

NEGRITO BONITO
by Papo Colo, 2009
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The purpose of this exhibition is to dramatize an idea (yes, an exhibition is a stage for the public) born thousands of years ago.

Why do we have different colors of skin? Climate? Pigments? Certainly not social behavior or religion. It is a scientific fact that Africa is the cradle of civilization. And in the beginning there were no other humans other than those people burned by the sun that developed dark skin for protection from the sun. Scientists concluded that the first humans of Africa populated the whole world. Négritude then is an international physical expression, the genes of Africa were remixed and created different shades of color from black to white. Confirming that race is the multiplicity of color...we are all mixed...purity is in the mixture. Social influences indoctrinate us with the different values of skin color. Before the discovery and occupation of the New World there were white and black slaves, but with land to conquer, fresh bodies were needed to work the richness of the Americas and exterminate the ancient lands of native populations. Africa and the Africans were a new business to exploit, explore and multiply. Power must justify its behavior, and that was race. With the slave trade populating the Americas, inferiority was imposed on Africa.

Négritude is in us from the beginning. Great poets have this first language, that combines words to synthesize primal ideas that are wrapped in a unique way to surprise us. Aimé Césaire is one of those poets. With his visionary way of naming something as abstract as race, he reminds us that naming is possession, but naming a race is inventing a tradition and he did it with organized words, poetry. Return to the Native Land, his opus poem, can become anything that you want including an exhibition. Art is pregnant with science and history. Aesthetics change, depending on how power understands it.

“Négritude is an ensemble of characteristics attached to the black race.” That’s what my French dictionary says, but for me, one of its many definitions is that Négritude is a condition of the hybrid state that defines us after the colonization of the New World. And today it is more relevant because of the multiple emigrations from the “colors” countries to the “white” ones. This word, Négritude, names and appropriates everything that it touches. Négritude is a net word, a word that connects. A DNA code of pigments replicated billions of times. We are the same with different shades of color. Populations explode, mix up the crowd and Négritude emerges. With the gene of race running away from the lies of history, the invention of race was born away from the race of light against darkness, holding the gene of memory, with elegant panache, inside and outside of any aesthetic.

Yes, Négritude has grown with us because it is us. Historical propaganda teaches us that Europe is a different civilization than Africa and the Middle East, but anthropology shows us that it is not completely the truth, because the Mediterranean Sea is shared by these continents. Influences, ideas and wars cross this sea as physical and spiritual messengers of our hybrid civilization, today well defined in our Americas.

Négritude is a word that is a world.

Text for the exhibition at Exit Art NY
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