

UNFIXED

PHOTOGRAPHY AND
POSTCOLONIAL
PERSPECTIVES IN
CONTEMPORARY ART

CHARIF BENHELIMA (1969 BE)

Charif Benhelima is a Belgian photo-artist living and working in Antwerp. He received his MFA from the Higher Institute Sint Lucas (Brussels), Laureate at the Higher Institute for Fine Arts (Antwerp) and graduated in Documentary Photography at the International Center of Photography (New York). Nominated for the Robert Gardner Fellowship in Photography 2008 (Harvard University/Peabody Museum), Benhelima investigates the notion of identity, memory/oblivion, document, and truth through images that explore perception, time and space, and a sense of invisibility. He has been an artist in residence at the Cité internationale des Arts, Paris and Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin.

KOBENA MERCER (1960 UK)

Writer, art historian and critic Kobena Mercer is the author of landmark texts in visual culture and has an international research profile in cultural studies. Since his first book, *Welcome to the Jungle: New Positions in Black Cultural Studies* (1994), Mercer has contributed to catalogues such as *Mirage: Enigmas of Race, Difference and Desire* (1996) and *AfroModern: Journeys through the Black Atlantic* (2010), along with numerous artist monographs and articles in publications such as *frieze*, *Artforum International* and *Camera Austria*. He was series editor of *Annotating Art's Histories*, whose titles include *Cosmopolitan Modernisms* (2005) and *Exiles, Diasporas & Strangers* (2008).

OTOBONG NKANGA (1974 FR/NG)

Otobong Nkanga is a visual artist and performer, working in a broad spectrum of media including installations, photography, drawings and sculpture. Sometimes she becomes the protagonist in photography works to convey and interrogate implications of our acts in varied environments and contexts. Nkanga began her art studies at the Obafemi Awolowo University in Ile-Ife, Nigeria, continued at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Paris, as well as the Rijksakademie in Amsterdam, and obtained her Masters in the Performing Arts at Dasarts, Amsterdam. She has exhibited widely internationally in shows including *Africa Remix*, *Snap Judgments* and the *Sharjah, Taipei, Dakar, São Paulo and Havana Biennials*.

KEITH PIPER (1960 UK)

Keith Piper is a multi-media artist, curator, researcher and academic. Currently, he is a Reader in Fine Art and Digital Media at Middlesex University, London. He graduated with a BA (hons) in Fine Art from Trent Polytechnic, Nottingham, England, received his MA in Environmental Media from the Royal College of Art, London, and received an Honorary Doctor of Arts from the University of Wolverhampton, England. Over the past thirty years, Piper works has made frequent use of (photo) archives and created new critical and creative perspectives on dominant historical narratives through interactive digital works, installations and film. In the 1980s he was a founding member of the BLK Art Group, a group of influential conceptual artists, painters, sculptors and installation artists based in the United Kingdom and noted for the boldly political stance of their work and exhibitions. Piper currently lives and works in London.

PAMELA PATTYNAMA (1958 NL)

Pamela Pattynama is Professor of Colonial and Postcolonial Literature and Cultural History at the University of Amsterdam. She has published widely on (post)colonial discourse and the representation of gender and mixed race in Dutch (post)colonial film and literature. Another focal point in her research is the formation of identities and memory in migrant communities. She is currently working on a book on postcolonialism and cultural memory in literature, photography and film.

UNFIXED SPEAKERS & PRESENTERS BIOS

NATALIE ROBERTSON (1962 NZ)

Natalie Robertson (Ngati Porou, Clan Donnachaidh) is a photographic artist, making photographic and moving image works that explore Maori knowledge practices and cultural landscapes. A Senior Lecturer at AUT University, Auckland, New Zealand, she received an MFA (First Class Honours) from the University of Auckland and is enrolled in a PhD programme at Massey University researching photography in Maori contexts. Robertson's practice engages with conflicting settler and indigenous relationships to land and place. She has exhibited extensively in public institutions throughout New Zealand and internationally.

