



MARIELLE PLAISIR

ACTA EST FABULA

(The piece is over)

February 22-March 21, 2020

Locust Projects presents *ACTA EST FABULA (The piece is over)*, a site-specific multimedia installation by French-Caribbean artist Marielle Plaisir who is based in South Florida. *ACTA EST FABULA (The piece is over)* features a newly commissioned video in which the artist modifies, intersplices, and repurposes films starring actress, singer, and dancer, Dorothy Dandridge, from the 1940s and 50s as part of an immersive environment that explores representations of the black sexual body and the exoticism of opera in two works of mid-twentieth century cinema.



In the newly commissioned video work featured in the exhibition, Plaisir recontextualizes Dandridge's iconic early roles in *A Jig in the Jungle* (1941) and *Carmen Jones* (1954) by isolating moments that depict problematic representations of blackness and domination in the films to confront examples of racial stereotyping.

For example, in the 1941 three-minute black and white soundie, *A Jig in the Jungle*, aka *Jungle Jig*, a nineteen-year-old Dorothy Dandridge

wears a feathered bikini while she sings and dances. While the film's title might refer to a dance, it appears to be a not too subtle euphemism for having sex given the song's lyrics which joyfully mock stereotypes, celebrating "love run wild, nudity, and (if the word "cookin'" is taken literally) cannibalism."¹

In 1954 Dandridge plays a modern version of Georges Bizet's liberated gypsy from the 1875 tragic opera, *Carmen* in Oscar Hammerstein's *Carmen Jones*. The post-WWII version is played by an African-American cast with *Carmen* depicted as a lower-class seductress. The lyrics are re-written using common clichés of the era's discourse around people of color and stereotypes of a black vernacular dialect.

Plaisir recontextualizes how Dandridge is depicted in both films in *ACTA EST FABULA (The piece is over)* empowering each film's characters to exist solely for themselves and their own truth, confronting the viewer rather than serving as passive entertainment for the watcher's gaze.

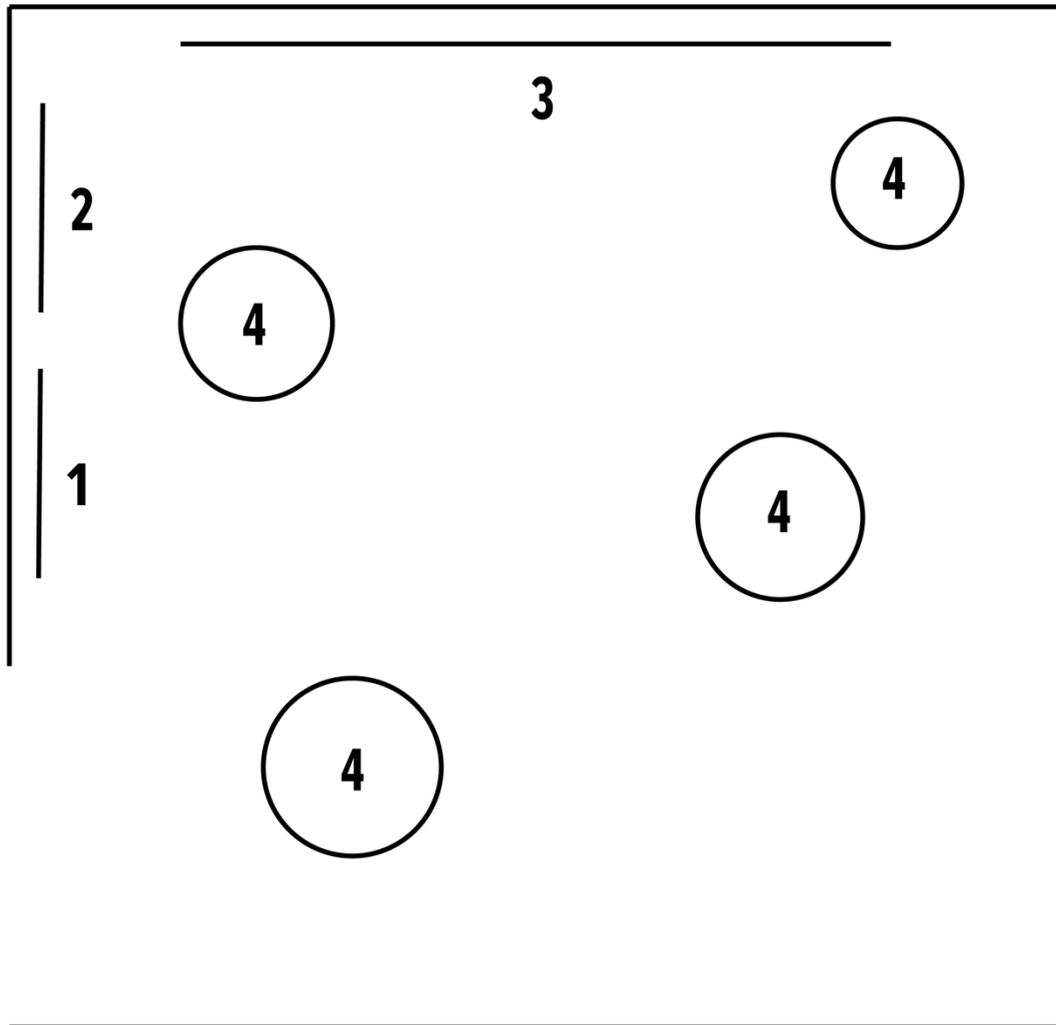
Suspended in the space amidst the projected video, Plaisir has extracted 'exotic' clothing symbols from the two films to create new, experimental objects, using fabrics and embellishments to give them a fresh social dimension. Plaisir frees the garments from their supporting roles in enhancing the films' stereotypes through her alterations and manipulations. Floating freely above the viewer, they are rid of their previous social connotations transformed into beautiful, celebratory monuments enveloped in lace and embroidery and illuminated by soft ethereal light. The new forms "flip the script" when shown in the context of segments from the original films, inviting visitors to question their perceptions of the black body and how they have been shaped over time through depictions in media and popular culture.

