

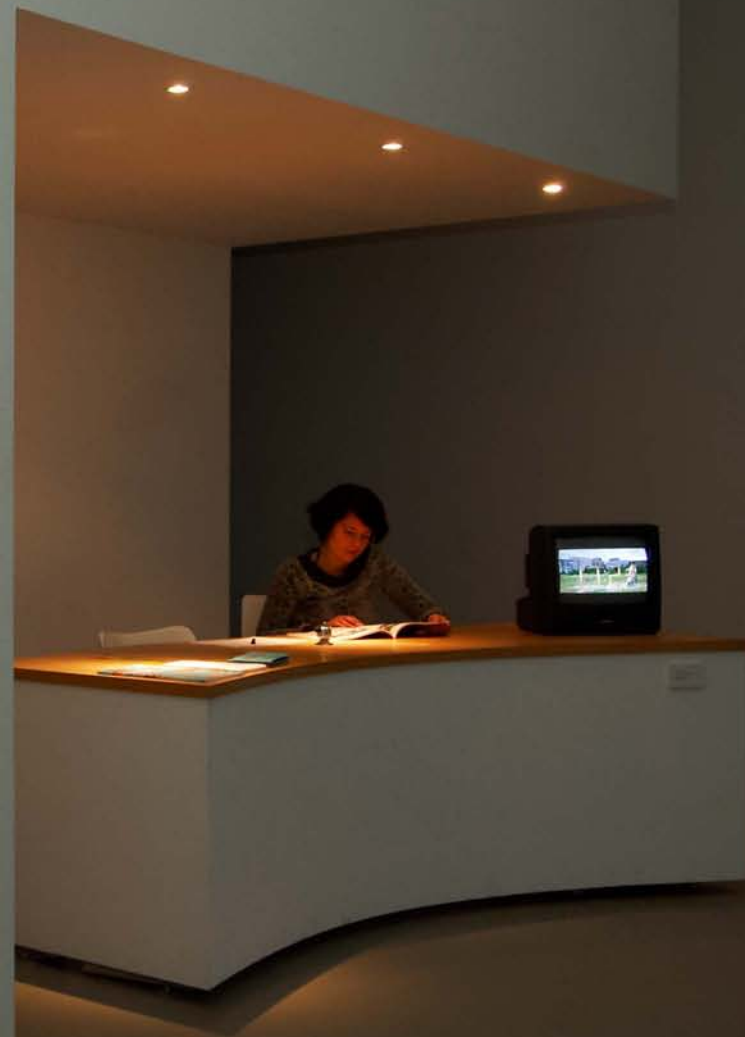


ANE LAN

WOMAN OF THE WORLD







photography













video installation







The duty you give to me





The name I accept to be mine

# WOMAN OF THE WORLD - essay

The notion "Multiculturalism" has a wide variety of connotations, and is an important concept within the ongoing discourse of the globalisation process. The concept is as old as civilisation itself, but the term as we understand it today derives from the immigration of people from the former colonies into Western Europe in the early 20th century. Multiculturalism is also an important part of the construction of the ideological image of the United States in the 19th and 20th century where everyone is an immigrant with a "different" cultural background. The term was given critical attention by the 1970's liberation movement, and the idea of a multicultural society is still under construction. The last few decades' multicultural identity has been investigated through a diverse range of artist projects and has been given much attention from National Arts Councils and programs.

In 2007, the Norwegian Government decided to initiate a program, 2008-The Year of The Multicultural Norway, to emphasise the importance of Norway as a multicultural society.. A funding program was established to encourage new art projects within the Program, and every publicly funded art institution in Norway was forced to present at least one event or exhibition related to the program. If the institutions did not adhere to this, threats of withdrawing the state funding and support was expressed by the government. Despite of the controversy of a state initiative that enforces the content of the art institutions exhibition and event program and a most vague proclamation of the intentions of the programs itself, the initiative did not provoke much discussion. It seems that, after all, there is a common consensus or understanding of what a multicultural society is or look like, and more problematic: who the ones are that represents the cultural diversity, and what is expected of these persons?

What they are gaining from having this position?

One of a few projects that critically questioned the state-enforced program, and profoundly investigate the term Multiculturalism was the exhibition project "Woman of the World" by performance artist Ane Lan, at Gallery F15/Punkt 0 in Moss. Ane Lan manages to cunningly twist our conceptions by introducing a multiple layered understanding of what could be understood as an ethnic Identity.

