

# TEMPLON



OMAR BA

WHITEWALLER, 10 octobre 2018

# OMAR BA'S

CRITICAL NEW WORKS AT GALERIE TEMPLON

By Katy Donoghue

Galerie Templon opens its fall season with a solo exhibition by Omar Ba. Entitled "Autopsy of Our Consciences," the show takes on a critical stance, looking at recent history, environmental concerns, and the artist's personal story.

*Whitewaller* spoke with Ba about the theme of voluntary forgetfulness that he has addressed throughout the exhibition, which is on view through October 27.

**WHITEWALLER:** What was the starting point for the body of work on view in "Autopsy of Our Consciences"? Was there a piece that kicked off this series of paintings?

**OMAR BA:** The starting point of this exhibition was the work *Diafate* that I created for the collective exhibition "Quel Amour!?" which I was invited to participate in at MAC, Marseille, until September 2, 2018, and then at Museu Coleção Berardo, Lisbon, Portugal.

I began with this piece, which speaks of maternal love. It started from there, and from another work, *Autopsie de nos croyances* (2018) that I showed during the fair Art Geneva, which spoke about problems around belief, of religion; the influence and impact of religion on humans. I made a painting as a kind of city, composed of religious architecture—synagogues, mosques, churches, temples—mixed, to show the similarity that exists at the level of beliefs, and, paradoxically, its differences. This was the starting point of my reflection for the exhibition in Paris.

**WW:** How did you arrive at a theme around forgetfulness?

**OB:** This is an observation I made when I first arrived to Europe: I saw that there was a bias in the perception of black people; their origins and their history were not known at all and even obscured, and this creates prejudices and injustices.

I started to look carefully at it, to analyze the reasons for certain attitudes, certain behaviors. I was interested in the story, the way we forge the image of "the other." I realized the problems of discrepancy

between appearance and reality, the discrepancy of what is transmitted by the media, in official writings.

This subject, the theme of voluntary forgetfulness, of amnesia, comes back all the time in my work. It is a subject that forms the center, the base.

Double identity in action, right here.

**WW:** How did you want to approach the idea of maternal love and sacrifice?

**OB:** It came naturally: I always realized that if today I am what I am, especially if I was able to study, it is thanks to the love of my mother. In my family, there were no artists; nobody could know I could survive on art. But she always supported me.

For me, it is obvious that this love has always been present, but it gave me extra strength to recognize it, that we cannot start from nothing, we all come from somewhere . . . yet we've never seen a man give life: The basis of human life comes from the woman.

At the same time, I come from a society in which, before the arrival of the great religions or colonization, we lived in matriarchy; the hard core of the family was the woman.

**WW:** What colors were you drawn to, to create these paintings?

**OB:** From the outset, I am always attracted by the base color: black. From that, I develop other colors. Here, I tried to start from the black base but add a few more colors that pull toward the violence—red—but I always add on a color that alleviates the pain and the violence of the painting: white.



Omar Ba, 2017, courtesy Templon, Paris & Brussels.

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Omar Ba, *Junglejunkie of war 1*, 2018, courtesy Templon, Paris & Brussels