



Pavilion of the Seychelles at the 57th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia

Press Release

'Slowly Quietly' is an exhibition of the work of 16 Seychellois artists, collectively known as **Group Sez.**

The Commissioner for the Seychelles Pavilion is Ms Benjamine Rose, Principal Secretary, Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture, Department of Culture.

The Curator is Mr Martin Kennedy and the exhibition is organised by the Seychelles Art Projects Foundation (SAPF), the organisation which successfully managed the first ever Seychelles pavilion at the 56th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia.

SAPF gratefully acknowledges the support of the following organisations, without whom the Pavilion would not be possible: Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture, European Cultural Centre, Global Art Affairs Foundation, Seychelles Tourism Board, Arterial Network Seychelles, Four Seasons Resort Seychelles, GEF Small Grants Programme, The H Resort, National Arts Council, Air Seychelles, Kreolor, Sun Motors, Hunt, Deltel & Co. Ltd, Le Chantier Dental Clinic, Red Coral.

'Creep' is the collective noun for the tortoise and, within the spirit of the theme 'Viva Arte Viva', Seychellois artists of the Group Sez offer for public appreciation and pleasure a 'creep' of 16 life-size Seychelles giant tortoises, each individually customised by the sixteen artists to bring aspects of Seychelles's environment and culture to Venice.

The giant tortoise is revered in the Seychelles for its longevity and character, and has become a national symbol, found in the wild as well as in domestic settings. The fibre glass 'blanks' have become primed canvases for artists to embellish. Group Sez artists have met together, with some sculptures being realised through intense collaboration of concepts and approaches. Most now carry some painting, whilst others have seen their natural forms extended. The power inherent in these creatures – an adult can upturn a car – is evident and implicit, yet many of the final pieces exude a charm and grace that can be simultaneously engaging and unsettling.

Artists have chosen to interpret the project's starting point with great diversity; we have expressionist reptiles and surrealist brethren. Some shine and catch the eye with their gaudy vulgarity; some are sexy, some are scary. For some viewers the transformations are disturbing as well as thought-provoking. Together they present a snapshot of Seychelles today, with the common visual denominator being a creature that appears out of time, its pace and habits out of synch with human lives which, even in the relative calm of Seychelles, are squeezed and rushed.

When visitors interact with living giant tortoises it invariably provokes introspection and reflection. The head of the tortoise, poised and inscrutable, is pocked and lined with an immeasurable and unknowable topography. One can become quite lost looking into its ancient and rheumy eyes, just as one can experience a transformation of time and place before art. Living art. Art that is real. The Group Sez invites you to experience yourselves as well as their project.

Each tortoise has been customised by a different artist of national importance, with the original template created by George Camille and fabricated by Allen Camille.

Artists were free to interpret the 'blank' sculpture in any manner they wished; however most have elected to link their personal reptilian canvas to the inspirational Seychelles topography. Some have



simply painted the tortoise, whilst others have embellished the carapace with additions and extensions.

The Group Sez comprises some of the most celebrated artists working in the Indian region today. Both **George Camille**, b. Seychelles 1963 and **Leon Radegonde**, b. Seychelles 1950, who exhibited at the 56th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia, are once again present. **Camille** is one of Seychelles' foremost artists, producing work that includes painting, drawing and printmaking as well as sculpture, assemblage and installation. This diversity is informed by a well-honed personal ideology and iconography, with symbols and motifs knitting together different forms of visual expression.

Radegonde is one of the most important artists working in the Indian Ocean region. His output is a compelling and complex fusion of found objects, the deployment of unconventional materials and processes and an archival subject matter. Radegonde's work, which spans the divide between representational and non-representational, is a determined exploration of history and a way of life in Seychelles that is fast becoming mythological.

The two artists are this year joined by 14 of their contemporaries.

Colbert Nourrice, b. Seychelles 1964. His work often combines expressive and intuitive compositional forms with a personal hieroglyphic; he responds to the development of Seychelles political life as well as the changing cultural and economic landscape.

