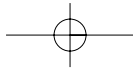
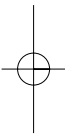
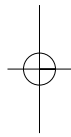
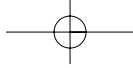


UNDERSTATEMENT HYPERBOLE

PETRA LOTTJE + SOAVINA RAMAROSON





UNDERSTATEMENT HYPERBOLE

PETRA LOTTJE + SOAVINA RAMAROSON

EXHIBITION: 13.02.10- 13.03.10

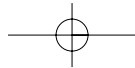
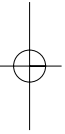
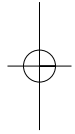
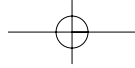
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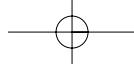
CURATOR: BONAVENTURE S. B. NDIKUNG

SAVVY CONTEMPORARY

RICHARDSTR. 43-44

12043 BERLIN





CONCEPT

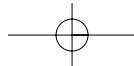
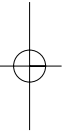
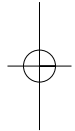
It is just a search...

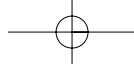
Sometimes a search for singularity in plurality

Sometimes a search for identity in a community

Sometimes a search for the root-end or the leaf-end of a cliché or stereotype

Sometimes a search for the thin line between an understatement and a hyperbole





6 **UNDERSTATEMENT HYPERBOLE** CONCEPT

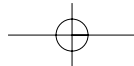
The concept of artistic creation spans a wide scope which can be banally simplified as ranging from an understatement to a hyperbole. Such an understatement could be interpreted in the intensive and poignant minimal and conceptual art by Flavin, Judd or LeWitt and such a hyperbole could be a lapidary association to extreme performances of the Wiener Aktionismus around Brus or Nitsch.

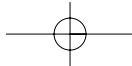
What on the other hand is probably more difficult to portray is a combination of an understatement and a hyperbole, which by any definition are two sides of the same coin; just like any other extremes. One might also argue that the statement made by the minimalists was by no way an understatement but a gross exaggeration of an entity or an idea, especially when

considering the formation and not the form, which due to its intangibility seems to us an understatement. Likewise, one could bullet out enough arguments to define the works of the most abstract painters or most aggressive performance artists as just an understatement of what it could be. Whichever way this might turn out to be, this phenomenon is worth reflecting and researching on.

In this line of thought, the art space SAVVY Contemporary, which seeks at instigating a dialogue between the populist terminologies "western art" and "non-western art" invites two milestones of a new generation to deliberate on this understatement-hyperbole complex. Crossing the imaginary geographical lines in art, these two artists, Petra Lottje and Soavina

Ramaroson, of completely different backgrounds and media with which they contain their artistic positions, are pre-destined to expose together. While the differences in the *causa materialis*, *causa formalis* and *causa efficiens* are seemingly evident, from Aristotle's point of view, Petra Lottje and Soavina Ramaroson have the same *causa finalis*, namely art as a state of expression, aesthetics and encounter. By getting into the crux of their works, this exhibition intends to broach the issue of, but also demystify the extremes (geographically, historically or conceptually). If Marcel Duchamp's quote "Art is a game between all people of all periods" holds true, then SAVVY contemporary will be the playground for this game, while Lottje and Ramaroson are the players.





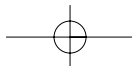
In their works, both artists' theoretical horizon is around the realm of human interactions and their social context as coined by Nicolas Bourriaud in Relational Aesthetics. On the one hand, Lottje extracts episodes, representing the exaggerated emotions and clichés affiliated to Hollywood movies of a period of over 50 years, to create her own universe. By extracting, metamorphosing and making a video collage, Lottje compresses these characteristic factors meant to attract and strike a chord with a mega-public to an understatement without losing the emotions and clichés meant to be transmitted. By playing to the gallery but consciously distancing herself from acting, Lottje seeks at re-individualizing, in her own way, the junk of information and pictures provided by the mass media in

