HOME
SAT 30 APR - SUN 3 JUL 2016

IMITATION OF LIFE
MELODRAMA AND RACE IN THE 21ST CENTURY
Imitation of Life: Melodrama and Race in the 21st Century is a major exhibition that examines the performative and melodramatic connotations associated with racial politics in an evolving post-digital, 21st century. Oral histories and verbatim storytelling drawn from theatre and cinema, painting and sculpture, confront the fluid and evolving politics of representation and race. The exhibition's first point of reference is Douglas Sirk's 1959 melodrama *Imitation of Life* and its subsequent re-evaluation as a text that used melodramatic techniques to unfold race relations in America. Here, these themes are updated to consider the relationship between blackness, gender and queer identity in the western world today.

Curated by Omar Kholeif, Manilow Senior Curator at MCA Chicago and Senior Visiting Curator at HOME and Sarah Perks, HOME's Artistic Director: Visual Art.

**mel-o·dra·ma**

*mele dräma/

noun

• 1. a sensational dramatic piece with exaggerated characters and exciting events intended to appeal to the emotions.

• 2. *historical* a play interspersed with songs and orchestral music accompanying the action.
The film *Imitation of Life* is loosely based on American popular author Fannie Hurst’s novel of the same name released in 1933. It is a book that has been both celebrated and criticised for addressing the then-topical issues of the great migration to the north by black African-Americans, class confines and women’s traditional societal roles; nevertheless, the novel descends into clichéd conclusions of African American racial stereotypes. A first film adaptation followed in 1934 (directed by John M. Stahl) as well as critical evaluation in the theatre by Harlem Renaissance figure, Langston Hughes, titled, *Limitations of Life*. A product of its time, the characters never appeared to break out of their social constructions, the black maid Delilah was seen as the archetypal ‘Mamma’ and the white single-parent protagonist Bea lost her heart’s desires for putting her business interests ahead of family. In all of the three official versions, the main black protagonist (Delilah/Annie) has a daughter who is light skinned and passes for white (Peola/Sarah Jane).

In 1974, New German Cinema director Rainer Werner Fassbinder remade another of Sirk’s melodrama’s *All That Heaven Allows* (1955) as *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*, providing both a title and a warning statement. In this film, a mature German widow, Emmi, falls in love with and marries a much younger Moroccan immigrant, Ali. However, her family and community bear down on her with sharp disapproval. It seems that whatever the context or setting, melodramatic techniques (over the top conflict, hyperbole, and melancholia) drive a sharp double-edged sword into the divisions of society and its segregation of those who oppose the prevailing white middle class norms and attitudes of the time.

Todd Haynes remade *Imitation of Life* as *Far from Heaven* in 2002. This time the picture was set back in white suburban America, and explicitly dealt with the subject of homosexuality – something only previously revealed through alternative readings of the original motion picture by Sirk in the 1970s. In pushing *Imitation of Life* into the 21st century, the issues of racial representation (and passing for white), female equality, and black queer identity are explored.

How do we perform race in the 21st century? How have artists and writers re-imagined how race, gender and sexuality are performed since the advent of the new millennium? Melodrama, whether regarded as a genre or simply a sensibility, has consistently exposed the contradictions and tensions of societies and here we continue the investigation into the 21st century through contemporary visual art practice.

Omar Kholeif & Sarah Perks
Larry Achiampong presents six of his series, Glyth, a set of digitally manipulated family photographs that depict ‘cloudface’ - humanoid-like figures with black heads and red lips. Glyth presents a double entendre: created from our historic image bank, the cloudface are formed to represent the possibility of another parallel existence entwined with everyday representations. Through the reappropriation of the iconic but deeply problematic ‘Golly’, joyful familial scenes take on a new reality. Additionally, the work could be understood as a critique on Western media and how the other is consistently misrepresented. The simple but effective device of using his family photos firmly establish the work in the melodramatic tradition.

