

ARTslant

Stereo Types

by Yaelle Amir

Group Show

Number 35

39 Essex Street, New York, NY 10002

July 17, 2009 - August 15, 2009

The summer exhibition on view at Number 35 introduces the work of three fairly unknown New York artists in a thought provoking arrangement. The joining of Michael Paul Britto, Carlos Sandoval de Leon, and Diane Wah's oeuvres generates a reciprocal dialogue that ultimately serves to strengthen the individual projects.

Wah's black and white photographs present close up views of seductive women and men in intimate settings. The sexual tension that arises from her images is reinforced by the titles of the works, *I Fall in Love Too Easily* (2009) and *In a Sentimental Mood* (2009), which evoke familiar jazz references. The direct gaze of Wah's subjects hints to recognition of power—while the female portraits present a strong sense of self-awareness, the men appear as if surrendering to their desire.

In his video and vinyl on mirror works, Britto challenges the viewer to reflect on their reaction to the use of the 'N word.' Although perceived mostly as a derogatory term, it is extensively incorporated into hip-hop culture. In the two-channel video and mirror plaques *What Up Nigga! What Up Son!* (2009), Britto introduces the inter-changeable usage of this word in black culture. In the video, Britto repeats the two title-phrases in a seemingly infinite loop. In placing these sayings side by side, he tests the viewers' reactions, bias, and associations towards this loaded term.

Sandoval de Leon's sculpture *P+P* (2009) is composed of mundane, yet socially charged objects and raw materials. Made of bulletproof plastic, the tall rectangular structure contains used bar soap, empty bottles of shampoo and conditioner, and a "stash" book. Together, these components allude to a deserted hideout or a temporary environment. Providing the viewers with associative everyday items, Sandoval de Leon relies on their imagination to find personal and cultural significance in his work.

These three artists share an urge to dissect the structure of our society in building upon personal and familiar elements, such as jazz, hip-hop, and raw materials. In so doing, the viewers are able to acknowledge and confront their own sentiments on the contentious subjects of race, appropriation, power dynamics, and our culture's unrelenting detritus.

Posted by Yaelle Amir on 7/24/09