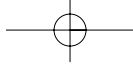
general and movies in particular. Thus, her work is a pursuit to maybe filter the surplus to the essential. It is a bid at personifying the mainstream. It is a searching for an identity in the mass and a means of canalization using the arts. On the other hand, Ramaroson does a sozio-anthropological research of mainstream clichés with the camera as his weapon. Be it clichés about women, poverty or the illusion of manhood, the poignancy of Ramaroson's work can be summarized in a title of one of his pieces "la force ne peut resister à l'esprit". In a cryptic depiction, he seeks at decanalizing a distinct identity to a mass of impressions from popular culture. Spiked with humor and irony, Ramaroson chooses to amplify... by over-expressing the found emotions

and platitudes in his photography, he transforms understatements that almost disappear in daily routine to a massive exaggeration that calls for utmost attention. The scenes in his works narrate stories of a strange world but the emotions emanating from the figures are omnipresent and appeal to an almost global identification. It is an effort to create a handbook of contemporary symbolism in photography.

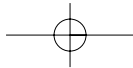
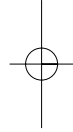
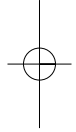
SAVVY Contemporary will host Petra Lottje and Soavina Ramaroson from the 13th Feb. – 13th March for the Understatement hyperbole exhibition which will be curated by Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung.

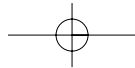
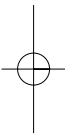
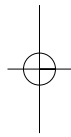
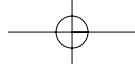
www.savvy-contemporary.com

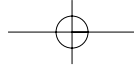




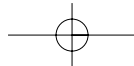
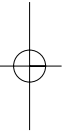
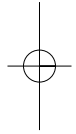
8 UNDERSTATEMENT HYPERBOLE

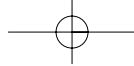






10 **UNDERSTATEMENT HYPERBOLE**
SOAVINA RAMAROSON 1977, MADAGASKAR





Disecting a notion:

Soavina Ramaroson's „Women cliché“

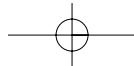
The genesis of the onomatopoeic word “cliché” lies in the peculiar sound that arises during a stereotyping process of printing technology... and indeed at the roots of their technological usage, the printer-words “cliché” and “stereotype” are synonyms. Tracing back to the Greek meaning of stereotype, composing of stereos “firm” + tupos “impression,” one can easily comprehend the modern psychological meaning of these expressions as coined by Walter Lippmann in his 1922 seminal text *Public Opinion*^{1,2}.

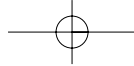
In this same line of cognitive psychology, artist Soavina Ramaroson (*1977, Madagascar) embarked on a photographic research of phrases, ideas, images, symbols and connotations on women that have been overused so that they dwindled into clichés or rendered stereotypes.

Coming to think of it, stereotypes about certain groups of people, races, genders, sexual orientation, religions or social status are as old as mankind... and clichés about women date as far back as the biblical allegory of Eve betraying Adam and Mankind by ceding to the serpent in the Garden of Eden.

In his photographic series “Women cliché,” Ramaroson meticulously put together a process, that involved an almost perfect sketching of his intentions prior to realising them with his female models. Reminiscent of his architectural bak-

ground the sketches encompass a figure in a three-dimensional space, with all components precisely labelled. These sketches, which were originally meant to be drafts for a working-process, currently serve as negatives or stereoplates and to the least as title blocks of the photographic works. Ramaroson tries, with much zeal and zest, to ignite a dialogue on the basis of political, social or religious women clichés prevailing in our societies today. The “red thread” in all the artworks in this series is a white rope that at the same time symbolises the causes and consequences of these clichés. Also, the white rope symbolises the strong attachment related to clichés, how difficult it is to get rid of clichés or maybe just reveals that clichés are a never-ending line of thoughts i.e. a “firm impression.”





12 **UNDERSTATEMENT HYPERBOLE**
SOAVINA RAMAROSON

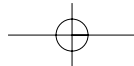
This series goes beyond mental labelling, subconscious or conscious stereotyping... it dwells more or less around the frontiers of conscience and steps into a poetical constructivism in the form of photography. The works are surrounded by irony and are a microcosm of prevalent women clichés, reflecting empathy, obsession, aggression, weakness or desperation. The satirical poetry of Ramaroson's works is striking; In *I'm free*, the female models of various skin and eye colours are veiled in black, so that only their full, sometimes over-painted succulent lips and alluring eyes are revealed. The rigidness and stirriness of their looks and the ropes around their necks disclose everything but freedom! Nevertheless the luscious looks deep behind their eyes betray an almost sado-masochistic tendency associated with some religious groups.