NARO SNACKEY (1980 NL)

Naro Snackey studied at the Art Academy in Den Bosch, the Netherlands and was an artist in residency at the Rijksakademie in Amsterdam and LIA, Leipzig in Germany. Her unique, and often expansive sculptural and collage based works incorporate photography, simultaneously deconstructing and reconstructing images and their positions in time and space. She has often worked with personal photographs. For UNFIXED Snackey has made a new installation using images sourced from genealogical websites.

ANDREA STULTIENS (1974 NL)

As Andrea Stultiens describes, 'she does things with photographs. She makes them, collects them, looks at them, thinks and writes about them, and sometimes she makes the results of this visible for the rest of the world. Books are Andrea's favorite medium to present her work. They give her the opportunity to tell the story in an intimate way, literally one on one with the reader'. Stultiens studied photography at Hogeschool van de Kunsten Utrecht and received her MA in photography from St. Joost in Breda, both in the Netherlands. She currently teaches at Minerva Art Academy in Groningen, the Netherlands. Recently her work has been shown in the Lagos Foto Festival, Netherlands Fotomuseum and the Noorderlicht Photo Festival.

KADDU WASSWA JOHN (1933 UG)

Kaddu Wasswa John is a farmer and anti HIV/AIDS activist. He runs his NGO Turn To Tea from his home in Mayirikiti, Mokono District, Uganda. Among many other things Kaddu Wasswa John has founded the first youth club in Uganda, penned dramas and social critique, served as civic leader in Ngogwe, Nyenga and Njeru town councils and been a rural community educator and activist on human rights, public health, food security and environmental issues. Some years ago, when on the verge of losing his passion for education and development, he was 'discovered' by his grandson, Photographer Arthur C. Kisitu, who was searching for his roots after his mother's death.

ARTHUR CONRAD KISITU (1975 UG)

Arthur Conrad Kisitu holds a degree in Business Administration and is the vision bearer of Sweet Home Uganda (SHUGA), he is a designer, poet, dancer and full time photographer. Kisitu lives in Kampala, Uganda.

HANK WILLIS THOMAS (1976 US)

Hank Willis Thomas, winner of the first ever Aperture West Book Prize for his monograph *Pitch Blackness*, received his BFA from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts, and his MFA in photography, along with an MA in visual criticism from the California College of the Arts, San Francisco. He has exhibited in galleries and museums including the Studio Museum, Harlem, New York; The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Smithsonian; National Museum of American History, Washington D.C.; National Portrait Gallery, Washington, D.C. and PS1, Queens, New York. He received the New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship Award and is a recipient of the 2007 Renew Media Arts Fellowship from the Rockefeller Foundation.

HULLEAH J. TSINHNAJINNIE (1954 US)

Hulleah J. Tsinhnajinnie is currently Director of the C.N. Gorman Museum at University of California Davis and Assistant Professor in the Department of Native American Studies at University of California Davis. She was born into the Bear and Raccoon Clans of the Seminole and Muscogee Nations, and born for the Tsinajinnie Clan of the Diné Nation. Exhibited nationally and internationally, Tsinhnajinnie claims photography and video as her primary languages. Creating fluent images of Native thought, her emphasis is art for Indigenous communities. She has been a recipient of the Eiteljorg Fellowship for Native American Fine Art, a Chancellor's Fellowship at the University of California Irvine, the First Peoples Community Artist Award, and a Rockefeller artist in residence. Recently, she edited *Visual Currencies: Reflections on Native Photography* together with Henrietta Lidchi.

MODERATOR: FARID TABARKI (1976 NL)

Farid Tabarki is a researcher, writer and presenter. In recent years he has been working as editor-in-chief and researcher for *CoolPolitics* - a Dutch civic social organization that encourages younger generations to shape and develop their role as citizens and works towards building Dutch, European and global civil society. As the director of *Studio Zeitgeist*, Tabarki conducts and coordinates research and develops projects on the local, national and European zeitgeist. He works together with research institutes such as the Open Society Institute and the University of Amsterdam. Tabarki has moderated and hosted debates, expert meetings and conferences through such diverse venues as *Felix Meritis* (Amsterdam), *Witte de With* (Rotterdam), the *International Film Festival Rotterdam*, *TedX* (Rotterdam), *TMF* and *MTV*.

