

David Frohnapfel

Disobedient Museality: Atiz Rezistans and the Politics of Artistic Poverty Tourism in Port-au-Prince

In the late 1990s the Haitian artist collective *Atiz Rezistans* opened their studios and yards in a 'slum' neighborhood in Port-au-Prince as art museums for an international audience. I compare these autonomous and subaltern mechanisms of self-representation in a local neighborhood with institutional forms of musealizations of these art objects in European and North American art exhibitions. My research discusses how these art objects travel between societies, different milieus and 'art worlds' and thus acquire transcultural qualities which mediate communication, exchange and misunderstanding between cultures and individuals of extremely different socio-economic strata. The *musée d'art* by *Atiz Rezistans* create a space where foreign visitors and local artists find themselves embodying structural positions of marginality and centrality, as they become involved in re-configuring difference, sameness and inequality in their interactions. Gétho Jean Baptiste's exhibition space *Royaumes des Ordures Vivantes* and André Eugène's *Musée d'Art: E Pluribus Unum* will serve as my main case studies for this purpose. Is the subaltern creolization of allegedly "bourgeois" and "Western" art institutions in this particular neighborhood a means to escape marginalizing frameworks and to acquire agency or are the members of *Atiz Rezistans* re-establishing persisting discourses of primitivism and authenticity? Haiti's Vodou-inspired paintings from subaltern artists have always been closely intertwined with processes of transcultural commodification, branding and Othering. Karen Richman sees in the construction of "naïve art" in Haiti mainly a reflection of the Other for tourist consumption. It is not surprising that the new generation of subaltern artists emerging in the 1990s broke with the "naïve style" of their predecessors but kept the Vodou branding intact. What function does the use of the religious system *Vodou* have for this new generation of artists in a transnational dialogue between international curators, gallery owners and artists? I argue that the members of *Atiz Rezistans* virtually re-produce their own poverty as handy objects for transnational consumption. Furthermore, I argue that they use established discourses of marginalization and Othering for their own ends in an "auto-orientalist" manner. I will conceptualize these mechanisms of artistic presentation as an instance of opacity in a Glissantian sense and as strategic cultural and socio-economic alterity.

David Frohnapfel studied Art History, Comparative Literature and Religious Studies at Ludwig-Maximilians-University in Munich (M.A. 2011). 2008-2009, he studied at the Universidad de la Habana, Cuba. Since 2012 he is a Ph.D. candidate at the Freie Universität Berlin with the dissertation project: OPAQUE CURATION: Contemporary, Caribbean Art between Autonomous Musealiza-

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tion and Foreign Presentation. He also worked as a curator of *The 3rd Ghetto Biennale: Decentering the Market and Other Tales of Progress* in Port-au-Prince in Haiti, December 2013, together with André Eugène and Leah Gordon.