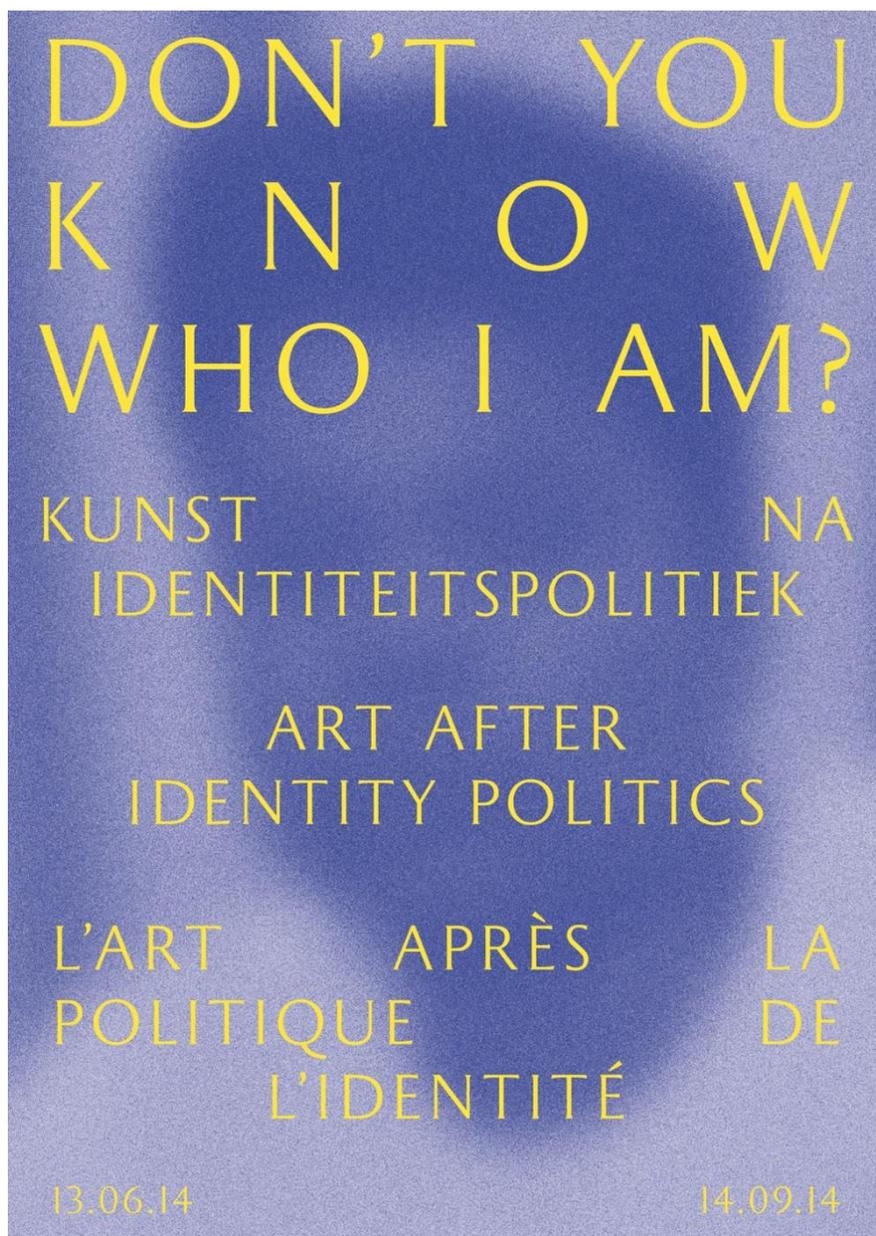


PRESS FILE

Don't You Know Who I Am? Art After Identity Politics

13.06.2014–14.09.2014

<http://afteridentity.muhka.be>



M HKA

Museum of Contemporary Art Antwerp

Leuvenstraat 32, 2000 Antwerp

www.muhka.be

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Don't You Know Who I Am?

Art After Identity Politics

Don't You Know Who I Am? Art After Identity Politics is a major group exhibition at M HKA, the Museum of Contemporary Art Antwerp, reflecting how emergent artists relate to issues of 'identity politics' today.

'Don't You Know Who I Am' is a phrase we might expect to hear from celebrities being refused entry to a nightclub, or politicians trying to dissuade a policeman from giving them a parking ticket and expecting to get away with it because of who they are. In this case it also refers to the fact that many of the artists in the exhibition will be less well-known to a wider audience. This exhibition, on both main floors of the M HKA and in several off-site locations, is intended as a large-scale survey of the modes and means for considering identity and identification.

