

Coco Fusco

With Others in Mind

25/11 2023 – 27/01 2024

Mendes Wood DM is pleased to present Coco Fusco's first solo exhibition in São Paulo, "With Others in Mind". The exhibition aims to highlight Coco Fusco's rigorous exploration into the erasure and metamorphosis of cultural identities, particularly in societies shaped by the aftereffects of colonialism. By different mediums such as videos, photos, and performance, Fusco crafts a multifaceted narrative language. This language acts as a tool, enabling the artist to dissect and critically engage with the socio-political dynamics inherent in post-colonial societies. At the intersection of visual art, performance, and cultural politics, Fusco examines race, identity, and the new shape of societies.

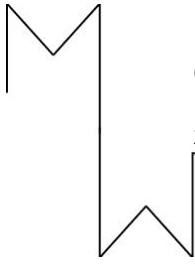
Her works show the navigation and negotiation of existence within a socio-political framework. Fusco's practice involves exploration of representations and their effect on cultural memory. She investigates historical contexts, examining them to reveal stories and understand the dynamics of power. The artist's research serves as both an inquiry and a critique, challenging the viewer to interrogate established norms and perspectives. Through the exhibition, the audience is invited to journey alongside Fusco, navigating the complexities of cultural memory, identity, and the often-obscured histories that shape them.

Previously presented in 1992 at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, the work entitled *The Year of the White Bear and Two Undiscovered Amerindians visit the West (1992)*, is part of the exhibition. In collaboration with Guillermo Gomez-Peña, Fusco brings forth an interdisciplinary arts project that critically examines the 'discovery' of America. Through a multi-media installation reproducing a cage with an experimental radio soundtrack, and artifacts inside, the duo blurs the boundaries between observer and the observed. By presenting themselves as 'undiscovered Amerindians', they confront audiences with the historical and ongoing objectification of indigenous peoples, urging them to question long-held assumptions and challenge dominant narratives.

At the following room, Fusco's experimental video "a/k/a Mrs. George Gilbert," delves into the intersection of photography and racial stereotypes, particularly during the tumultuous period of the FBI's hunt for Angela Davis. Photography, often seen as an unbiased, objective medium, becomes an instrument of misrecognition, subject to racialized fantasies. While Angela Davis's image became an iconic representation of black activism in American culture, Fusco draws attention to how this very ubiquity led to the misrecognition of Davis as an individual. Rather than focusing on a 'true' image of Davis, Fusco emphasizes the flawed ways her image was circulated, consumed, and misinterpreted.

Both works underscore the dangers and pitfalls of representation and the ease with which societies fall prey to skewed perceptions. Whether it's the exoticized image of the 'undiscovered Amerindian' or the sensationalized portrayal of Angela Davis, Fusco reveals the layers of misrepresentation that perpetuate bias and ignorance.

Mendes
Wood
DM



Coco Fusco

With Others in Mind

25/11 2023 – 27/01 2024

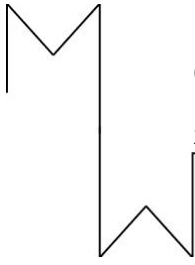
For new audiences, Coco Fusco's body of work offers an opportunity to engage deeply with the process of seeing and being seen. Her art prompts us to question our own gaze and the histories we've been taught. Through her provocative performances and installations, Fusco demands a reexamination of the ways in which cultures construct and consume images, urging for a more conscious, critical engagement with the world around us.

In *A Room of One's Own: Women and Power in the New America*, Coco Fusco, recognized for her ironic artistic language, presents a witty commentary on America's handling of oppression in the guise of imperialist ventures in impoverished nations. Playfully referencing Virginia Woolf's call for women's creative independence, Fusco's work sharply exposes the paradox of framing the War on Terror as a platform for American women to showcase their strength. In her performance, disguised as a patriotic lecture, Fusco sardonically challenges the notion of empowerment through military actions. Instead of celebrating a genuine pursuit of democracy, Fusco reveals the irony of claiming private spaces as sanctuaries for liberty while engaging in imperialist actions abroad. Through her ironic lens, she questions the narrative positioning women in uniform as leaders in the battle against terrorism, shedding light on the contradictions within the discourse of freedom and democracy. In this engaging and thought-provoking piece, Coco Fusco prompts the audience to reconsider the true nature of America's role in the global War on Terror, emphasizing the complexities and contradictions that arise when oppression is cloaked in the guise of empowerment.

