

Ghetto Biennale Participating Artist

Presented by
Karen Miranda Augustine

11 October 2011



Karen
Miranda
Augustine

2ND ghetto BIENNALE 2011
PORT-AU-PRINCE, HAITI

November 28th – December 18th

CONTACT

Karen Miranda Augustine

Phone: (416) 263-9835

E-mail: kma@karenmirandaaugustine.com

Web Site: KarenMirandaAugustine.com

Contents

Ghetto Biennale

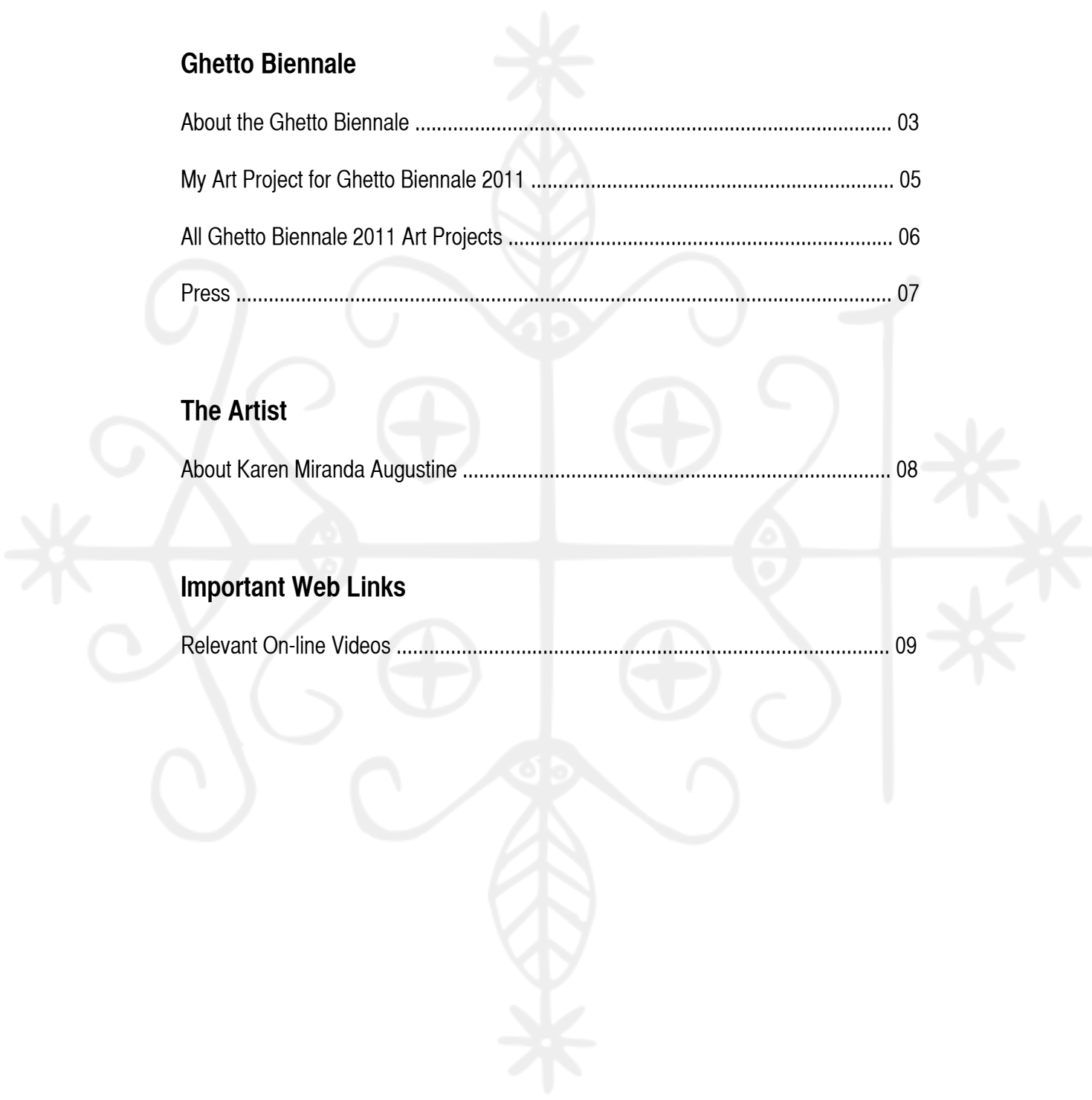
About the Ghetto Biennale	03
My Art Project for Ghetto Biennale 2011	05
All Ghetto Biennale 2011 Art Projects	06
Press	07

The Artist

About Karen Miranda Augustine	08
-------------------------------------	----

Important Web Links

Relevant On-line Videos	09
-------------------------------	----



About the Ghetto Biennale

A Salon des Refusés for the 21st Century

In December 2009, Atis-Rezistans, the Sculptors of Grand Rue, hosted their first Ghetto Biennale. They invited fine artists, filmmakers, academics, photographers, musicians, architects and writers to the Grand Rue area of Port-au-Prince, Haiti, to make or witness work that was shown or happened in their neighbourhood. Artists from many countries, including Australia, Italy, the UK, Jamaica, the USA and Cuba, came to Haiti to participate in the Ghetto Biennale.