Various groups in society have, during recent decades, defined themselves along political, economic or social lines such as race, ethnicity, gender or sexuality in order to enhance their visibility and overcome marginalisation. After this established discourse of identity politics, often associated with the art of the 1980s, artists are once again considering notions of identity and what they mean in the contemporary world.

Having outgrown theoretical and visual codes that were too often focused on representations of the self or the body, and that more than anything expressed a desire for social visibility, artists today seem to be more interested in identities (in the plural) as part of an overall understanding of complexity – which the art system has not always been able or willing to accommodate.

New generations of artists interrogate the formation of identities in the world through strategies such as performativity, abstraction, thingness, the logic and aesthetics of the digital, activism, analysis of selfhood from cultural and scientific perspectives or addressing the role of the viewer. These strategies may not always reinforce each other, but artists have not accepted any ban on self-contradiction.

Visual art is still, but perhaps only notionally, an avant-garde in relation to culture and society as a whole. Yet it remains a place for experimentation, and many artists, followed by curators and theoreticians, are asking themselves how they can achieve an ever more nuanced and relevant understanding of what identity means to individuals and their sense of self and how it can be articulated in creative practice. The exhibition will invite and even provoke different perspectives from the artists invited, as well as the audience and other participants in the project, such as writers for the publication or speakers for discursive events.

Don't You Know Who I Am? Art After Identity Politics is organised in partnership with **AIR Antwerpen**, which offers residencies in Antwerp to participating artists. The exhibition will be accompanied by a series of discursive activities, including a **symposium** in collaboration with CAHF (Contemporary Art Heritage Flanders) at Cinema Zuid in Antwerp on 14 June,

that will seek to enhance and expand it. It will also include a substantial **e-book** published in English, Dutch and French versions. They can be downloaded for free from the project's **microsite** <http://afteridentity.muhka.be>, to be launched in June.

Don't You Know Who I Am? Art After Identity Politics is organised by M HKA within the framework of "The Uses of Art", a project by the European museum network **L'Internationale**. *L'Internationale* proposes a space for art within a non-hierarchical and decentralised internationalism, based on the value of difference and horizontal exchange among a constellation of cultural agents, locally rooted and globally connected. Comprising six major European museums: **Moderna Galerija** (MG, Ljubljana, Slovenia); **Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía** (MNCARS, Madrid, Spain); **Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona** (MACBA, Barcelona, Spain); **Museum of Contemporary Art Antwerp** (M HKA, Antwerp, Belgium); **SALT** (Istanbul and Ankara, Turkey) and **Van Abbemuseum** (VAM, Eindhoven, the Netherlands) and associate organisations from the academic and artistic fields.

Curators: **Anders Kreuger** and **Nav Haq**, M HKA

Participating artists:

Anthea Hamilton

UK, born in 1978, lives in London

<http://antheahamilton.com>

Augustas Serapinas

Lithuania, born in 1990, lives in Vilnius

Donna Kukama

South Africa, born in 1981, lives in Johannesburg

<http://vimeo.com/44359748>

Eloise Hawser

UK, born in 1985, lives in London

<http://www.eloisehawser.com>

Ermias Kifleyesus

Ethiopia, born in 1974, lives in Brussels

<http://ermiaskifleyesus.com>

Guan Xiao

China, born in 1983, lives in Beijing

Haegue Yang

Korea, born in 1971, lives in Berlin/Seoul

Hedwig Houben

Netherlands, born in 1983, lives in Brussels

<http://www.hedwighouben.nl/portfolio.pdf>

Iman Issa

Egypt, born in 1979, lives in New York

<http://imanissa.com>

Imran Qureshi

Pakistan, born in 1972, lives in Lahore

Juha Pekka Matias Laakkonen

Finland, born in 1982, lives in Helsinki and Skövde (Sweden)

