

Vanessa van Obberghen
Off shore world

February 26 – April 16, 2011

Galerie Susanna Kulli, Dienerstrasse 21, CH-8004 Zurich;
Tel +41 43 243 33 34, Fax +41 43 243 33 35
Hours: Tue–Fri 1–6pm, Sat 11am–4pm
www.susannakulli.ch

Opening: Friday, February 25 from 6pm

Vanessa van Obberghen (b. Seoul 1969) lives and works in Antwerp. After “BIG WHIG” (2007), Galerie Susanna Kulli now presents “Off shore world,” Vanessa van Obberghen’s second solo exhibition in Switzerland.

“The title ‘Off shore world’ is derived from off shore companies—which are companies where the main activities often do not happen where the company is officially registered. *Off shore world* is a world that is situated on a fine line between reality and an imaginary world. It is inhabited by people whom you cannot situate in a clear racial or social group. Off shore people are people who fit in nowhere and everywhere—they are like chameleons.”

Like earlier works of the artist, Vanessa von Obberghen’s current project stimulates a discourse about identity and belonging. She puts the focus on people who, in specific situations, defy clear assignment to a group, directing our attention to otherness and the position of the outsider.

Using crayons, Vanessa van Obberghen adds artificial color to black-and-white photographs of exotic flower blossoms and human models. She displays these pictures next to drawings of genealogical trees and strands of DNA she realizes in a deliberately playful fashion rather than copying them strictly from scientific sources.

Small LED screens framed like drawings present material that contrasts with these defamiliarized representations: video recordings of traditional African dances. The footage was shot during the Festival du Niger held in Segou, Mali, by Alassane Insa Babylas N’diaye, a Senegalese artist and friend of Vanessa von Obberghen’s: “I wanted images made by an African recording traditional dances because his gaze would be different from mine, or perhaps also shaped by his not coming from an urban environment.”

Vanessa von Obberghen is particularly interested in differences of perspective, in the process of appropriation and the ambivalence it entails between proximity and distance, a characteristic feature of the experiences for example of tourists and immigrants. She uses the term *métissage* to describe the productive interferences that result:

“The *métissage* can be biological or circumstantial, but it is not the result of a mixture where each component loses its properties on the way. Each component can be fully integrated: one meets one to create one—people are the results not of half and half but of one plus one.”

From February 4 to March 27, 2011: **The Idea of Africa re-invented #2: CHEIKH ANTA DIOP a Project by Mohamed Ndiaye-Kingue & Vanessa van Obberghen at the Kunsthalle Bern; www.kunsthalle-bern.ch**

Solo exhibitions: 2009 “Gaende,” Koraalberg, Antwerp; 2007 “BIG WIG,” Galerie Susanna Kulli, Zurich; 2006 “Gentillesse,” objectif-exhibitions, Antwerp; 2004 “Une promesse de bonheur” (in collaboration with David Gheron Tretiakoff), Matrix Art Projects, Brussels; 2002 “Freespace,” NICC, Antwerp; 2001 “Waxale,” Cascoprojects, Utrecht; 1998 “Peace, unity, love and having fun,” Bureau Coquilhat, Antwerp.

Group exhibitions: 2009 “Double Happiness,” Palais de Bozar, Brussels; 2008 Galerie Susanna Kulli, Zurich; 2007 “Strike a pose,” Circuit, Lausanne; 2006 “PRE-EMPTIVE,” Kunsthalle Bern, Berne; 2005 “Monopolis,” Witte de With, Rotterdam; 2005 “Camouflage,” Casa Romulo Gallegos, Fundacion Celarg, Caracas; 2000 “Dak’art tour 2000” (in collaboration with Bili Bidjocka), Biennale Dakar.