

## Handmade

Performance lecture: Orestes De La Paz (Miami, USA)

Sound performance: Sean Derrick Cooper Marquardt (Berlin Dolls)

Thursday, 5th September 2013, 7pm

Curator: Ismael Ogando

Art Directors: Dr. Bonaventure S.B. Ndikung, Dr. Elena Agudio

SAVVY Contemporary | Richardstraße 20 | 12043 Berlin-Neukölln



The body is a material organism, but also a metaphor for various issues of modern society. Nowadays, the body is no longer merely a biological entity and a surface of beauty, but it has come to be a substrate for technological experiments conducted in a bid to attain an illusion of perfection and the chimera of beauty. Liposuction (variably termed 'lipoplasty' or 'liposculpture') is one of the ways by which mankind follows up the inherent craze and craves to sculpture their physical identity and shape their own body (*body management*), through a cosmetic surgery procedure that removes fat from a specific area of the body, e.g. the buttocks, abdomen, or thighs. It is against this backdrop that artist Orestes De La Paz incorporates liposuction in his project *Making Soap* and offers an insight into contemporary tendencies and possibilities of exploration or even exploitation of the human body.

For this performative project, De La Paz underwent a liposuction in front of a camera, and the by-product of this operation—his body fat—was not disposed of, but back from the hospital, the artist used it for soap making. Subsequently, these soap bars were utilized in his performance at an exhibition, where visitors washed their hands with De La Paz's body fat soap. This intrinsically performative cycle, concluded with an almost biblical quotation reminiscent of washing one's (or Pontius Pilate's) hands in innocence, questions the legitimacy of the dominant culture of a normative beauty, and simultaneously challenges the society's pretence of innocence towards certain social practices embedded in the dynamics of structural power.

This calls to mind Susan Bordo's deliberations on how social representations command a homogenized culture and how these homogenized images normalize. "Indeed, such preoccupation may function as one of the most powerful normalizing mechanisms of our century, insuring the production of self-monitoring and self-disciplining 'docile bodies' sensitive to any departure from social norms and habituated to self-improvement and self-transformation in the service of the norms" (Bordo, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body*, 1993). *Making Soap* touches upon the politics of representation and the economy of the body as capital, thereby making the body visible through the prism of the biological and the social—not analogically, but consecutively.

SAVVY Contemporary offers Orestes De La Paz a platform to expatiate on his performative practice, accompanied by a joint session to collectively wash hands in innocence with the artist's soap. The event will be followed by a musical intervention by composer Sean Derrick Cooper Marquardt.

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