Scarce New Flowers is about the politics of passing, representation of whiteness and racial dysphoria through the actual packaging of facial whitening creams from Chemical Corps Taiwan, Indonesia and Thailand. These holographic, shiny images are manipulated to generate large scale images for the exhibition, and seep into Sophia Al-Maria’s contribution to the accompanying publication for this exhibition, Fear Eats the Soul.

These real products are made to be sold in South Asia, the Middle East and Africa (according to some of the boxes). Some are explicitly targeted at Arabic speaking women as the instructions are only in Mandarin and Arabic. As Sophia notes, ‘their promises fade into a gross subliminal message and the new, impossible you reflected in the holographic surface of your imagination disappears'.
Michael Armitage paints with oil on Lubugo, a traditional bark cloth from Uganda, which is beaten over a period of days creating a natural material which, when stretched, has occasional holes and coarse indents. The paintings evoke the contradictions of melodrama, a rich colour palette and dream-like imagery that locate the work in the East Africa of his birth, whilst also a quiet exposition of Kenya’s politics, social inequalities, violence and extreme disparities in wealth.

Untitled (Fades/Violas), 2015
Jeans, denim new era hat, resin, television mount
Zabludowicz Collection, courtesy of Tamares Real Estate Holdings Inc

Kevin Beasley’s sculptural works develop over time from found materials that have a personal connection to him. The materials used for Untitled (Fades/Violas) are coerced over time into this work, their everyday feel and texture de-familiarised from their cultural specificity. The result is about connections and associations, not the literal presentation of the materials – like melodrama, there is more to discover than the surface suggests – producing a physical relationship with their new form in the gallery space.
Jordan Casteel's painting and collages of black men evoke melodrama with their domestic settings and bright colours, suggesting a counter-reading to mainstream's subjectivity and vulnerability in their stylised world of flattened, figurative detail and absence of maternal figures.

In the video White Women, Loulou Cherinet sets her film at a dinner party where all the guests are men of African origin. They are filmed with a rotating camera in the centre of the large table, while they sit dressed in striped sailor tops (evoking the polemical stereotype of migrants who arrive by sea). Here, they sit and humorously and problematically discuss their experiences of white women, unfolding the stereotypes in which they are expected to perform as African men, from labour to sex.
In *Ditch Plains*, Loretta Fahrenholz shows us a version of New York as a catastrophic shrine to capitalism, making visible the city's economic injustices and racial divisions which became evident after the havoc wreaked by Hurricane Sandy, especially within the working-class communities of the Rockaways and East New York, where much of *Ditch Plains* takes place. In this ambitious film, bodies move through a lifeless landscape in dance sequences that seem to start in fits and spurts. These are members of the Ringmaster Crew, an East New York-based group of self-taught performers that worked closely with Loretta to develop the film. In this work, the dancers perform quiet dance narratives around a ‘stop-and-frisk’ scenario, a drug-fuelled hotel party scene, and an imagined death match, all of which collectively illustrate how race is performed through abstract bodies in the 21st century.

Tony Lewis' drawings begin with a statement that he wrote, based on found quotations, to describe the past, present and future of race relations in the United States. He breaks down this original, undisclosed statement, disassembling its syntax and distressing the words' appearance on the paper. The stray letters and dismantled words also function on a graphic level. The graphite and pencil that he uses to painstakingly form the letters' shapes, spread out across the paper creating loose lines and smudges, to produce a field of marks that lacks clarity and, like any language, discovers its own inevitable limitations.
ART THOUGHTZ: How To Be A Successful Black Artist, 2010
Digital video, 8 mins 42 secs
Courtesy of the artist and Salon 94, New York

Jayson Musson uses his alter ego of Henessy Youngman to unearth the stereotypical ways that African American male identity is performed in both the artistic and academic spheres. ART THOUGHTZ: How To Be A Successful Black Artist (2010), explores African-American social identity, recognising ‘blackness’ as a role conferred by a history of discrimination. The artist inhabits certain racial stereotypes in order to displace them and conjure a more ambivalent identity, one that comes closer to reflecting his personal experiences of being black.