Katja Novitskova

Estonia, born in 1984, lives in Amsterdam

<http://katjanovi.net>

Lawrence Abu Hamdan

UK/Lebanon, born in 1985, lives in London

<http://lawrenceabuhamdan.com>

Liesbeth Doms

Belgium, born in 1989, lives in Antwerp

Maria Safronova

Russia, born in 1979, lives in Moscow

Maria Taniguchi

The Philippines, born in 1981, lives in Manila

<http://www.mariataniguchi.com>

Massimo Grimaldi

Italy, born in 1974, lives in Milan

Nadezhda Grishina

Russia, born in 1984, lives in Moscow

Nástio Mosquito

Angola, born in 1981, lives in Luanda and Lisbon

<http://nastiosquito.com>

Oleg Ustinov

Russia, born in 1984, lives in Moscow

Onkar Kular & Noam Toran

UK and US, born in 1974 and 1975, live in London

<http://www.onkarkular.com> & <http://noamtoran.com>

Oscar Murillo

Colombia, born in 1986, lives in London

Patrizio Di Massimo

Italy, born in 1983, lives in London

www.patriziodimassimo.com

Pedro Barateiro

Portugal, born in 1979, lives in Lisbon

<http://pedrobarateiro.tumblr.com>

<http://pedro-barateiro.blogspot.com>

Pennacchio Argentato

Italy, born in 1979 and 1977, live in London and Naples

<http://www.pennacchioargentato.com>

Shilpa Gupta

India, born in 1976, lives in Mumbai

<http://shilpagupta.com>

Wu Tsang

US, born in 1981, lives in Los Angeles

<http://wutsang.com>

BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION...

Hello. Nice to meet you, and thanks for coming.

Well... We've been wondering how to introduce something without it being a mere elevator pitch? This is our task here in describing an exhibition that touches on the complicated relations of representation and identity. By way of introduction, we'll have to bite our proverbial tongues a bit and summarise for you.

How are you, anyway?

We've made this exhibition, and given it the title *Don't You Know Who I Am? Art After Identity Politics*, to bring together around thirty artists in relation to a question. Is 'identity politics' still relevant or necessary in art? We wanted to see how and why artists today address issues of identification and subjectivity in their work. We've focused specifically on emergent practices, because we think they might help us, and our audience, to understand the here-and-now of art and to speculate on its future.

In the not-so-distant past – for instance at the Whitney Biennial in 1993 or even at Documenta 11 in 2002 – there was something like a broad agreement on the ultimate goal of identity politics in art. Their answer was to show 'the public' (in itself a questionably generalising and universalising notion) that any lingering belief in universal aesthetics or universal values is based on lies and (self-)deception, on a monopolisation of perspectives on culture and on history as written by the victors, from a position of power. Despite these good intentions, or perhaps even because of them, identity politics rather quickly ran its course as an innovative approach to the practice and discourse of art. Too often, the message became the medium, in a way. Too often, the desire to get out of the ghetto (of various subaltern conditions to do with race, class, gender, sexuality etc.) was stronger than the resolve to broaden and deepen the aesthetic range of 'identity art'.

We could point the (also proverbial) finger of blame in numerous directions, but perhaps that's not so important here. What matters is that there's little desire, among artists today, to repeat such mistakes. We probably don't need to remind you that there has been an explosive increase in access to information in the last twenty years. Today's emergent artists are clued in, aware and in-the-know to an extent that was unthinkable in 1999 or even in 2004. This can be a mixed blessing – the 'digital natives' are sometimes also referred to as the 'short attention-span generation' – but for our purposes it's mainly a good thing, since an abundance of stimuli appears to have enhanced the acceptance and understanding of complexity.

The 'I word' that is embedded in the exhibition title was also embedded in our approach to this project. What might identity mean today? What purposes does it serve? What does it 'look' like? How does it function? Can it reflect or cause radical change? Many questions, we know. But we've taken the lead from what artists are doing, and it seems obvious to us that there's a new urgency to looking at the work produced today as part of a new identity paradigm, particularly if we also consider the consequences of capitalist globalisation.

It also seems obvious to us that there's a new desire, among artists and their audiences, for more supple and more relativistic approaches to existence and how it might be represented in art, through art. This extends to how artists position themselves within the art community, often in defiance of the market logic, and is manifested in concrete practises, such as those included in this exhibition. 'Our' artists might be characterised as dealing with the complexity of lives rather than the anecdote of biographies, with experimentation on many levels rather than with telling a story or delivering a message, with articulating subjectivity rather than submitting to the unspoken hegemonic claims of the art system, which is already global. Furthermore, these practitioners don't agree that the representation of identities can be a face value. Rather, they question the connection between identity and identification. And this, for us, adds up to a radical reorientation of what was referred to not so long ago as 'identity politics'.

Are you still with us?

We wanted the exhibition to reflect these relativistic attitudes. We've invited twenty-seven individual artists and duos, wishing to offer each of them a substantial presence. We're glad to have been able to help produce new works and projects, as well as re-contextualising and revitalising numerous existing ones. We've wanted to treat each artwork itself as a subject or being, allowing a level of self-determination in their display rather than using overarching conceptual or visual principles that homogenise. With this approach to the works, we've wished to facilitate the experience of dialogue, not just between the works but also, crucially, with their viewers. The relationship with the artists has been an active and discursive one, and we're glad to have found them appreciative of our thoughts and ambitions. We thank them all for their participation, insights and energy.