The exhibition consists of life size photographic portraits and a video performance where Ane Lan, the female pseudonym of a male artist, is dressed up as various ethnic women from different parts of the world. In the meeting with Ane Lan's "portraits" the viewer is left with a feeling of an awkwardness that goes beyond the trick of just dressing up as a woman with a different skin tone. The feeling of discomfort may be provoked by the choice of attributes which the "women" are holding in their hands suggesting a story or a "virtue" of the sitter. The western woman displays her credit card and the Indian holds a broccoli in her hands and thus signal her role as the provider of vegetables and raw material. The choice of attributes are slightly absurd considering that broccoli traditionally is an unknown vegetable in India. In the photograph of the woman from Middle East, the magazine of the machine gun she holds in her hand is mounted the wrong way. This underlines a feeling of displacement when viewing the portraits, and highlights the deconstructive qualities of the work. The feeling of awkwardness is even stronger due to the simple fact that the portraits are strictly classically composed with a smooth background and a basic position, rendering the facial expression the focal point and making the convincing actor abilities of Ane Lan the factor that actively transcends the work. One is forced to believe in the person presented before us, and in her emotional state, in spite of the obviously staged and acted out cliché.

## WOMAN OF THE WORLD - essay

The feeling of unease and discomfort is further elaborated in the video work "Woman of the World". The work is a kind of video performance where we meet the same ethnical characters as in the portraits, each of them singing the same naïve song with a rusty falsetto voice, questioning their name, origin and image of themselves. Between every scene the women are covering the video camera with a piece of cloth, veiling film clips gathered from documentaries of political and economic events related to the origin or image of the specific female character. When taking the time to watch the whole piece through, one realises that in addition to singing the same song, all the characters are practically repeating the same movements and mimicry. Even the documentary film clips are quite similar and presented in the same tempo. It is like an economical circuit where all the characters are dependent on the other and what the other represents. Here again the most interesting factor of the work is the empathy of the "actor" Ane Lan. It is with an itchy sense of discomfort and embarrassment I watch this man's unreserved, almost private desire to impersonate or gestalt these women. Every attempt from my side to free myself from the discomfort through laughter or considering the cross-dressing act the slightest ludicrous, are disrupted by the lingering tempo, stripped sound score, and intensity of the protagonist. He literarily forces me to relate to these characters as real people, and it is in the tension created between the discomfort of the manic intensity of the acting, my wish to free myself from the feeling of embarrassment and the strong content of the words and images, that this work gains its strong complexity and quality.

I am strongly convinced that Ane Lan is not unfamiliar with the main concepts of Queer-theory. It is quite alluring, that he, being a white male from the North of Europe (and hetero sexual for all I know..) thus representing the ultimate "subject" and

and the "molester" of both sex and ethics diversity, and in this case, in addition to inflicting pain upon "the other", he seems to desire the suffering he causes.

Is this not exactly what we do in our late Western Capitalist "adventure - economy"? In our safe protected part of the world, where the only thing we need to worry about is what to consume the next day, a longing for something more real arises, a longing for some "true" emotions and a "genuine" feeling of suffering/joy. The recent international art biennials and grand exhibition has also been showcasing a large number of works, mainly films, presenting inhabitants from the third world singing hauntingly of terrible sufferings deriving from traumatic incidents. Our purchasing power does not limit itself to just exploiting the labor and commodities of the developing countries, but even the suffering inflicted upon the people of these countries are promoted.

It is precisely these mechanisms Ane Lan unveils in the complex work "Woman of the World". Not only does he questioning the notion "identity" related to gender and sex, but also what economical and psychological factors are the bases for our meeting with or construction of "the other", in this case the multicultural "other".

*Sigurd Langbakk ©2008*

# WOMAN OF THE WORLD

WOMAN OF THE WORLD - documentation photo 1

WOMAN OF THE WORLD - documentation photo 2

WOMAN OF THE WORLD - documentation photo 3

WOMAN OF THE WORLD - production photo #1

WOMAN OF THE WORLD - production photo #2

WOMAN OF THE WORLD - production photo #3

WOMAN OF THE WORLD - production photo #4

WOMAN OF THE WORLD - production photo #5

WOMAN OF THE WORLD - production photo #6

WOMAN OF THE WORLD - video still #1

WOMAN OF THE WORLD - video still #2

WOMAN OF THE WORLD - video still #3

WOMAN OF THE WORLD - video still #4

WOMAN OF THE WORLD - video still #5

*WOMAN OF THE WORLD - documentation photo credit; Terje Holm*

*WOMAN OF THE WORLD - production photo credit; Aurora E. Sandlilje*

*WOMAN OF THE WORLD - video stills - Ane Lan*

WOMAN OF THE WORLD video cast: Ane Lan

- music: Ane Lan

- set design: Ane Lan

- costume design: Ane Lan

- camera: Ane Lan

WOMAN OF THE WORLD Production: Ane Lan & PUNKT Ø

supported by:



NORSK KULTURRÅD  
Arts Council Norway

PUNKT Ø

Staging himself as various women of the world, the artist Ane Lan raises questions of the images and ideas of gender, ethnicity and multiculturalism within the concept of a global economy.

[www.anelan.com](http://www.anelan.com)