

IMPORTANT and important

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As a component of the 1997 Johannesburg Biennial's general conception —developed by Okwui Enwezor—, this exhibition was conceived to feature “important artists whose works exhibit the complexities of contemporary artistic processes, serving as crucial influences in the work of young artists in different parts of the world.” The idea was to present in certain extension artists whose oeuvre could be paradigmatic of the Biennial's conceptual and metaphorical axis, held together by the notion of “trade routes”. It was not about illustrating a thesis, but about acquainting the complexities (and even contradictions) around the Biennial's thematic issues, focusing on some specific practices. The project aimed to do so through artists who have been developing a substantial corpus of work in these directions, as part of the provocative mess of this time of displacements. This exhibition aspires also to show in South Africa artists who are playing a significant role in contemporary artistic practice.

The notion of importance is a problematic one, due especially to certain universalistic connotations. There is an inclination to think “importance” as an abstract value, independent of the specific implications that usually originate

the term's use. Faith, conscious or unconscious, but undeniable, in the existence of permanent universal values in art explains the strong —and ingenuous— role of “the universal” in discourses and judgments on art. Ideas of cultural relativism have made very little headways in this area. The most serious problem here is that we are not dealing with an abstract universalism: the universal has persistently been a disguise for hegemonic power.

Following this, we find stratigraphies that classify the works according to whether their value is “local”, “regional” or “universal”. One hears comments that an artist is important on a “continental scale,” that another is important “in the South African region.” We hardly need to mention that if artists are successful in New York they will become “universally” important overnight. The elite production coming out of the centers is ontologically considered “international” and “universal”, and one can only be placed in such categories if one is first fully legitimized by them. In contemporary art, valuation is highly dependent on the major networks that promote art, and their power to accept or reject. It is a funny paradox that a small island determines what is “universal.” All



Willem Boshoff. *The Writing That Fell Of The Wall*, 1997.

of this we know only too well, but frequently we let it slip from our minds without noticing. The imposed prestige systems have dug deep into us, producing a metastasis.

In the History of Art established judgments of value condition qualitatively and quantitatively the way in which the historical narration is constructed. Although there exists a sociological critique of the mechanisms that build value, we have come to accept the rigid judgments that have been drawn up, which form a substratum within ideas and discourses on art far removed from social, cultural and historical conditioning. Also, welded firmly to “universality” is “judgment of history,” the ultimate proof of the maximum importance of a work, an artist or a movement. But this expression is just as suspicious as “universality”. History is put in the position of guarantor when it is History itself that has been constructed retrospectively from dominant criteria.

In the contemporary art field, “importance” is often homologated to the mainstream, or associated with broad international recognition, which, in its turn, depends on established circuits. It comes to be a sort of label tagged to the artists by a select club of importance-makers. The construction of importance depends too much on centralized networks of legitimization, giving little room to other avenues. Although in expansion, the so called international art scene is still a system of apartheid. A considerable amount of contemporary aesthetic-symbolic production is undervalued, or reduced to Bantustans. As such functions the stratigraphy that I just mentioned. There are Bantustans for African art, for “alternative” art, for different types of quota art, for be-updated-with-the-global art, and so on.