Reifying Desire 6, 2014
HD Digital video, 24 mins 14 secs
Courtesy of the artist

Matriarch’s Rhapsody, 2012
HD Digital video, 43 mins 46 secs
Courtesy of the artist

Jacolby Satterwhite’s exuberant performance and video works bring together personal mythology with alternative online realities, layering computer-generated and analogue images. Reifying Desire 6 uses 3D models of his mother’s drawings, alongside animated figures, bringing together various disciplines. He draws parallels between his mother’s private domestic imaginary and his public reactions to pop culture, art history and political histories in order to create a distorted simulation of reality.

Matriarch’s Rhapsody utilises Jacolby’s mother’s drawings of common objects and luxury products found in the domestic sphere as a primary resource, queering their meaning in a performative animated narrative.
S1:E1, 2015
Installation
Courtesy of the artist

S1:E1 is an installation that examines the representation of blackness in the American situation comedy, commissioned by the New Museum for the 2015 Triennial: Surround Audience. Using the notion of ‘making-it’, television as an entrepreneurial industry, and a semi-autobiographical story, S1: E1 shows the artist unreliable narrating the creation of a pilot show called She Mad. The sitcom is genetically related to melodrama, both share common environments and the concerns of the everyday, domestic and personal with the former relying heavily, and problematically, on stereotype and comedy. This work is accompanied by her essay in our publication, Fear Eats The Soul: A Pilot For A Show About Nowhere.

We the ones (blackngold), 2016
Synthetic hair and timber
Courtesy of the artist

Lauren Halsey presents a new offspring to her Kingdom Splurge series, a site-specific installation of bright, artificial hair from LA neighbourhood’s beauty suppliers of extensions. Lauren collects images and objects for her growing archive that she uses to create fantasy worlds that connect the everyday and the monumental, informing all of our culturally saturated space in between.
EVENTS AND FILM

EVENTS

IMITATION OF LIFE: MELODRAMA AND RACE IN THE 21ST CENTURY ARTIST AND CURATOR TOUR
Sat 30 Apr, 14:00 – 15:00
Sat 2 Jul (BSL), 14:00 – 15:00

Curator Sarah Perks leads an informal tour of the exhibition. A number of the featured artists will also be present for the tour on Sat 30 Apr.

On Sat 2 Jul, Siobhan Rocks provides BSL Interpretation.

BOOK LAUNCH: FEAR EATS THE SOUL
HOME Gallery. FREE
Fri 20 May, 19:00 – 20:00

Join us for drinks and nibbles and hear readings from the contributors to our latest publication, Fear Eats The Soul, released to accompany the exhibition, Imitation of Life: Melodrama and Race in the 21st Century. The publication will be available for a special discounted price.

MEDIA MINERALS
HOME Gallery. FREE
Fri 20 May, 20:00 – 20:30

Larry Achiampong and his long term collaborator David Blandy perform Media Minerals, a spoken-word lecture, by remixing sound and lyrics as a means of researching the post-colonial, and its relationship to today’s globalised media and technologies. The performance will draw on the conflict minerals that power the new media devices we use to communicate today, most of which derive from the Congo.

FILM SEASON

IMITATION OF LIFE (12A)
Sat 30 Apr, 20:20
Dir Douglas Sirk/US 1959/125 mins

Sirk’s last commercial feature is a peerless melodrama which features numerous overtures to the real life travails of its star, Lana Turner.

FAR FROM HEAVEN (12A)
Thu 26 May, 18:10
Dir Todd Haynes/US 2002/107 mins

The Whitakers are the very picture of a happy and successful suburban family. Then one night, Cathy discovers her husband’s secret life and her tidy, insular world starts spinning out of control. Reuniting with Julianne Moore, director Todd Haynes constructs a handsome homage to Douglas Sirk. Screening from 35mm print.

