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OLIVIER CASTEL

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SILK HANDKERCHIEFS

DONELLE WOOLFORD

CASPER PERRIN YOAKUM

1 July – 4 August 2012

Private view 30 June, 6–9 pm

At 7pm and 8.30pm during the private view: Donelle
Woolford's performance *Dan Graham Withdrawal Syndrome*

Check the gallery website for satellite exhibition by Ursula
Wild and launch of her vegetarian cook book *EARTH FOOD*
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DONELLE WOOLFORD



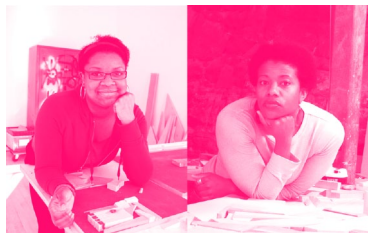
*KARMA CHAMELEON:
AN INTERVIEW WITH A DONELLE WOOLFORD*
by Lorena Muñoz-Alonso

LORENA MUÑOZ-ALONSO I was reading David Joselit's piece on you, in which he describes you as a quasi-mythical character and as an 'avatar', which allows "for an imaginary/real mobility" that a regular artist lacks. I am wondering how do you interpret this concept of mobility and why it symbolizes something positive or desirable?

DONELLE WOOLFORD The dichotomy of "real" and "imaginary" reminds me of the three beds in Plato's Republic. Though Plato was quite confident about the distinctions he drew between the idea, the object, and the representation of a bed, in our time we're no longer committed to such utilitarian hierarchies. If I'm enjoying some kind of mobility it's between these levels of being (or not). This chimerical quality is key to myth. This allows me to be fixed and flexible simultaneously. There is the underlying

common notion of Donelle Woolford as a young artist – my character, so to speak – and then there are the particular embodiments of that character by the different actors who interpret it. Myth allows me to be in several places at once, or to be instantly fluent in German, or tall, or somber, or handsome. Every version of me is different, and yet every version is still me.

LMA In your artist statement you define yourself as the “quintessential market artist.” Could you explain what you mean by that exactly and how that relates to your political agenda?



DW I’m just trying to claim some valuable intellectual territory for the left. I’ve never understood why so-called political artists almost completely cede the power of commerce to conservatives. The belief that refusing to make saleable art objects somehow symbolizes a critique of the retail art market is dubious and shortsighted. Eliminating the object of exchange only turns the artist herself – or the event, or the community involved – into commodities that get bought and sold in the institutional marketplace of museums, biennials, and state-funded public art. What gets referred to somewhat lazily as commodity critique is really only a transformation – an exploitation, really – of systems and networks of people into saleable objects. That doesn’t sound very liberating to me, in fact it sounds quite corporate and repressive.

LMA Your narrative as a working class black female is written by Joe Scanlan, a middle class white man. Do you have any idea why Joe decided you should fit this description, what were his most intrinsic reasons and thoughts to engage in a race and gender conflict that doesn’t really affect him that much?

DW Actually you have it backwards. Joe is the working class artist, I’m the privileged one. My father was a real estate lawyer who made a successful transition into entertainment law. My mom is a natural healer and author. And I graduated from Yale University. If I were to say anything about Joe’s characterization of me it would be that he wrote me to be everything that he is not. That works in the basic black/white, male/female kind of way, but it also works in terms of class and education and family history. I’m everything he is not in those ways too, and that also matters.

LMA How necessary are you for the art world?

DW I think we’re all only just beginning to learn the language of perception as it relates to social space. Our vocabulary is quite narrow, actually. For a recent show at White Flags Projects in Saint Louis I created a piece based on Piaget’s theory of the conservation of volume. This theory deals with development and perception: at a young age, people associate volume (size) with shape, regardless of what they might have previously known or seen to the contrary. At the opening, I got to experience (and experiment with) reactions that I attributed to shifting perceptions of my portrayal. Throughout the opening, I would periodically change out of character whenever I climbed onto one of four risers built for the occasion that were of slightly different heights. Although my portrayal changed back and forth throughout the opening, my physical form remained unchanged. Some people had a hard time dealing with that because, like the Piaget experiment, they were not able to apply knowledge from previous perceptions of Donelle to the situation of Donelle in the present. Others just rolled with it and played along. It felt pretty important.

The performance challenged notions of provenance. It challenged my audience to reckon with what they think I am and what they'd like me to be. If that's an experience we need to have as an audience, then I guess I'm necessary for the art world.

LMA I remember I went to see *Double Agent* at the ICA almost three years ago but I completely missed the point of your work. You were not in the gallery in that particular moment and I didn't even know you were an 'avatar', so my experience was reduced to the sight of an empty studio. What happens with Donelle's agency when the viewers fail to grasp her true essence? Is it diminished or, on the contrary, multiplied?

DW My agency is quite vast when you don't know anything about me, but the more you learn the tighter and smaller I get. However, just when you think what you know about me will annihilate your curiosity, the fact that I am portrayed by many actors who are empowered by their portrayals flips the whole premise on a point, like light passing through a pinhole, and my agency expands again. My essence is kind of like a solar eclipse. I'm best seen indirectly, inverted, projected. Like Marcel Broodthaers said, 'fiction enables us to grasp reality and at the same time that which is veiled by reality.'

LMA *Double Agent* was a very interesting show in that it addressed situations wherein artists use others to make their work. Have you ever felt exploited in an artistic working relationship, like for example with Joe?