We've aimed to be particularly ambitious in our endeavour, and for this we'd also like to thank the numerous supporters and collaborators for *Don't You Know Who I Am?* Our partnership with AIR Antwerpen has allowed several of the participating artists to be present in the city for a number of months and has given them the valuable time and space to develop major new works. Working together with CAHF (Contemporary Art Heritage Flanders), we have realised an ambitious programme of events, titled *Just Who Do You Think You Are?*, on 14 June 2014. It has enabled many of the participating artists to present significant performance works, alongside some dynamic invited speakers. We're also grateful for the support of the Permeke Library and the Hendrik Conscience Heritage Library in Antwerp. We've found the collaboration with these organisations particularly fruitful, and we really look forward to deepening our relationships further in the future.

Moreover, *Don't You Know Who I Am?* is presented within the framework of *L'Internationale*, the confederation of European museums and other art institutions of which M HKA is a member. The other partners – using the ubiquitous logic of alphabetisation – are MACBA in Barcelona, Moderna Galerija in Ljubljana, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía in Madrid, SALT in Istanbul and Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven. We are grateful to the Culture Programme of the European Union for supporting the confederation and this exhibition.

We also want to thank the Evens Foundation in Antwerp for supporting our project. Other institutions and organisations have been equally invaluable, particularly for the production of

new works. We'd like to thank funders such as the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon, the Embassy of Portugal in Brussels, the Lithuanian Cultural Council in Vilnius, and the Mondriaan Foundation in Amsterdam. We'd also like to thank our coproduction partners Galleria Zero in Milan, the HISK (Hoger Instituut voor Schone Kunsten) in Ghent, Kraupa-Tuskany Zeidler in Berlin, Kunsthalle Lissabon in Lisbon and Wilkinson Gallery in London for working with us. Many thanks to everyone; we appreciate it very much.

We'll leave you here to carry on yourselves, if that's OK? See you again, we hope.

Curators **Nav Haq** and **Anders Kreuger**, M HKA

IMAGES

Images are available at www.muha.be/pers



Anthea Hamilton, Installation view of *CUT OUTS*, 2012 photo Andy Keate



Maria Safronova, *The General Outlook Game: New Year*, 2013, courtesy of the artist and Gallery Paperworks, Moscow



Pennacchio Argentato, *YOU WILL NEVER BE SAFE*, 2013, photo Max Reitmeier

IMAGES

Images are available at www.muha.be/pers



Ermias Kifleyesus, *I call and call nobody responds*, 2014, courtesy the artist



Hedwig Houben, *The Hand, the Eye and It*, 2013 performance lecture, 20 mins approx, courtesy the artist



Oscar Murillo, *Untitled (stack painting)*, 2013 courtesy the artist and Carlos/Ishikawa, London

OFF-SITE PROGRAMME

Artists in residence, in collaboration with AIR Antwerpen

For the major group exhibition *Don't You Know Who I Am? Art After Identity Politics*, M HKA is collaborating with AIR Antwerpen, the city's international residency programme for visual artists. Three artists, Augustas Serapinas, Juha Pekka Matias Laakkonen, and Oscar Murillo, have been invited to undertake residencies of between one and three months at AIR Antwerpen. This time spent in Antwerp has enabled each of them the possibility to create projects that are site-specific for the context of Antwerp and M HKA.

Augustus Serapinas is invited for a residency of three months. Serapinas is the youngest participant in the exhibition, and has the most clearly articulated interest in 'working with people': with the human dynamics of a 'found' environment. Serapinas bases one of his new works on a previous one, for which he interviewed priests of Christian churches in Lithuania, but this time he is interested in collaborating with representatives of Antwerp's Moroccan and Turkish communities. For the other work, Augustas Serapinas researches the built environment of the city, looking for spaces to make his own, but also present to the public in a new light as part of the exhibition. It is therefore highly likely that the result of Serapinas's residency are works that take place outside of the museum building, thus expanding the format of the exhibition to include otherwise invisible social and psychological processes in the surrounding city.

Juha Pekka Matias Laakkonen has developed a new art project during his two-month residency at AIR Antwerpen. For this project, Laakkonen transported wooden beams, one from Korsnäs and one from Ilomantsi in Finland. Both villages are located on the 62nd latitude, where Finland is at its widest. With these beams Juha Laakkonen will create a loom, which he will use to make a garment out of 12 kilograms of wool, gathered in the same regions.

