

**CLIFTON BENEVENTO**

LOCATION: 515 BROADWAY NEW YORK NY 10012 PHONE: 212 431 6325 FAX: 212 334 4703  
EMAIL: INFO@CLIFTONBENEVENTO.COM WEBSITE: WWW.CLIFTONBENEVENTO.COM

# BLOUINARTINFO

## Wu Tsang and Fred Moten Trade Voicemail at Clifton Benevento

BY RISA PULEO, MODERN PAINTERS | SEPTEMBER 26, 2015



Wu Tsang with Fred Moten in "Miss Communication and Mr: Re, 2014.  
(Courtesy the artist and Clifton Benevento, New York)

Two interwoven videos and a pair of sculptures triangulate different types of relationships in Wu Tsang's second exhibition at Clifton Benevento, on view through October 31. In *Miss Communication and Mr: Re, 2014*, poet and cultural theorist Fred Moten's and Tsang's faces each fill a monitor, facing the viewer in postures of sympathetic and attentive listening and receiving. Tsang's collaboration with Moten began over the telephone and a nine-hour time difference, the two leaving voice messages for one another. These voice messages provide the soundtrack for the mute video portraits. Tsang speaks to the nuance of spoken language and intimacy of communication, while Moten, appearing in bright red lipstick halfway through the loop, riffs on variations of drag: time drag, dragging bodies, drag queens.

Much like a voice message, the relationship forged between *Miss Communication* and *Girl Talk*, 2015, isolates articulation from utterance. *Girl Talk* displays a written transcript of the voice messages synchronized to the audio track of *Miss Communication* in the manner of a karaoke monitor. The two-channel video portrait yields to the third screen for a performance by Moten that translates the conversation into an image. Dressed in a flowy gown decorated with crystals, Moten swirls in his role as drag mother. Video is slowed down (an instance of time drag), as is audio: a version of Moten's favorite song, Betty Carter's jazz standard *Girl Talk*, updated by Josiah Wise.

The dialogue between *Girl Talk* and a pair of untitled sculptures, both 2015, emphasizes the relationship between image and object across media. Two bodily forms of different shape and size stand near each other in conversation. Both wear flowing fabric garments decorated with strings of crystals, much like the gown that Moten wears in *Girl Talk*. In the sculptures, role has been isolated from performer. Circling back to *Miss Communication* and *Mr: Re*, the two sculptures give form and body to the attentive faces. This carefully orchestrated dialogue between pairs operates through substitution, unfixing and refixing identity in each reorganization of Moten's and Tsang's bodies.

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