



## ART CITIES:Paris-Romuald Hazoumè

13/05/2016



**The work of Romuald Hazoumè deals with the social and political history of Africa and Africa's dynamic, ever-changing role within the international art scene. He repudiates the idea that Africa's problems exist as an anomaly "We need to understand that we have the same problems all over the world on different levels. We all take up this "Coca Cola" culture, which makes us unaware of our own culture". He argues that we exist within a global situation in which we are all unaware of our own direction and origins – a problem that he deals with in his work.**

**By Efi Michalarou  
Photo Gagosian Gallery Archive**

Romuald Hazoumè uses salvaged materials as an artistic medium, transforming discarded items into spiritually and culturally significant works and installations. He is most widely recognized for his masks made of old gasoline containers and the like, which convey the Vodun\* idea that materials possess a spiritual nature of their own. Through his choice media, Hazoumé also explores cultural and political issues such as globalization, the legacy of slavery and colonization, and the role of the oil industry in Benin. Romuald Hazoumè's solo exhibition at the two spaces of Fagosian Gallery in Paris, is spanning his work of the last two

decades and includes sculpture, installation works, and a single large-scale photographic tableau. In a creative gesture that evokes Marcel Duchamp's readymades, Hazoumé appropriates and reconfigures the commonly found gasoline jerrican as a mask. His deliberate choice of this material addresses the impact of Western consumerism on Africa. The Beninese rely upon Nigeria for petrol, supplied in jerricans via extensive black market trading between the neighboring countries. These canisters, usually made of black rubber from Germany, accumulate in the streets of Cotonou and Porto-Novo. Hazoumé relishes the irony of sending discarded matter back to Europe and the United States through his creations. In contrast to the intimately scaled masks are monumental mixed-media installations. **“Rat-singer: Second Only to God!”** (2013) is, doubtless, a sardonic retort to Pope Benedict XVI's paternalistic advice to Africans about society, economy and spirituality, reported during a visit in 2011. Here, a large white rat perches on a crossbar of an upended boat made entirely of flattered bidons, capsizing into an eddy of the same plastic containers.

\*Vodun is a derivative of the world's oldest known religions which have been around in Africa since the beginning of human civilization, in Benin is practiced by the Gbe speaking ethnic groups of West Africa.

**Info: Curator: André Magnin, Gagosian Gallery, 4 rue de Ponthieu (2<sup>nd</sup> Floor), Paris, Duration: 19/4-1/7/16, Days & Hours: Tue-Sat 11:00-19:00 & 26 Avenue de l'Europe, Le Bourget (Paris), Duration: 19/4-1/7/16, Days & Hours: Tue-Sat 11:00-18:00, [www.gagosian.com](http://www.gagosian.com)**



Romuald Hazoumé, Antidépresseur, 2013, © Romuald Hazoumé/ADAGP 2016, Photo: Thomas Lannes, Gagosian Gallery Archive



Romuald Hazoumè, Installation view at Gagosian Gallery Le Bourget-Paris, © Romuald Hazoumè/ADAGP 2016, Photo:Thomas Lannes, Gagosian Gallery Archive



Romuald Hazoumè, Installation view at Gagosian Gallery Paris Project Space, © Romuald Hazoumè/ADAGP 2016, Photo:Thomas Lannes, Gagosian Gallery Archive



Romuald Hazoumè, Installation view at Gagosian Gallery Le Bourget-Paris, © Romuald Hazoumè/ADAGP 2016, Photo:Thomas Lannes, Gagosian Gallery Archive

<http://www.dreamideamachine.com/en/?p=12840>