

Adrien Sina

Farafin a ni Toubabou
black and white ethical projects

performances, instruction pieces & videos, 2005-2007

texts by Adrien Sina + Sarah Wilson



Farafin a ni Toubabou Adrien Sina + Mamary Diallo

The Black Man an' the White Man
video 16/9, 04:58 min, sound, **Bamako** (Mali), 2007

My white arms are dyed in black with coal dust, his black arms are dyed in white with clay... white hands on a black background and black hands on a white zone : the inversion of our territories blurs our behavior and establishes a factor of indeterminacy. Our hands structure routes of fast exchange. Reflecting reality, passports, weapons, immigrants, deported immigrants, medicines, tourism of the hunt, American war movies, money, minerals, fetishes, pass from one territory to another regardless of any notion of control, balance or equity.

After few seconds, we no longer know who is rejecting whom, who is exploiting whom, who behaves as black or who behaves as white, who is guilty or who is innocent. For centuries the North needed the energy of the South, now rejection, humiliation and stigmatization have returned - an absurdity in the age of multidirectional exchanges within the city-world. A campaign image cut out from *Le Monde* newspaper offers the reminder: 'Immigrants are not criminals'...

Sharing a common history we've already taken so much from those to whom we thought we had given all... Otherness should more than ever be reversed into sameness...



The Small Clouds which Cross the Sky of the Soul

Adrien Sina

video 16/9, 01:41 min, mute, Bamako (Mali), 2007

As in a landscape, clouds cover and discover the sun, worries or peacefulness cover and discover the sky of the soul, making perceptible variations in expression of the face, when eyelids are closed... A mute exchange takes place beyond words, beyond the gaze, in the heart of silence. The temporality of this video is sweet and suspended... slowed down and soundless.

I simply asked children to think with closed eyes... a deep inner reality migrates from inside to the surface of the skin, making perceptible their pain or pleasure... imagination and dream...

For a very short moment, the eyes are opened... on the final screen, the expression is no longer the same....

Beyond mere embodiment, the incarnation of mental universes, may we touch here a glimpse of anamnesis ?



Small Clouds which Cross the Sky of the Soul 2 *Adrien Sina*

video 16/9, 01:08 min, sound, Bamako (Mali), 2007

A little girl has her hair dressed by her mother on the threshold of their house in a crowded street of Bamako. The gestures seem to be repetitive and endless. Regardless of their utility, they are part of the mother-child body continuum after birth.

The girl is somehow dancing and chanting while seated. Her movements are the result of a dilemma: moving without moving apart, keeping her head in the same position accessible to her mother. Sometimes an expression of pain covers her face as her hair is stretched.

Her mind is present and absent at the same time. Nothing interferes with her inner thoughts. No passer by, no car, no truck, no bicycle, no dog, no urban noise can disturb her 'serious concentration'.

During few seconds, a small cloud of happiness crosses the sky of her soul, she expresses a small smile amplified in slow motion in this video... then back to ordinary worries...



Fables of La Fontaine (the fountain) 5 *Adrien Sina*

video 16/9, 02:28 min, sound, Bamako (Mali), 2007

In the less-favored neighborhoods, at the corner of each block, a simple pump – a fountain – provides a large part of the city with drinking water. Only women or girls submit themselves to the drudgery of water-bearing... unoccupied men pass in the street ; no glance is exchanged... These parallel worlds run alongside each other without any encounter...

Yet women know how to transform this drudgery into a moment of socialization, of relaxation, of end-of-day exchanges, confidences and complicity. Their precise, controlled gestures, their proud and graceful bearing, transform the age-old act of water-carrying into a pure aesthetic ritual.



