

BENRIMON CONTEMPORARY

PRESS RELEASE

Configured

Curated by Teka Selman

Benrimon Contemporary

March 1, 2012 - April 14, 2012

For immediate release

Benrimon Contemporary is pleased to present *Configured*, an exhibition featuring works of self-portraiture by artists including Njideka Akunyili, William Cordova, Delphine Diallo, LaToya Ruby Frazier, Barkley L. Hendricks, Duron Jackson, Hedy Klineman, Dave McKenzie, Fahamu Pecou, Xaviera Simmons, Bradley McCallum and Jacqueline Tarry, Mickalene Thomas, Stacy Lynn Waddell and Paula Wilson.

Working in a range of media including painting, photography, video, and sculpture, the artists in *Configured* employ a myriad of methodologies to explore manifestations of the complex terrain of identity. While they do not necessarily work exclusively in self-portraiture as a practice, all are interested in confronting conventional notions of representation, considering how a work of art might concurrently engage and resist the gaze. With works that are at turns playful or somber, the artists in *Configured* challenge notions of truth in (self) representation, hiding as much as they might reveal about their own embodiment.

Well known for his painted portraits of stylish urbanites from the 1960s and 70s, Barkley L. Hendricks is also an accomplished photographer whose interest in art history contemporizes the stylish and stylized figures of court painting alongside the tradition of self-reflective portraiture of artists such as Jan Van Eyck and Rembrandt van Rijn. Similarly, artists Delphine Diallo and Mickalene Thomas retool iconic images inspired by the likes of French Neoclassical painter Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres themselves as heroines. Fahamu Pecou looks to more recent art historical idols, referencing the imagery of Barkley L. Hendricks in his painting after the artist's 1969 self-portrait *Icon for My Man Superman* (*Superman never saved any black people— Bobby Seale*).

For some, notions of identity are inexorably tied to other bodies. LaToya Ruby Frazier's photographs consider the family as a reflection of the self; here, the artist's mother is a doppelganger, a link to the past and future in a single body. Collaborators and couple Brad McCallum and Jacqueline Tarry's video works explore self-portraiture through their relationship with each other, challenging the viewer to engage with questions of race, power, and identity as reflected in their physical interaction. Njideka Akunyili, too, is interested in how relationships become manifest. Her mixed media works mine the seemingly contradictory loyalties that emerge as a Nigerian woman in an interracial marriage, with a visual topography that is as complex as her subject matter. Hedy Klineman transfers the power of presentation to her sitters, asking them to picture themselves via visually charged ritual objects. In Dave McKenzie's 2000 work *Edward and Me*, the artist channels Edward Norton, retooling a fragment of his performance in the film *Fight Club* as an exhaustive acrobatic dance routine.

Other artists in *Configured* challenge the notion that self-portraiture requires a literal manifestation of the figure. William Cordova, Duron Jackson and Xaviera Simmons consider the notion of sculptural embodiment, revealing ways in which the object-hood of corporality can be itself representational. Paula Wilson's mixed media works engage sculpture, painting, printmaking and installation to play with perceptions of the body in space. Stacy-Lynn Waddell renders the figure through burned out traces left by branding tools on paper, reshaping portraits where text and symbol suggest the features of a face.

Configured is curated by Teka Selman, Assistant Director of the MFA in Experimental and Documentary Arts at Duke University.

Benrimon Contemporary is located at 514 West 24th Street, Floor 2E, New York, NY 10011, between 10th and 11th Avenues. Our hours are Monday to Saturday 10am to 6pm and Sunday by appointment. For further information, please call 212.924.2400 or email info@bcontemporary.com.