

Mythopoeia

Mequitta Ahuja, Kapwani Kiwanga, Pamela Phatsimo Sunstrum and Alida Rodrigues

10 April – 9 May 2015

Private View: Thursday 9 April 2015, 6.30 – 8.30 pm



Pamela Phatsimo Sunstrum, *The Star + The Moon*, stop-motion animation, 2011

Tiwani Contemporary is pleased to announce *Mythopoeia*, a group exhibition gathering four international artists: Mequitta Ahuja (USA), Kapwani Kiwanga (Canada), Alida Rodrigues (Angola/UK) and Pamela Phatsimo Sunstrum (Botswana/South Africa). The exhibition title, drawn from the Greek ‘mūthopoiōs’ and meaning ‘composer of fiction’, points to the age-old role of storytelling and mythologising in rationalising the unknown. Working across a variety of media including painting, sculpture, photography, video and drawing, participating artists share an interest in crafting their own, new mythologies: personal cosmologies and fictional worlds with endless potential for interpreting and re-inventing our reality.

Present in all societies, ancient and modern, myths have long been of interest to artists and thinkers as a key to understanding culture. *Mythopoeia* suggests that contemporary art can offer a similar opportunity to re-interpret the world, and constitutes a mythic system in itself: a machine for generating stories and images that help us comprehend our world, but which might also reaffirm its singularity and power.

Mequitta Ahuja will debut new work - large, bold paintings depicting “The Journeyman,” the artist/craftsman as both archetype and individual. In these psychologically charged self-portraits, Ahuja references the city of Siena, a historical link between paint and alchemy, and the tripartite relationship between source material, creative thought and crafted form.

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Kapwani Kiwanga will also present new, unseen work produced especially for this exhibition. A number of sculptural assemblages will be on display, drawing on her long-standing interest in the legend of Drexciya: the underwater city founded by African slaves who were drowned during the Middle Passage. A voyage into the depths of collective black consciousness, the work refers to cultural mutation through Vodoun mythology in Benin, popular beliefs in Haiti, and the contemporary urban mythology of the Detroit techno group Drexciya.

Pamela Phatsimo Sunstrum's drawings and video animations allude to mythological musings on the beginning of time, geological speculations of the Earth's structure, theories on the nature of the universe, and, most recently, 18th-century European Romanticist landscape painting. Her drawings, narrative landscapes that appear simultaneously futuristic and ancient, shift between representational and fantastical depictions of volcanic, subterranean and cosmological landscapes.

While the iconography of the plant-human hybrid finds a resonance within classical European mythology, particularly in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, **Alida Rodrigues**' practice explores shifting senses of identity within the context of historicised globalisation. Her collages, created from applying cuttings of botanical images to found Victorian postcards, highlight the interrelation between science, exoticism and commerce within Britain's colonial past.

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Notes to Editors

About Mequitta Ahuja

Mequitta Ahuja (b. 1976, USA) is a Baltimore-based artist. Through her "automythographic" form, she portrays the individual as a creative agent and actor in her environment. Mequitta was awarded a 2011 Tiffany Foundation Award, and has exhibited her work throughout the USA as well as in Paris, Brussels, Berlin, India and Dubai. She is a graduate of the University of Illinois at Chicago, where she was mentored by artist Kerry James Marshall, and is a former artist-in-residence at the Studio Museum in Harlem (2009–2010).

About Kapwani Kiwanga

Kapwani Kiwanga (b. 1978, Canada) lives and works in Paris. Her film and video works have been nominated for two BAFTAs and received awards at international film festivals. She has exhibited internationally, including a solo exhibition at Jeu de Paume, France (2014), and in group exhibitions at venues including the Centre Pompidou, France (2006) and the Glasgow Centre of Contemporary Art, UK (2008).

About Pamela Phatsimo Sunstrum

Pamela Phatsimo Sunstrum (b. 1980, Botswana) currently lives and works in Johannesburg, South Africa. Her multidisciplinary approach to art sees her draw parallels between ancient mythologies and futuristic sciences.

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Pamela has recently exhibited and performed at the FRAC Pays de Loire, France (2013), Brundyn Gallery, South Africa (2014), MoCADA, USA (2011), and at the 2012 Havana Biennial.

About Alida Rodrigues

Alida Rodrigues (b. 1983, Angola) lives and works in London. She received her BA in Fine Art from the Slade School of Fine Art in 2007. She held her first solo exhibition at Trondheim Kunstmuseum, Norway (2014), and also participated in a group show at the Interchange Junctions, UK (2014). She was also an artist-in-residence at Iniva (UK) in October 2014.

About Tiwani Contemporary

Tiwani Contemporary exhibits and represents international emerging and established artists, focussing on Africa and its diaspora. The gallery presents work through its exhibition programme and participation in art fairs.

In addition to its commercial activities, Tiwani Contemporary runs a public programme, Art Connect, supported by the A.G. Leventis Foundation. This provides a platform for discussing contemporary artistic practice through publications, talks and projects, both within the gallery and in association with other organisations.

Tiwani Contemporary works in collaboration with the Centre for Contemporary Art, Lagos (CCA, Lagos) on both its exhibition and public programmes.

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Opening hours

Tuesday - Friday, 11am - 6pm

Saturday, 12pm - 5pm