TANGERINE (15)
Mon 13 Jun, 18:30
Dir Sean Baker/US 2015/88 mins

It’s Christmas Eve in Tinseltown and Sin-Dee is back on the block. Upon hearing that her pimp boyfriend hasn’t been faithful during the 28 days she was locked up, the working girl and her best friend, Alexandra, embark on a mission to get to the bottom of the scandalous rumour.

FEAR EATS THE SOUL (15)
(ANGST ESSEN SEELE AUF)
Sun 3, Tue 5 & Wed 6 Jul
Dir Rainer Werner Fassbinder/DE 1974/90 mins
German wEng ST

Paying homage to the classic melodramas of Douglas Sirk, in particular All That Heaven Allows, Fear Eats The Soul is a beautifully performed look at intolerance and hypocrisy, and a key film for both Fassbinder and the New German Cinema. New 4K restoration

RELATED EVENTS

SEXUALITY SUMMER SCHOOL: LOVE AND ITS OTHERS
Mon 23 – Wed 25 May

The Sexuality Summer School has been held annually by the University of Manchester’s Centre for the Study of Sexuality and Culture (CSSC) since 2008. The four-day summer school, intended for postgraduates and researchers working in interdisciplinary sexuality studies, also hosts public events at the University and beyond.

For more information on other events that are part of the Sexuality Summer School, please visit homemcr.org/sexuality-summer-school

PREVIEW/RE:ORIENTATIONS
Wed 25 May, 18:00
Dir Richard Fung/US 2016/70 mins

In 1984 Richard Fung released his first documentary, Orientations: Lesbian and Gay Asians. This was the first documentary on the experiences and perspectives of diasporic queer Asians in North America, and captured the texture of gay life and politics in Toronto at that time. Re:Orientations revisits seven of the original participants as they encounter the footage of their younger selves and reflect on their lives over the intervening three decades.

Event
This screening will be accompanied by the short film Sea in the Blood (2000) and will be followed by a Q&A with director Richard Fung, Professor Richard Dyer and Professor Patricia White.
MICHAELE ARMITAGE
Michael Armitage paints with oil on Lubugo, a traditional bark cloth from Uganda. The visual iconography of East Africa lies at the heart of his practice: its urban and rural landscape, colonial and modern vernacular architecture, advertising hoardings, lush vegetation and varied animal life. Undermining this rich colour palette is a quiet exposition of Kenya's sometimes harsh reality: its politics, social inequalities, violence and extreme disparities in wealth. Exhibitions include 100 Painters of Tomorrow, Beers Contemporary, London; La vie moderne, the 13th Lyon Biennale, and Painting Is Not Doomed To Repeat Itself, Hollis Taggart Galleries, New York. Michael lives and works between London and Nairobi.

KEVIN BEASLEY
Kevin Beasley's sculptures evolve out of an inventive, performative process that incorporates found materials, including the artist's own clothing, into composite objects. His sculptures trace the movements and actions of the artist's body while also themselves resembling bodies or flesh, though fragmented or dismembered. Exhibitions include MFA Yale University School of Art, Connecticut; PS1 MoMA, New York; Pop Gallery, Los Angeles; 2014 Whitney Biennial and Studio Museum Harlem. Listed among Apollo's '40 Under 40', an annual selection of the most talented and inspiring young artists in the USA. Kevin lives and works in New York.

