

*ATIS REZISTANS*  
*&*  
*GHETTO BIENNALE*

*KOCHI MUZIRIS*  
*BIENNALE*

# ATIS REZISTANS & GHETTO BIENNALE

Atis Rezistans (Resistance Artists) is a dynamic, majority class group of artists working in the Grand Rue neighbourhood of downtown Port-au-Prince, Haiti, often in harsh and difficult conditions. This is a shifting community which is made up of experienced mature artists, who are primarily sculptors, and a range of younger emerging artists, some of whom are working in sculpture and painting, but also, more recently, photography, video, music, slam poetry, writing and performance. Much of their work relates to Haitian history and religion which is deep-rooted in their culture. Atis Rezistans | Ghetto Biennale are honoured that they can exhibit their work in the Chapter House as there are so many spiritual parallels between the work and the history of the space.

In December 2009, Atis Rezistans hosted the 1st Ghetto Biennale, which was devised as a response to lack of international mobility for Haitian majority class (lower class) artists which acts as a barrier between them and the global art world. The Ghetto Biennale issues an international call for artists to apply to come to their neighbourhood to make work with and the Haitian artists. Over the last twelve years Atis Rezistans have hosted over three hundred international artists and formed many strong collaborative bonds. The Ghetto Biennale is attempting to momentarily transform spaces, dialogues and relationships considered unthinkable and unworkable, into complex, transcultural, and creative platforms.

Atis Rezistans | Ghetto Biennale, at RISING, wants to showcase Haitian art, and the collaborations generated by the Ghetto Biennale. We want to highlight the agency, importance, influence and impact of the Haitian Revolution; discuss the radical lessons that Haitian majority class rural and urban cultures can teach people in the 21st century; and formulate an interrogation of cultural institutions and the margins and centres of global art production.

# HAITIAN HISTORY SLAVES REVOLT

Haiti's history is not an easy one, but it is a significant and important one. It is the history of the decimation of the indigenous Taino Indians by the Spanish invaders. Subsequently it is the history of the most profitable, and correspondingly brutal, French colonial plantation system in the Caribbean, fuelled by the import of enslaved Africans through the Transatlantic slave trade.

The intensity of French barbarity in pursuit of profit, coupled with rumours of the French Revolution, led to the Haitian revolution, an uprising of African and Creole slaves against the white plantation owners. Vodou was both the inspiration and precipitation of the long fight for Haiti's independence. On 23rd August 1791, a Vodou priest called Dutty Boukman performed a ceremony at Bwa Kayman, in the north of Haiti. Slaves gathered from all over the region. Boukman sacrificed a black pig for the African ancestors, and in its blood wrote the words 'liberty or death'. Inspired the slaves returned to their plantations and spread the message of rebellion. Within days the fertile plains of cash crops were burning with a passion for freedom that did not dampen for thirteen years until independence was achieved in 1804.

In May 1803, former slave and rebel leader Jean-Jacques Dessalines dramatically created the flag of the black insurgents. He took the French tricolour of blue, white and red, and ripping the white out of it, declared he was ripping the white man out of the country. The red and blue were stitched together, the initials RF (Republique Française) were replaced by Liberty or Death, and Haiti's flag was born.

The diffusion and transmission of Haitian history uses the drums, songs, dances and possessive ritual of the Vodou religion and the collective melodies and rhythms of Rara bands. Haitian history flows through the words and poems of its great literary tradition and the unique visions of its painters and flag makers. Haitian culture, history and spiritual beliefs is also replayed through the incredible work of Atis Rezistans.

# RECYCLED MATERIALS WOOD, METAL, BONES

The Haitian artists all grew up in an atmosphere of junkyard make-do, survivalist recycling and artistic endeavour. Their powerful sculptural collages of engine manifolds, TV sets, wheel hubcaps, computer mother boards, medical detritus and discarded lumber have transformed the detritus of a failing economy into radical works of sculptural art. Their works reference their shared African cultural heritage, Vodou ritual and a dystopian sci-fi view of the future. Their use of the readymade components is driven by economic necessity, combined with creative vision and cultural continuity.

