



Wangechi Mutu: A Shady Promise

Isolde Brielmaier, Malik Gaines, Michael Veal

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"Females carry the marks, language and nuances of their culture more than the male. Anything that is desired or despised is always placed on the female body," states Kenyan-born, New York-based artist Wangechi Mutu, the subject of this highly anticipated first monograph. In recent years Mutu's work has become increasingly sought-after in the international art world, making high-profile appearances at the important art fairs and auctions. What makes her interesting, however, is her fierce and contemporary use of the well-worn medium of collage. Mutu deals with female and cultural identity in large-scale figurative pieces constructed from found and drawn imagery. Her figures are freakish and erotic hybrids of the primitive, contemporary and post-human. These sometimes garish, diseased, ravaged and distorted figures are made from seductive or silly materials like glossy fashion magazine pictures, glitter or fun fur. They refer to colonial history, contemporary African politics, the history of art and fashion--in often quite irreverent ways. Mutu's own diverse history--she has studied both anthropology and sculpture and has lived in Nairobi, Wales, New York and New Haven, where she received her MFA from Yale University in 2001--seems a likely source for her manifold concerns. This volume surveys Mutu's work to date.

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