¹ Jim Radcliff, <https://songbook1.wordpress.com/tx/dorothy-dandridge-2/soundies-of-dd/>

Cover image: Marielle Plaisir, *You won't be no angel, (...) when you do the jig in the jungle*, 2020. Prints on duratrans, backlit transparent archival film, courtesy the artist.

Top image: Marielle Plaisir, *Blow on 'em sugar. Make 'em dry faster*, 2020. Prints on duratrans, backlit transparent archival film, courtesy the artist.

MARIELLE PLAISIR: *ACTA EST FABULA (The piece is over)*



1. *You won't be no angel, (...)
when you do the jig in the
jungle, 2020*
Printing on Duratrans,
backlit transparent archival
film
16 x 12 inches
2. *Blow on 'em, sugar. Make
'em dry faster, 2020*
Printing on Duratrans,
backlit transparent archival
film
16 x 12 inches
3. *ACTA es FABULA (The
piece is over), 2020*
Digital video
6:23 minutes
4. *The piece is over, 2020*
Fabric, embroidery, natural
feathers, pearls, Swarovski
stones



ABOUT THE ARTIST

Marielle Plaisir is a French-Caribbean multi-media artist based in South Florida who combines painting, drawing, monumental installations and performance to present highly intense visual experiences. Plaisir's work blends life and fiction, using personal experiences and historic narratives from the Caribbean that touch on universal themes like power, domination and prejudice.

The common thread throughout her work is a critique of prejudice, according to which political power is supposedly "a natural fact." In context, she uses textiles, fibers, fabrics which carry social meanings to create exotic, dream-like worlds in which viewers can find moments of humor and beauty, as well as evidence of our humanity.

Plaisir earned a Master of Applied Arts (University of Bordeaux III, France) and a graduate degree in art and scenography (Honors Advanced School of Fine Arts and Decorative Arts of Bordeaux, France.) Plaisir has exhibited in Museums in Europe and USA, as well as biennials including in Sao Paulo, Dakar, Benin, Florence and Dublin. In 2018, Plaisir received a prestigious South Florida Cultural Consortium award. She was a 2019 Studio Resident at Oolite Arts in Miami. She is represented by De Buck Gallery.

ABOUT LOCUST PROJECTS

Founded by artists for artists in 1998, Locust Projects is Miami's longest running nonprofit alternative art space. We produce, present, and nurture ambitious and experimental new art and the exchange of ideas through commissioned exhibitions and projects, artist residencies, summer art intensives for teens, and public programs on contemporary art and curatorial practice. As a leading incubator of new art and ideas, Locust Projects emphasizes boundary-pushing creative endeavors, risk-taking and experimentation by local, national and international artists. We invest in South Florida's arts community by providing artists with project grants and empower creative careers by supporting the administrative work of being an artist through an onsite artist resource hub and access to pro bono legal services.

Locust Projects 2019-2020 exhibitions and programming are made possible with support from: The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation; The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts; The Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs and the Cultural Affairs Council, the Miami-Dade County Mayor and Board of County Commissioners; The National Endowment for the Arts Art Works Grant; Hillsdale Fund; the Albert and Jane Nahmad Family Foundation; The State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs and the Florida Council on Arts and Culture; Kirk Foundation, Funding Arts Network, and the Wege Foundation and Locust Projects Exhibitionist and Significant Other members. Thanks to our Talks program partners at Oolite Arts.



ART HAPPENS HERE.

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