

baudoin lebon

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press release



**During Photoquai 2013, 4th biennial exhibition of world images,
baudoin lebon gallery presents**

ayana v. jackson - archival impulse & poverty pornography



/// opening on wednesday, september 18th 2013 from 6pm to 9pm
exhibition from thursday, september 19th to saturday, november 2nd 2013

Ayana V. Jackson

Ayana V. Jackson's work explores African and African Diaspora identities through varied photographic approaches ranging from reportage and portraiture to performance and studio based practice. Using her background in sociology, she creates bodies of work that in some cases address the history of photographic representation of the black body and in others explore the complexity and plurality of contemporary African descendent identity. In recent work she uses her own body to stage interventions that critique mid-19th and early 20th century colonial photography.

Based in Johannesburg and New York, she has exhibited her work in association with Gallery MOMO (Johannesburg, RSA), Primo Marella Gallery (Milan), San Francisco Mexican Museum (USA). She has received grants from the Marguerite Casey Foundation, supporting her participation in the 2009 Bamako African Photography Biennial. Public art exhibitions include Round 32 of Project Rowhouses in Houston's 3rd ward (USA). Her photography has been featured in publications including the exhibition catalogue for her series African by Legacy, Mexican by Birth, n.paradoxa, "Souls: A Critical Journal of Black Politics, Culture, and Society" (Columbia University), Art + Auction, Camera Austria, Afrique in Visu, and Dutch based ZAM magazine. She has lectured and conducted workshops at university and arts institutions across Africa and the Americas.

Archival impulse

The real work of this series does not exist in physical form. It exists in the imaginary; in the space between her reference images, the spectators private thoughts/memories/ associations, and the reenactments themselves.

At its core, it considers the chapter of photographic history that was underscored by the period of colonial expansion. It considers the role photography played in the architecture of racialized thinking. It considers the potentially violent exchanges between photographer and “subject”, while at the same time considering other interactions between them and looking for traces of agency in the sitter.

Archival Impulse takes its name from Hal Foster’s idea that by confronting the archive new systems of knowledge can be created. In this case Jackson confronts late 19th and early 20th century imagery of non European bodies.

To do this, the artist draws on images sourced from the Duggan Cronin collection created in South Africa, the works of unknown photographers practicing throughout the global south at the time, as well as documentation of reconstructed villages and “native” performers that were touring in Europe’s Human Zoos.

The scholarship of Susan Sontag, Elizabeth Edwards, Okwui Enwezor, Jennifer Bjorek, Pascal Blancher, and Tamar Garb are also informative. In reading and comparing these texts Jackson has found multiple angles for entering, interpreting and appropriating her reference materials. As visual experiments these final images aim to draw out the multiple ways the originals can be read: Ethnographic, Anthropologic, pornographic, historical documents, curiosities, etc.

The artist’s process involves identifying reoccurring motifs in the original images, interrogating them, performing them and reconstructing them. Her primary intervention is in her deliberate choice not to situate the “subjects” in the scenario. The separation of the bodies in the foreground from the background image is done first to bring attention to the fact that these early photographs are theatrical performances written and directed by the photographer and subject alike and as such are fictitious, second to ask questions around the photograph’s potential as an agent of propaganda, and last, if not most importantly, to transform this theatre into a space where new narratives might emerge.