Ghetto Biennale is not a biennale in the traditional Western sense. Rather, a group of Haitian artists are extending an invitation to Western and non-Western artists to come to Haiti, make work with them and produce an exhibition.

Significance for Regional Haitian Artists

There are a number of complex and overlapping motives for this event:

Lack of Formal Arts Training: The lack of formal arts training in Haiti leaves youth and artists sometimes very frustrated in their thirst for new ideas, influences, mediums and aesthetics. The Ghetto Biennale is an arena within which the visiting artists and academics can share philosophies, ideas and aesthetic practices with Haitian arts practitioners.

Presentation: Presentation is an important aspect of the work of Atis-Rezistans, and they have created a unique and local site-specific installation that has allowed Haitian artists to expose their work, in situ, to the visiting artists, curators, journalists and academics. This has given Haitian artists the chance to reach a far wider audience, make important contacts and integrate with wider arts networks.

Platform for Artists in Neighbouring Regions: The Ghetto Biennale has created a platform for Haitian artists throughout the region to take part and exhibit their work. Artists from FOSAJ in Jacmel, Rivière Froid in Carrefour, APROSIFA in Carrefour Fois and flagmakers from Bel Air also took part in the Ghetto Biennale.

Involvement of Women & Children: In the Grand Rue neighbourhood, arts practice has been, primarily, a male domain. Recently, the artists have been encouraging young children, both male and female, to make art. A diverse range of genders, sexualities and nations will be represented at the biennale, and many of the projects are aimed to involve neighbourhood women and children.





Arts-Focused Model of Tourism: Atis-Rezistans also want to use the Ghetto Biennale to portray a more creative aspect of Haitian reality to counterbalance the current, dominant negative portrayal of the country. The Ghetto Biennale is an alternative model of tourism, which brings visitors who can have positive and creative experiences in Haiti while learning about its rich cultural heritage.

Benefits to the Greater Haitian Community

Ghetto Biennale is a low cost, high visibility project, which brings economic and cultural benefits to the local neighbourhood:

Increased Interest in Local Arts: Ghetto Biennale attracted a large local audience for the final exhibition, which significantly broadened the national demographic for arts event attendance.

Knowledge / Skills-Sharing: Through a series of workshops created for the local people and children in the neighbourhood, many of the chosen projects impart skills, including graphic design, Web site creation, videography, photography and mobile foundry production.

Creates Dialogue Between Artists & the Community: Ghetto Biennale highlights issues of migration and global freedoms and provides collaborative possibilities between artists from radically different backgrounds to explore and address these topics. This project is also about institutional critique and questions the advancement of globalization and Western hegemony.

Presentation to Local & Global Audiences

Exhibitions: The 2nd Ghetto Biennale will take place from November 28th until December 18th, 2011. There will be an event displaying the works created during the artist collaborative process on December 16th.

Conference: The Ghetto Biennale will be holding a conference on December 18th for the Haitian artists, the visiting artists, Haitian and visiting academics to formally express their experiences and to create dialogue on the globalization of art history and the positioning of non-Western art.

Radio & Video Podcasts: The exhibition and conference will be video podcast through the [Ghetto Biennale Web site](#) and to a number of satellite exhibitions in London and Berlin. It will also be radio podcast to participating arts radio stations in Miami, New York, London and Berlin.



My Art Project for Ghetto Biennale 2011

The Three Erzulies / Ezilis yo Twa



Real “heroines” are usually special, but regular, everyday people who have done remarkable and very giving things. They don’t win awards, aren’t always considered newsworthy and are rarely thanked on a regular basis. Yet they live their lives in service, impacting many in their communities with their talents, generosity and support, often sacrificing themselves for others with little fanfare. And when they have passed from this life, what we are left with are wonderfully warm memories and gratefulness for having experienced them in our lives.

The Three Erzulies / Ezilis yo Twa will be three mixed-media portraits — combining sculpture, painting, sequins and found materials — of local unsung heroines from (or who have held deep significance to) the neighbourhood of Grand Rue, Haiti. Created by three women artists, this work will serve to memorialize, attract the blessings and celebrate the lives of three significant female community ancestors, while acknowledging the Divine aspects of the Erzulie *lwa*.