Oscar Murillo will be in residence at Air Antwerpen for a month. He has developed a new project for M HKA that approaches the exhibition space as a production site for a functioning factory of ceramic coconuts, like those often found in places such as Columbia and Mexico. From a family of factory workers, he, and occasionally his father, will occupy this space, initially to set-up the factory, and then to run it on occasional days throughout the duration of the exhibition. In turning part of the museum into an operational production space, Murillo opens up questions of labour and globalisation, as well as more relational subjects of community and family, whereas the ceramic coconuts comment on the marketability of 'exotic' cultural identities.

Permeke Library

Shilpa Gupta's project *Someone Else* (2011-2012) is presented in two parts, at M HKA and at the Permeke Library in Antwerp. The work is based around the idea of a library of 100 books that have been written either anonymously or under a pseudonym. The books have been selected from around the world and from across centuries, including books by Emily Brontë (who used the pseudonym Ellis Bell) and Herman Hesse (who used the pseudonym Emil Sinclair) for example. The reasons for authors deciding to do this varies greatly, from 'fear of not having a Christian name positively masculine' to 'fear of not being able to return home', together offering an insight into the issue of censorship as well as social norms and prejudices in different cultural contexts.

At M HKA, 100 metal surrogate book sculptures are presented on shelves. Each is etched with the title of the books as well as the reason for the author's anonymity, and each is empty to signify the absence of the author's real identity. At the Permeke Library, a selection of the books have been inserted into the shelves, including many new additions to this list originally written in Dutch, and are available to read or borrow. The Permeke Library is located at De Coninckplein 26, close to Antwerp Central station.

OTHER EXHIBITIONS AT M HKA

Dialogue

#3 Ria Pacquée & Filip Gilissen – 27.06.2014–05.10.2014

#4 David Claerbout & John Gerrard – 24.10.2014–18.01.2015

In 2014, *Lonely At The Top (LATT)*, located on the sixth floor of M HKA, is sure to become a place for dialogue. In this four-episode programme, established names introduce a lesser-known artist. Anne-Mie Van Kerckhoven, Luc Tuymans, Ria Pacquée and David Claerbout host the series, as there is obviously nobody better placed than an artist to recognize important talent. The lesser-known artists, in turn, return the favour and select one or more works by the established name for the presentation.

Both artists enter in conversation during the Thursday evening preview of a new *Dialogue*.

Panamarenko Universe

03.10.2014–22.02.2015

Panamarenko Universe is a lively retrospective on one of the few top artists of the post-war European avant-garde: Panamarenko. His name will always remain connected to the city of Antwerp and he is a true artist of reference for M HKA, which has safeguarded and preserved his artist's house in Biekorfstraat. With *Panamarenko Universe*, M HKA intends to lay the foundation for an international comprehensive overview based on three aspects of his extensive oeuvre: works, actions and thoughts.

M HKA presents this Panamarenko retrospective as a voyage of discovery through the mental universe of the artist, with an intimate view into his artistic process. Apart from the masterpieces, attention is also given to Panamarenko's happenings from the 60s, his scientific insights, and his artistic statements. For the first time, a closer look is taken at the artist's sources of inspiration as well. *Panamarenko Universe* simultaneously focuses on both the versatility and the depth of the work of this inspired artist-magician.

There will also be a publication to coincide with the exhibition: a concise and original catalogue with an accessible overview of Panamarenko's most important works, actions and theories.

Olga Chernysheva

Collection intervention

24.10.2014–18.01.2015

M HKA is continuing the *Interventions* series, for which we invite contemporary artists to make an exhibition based on the M HKA collection and their own work. We collaborated with English artist Emily Wardill in 2011 and with Maarten Van den Eynde in 2012.

Now we have invited the internationally renowned Russian artist Olga Chernysheva (born in 1962, lives in Moscow) to research the collection and respond to it. We acquired a major new work by her, the video installation *Screens* (2013). This is featured in the exhibition along with her recent audiovisual works, photographs and drawings.

Chernysheva is a leading artist in the generation that emerged in Moscow in the 1990s, a period of political and cultural vibrancy but also of difficult transition from the Soviet system and economic hardship for much of the population. Her work in different media – also including very short essays that she combines with still or moving images – is based on close observation of the reality around her.

Olga Chernysheva continues a long Russian tradition of social realism (very different from the Socialist Realism that was the official artistic doctrine of the USSR) and of art as a form of critical and compassionate narrative. Her work is both formally sophisticated and subtly humorous. She has had numerous solo exhibitions, most recently at Kunsthalle Erfurt, and participated in many international group exhibitions. Chernysheva represented Russia at the Venice Biennale in 2001.

PRESS INFORMATION

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For more information and photos, please visit:

www.muha.be/pers and www.ensembles.org, there you will find more information and documentation on artists, artworks and exhibitions in M HKA

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Nationale Loterij



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l'internationale