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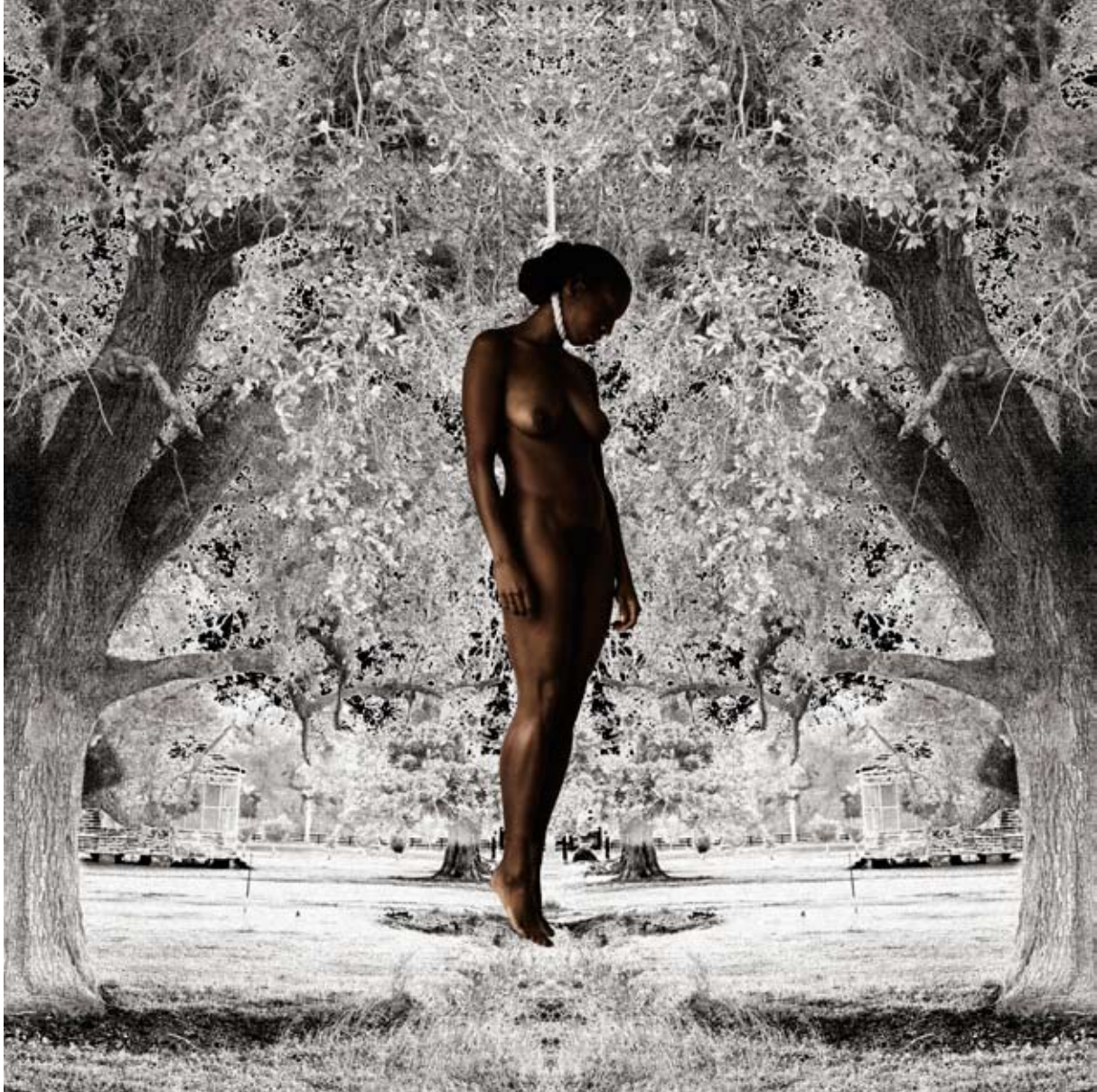


Poverty Pornography

Poverty Pornography interrogates photographic representation of noneuropean bodies dating from the turn of the 20th century through to the present day. Jackson restages existing images as nudes in order to explore the emotional tension one feels when observing these polemic and often violent photographs. The viewer is simultaneously drawn to and yet repulsed by the originals in a similar way one is attracted yet potentially shamed by the naked female form. This work combines the two in order to question the seductive language of photography and the ideas it can communicate and sustain. The term poverty pornography (commonly used in the NGO domain) refers to the prevalence of images of suffering in the developing world. These photographs are often dehumanizing and project an image of endless despair. They evoke sympathy (and hence activism), but at the same time activate modes of representation that contribute to the development of “the other”. While Jackson works with her own body, these are not self portraits. The act of reappropriating these images is for the artist a way to work through her own relationship with the complicated histories these images reflect.



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biography

solo exhibitions

2013

Gallery Sho, Tokyo, Japon

« archival impulse & poverty pornography », Galerie baudoin lebon, Paris, France

Gallery MOMO, Johannesburg, Afrique du Sud

2011

« Projection Surface », Gallery MOMO, Johannesburg, Afrique du Sud

2010

« African by Legacy, Mexican by Birth », Angkhor Photo Festival, Cambodge

2008

« Looking Glass Self », Peter Hermann Gallery, Berlin, Allemagne

2007

« African by Legacy, Mexican by Birth », Mijares Gallery en collaboration avec l'UCLA, Los Angeles, Etats-Unis

2006

« Viajes Personales », Bluefields Indian and Caribbean University, Bluefields, Nicaragua

« African by Legacy », Mexican by Birth, Guadeloupe Arts Center, San Antonio, Etats-unis

Galeria de la Raza, organisé par le San Francisco Mexican Museum, San Francisco, Etats-unis

Franklyn H. Williams Caribbean Cultural Center & African Diaspora Institute

2005

« Viajes Personales », Instituto Universitario de Barlovento, Higuero, Venezuela;

Biblioteca Virgilio Barco, Bogota Colombia; UNAN-Leon, Leon, Nicaragua;

Museo del Hombre, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

African By Legacy, Mexican by Birth (Series 1), Inter-America Foundation, National Council of La Raza,

Inter-Agency Consultation on Race in Latin America. Washington DC