

Mary Mary

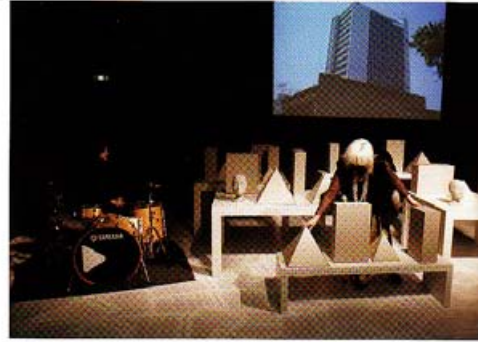
KOPP, CÉLINE; VITAMIN 3D, JUNE 2009



01

When trying to define any community or alternative culture, one first looks for its quintessential and 'pure' stage, the moment when the group could be identified by a common ideology, a posture, a sound or an aesthetic, before it was repackaged by the cultural industry. To Lili Reynaud-Dewar, such authentic and autonomous moments are nostalgic mythologies. In her work she appropriates elements from underground cultures and artificially reconstructs their roots to demonstrate eccentricity and opacity unprotected from outside interferences. Her allegorical sculptures and theatrical fables are devoid of transparent maxims, yet polarities collide in a burlesque *mise en scène* of cultural assimilations and resistance.

Allowing a range of vocabularies to co-exist in a mannered syncretism, Reynaud-Dewar reactivates forms from the historical avant-garde, merging them with elements from cultural movements that possess strong aesthetic and radical sensibilities (including post-punk, queer culture, voodoo and African-American culture). In her sculptures she plays with the proximity between generic abstract forms and culturally specific motifs. *Queen Mother Nanny of the Mountains* (2006), for example, is constructed with modernist geometrical forms and bold colours. Green, yellow and red, however, also represent the Rastafarian flag, and the overall shape of the sculpture, conceived from a frontal point of view with an axial symmetry, suggests possible uses as stage decor or a totem for initiation rituals. The black pyramidal hanging and burnt wood circle mimic ritual gates, underlining the creation of identity through staged artifices.



02

Drawing from aesthetic vocabularies that are unrelated to her own cultural background, Reynaud-Dewar assumes a fragmentation of her own voice to decentre the work's content towards foreign elements. This polyphony of voices questions cultural authenticity and the intrinsic representation of the author's own self in the creative process. Far from literal references, these appropriations function as allegorical characters, bringing contexts, motifs and myths together in a carnivalesque game in which aesthetic hierarchies, identities, radicalism and the mainstream are inverted by normally concealed energies.

Love=UFO (2008) is a complex example of this reversal mechanism. In this work, Reynaud-Dewar created an installation conceived as the decor for a performance featuring emblematic characters interacting with their self-images and opposites through multiple *mise en abîmes*. As in a narrative fable, each performer personifies a concept, from camp posture to Creole identity to noise music. These characters interrelate in an environment where each object brings new references to be multiplied in the never-ending effects of mirrors and make-up (with echoes of Robert Filliou, Bruce Nauman and Peter Saville). The Plaza Dressing Table, designed by Michael Graves for the Memphis Group, evokes the use of deviant taste as a critical tool, while a costume recalling Sun Ra's cosmogony suggests the possibility of finding a valid yet sardonic identity through humour, parade and mannerist celebrations. Although a fable typically leads towards a resolution, Reynaud-Dewar always keeps the audience at the core of the narrative mechanism by emphasizing the artificiality of the decor and showing the performers putting on make-up and arranging props. There is no narrative resolution, just a parade that surprisingly holds polarities together in an eccentric whole that seems to claim, 'We master rhetorical figures like magical formulas' (*The Center and the Eyes*, 2006). [Céline Kopp]

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01 Abacos!, 2007
Wood, paper, leather, paint
Approx. 2.2 x 60 x 60 cm
4 collages
50 x 65 cm

02 En réalité, le sphinx est il une annexe du monument, ou le monument une annexe du sphinx?, 2008
Posters, mirror, drum kit, leather costume, chains, video, cardboard models, Guosereu tables from the *Misura M* series by Superstudio
Performance with Xavier Chabellard and Mary Knox
Dimensions variable

03 Queen Mother Nanny of the Mountains, 2006
Burnt plywood, fabric, photocopies, vinyl record and sleeve
Approx. 250 x 220 x 180 cm

