

# **Saâdane Afif**

## **Anthologie de l'humour noir**

**18 February – 1 April 2012**

MMK Zollamt – an external exhibition space of the MMK Museum für Moderne Kunst Frankfurt am Main devoted to presenting the work of young artists – features the first solo exhibition in a German museum of French artist Saâdane Afif (b. 1970), recipient of the Marcel Duchamp prize in 2009. This exhibition will mark the new developments of his project initiated at the Centre Pompidou in 2010.

In this presentation, titled after André Breton's seminal "Anthologie de l'humour noir", Afif plays with the African influences on the European avant-garde while also linking it to modern French art and literature.

The centre piece of the exhibition is a coffin manufactured in Ghana; Afif is 'using' a custom which has recently taken hold there: figurally designed coffins serve as a form of commemoration of the deceased. The shape of the coffin is a reference to the Centre Pompidou. This coffin with the title *Humour Noir* is an allusion to "black humour" a phrase coined by above-named André Breton.

The coffin forms the core of the exhibition and the point of crystallization for several threads of meaning: the artist's biography, the history of the Centre Pompidou, the sculptural tradition of Africa and the early twentieth-century European avant-garde artists' fascination with so-called "primitive" sculpture. An especially important aspect, however, is the reference to the programmatic proclamations of precisely those artists – the Futurists, Dadaists and Surrealists – who critically examined the museum institution in their manifestos, and who rejected its conservative function. In this context, the coffin becomes a self-deprecating symbol of the museum as a burial place for its own corpse. By way of Breton's "black humour", Saâdane Afif thus interfaces the young Ghanaian tradition of figural coffins with the tradition of European modernism.

As he does in his work since the past ten years, Afif has invited artists, curators and critics to write song lyrics about his ideas concerning the exhibition. On the evening of the opening, the lyrics will be presented to the public in a performance: two actors will proclaim them in a manner recalling the history of the square in front of the Centre Pompidou. In the 1980s, the street bollards there came to serve as podiums for all manner of self-appointed public speakers, and people gathered around them to philosophize and debate.

The presentation of "Anthologie de l'humour noir" at the MMK Zollamt in Frankfurt provides Saâdane Afif with a new opportunity to show the coffin in the shape of the Centre Pompidou. Once again he raises questions such as: To whom does the coffin belong? For whom was it made? –

without apodictically answering them. At the MMK Zollamt, Afif will unfold his ideas beyond the specific and anecdotal limits of his Paris experience to encompass a more general scope, a new and broader dimension of meaning. In Frankfurt, Saâdane Afif will thus enhance the original Paris show with a new stage of thought.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a catalogue with texts by Eva Huttenlauch, Adam Kleinman, Patrick Moran/Bernard Gendrel, Nana Oforiatta-Ayim and Regula Tschumi.

**Opening and Performance:**  
17 February 2012, 7 pm

The exhibition and catalogue are being made possible with support from: Jürgen Ponto-Stiftung zur Förderung junger Künstler , Institut français, FAZIT Stiftung

**Press Photos**

Press photos can be downloaded on our website [www.mmk-frankfurt.de](http://www.mmk-frankfurt.de)

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