The exhibition also presents her most recent film, "The Eternal Night" unfolds the compelling narrative of three Cuban youths condemned for their beliefs and creations, highlighting the transcendent power of imagination in challenging circumstances. Based on the real-life experiences of Cuban writer Néstor Díaz de Villegas, who, at eighteen, was sentenced to six years in prison for writing a poem, the film delves into the consequences of "ideological diversionism" imposed by the revolutionary government.

Set in 1974, the story follows a poet, a young Evangelical man accused of attempting to assassinate Fidel Castro. The actor guides them through the social dynamics of prison, resisting authorities' attempts at re-education. To inject life into the prisoners' evenings, he persuades the warden to introduce film screenings as a means of promoting socialism, creating an unexpected cinema within the confines of the prison. "The Eternal Night" vividly portrays resilience against ideological oppression and the transformative potential of artistic expression.

Coco Fusco's exploration of cultural identities in post-colonial societies unfolds through various mediums. Her narrative language critically engages with socio-political dynamics, navigating race, identity, and the shaping of new societies. Fusco's works challenge assumptions, revealing dangers in misrepresentation and urging conscious, critical engagement. From the collaborative project on the 'discovery' of America to scrutinizing racial



Coco Fusco

With Others in Mind

25/11 2023 – 27/01 2024

stereotypes in the FBI's hunt for Angela Davis, Fusco prompts a reexamination of image consumption. Her recent film, "The Eternal Night," depicts resilience against ideological oppression and the transformative power of artistic expression, emphasizing the enduring ability of imagination to challenge circumstances. Fusco's exhibition invites viewers to question their gaze, reconsider prevailing narratives, and recognize complexities within the discourse of freedom and democracy.

Coco Fusco is an interdisciplinary artist and writer based in New York. She is a recipient of a 2021 American Academy of Arts and Letters Art Award, a 2021 Latinx Artist Fellowship, a 2021 Anonymous Was a Woman award, a 2018 Rabkin Prize for Art Criticism, a 2016 Greenfield Prize, a 2014 Cintas Fellowship, a 2013 Guggenheim Fellowship, a 2013 Absolut Art Writing Award, a 2013 Fulbright Fellowship, a 2012 US Artists Fellowship and a 2003 Herb Alpert Award in the Arts.

Fusco's performances and videos have been presented at the 56th Venice Biennale, Frieze Special Projects, Basel Unlimited, three Whitney Biennials (2022, 2008, and 1993), and several other international exhibitions. Her works are in the permanent collections of the Museum of Modern Art, The Walker Art Center, The Art Institute of Chicago, The Whitney Museum, the Centre Pompidou, and the Museum of Contemporary Art of Barcelona.

Fusco is the author of *Dangerous Moves: Performance and Politics in Cuba* (2015). She is also the author of *English is Broken Here: Notes on Cultural Fusion in the Americas* (1995) *The Bodies that Were Not Ours and Other Writings* (2001), and *A Field Guide for Female Interrogators* (2008). She is the editor of *Corpus Delecti: Performance Art of the Americas* (1999) and *Only Skin Deep: Changing Visions of the American Self* (2003). She contributes regularly to *The New York Review of Books* and numerous art publications.

Fusco received her B.A. in Semiotics from Brown University (1982), her M.A. in Modern Thought and Literature from Stanford University (1985), and her Ph.D. in Art and Visual Culture from Middlesex University (2007).

Fusco is a Professor at the Cooper Union School of Art.

Mendes
Wood
DM