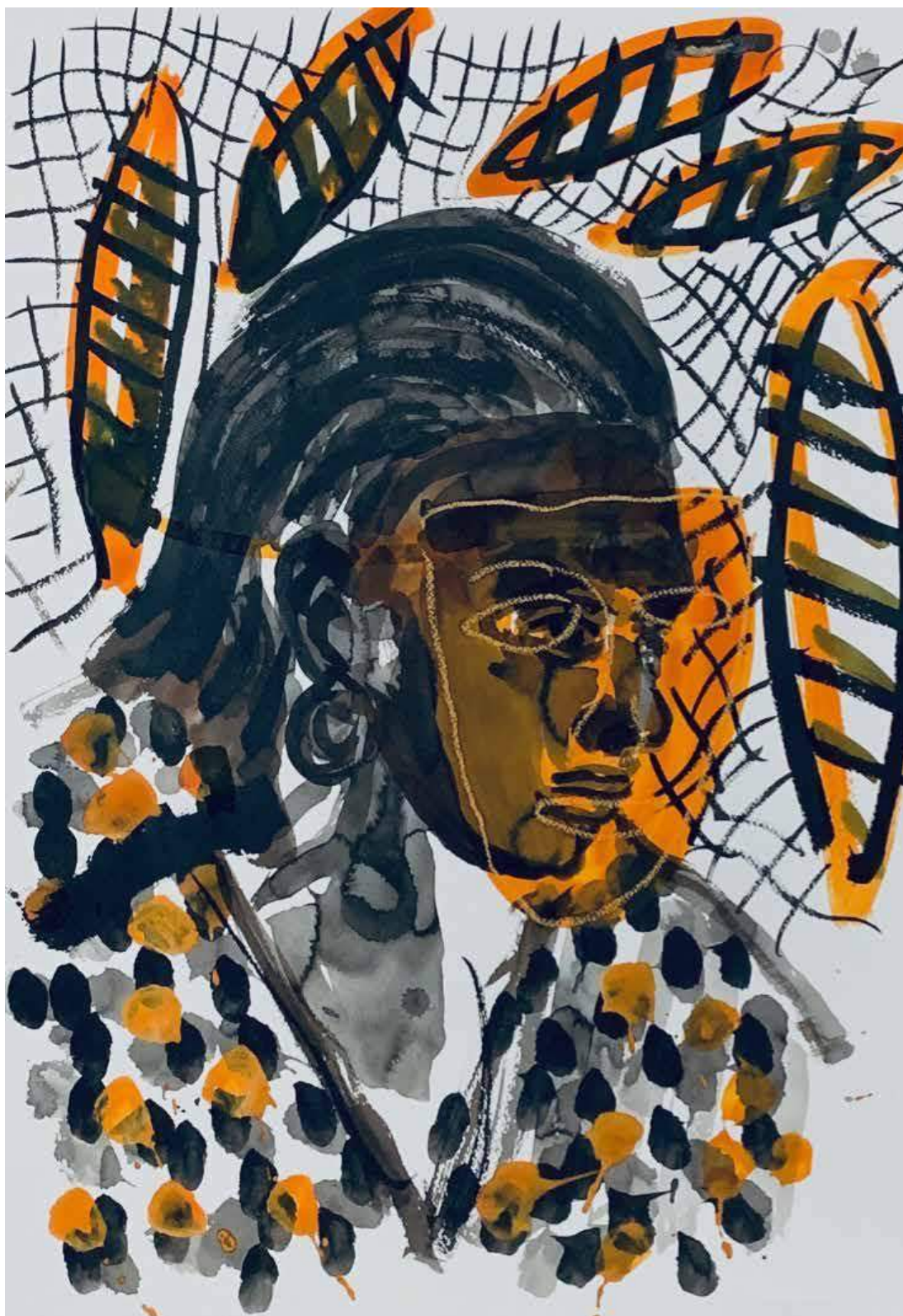
RENÉ TAVARES (b. 1983, São Tomé e Príncipe) - RT55
Unknown portraits. Série: ritual to forget enemies,
Técnica mista sobre papel / *Mixed media on paper*
70x50cm, 2019



RENÉ TAVARES (b. 1983, São Tomé e Príncipe) - RT56
Unknown portraits. Série: ritual to forget enemies,
Técnica mista sobre papel / *Mixed media on paper*
70x50cm, 2019



RENÉ TAVARES (b. 1983, São Tomé e Príncipe) - RT57
Unknown portraits. Série: ritual to forget enemies,
Técnica mista sobre papel / *Mixed media on paper*
70x50cm, 2019



More about René Tavares



Migrations and Things Tchilololi Unlimited

ART AFRICA spoke to artist René Tavares, represented by *This Is Not a White Cube*, about his series *Migrations and Things – Tchilololi Unlimited*



René Tavares, *Untitled* from the series: *Tchiloli unlimited*, 2019, mixed media on chinese calligraphy rice paper, 47x76cm.

