

## RACING THE CULTURAL INTERFACE: AFRICAN DIASPORIC IDENTITIES IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Curated by Sheila Petty

The African diaspora, and specifically the “Black Atlantic,” encompasses the world created by the post-Columbus African slave trade and by other population displacements among people of African descent. For this reason the black diaspora is often described as a space in movement between cultures, nations, races, origins, destinations and journeys—a space in many ways analogous to cyberspace. Thinkers and media artists working in the black diaspora exploit the interactivity of this space, with its history of hybridizing global flows of black thought.

Paul Gilroy, for example, argues that in the black diaspora, “the concept of space is itself transformed when it is seen less through outmoded notions of fixity and place and more in terms of the ex-centric communicative circuitry that has enabled dispersed populations to converse, interact and even synchronise” (“Route Work: the Black Atlantic and the Politics of Exile,” in Chambers, Iain and Curti, Lidia (eds.) *The Post-Colonial Question: Common Skies, Divided Horizons*. London and New York: Routledge, 1996: 22).

Although it could be argued that the very refusal of black diasporic space to become fixed and therefore definable is an indication of instability, it is more accurate to describe it as inherently interactive, with a strong emphasis on exploding static notions of mainstream authority and a long history of hybridizing global flows of black thought. This exhibition brings together performance, digital art, interactive cinema and web-texts by artists of the African diaspora who are questioning what it means to be black in the digital age and

who are contributing to concepts of resistance and the tactics of challenge that have the power to race the cultural interface.

#### Artists/Works:

John Akomfrah is a London-based digital media artist whose project, “Digitopia” explores the relationship between African diasporic identities and analog and digital worlds.

Wayne Dunkley is a Montreal-based digital and installation artist whose project, “The Degradation and Removal of A/The Black Male” deals with issues of surveillance, black masculinity and identity in Canadian society.

Philip Mallory Jones (USA) is a digital video artist whose projects, “Paradigm Shift” and “Footprints” focus on explicating black identity through the use of images rather than words.

Carmin Karasic is a Boston-based digital media artist whose project, “With Liberty and Justice For All” explores the US Pledge of Allegiance from a position of black alienation.

Roshini Kempadoo is a London-based digital media artist whose interactive installation, “Ghosting” documents how Caribbean and African historical moments such as slavery, colonization and migration are re-visited and re-articulated.

Camille Turner is a Toronto-based multidisciplinary/performance artist whose project, “Miss Canadiana” (part of a larger program of research entitled, “Red, White and Beautiful”) explores racial myths encountered by a young African-Canadian woman.