Suspended Moments *Adrien Sina*

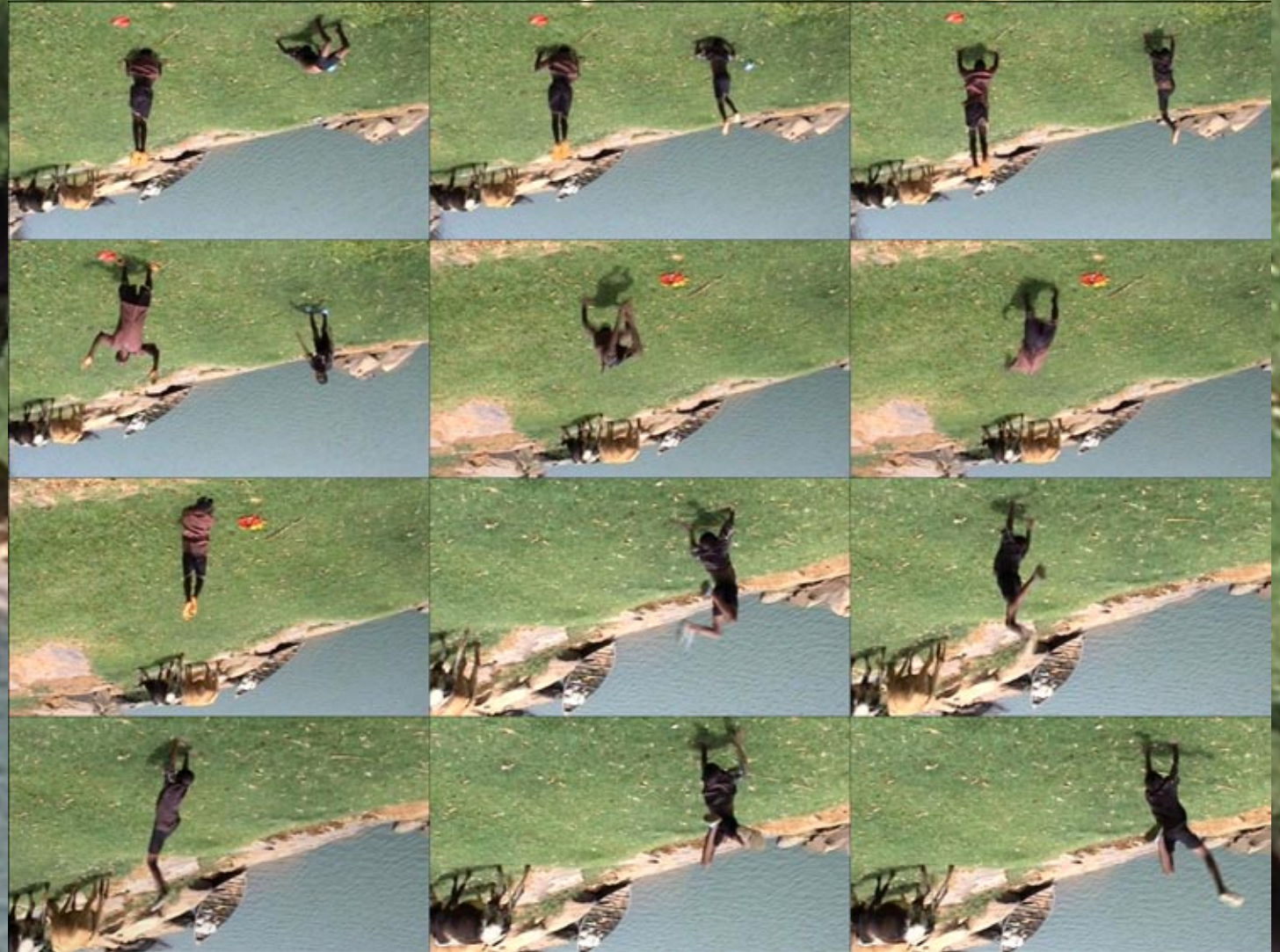
video 16/9, 02:25 min, mute, Bamako (Mali), 2007

Two shepherds whose herd grazes the grass of a restaurant garden on the borders of the river Niger are driven out by the owner.

Nomadism is a tradition, the grass has dried out everywhere; there is only green vegetation on golf courses or in the gardens of tourist haunts. Where else to go?

I greet them to show my solidarity. They reply to my sign of complicity with some peaceful acrobatics, the last demonstration of their pride before accepting their retreat.