Concept

This work will be a contemporary, Haitian twist to the Greek/Roman myth The Three Furies: Tisiphone (avenger of murder), Megaera (the jealous) and Alecto (relentless anger) — all defenders of moral and legal order. Like the Furies, Erzulie’s attributes are jealousy, vengence and discord, with her true powers used to defend women (particularly women and children who are victims of domestic abuse), as well as newly consecrated Vodou priests and priestesses. Visually, she is portrayed as a Black Madonna, bearing two scars on her cheek, often a knife in her hand to ward off enemies.

In an African context, the *Petwo lwa* Erzulie Dantor (*Ezili Dèn Tort*) is especially significant in her direct connection to the Yoruba’s Òsun deity (of love, beauty, artists, business women, lesbians, the river...) and, like Brazil’s Pomba Gira, she embodies the female energy of Legba and so straddles the parallel realms of the living and the world of the Spirits.

As one of Haiti’s most revered *lwas*, I find it fitting that this work embody several symbolic aspects of her attributes as they relate to each female subject in question. These women may range from the well- to lesser-known and may include a community worker, an activist, business owner, teacher, healer, artist, family member or friend of distinct character.

The creation of this work will be a true creative collaboration between two local Haitian women artists and myself, along with the assistance of two female Haitian youth from Ti Moun Rezistans (children’s arts collective).

All Ghetto Biennale 2011 Art Projects



Anderson Family

UK

Photograph residents and provide them with a print; show local youth darkroom printing, textile design and printmaking so that they may create T-shirts from their art.

Crystal Nelson

USA

Collaborate with Grand Rue's young hip-hop artists to record and produce CDs and a music video that tell neighbourhood stories.

David Snoo Wilson

Fiacha O'Dubhda

UK

Create a low-cost foundry on-site, a biennale bell to be rung at the opening and skills-sharing workshops with local artisans.

Edgar Young III

USA

Make solar lanterns to be exhibited in neighbourhood houses.

Emilie Boone

USA

Create an installation from portraits obtained from local photography studios.

Gabriel Gimenez

Hector Burga

USA

Simultaneously create two murals:

in Little Haiti, Miami, and in Grand Rue, Haiti, to highlight connections between the cities.

Gina Cunningham

USA

Create an exquisite corpse drawing project with neighbourhood children.

John Cussans

UK

With TeleGhetto (children's video collective that emerged from the 1st Ghetto Biennale), record the painting of a Tap Tap that will advertise Ghetto Biennale.

Kanoko Hanashi

Japan

Build a small biogas digester, create a communal meal with local women and exchange experiences of Japan's and Haiti's earthquakes.

Karen Miranda Augustine

Canada

Collaborate with local woman artists to create a memorial piece that honours three female community ancestors.

Kendra Frorup

Bahamas

Using traditional paper-making methods, collaborate with local artists, showing them how to make handmade artists books.

Natalia Matta

Chile

Create an audio piece, from the sounds and noises of Grand Rue, which will later exhibit in Chile.

Richard Fleming

USA

Using photography, archive the gingerbread buildings in Port-au-Prince and exhibit with drawings from the book *Gingerbread Houses: Haiti's Endangered Species*.

Robert Gomez

Mexico

With Ti Moun Rezistans (children's art collective), create their Web site and provide Web admin training so that their site can become both resource and tool to expose their own artworks.

Vivian Chan

Phang Yuk Yee

Maccha Kasparian

UK / Malaysia / Singapore / France

Create a technical drawing workshop and gallery for the local artists and children.



Press

Already there is media interest in the 2nd Ghetto Biennale from Steven Kasner of *Vanity Fair* and Geoff Dyer from *The Guardian*. PUMA Creative will also be publishing a blog about this event on the [Creative Caribbean Network](#) Web site, which reaches a global audience of over 50,000.

Media coverage that the 1st Ghetto Biennale 2009 received includes:



Tracey Moberly. [“Haiti Ghetto Biennale.”](#) *Dazed Digital* (August 2010).



Arnaud Robert. [“Haiti, the Salon des Refuses.”](#) *Le Temps* (29 December 2009)



Antonia Ward. [“Haiti’s Triumph: How to set up an art biennale in a ghetto.”](#) *The Glass* (12 May 2010).



Richard Fleming. [“The Ghetto Biennale, Port-au-Prince, Haiti.”](#) *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (2009).



Polly Savage. [“The Germ of the Future? Ghetto Biennale, Port-au-Prince \[pdf\].”](#) *Third Text: Critical Perspectives on Contemporary Art & Culture*, vol. 24, no. 4 (July 2010).



Georgia Popplewell. [“Global Voices in Haiti: The Grand Rue Artists, After the Earthquake.”](#) *Global Voices* (01 February 2010).