Pull my hair intentionally positions all the

symbols at the forefront: the dryer, the dildo or the wedding ring... like mutations of abstracts from Puvis de Chavannes' 1879 *Young girls at the seaside* and McNeill Whistler's 1864 *Symphony in White No. 2*. In this well composed piece, the white rope creates the balance between the heated ups and downs in marital eroticism and violence. This allusion is continued in *Marry me*, which portrays the "beautiful, exotic bird in a cage." And although the gestures of torsion, bondage or flipping the bird are even almost too clear, eroticism is still in the air.

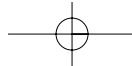
Ramaroson's research on women cliché provokes with the conception of women as working or sex slaves and although a man is never visible in *Slavery* it is imminent who knots the ropes, who pulls the strings or who forces to submission! A physical enslaving might lead to a mental or ideological slavery, whereby the slave herself

becomes her own slave master, falling victim to fashion, bling-bling or vanity and before the blink of an eye she is head-over-heals a part of the cliché *Blink blind*. The artist thematizes the most evident topics in our contemporary society, be it the craze of having the ideal model structure, which might come along with bulimia or other eating disorders as a by-product, or be it the crave for perfection as depicted in *Plastic surgery*. By wrapping the model in a plastic foil Ramaroson makes a statement alluding to the pun, but also shows the distortions of the body as a consequence of plastic surgery. The strength of this work lies in the easily overlooked details, as despite all the efforts to attain perfection, behind the curtains of privacy, the evidence of imperfection is evident e. g. in the asymmetry of the labia.



Eat shit!





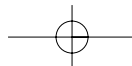
14 **UNDERSTATEMENT HYPERBOLE**
SOAVINA RAMAROSON

The series culminates to its crescendo with the works *Plus de regles* and *I love you bastard*. The ambiguity of the former is on the one hand a plea for freedom and emancipation towards rules and regulations governing human beings, and on the other hand a scream of despair, agony and resignation attached to the monthly menstruation period, clichéd to be a period of ill-moods and caprice. The latter is a sarcastic but extremely strong comment on violence towards women. It is an image of pain. *I love you bastard* is the effigy of the woman who misinterprets the ruthless aggression of her husband or the rest of the society for love. It is the image of rape, torture or misuse but with the irony of attachment.

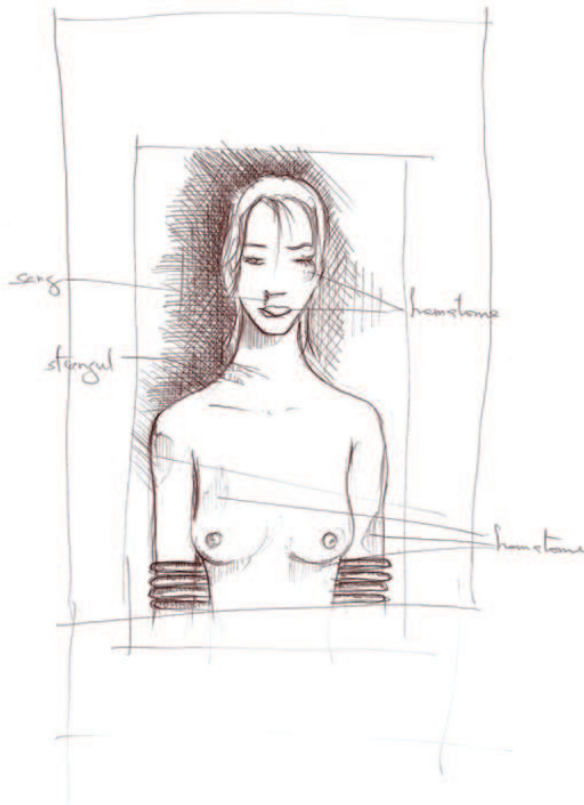
This young African artist, born and raised in Madagascar, trained as an architect in France, represents a new age of contemporary photography. Previous series by