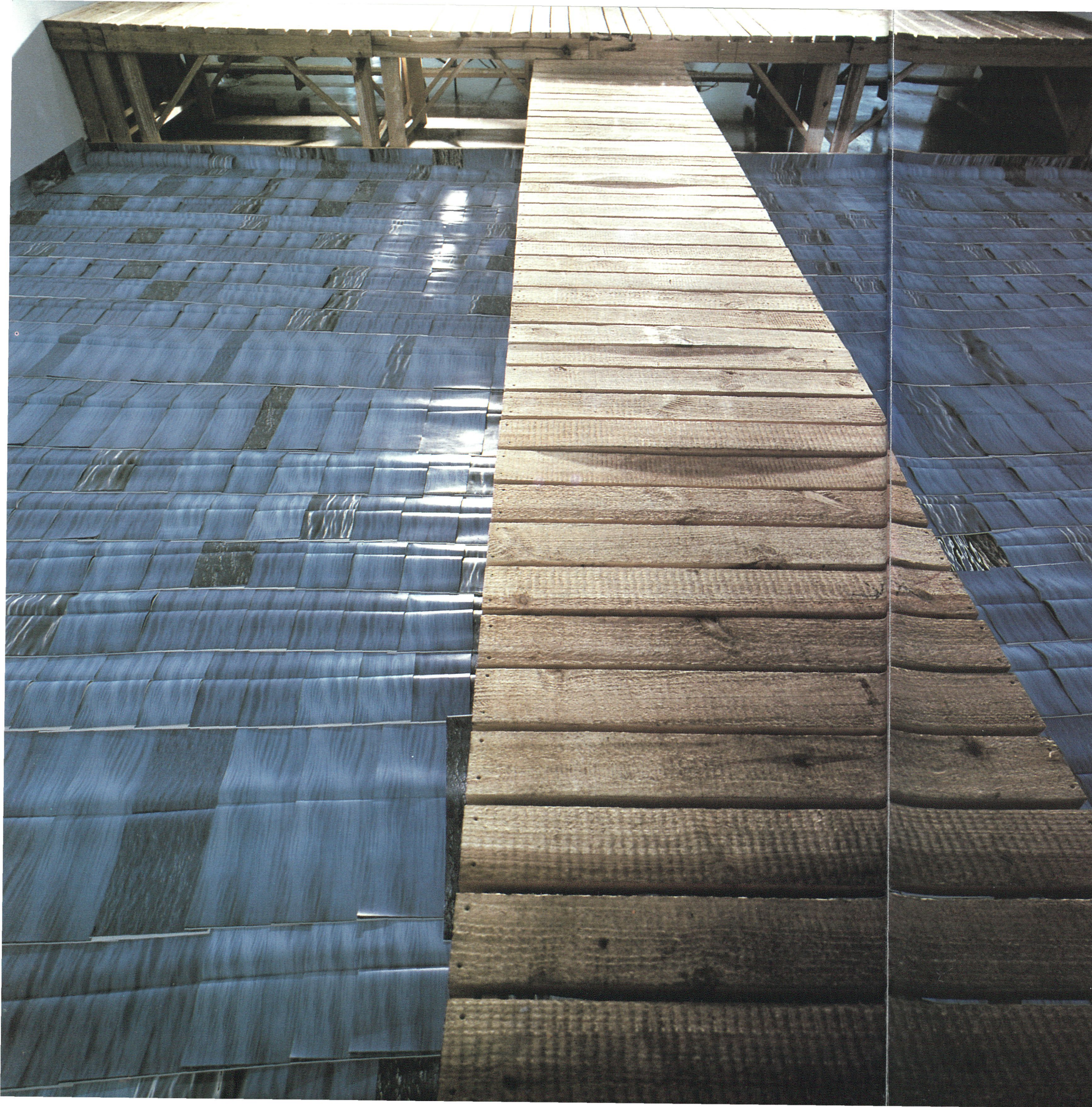
In Mexico they have a quite eloquent term for referring to this kind of things: *ninguneo*, literally nothing-ing or none-ing. It is the operation consisting, as Octavio Paz put it, “of making of Somebody a Nobody.” *Ninguneo* became a habitus in the art camp, involving the market, but also specialists and institutions. Sometimes it is a matter of prejudice, sometimes of sheer ignorance, or a cocktail. Going beyond, it has historical roots in the all-encompassing global expansion of the West through colonialism.

The story of the expansion of Europe and its culture from the Renaissance onward has been told as a story of the expansion of the world. Acquisition of worldwide power was seen as a globalization: that which had been local to the West became universal through the conquest of planetary power, colonialism, and the construction of a totalizing rationality from this power. The main problem is that the West really became universal in a way, by determining the situation in which we all live. Western culture was generalized not simply as an ethnic culture but as the operative metaculture of the present-day world. A similar mechanism of inflating some hegemonic local experiences and reducing the subordinate locals as The Local, continues to reproduce today.

The term “globalization” forms a part of this etymology, dragging multiple implications along with it. It serves to characterize the contemporary situation, but it conceals the enormous inequalities of a world that, to paraphrase Orwell, is much more global for some than for others —the majority.

This exhibition intends a more diversified approach to the idea of importance. It aimed toward more flexible, intricate and truly international ways of recognition, based on some points raised by the Biennial’s proposal. I am aware that it is impossible to go far, because we all share a general postcolonial background. We are part of existing material and mental structures, concurrently as preservers, victims, renovators and transgressors. The exhibition’s goal is nothing like an axiological revolution. The intention is to work inside the structures, but against the status quo, opening alleys for invasions.

All of the artists included have a major trajectory, and are very active shaping contemporary art tendencies. Paradoxically, Ana Mendieta passed away, but is becoming more influential and is receiving increasing recognition, although the intercultural complexity of her work has not been fully understood. The ten artists come from different geographies and backgrounds from diverse corners of the world. They are, in many ways, paradigmatic of the intricacies of



Cildo Meireles, *Marrullito*, 1992-97. Mixed media. Installation.

globalization's cultural processes. Some names are very well known, and some others are not —perhaps due to their heterodoxy, or for being “shaping the contemporary” in a local context. This makes part of the implicit contradictions of globalization. The exhibition's view of artistic importance and of “the contemporary” tends more to the mosaic than to the pyramid or the leading axis. The list itself is a gentle statement against prevailing rankings and taxonomies in the art scene. It does not propose a new ranking, but stands for more variegated ways of ranking. Pluralism can be a prison without walls. Borges once told the story about the best labyrinth: the desert's incommensurable openness, from where it is difficult to escape. Abstract or controlled pluralism, as we see in some “global” shows, can weave a labyrinth of indetermination confining the possibilities toward real, active diversification. Although the stimulus of pluralism is a basic trait of postmodernity, its decentering implies remaining under the control of centers that “self-decenter” in a Lampedusan strategy for change that keeps everything the same. Power today does not seek to repress or homogenize diversity, but to control it.

