

Flash Art

REVIEWS

Wu Tsang

Michael Benevento, Los Angeles

Wu Tsang's first solo exhibition in Los Angeles, comprised of two films, photographs, text and a readymade sculpture, provides a homecoming that depicts the artist as a performer-cum-superstar. As a gesture this fulfills a particular role in his works, which reject any optimized projection of solid subjecthood, instead delivering to the viewer processes of rehearsal, reenactment and restaging that represent characters and bodies subject to perpetual change.

Tsang's *Tied and True* (2012), set in the fictional post-colonial town of Mektoub, portrays the chance meeting of Johnny and Raja, distant relatives turned love interests who meet at a family dinner. There, Johnny's Caucasian father waxes poetic about his legacy and its ties to the conquered land while commenting on the sub-human status of his African wife. His speech forms a racial gulf between Johnny and Raja, which is dispersed in a casual moment they later share at the bathroom, strengthening their potential bond.

In *Mishima in Mexico* (2012), the film's writer, artist Alexandro Segade, and Tsang arrive at a resort in Mexico City to create a version of Yukio Mishima's queer classic *Thirst for Love*. The film fluidly shifts between the two artists trying to figure out how to write and stage the film, and their interpretation itself. The film operates like the scene of a rehearsal, with both the story's narrative and the contingencies of the artists' lives cycling back onto one another in a continual process of becoming, illustrating how stories write subjects as much as subjects write stories.

In the gallery's second space hang photographs of Tsang inspired as much by fashion as by documentary traditions. Positioning his body between fact and fiction through the lens of the "superstar," the artist alternately strikes a pose and waits in repose backstage. Tsang has framed this all with an altered readymade hanging in the space's center, a metallic lighting truss that spans over twenty feet. Prose reprinted in vinyl between the photographs comprise diaristic streams of consciousness that border on the confessional, dramatizing the exhibition as a place that demands the performance of one's self.

by PAUL SOTO



*Wu Tsang, Untitled, 2013. C-Print on aluminum, 76 x 101 cm.
Courtesy Michael Benevento, Los Angeles*