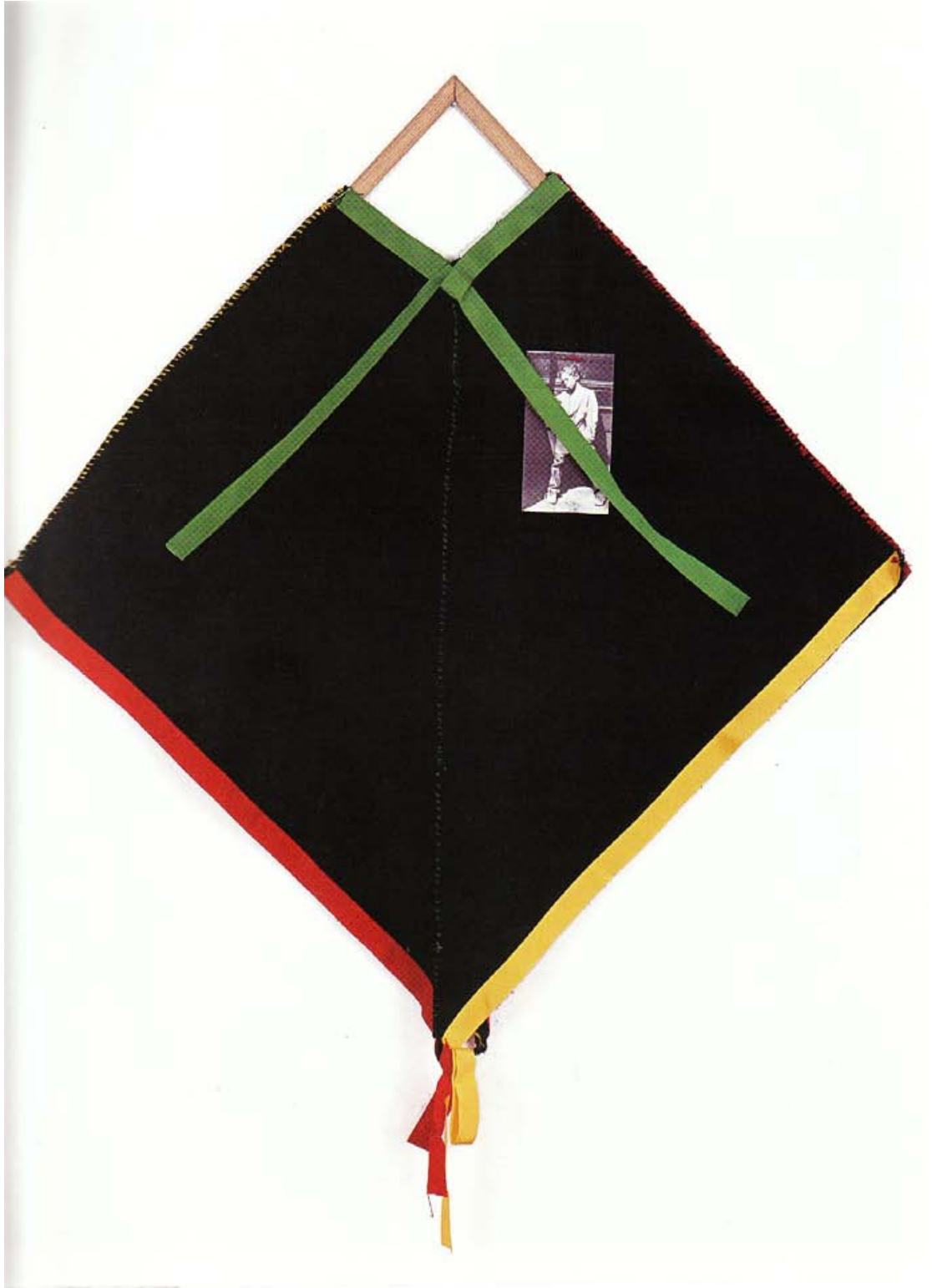
04 LOVE=UFO, 2008
Wood, glass, leather, costume, screen-printed posters, video, performance
Dimensions variable

03

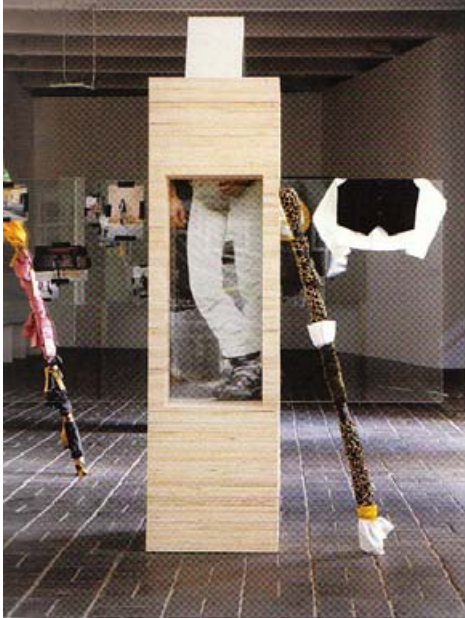
04



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06

05 Costume for performance (with child), 2007
Fabric, paper
90 x 100 x 5 cm

06 Les Garçons Sauvages, 2008
3 wooden columns, photographic prints, glass, prints, ceramic, fabric, mixed media
Approx. 170 x 40 x 180 cm

07 In every room there is the ghost of sex, 2006
12 screenprints, works by Ettore Sottsass, performance by Mary Knox and Lionel Fernandez
Dimensions variable

07

