

PRESS RELEASE April 30, 2015

African Masks d'après Walker Evans,
Par Sherrie Levine
8 Juin - 31 Juillet, 2015

DURING BRUNEAF, 10-14 Juin 2015

Jablonka Maruani Mercier Gallery is pleased to present for the first time American artist Sherrie Levine's (1947, Pennsylvania) work in its Brussels location. « African Masks After Walker Evans », the numbered series of 24 photographs will be staged next to a selection of African masks from **Didier Claes** – among them a very rare Kwele, Gabon - . A « resonance » between the photographer's work and the culture it portrays. An exhibition that will be held both in Didier Claes' gallery (some 10 photographs of masks will be presented) and at the JMM Gallery, echoing the statues of the same ethnic group. A premiere taking place at the same time as Bruneaf (Brussels Non European Art Fair) event, dedicated to primitive arts, tribal, African and Oceanian.

Levine's series, a keyword of postmodernism

Sherrie Levine received widespread acclaim in 1979 for her series «After Walker Evans» in which she re-photographed 24 of Walker Evans's photographs out of an exhibition catalogue, depicting the impoverished rural population in Alabama at the end of the 1920s. Levine's series is recognized as a key work of postmodernism, raising issues of authenticity, authorship, and commodification with particular acuity and persuasiveness.

A work based on the commissioned work of 1935 for the Museum of Modern Art

35 years later, in a further series after Walker Evans, Sherrie Levine addresses similar issues with new layers of relevance. This time, the artist chose her motifs from an extensive collection of over 400 photographs of African artworks that Walker Evans was commissioned to produce in 1935 by the Museum of Modern Art in New York. This comprehensive project made a significant contribution to the reception of African art in the western aesthetic canon. The photographs were taken during the show in New York, often at night, after the museum's regular opening hours. They were not used for the exhibition catalogue, but were compiled into a portfolio of more than 400 original prints. A total of 17 portfolios were produced, and provided to museums and specialized libraries for educational purposes. A portion of the portfolio was enlarged and travelled to several museums as an independent exhibit.

From foreign ritual artifacts to modern sculptures

Selecting only masks for her series, Sherrie Levine hones in on the question of the identity of the artwork creator. Walker Evans's photographs already indicate the aesthetic primacy of the works he depicted: through the act of being photographed,

they are transformed in status from foreign ritual artifacts into modern sculptures. The 1935 exhibition and Evans's photographs raised inevitable, though long unnoticed questions surrounding the authority of the new western owners of these objects. Sherrie Levine's selection of 24 photographs "after Walker Evans" opens up the discourse surrounding these issues. Not only should one consider how Levine's work relates to that of Walker Evans, but also how they relate to their motifs, and to what extent they participate in the transformation of these objects into works of art.

ENCADRE

Walker Evans (1903-1975), America's preeminent documentarian, is one of the most influential artists of the twentieth century. His elegant, Crystal-clear photographs and articulate publications have inspired several generations of artists. Evans had the extraordinary ability to see the present as if it were already the past, and to translate that knowledge and historically inflected vision into an enduring art.

ENCADRE

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, a group of artists including Cindy Sherman, Richard Prince and Sherrie Levine - at the time dubbed the « Pictures » génération - began using photography to examine the strategies and codes of representation.

Sherrie Levine lives and works in New York.

PICTURE

Sherrie Levine
African Masks After Walker Evans 1-24 (Image 19), 2014
Ed. N°4/12
Giclee Inkjet Prints

PICTURE

Sherrie Levine
African Masks After Walker Evans 1-24 (Image 7), 2014
Ed.n°4/12
Giclee Inkjet Prints

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Evening openings on Wednesday the 10th of June (till 9pm) and Friday the 12th of June (till 8pm).