However, this very strategy responds to a different distribution of power, and disadvantaged groups exercise more and more active pressure and infiltration. Many are the conflicting ways of difference and decentering in this presumably global world, which is ruled by the fundamentalism of the market and competition. Today, culture constitutes a camp of post-Cold War tensions, in which hegemonic and subaltern social forces wrestle. Their confrontations and negotiations take place over assimilation, tokenism, the rearticulation of hegemonies, the affirmation of difference, the critique of power, and appropriation and resemanticizing from all sides among other tensions.

It is in such a framework that this exhibition inscribes. So are its discourse, its situation in the global checkerboard, and its reactions to it. Globalization ends for conversion and domination also imply generalized access. If its imposition seeks to convert the “Other”, its availability facilitates the use of the metaculture for the “Other's” own, different ends, and thereby

for transformation. The existence of an operative international metaculture has permitted the further globalization of the differences of local regions. If the metaculture maintains its hegemonic character, the “Others” have made good use of its capacity for international broadcasting to surpass their local frames. Employed from the other sides, the metaculture has permitted the diffusion of different perspectives, and has undergone modifications according to these perspectives. Moreover, all wide-ranging expansion (for instance, Buddhism in Asia or English in our global world) carries with it a high degree of tension that creates porosities and cracks. It can twist things and make them to fall down, as it happened to the words in Willem Boshoff’s installation. Imposed by colonialism and in spite of it, globalization could become an instrument for decolonization.

This process of globalization-differentiation is an intricate, conflicted articulation of forces more than a dual dialectic. It involves contaminations (in the sense coined by Jean Fisher), mixtures, and contradictions from many sides. The process also orients the present-day development of culture, which is not something that occurs passively, without the pressure exercised by the subaltern sectors.

It is in this labyrinth of displacements and ambiguities that cultural power takes part today. The dynamic of culture crooks amidst collisions and dialogues. It unleashes phenomena of mixing, multiplicity, appropriation, and resemanticizing by many complex turns.

The exhibition’s title alludes to this metamorphic landscape. Luis Camnitzer gave me the pun. I am using it referring to the exhibition’s conceptions, in a way that implies a certain self-criticism, or self-kidding, enhancing the tensions, complexities and contradictions involved. The title forces English to encompass the idea of importance (this particular show’s mission) with the Biennial’s use of the trade routes metaphor for discussing globalization and its cultural processes, and as a reference to South Africa’s own history and location. This language adjustment carries other tropological allusions. In *its deconstruction of importance as an abstract notion, linking it*

to richness (of all kinds) coming out of exchange, the title resumes the exhibition’s agenda.

Diaspora is the key conceptual and metaphorical issue for the Biennial’s approach to globalization. Increasing migrations are a result of our global world’s structure as an atlas of radial nuclei and “unplugged” areas that generates flows of emigrants in search of connection. They are producing complex redefinitions of identities that influence artistic and cultural practices.

Today we all participate in processes of resignifying, appropriation, and cultural hybridization, interwoven with the construction of new urban cultures, neologisms and “border culture” both where physical frontiers exist and where they do not, or where the frontier is no more than a street. On the other hand, these realignments are facing challenging articulations with the new global communication and information media and their virtual reality.

For this exhibition I mean diaspora not only in the straight sense of physical and cultural transterritorializations, but metaphorically embodying displacements in art and its discourses. The artists included produce works that are crossroads of diasporas, embracing shifts of different sort, exchange, multiplicity, intermingling, transculturation . . . in a complex range of interactions. They stand as clear examples of a general contemporary orientation. We could say that these artists are children of Elegba, the Yoruba trickster of change, transit and uncertainty, the god that opens and closes.

The Biennial uses metaphorically the 500 years of Vasco da Gama’s crossing of the Cape of Good Hope to present Africa as a global crossroads. We could say that the ten artists in the exhibition are Capes of Good Hope themselves, connecting different worlds of culture, discourse, action, meaning, aesthetics and ideas. The figure of Trade Routes applies here to the process of the very works, signed by complex, manifold exchanges, negotiations and trespassings.

Going beyond their works, many of the artists’ lives were transformed by desired or forced migrations, or were *conditioned by travels of diverse kind. Their experiences and*



