

WAHALA

On Representation, Authenticity, Expectations and Other Inflated Concepts

Artists: William Cordova ,Jean Ulrick Désert, Yoel Diaz Vázquez,
Köken Ergun, Alex Martinis Roe, Katrin Ströbel,
Emeka Udemba.

Curator: To Whom It May Concern

Opening: Dec. 7, 2013, 7pm
Exhibition: Dec. 8, 2013 – Jan. 7, 2014

Art Directors: Dr. Bonaventure S.B. Ndikung, Dr. Elena Agudio
SAVVY Contemporary | Richardstraße 20 | 12043 Berlin-Neukölln



(Image: Emeka Udemba)

‘Good’ representation is often a reaction against the white stereotypical representation. Rather, the debate should be about transforming the image, questioning the images that subvert, posing alternatives and recognising that it is not an issue of ‘us’ and ‘them’.

Hooks, Bell. *Black looks: race and representation*. Boston, MA: South End Press, 1992. p.4

Wahala is a Pidgin English word signifying trouble, confusion, problematic or complicated situations presumably borrowed from Yoruba or Hausa, and etymologically linked to the Arabic word *wahla*, which translates as *fright*, *terror* or *error*. The exhibition project *Wahala* is a bid to fish in the troubled waters of representation and authenticity: to investigate presentation and representation in artistic production using art as a tool, and get a grip on the parasitic power mechanisms that feed on these concepts. In sync with bell hooks' suggestion of shifting the discourse from the sphere of ‘othering’ and victimisation, *Wahala* provides space for experimentation on how the troubles related with representation and various ideological and material images, which might be associated to or used authentically or unauthentically to frame representations, could be questioned, challenged, transformed, cleansed or even ridiculed... with or without proposing an alternative.

Wahala goes beyond the ubiquitousness of representation and authenticity in everyday practices (from marketing exotic holidays and fitting women or blacks into certain positions to the portrayal of crime, piousness, poverty or richness according to particular racial geographical or gender dictums), in academia and in the cultural sector—where artists, scholars or curators still have to deal with representations or find themselves explicitly or implicitly accused of inauthenticity on the basis of their background, race, gender or sexual orientation. Along these lines, the exhibition project aims to explore the ways in which artists and their works can transgress boundaries of authenticity, identify themselves in order to challenge the notions of representation and power relations inscribed in a social context that brings them about, and... force a twist in the tail.

Similar to Aristotle’s ambivalent idea of catastrophe, the change of fortune that happens at the end of a drama and allows for a catharsis of mind and emotion, *Wahala* can also stand for the metamorphosis of a problematic into a positive situation. Artistic vision often works in a catastrophic way, like a *wahala*, acting as a virus, insinuating in the social body and changing the “horizon of meaning” of a certain social context.

It is against the backdrop of these reflections that the exhibition project will examine the strategies of renegotiating stereotypes of representation, and inter alia impart a carnivalesque and satirical overtone to these notions. It will be a trial to make sense and find a vocabulary to articulate and elucidate in a hermeneutic way these troubled waters—the *Wahala*, which essentially accompanies or is an aftermath of representation and authenticity.

The exhibition is curated by *To Whom It May Concern*, the SAVVY curatorial collective which consists of Dr. Bonaventure S. B. Ndikung, Dr. Elena Agudio and Saskia Köbschall

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mission impossible I&II, video installation with two screens (2008)

Katrin Ströbel (1975, Germany)

Katrin Ströbel's drawings, installations and videos deal with semiotics, the relation of words and images, (pictorial) languages and cultural codes. Through travel grants and longer stays in Europe, Africa and America (France, Morocco, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, the U.S. and Peru among others), since 2004 her work has been increasingly focusing on intercultural and socio-political issues, like impacts of urbanism and architecture, migration, borders and borderlines, intercultural communication etc. Apart from these rather political or cultural themes, she has been intensely engaged with basic reflections on the meaning and function of contemporary art in Western and non-Western contexts. Through her work, Ströbel attempts to question her own culture / cultures, her visual and verbal languages, the problems of migration and the injustice concerning the right to travel. Other thematical highlights of her work are clichés and stereotypes, the “exotic”, and nomadism.

She currently lives and works in Stuttgart.

www.katrin-stroebel.de



Negerhosen (2000)

Jean Ulrick Désert (1965,Haiti)

Graduate from the **Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture** and from the Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art, both in New York, Désert has lectured and been invited as an art critic to Princeton, Yale, Columbia, Humboldt University, and l'école supérieur des beaux arts.

Emerging from a tradition of conceptual work engaged with social and cultural practices, his artworks range across billboards, actions, paintings, site-specific sculptures, videos and objects. Known for his "Negerhosen2000" and his provocative "Burqa Project", he often combines cultural iconographies and historical metaphor to disrupt, alter and shift the pre-supposed meaning. Désert has widely exhibited at such institutions as The Brooklyn Museum, Cité Internationale des Arts, The NGBK, and at various galleries and public venues in Munich, Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Ghent, and Brussels. He is the recipient of awards, public commissions, and private philanthropy, including LMCC, Villa Waldberta / München-Kulturreferat and Cité des Arts (France). He represented Haiti and Germany at the 2009 Havana Biennial.