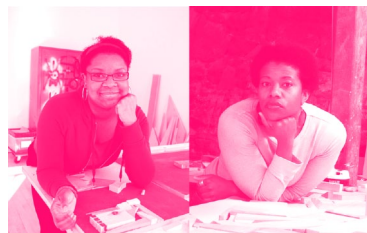
DW No. I am an actor getting paid to play a complex, improvisational role on a stage where the boundaries are constantly shifting. It's a great challenge and a great learning experience, something that would never exist in the theatre world because the form is too amorphous. But that's what allows me to have a say in where Donelle's character is going, what I think she would or wouldn't do next. Plus the role has taken me to Amsterdam and London and put me on stages at Yale University

and The Guggenheim. As a young actor, what more could I ask for?

I guess you could say that Joe and I exploit each other. As an actor playing an artist I get to inhabit and work through a character in situations that are beneficial to me. As an artist, Joe gets to try out artworks through a kind of lens that allows for a different, more attenuated kind of authorship. He likes having that lens, and I like being it, but for different reasons.


LMA At the end of the day, what is more important to you: your work in itself or the debate around the questions of gender, race and authorship that it generates?

DW The work. What's interesting is that for me the work is the portrayal, and for Joe the work is the artwork.



A different version of this interview was first published in *An Art Newspaper* (Berlin: vol. 10, no. 23, April, 2011): 27–28.

OLIVIER CASTEL



Olivier Castel has exhibited work under various names like Gensor,
Louise Weiss, Francis Frederick, Winnie Cott, Hideki Mathumoto, Giorgio Silverio
... amongst many others.
Under the name Olivier Castel he exhibits 'My graves' as the screen saver on
the gallery's office computer - a slideshow of an
evergrowing archives, each photo being of a
different potential grave.

SILK HANDKERCHIEFS

i tend to agree with the sentiment of most of the people here. as if goldsmiths, the slade or glasgow would have you. how many famous artists went to ruskin? none. its for poshos who cant get onto the decent courses and arent good enough for the decent art schools. you are (and will continue to be) rejected because you are derivative and talentless. your life is pointless.
[cmoouk14](#) 1 month ago

FUCK YOU
[millsandboner](#) 2 years ago

cliche away!
new ideas time
[anaidgnoud](#) 1 year ago

cliche away!
[anaidgnoud](#) 1 year ago

time to get a job methinks
[anaidgnoud](#) 1 year ago

i think youre a cunt
youre such a douche cunt arsehole
even if it is 'ironic'
youre still a cunt
a painfully horrible one
i hate your posh face and life
die you cunting twart
and your work is shit
that might be the defining thing
[anaidgnoud](#) 1 year ago

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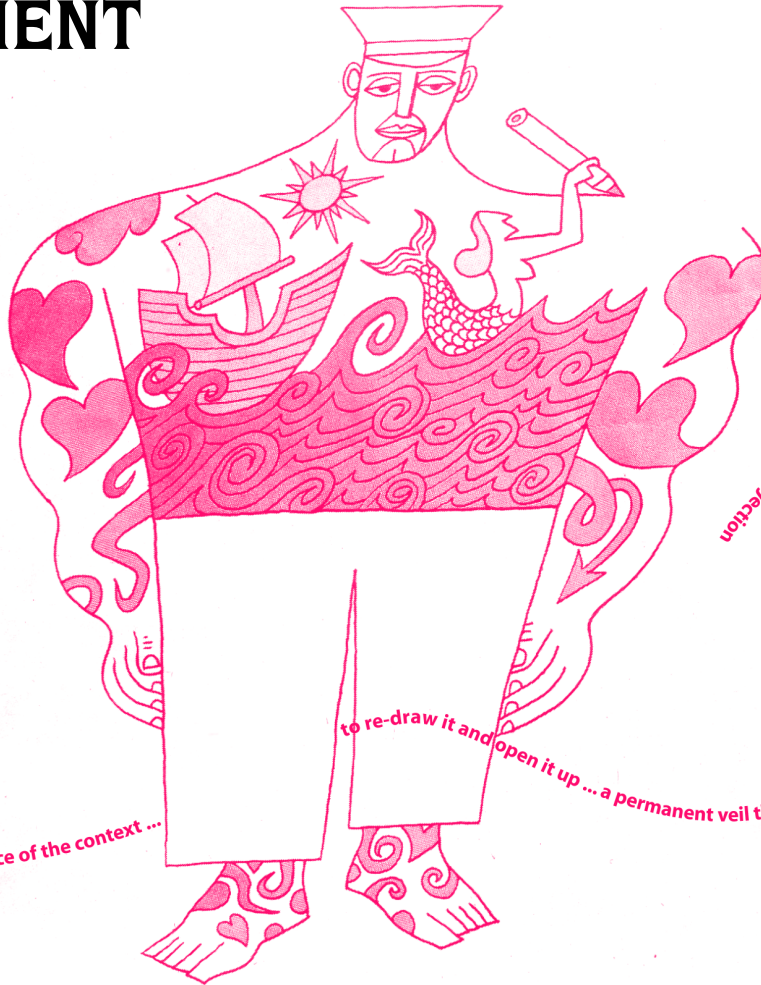
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[anaidgnoud](#) 1 year ago

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come into use ... to pull out the essence of the context ...



to re-draw it and open it up ... a permanent veil that narrates in loop and inserts difference. Trace, scan, imprint, projection

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