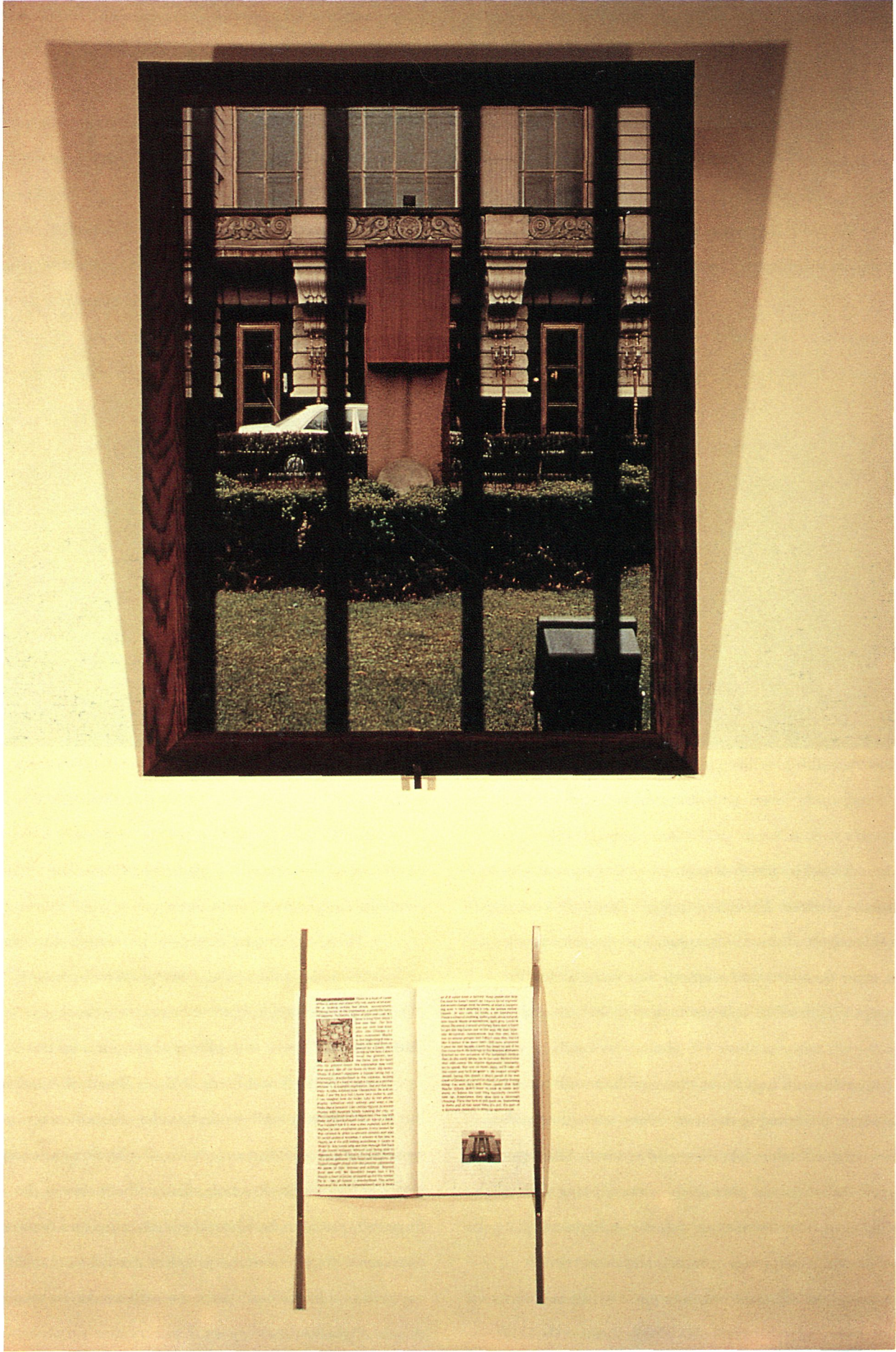
Hiroshi Sugimoto. *Black Sea, Ozuluce*, 1991.

poetics are oriented by physical and spiritual movements, or by displacements of sense. There are direct or slanting connections between this aspect of their biographies and the conceptual, aesthetic, semiotic or cultural journeys that occur within the work. Trespassing borders is in the core of their lives and works.

Important and Exportant tries to enhance all these crucial aspects, according to the trade routes metaphor and South Africa's geographic, historical and symbolic situation. It focuses on installation and photography, considering their role as two chief arts paths for dealing with the contemporary kaleidoscope and its slippings of sense. The show tries to develop a visual and discursive counterpoint between photos and installations. All artists here work both in ways that take

advantage of these morphologies' possibilities, and simultaneously subvert them.

The museography intends to promote a close dialogue, as could be seen in the visual, conceptual and poetic relationship embracing Hiroshi Sugimoto's *Seascapes* with Cildo Meireles' books with photos of the sea, and this last taped words with Boshoff and Frederic Bruly Bouabré visual ones. But the exhibition aspires to a broader connection for structuring its own discourse, without affecting each artist's personal expression. Precisely, the conflict between the frequently overdeveloped curator's narrative and the artists' own ones inflates curatorial practices nowadays. Arnold Haskell once wrote that the best dance scenario would not take more than a single notebook's page. I will try next time.



Sophie Calle. *The Detachment, Desertes Memorial Plague*, 1996. Colour photography and book.

There is an inclination in Latin America and in other non-central areas to use conceptually oriented art to interweave a multitude of elements. The aesthetic, the social, the cultural, the historical, the religious, the political, etc. are sewn together without sacrificing artistic consistency. On the contrary, artists have strengthened the analytical and linguistic tools of conceptualism as a way of dealing with the high degree of complexity within postcolonial cultures and societies. Here multiplicity, hybridization and contrast have introduced both contradictions and subtleties. *Some of the heterodoxies in this exhibition come out from such background.*

Meireles is not only a perfect example, but a most provocative contemporary artist. His work interchanges art and life. Even when it does not practice a direct social insertion, his art always has a contiguity with the real, but transforming it by way of a lyric rationality. Meireles works on the edge of many frontiers. *He investigates the dichotomy between matter and symbol. More specifically, almost every work conveys an enactment of the tensions between the material and the message it bears. Going further, he explores the critical relationship between art and visibility. There is always a will for exceeding the eye to involve other senses, displacing and reactivating perception. This problematizing of perception links Meireles with Boshoff; both of them even have pieces about blindness. The two artists also share a poetic approach to language and conceptualism.*

Meireles' piece here consists in a dock surrounded by a sea of open books whose pages reproduce the same color photo of the sea. Coming up from the underwater, out of the blue, we hear waves of voices repeating steadily the word 'water' in dozens of languages from all over the earth. Apart from its multiple connotations, the piece works here as a tropological problematizing of the Cape of Good Hope rounding and its contemporary global implications.