Born in Haiti, Désert had lived in the U.S. and France before moving to his current place of residence, Berlin.

www.jeanulrickdesert.com



Binibining (2010). Video installation

Köken Ergun (1976, Turkey)

Born in Istanbul, Ergun studied acting at the Istanbul University and acquired a postgraduate diploma degree in Ancient Greek Literature at King's College London, followed by a master degree in Art History at the Bilgi University. After working with the American theatre director Robert Wilson, he became involved with contemporary art, specifically video and performance. He exhibited internationally at various venues including Platform Garanti (Istanbul), KIASMA Museum of Contemporary Arts (Helsinki), Sparwasser HQ (Berlin), Digital ArtLab (Tel Aviv), the Museum of Contemporary Arts Taipei, Casino Luxembourg, Art in General (New York), and the Stedelijk Museum Bureau Amsterdam. His video works were screened at different film festivals in Oberhausen, Rotterdam, Sydney and Zagreb. In 2007 he got the Tiger Award of the Rotterdam Film Festival for his short film "The Flag".

With a special focus on rituals in his works, Ergun has been recently collaborating with ethnologists and extending his practice to the academia. Currently, he writes his PhD thesis 'Rituals of Isolation: Emotional Bonding in Wedding Ceremonies of the Turkish/Kurdish Community in Berlin' at the Interart Graduate College of the Freie Universität Berlin.

www.indexofworks.com



The Practice of Doing (2012–2013) installation view

Alex Martinis Roe (1982, Australia)

Alex Martinis Roe holds a PhD in Fine Arts from Monash University, Australia. In 2006-'09 she was awarded the Silver Jubilee Scholarship for post-graduate research. In 2006-'07 she was a resident at Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces, Melbourne, and in 2007 undertook a summer program with Valie Export at the Salzburg International Academy for Fine Arts, Austria. Some of her recent shows are HaVE A LoOk! Have a Look! FormContent, London (2010); Encounters: Conversation in Practice, Limbus Europae, Berlin (solo) (2010); Change, Monash University Museum of Art, Melbourne (2010) and many others. Roe was published in art magazines such as *Art & Australia* (2009), and produced artist pages for *Un Magazine* issue 3.1 (2009). In 2011 she completed a residency at Seoul ArtSpace Geumcheon, and since 2009 she has lived and worked at Kunsthaus KuLe, Berlin. She is currently a fellow of the Graduate School for Arts and Sciences, University of the Arts, Berlin.

Roe's practice involves bringing forth settings that allow viewers and participants to encounter contemporary challenges embedded within feminist histories. Her current projects focus on feminist genealogies and seek to foster specific and productive relations between different generations, as a way of participating in the construction of feminist histories and futures.

www.alexmartinisroe.com



Monuments_(1), 2006, color photography, 70x50cm

Emeka Udemba ([1968, Nigeria](#))

Born in 1968, Emeka Udemba studied art education at the Lagos state collage of education/University of Lagos, Nigeria. Udemba's art is a process of continuous inquiry, where various creative genres interweave. His artistic practice focuses on the use of installations, performances, photography, video and drawings as complementary to each other. His works explore questions that underlie both individual and collective experiences, and deal with issues of socio-cultural influences and communication in the socio-political sphere. He participated in a number of residency programs, is a winner of various prizes and grants, and actively engages in curatorial art practices in public spaces.

In 2000 Udemba was awarded with The Public Prize (Germany), The Ambassador of France Award at the Dakar biennale in 2002 (Senegal), and a Special Mention for young curators in 2007 (Nigeria). His main exhibitions include: Closed Space, Neukölln-Berlin/Hillbrow-Johannesburg; GoetheonMain, Johannesburg and Kunsthaus I6 Freiburg, Germany (2011); Wide Angle Johannesburg, South Africa (2011); 7 Days, Berlin, Germany (2011); Retour Paris, Stuttgart, Germany (2011); Africa. Objetos y Sujetos, Gijon, and Madrid, Spain (2010); Artist talk – Closed space/Open space, Johannesburg, South Africa (2010); FESMA, Dakar, Senegal (2010); Walking the City, Drillhall, Johannesburg, South Africa (2010); Exchanging Space, Lagos, Nigeria (2010).

