



MARCEL PINAS

KIBII

WII

THE  
EVENT

MAR 17 -  
OCT 30,  
2011

KONI

SURINAME



*Faaka Tiki France 2007, installation, 2007*

PHOTO Marcel Pinas, 2007

## ◀ FAAKA TIKI

*Faaka Tiki 2011, installation by Marcel Pinas and school children participating in the Villa Zapakara-part of Kibii Wi Koni Marcel Pinas The Event, April 2011 / PHOTO Harvey Lisse, 2011*

Faaka tiki poles are a sign of welcome, but also serve as a reminder to cherish cultural heritage.

The sturdy wooden poles are decorated with colorful pieces of cloth, painted symbols and other dear mementoes.

Faaka tiki stokken dienen als welkomstteken, maar fungeren ook als een prikkel om het cultureel erfgoed te koesteren. De stevige houten palen zijn versierd met kleurige stukjes stof, geschilderde symbolen en andere dierbare kleinoden.

## AFAKA

Signs of the times ... The Afaka script is a secret writing developed shortly after 1910. It was used during a few decades by some of the N'dyuka people in the Tapanahony region. It is named after the man who invented the 56 syllable script: Afaka Atumisi.

Tekens van de tijd ... het Afaka-schrift is een geheime schrijfwijze die kort na 1910 ontwikkeld is. Gedurende enkele decennia was het in gebruik bij enkele N'dyuka-mensen in het Tapanahony-gebied. Het is genoemd naar de man die het 56 tekens tellende syllabeschrift ontwikkelde: Afaka Atumisi.

# TEMBE

'Tembe', the word used for the decorative patterns which are carved in wood, is actually a way of life. Not only does the use of tembe make objects more beautiful; it is also a way of conveying a message without using words. Marcel Pinas uses symbols and patterns as a means of communication. He has a message for society: 'kibri a kulturú'; 'preserve the culture'.

The motifs on Pinas' canvasses underline his intention to preserve elements from the N'dyuka culture, also in the present day. The vivid colors find their origin in Suriname's abundant flora and fauna.

'Tembe' is het woord dat gebruikt wordt voor de decoratieve patronen die in hout gesneden worden. In feite is tembe veel meer; het is een leefwijze. Tembe wordt niet alleen toegepast vanwege de decoratieve waarde; het is

ook een manier om een boodschap over te brengen zonder woorden te gebruiken. Marcel Pinas gebruikt symbolen en patronen als een communicatiemiddel. Hij heeft een boodschap voor de maatschappij: 'kibri a kulturú'; 'behoud de cultuur'.

De patronen op de doeken van Pinas benadrukken zijn intentie om elementen van de N'dyuka-cultuur ook in de huidige tijd in stand te houden. De levendige kleuren vinden hun oorsprong in de weelderige flora en fauna van Suriname.

*Untitled, mixed media on canvas, 2007*

PHOTO Marcel Pinas, 2007



# A LIBI

Life. The clock is ticking. The mercury pollution that goes hand in hand with the destructive search for gold threatens the life of the people in the interior. Nature is harmed. Culture is lost. Life becomes death. The time to act is now.

Het leven. De klok tikt. De kwikvervuiling die hand in hand gaat met de vernietigende zoektocht naar goud bedreigt het leven van de mensen in het binnenland. De natuur wordt beschadigd. De cultuur gaat verloren. Het leven maakt plaats voor de dood. Nu is het moment om in actie te komen.

*A Libi, installation, 2008 / PHOTO Marcel Pinas, 2008*





## FETI

Slingshots. Catapulting echoes of the fight for freedom, the fight for survival, the fight for respect and recognition. For the right to speak and to be heard. Get up, stand up.

Katapulten. Ze lanceren echo's van de strijd voor vrijheid, de strijd om te overleven, de strijd voor respect en erkenning. Voor het recht om te spreken en om gehoord te worden. Sta op.

## KIBII WI KONI

Bottles, wrapped with pangis, the clothing of the Maroon people, are traditionally used to store homemade potions and medicines made from all natural ingredients. Here they symbolize the wisdom of previous generations carefully stored. Kibii wi koni. Preserve our knowledge. The silhouettes of the enslaved forefathers remind the viewer of the past, of the road that lies behind. Bottles and figures, telling the story of who the ancestors were and from whence they came. The story of who they have become, what they have achieved and all that we should never forget – and always embrace.

Flessen, omwikkeld met pangistof, de kleding van de marrons, worden gewoonlijk gebruikt om huismiddelen en medicijnen gemaakt met ingrediënten uit de natuur in te bewaren. Hier staan zij symbool voor de wijsheid van vorige generaties die zorgvuldig bewaard wordt. Kibii wi koni. Bewaar onze kennis. De silhouetten van de tot slaaf gemaakte voorvaders herinneren de toeschouwer aan het verleden, aan de weg die achter ons ligt. Flessen en figuren, ze vertellen het verhaal van wie de voorouders waren, van de weg die zij afgelegd hebben. Het verhaal van wie zij geworden zijn, wat zij bereikt hebben en alles dat wij niet moeten vergeten – en altijd moeten omarmen.