So do Sugimoto's *Seascapes*. This zealous documentation of the world's seas proves that, at the end, it is the same water all over. It establishes a visual and geographic predicament to Meireles' auditory, linguistic and cultural one.

The frisson that Sugimoto introduces here about da Gama's border crossing is just a concrete metaphoric extension of his programmatic erasure of representations. All of his work is about the inconsistencies between image and reality. He builds this critical and simultaneously poetic project by means of undermining photography as a most objective instrument for representation. This undermining is based, paradoxically, on respect. The artist respects in an almost ceremonial way photography's capacity for objectivity, but he leads it to absurdity.

We could speculate that Sugimoto's approach to photography relies on some projections of Eastern philosophy. Not thematically, but by using some ways, and even tricks, related to a non-Western Weltanschauung, as we will see in Mendieta. It is worth noticing, in particular, his contemplative use of photography in search of illuminations apt to transcend the real by subverting direct images of reality. In this sense, Sugimoto is easily applying some classic traditions to activate a contemporary artistic practice, thus crossing established dichotomies between "the traditional" and "the contemporary". Such trespassings also happen between a specific cultural background and a so much internationalized instrument and artistic practice as photography.

Mendieta's art and life were a single piece. Her obsession for stamping her silhouette on nature or on hierophantic places was an intimate ritual about going back. Her forced migration from Cuba to the United States, alone, at the age of twelve, affected her whole life/art. She used art as a mystical proceeding to symbolically resolve her schism between cultures and places.

Mendieta intertwined 70's performance, body and land art with Afro-Cuban religious practices; not as subject matter, but as mystical procedures. Her participation both in North American and Cuban cultures makes the artist a symbol for the future negotiations of Cuban transterritorialized culture. As a friend of hers, I am taking the freedom of mixing together silhouettes made in the United States, Mexico and Cuba, and displaying them in the shape of new silhouettes, stamped on

Africa, for the first time. This continent was a myth for Mendieta, and its trans-Atlantic culture became instrumental for her art. It is a way of finally bringing them together, in the artist's own ritual terms.

Like Mendieta, Sophie Calle also blends art and life. More, both artists transfer the intimate into the public sphere. But if for the first it was more about going from life to art, for the second it is like the opposite. What I am trying to say is that *Calle occupies herself with importing and exporting from art to life and vice versa*. She is a smuggler who systematically violates the frontiers of art, theater, literature and life. Few artists have gone so far in liberating art from representation, to a point where it could be difficult to say if we are dealing with art, literature, or some other, not yet named, activity. However, what is more transgressive about her work is that it becomes a sort of representation of the non-representation, a simulacrum of the unreal. That is why a strange ambiguity always surrounds it.

These features come out also from the work's strong rituality. Like in Mendieta, the gist of Calle's art is the performance of personal rituals. In Mendieta, rituals were half artistic, half religious, as true symbolic, and emotional, modes for resolving an obsession. Calle, to the contrary, creates her own obsessions through rituals. Her work involves traveling and deals with movement, both physical movements—frequently in a circular time—and displacements of meaning. But her interaction with rituals stands out as a most radical displacement: the self-construction of artificial feelings, out of banality. We are living a world where many of our values, beliefs and reactions have been built up by systems of domination. Calle's construction of her own feelings could be read as an unexpected gambit of the individual for *paradoxically preserving his or her integrity through the artificial, as a last resource to keep personal control over "reality."*

The intersections between art and "reality" (it is interesting that we need to use quotation marks for the word "reality", not for "art"), culture and life, occupy all the

participants in this exhibition. David Medalla's way of entailing art and life, as opposed to that of Mendieta or Calle, is not a carefully rendered encounter, but a systematically spontaneous activity of minimal, precarious, even imaginary artistic interventions on life. It is so to such an extension that Yve-Alain Bois resumed Medalla's work by saying that he "invented the practice of virtuality."

His art almost does not exist, or, to be precise, is *difficult to grasp because it is about freedom, flux, behavior, living processes, exchange, time...* It seems more like a certain "doing things" that ranges from impromptu to painting, to editions, to dance, to give space for others. For most of his life Medalla has been working in joint ventures with different younger artists. Since 1991 he collaborates with Adam Nankervis, both artists also doing individual work. This changing duo practice tells about Medalla's disregard for authorship's aura and his embracing of the public art sphere with the personal one. Beyond this, his art frequently implicates strong group and audience participation. However, the art of this postmodern griot is necessarily quite Medalla-centered. It is the ultimate crossroads; and Medalla, Elegba himself, smiling in the middle of everything.