There is a playfulness to their use of materials, little by little you start to grasp the new language assigned to the different materials, mountain bike tyres are wings, pistons are penises, industrial springs often ribs. In their work a new Adam leaps from the post-industrial waste, raising spectres to haunt the dark landscape of globalisation.

Some of the Haitian artists use human bones in their work and a number of these pieces have already been exhibited at the Venice Biennale in 2011, the Fowler Museum, LA, in 2012; Pioneer Works, NYC in 2018 and MOCA, Miami in 2019. The use of bones in art and on Vodou altars is not disrespectful in Haiti and is deeply rooted in honouring connections with the elders and ancestors. In Haitian Vodou the world of the living and the world of the invisibles (the dead) are inseparable and the Vodou spirits are the bonds that connect the living and the deceased.

Their work is transformative on many different allegorical levels, the transformation of wreckage to art, of disunity to harmony and of artists, with no formal arts training to being the new heirs of a radical and challenging arts practice that has reached down through both modernist and post-modern arts practice.

# ANDRÉ EUGÈNE

Born 1959, Haiti

André Eugène was born in downtown Port-au-Prince in 1959. He is a leading figure in the artists' collective known as Atis Rezistans and a broader movement known as the Sculptors of Grand Rue.

Eugène fused the fetish effigy with an apocalyptic MTV futuristic vision. Much of his work is figurative using human skulls for heads and imbued with a bold sense of irony, sexuality and humour.

In 2006 André Eugène contributed to a large-scale collective sculptural work, which is a permanent exhibit at the International Museum of Slavery in Liverpool. His work has been shown at the Museum of Ethnography, Geneva; at the Parc de la Villette, Paris; the Fowler Museum, UCLA, Los Angeles; Nottingham Contemporary, UK and at the Grand Palais, Paris. His work was included in the Haitian Pavilions at the 54th Venice Biennale. Andre Eugène is the co-director of the Ghetto Biennale, which has been held in Port-au-Prince since 2009.

## **Gede Sekey (Gede Coffin)**

(2009) 73 x 46 x 12in. Wood,  
metal & recycled objects.



*Eugène has previously shown at documenta fifteen, Grand Palais, Paris, Venice Biennale, Milan Triennale, Frost Museum, Florida. Fowler Museum, LA, Pioneer Works, NYC. MOCA, North Miami and Nottingham Contemporary*

*Artwork image courtesy of the artist*

# ANDRE EUGENE

## **Jij Bosou (Judge Bosou)**

(2006) Book, tires, metal  
& chair legs



## **Gede milite (Military Gede)**

(2010) 74 x 42 x 15in  
Metal, tires, cloth &  
recycled objects



## **Chef seksyon (Section chief)**

(2000) 72 x 35 x 18in  
Metal, cloth & recycled objects



## **Danballa (Various Snakes)**

(2016) 45 x 6 x 3 ¼in  
81½ x 8½ x 5½in  
48¾ x 8 x 4in  
45 x 8¾ x 4¼in  
51½ x 9¾ x 4in  
Wood, rope & metal



**EVEL  
ROMAIN**  
Born 1969, HT

Evel is a member of the artists' collective known as Atis Rezistans and has been a participant and organizer for the Ghetto Biennale since its inception in 2009.

His work has far more aesthetic parallels with traditional African work and he works with skilfully carved wood with nails attached and bound with cords.

**Danballa**

(2013) 77 x 12 x 15in  
Wood, metal & rope

**Danballa**

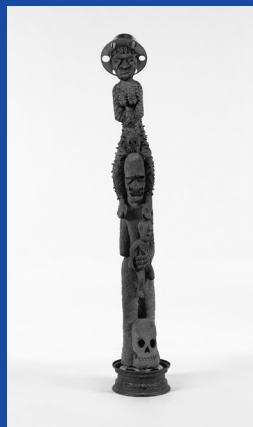
(2010) 87 x 10 x 15in  
Wood, metal & rope

**Kafou (Crossroads)**

(2011) 55 x 12 x 12in  
Wood, tire, metal  
& rope

**Bosou (The Bull)**

(2011) 43 x 13 x 11in  
Wood, tire, metal  
& rope



*Evel has previously shown at documenta fifteen, Pioneer Works, NYC. MOCA, North Miami*

*Artwork image courtesy of Daniel Bock and the artist*

# KATELYNE ALEXIS

Born 1976, HT

Katelyne is one of the most developed female artists in Atis Rezistans and has been a participant in the Ghetto Biennale since its inception in 2009.

