

UNFIXED

POSTCOLONIAL PERSPECTIVES, PHOTOGRAPHY AND CONTEMPORARY ART

October – December 2010

Center for Contemporary Arts (CBK) Dordrecht, the Netherlands

Organized by Sara Blokland and Asmara Pelupessy (Stichting UnFixed Projects)

www.unfixedprojects.org

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

FOR MULTI-PLATFORM PROJECT, UNFIXED

UNFIXED is a project that explores the relation between photography, postcolonial perspectives and contemporary art. It includes an exhibition, symposium, workshop, artist commission-residency, and a resulting publication. The title refers to the unfixed nature of photography. It explores the elusive “truth” of photography and its relationship to ideas of ethnicity, culture and identity in contemporary art.

“The meaning is not in the object or person or thing, nor in the word. It is we who fix the meaning so firmly that, after a while, it comes to seem natural and inevitable. The meaning is constructed by the system of representation.”

- Stuart Hall

Currently, photography is understood to create and produce truths, as opposed to simply capturing fixed or objective reality. Photographs are no longer only seen as representations, but as elements of complex visual discourses in postcolonial debate. Within the discourse of colonialism, photography contributed to the construction and dissemination of the cultural or racial Other as essentially and fundamentally different, fixed within difference.

“I am given no chance. I am overdetermined from without. I am the slave not of the ‘idea’ that others have of me but of my own appearance... I am fixed.”

- Frantz Fanon

In recent decades, artist and theorists around the world have critically reflected on photography’s role in colonial, migrant and diasporic histories. They have unfixed photography, questioning the process of production, who is looking, whose history is represented and what the photographic image is staging. In this line, UNFIXED proposes an encounter with photography’s own reflective history, looking back while looking forward, continuing to dissolve ideas of photographic truth and cultural identity as essential and unchanging through photographic practices that are innovative, self-reflexive and critical.

“Photography has been, and is, central to that aspect of decolonization that calls us back to the past and offers a way to reclaim and renew life-affirming bonds. Using images, we connect ourselves to a recuperative, redemptive memory that enables us to construct radical identities, images of ourselves that transcend the limits of the colonizing eye.”

- bell hooks

UNFIXED aims to contribute to the Netherlands’ relatively young discussion about postcolonialism’s relation to photography. The project will bring together an international group of contemporary artists and scholars with personal relations to migration, colonial history and cultural diaspora, researching and reflecting on photographic histories, as well as constructing new ones. UNFIXED avoids imposing narratives about the past and future onto the project’s artworks, presentations and essays. Instead, we embrace the narratives and strategies proposed in the works as points of departure. In the same fashion as many of the invited artists, UNFIXED hopes to blur the lines between art practice, scholarly research and cultural activism.

PARTICIPATING ARTISTS:

Charif Benhelima (BE)
Otobong Nkanga (FR)
Keith Piper (UK)
Naro Snackey (NL)
Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie (USA)
Hank Willis Thomas (USA)

KEYNOTE SPEAKER AND ESSAYIST:

Kobena Mercer (UK)

EXHIBITION: 23 October – 4 December 2010

SYMPOSIUM: 16 November 2010

WORKSHOP: 15 November 2010

PUBLICATION: December 2010

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

We invite scholars, artists, writers and professionals to submit proposals for visual and/or textual presentations or papers on topics relating to UNFIXED.

We will consider all proposals for:

- ✕ Publication contributor
- ✕ Symposium presentation (20 minutes)

FOCUS POINT: UNFIXING PHOTOGRAPHY'S FIXED REPRESENTATIONS OF CULTURAL HERITAGE, ETHNICITY AND IDENTITY

This could be addressed through a broad range of topics concerning photographic practice, history and/or archives. Proposals could deal with deconstruction, reconstruction, collage, appropriation, politics, regionalism and location, subjectivity and/or authorship within photography. They could also concern photography's relationship to other media, vernacular photography, found photography, documentary photography and/or visual culture. Some key theoretical points that strongly relate to the project include cultural hybridity and transculture. Proposals could also consider current political discussions about culture (assimilation and integration) as they relate to visual culture and photography. We hope to receive proposals that look at the inventive aspects of photography.

✕ We welcome proposals for both or either platform (publication/symposium)

✕ Next to 'traditional' essays we welcome proposals for visual essays, which can include vernacular or found photography, and/or photo-works made by applicants, etc.

✕ We encourage proposals for essays or presentations with innovative formats (performance-based presentations, multimedia projects etc.)

✕ All proposals by students will be considered as applications for the Workshop (see below).

DEADLINES AND REQUIREMENTS:

Mail your proposals to unfixedprojects@gmail.com with the following information by **15 July 2010**.

Please use the subject line – CFP.

Textual essay proposal ✕ Proposal (abstract) of 600 words maximum

Visual essay or presentation proposal ✕ Proposal of 400 words maximum

✕ 5 images maximum (jpeg format, maximum 1mb per image)

Include full name, birth date, contact information, and educational or organization affiliation (where relevant). Please indicate for which platforms you wish your proposal to be considered (publication and/or symposium).

We acknowledge receipt and answer to all paper proposals submitted. If you do not receive a reply from us in a week you should assume we did not receive your proposal.

Successful applicants will be notified by 30 July 2010. Full papers/presentations should be submitted by **30 September 2010**.

A small financial contribution is available for travel and accommodation for those invited to present at the symposium. This will be distributed according to distance and need. There will be no registration costs for invited workshop participants.

For more information visit our website www.unfixedprojects.org.

The conference and workshop language is English.

PROJECT PLATFORMS IN SHORT

EXHIBITION

A group of six international artists re-construct and re-contextualize fixed versions of photographic history through their installations, found and vernacular images, sculpture, text and video. Participating artists are Charif Benhelima (BE), Otobong Nkanga (FR), Keith Piper (UK), Naro Snackey (NL), Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie (USA) and Hank Willis Thomas (USA).

SYMPOSIUM

The symposium will explore the relationships between photography, postcolonial perspectives and contemporary art. The symposium will include talks, presentations and discussions by the artists, keynote speaker, curators, and selected respondents to this Call for Proposals.

PUBLICATION

The publication aims to collect and expand the key questions, issues and discussions explored in UNFIXED. It will include contributions from the artists, along with essays from the curators, a symposium reviewer, art historian and critic Kobena Mercer and several scholars responding to this Call for Proposals.

WORKSHOP

A group of graduate students in arts theory and practice will be invited to participate in a workshop with UNFIXED artists, keynote and curators. The aim is to relate to the themes of UNFIXED through projects the students are working on as researchers, writers and artists. We will use the day for a hands-on discussion, in which a selection of the students' own works will be viewed, considered and discussed.

UNFIXED is made possible by the support from the CBK Dordrecht, the Mondriaan Foundation and the Netherlands Foundation for Visual Arts, Design and Architecture.

