

ETHICS IN A WORLD OF STRANGERS: NIRVEDA ALLECK AND ERIC VAN HOVE

Curated by: Ugochukwu-Smooth C. Nzewi

APRIL 25 - JUNE 11, 2017

OPENING APRIL 25, 6-8PM



Eric van Hove

"Are you really supposed to abjure all local allegiances and partialities in the name of this vast abstraction, humanity?"

- Kwame Anthony Appiah

Richard Taittinger Gallery is pleased to present *Ethics in a World of Strangers*, an exhibition of works by Nirveda Alleck and Eric van Hove, curated by Ugochukwu-Smooth C. Nzewi. The cultural theorist and philosopher Anthony Kwame Appiah describes the inevitability of parochial obligations to family and country. Yet he also insists on non-filial obligations which inscribe our membership in the global community. Whereas cosmopolitanism might reproduce utopia and privilege, Appiah suggests that its true value is a moral economy of tolerance, openness, and coexistence. Artistic contemporaneity demands a cosmopolitan commitment to working across cultures and national boundaries and a concomitant appreciation of diversity and difference. This moral compass anchors this exhibition. Against the backdrop of resurgent nativism, nationalism, and xenophobia which currently outline the global political landscape, it asks the question: what are the values of fraternity, empathy, and worldliness? The ethical imperative of acknowledging the humanity of others is particularly pertinent in this

present climate of travel bans, restricted movements, and border control. Through individual artistic practices, backgrounds, and experiences, Alleck and van Hove make a persuasive argument in this season of anomie. Their works are presented as a dialogue.

Ethics in a World of Strangers includes a selection of large-scale paintings and video from Nirveda Alleck's Continuum, an ongoing series that considers notions of identity, self, and the body. Begun during an artists' residency in Cape Town, South Africa in 2006, the body of work has since evolved in the last ten years in the course of Alleck's international travels to Senegal, Mali, United States, and Lebanon. In these places as well as in her home country of Mauritius, Alleck sought out people on the streets. Documenting them, first, as individuals with the aid of her camera, she assembles them on equal footing with no interest in their social statuses or ethnic backgrounds. They are rendered on multiple canvases in a laborious photorealism. Subjectivity in relation to space is an important aspect of Nirveda's picture making process, yet her main interest lies in uncovering the inherent complexities of the human ego. This is conveyed as double rendering of same subjects. She describes this as a utopian attempt to simultaneously represent inclusion and exclusion.

Since 2013, Eric van Hove has been working collaboratively with Moroccan craftsmen in his studio in Marrakesh. Together they have produced the exact replicas of motor engine parts and a full-blown motorbike included in the exhibition. These exquisite objects are fashioned with different craft materials found around the country. They represent the artist's ingenuity and the methodical brilliance of millennium-old Maghreb artisanship in dialogue with modern industrialization of which the engine is an excellent example. In what he has termed social sculptures, van Hove conceives of his work as a metaphor for human interdependence; one singular part needs the others to function and to form a whole just like the car engine. Overall, the objects offer incredible insight on utopia that stems from the commingling of cultures and the blurring of physical, mental, and conceptual boundaries.

The nomadic impulse and desire for human interac

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Nirveda Alleck

tion and cultural connections beyond comfort zones are a critical leitmotif in the two artists' practice. Born in Mauritius in 1975, Alleck addresses the human subject in multiple contexts, using a range of media and art forms such as paintings, videos, installations and performance. She trained at the Michaelis School of Fine Art, University of Cape Town, South Africa, and Glasgow School of Art, Scotland. Active on the international art scene, she has participated in numerous artists' workshops and art residencies in Namibia, South Africa, Lebanon, Mali, Mauritius, United States, among others. She has exhibited her work at key international events, including the 11th Triennale India in 2005, the Pan African Arts Festival in Algeria in 2009, the Dak'Art Biennale (2010 and 2012), and the World Festival of Black Arts in Dakar in 2010.

Also born in 1975, in Guelma, Algeria, van Hove spent his formative years in Yaounde, Cameroon. He holds a B.A. from École de Recherche Graphique, Brussels, Belgium, and advanced degrees from Tokyo Gakudei University, Tokyo, Japan. His work has been shown internationally at venues including, the 52nd Venice Biennale; Mudam Museum of Contemporary Art, Luxembourg; STUK Museum of Contemporary Art, Leuven, Belgium; Ueno City Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan; Marrakech Biennale 5 and 6, Marrakech, Mo

rocco; Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris; and Frankfurter Kunstverein, Frankfurt. His practice reflects a willingness to simultaneously address local and global contexts.

ABOUT THE CURATOR

Ugochukwu-Smooth C. Nzewi is an artist, art historian, and curator of African art at the Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College. He has curated internationally at major venues including the Dak'Art Biennale (2014), Shanghai Biennale (2016-17) and is associate curator of the forthcoming La Biennale d'Architecture: Walking through someone else's dream at FRAC Centre-Val de Loire, Orléans, France (October 13, 2017 - March 18, 2018). Nzewi's writing has appeared in academic journals and art magazines including, Art Africa, African Arts, World Art, Critical Interventions, Nka, Kunstforum, Studio, and Art Basel Miami Beach magazine, and edited volumes. He was a contributor to the catalogue of the 56th Venice Biennale, All the World's Futures, and the Daybook of Documenta 2017. He is co-editor of New Spaces for Negotiating Art (and) Histories in Africa (2015), a book on independent art spaces in Africa.

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