She produces very individual works, sculptures of re-purposed severed doll parts pulled from the debris left by the earthquake and other recycled objects. Katelyne teaches art and runs workshops on recuperation art in local schools.

## **Sen Jak Maje (St Jacques the Major)**

(2015) 34 x 23 x 4in

Plastic, tires & doll's head



## **Kibodist (Pianist)**

(2017) 26½ x 18 x 5in

Plastic, doll's head, sequinned cloth & keyboard



## **Ayiti malad (Haiti is Sick)**

(2017) 52 x 18 x 17in

Metal, plastic, tires & dolls



*Katelyne has previously shown at documenta fifteen, MOCA, Miami, Pioneer Works, NYC.*

*Artwork image courtesy of Daniel Bock and the artist*



JEAN  
CLAUDE  
SAINTILUS  
1960-2024, HT

**Vyej Mari (Virgin Mary)**

(2015) 115 x 55 x 54in

Metal, net cloth, glazed paper,  
bible, clock, doll, plastic chair,  
balsam & recycled objects

**Untitled**

(2015) 23 x 24 x 55in

Net cloth, wood & recycled  
objects

**Notre Dame de Sept  
Doleurs**

(2015) 74 x 21 x 23in

Metal, cloth, plastic &  
recycled objects

Claude is an artist, musician, drummer and singer. Claude started working with Andre Eugene in the mid 1990's and with 'Atis-Rezistans' in 2002. Most of his work is figurative and rich in Vodou symbolism. He represents the strongest blurring of boundaries between religion and art, citing the spirits as his biggest influence and inspiration. "My whole family is mystical. I asked the spirits that I could do work with my mind and be creative. They told me to do work that is mystic and so I can better understand the mystic. The mystic is an absolute truth. It exists, so therefore I love it."



Claude has previously shown at documenta fifteen, Pioneer Works, NYC, MOCA, North Miami, Venice Biennale, Fowler Museum, LA

*Artwork image courtesy of Daniel Bock and the artist*

# HEROLD PIERRE

Born 1996, HT

Herold Pierre Louis born 1996 paints remarkable paintings and often writes surreal stories which create another rich layer of meaning. His works are a significant development in the genre of Haitian painting and address themes of poverty, sexuality and embrace a mystical Afro sci-fi imaginary.

**La Sirene Danger**

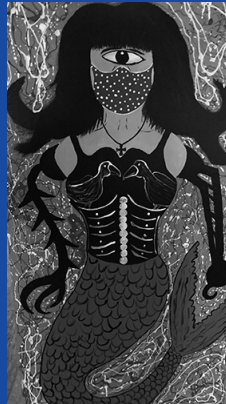
**Transformation  
Extraterrestre**

**La vie Andy Warhol**

**Le Geant Allemand**

**Les deux lesbiennes**

(2022) 60 x 120cm and  
60 x 60cm, card, acrylic



*Artwork courtesy of the artist*

# LEAH GORDON

Born 1959, GB

## Caste Portrait Series Noir Sacatra Griffe Marabou Mulâtre Mamelouque Quarteronnée Sang-Mêlé Blanche

(2012) Framed to 16 x 22in, nine x silver halide photographic prints

The Caste Portraits investigate the practice of the grading from black to white of skin colour, which marked the extent of racial mixing in 18th century colonial Haiti. Moreau de St Mery, a French colonialist living in Haiti, created a surreal taxonomy of race which classified skin colour from black to white using names borrowed from mythology, natural history and bestial miscegenation. Each name corresponds with a percentage of the fusion of black and white ancestry. As Colin Dayan, a Haitian historian, comments, 'Stranger than any supernatural fiction, the radical irrationality of Moreau St Mery's methods demonstrates to what lengths the imagination can go if driven by racial prejudice.'

