

THE WALTHER COLLECTION

Distance and Desire: Encounters with the African Archive Part II: Contemporary Reconfigurations November 30, 2012 – March 9, 2013

The Walther Collection is pleased to announce Part II of *Distance and Desire: Encounters with the African Archive*, a three-part exhibition series curated by Tamar Garb. “Contemporary Reconfigurations” offers new perspectives on the African photographic archive, reimagining its diverse histories and changing meanings. The exhibition centers on photography and video by African and African American artists who engage critically with the archive through parody, appropriation, and reenactment.



Zanele Muholi, *Ms Le Sishi I, Glebelands, Durban, 2010*

Carrie Mae Weems introduces the themes of “Contemporary Reconfigurations” with her powerful series *From Here I Saw What Happened And I Cried*, a revision of nineteenth and twentieth-century anthropometric photographs of African Americans, overlaid with texts by the artist. Sammy Baloji and Candice Breitz rework ethnographic photographs onto large-scale collages. Zwelethu Mthethwa and Zanele Muholi examine sexuality, costume, and ritual. Samuel Fosso and Philip Kwame Apagya create exuberantly staged studio portraiture, using elaborate backdrops and sets to critique stereotypes and identities.

Sabelo Mlangeni’s black and white photo-essay, *limbali*, documents the reed dances of KwaZulu-Natal, showing the display of virgins vying to be chosen as brides. Pieter Hugo’s series *There’s a Place in Hell for Me and My Friends* examines ethnicity and skin tonalities through anthropological mug shots. Working in video, Berni Searle performs as a statuesque deity engaged in domestic labor in “Snow White,” and Andrew Putter gives an indigenous voice to the effigy of Maria de la Quellerie, wife of the first Dutch settler in the area known today as Cape Town, in “Secretly I Will Love You More.”

For this group of artists, a stereotype or ethnographic vision in one era may provide material for quotation, irreverent reworking, or satirical performance in another. Illustrating how the African archive—broadly understood as an accumulation of representations, images, and objects—figures in selected contemporary lens-based practices, the exhibition stages a dialogue between the distance of the past and the desiring gaze of the present.

Part III: “Poetics and Politics” (March 22 – May 18, 2013) will be a presentation of vintage portraits, books, albums, postcards, and cartes de visite, revealing the complexity of the African archive through photographs produced in the 1870s to the early twentieth century. The images make visible both the ideological frameworks that prevailed during the colonial period in South Africa as well as the extraordinary skill of photographers working in the studio and the landscape.

The Walther Collection is a private non-profit foundation dedicated to researching, collecting, exhibiting and publishing modern and contemporary photography and video art, based in Neu-Ulm, Germany and New York. The Walther Collection Project Space is located at 508-526 West 26th Street, Suite 718, and is open to the public Wednesday through Saturday from 12pm to 6pm. For further information, call +1 212 352 0683 or email brendan@walthercollection.com.