ASMARA PELUPESSY (1981 US/NL)

Asmara Pelupessy is a scholar and project organizer who has focused her research, writing and work on issues of (cultural) identity and (photographic) representation. Born in the Netherlands with Dutch-Indonesian roots, Asmara was raised in the United States. She received her BA at University of California at Berkeley with a self-designed interdisciplinary major in the Social History of Photography. She has worked on projects with a range of concerns, including mixed race identity, young women and arts education, and has worked in such organizations as *World Press Photo*, *NOOR*, the *International Museum of Women* and *Alternet.org*. She received her MA in Photographic Studies at the University of Leiden in 2010.

SARA BLOKLAND (1969 NL)

Sara Blokland is a visual artist and scholar born and raised in the Netherlands with Dutch-Surinam roots. She studied at the Gerrit Rietveld academy (BA) and graduated from the Sandberg institute (MFA). As a visual artist she is predominately working with video and photography reflecting on the complicated role of photography in relation to personal histories and postcolonial narratives. Her work is represented by the *Van Zoetendaal Gallery* in the Netherlands and *Gallery Lmakprojects* in New York and is part of several national and international museum and corporate collections. In the past ten years she was frequently working as a (guest) lecturer in photography and art and has published several artist books. Additionally she is studying *Photographic Studies* at the University of Leiden where she is currently writing her Master thesis.

UNFIXED SCHEDULE

- 10.00** Welcome from Gerrit Willems, Director CBK Dordrecht
- 10.05** Introduction from Asmara Pelulessy & Sara Blokland, curators of UNFIXED

SESSION ONE: IDENTITY AND REPRESENTATION

*Photography...
shaping identity and culture in the past and present
being used to construct and assert identity
feeding back into how we form our identity
being used to include and exclude people in society
as a political act*

- 10.30** **CHARIF BENHELIMA (1969 BE)**
Welcome to Belgium is a nine-year (1990-1999) photographic research on the feeling of being a foreigner. This resulted in the tough, yet poetic photo book in which personal, historical and social layers are intertwined. In Benhelima's photography identity is a crucial question
- 10.55** **HULLEAH TSINHNAHJINNIE (1954 US)**
Visual sovereignty: A survey of indigenous photographers
- 11.30** BREAK
- 11.45** **KEYNOTE: KOBENA MERCER (1960 UK)**
Photography and the colonial conditions of cross cultural modernity: Offering a critical account of the often vexed relation between photographic theory and post-colonial studies, Mercer's lecture will enter the archive of Diaspora to reveal the historical role of photography in shaping the cross cultural conditions of global modernity from 1900 onwards.
- 12.25** QUESTIONS & DISCUSSION ON KEYNOTE PRESENTATION
- 12.40** QUESTIONS & DISCUSSION CHARIF BENHELIMA, HULLEAH TSINHNAHJINNIE & KOBENA MERCER
- 13.00** LUNCH
- SESSION TWO: (DE/RE)CONSTRUCTION AND APPROPRIATION**
- Photography...
constructing and deconstructing meaning and histories
decontextualized
in terms of ownership and authorship within representation
using and negotiating visual languages and images in the public domain*
- 14.00** **HANK WILLIS THOMAS (1976 US)**
Pitch Blackness -is a reflection on the focus of Hank Willis Thomas' recent work - the representation of "blackness" in corporate media and popular culture. Thomas will also pose questions about the ways in which these representations affect our lived realities and our understanding of identity.
- 14.35** **OTOBONG NKANGA (1974 FR/NG)**
Memory as a photographic process.
On the photographic memory of space and place through architecture and landscape.

- 15.00** **NATALIE ROBERTSON (1962 NZ)**
"Can I take a photo of the marae?" - Dynamics of Photography in Te Ao Maori (the Maori world)
Explores some of the specific socio-cultural and political dynamics of photographing in Maori contexts, specifically the marae (communal meeting place) outlining cultural codes of practice as a Maori photographer.

- 15.30** **NARO SNACKEY (1980 NL)**
Performance in collaboration with Désirée Snackey: A performer rethinks herself through found images, incorporating the development process of a photographic sculpture.

