

REVIEWS

SHANA MOULTON

FONS WELTERS - AMSTERDAM



Above: SHANA MOULTON, *Galactic Pot Healer*, 2010. Video still. Right: SHANA MOULTON, *The Castle of Secrets*, 2010. Installation view at Fons Welters, Amsterdam. All courtesy Fons Welters, Amsterdam. Photos: Gert Jan van Rooij.

While many contemporary video artists rely more and more on the techniques of professional cinema, the American artist Shana Moulton refers back to the aesthetics of home videos and television shows of the '70s and '80s. Moulton's colorful video installations deal with her alter ego Cynthia, an unhappy woman who searches for salvation in New Age therapy and health consumerism.

In the sculptural two-channel video installation *Galactic Pot Healer* (2010) Cynthia

receives messages during her daily beauty routine. The information leads her to a medical spa where Cynthia can heal her broken green vase. Yet, despite the help of the galactic pot healer, represented by two arms in a pink dress resembling a colorful monster, the vase cannot be fixed. During a therapeutic massage a new green vase is sculpted out of Cynthia's body, as shown by an archaic special effect, providing new hope for the protagonist. By looping the imagery, the new vase becomes the beginning of yet another narrative cycle, symbolizing Cynthia's never-ending quest.

The focus on consumerism becomes more explicit in the video installation *Women's Logos Anxiety* (2010), where Cynthia's face suddenly appears in a sphinx-like beauty product logo. Her nose is covered by a pore-cleansing strip, as in several other sequences of Cynthia's adventures in Moulton's video-installations, and she sadly watches the esoteric aesthetics of the beauty products pass by. These two video installations in the exhibition "The Castle of Secrets" are accompanied by New Age music, sculptural objects, festive decorations and light effects that guide the spectator's gaze. By the

presentation of a broken vase, spilled medicines on the gallery floor and the pink costume of the pot healer next to the projections, a tactile interaction between the in-frame and the gallery space is produced.

Moulton deliberately plays with the kitsch-status of the esoteric objects in her installations through her artistic style. This colorful pop-aesthetic might be a bit over the top for some spectators. Nevertheless, Moulton succeeds in presenting her anthropological interest in human behavior and rituals with a strong sense of humor and irony.

Tessa Verheul



REMY JUNGERMAN & FOLKERT DE JONG

METIS - AMSTERDAM



FOLKERT DE JONG & REMY JUNGERMAN, *Blue Devil*, 2010. Installation view at Metis, Amsterdam. © 2010 Office For Contemporary Art Amsterdam.

The exhibition "Blue Devil" presents two artists — one from Surinam and the other from the Netherlands — who share a method of assembling materials and a common interest in art-historical motifs. Nevertheless, the specific context of their work is drastically different.

The most prominently represented artist is Remy Jungerman, who makes altarpieces and collages based on the rituals of the Winti religion, devoted to the supernatural spirits of West African ancestors who are believed to have come along with the first slaves to Suriname. Such ritualistic practices were forbidden by the Christian slaveholders and therefore performed in secret. The large installations *Wise Words* (2010) and *White Hand With Cock* (2010) are altarpieces in which bottles, close-up photographs of people and paintings are combined in a modernist grid. The unifying composition of primary-color objects within the black rectangular pattern makes a significant reference to Piet Mondrian. Jungerman often recycles images: the silhouette of a devil-figure is shown in several collages.

Jungerman's work is accompanied by a sculpture of the younger artist Folkert de Jong. While Jungerman relies on modernist aesthetics to establish Winti identity in an intercultural context, de Jong deconstructs modernism completely. The Dutch artist is known for his colorful, figurative sculptures that are often based on art-historical or media icons. By means of unconventional materials like styrofoam and pigmented polyurethane foam, de Jong translates these well-known icons into life-size carnivalesque settings with a dark undertone. *The Last Thinker* (2010) is based on Rodin's *The Thinker* (1881), yet De Jong positions the gray and neon-colored figure on a pile of pallets. The figure has taken off his blue hat and seems to watch Jungerman's collage *Kwasi Libation Optete* (2010), in which the statue of a devil stands out. Despite this composition within the gallery space, the two artists' works, strong on their own, do not interact convincingly. The combination produces a culture clash of two worlds; while Jungerman's can still be ritualized, de Jong's is out of control.

Tessa Verheul