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On immigration, Hazoumè's sculpture, painting capture 'All In The Same Boat'

By Tajudeen Sowole | 31 October 2016



Romuald Hazoumè's *Cry of the Whale*, mixed media installation, 250 x 650 x 140 cm. PHOTO: Jonathan Greet/October Gallery

One of the leading contemporary African artists in the Diaspora space, Romuald Hazoumè, expands his thematic focus on 21st-century human movement challenges. Benin Republic-born, Hazoumè, whose revered sculptural work of mostly alternative medium such as discarded objects, is currently showing a body of work titled *All In The Same Boat*, till November 26, 2016 at October Gallery, London, U.K.

Winner of Arnold-Bode-Prize at dOCUMENTA 12, in 2007, Hazoumè is no doubt in a familiar space, after showing thrice at October Gallery as well as having the same gallery shown his works at art fairs outside the U.K.

Among the works – viewed via soft copies are *Cry of the Whale*, mixed media installation; *Tricky Dicey Die*, metal, plastic, wood, mirror and *Mutti*, wood, metal, plastic, 182 x 180 x 190cm.

With quite a tone of humour, Hazoumè has established himself as a pseudo-satirist whose work, radically, pierces through the conscience of Africans' defeatist attitude as well as modern economic and political imperialists within and outside the continent. For example, in *Mutti!*, a three dimensional female figure dated 2016, which roves over three characters of a woman: depicts what looks like an African deity, or goddess; German leader, Angela Merkel look-alike; and a

widely accepted soft-hearted mother cuts across culture. The title of the sculpture, adapted from German word for mother is the artist's expression for concern, over Europe immigrants crisis. Also featuring in the exhibition is what the gallery describes as a five-meter long crashed boat and a dice made of thousands of found flip-flops. The theme "addresses the movement of people across the world and reflects upon the dramatic narratives created by migrants forced by war or famine from their home country."

Hazoumè, a painter, sculptor, photographer and filmmaker, according to a curatorial statement of the exhibition, keeps showing how his powerful creations mark him as one of the most innovative and exciting personalities to emerge from Africa.

Excerpts from the gallery statement: His work first came to prominence in the U.K. with the inclusion of his 'masks' in the Saatchi Gallery's 'Out of Africa' show, in 1992. In the past twenty years his work has been widely shown throughout Europe, the United States and Asia, including the British Museum, the Guggenheim Bilbao, the Museum of Arts and Design, New York, the Irish Museum of Modern Art and recently this year, in two different sites at Gagosian, Paris.

His works are in prominent public and private collections around the world, including the permanent collections of the British Museum, London; Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane and Neue Galerie, Kassel.

<http://guardian.ng/art/on-immigration-hazoumes-sculpture-painting-capture-all-in-the-same-boat/>