

# ghetto BIENNALE

## CALL FOR 4th GHETTO BIENNALE 2015

### *Kreyòl, Vodou and the Lakou: forms of resistance*

A call for artists and curators (calls in Kreyòl, 官话, Português, العربية لغة, Español, русский, Français, 中文 available soon *on the website*)

After the Haiti Revolution, the formerly enslaved peasants had three tools for their 'counter-plantation' position - the Kreyòl language, the Lakou system and the belief-system and ritual practices of Vodou, a triumvirate of linguistic, territorial and cultural resistance. Laurent Dubois, writing in 'Haiti: The Aftershocks of History', notes that, 'thanks to a remarkably strong and widely shared set of cultural forms - the Kreyòl language, the Vodou religion, and innovative ways of managing land ownership...- they built a society able to resist all forms of subjection that recalled the days of slavery.'

The language of Kreyòl, which was born in the colonial plantations, began as a basic and rough method of linguistic communication between the culturally and geographically diverse populations of the colony. After the slaves revolt Kreyòl became a language of resistance and retreat from the metropolitan state, which continued to use French as the lingua franca of power and capital.

Vodou is a creolised religion forged by African slaves and their descendants which is comprised of elements from a wide range of diverse religious practices including many African traditions from the Fon, Dahomean, Kongo, Yoruba, and other African ethnic groups; Christianity and of the indigenous Taino Indians who were the original inhabitants of the region. As Dubois comments, 'As they suffered together through the trauma of plantation life, Africans and creoles developed their own rituals of healing, mourning and worship.'

The Lakou is a sub-altern land management system in the rural provinces of Haiti which refers to clusters of houses around a yard which house extended and multi-generational families, forms of land management, ownership, co-operative labour and trade practices which attempted to resist the return to the plantations. As Dubois wrote, 'In order to preserve that control, the Lakou system established its own set of customs to regulate land ownership and land transfers. The state had no part in these transactions, which were overseen entirely by community and family institutions.'

Vodou is a contested theme in studies of Caribbean and Haitian art. Current discourse interrogates both auto-exoticism by Haitians, and the 'othering' of outsiders. Important concerns include the appropriation of the impoverished peasant or ghetto culture as an essentially neo-colonialist strategy, and the precarious position of Haitian art in general, trapped as it is between the historically marketable 'naïf' or 'primitive' Vodou-celebrating tendency, and a contemporary desire to take its place on the stage of the international global art world.

We welcome projects that incorporate language, dialogues, place, symbolism and performance or consider global territorial struggles, forms of linguistic refusal and friction, and ritual and esoteric forms of obstruction and intransigence. The Ghetto Biennale invites artists and curators to explore what potentials these radical tools, Kreyòl, Vodou and the Lakou, have to offer to the contemporary world.

*The 4th Ghetto Biennale 2015 will take place from the end of November until the middle of December 2015, the exact dates to be confirmed. All works must be made and exhibited in Haiti. Artists and curators will be invited to pass, no less than one, to three weeks in Haiti before presenting their work in the neighbourhood to an audience of local people, Port au Prince neighbourhood communities, arts collectives and arts organisations.*

*The deadline for proposal applications is midnight Sunday 5th July BST and our decisions will be made and announced by the end of the third week in July.*

*Applicants for the 4th Ghetto Biennale 2015 must provide a written synopsis of their project proposal covering conceptual background, methodology, and a production and exhibition strategy for the proposed new work on no more than two sides of A4 including illustrations, and a one page CV, all formatted as pdfs. We will not accept any proposal longer than two sides, no attached images and neither will we accept website links as a proposal component.*

*Please keep in mind that we are looking for works that will be created during the three-week period in Port au Prince, Haiti. We are not looking for work that is already created. We welcome projects that may require collaboration with local artists and would be able to help connect artists beforehand.*

*There is no funding for this event and you will be expected to cover the cost of your flight, accommodation and materials. We will supply a reading list, there is a film about the Grand Rue sculptors on-line and we will be more than happy to help (via email) with any research and information needed, both before your application and leading up to the event. Advice can also be given about the practicalities for the production of specific projects and budgeting for the trip. If your work involves intensive interviews we will advise you to budget for your own translator. Artists should be aware that Haiti has only a 50% literacy rate and text heavy projects could be problematic for the local audience. We can help organise all hotel bookings, airport pick-ups and internal transport.*

*The Ghetto Biennale remains a lens-free event for none-Haitian artists so no video and photography projects will be considered, but there will be a photographer on site to document the projects at the end of the event for anyone needing images for documentation.*

Thank you to our volunteer translators Patricia Verdial (Español), Maccha Kasparian (Français), Yuk Yee Phang (官□), Anya Dorofeeva (русский), Priscilla Mountford (Português), Laurie Richardson (Kreyòl) and more.

'The Sculptors of Grand Rue' can be viewed at <http://vimeo.com/14681755>

Find more information about Atis-Rezistans visit [www.atis-rezistans.com](http://www.atis-rezistans.com)

Check out the project archives of the previous Ghetto Biennales  
[www.ghettobiennale.org](http://www.ghettobiennale.org)

Enquiries, applications & questions contact: Leah Gordon at [Leahgordon@aol.com](mailto:Leahgordon@aol.com)