

Michael Benevento is pleased to present a solo exhibition from visual artist, performer and filmmaker Wu Tsang. Occupying both gallery locations simultaneously on Sunset Blvd, this is Tsang's first solo exhibition in Los Angeles.

The exhibition encompasses several new projects that reflect on the possibilities and the limitations of narrative. Working both collaboratively and solo, and often within a cinematic frame, Tsang addresses questions of personal versus collective identity constructions. For Tsang these questions have coincided with a broader social movement, and in this exhibition the artist reveals how narrative functions to define us, both as individuals, and in our relationships to others.

7578 Sunset has been divided into two theatres featuring the Los Angeles premiere of two films. Tied and True is set in a fictional city called Mektoub, a former colonial town (inspired by Île Saint-Louis, Senegal) with connections to a former Imperial state (inspired by the US) in the near future. The film was co-created with Ghanaian filmmaker and historian Nana Oforiatta-Ayim for Frieze Film & Channel 4 UK "Random Acts" broadcast. It tells the story of star-crossed lovers, inspired by Douglas Sirk's 1955 melodrama *All that Heaven Allows* (and the legacy of queer films it inspired). The work examines themes of assimilation and alterity in a world in which despite a developed and liberated sense of tolerance, bigotry and disparity are still prevalent features of society.

Mishima in Mexico also explores melodrama in a short performance film. It draws inspiration from Yukio Mishima's novel "Thirst for Love" and from Mishima's legacy as it is encountered today within a global queer context. The original novel is a twisted romance set in 1950s Post-war Japan. Etsuko, a widowed society woman falls in love with her servant Saburo,

a rural farm boy, but her desire drives them both to tragedy. In collaboration with Alex Segade, Tsang's stripped down adaptation is set in a single room of an iconic hotel in Mexico City. A writer and director struggle to relate through the creative process, while on-screen as Etsuko and Saburo, they shift in and out of mutable characters. In this experimental narrative, the liminal space between reality and fantasy for the performer becomes fluid and the separation between observer and observed starts to collapse.

7556 Sunset will house new photographic and text-based works that mark a significant conceptual departure for the artist. Produced after a decade of engagement in a reflective social practice, these works are intentionally located in an inward and exposed psychological space with the artist's own body sourced as subject material. Tsang's silhouetted frame appears repeatedly within two sets of images, comprised of performance documents and their "answer images". The original performance

took place at Ashland Mine's Blasting Voice solo performance series (Suzanne Geiss, July 2012), in which the artist invited audience members to cut his hair, locating the project within a feminist context via Yoko Ono's "Cut Piece". His answerimages (lensed by cinematographer Michelle Lawler who also shot both films in the exhibition) respond to the proposition of the "solo" gesture, and ask whether that can ever be freed from collective desire. The texts, written as first-person accounts, invite readers into emotive narratives that represent ways in which we define and protect ourselves in relation to other individuals or the group.

The artist writes: Gregg [Bordowitz] once said that that art can change the world. I believe that storytelling especially has this power. For example, Gabriel Arkles's YouTube animations make difficult trans [gender] law case studies comprehensible and entertaining for anyone to watch. These kind of stories transform my consciousness; they enable me to imagine the experiences of others, feel connected to greater things. Storytelling is also dishonest because its truths are inherently constructed. You have to "serve" the story; it doesn't always turn out to be "about" what you originally intended. Social movements are built upon narratives (and by extension: archives, histories, writings, oral stories, ideologies) - they are built up in our collective unconscious and in turn transform the world around us.

Tsang's projects have been presented at the 2012 Whitney Biennial and New Museum Triennial in New York, the ICA Philadelphia, MOCA Los Angeles, the Gwangju Biennial (South Korea), and the Tate Modern and Liverpool Biennial (UK). He was named one of 2012's "25 New Faces of Independent Film" by Filmmaker Magazine, and is currently a Film Independent Project: Involve Fellow. His first feature WILDNESS won the Grand Jury Award for Outstanding Documentary at Outfest 2012 [World Premiere: MoMA Documentary Fortnight (New York, NY), SXSW (Austin, TX), Hot Docs (Toronto, Canada), SANFIC8 (Santiago, Chile)]. He has received grants & support from Good Works, Frameline, Wexner Center for the Arts, IFP, Film Independent, Art Matters, Tiffany Foundation, Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, and the Contemporary Art Foundation.

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