This inversion of the values, inversion of the aggressivity of rich people into a peaceful reply of upside down bodies led me logically to mount this film upside down in time and gravity. Bodies, intentions and moments appears to be suspended in all the meanings of the term...



Toubabou... Toubabou... *Adrien Sina*

video 16/9, 07:18 min, sound, Bamako (Mali), 2007

This video depicts the psychology of the crowd, of rumors spreading, of individual and collective behaviour.

I walk in the city with my camera carried vertically, in order not to show the poverty of the neighborhood. I film the skipping of children surrounding me... There are three, then six, then twenty, then thirty or more... a cloud of minuscule beings agitated around me.

Suddenly a child pronounces the word 'Toubabou'. A word that parents teach their children, indicating - without rancor or hatred - the white man. Toubabou comes from *toubib*, doctor... Once this word pronounced, it spontaneously structures the amorphous collective movements and transforms the random noise into a song and dance whirling around me to the chanted rhythm of 'Toubabou... Toubabou... Toubabou...'

Looking at their behaviour, it is clear who will be who tomorrow, who will do what, who will have a lust for success at the expense of others, who will be left on the borders of society... Richness or poverty is also visible in their clothing - as is the care or affection given or withheld by their parents. A rising crescendo within the logic of crowds reveals steps leading from curiosity, enthusiasm to protective or aggressive power relations.



Walking around the Planet *Adrien Sina*

video 16/9, 06:19 min, mute, **Joucas** (France), 2005

This is the long story of a person that we could imagine as a single sequence stretching over several fragments of a life. The person is small, tall, woman, man, black, white... he or she walks as though walking around a planet of the different landscapes : the city, the bush, the forest... but always same walk, in the same direction....

The walking feet form a ribbon of ever-changing presences : the feet stride on, forcefully, tentatively, prettily... Pink toes, brown sandals, shoes in the dust, shoes on the road or across a path.

The march continues, continues, straight on, around the world : beyond the horizon is another horizon, other marchers, other marches ? Or the same ? The idea is that the duration of projection of this video could correspond to the duration of a walk around the Planet : one year. In one year we can make the 40.000 kilometer tour of the Planet, walking day and night with a normal pace....



Fables of La Fontaine (the fountain) 1

Adrien Sina

Washing Hands
video 16/9, 03:08 min, **Joucas** (France), 2005

I ask passers by to freshen their hands with the water of the fountain. Into the water hands dip and rise, touching the fluid element. Beyond individual practices, unaware beliefs, religious, cultural or superstitious rituals appear, unique each time.

Some white hands play with the water as if it were not a precious element, some others play purification rituals.

Some black hands conserve the rare and precious liquid. There are ritual prayers, gestures repeated a specific number of times, bright beliefs or dark fetishisms...

Carried by people from countries spread all over the Planet, many cultural differences or similarities are revealed through this simple choreography of hands.



Fables of La Fontaine (the fountain) 2

Adrien Sina

Couples
video 16/9, 02:48 min, **Joucas** (France), 2005

I ask the couples, real or coming together just for the occasion, to make a pause in their walk through the village, to remove their shoes, and to relax in the water of the fountain. Then I ask them to improvise or to invent an intersubjective language of communication with their feet.

A whole gamut of behaviour is displayed, from devouring love to intense shyness. The energy of the couple in love is reflected in the imaginative quality of their games and their complicity.

The mute language of feet can reveal better than words the state of their love story, the success of their inter-racial relationship, especially between couples of different nationalities whom I asked to take part; hence the play between different skin-colors.





Adrien Sina is an artist and theoretician. He has curated cross-disciplinary exhibitions involving architecture, performance, video and philosophy: *Fugitive Fluctuations*, *Tragédies Charnelles*, *Immanences Spatiales*. Thinker in Residence at London's Live Art Development Agency, for Performing Rights, he is planning the exhibition and publication 'Feminine Futures: Performance, War, Politics and Eroticism' for the PERFORMA Biennial, New York, 2009. This project is partly reflected in the catalogue of the Pompidou Centre exhibition 'Traces of the Sacred'.

Adrien Sina lives and works in Paris and London.

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