Medalla is probably the last artistic hero, a 60s' fossil. For decades he has been successfully escaping from the art system, using it just as far as it allowed him not to fall trapped inside. Among his not yet recognized anticipations, stands that cosmopolitan, postnational, site-specific, non workshop-centered artistic practice so common nowadays. But Medalla is not an international event's traveler, but a real wanderer. He gives everything an earthly quality, even when he surpasses Tatlin and the Russians, dreaming with geomorphic and interplanetary art.

Boshoff scarcely travels. His journeys happen at night, inside his room, possessed by insomnia. He navigates dictionaries, and tries to open routes through the oceans of language. Difficult task, because dictionaries are more about not knowing than about knowledge. So, the artist's obsession with words and taxonomies pursues, in his own words, a "study

of ignorance.” One of his pieces is *A Map to Get Lost By*. A constitutive sense of loss, as Ashraf Jamal poignantly indicates, determines Boshoff’s nature and artistic method.

The artist could be seen as an orthodox conceptualist, one who keeps a clean concentration on language, and even on words. Moreover, he stages the relations between words, meanings, and visual and tactile images, and discusses language and its material base and representation. But Boshoff puts the whole thing upside down from its very interior. First, due to that sense of being lost that enhances the tautologies’ inconsistencies. Second, because he is a mystic of conceptualism. His approach to this artistic field is a religious one. There is a sort of cabalistic will of finding an *au delà* of words, together with an endurance ritualism heading for the hierophantic. Third, for the introduction of empirical subject matter and for the social and moral allusions of his work. His botanical garden in progress is not only the representation of an index of plants. It implies a personal, empirical experience with the plants included. Boshoff’s art dwells in the very tensions of such contradictory crossings. The more “pure” it is, the more heterodox.