Egbert Marday, b. Seychelles 1953. Marday is a prolific artist with a range of stylistic preferences. He creates flat work, assemblage, sculpture and mixed media installations. Like Colbert Nourrice he is a social commentator, quick to identify and comment on injustice, both that of the past as well as the present.

Alcide Libanotis, b. Seychelles 1966. He creates figurative work in response to his environment and experiences, both presently in Seychelles and previously during his art training in China, a period which determined his painting style and informed his future selection of subjects.

Christine Chetty-Payet, b. Seychelles 1969. Chetty-Payet is an artist for whom concepts and the materials which realise them are connected within a powerful synergy. Materials traditionally associated with 'women's work' are honoured as they are reinvented and thereby transcend the context within which we normally experience them.

Alyssa Adams, b. Seychelles 1980. Adams's (often) limited palette compositions are intensely busy. They respond to the insane congestion of the tropical forest, where growth is a fight for survival and light is the ultimate prize. Her tortoise reflects and celebrates this organic mayhem.

Tristan Adams, b. Seychelles 1977. His paintings are often personal responses to panorama and vista; they breathe freely and place the viewer before a comprehensive survey of land, sea and sky. His tortoise's carapace presents us with a bird's eye view of one of Seychelles's islands.

Zoe Chong Seng, b. Seychelles 1987. In Chong Seng's work subjects disappear (completely or partially) and re-appear throughout intense sequences of paintings, creating a sense of mystery and disincorporation. However rather than alienate the viewer as a consequence, the compositions draw people in. They are luscious and seductive, as is the artist's response to the reptilian form.

Marc Luc, b. Seychelles 1959. Luc is principally an expressionist painter who relishes in the creation of generous and gestural brush strokes. We can imagine him licking his lips as he gleefully swipes a heavily loaded paintbrush across his tortoise, depicting a kaleidoscopic rendition of the country's music scene.



Daniel Dodin, b. Seychelles. 1996. Dodin's paintings frequently chronicle personal change through journeying, a characteristic that reflects the artist's time studying in India, where he refined his approach to picture making in an environment which is in many ways the opposite of home – congested, manic and with a powerful beauty derived principally from human activity and creativity rooted in deep religious beliefs.

Danny Sopha, b. Seychelles 1968. Sopha's colourful canvases, often incorporating sculpted relief forms, celebrate the cultural and natural heritage of Seychelles. They portray – often in symbolic form or through the surreal distortion of scale and perspective – everyday activities which bind people together; fishing and dancing for example.

Charles Dodo, b. Seychelles 1971. Much of Dodo's work contains three dimensional elements, even if not qualifying as conventional sculptural forms. His use of relief indicates an intention to move increasingly towards more pronounced projection from the plane, and this passion is reflected in his modification of the tortoise form.

Allen Ernesta, b. Seychelles 1968. Ernesta's work is probably the closest to strict realism being made in Seychelles today; his sources are often photographic and he is an accomplished technician when it comes to rendering editions of reality. His prowess endows his tortoise with a strong surreal quality.

Nigel Henri, b. Seychelles 1967. Writing in a monograph published about Henri's work in 2005, Lynn Blackadder divided the artist's work into distinct yet symbiotic categories: Anba Lanmer (under water), Nou Dimoun (our people) and Nou Leritaz (our heritage), since when the artist has consolidated and extended these key areas of activity. He was, and remains, a distinctive 'artist of Seychelles'.

Christine Harter, b. Seychelles 1951. Harter's oeuvre is mostly watercolour, and so the tortoise project has provoked fresh and exciting directions and media for the artist's consideration. Working with armature and feathers Harter has taken her tortoise out of the mud of its natural habitat and into the air.

Press Office contact:

Ilaria Isola
 Press and Media Relations
 P.O Box 237, Victoria, Seychelles
 Tel: +248 2584227
 Tel; +39 393 3362617 (active starting 5th May 2017)
 Email: seychellesartprojects@gmail.com

