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PRESS RELEASE

## WU TSANG

*Diversity is Reality*

20.06. – 10.11.2019

Copenhagen Contemporary is pleased to present the exhibition *Diversity is Reality* with two important works by American filmmaker and performance artist Wu Tsang: *Into A Space Of Love* (2018) and *Shape of a Right Statement* (2008). The two films, made roughly ten years apart, mark two moments in Tsang's career as a performer and filmmaker and address vital aspects of her work, including the politics of visibility and appropriation – who speaks for whom; the ephemerality of community; and performance as modes of resistance.

*Shape of a Right Statement* (2008) is a short video manifesto. Staring directly at the camera, Tsang re-performs one section of "In My Language," a forceful YouTube manifesto by autism rights activist Amanda Baggs. Tsang's powerful interpretation was staged at the Silver Platter, home to the club Wildness, following a year in which the artist had presented live performances of the Baggs text. Tsang mimetically reproduces the voice of Baggs's Speech Generation Device, stating, "It is only when I type something in your language that you refer to me as having communication." Language, particularly its transmission and translation, plays a crucial role in Tsang's work as a structure to be dismantled through alternative modes of communicability.

These aspects are also crucial to *Into A Space Of Love* (2018), an essay-film exploring the intergenerational legacy and the spirit of house music, rooted in New York's underground culture. The film examines how house music, like so many other movements, was created by communities of queer, brown, and black people and then appropriated by mainstream white cultures. "We own it, we possess it, and we give it away freely." – says Shaun J. Wright, one of the protagonists. By emphasizing how the genre of house music was born in the 1970s in inner cities like NYC, where "diversity is a reality" (to quote Venus X, one of the protagonists of the film) and the young generations have to deal with cosmic traumas and a hybrid past, Tsang shows the life provided by the club, its music, its participants, and alternative kinship structures. Like a church, the club is portrayed as a 'space of love', a spiritual environment in which its creators challenge the world with the power of music.

The exhibition title, *Diversity is Reality*, is a quote from Venus X from *Into A Space Of Love*. 'Diversity' exists as a concept only when 'sameness' or 'homogeneity' are acknowledged as an established norm.

Both films use performance and layered fictions to explore trauma and alternative forms of expression and communication – from spoken language to dance – which serve as vehicles to express reality in its complex and multilayered ways of

materializing in the world. Tsang's work reveals hidden histories and marginalized narratives through the act of performing itself.

The exhibition is realized in collaboration with Copenhagen-based curator Irene Campolmi.

## Biography

Wu Tsang is an award-winning filmmaker and visual artist who combines documentary and narrative techniques in works that re-imagine racialized, gendered representations beyond the visible frame to encompass the multiple and shifting perspectives through which we experience the social realm. She received a B.F.A. (2004) from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and an M.F.A. (2010) from the University of California at Los Angeles. Other films by Tsang include *One emerging from a point of view* (2019), *We hold where study* (2017), *Duilian* (2016), *Girl Talk* (2015), *Wildness* (2012), and *Damelo Todo (Gimme Everything)* (2010). In 2018, she was awarded the MacArthur Fellowship, known as the Genius Grant. In the fall of 2019, she will open a solo show at the Martin Gropius Bau in Berlin. Her work has been exhibited at Tate Modern London, Stedelijk Museum, Whitney Museum of American Art, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, and the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, among others.

**The exhibitions *Diversity is Reality* and *Performa Archive* will be open to members of the press Wednesday 19 June 2019 from 14.00–15.00.**

CC's Director as well as curator Irene Campolmi and founder of Performa RoseLee Goldberg will be present at the press viewing. RoseLee Goldberg will give an introduction to *Performa Archive* and Irene Campolmi will give an introduction to *Diversity is Reality*.

After the press viewing refreshments are served in the foyer.

**For attendance at the press preview or interview requests please contact no later than Wednesday 12 June:**

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Press kit and images are available for download from the CC website:

<http://cphco.org/en/presse/>

Read more about the event here:

<https://www.facebook.com/events/602974830528081/>

**The official opening of *Diversity is Reality* and *Performa Archive* will take place Wednesday 19 June from 18–21.**

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