ART AFRICA: Can you explain what Tchiloli is and the cultural importance it has in São Tomé and Príncipe?

René Tavares: Tchiloli is a reference play (theatre) in São Tomé and Príncipe, introduced in São Tomé in the 17th century by the Portuguese. It was adapted at the time by the slaves and became a provocative means of communicative demonstration against the Portuguese regime. After its prohibition, like most other African expressions, Tchiloli became a symbol of resistance and is currently a unique artistic expression, which best identifies the culture and the identity creation of the São Tomean people.

Your series 'Migrations and Things – Tchilololi Unlimited' derives a part of its name from this cultural performance. Can you explain how it informs your work?

Tchiloli has been a source of inspiration for me as an artist and an African who defends globalization values. Through Tchiloli, I ask myself about

several themes, and I look for answers or open other questions that result in artworks in different forms and artistic categories: photography, painting and drawings. *Migrations and Things* is an example of this search, and Tchiloli is the engine for its history.

Recently, migration has been a very relevant theme in our daily lives, and this project emerges as a refreshing of the memory of forced occupation, of artefacts taken and brought from Africa to the world and vice versa, of people and goods, brought and exchanged. Tchiloli itself is a piece of Western history taken to São Tomé and adapted by Africans.

This project brings the memory of this exchange, or *cultural sharing* as a result of migration, to a current context. In every work, I have to understand the relationship between time, space, history and heritage to talk about a certain multicultural identity, which is a collective memory that tends to be hidden or devalued today.



Untitled from the series: *Tchiloli unlimited*, 2019. Mixed media on Chinese calligraphy rice paper, 47 x 76cm.

You take a multidisciplinary approach and work across painting, photography and drawing. Can you explain why these are your preferred mediums of expression?

I started painting and drawing very early. I then graduated in visual arts from the school of Fine Arts in Dakar – Senegal, where painting became an important challenge due to the nature of the curriculum. Drawing is the basis of everything; it is an intellectual exercise, a way of writing and

expressing ideas. After Senegal, I went to study in France. I saw the need to look for other answers in photography as an artist, perhaps because of the need to intervene more explicitly and directly, in a less solitary way than painting. Photography also often supports painting and drawing. I think they are languages that marry easily and allow us to express ideas more profoundly.



Untitled from the series: *Tchiloli unlimited*, 2019. Mixed media on Chinese calligraphy rice paper, 47 x 76cm.



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In your artist's statement, you say "More than places, departures or arrivals, our identity is increasingly defined by the set of memories that make up our values." Can you elaborate on what this means and what the relationship between memory and heritage means to you?

I believe more and more through my travels that spaces as a territory have no value if it is not associated with a history or memory I'm experiencing. We are also the set of these memories, and we carry the value of history; this relationship between memory and heritage is what makes our identity.

In the end, all is in process. Both memory and heritage are concerned with the politics of the

past in the present and with the effects of dislocation as people, ideas and objects move away from familiar surroundings to new ones laden with different memory and heritage fabrics.

However, despite the overlapping interests, heritage is more directly focused precisely on those memory triggers that also act as props for narratives of identity and belonging. This relationship is more and more sensible in the contemporary context, and I admit to being the result of this consequence of space or place, in the same way, that I assume my African values and the importance of the message of my values through the territories of departure and arrival.



Untitled from the series: *Tchiloli unlimited*, 2019. Mixed media on Chinese calligraphy rice paper, 47 x 76cm.



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Your recent work has had a more political edge, is there anything in particular that prompted this change in approach?

Art can be understood as a form of political discourse or as a vehicle with which to transcend the political. Art questions our understandings and perceptions of the world, altering the discursive frames within which the political is

negotiated. I'm interested in how to explore art's engagement with politics and its vision of the world but not using art to make politics. I guess this is part of a kind of self-conscience that comes from the fact that I should be more an active citizen, committed to the socio-economic development of my country and my continent.

This Is Not a White Cube's booth at Cape Town Art Fair this year seeks to start a thematic dialogue that deals with memory, identity, tradition and decolonization. Can you explain how 'Migrations and Things – Tchiloli Unlimited' addresses these themes and do you see any similarities between your work and the work of your fellow exhibiting artists?

This is Not a White Cube has a set of artists with excellent languages with regard to identity, memory, archive and traditions. A dialogue is created in which memory is the keyword and of common interest. In this way, we develop dialogues that emphasize the intention to provoke a continuous position of transgressing and insurgence.

