

Baronian Xippas

Press release

Seyni Awa Camara
2 Rue Isidore Verheyden

04.09 - 24.10.2020

Opening
Thursday 03.09.2020
from 5pm - 9pm
during the
Brussels Gallery Weekend

Seyni Awa Camara

The Baronian Xippas Gallery is pleased to present a personal exhibition of new sculptures by the Senegalese artist Seyni Awa Camara.

Seyni Awa Camara's mother introduced her to traditional pottery techniques when she was just a child but her artistic work rapidly became a far cry from the utilitarian nature of objects moving into a confirmed aesthetic research into form and content.

Seyni Camara is also called the "Magicienne de la Terre" because there is a local legend behind her apprenticeship with clay. Seyni and her brothers were allegedly kidnapped by genies of the forest. It is said that for more than four months, they taught the children all there was to know about pottery. When her children did not come home, their mother and the villagers organised human sacrifices to ensure their return. Seyni and her brothers reappeared one morning, pottery in hand, after four months of absence.

Seyni Camara married at the age of 15 and is said to have experienced difficult deliveries. After being abandoned by her first husband, she met Samba Diallo, who encouraged her in her artistic work. Her second husband, who died in 2004, was her most fervent defender and played the role of mediator between the artist and the cultural world.

Seyni Camara's creations are the result of a long process. She always begins by making sacrifices to the spirits and expresses her wish for them to reveal to her in a dream the forms that she should represent in her statuettes. The next morning, the artist locks herself in her studio and begins to create models based on the shapes that appear inside her head. After preparing the clay, Seyni Camara begins the work of gradually giving shape to the images and characters that populate her mind. It takes her more than ten days to produce some of the sculptures that have complex shapes. The final process of firing the clay is carried out according to an ancestral method; the sculptures are first fired over a wood fire for more than three hours, before being immersed in their hot state in a liquid obtained from putrefied pods of trees. This final stage lends the sculptures their colour and robust quality.

The sculptures of Seyni Camara very often represent pregnant women, maternal figures surrounded by lots of children. Her creations are possibly an outlet, a revelation of the dramatic nature of her intimate thoughts: an animist imagination inspired by nature, local tales and that revolves around the themes of motherhood and sexuality.

Unlike many creators, Seyni Camara has apparently never sculpted in order to attract fame and glory. Her discovery on the international art scene was almost a coincidence when a tourist bought several of her pieces at the market before returning to Europe. Over time, her sculptures aroused curiosity and interest in her work grew as is borne out by the presence of her works in many international exhibitions.

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Seyni Awa Camara was born in around 1939 in Diouwent near Oussouye, in Casamance. She lives and works in Bignona, Senegal. She participated in the exhibition “Magiciens de la Terre” at the Pompidou Centre in 1989. Her works have also been shown at the Venice Biennale, the Museum of Fine Art in Houston and the Pinacoteca Giovanni and Marella Agnelli in Turin. In 2015, Fatou Kandé Senghor directed a documentary film, Giving Birth (Donner Birth) that was presented at the Venice Biennale. This documentary is one of the few testimonies to reveal the complexity of Seyni: her shy extravagance, her artistic eccentricities. Although she loves flashy accessories, Kung Fu films and wears some unusual clothes, there is a gentle and light side of this great woman waiting to be discovered.