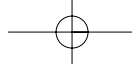
Ramaroson, exposed in the *Nouvelles Rencontres Africaines de la Photographie* (2007, Bamako), at *Photoquai* (2007, Musée du Quai Branly, Paris) or the *Spot on Bamako* (2008-09, IFA Gallery Berlin and Stuttgart), go hand-in-hand with the intensity of the *Women Cliché* series exposed in the international group exhibition *Consciences and Frontiers* curated by Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung and Simone Kraft (2009, Alte Post Berlin). The social context of his works as well as the closeness to the aesthetics and politics of everyday life form the quintessence of his works. *Women Cliché* is work in progress. It will be exciting to see the stereotypes that will catch Ramaroson's interest in the coming years.

Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung, 2010



I love you, Bastard!





16 **UNDERSTATEMENT HYPERBOLE**
SOAVINA RAMAROSON

Will you describe your work as having a social aesthetic and relation?

My work, till now on photography is surely having a social relation. My aim is to show my feeling with what I see around me and to share it. Some find it aesthetic, some not. I'm happy if people just have feelings about it, like or dislike...

You have been invited to do an exhibition with someone you hardly know, someone using a different artistic medium than you do and to a topic based on marking contrasts. What exactly stimulates you to participate

in such a project?

According to me, art is specially a discussion. To work with another person, artist or non artist is a very good way to make the work more interesting and richer.

So far, you have had the chance to occupy yourself with your partner's/opponent's artistic work... what do you think would have attracted you in co-operating with him/her, had it not been for this exhibition?

In this case, it's the drawings about the women and fishes.

Do you generally cooperate with other artists in your work as an artist? If yes, what normally instigates you to do a co-operation and what is generally your common ground with the

co-operation partner?

If no, what deters you from doing such a co-operation?

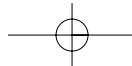
I generally don't work with other artist but I think it's just because I'm young in my art work.

You have developed a ping-pong process of communication for this exhibition. How is the communication going so far and can you please explain your role in this communication process?

If I get the project, I think I'll be "the model".

If you were asked to summarize your work as an artist in a few words, what will that be?

Hard to answer... Let's say "trying to be an



artist”.

Individualism and the notion of lifting-off yourself or your characters from the mass play a huge role in your works. What exactly is it about singularity that occupies you?

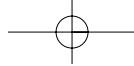
I don't think I'm singular.. People may think it, but I think I'm quite normal, unfortunately.

On the other hand it is a thin line between singularity and plurality in your works, as your works touch on global and mainstream phenomena?

...

Another issue that is evident in your work is the interest on the thematic “cliché”... what is it about an idea or





18 **UNDERSTATEMENT HYPERBOLE**
SOAVINA RAMAROSON

an element which has been overused to the point of losing its original meaning, that interests you?

"Clichés" for me are the reflection on our society... it can open eyes on reality. For me, we will need to use it again and again. Now, the work of the artist is to find his own way to use them.

Do you seesaw between an "understatement" and an "exaggeration" in your work? Or do you basically consider both extremes as overlapping?

They are deeply linked, as people have their own interpretations in front of art.

Is this an issue that plays a role or has played a role in any way in your work as an artist?

Not really, I was born like I am.

Is your identity as an artist affiliated in any way to your nationality?

Till now, curators choose you first because you are from Africa or "non western" artist.

From your subjective point of view, is there a discrepancy between art from these geographical regions?

I studied architecture. When you make a building, you use the material around you, you try to build a house not too different from the others around it... yes I think there is a discrepancy between art from these geographical regions first because of the environment but also because of the thinking.

Your point of departure is architecture ... how did you come to photography?

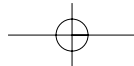
By accident! During an architecture project, I discovered that people liked my pictures.

Is there an exact point when one becomes an artist? When and how exactly did you find out that you were an artist or when and how did you decide to become an artist?

I don't think I'm an artist yet...

What is the point of origin for your work as an artist... or bluntly, what is the reason why you get up every morning and wish to do art?

The fun...



How will you characterize the development process of your art pieces?

I do it like an architect; I do layouts and then realize it.

Is there an artist (well-known or unknown) with whom you will like to work with or expose with?