*Kibii Wi Koni*, installation, 2011





*School at Pelgrimkondre 2005, installation, 2005*  
PHOTO Hubert Hermelijn, 2005

## PELGRIMKONDRE

School benches from Pelgrimkondre, the small village in the Marowijne district where Marcel Pinas was born. The children of Pelgrimkondre can't fight for their right to have a good school. With his art Marcel Pinas gives them a voice.

Schoolbanken van Pelgrimkondre, het kleine dorp in het district Marowijne waar Marcel Pinas is geboren. De kinderen van Pelgrimkondre kunnen niet vechten voor hun recht op een goede school. Met zijn kunst geeft Marel Pinas hun een stem.

*Reconnecting, installation, 2008*  
PHOTO Marcel Pinas, 2008

## RECONNECTING ►

During a journey to the African continent, Marcel Pinas saw – sometimes unexpected – similarities with home. There, in Cameroon, he understood more about his own culture. Pinas started reconnecting.

Tijdens een reis naar het Afrikaanse continent zag Marcel Pinas – soms onverwachte – overeenkomsten met thuis. Daar, in Kameroen, begreep hij meer van zijn eigen cultuur. Pinas begon met 'reconnecten', met heraansluiten.



# ESSAY



There is a credible life — a discreet politics — in imagined forms; in objects transformed into signs. Ideas of place can be conjured or conveyed not as replacements or stand-ins, but as the indicators of their own experiential moment. We are talking about the intent of the artist and also about the challenge, in postcolonial spaces, of intervening and dislodging his work from a longer history of conventional readings.

As a contemporary artist, Marcel Pinas is not weary of nor sees himself in conflict with tradition. So it becomes quite ironic when his work is read through a Modernist lens as a significant other. His idea of tradition is perpetually in the present tense, already adapting, always alive, always anticipating the next step.

Pinas is no iconoclast, though his bad-boy status is derived from his rethinking of the value of tradition in response to the over-simplification and undermining of his community by the “melting pot” ideology of national regimes.

Within Pinas’s programme, a practical gesture such as opening a locally owned restaurant, the building of a small stage for musicians to perform, the creating of a memorial sculpture on the site of the infamous Moiwana massacre or an international residency and sculpture park in this location have to be understood as part of his creative process, artistic vision and sense of purpose. Within his process, the installations and reconstructions, placed in various spaces in Europe or even in Paramaribo, become guided tours, not for cultural display or difference as entertainment, but as sense-based reconstructions of presence and memory.

One can say that he is blurring the traditional boundary between artist and curator. Each new configuration — each new life given to these altered objects — each arrangement — tells a story of survival which we all carry or internalize through engaging the work. We become collaborators through what we produce by experiencing the work.

The artist is always articulating visibility, on many fronts. Where, then, should the work reside, ideally? In Moengo? In an art space or a tropical institute? What does it conflate or dismantle? There is an irony to that question, as Pinas’s leadership and participation in the rebuilding of the community of Moengo is in itself a site-specific artwork. In negotiating with all these contexts/circumstances, it asks if other practices can also be able, or are willing, to cross the same territories as expansively.

Pinas’s work resides in the Americas somewhere between constructions of the Caribbean, South America, and also Latin America, and not exclusively in the peripheral vision of Dutch colonial memory or within its current arguments with immigration and multiculturalism.

In some way, his work provides another platform for a Dutch (and also Surinamese) engagement of the Americas, but not through ethnography or anthropological foraging. It’s a contemporary conversation. The vocabulary shifts the relationship or the register from within the nostalgic longings of Modernity with its ironic colonial gaze. We are witnessing, over time, a cultural intervention — a memory in the process of re-inventing itself — malleable in its retelling and in its reconstruction.

The strategies that Pinas uses to develop and position his work are the same as many contemporary artists regionally and internationally, where the shift has been from ethnic, national and cultural representation to more individualized investigations and vocabularies. Moengo can be understood as just another location in the larger Caribbean story shaped by our respective journeys. His work knits together places like Kingston, Georgetown, London, Amsterdam and New York — places where ideas of exile and belonging, visibility and reconstruction are ongoing.

In the fallout from nationhood, a complex dialogue about homelessness and belonging remains unresolved for the vast majority of Caribbean people wherever they reside. The boundary between personal, political and cultural expressions of nationhood and home are dissolving. None are logically definitive, all are products of the imagination. As we move from place to place responding to shifting social circumstances, this becomes apparent. The Caribbean may always have been more a conceptualized space than an actual or fixed place.

Pinas’s community and culture may no longer exist in its alleged original form, but the idea — the sense and space created by the work — lives in our mind’s eye, in our discourse and mutual processing of memory, but not to elicit pathos. Pinas’s practice, like that of many conceptual artists, transgresses the traditional boundaries between artist and curator, between local and global, between tradition and the contemporary, between politics and art.

It is often said that art is made by individuals and not by societies or cultures, so we are not talking here about Maroon art. We are talking about the interests of Marcel Pinas, and how they are currently reshaping our ideas about visual production. Not just in the Caribbean, but wherever the work is situated or discussed.

**Christopher Cozier, 2011**

*Note: For a Dutch translation, please contact Readytex Art Gallery: [info@readytexartgallery.com](mailto:info@readytexartgallery.com) or 0894-5911.*





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