[Udemba currently lives and works in Kirchzarten, Germany.](#)



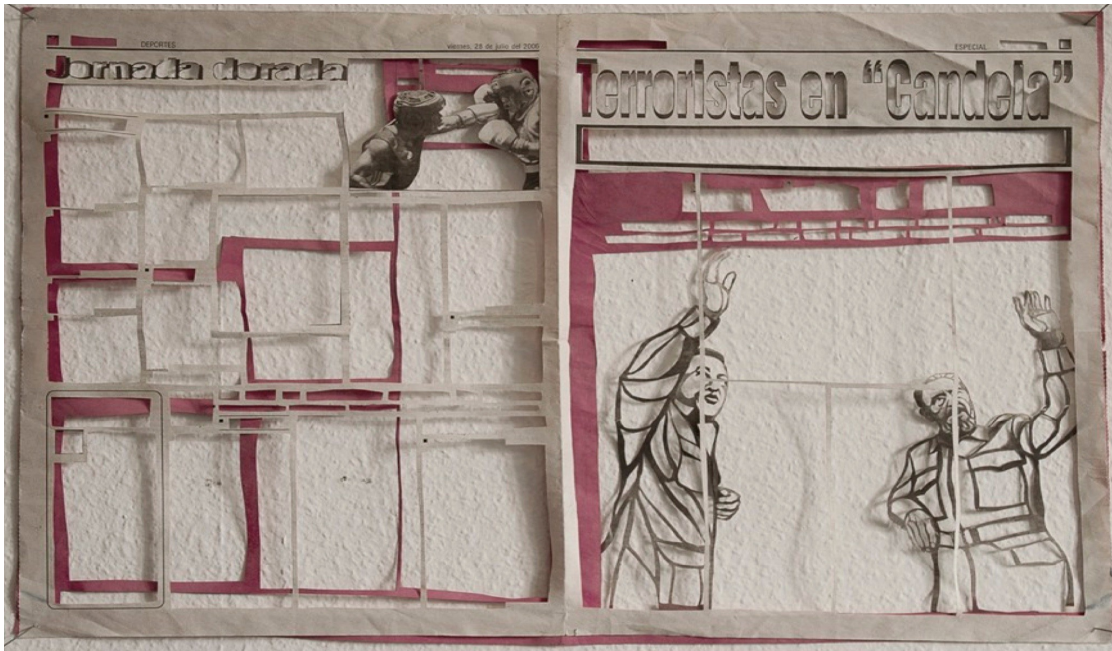
Laberintos (after octavio paz), 2003-09. Appropriated vinyl records from undisclosed ivy league institution in response to that institution's refusal to return 200 Inca artifacts from Peru after it originally borrowed them in 1914

William Cordova (1971, Perú)

Born in Lima, Perú and raised in Miami, Cordova currently lives and works in New York. He earned his B.F.A. from the Art Institute of Chicago in 1996 and his M.F.A. from Yale University in 2004.

His solo exhibitions include: *untitled (chicanas)*, LAXART, Los Angeles (2010); *Laberintos*, Sikkema Jenkins & Co., New York (2009); *More than Bilingual*, Fleming Museum, University of Vermont, Burlington (2009); *Moby Dick*, Artspace, San Antonio (2008); *Pachacuti* (stand up next to a mountain), Arndt & Partner, Zürich (2007); *P'alante*, Arndt & Partner, Berlin (2006); *Drylongso (Pichqa Suyu)*, P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, New York (2006); *I Wish It Were True*, Jamaica Center for Arts & Learning, New York (2006); and *No More Lonely Nights*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Miami (2003). His work is on show in such public collections, as the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts; Yale Art Gallery, New Haven; Museo de Arte de Lima, Peru; Ellipse Foundation, Cascais, Portugal; Museum of Contemporary Art, Miami; and La Casa de las Americas, Havana, Cuba; among others. He has held numerous residencies and is currently a fellow at the American Academy in Berlin.

“Cordova’s work is exceptionally transformative and his approach to painting, like that of his installation work, is grounded in multifarious personal narratives, ritual histories, and subjective perception. Whether creating towering monuments of found speakers or humorous and reductive paintings on used cardboard, Cordova’s incredibly humble approach makes for work that is overwhelmingly thoughtful and executed in a majestic manner in keeping with the medium itself.” - Evan J. Garza



“Las Muchachas que aprendieron a Soñar” (2012) Intervened Cuban newspaper Granma

Yoel Diaz Vázquez (1973, Cuba)

Born in Habana, Diaz Vázquez's work has been featured in numerous exhibitions all over the world. Having received his BA from the National Academy of Fine Arts San Alejandro, and completed a residency in USF Verftet Bergen, Norway (2008) his group shows include; *IN OTHER WORDS*. The Black Market of Translations - Negotiating Contemporary Cultures. NGBK and Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin, Germany (2012) ; VI Göteborg International Biennial for Contemporary Art, Göteborg, Sweden (2011) ; Other Possible Worlds Proposals on this side of Utopia, NGBK, Berlin, Germany (2011) ; 29th Sao Paulo Biennial, Sao Paulo, Brazil (2010) ; CAFE X: The Journeys of Cuban Artists, West Indies University at Art center EBCCI, Barbados (2010) among others.

His current works consisting of intervened newspapers have as referents the works of other artists , where the text has been annulled in order to propound a minimalistic reading of the traditional written press support. Approaching the newspaper in a “forensic” manner , a re-read is proposed starting off from what has not been extracted, intending to reveal a completely new message, a not planned one in the original edition.

He lives and works in Berlin.