There is the idea of overcoming of colonialism, and in *extremis*, the idea of decoloniality that indicates precisely the opposite and seeks to transcend coloniality. Decolonial, therefore, implies a continuous struggle – *A Luta continua*.

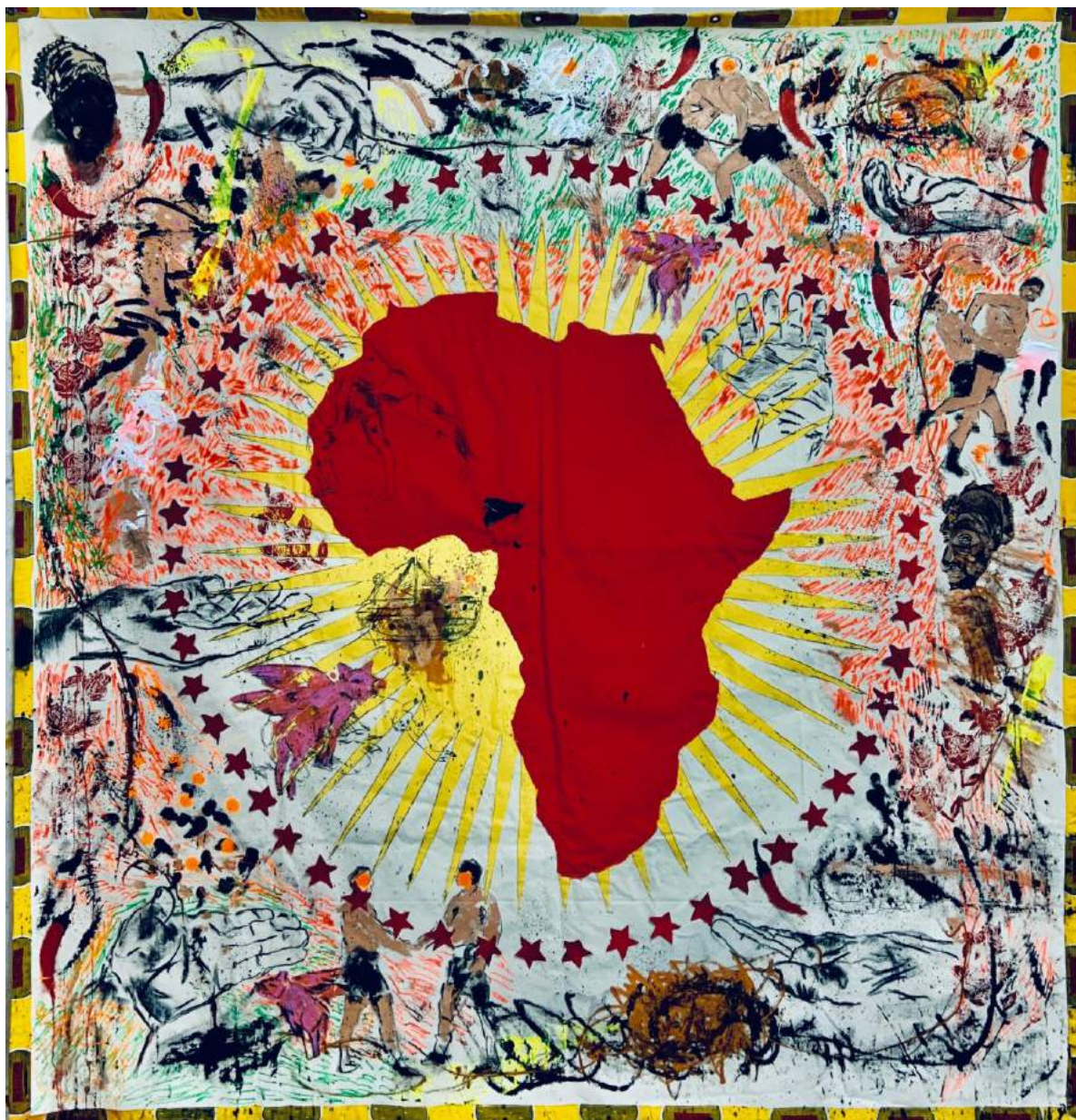
The project *Migrations and Things* is, basically, talking about contemporary societies through this collective memory, invoking a continuous movement of aesthetic, cultural and even linguistic influences. It aims to understand the migratory cycle of the human being as a need intrinsic to the survival of man since the beginning of time and to explore new frontiers of language that emerge. It aims to perpetuate memory and heritage in a space where traditional culture and more contemporary forms of expression intersect.

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Fantastic African Union, 2020
Thinking about Africa's future
Técnica mista sobre tela
Mixed media on canvas
200cmx190cm



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