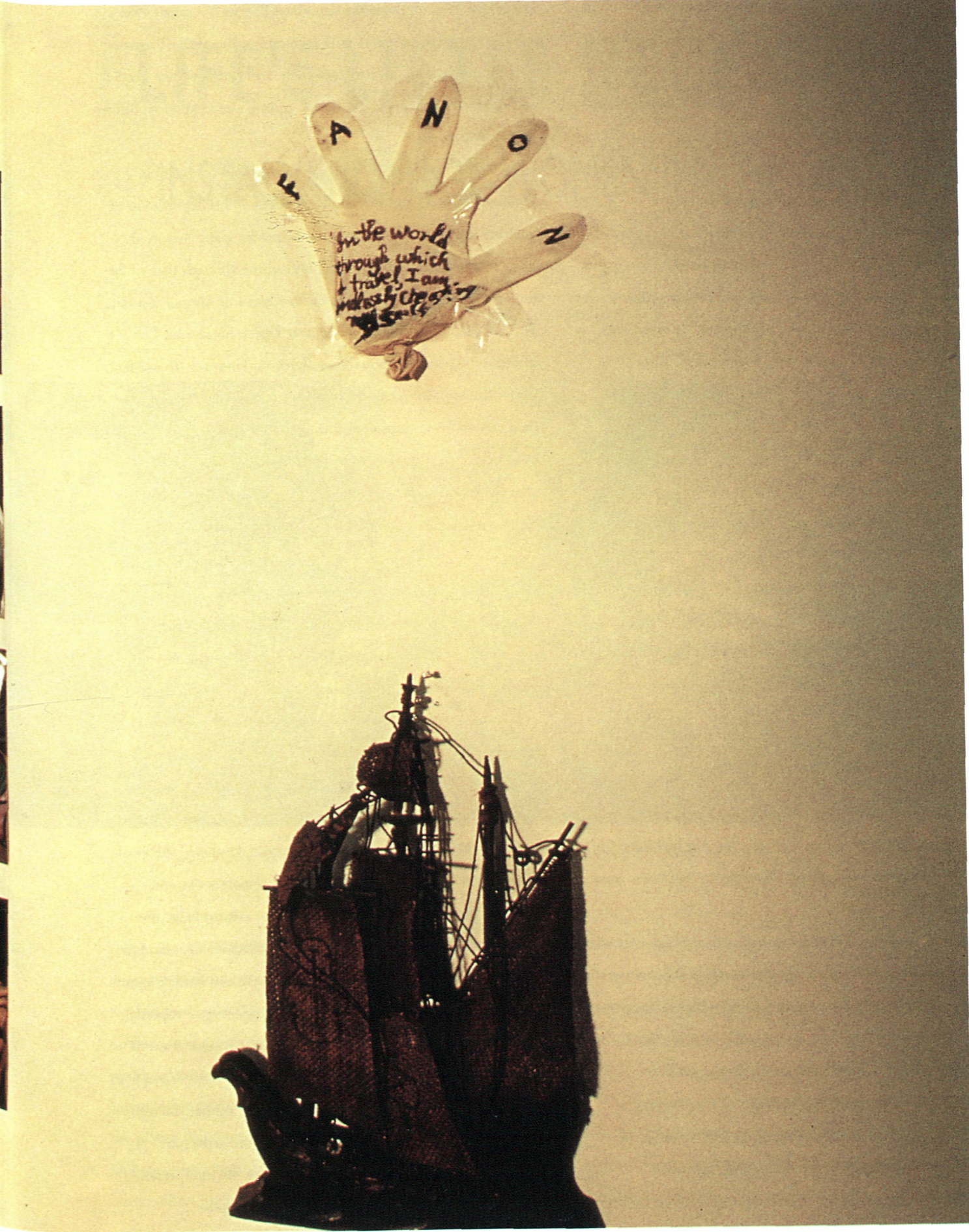
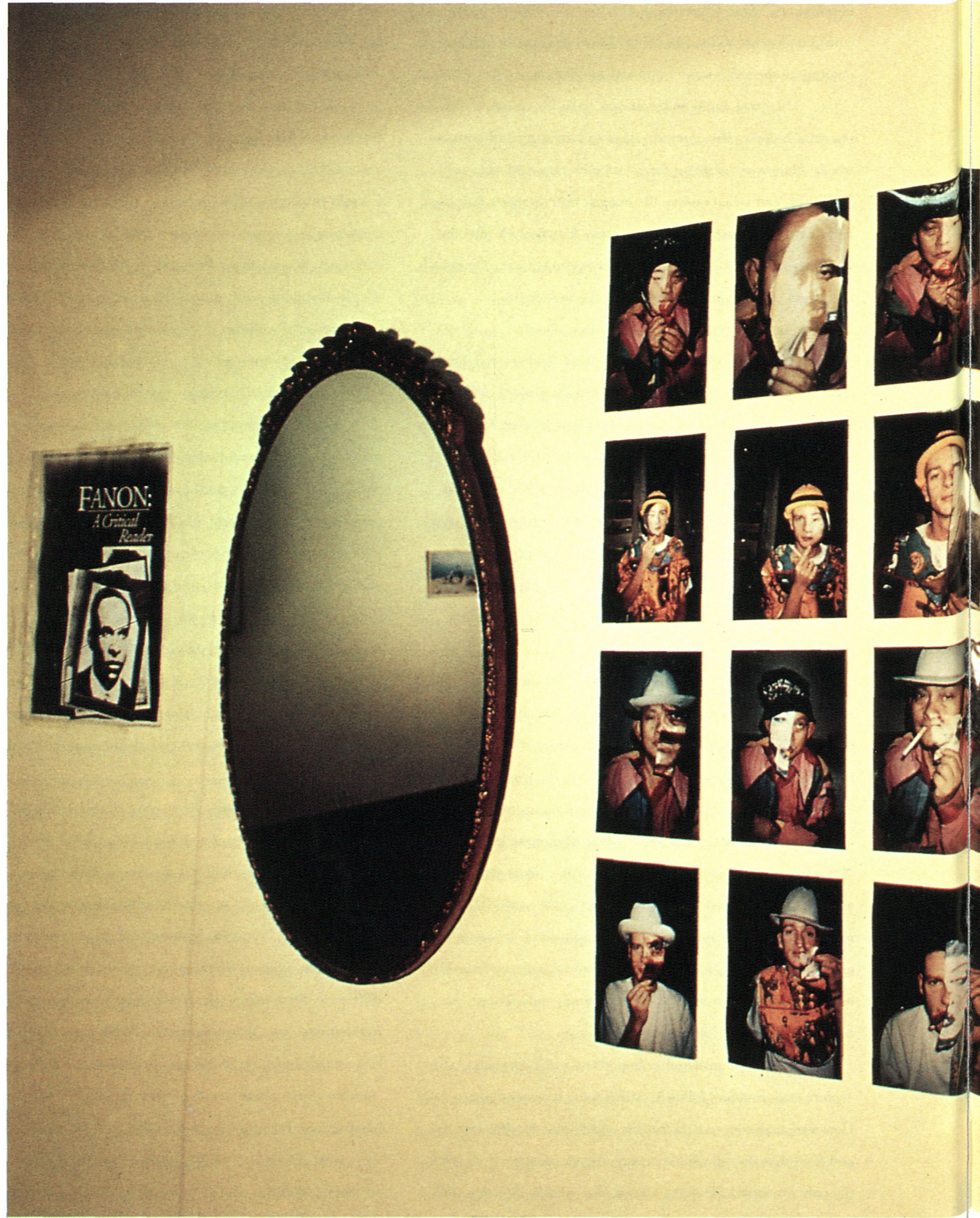
For some pieces the artist invented his own hieroglyphs, refusing to reveal their meaning. Language becomes thus a cryptic code, contradicting the semiotic character of art to the gain of its ambiguity and its pure visuality. His work experiments with the impossibility of translations and decodifications, with ignorance as a way of discovering, of “knowing through not knowing.” Most of his pieces are “blind alphabets”, as the artist named his best known work. What underlies here is a critique on the arbitrariness of meanings and classifications. But Boshoff opens new roads enclosing himself inside language for transforming this critique into a new, different, “linguistic” experience.

The artists gathered in *Important and Exportant* explore art’s frontiers following different ways in and out. However, they conceive their work within that specific activity and field that we call contemporary artistic practice. Bouabré is the only exception. He is the author of a syllabic alphabet that

can be used for any language. After a religious experience, he has been working in a contemporary cosmogony, an explanation of the world by way of compiling and commenting on the universe of things. It is also a holly book commissioned through revelation, where Bouabré, a prophet, keeps record of his visions. This aspect relates him with the Jamaican priest/artist Everaldo Brown. Bouabré’s grand recit is a nonsystematic construction, an open, nonhierarchical cosmos. His vast catalogue diverges from the usual ones because it seems to deeply assume the conjectural character of classifications. It comes from “not knowing,” as Boshoff would say, out of a dialogical interaction with the universe that does not pretend to ambitiously reduce its intricate immensity.

