ENG

patricia kaersenhout

Poetic Justice

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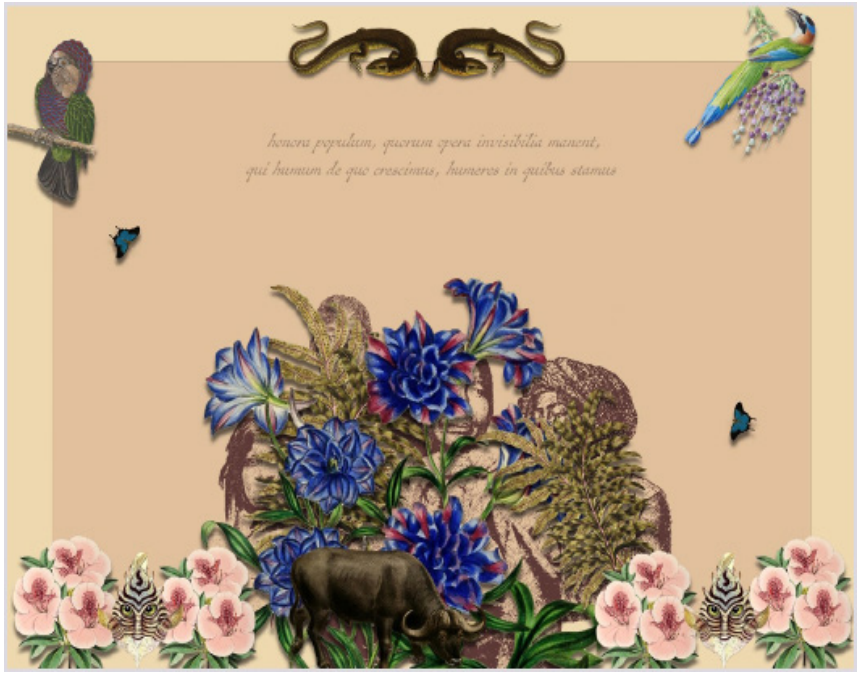

Honor the people, those whose work remain unseen, who are the soil out of which we grow, the shoulders on which we stand, 2024-26, digital print on cotton mounted on paper, mixed media, 82 x 110 cm (detail)

AKINCI is proud to present *Poetic Justice*, a solo exhibition by patricia kaersenhout (1966). Who has the right to name a world? *Poetic Justice* explores how language, image, and imagination can be instruments of both colonial power and healing. The title refers to a form of justice not administered by the courts, but by art: a symbolic rewriting of histories in which the voices of Indigenous and Black communities have been systematically erased.

From the moment the first European colonists set foot on American soil, language was used as a means of claiming ownership. Landscapes were given new names and plants and animals were classified according to the Latin system, while centuries-old Indigenous knowledge and local names disappeared. The botanical illustrations, maps and travel logs produced by European 'explorers' were presented as objective science, but they were also instruments of colonial control.

Poetic Justice comprises three series of works that together form a continuous narrative. *Non Sine Periculo* reveals the historical intertwining of beauty and violence. *Paradise Lost* challenges the language through which colonialism has been justified. And *A Phantasmagorical history of Manhatta Island* offers a radical reimagining and alternative memory, detaching Indigenous and Black histories from the coloniser. Alongside these three series, other recent works by kaersenhout are on view that echo these narratives and reinforce the stories told through this exhibition.

The series *Non Sine Periculo (Not Without Danger)* (2024) exposes hidden power structures. It combines fragments of portraits of wealthy Europeans, primarily painted by Dutch masters, alongside drawings of birds and medicinal plants by the artist and naturalist John James Audubon

(1785–1851). His admiration for nature was accompanied by the killing and taxidermy of the animals he depicted. This is a painful metaphor for a colonial system in which beauty and admiration cannot exist without violence and appropriation. The plants with medicinal properties symbolise the resilience of Indigenous and African knowledge traditions, offering a space for healing.

In the series *Paradise Lost* (2024) the colonial archive is actively disrupted. kaersenhout draws on illustrations of Indigenous flora and fauna, leaving out their Latin names. In their place appear Latin translations of statements by contemporary Indigenous activists who are protecting their homelands from exploitation. Once used to appropriate knowledge, Latin becomes the voice of those fighting for survival. Paradise Lost serves as a monument for those who have been murdered in recent decades for protecting their lands. The series appears as digital collages on etching paper, with a background using blind embossing that creates extra depth. The title also refers to John Milton's eponymous epos about the expulsion from Eden. What if the lost paradise is not Eden, but the worlds destroyed by colonisation?

The works in *A Phantasmagorical history of Manhatta Island* (2024) are based on the travel accounts of early colonists, such as Giovanni da Verrazzano, who encountered the Lenape peoples in 1524 and described the landscape as exceptionally fertile and abundant. By processing these texts using an artificial intelligence model, kaersenhout makes dense images emerge on printed textile enriched with among others African textiles, beads, fur and leather. They no longer depict the coloniser's vision but instead offer a speculative memory of a world in which European domination never occurred. In this alternative history, the first eleven enslaved Africans brought to Manahatta are depicted as free Black individuals who bring peace. Their presence connects with the Lenape peoples, who historically offered protection to enslaved people who had fled. The images in this series depict solidarity between Indigenous and Black communities, united by shared experiences of dispossession, as well as by mutual care and resistance.

Within *Poetic Justice*, with these three series that form the core of the exhibition, three movements (unmasking, disrupting, and restoring) reveal themselves as an invitation to read and imagine history differently.

Biography

patricia kaersenhout is a visual artist working in digital printmaking, installation, film, book making, performance, and textiles. Their work has been shown nationally and internationally in group and solo shows including Into the Deep Loving Darkness bij Kunstverein Braunschweig, Germany; Decolonial Memorial EarthNest in Berlin Global Village, Berlin, selected as Lockward Collective after winning the prestigious international Award; Kunsthalle Munich; Chiostro del Bramante, Rome; National Drama School Athens; Sharjah Biennial, Sharjah; Prospects 4, New Orleans; Manifesta 12 Palermo; Queens Museum of Art, New York; Art Museum of the Americas, Washington DC; Autograph London; Haitian Cultural Centre Miami; Art Basel Miami; Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, Van Abbemuseum Einhoven; Frans Hals Museum Haarlem; Centraal Museum Utrecht; Bonnefantenmuseum Maastricht; Museum of Modern Art, Vienna; HART museum, Amsterdam; Museum van Loon, Amsterdam; Rønnebæksholm, Denmark; Kunstmuseum, The Hague; Berlin Tempelhof, Berlin; Palais de Tokyo, Paris; Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow; Dakar Biennial, Senegal; Kunsthal, Rotterdam. kaersenhout also participated in many film festivals including the Cannes Independent short Film Festival; Paris international Film Festival; Trinidad & Tobago film Festival; Harlem Film Festival, New York; Caribbean Tales Festival, Toronto; The Dutch Film Festival, Utrecht; Barcelona International Film Festival and Nashville film Festival.