Richard Fleming. [“Ghetto Art Show \[podcast\].”](#) *PRI's The World* (25 December 2009). [Photos on Flickr.](#)

About Karen Miranda Augustine

Biography



Karen Miranda Augustine is an artist and writer whose works have exhibited in Canada, the United States and the UK. She has been published and cited in a range of books and publications, including *The Queer Encyclopedia of the Visual Arts* (Cleis Press), *The Art of Reflection: Women Artists' Self-Portraiture in the Twentieth Century* (Columbia University Press), *Hoodoo & Conjure Quarterly* and *Red Light: Superheroes, Saints, and Sluts* (Arsenal Pulp Press).

Formerly, she was the founding editor of **At the Crossroads: A Journal for Women Artists of African Descent** (1992–97), editor of the now defunct *MIX: independent art & culture* magazine, beloved CKLN 88.1 FM radio host of BASS: Black Afrikan Sistuhs of Soul (1992–2003) and a poet who had opened for Philadelphia recording artist Ursula Rucker, writer Dionne Brand and dub poet Lillian Allen.

In 2004, she recorded “Sapphire” for the jazz/poetry compilation *The New World Reveal-a-Solution* (Urbanicity Recordings), produced by Chicago DJ Shannon Harris. Three years later, *Miranda and Child (RaRa Rah)* — a mixed-media self-portrait as the Erzulie *lwa* that reflected her feelings of hope and grief in the wake of her partner’s death — was awarded third place at the *CRUX* exhibition in Norfolk, Virginia. Since 2008, she has been publishing **POSSESSION: All that is sacred in contemporary art** — an art blog where pop culture, spirituality and social issues intermingle.

Born in Toronto, and raised in Scarborough, Karen Miranda’s creative projects interconnect spirituality, class, sexual and countercultural issues. She holds a Master’s degree in Interdisciplinary Studies from York University and will be an artist-in-residence at USF Verftet in Bergen, Norway, in 2012. Karen Miranda is of Dominican and Kalinago (Carib) Indian descent.

Artist Statement

My work is a mixture of indigenous spiritualism, popular culture and the metaphysical. I create two-dimensional, mixed-media art out of found materials, textiles, photography and paint in a way that could be loosely described as low-relief assemblage. Primarily, these works are centred around a degraded photograph — whether it be through photocopy, image transfer or *découpage* — as it is the raw, primitive imprint of my subject where I find the most interest.

My inspiration emerges from our very base, dark and heightened experiences: trauma, personal crisis, sex, loss, social stigma and transcendence — life-changing events that leave one feeling vulnerable, ungrounded and often in disbelief. Whether filtered through media news stories, my personal life, mythology, or casual observation, I try to dig into the intimate psychology of my subjects to get a sense of their true heart (or the heart of the matter) and connect that to the Spirit realm — to that in between place where our earthly conditions converge with the unseen — and project what may be understood about us through ancestral eyes.

For these very reasons, I classify my work as ritualistic pop art. My underlying themes dwell on how one passes through affliction to a place of self-possession.

Relevant On-line Videos



Atis-Rezistans: The Sculptors of Grand Rue

by Leah Gordon (35 mins)

Atis-Rezistans (the curators of Ghetto Biennale) live in Grand Rue — the main avenue that runs a north-south swathe through downtown Port-au-Prince. At the southern end, amongst the labyrinth of back streets that line the avenue, is an area that traditionally has produced small handicrafts for the ever-diminishing tourism market. This close-knit community is hemmed in by the makeshift car repair district, which serves as both graveyard and salvation for the city's increasingly decrepit automobiles.

The Sculptors of Grand Rue grew up in this atmosphere of survivalist recycling and artistic endeavour. Their powerful sculptural collages of engine manifolds, TV sets, wheel hubcaps and discarded lumber have transformed the detritus of a failing economy into bold, spiritual and radical sculptures.



The Artists of Grand Rue, After the Quake

by Georgia Popplewell (6 mins)

Interview with Belle Williams, the spokesperson for Ti Moun Rezistans (Children of Resistance). Conducted shortly after the earthquake in January 2010, Belle discusses its impact on the artist community in the Grand Rue district of Port-au-Prince, Haiti, and the significance of Ghetto Biennale.



TeleGeto 1

by Alex Louis, TeleGhetto (10 mins)

This is the first video created by TeleGhetto — grassroots guerilla media formed by Ti Moun Rezistans — the youth art apprentices of the Grand Rue Sculptors. Shot after the earthquake that followed the 2009 Ghetto Biennale, this video documents voices from the Grand Rue community and includes interviews with artists Chuku, Rass and Fabrizio.



Milord and Ti Kay Rezistans: Une jeune et un grand artiste

by Alex Louis, TeleGhetto (6 mins)

Filmed by TeleGhetto, this is an interview with Jean Muller Milord, a 13-year-old artist from the Grand Rue neighbourhood of Port-au-Prince and artist apprentice with Ti Moun Rezistans.