

And the flags fly

Myriam Thyès will fly ten flags in Luxembourg. Just enough to make the national colours green with envy.

It doesn't happen every day to have the right to hoist, in the heart of our capital, flags which, for once, have nothing to do with the nation, on the contrary. A short walk in this ephemeral "oasis" of tolerance. (...) And, to top it all, 1997 has been declared "year against racism" – once again a good thing through these blowing winds of intolerance – and the presidency of Luxembourg has the wind in their sails, the conditions are all favourable in order to allow Myriam Thyès to fly her ten flags, all hand painted, to the four points of the compass-rose of the capital.

The plagues of the world

The chosen context is compelling, the themes of the flags range from the political-economical to social-cultural, without forgetting to touch on the subject of ecology, of feminism or of tolerance. The direct involvement therefore, and the location of the "exhibition" highlight it, which subdivides the whole into three sub-categories:

First, the tasks of Europe (The agricultural politics: quality instead of quantity; can be seen at the Schuman Rond Point. Women weave Europe: E. Hamilius Square. The energies of the future, Schuman Rond Point. Employment and sharing of riches; the Capuchins' Theatre).

The second group of flags directly concerns the Grand-Duchy (Luxembourg, linking-bridge between France and Germany, bridge of peace and harmony: Station Square. The residents of Luxembourg welcome Portuguese immigrants: Station Square. Luxembourg, protect your forests: the Fish Market).

As far as the three remaining flags are concerned – the most eloquent, possibly, from the point of view of involvement – they speak of the link between Europe and the rest of the world (The peoples and the strong currencies: Martyrs Square. Infinite migrations: Guillaume II Square. Europe at the (false) centre of the world; rue Victor Hugo).

Anti-flags

The least one can say is that Myriam Thyès does not hide her game. She expresses what she wants to, she goes straight to the point. It is, and this is refreshing, as if she posts the great plagues of the end of this millennium in the air of the capital. Beware, say the flags loudly to the builder's of tomorrow's world, do not forget employment, women, immigrants, the third world, culture, nature, in brief everything that, in the name of "realism", politicians have the distressing but constant tendency to sweep under the carpet, as it were.

The message is clear, and the other flags, notably those of the Fifteen, give a bad dated impression and they can go back to where they came from in view of the vitality that competes between them. Because it is mainly about this: to be hoisted next to the "real" flags to highlight their narrow-mindedness. One is both near and far from the corruption of "values" driven by the national colours, as some "corruptors" practice within the aimed object. Near, because the idea, that supports the project, is analogous, far, because the "cohabitation" of the two types of flags, compels the observer to measure the distance, the gap, which separates them. The "corrupted" flag also seems to discuss with the "true ones". But can one still talk about "true" flags? Do not the national colours all, in some way, differ from their purpose?

Here is another thought that could be engraved in Myriam Thyès' project: it is not my flags, she could say in substance, that differ, but those who, from their birth, the nations obstinately place in smallness of their memory, dividing the globe into a multitude of plots of land with bolted doors. Faced with closing, she opts for the opening. Faced with intolerance, for generosity. And faced with the commercial thinking of the ir(responsible)s, she opts for the respect of man.

Starting from 29th August, in different locations of the capital. Until 28th September. The exhibition is funded by the city of Luxembourg, the History Museum of the city of Luxembourg, the Ministry of Culture, the National Cultural Funds, the representation of the Commission of the European Union.

Jean Portante, in: 'Le Jeudi', Luxembourg, 28th August 1997