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Coco Fusco, *La Confesión*, 2015, 30 minute digital film, dimensions variable

Coco Fusco

January 9 – February 6, 2016

Alexander Gray Associates presents an exhibition of work by interdisciplinary artist and writer Coco Fusco, screening for the first time together a survey of her seminal videos created over the past two decades. Premiering is her latest installation *Confidencial, Autores Firmantes* (2015), which examines Cuba's systematic censorship of key literary voices during the 1970s. Featuring works from the early 1990s through the present, the exhibition focuses on Fusco's critical examination of the politics of identity, military power, the history of racial thought, and post-revolutionary Cuba.

Presented for the first time in New York, Fusco's most recent videos on Cuba, *La Confesión* (2015)—created for the 56th Venice Biennale, Italy—and *La botella al mar de María Elena* (2015)—premiered at the 2015 Göteborg International Biennial for Contemporary Art, Sweden—explore the cases of Cuban poet Heberto Padilla and writer María Elena Cruz Varela, respectively deconstructing official narratives of political oppression. Cuba has been a subject of study for Fusco for three decades, during which she has produced videos; exhibitions; performances; cultural exchanges and numerous texts, included her recently published book, *Dangerous Moves: Performance and Politics in Cuba* (2015, Tate Publishing).

Her research on Cuba led to her collaboration with Lilian Guerra (professor, University of Florida), which resulted in the mixed-media installation *Confidencial, Autores Firmantes* (2015). Through this work, Fusco further explores the Padilla affair by presenting twenty-one facsimiles of official memorandums and letters from 1971—found by Guerra in the archives of the Cuban Ministry of Culture. The documents detail orders and methods by which to censor publications by intellectuals deemed “anti-Cuban” due their open disagreement with the government's detainment of the poet Heberto Padilla, and their skepticism regarding the motives of Padilla's ensuing “confession” that he had betrayed the revolution. The documents are presented alongside original Cuban editions of books by authors such as Gabriel García Marquez, Julio Cortázar, and Mario Vargas Llosa who signed two open letters to Fidel Castro that were published in *Le Monde* in 1971 in protest of the Cuban government's treatment of Padilla. This room-size installation is an archive of a key historical moment that redefined Cuba Revolutionary government's relationship with progressive intellectuals of that era out and inside the island, and cast a long shadow over its relationship with its literary cadre. *Autores Firmantes* mirrors a moment in time both past and present, in the artist's words, “A state may produce the absence of its own archive while retaining its own contents for a future exercise of force.”

With equal doses of research, humor, and irony, Fusco tackles complex subjects including race, ethnicity, identity, xenophobia, violence, and objectification of minority cultures in her video works. In works such as *TED Ethnology: Primate Visions of the Human Mind* (2015), *Operation Atropos* (2006), and *The Couple in the Cage*:

A Guatinaui Odyssey (1993), she uses the body as the basis from which to question and destabilize enforced binaries of hegemony and otherness dictated by doctrinarian voices, which she describes as “conditions of uncurbed power that are present in so many warring scenarios” in today’s societies. Videos such as *The Empty Plaza* (2012) and *Y entonces el mar te habla* (2012), foreground her exploration of memory, history and place: in them she considers the hegemonic control of official histories of Cuba and the ways that unofficially recognized flows of bodies transform the meaning of iconic elements of the Cuba landscape.

Fusco’s thirty-year exploration of difficult subjects through performance, video, and research presents a body of work that evinces a nuanced, informed and open-ended approach to sensitive issues. In an interview between Fusco and Guerra, the latter explains, “One story—regardless of its source—is never representative of the multiple dimensions of any lived reality.” Fusco’s work brings depth and multifold meaning to complex investigations of the human condition.

Coco Fusco’s work was recently exhibited in *All the World’s Futures* at the 56th Venice Biennale, Italy, curated by Okwui Enwezor, and at the Göteborg International Biennial for Contemporary Art, Sweden, curated by Elvira Dyangani Ose (2015). Fusco’s performances and videos have been included in the 8th Mercosul Biennial, Porto Alegre, Brazil (2010); two Whitney Biennials, New York (2008 and 1993); VideoBrasil, São Paulo (2005); Performa 05, New York (2005); Shanghai Biennale, China (2004); Johannesburg Biennial, South Africa (1997); London International Theatre Festival, United Kingdom (1995); and Sydney Biennale, Australia (1992); among others. Her work has recently been featured at the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN (2014); Centre Pompidou, Paris (2014); New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York (2013); Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, TX (2012); Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid (2012); Tate Liverpool, United Kingdom (2010); among others.

Fusco is the author of *English is Broken Here: Notes on Cultural Fusion in the Americas* (1995), *The Bodies that Were Not Ours and Other Writings* (2001), and *A Field Guide for Female Interrogators* (2008). She is the editor of *Corpus Delecti: Performance Art of the Americas* (1999) and *Only Skin Deep: Changing Visions of the American Self* (2003). Her most recent book is *Dangerous Moves: Performance and Politics in Cuba*, supported by Absolut Art Award for Art Writing and released by Tate Publishing (2015). She has won numerous awards, including: Herb Alpert Award in the Arts (2003); USA Berman Bloch Fellow (2012); Guggenheim Fellowship (2013); Absolut Art Award for Art Writing (2013); a Cintas Foundation Visual Arts Fellowship (2014–2015) and the 2016 Greenfield Prize. Since 1988, she has performed, lectured, exhibited, and curated around the world.

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