Leah Gordon made the Caste Portraits depicting the nine skin varieties, with herself at one end of the scale as 'Blanche', and her partner, Andre Eugene, a Haitian sculptor, at the other end of the racial spectrum as 'Noir'. Gordon was questioning her own relationship and culpability with Haiti's history by placing herself in the series. The set are exhibited with "Europe Supported by African and the Americas: A Prophecy'.



*The Caste Portraits have been shown at the MCA, Sydney, documenta fifteen, Kassel, 11ème Biennale de l'Art Africain Contemporain, Dak'art 2014, Senegal, Origin Stories: Photography of Africa and Its Diaspora, Norton Museum of Art and acquired by the Kadist Foundation*

*Artwork courtesy of the artist*

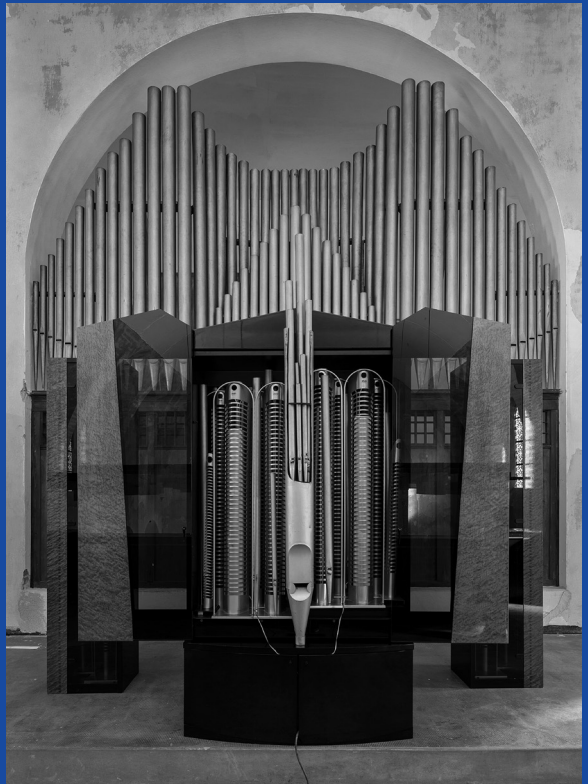
# HENRIKE NAUMANN & BASTIAN HAGEDORN

Born 1984,  
Henrike East Germany,  
Bastian West Germany

## **The Museum of Trance**

(2022) 270 x 350 x 120cm  
Furniture pieces, CD-  
stands, organ pipes,  
sound system, sound  
composition

The Museum of Trance is a fictional institution that explores the sonic culture phenomenon of the 90ies German music genre Trance. Built around the organ, the central instrument of worshipping ceremonies, the work tries to interlace the structural elements of ethnographic historization and the museology of cultural formations. The project started in 2015 during the 3rd Ghetto Biennale in Port-au-Prince, when the artists opened the Museum of Trance inside a vodou temple in the Grand Rue neighbourhood. Ever since, it lives on in memories, discussions and performances. For the exhibition in Melbourne it takes on a physical shape as a trance organ, lending the soundtrack to the collaborative presentation in the church.



*Artwork image courtesy of Frank Sperling and the artists*

# LAFLEUR & BOGAERT

Michel 1981, HT  
Tom 1966, BE

## **Famasi Mobil Kongolè**

(2019 - 2022)

80 x 60 x 40cm (Blue)

150 x 60 x 30cm (Yellow)

