

WELANCORA GALLERY

PRESS RELEASE



AISHA TANDIWE BELL

CONJURE

NOVEMBER 4, 2017- JANUARY 14, 2018

OPENING RECEPTION: NOVEMBER 4, 2017 6-9PM

Curated by Derrick Adams

Welancora Gallery is pleased to present *Conjure*, an exhibition of works by Aisha Tandiwe Bell, from November 4, 2017 through January 14, 2018. A reception for the artist will be held on Saturday, November 4th from 6 – 9 pm. This is the artist's first solo exhibition with the gallery.

Bell's subject is the complex notion of consciousness and identity as it relates specifically to the African American experience in the Western world. In *Conjure*, she continues to utilize composites of her mental archive of gazes and gestures to create portraits and personifications that explore code switching and the African and Indigenous ideas of "the trickster". This notion of "the trickster" is a coping mechanism of sorts that relies on the ability to transform, resist, and escape traps while exploring ideas of transformation, multiplicity, indecision, confusion, consumption, balance and fragmentation.

In this quest that spans a number of years, Bell has created a unique visual language that draws inspiration from Duboisian "double consciousness" theory and Jacques Lacan's shape shifting subconscious ideology. Bell posits that we have many identities, and like chameleons they shift according to our surroundings code-switching for survival and as tool for getting ahead.

Bell's work is made from clay, cardboard, cloth, and canvas. As they protrude from the wall, her clay heads serve as a metaphor for enlightenment, pushing their way to freedom, their bodies painted and "trapped" on the canvas. Jute rope springing from the opened palms of her subjects, and gold twine, are props used to simultaneously reference the West African folktale of Anansi, the web slinging spider man, the crucified, the praying, and rope used for lynching. These works are at once provocative, elegant, and haunting.

Bell's cardboard traps are depicted as comfortable spaces to inhabit, fully decked out in soft fabric; yet they simultaneously serve to illustrate the lure of escapism in all of its forms including consumerism and the comfort found in the unchanged and unchallenged. In drawing upon our shared and intersecting histories, Bell weaves together a coherent picture of the conflicted realities that shape who we are and who we can be.

Aisha Tandiwe Bell's practice is committed to creating myth & ritual through sculpture, performance, video, sound, drawing & installation. Bell holds a BFA, & an MS from Pratt & a MFA from Hunter College. Bell received a NYFA in Performance Art/ Multidisciplinary Work & has had artist residencies/fellowships at Skowhegan, Rush Corridor Gallery, Abron's Art Center, LMCC's Swing Space, The Laundromat Project, BRIC & more. She has been a fellow with DVCAI on International Cultural Exchanges (Jamaica 2012, Surinam 2013, Antigua 2014, Guadeloupe 2015 & 17). The Museo De Arte Moderno's Triennial 2014, The Jamaica Biennial 2014 & 17, The BRIC Biennial 2016, The Venice Biennial 2017, MoCADA, The Rosa Parks Museum, CCCADI, Columbia College, Space One Eleven & Rush Arts are a few spaces where Bell has exhibited her work. The artist lives and works in New York City.

About the Curator:

Derrick Adams recently served as guest curator for the first curated section of VOLTA NY 2016. His work has been shown at MoMA PS1, Brooklyn Museum of Art, Studio Museum in Harlem, Contemporary Art Museum Houston, and the California African American Museum.

For all inquiries, please contact the gallery at 917-848-4627 or pr@welancoragallery.com.