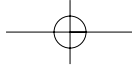
I let the future answer, no discrimination for me...

Now I am bored of asking questions...

Is there a question you would have liked me to ask? If yes, please ask yourself that question and give an answer to the question.

I agree, let's stop.





20 **UNDERSTATEMENT HYPERBOLE**

PETRA LOTTJE 1973, DEUTSCHLAND

Mind the gap:

Petra Lottje's video works

The components of reality appear in Petra Lottje's works like variables in the human coordinate system. The artist dissects the corpus of daily routine, reminiscent of a chemist, who dissociates elements from their bonds in order to study their characteristics. At this juncture, video art serves the purpose of a subjective experimental kit to research on questions of the composition of communication, the origination of meaning, the effect of pictures and the antagonism of individuality and commonplaces.

Language plays an important role as point of departure in most of Petra Lottje's videos. In „Episoden“ (2009), „Loope“ (2009), „Time is the killer“ (2008) and „O.T.“, she combines sound sequences from different movies, accords them a somatic expression and relocates them into new contexts. Through this reduced, but in no way neutral mimic expression of her figures, Lottje succeeds in constructing a gap between the emphatic language from the movies and their alleged authors. Armed with a subtle irony, Lottje approaches these partially ambiguous utterances and grotesque situations in their entanglement and quest for understanding. By absorbing the whole spectrum of mostly contradictory voices which cinema yields, like love or identity, the protagonists become emblems of general human sentiments but also media-conditioned (self-) perception. Today, each person is a protagonist of his/her own

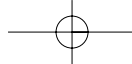
movie, however to what extent is this movie actually innate? And how much are we ourselves media-collective stereotypes?

We do not find answers in Petra Lottje's works... as they treat those issues that lie in between. They reveal the 'perhaps' inexpressible rest of inter-personal communication. In order to address these issues, the artist uses the method of isolation and displacement of the single components – language, picture and carnal expression, so as to unhinge the ultimate from them. She stretches this process until the point where the re-composition of the components becomes the gap, the incongruence between two elements. The space of impossibility of expression or of failure in communication or understanding develops here. However, this space does not describe a 'black hole'! It rather has the potential of becoming the new point of

departure for understanding... as it favours the unfolding of the place and moment in the cosmos of the beholder for his/her own unique perception.

Susanne Husse, 2010





22 **UNDERSTATEMENT HYPERBOLE**

PETRA LOTTJE

Will you describe your work as having a social aesthetic and relation?

As a part of it, yes!

You have been invited to do an exhibition with someone you hardly know, someone using a different artistic medium than you do and to a topic based on marking contrasts. What exactly stimulates you to participate in such a project?

A particular excitement arouses in me when I think of a collective exhibition. I wouldn't have come up with the idea to

combine our approaches or positions. Let's see if I will start thinking differently in the course of the preparation process.

So far, you have had the chance to occupy yourself with your partner's/opponent's artistic work... what do you think would have attracted you in co-operating with him/her, had it not been for this exhibition?

Currently, a kind of challenge and 'forth feeling or fumbling' is taking place per email.

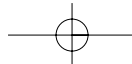
Do you generally cooperate with other artists in your work as an artist? If yes, what normally instigates you to do a co-operation and what is generally your common ground with the co-operation partner? If no, what deters you from doing

such a co-operation?

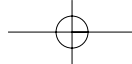
I enjoy the exclusive freedom of decision making in my work as an artist. How, when and with what I work! I gladly incorporate opinion and/or advice, but I am hardly willing to compromise at the final implementation.

You have developed a ping-pong process of communication for this exhibition. How is the communication going so far and can you please explain your role in this communication process?

I had an idea with which I confronted Soavina. The first reaction from him was already different than I expected. I smiled at my own astonishment – because that's exactly the point which this experiment amounts to. My approach doesn't function in this case and I am inevitably dumping







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PETRA LOTTJE

my conception of the "final outcome".
Everything is open!

If you were asked to summarize your work as an artist in a few words, what will that be?

As an artist I see myself as a subjective filter, which first of all sieves and secondly compresses everything that reaches me, touches me and doesn't let me go. I therefore give a commentary to a situation in which I find myself and to a situation that encompasses me.