LOULOU CHERINET
Loulou Cherinet works with moving images and video to focus her attention on the alienation of people belonging to different cultures. She often uses film-making in order to examine how abstract terms and politics penetrate our bodies, the objects that surround us and behavioural patterns. Loulou has exhibited at Moderna Museet, Stockholm; Visions Forum, Beijing; Asni Gallery, Addis Ababa; Art Dubai; Mori Art Museum, Tokyo and at the Venice Biennale (African Pavilion). She holds the position of Professor of Fine Art at Konstfack, Sweden's largest university college of arts, craft and design. Loulou divides her time between Stockholm, Sweden and Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

LORETTA FAHRENHOLZ
Loretta Fahrenholz's films are diverse in subject matter, often arising through close collaboration with her subjects. Loretta calls her films 'performative documentaries', suggesting not only an interdisciplinary approach but also highlighting the choreographed structure beneath the veneer of daily life. At the heart of her filmmaking practice is the act of revealing social or socio-political conditions through the fictional interpretation of true events. Recent solo exhibitions include Ludlow 38 and Reena Spaulings Fine Art New York; Project Native Informant, London; Gallerie Buchholz, Berlin, and artist in residence at Villa Romana, Florence. Loretta lives and works in Berlin.

LAUREN HALSEY
Lauren Halsey recently completed a residency at The Studio Museum in Harlem and is the recipient of the Rema Hort Mann Foundation Emerging Artist Award (2014). She often positions herself as an alternative archivist for utopic fantasies of South LA, creating...
site-specific installations or 'kingdoms', built environments inspired by the speculative nature of Funk with materials ranging from crystals and LEDs to lasers, iridescent and more. Recent exhibitions include PAPILLION, Los Angeles; Recess, New York; California Institute of the Arts; Studio Museum, Harlem and Coney Arts Walls, Coney Island, New York. Lauren lives and works in Los Angeles.

TONY LEWIS
Tony Lewis' recent drawings begin with a statement that he wrote, based on found quotations, to describe the past, present, and future of race relations in the United States. He breaks down this original, undisclosed statement, disassembling its syntax and distressing the words' appearance on the paper. What is left are the faded remnants of the source, which become a new form of language that viewers are forced to interpret for themselves. Recent exhibitions include Museum of Contemporary Art, Cleveland; Massimo De Carlo, Milan; Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York; Jessica Silverman Gallery, San Francisco and Sommer Contemporary Art, Tel Aviv. Tony lives and works in Chicago.

JAYSON MUSSON
Jayson Musson's most well-known project is Hennessy Youngman, a fictional character who hosts an episodic Internet series, Art Thoughtz, in which he pits hip-hop and art world idioms against each other in a dual parody of cultural clichés. A major theme for the artist is that of African-American social identity, recognizing "blackness" as a role conferred by a history of discrimination. Recent exhibitions include Fleisher/Ollman Gallery, Philadelphia; Salon 94, New York; The Last Drop, Philadelphia and Contemporary Arts Museum Houston. Jayson lives and works in Brooklyn, New York.

JACOLBY SATTERWHITE
Jacolby Satterwhite uses video, performance, 3D animation, fibres, drawing and printmaking to explore themes of memory, desire, personal and public mythology. In his Reifying Desire video series, the artist continues his exploration of 3-D animation and digital space as a utopian realm to explore memory and personal history. Jacolby's digital avatar performs movements drawn from voguing, martial arts, and choreographer William Forsythe's dance techniques. Recent exhibitions include Whitechapel Gallery, London; Dallas Art Museum; Seattle Art Museum; OHWOW Gallery, Los Angeles and multiple exhibitions at The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York. Jacolby lives and works in New York.

MARTINE SYMS
Martine Syms is an artist and conceptual entrepreneur based in Los Angeles. She is the founder of Dominica, a publishing imprint dedicated to exploring blackness in visual culture. From 2007–11, she directed Golden Age, a project space focused on exhibitions, performances, and printed matter that she also founded. At Golden Age, she organized over fifty innovative cultural projects ranging from film screenings to interactive online exhibitions. Her artwork has been exhibited and screened extensively, including presentations at the New Museum, New York; MCA Chicago; Green Gallery, Milwaukee; Capricious Space, Brooklyn and White Flag Projects, St. Louis. Martine lives and works in Los Angeles.

