

## MEDIA INFORMATION

### ASK YO MAMA

**Opening:** 29 Sept. 2011, 19.00

**Duration:** 30 Sept. – 10 Dec. 2011

**Press tour:** 29 Sept. 2011, 17.00

**Artists:** Ihu Anyanwu aka G.rizo, Sonia Boyce, Yvette Mattern, Maruša Sagadin, Sangam Sharma, Constanze Schweiger, Ina Wudtke, Anna Zwingl

**Curator:** Ina Wudtke

The title of the exhibition *Ask Yo Mama* relates to the Afro-Atlantic tradition of signifying, rap and storytelling.

While classic jazz songs such as “Signifying Monkey” by Oscar Brown Junior, hip-hop tracks such as Ufuo’s “Ask Yo Mama”, the American trash-talking game “dirty dozen” or the numerous Yo Mama jokes use the “mother” figure just as an instrument of an artistic verbal fight to insult and psychologically undermine the opponent, the exhibition project *Ask Yo Mama* turns the insolent pattern of rap and scat inside out: it takes the words literally and consciously focuses on female artists, who present their version of the story in the form of an artistic work that relates to “black sound”.

*Ask Yo Mama* is a “post black” exhibition and follows a series of exhibitions from the US (*One Planet Under a Groove*, *Black Light White Noise*, *Freestyle* etc). Above all Thelma Golden, the curator of the Harlem Studio Museum and former curator of the Whitney Museum, coined the term “post black”, which describes the shifting from body to an aesthetic sensibility. Thus the choice of artists for *Ask Yo Mama* makes it clear that it is about a language we speak, that has its beginnings in the tradition of the Afro-Atlantic diaspora. Since the 1990s at the latest (actually since as early as the 1920s, with Charleston, blues and swing) this language became the language of a whole generation who grew up with the Afro-Atlantic DJ culture such as hip hop, dubstep, techno, house, electro etc.

The white cube, the hegemonic presentation form for art from the 1920s to the present, has only very hesitantly opened up to the Afro-Atlantic sound. At the same time, traditional white European musical scenes were and are taken into the art context without problem. From classical music to punk, to new wave to experimental noise avant-garde, everything is represented in the leading contemporary exhibitions in Europe. Looking at art that relates to the (musical) tradition of the Afro-Atlantic diaspora, however, current continental European art seems to be speechless. To understand a danceable beat as complex avant-garde, as in the Harlem renaissance of the 1920s with the invention of the syncopated swing rhythms, always seems difficult in the continental European context. Here, black sound is culturally devalued as part of an entertainment industry. But the discourses of Afro-Atlantic

musical traditions and of fine art intersect in many ways, as a whole generation of contemporary artists and their works testify. *Ask Yo Mama* seeks to contribute to opening up the white cube more for Afro-Atlantic, black sound.

For the opening of the exhibition *Ask Yo Mama*, **Ihu Anyanwu aka G.rizo (born. 1974)** in cooperation with the artist Constanze Schweiger will perform *Your Africa Is Showing*.

Anyanwu lives in Vienna.

**Sonia Boyce's** conceptual work *Devotional Wallpaper* consists of a list of 200 names of exclusively black female musicians. The *Devotional Wallpaper* thus represents the large Afro-Atlantic element of British everyday culture at a glance. Sonia Boyce was born in 1962. She lives and works in London.

The light installation *Mulatta* by **Yvette Mattern** together with the sound track composed specially for it by the jazz musician and composer Don Byron, is reminiscent of bygone days in the Puerto Rican dance bars of New York and elsewhere. At the same time, the artist – who was born in Puerto Rico in 1963 as the descendant of black and white grandparents – breaks the warm bar atmosphere with the word “mulatta”, a term that comes from the context of 1920s racism. Mattern lives in New York.

**Maruša Sagadin's** video *Sehr gern modern*, showing for the first time in Vienna, is a spoken-word performance that satirises the take-over of public space by the big corporations and their star architects. Sagadin (born 1978) lives and works in Vienna.

**Constanze Schweiger** (born 1970) has designed a stage set of patchwork material to illustrate Ihu Anyanwu's musical performance *Your Africa Is Showing*. Schweiger lives and works in Vienna.

In her sound installation *Gefrorene Musik* [Frozen Music], **Sangam Sharma** (born 1978) describes the connection between the rise of jazz and the growth of modern cities. Part of the installation is a vinyl-PVC dub-“plate” in which Sharma combines a recording called *Mein Block* by the Berlin hip-hop act Sido, about growing up in a prefab estate, with an interpretation of the same theme by a group of youths from the Vienna Großfeldsiedlung (GFS) housing estate. Sharma lives and works in London and Vienna.

The artist **Ina Wudtke** (born 1968) is interested in artists in the German-speaking world who worked in the 1920s to 30s with a close relationship with black sounds. In the process, she came across the Berlin dancer Valeska Gert among others, who, influenced by jazz, developed a hypermodern dance performance in Berlin. Wudtke uses performance photos of Gert as the starting point for her photo installation *herstory: Ask Yo Mama*. Wudtke lives and works in Berlin.

**Anna Zwingl** (born 1983) lives and works in Vienna. Her *Limbo* installation from 2009 uses the free association of the dance movements of the West Indies in various material assemblages such as wood, varnish, soft rubber and found articles.

Text: Ina Wudtke

**More detailed information on the works of the artists in the *Ask Yo Mama* exhibition can be found at: <http://www.kunstraum.net>.**

A catalogue with contributions by Ina Wudtke and Dieter Lesage will be published to accompany the exhibition.

Long Night of the Museums: Sunday, 1 Oct. 2011, 18:00

Vienna Artweek, Thursday, 17 Nov. 2011, 18:00: guided tour of the exhibition with the curator Ina Wudtke

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**Image material:** [www.kunstraum.net/presse/ausstellung](http://www.kunstraum.net/presse/ausstellung)

**Opening hours:** Tuesday – Friday, 11.00–19.00 and Saturday 11.00–15.00. **Admission free.**