Individualism and the notion of lifting-off yourself or your characters from the mass play a huge role in your works. What exactly is it about singularity that occupies you?

I try to explain it on the basis of huge film

productions. The fascination about the fact that these films reach/touch so many people, as a perceptible medium, as a trigger of emotions, as a possibility of communication... is intriguing. But at the same time there is the sentence: 100 people sit in a cinema and watch 100 different movies. Where is the individuality? What does an individual take along with him from the film and is it about the movie that occupies her/him more than just the question of how to get home after the movie?

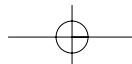
On the other hand it is a thin line between singularity and plurality in your works, as your works touch on global and mainstream phenomena?

...

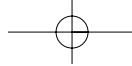
Another issue that is evident in your work is the interest on the thematic

"cliché"... what is it about an idea or an element which has been overused to the point of losing its original meaning, that interests you?

What is thrilling is, however, the fact that clichés always have an effect – be it unde-liberated concordance or controversial discussions. They have a societal function, they ease stereotyped thinking and polemic slogans and could easily become weapons of power! When I decided to use cliché-like situations in one of my works and to use myself as a 'projection screen', I found out that this piece of work touched and drew sympathy in a wide range of people as well as it gave them a feeling of togetherness. Also, I noticed that the superficiality of the chosen film sequences nevertheless granted the viewer much space – a different and new space away from my subjective composition.







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PETRA LOTTJE

Do you seesaw between an “understatement” and an “exaggeration” in your work? Or do you basically consider both extremes as overlapping?

Both... they overlap! On the one hand, I make big things small and on the other hand, by reflecting and transforming things, I make them bigger again.

Is this an issue that plays a role or has played a role in any way in your work as an artist?

I am first of all an artist with a specific socialization with which I am confronted and deal with.

Is your identity as an artist affiliated in any way to your nationality?

Obviously.

From your subjective point of view, is there a discrepancy between art from these geographical regions?

There might be differences in the realization process but I am convinced that the concern and the incentive of artists – no matter where they come from – is quintessentially similar.

Your point of departure is sculpture... how did you come to video?

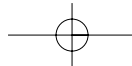
My interest in written word and what it can provoke was my point of departure. Thereafter came the Found Footage-Sound... pictures were, in my opinion, always lacking. That thing of which language has no equivalent word for it. The consequence of this all is the combination... that is what video means to me.

Is there an exact point when one becomes an artist? When and how exactly did you find out that you were an artist or when and how did you decide to become an artist?

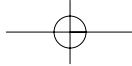
It was a gradual process to gain the feeling that I am good in what I do and my passion for what I do is huge and persistent.

What is the point of origin for your work as an artist... or bluntly, what is the reason why you get up every morning and wish to do art?

I am fulfilled to live life like this. I will like to use the notion of passion again: for art, the possibility, the path to a piece of work, the richness that dwells within!







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PETRA LOTTJE

How will you characterize the development process of your art pieces?

I believe I have already given an answer to this question.

Is there an artist (well-known or unknown) with whom you will like to work with or expose with?

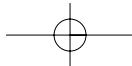
Yes.

Now I am bored of asking questions...

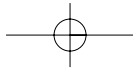
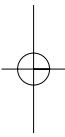
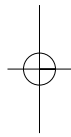
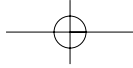
Is there a question you would have liked me to ask? If yes, please ask yourself that question and give an answer to the question.

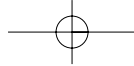
Dear Bonaventure. What prompts you to put up this art space?

...(I won't answer the question for you)...









UNDERSTATEMENT HYPERBOLE

Petra Lottje + Soavina Ramaroson
Curated by Dr. Bonaventure Soh
Bejeng Ndikung

PUBLISHER

SAVVY Contemporary –
the laboratory of form ideas

Art Director - Bonaventure Soh
Bejeng Ndikung (BSBN)

Events Director - Stefan Fuhrmann

PICTURES

Petra Lottje and Soavina Ramaroson

TEXTS

Susanne Husse – Text on Petra Lottje
BSBN – Text on Soavina Ramaroson,
interviews and exhibition concept

TRANSLATIONS

BSBN

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