- 16.00** BREAK

- 16.15** QUESTIONS & DISCUSSION
HANK WILLIS THOMAS, OTOBONG NKANGA,
NATALIE ROBERTSON AND NARO SNACKEY
- SESSION THREE: HISTORICAL MEMORY AND THE PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVE**

*Photography...
as part of our collective memory
collecting memories or facts
within institutional archives shaping visions of the past and the present
in personal archives and their relation official representations of history
Who archives? Who is archived?*

- 16.35** **ANDREA STULTIENS (1974 NL), KADDU WASSWA JOHN (1933 UG) & ARTHUR CONRAD KISITU (1975 UG)**
The Kaddu Wasswa Archive - is a visual biography, telling the story of 78 year old Kaddu Wasswa's life in Uganda through the artifacts, photographs and documents that he collected and arranged. Photographer Andrea Stultiens will give a short presentation on her project, followed by a conversation between Stultiens and her collaborators - Kaddu Wasswa and his grandson Arthur C. Kisitu.

- 16.55** QUESTIONS & DISCUSSION ANDREA STULTIENS, KADDU WASSWA JOHN & ARTHUR CONRAD KISITU

- 17.05** **KEITH PIPER (1960 UK)**
A Future Museum of the Present
An account of the development of the project over the course of the Artist Residency which took place in Dordrecht from July to September 2010. It positions the thematic concerns of the residency both in relationship to Piper's ongoing interest in the status of the photographic archive and in the role of the artist as 'trickster' figure engaged in the destabilization of existing hierarchies of knowledge.

- 17.35** **PAMELA PATTYNAMA (1958 NL)**
Photographs as active players: Indo-Dutch identity formation, social memory and museum policies.
Investigating the role of colonial photography in the visual history and hybrid identity formation of the Indo-Dutch community in the postcolonial Netherlands.

- 17.55** QUESTIONS & DISCUSSION
KEITH PIPER, PAMELA PATTYNAMA AND CURATORS
SARA BLOKLAND, ASMARA PELUPESSY (1981 US/NL)

- 18:20** DRINKS

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CENTRUM VOOR BEELDENDE KUNST DORDRECHT
(CENTER FOR CONTEMPORARY ART)

180 VOORSTRAAT, DORDRECHT THE NETHERLANDS

CURATED BY SARA BLOKLAND AND ASMARA PELUPESSY

ORGANIZED BY STICHTING UNFIXED PROJECTS
IN COOPERATION WITH CBK DORDRECHT

EXPLORING PHOTOGRAPHY'S RELATIONSHIP TO CHANGING NOTIONS OF CULTURAL HISTORIES, IDENTITIES AND REPRESENTATIONS.

The UNFIXED symposium will EXPLORE PHOTOGRAPHY'S RELATIONSHIP TO CHANGING NOTIONS OF CULTURAL HISTORIES, IDENTITIES AND REPRESENTATIONS. It is part of a multiplatform project that includes an exhibition, symposium, workshop, and a resulting publication.

UNFIXED explores the elusive nature of photography and its relationship to notions of ethnicity, culture and identity in contemporary art. Photography's attraction as a medium, its historical connection to the production and fixation of (cultural) identity, and the urgency of debates over identity, globalization, and culture, inspire UNFIXED. Via its various platforms, UNFIXED seeks to dissolve ideas of photographic truth and cultural identity as essential and unchanging by exploring artistic practices that are innovative, self-reflexive and critical. Photographs are not simply viewed as representations, but are understood to embody and communicate histories of power within complex visual discourses. The photograph is not only an act of remembrance recorded, but also a productive act of invention. This creates new positions and challenging questions that ask - Who is looking? Whose history is represented? What is the photographic image staging?

UNFIXED brings together a group of international artists and theorists with personal relations to migration, colonial history and cultural diaspora. These thinkers and practitioners research and reflect upon photographic histories as they construct new ones. UNFIXED engages the visual approaches and strategies of the exhibited works as points of departure for critical and productive consideration, aiming to contribute to the Netherlands' relatively young discourse about postcolonialism's relevance to photography. In the same fashion as many of the participants, the project hopes to blur the lines between art practice, scholarly research and cultural activism.