Bouabré’s encyclopedia is the result of a very personal manifold endeavor embracing image and text making, religion, philosophy, linguistics, myth, taxonomy, visions, collections, personal notes, and many other things. His books and drawings with texts consist of series of combined visual and textual narratives of diverse types, and of endless notations about things and events in the world. Other series concentrate on myths, symbols, specific subjects, or aim to interpret all kind of signs: (for instance, on fruits’ skins, in a related way to what Brown has done with leaves and rocks), Akan gold weights, the alphabet of his invention, and even *A Museum of the African Face: Scarifications*.

We are incorrectly circulating all this inside the art network as a way to approach something that challenges our classification systems and that we cannot thoroughly understand. It is not a question of something that is not “contemporary,” something coming out from “tradition” conceived as a haven for the past and for ethnographic difference. Bouabré’s work is vehemently contemporary and international, as a new, original intellectual creation looking into today’s issues. It contributes toward a de-Eurocentralized contemporary culture, constructed through a plurality of active perspectives. Bouabré emphasizes this with his insistence in surpassing the borders of his culture of origin, inside which scholars and critics tend to frame him. “Remove the label!,” he



David Medalla. *Vís-A-Vís (Visa Vie)*. Homage to Franz Fanon. 1997.

keeps saying. Such position is part of the current orientation in postcolonial discourses and strategies to go beyond ethnic or national enclosures, seeking stronger global participation.

Bouabré, who is as wise as street smart, recognizes and pushes himself as an artist for practical reasons.

The art world has been mainly attracted by the visual and narrative appeal of his work, reducing the other components, and the very heart of his effort, to a background for the *œpieces*.” Even worse: his production has been circulating inside a framework stressing an African authenticity based on roots, traditions, i.e., on “primitivism.” Fortunately, the conceptual nature of this oeuvre, which relates it to contemporary international art, has been making of Bouabré the only case of a “primitive” or “intuitive” African artist beginning to slightly move away from these Bantustans toward other circulation and interpretation environments. This exhibition, aware of the contradictions about showing his work as “art,” wants at least not to present it for its “primitive” glamour, but for its conceptual and linguistic aspects. Bouabré has said: “when I draw, what interests me is thoughts,” and has proposed a virtual African museum. His work interplays better with Meireles and Gerhard Richter than with Chéri Samba or Twins Seven-Seven, its usual exhibition’s companions. Richter’s *Atlas* —quite close to Bouabré’s concepts— could gain a lot from such an interplay, and even more Boshoff’s obsessions, which are so related to Bouabré’s own ones. It is also clear that his work feels *à son aise* among photographs. My highlighting of these considerations tells clearly about prevailing stereotypes on African artists.

Like Eleggba, the Yoruba trickster, David Hammons is a master of the crossroads —or, best, of the megalopolis’ street corners. His art transgresses many frontiers. It intertwines “high” and “low” productions and behaviors, the vernacular with the “art world”, Harlem, the South, Soho and the Caribbean, postmodern practices with the African-American world . . . Such intertwining is not a diplomatic mission: the artist points a critical edge toward every side. His work constitutes an affirmation of African-American culture —the

paradigm being perhaps the American flag with African colors, which relates to the colors’ war in Jamaica. But this affirmation is a “non politically correct” one. The artist empowers a playful self-criticism in African-American culture, and introduces fun in contemporary art.

The weight of his cultural background is crucial in Hammons’ work, and he frequently refers to his exportation of African-American culture to other scenes by using imported alien instruments. “I’m bringing my culture through theirs,” he has said. Several decades ago, another artist of African descent, Wifredo Lam, identified himself as a Trojan horse who infiltrated African contents in modernism. However, to use tools for a different aim means also to transform them, developing their possibilities. Hammons has also said: “I’m speaking to both sides”. And there are not only two, but many sides interacting today. When we focus mainly on culture to discuss Hammons, we are probably unconsciously ghettoizing him into the ethnic, as if being a sort of postmodern “primitive.” We are also restricting the artist to represent his culture.

The emphasis on the figure of the intruder could diminish two major issues about Hammons. First, his artistic personality: when we stress his relationship to a group we could be diluting in a certain way his prominence as an individual. Second, and more important, we could be fading his role as a protagonist of contemporary art. Hammons links with Arte Povera, Fluxus and the Situationists are often mentioned. But we never say that he seems to be the artist who developed the ideals of those movements in the most concrete, spontaneous and powerful way. Of course, it is imperative to acknowledge, for instance, the active presence of Kongo religious elements in his work. More important is to analyze how these and other African-American and non African-American components participate in the construction of an artistic practice that opens new ways in the recurrently boring international art arena. A chief example of African culture productivity, Hammons is also fundamental for going beyond ethnic frameworks to become the artist par excellence of the contemporary city. Such are the interpretation shifts that Important and Exportant aims to propose.