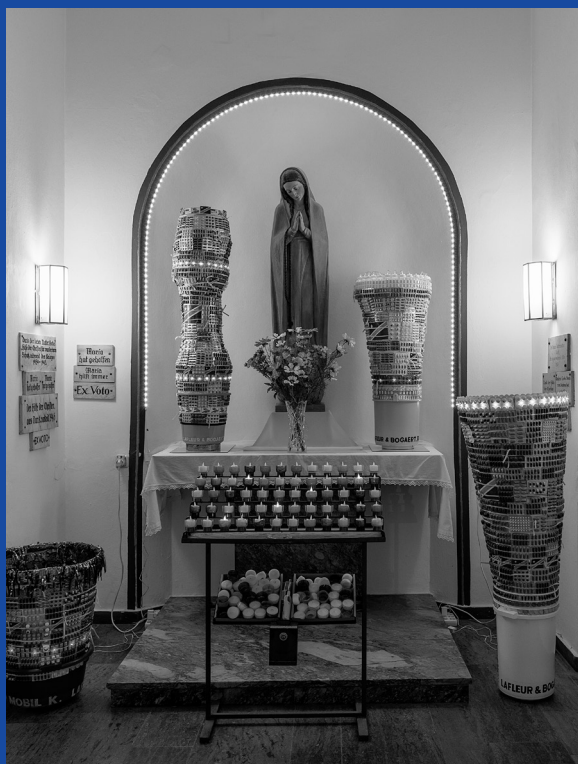
70 x 40 x 40cm (Red)

180 x 50 x 30cm (White)

Electric lights, Congo Blue  
filter sheets, hand painted  
cardboard, a virgin Mary,  
plastic buckets, multi-  
coloured pills, rubber  
bands, plastic flowers,  
and pairs of scissors; all  
presented on rotating  
displays.

Michel Lafleur (1981, Haiti) and Tom Bogaert (1966, Belgium) are two artists who founded the art generating business 'Lafleur & Bogaert' in 2013 when they met at the 3rd edition of the Atis Rezistans | Ghetto Biennale in Port-au-Prince, Haiti.

Mobile pharmacies are the main source of medicine for many Haitians. Street vendors carry spires of curved paper covered with pills – painkillers, antibiotics, Viagra knockoffs, condoms, abortion pills and cough syrups. At **RISING**, Lafleur & Bogaert present 4 mobile pharmacies in the Alpha 60 Chapter House.



*Artwork image courtesy of Frank Sperling and the artists*



**LAURA  
HEYMAN**  
Born 1968 US

**Don't Move Again**

(2009 - 2023)

42 pigmented inkjet prints  
from 8x10 negatives,  
30x24 in, drafting plan  
clamp, drafting table

Don't Move Again was initiated as an outdoor portrait studio operating in the Grand Rue neighbourhood during the first Ghetto Biennale in 2009. Heyman continued to photograph in the local community for twelve years, expanding the project to include a wide range of people living in Port-au-Prince: government ministers, workers, business people, NGO staff. Within the construct of formal portraiture, participants direct all aspects of the image, their attitudes and perspectives expressed through their choice of locations and poses they present to the camera. The installation for *RISING* combines images of Atis Rezistans, their friends, family and neighbourhood, including local vendors, and visual representations of the Haitian presidency from 1957 – present, depicted on currency, campaign posters, and murals found throughout the capital city of Port-au-Prince.



*Laura Heyman is an artist, curator and educator based in upstate New York. Selected exhibitions; documenta fifteen, Kassel, DE, On the Inside, c24 Gallery, New York, NY, Taci. Anza, parla, La Galleria Nazionale, Rome, IT, Who's Afraid of America, Wonderland Art Space, Copenhagen, DK, Ghetto Biennale, Port-au-Prince, HT, 2 Rivers + 30 Years, Vox Populi Gallery, Philadelphia, PA, The Photographer's Wife, Senko Studio, Viborg, DK, The African Continuum, United Nations, New York, NY.*

*Artwork courtesy of the artist*

*ghettobiennale.org*

**ATIS REZISTANS**

Katelyne Alexis (HT)

Andre Eugene (HT)

Michel Lafleur (HT)

Herold Pierre-Louis (HT)

Evel Romain (HT/US)

Jean-Claude Saintilus (HT)

**GHETTO BIENNALE**

Tom Bogaert (BE)

Leah Gordon (GB)

Bastian Hagedorn (DE)

Laura Heyman (US)

Henrike Naumann (DE)

ATIS REZISTANS | GHETTO BIENNALE

**ghetto BIENNALE**

**Atis Rezistans**

*Ghetto Biennale Curators | Tom  
Bogaert, André Eugène & Leah Gordon*

*Graphic Design | Elizabeth Woodroffe  
& Leah Gordon*