

HALES LONDON NEW YORK

Ebony G Patterson | Thomas J Price | Zadie Xa

31 March–6 May 2017
Preview: 30 March, 6–8:30pm
#HalesGallery

In Conversation with Thomas J Price and Zadie Xa: 22nd April, 2:30pm

Questions of cultural identity – feelings of belonging to a particular group – seem especially relevant in today's troubled Western society, increasingly international and yet as riven as ever with conflict and fear of others. How are our perceptions of identity formed; which stereotypes, fictions or representations have informed them? How do the categories of class, gender, race and nationality intersect and overlap to create one's sense of self (and other)?

For the three artists in this exhibition – Ebony G Patterson, Thomas J Price and Zadie Xa – visual and material forms of representation provide a potent strategy through which to pose these challenging and timely questions. Working in a diverse range of media, including sculpture, video, textiles and photography, these artists are united by their shared engagement with form, process and material. They each amalgamate different social and cultural references, fashions and art historical traditions to create new layered, hybrid mythologies that express the multi-faceted nature of identity in the 21st century. Through a simultaneous process of seduction and deconstruction, they powerfully challenge our conventional associations, assumptions and archetypes.

Ebony G Patterson's fantastically ornate images and installations explore the performance of identity among disenfranchised communities within post-colonial contexts. Patterson's bold, seductive aesthetic reflects the artist's desire to claim space and authority for subjects whom society so often deems unworthy of visibility, whilst refusing to shy away from the more complicated or contradictory elements of different identities.

Entourage (2010), the first piece from Patterson's 'Fambily' series of photographic installations (2010–13), explores the role of the gang as a surrogate family – a complex structure whose positive elements are usually ignored in favour of lazy stigmatisation. A large-scale studio photograph printed on a nylon banner and installed dramatically on floral-wallpapered walls, makes an immediate claim for attention. The depicted subjects, too, are elaborately costumed and made-up, reflecting the flamboyant visual language of Jamaica's popular Dancehall culture. The individuals in the photograph, however, are all models. Central to the work's heightened sense of theatricality is the concept of identity as performative, shifting and contradictory, the hyper-masculinity of the gang patriarch expressed through a conventionally feminised aesthetic of tight, colourful clothing, jewellery, and even artificially whitened skin as a mode of erasure and illumination.

Thomas J Price makes figurative sculptures depicting imaginary black, male subjects, playing with material, scale and modes of display in order to explore the relationship between representation and perception. This exhibition presents Price's most recent work, the *Untitled (Icon)* series: a new sequence of fictional portraits that are amalgamations of a range of sources, from classical sculpture to individuals observed in Price's everyday life.

Constantly experimenting with materials and technologies, for the *Untitled (Icon)* series Price has adopted two techniques for the first time: gilding, and 3D modelling. The use of 24 carat gold leaf has a powerful cultural resonance, as a technique which dates back to ancient Egypt and continues to signify luxury, splendour and exultation. The subjects depicted in these gilded sculptures, placed upon marble plinths in a classical style, are cast as 'icons' of a modern age, despite their anonymous, 'untitled' identities. Price subtly subverts the viewer's expectations, reframing the image and associations of black men in contemporary society and in art. This sense of subversion is heightened by the knowledge that these heads were sculpted using cutting-edge 3D modelling techniques before being cast in aluminium composite, a digital amalgamation of features with no rooting in reality. We are led to wonder whether the individual's 'true' identity really exists, amidst or beneath the layers of constructed presentation and conditioned perception.

Zadie Xa's work across media layers and samples pre-existing forms to create new images and objects which explores the construction and performance of identity, navigating her position within the Asian diaspora. Whether working in video or creating highly textural mixed media works, this process of layering combines racial tropes used to identify Asian bodies as 'other' (the commodified yin-yang symbol, 'monolid' eyes, sword blades) with diverse material from a range of personally relevant sources – music, digital technology, fashion and art, as well as Xa's own research into her cultural heritage – in order to conjure an alternative narrative of Asian identity.

Xa's recent practice is represented in this exhibition with three interconnected works: video *Moodrings, Crystals and Opal-coloured Stones* (2016); *Asian Gucci* (2016), an over-sized fan; and *SVN Stacks/Moon Marauder* (2015), one of Xa's self-described 'magical garments' existing on the border between costume and painting. The fabric surface of the garment is textured with a series of coded forms, notably the 'monolid' and the initial 'G', which refers to the Ganggangsullae, an ancient Korean women's folk dance. Performance footage of the Ganggangsullae is incorporated into *Moodrings, Crystals and Opal-coloured Stones*, whose central narrative is based on Xa's own journey retracing a different traditional Korean practice: the initiation rituals for female shamans, known as mudang, which Xa imaginatively re-enacts costumed in her self-made garment. One of the transformative mudang rituals known as the 'riding of the blades' is invoked also in the shiny silver knife blades that embellish the surface of *Asian Gucci*.