Fear Eats the Soul is a tapestry of thoughts, concerns and emotions devised in response to the exhibition and its themes, co-edited by the curators. In researching the show, we considered and were inspired by contemporary literature, such as Citizen by poet Claudia Rankine, which challenges the reader's assumptions of racial politics; the bold, category defying prose of Hilton Als' White Girls and the personal investigations of Sharifa Rhodes-Pitts in Harlem is Nowhere. Our book opens with a specially written poem by one of the UK's leading poets and HOME patron Jackie Kay MBE, and also includes poetry by Pamella Dlungwana. The co-curators offer a story each – a melodramatic fictional re-enactment of the novel's inspiration from Sarah Perks while Omar Kholeif meditates on the politics of being brown-skinned in America today. Three artists continue their works from the exhibition into the publication - Sophia Al-Maria, Martine Syms and Jacolby Satterwhite. Academic Monica B. Pearl returns to the subject of racial passing in the classical Hollywood cinematic melodrama offering an analysis of its queerness. Interdisciplinary artist Zachary Cahill presents a text message novella, angrily unfolding accepted American cultural ideals. Artist Zach Blas inverts notions of passing into an oppositional reading, queer darkness, for his essay on new identity politics, protest and the power of (non) representation.
EPILOGUE

This is the last in a cycle of exhibitions that began their starting point from the title of a key film or play that displayed strong themes within their narrative and fictional environments. Each provoked contemporary debate from heartbreak to environmental illness, alongside a consideration of the historical context of the original. To open HOME in May 2015, Omar Kholeif & Sarah Perks adapted Kasimir and Karoline (Ödön von Horváth, 1932) as The heart is deceitful above all things, and in autumn 2015, Louise O’Hare & Sarah Perks deconstructed Safe (Todd Haynes, 1995). These were accompanied by two books under the moniker of Transactions of Desire with over 30 creative contributors from artists and writers between them, and a touring compilation of eight short artist films under the same title. As a new type of contemporary cross art form centre, HOME’s inaugural visual art programme has addressed, and will continue to, new practices and current debates, whilst exploring visual art’s role in cross art form curation, specifically the spillage across film, performance and literature.

Sarah Perks, Artistic Director Visual Art (HOME)
Professor of Visual Art, Manchester School of Art

Transactions of Desire Vol 1 and 2 available from: cornerhousepublications.org/home-publications
BEHIND THE SUN:
PRÊMIO MARCANTÔNIO VILAÇA CNI SESI SENAI

SAT 23 JUL – SUN 25 SEP 2016
PREVIEW FRI 22 JUL

Curated by Marcus Lontra

A group exhibition made up of the five winners of the Prêmio Marcantônio Vilaça CNI Sesi Senai, the largest contemporary art prize in Brazil, this exhibition is a snapshot of new work from across the country. With film, performance, sculpture, photography and original performance, Behind the Sun challenges our preconceptions of a country that’s often reduced to frivolous, carnival-esque stereotypes.

FIRST BIRTHDAY WEEKEND
FRI 20 – SUN 22 MAY

We’re turning 1! Join us to mark our first birthday with a weekend of celebrations filled with special events, live music and fun for all the family. Keep an eye out for more details soon.

JAZZ GOES TO THE MOVIES THROUGHOUT JULY

Presented in collaboration with Manchester Jazz Festival, this season of jazz inspired films includes Tubby Hayes - A Man in a Hurry, Lift to the Scaffold and Round Midnight.
Peeping Tom presents

32 Rue Vandenbranden

Mon 23 – Wed 25 May

Cinematic set design and jaw-dropping physicality combine to create an unforgettable piece of dance theatre that plunges spectators into a foreboding universe of cold, wind and ice, with a soundtrack that includes music by Bellini, Stravinsky and Pink Floyd.

Winner of Best New Dance Production, 2015 Olivier Awards

★★★★★ "Hilarious and heart wrenching in equal measure, it is proof that dance is now unquestionably the first stop for innovation in the theatre." – Time Out Melbourne