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Across these multi-layered works, the mysterious, performative and transformational nature of identity is expressed, and the concept of a fixed, authentic self is thrown into doubt.

Ebony G Patterson (b. 1981, Kingston, Jamaica) studied at Edna Manley College of Visual and Performing Arts (2000–04) and the Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Arts at Washington University in St. Louis (2004–06). Patterson's work has been exhibited in numerous international solo and group exhibitions, including the Brooklyn Museum, New York (USA), the Ghetto Biennale, Port-au-Prince (Haiti), Museum of the Americas, Washington D.C. (USA), Bermuda National Gallery (Bermuda), Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, Overland Park, Kansas (USA), Perez Art Museum, Miami (USA), 12th Havana Biennial (Cuba), the Museum of Arts and Design, New York (USA), the 32nd Bienal de Sao Paulo (Brazil) and the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York (USA). Since 2006 Patterson's work has been selected for inclusion in the Jamaica Biennial, winning the Aaron Matalon award for most outstanding contribution in 2014. Patterson is also the subject of a forthcoming solo exhibition at the Pérez Art Museum Miami (USA). Work by Patterson is included in a number of international collections including Studio Museum in Harlem (USA), the Nasher Museum, Duke University (USA), Pont-Aven School of Contemporary Art (France) and the National Gallery of Jamaica (Jamaica). She has taught at the University of Virginia and is currently an Associate Professor in Painting and Mixed Media at the University of Kentucky.

Thomas J Price (b. London, UK, 1981) studied at Chelsea College of Art (2001–04) and received an MA at the Royal College of Art, Sculpture School (2004–06). In 2009, Price was featured alongside Grayson Perry, Michael Landy, Sir Anthony Caro and Cornelia Parker on the BBC 4 television documentary, *Where is Modern Art Now?*, presented by Gus Casely-Hayford. In 2010, he featured on BBC 4's *How to Get A Head in Sculpture*, also featuring Marc Quinn and Sir Anthony Caro. In 2010, Price was an invited artist at the Royal Academy Summer Show. In 2013, during his second solo show with Hales Gallery, Price presented his first large scale sculpture *Network*. The work subsequently was placed on display at the prestigious Yorkshire Sculpture Park, coinciding with Price's solo display at the Park (2014), and was selected for the 2015 inauguration of London's art walk *The Line*. Selected solo exhibitions have been held at prestigious institutions including the National Portrait Gallery, London (UK), Royal Academy of Arts, London (UK), Mac Birmingham (UK), Royal College of Art, London (UK), Yorkshire Sculpture Park (UK), Harewood House (UK) and Hales London (UK). Price's work has also been included in shows in the US and Europe. Price's work is included in a number of private and public collections including Derwent London (UK), Murderme (UK) and the Rennie Collection (Canada). Price lives and works in London.

Zadie Xa (b. 1983, Vancouver, Canada) received an MA in Painting at the Royal College of Art in 2014 and a BFA at Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design in 2007. Recent exhibitions, performances and screenings of Xa's work have been held at a range of institutions, including the Serpentine Gallery, London (UK), Whitechapel Gallery, London (UK), Assembly Point, London (UK), CGP London (UK), Cafe OTO, London (UK), Castlefield Gallery, Manchester (UK), Sara Zanin Gallery, Rome (Italy) and Schwabinger Tor, Munich (Germany). Upcoming exhibitions and performances include *Block Universe 2017*, Pumphouse Gallery (solo) and Hales London (UK). Xa currently lives and works in London.

List of works (clockwise, from entrance):

Thomas J Price, *Untitled (Icons 1, 3, 2)* 2017; Ebony G Patterson, *Entourage*, 2010; Thomas J Price, *Untitled (Icons 5, 4)*, 2017; Zadie Xa, *Asian Gucci*, 2016; Zadie Xa, *Moodrings, Crystals and Opal-coloured Stones*, 2016; Zadie Xa, *SVN Stacks/Moon Marauder*, 2015

Gallery News

Frank Bowling

Mappa Mundi

23 June 2017 - 1 August 2018

Haus der Kunst

Prinzregentenstraße 1

80538 München, Germany

Carolee Schneemann

Kinetic Painting

31 May - 17 September 2017

Museum für Moderne Kunst Frankfurt am Main

Domstraße 10

60311 Frankfurt am Main

Frank Bowling & Virginia Jaramillo

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12 July - 22 October 2017

Tate Modern

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SE1 9TG

Richard Slee

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Tate St Ives

Porthmeor Beach, St Ives

Cornwall

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