

DIAZ CONTEMPORARY

Brendan Fernandes

Pray For Us

4 April to 9 May

Opening Saturday 4 April from 3 to 6

Artist in Attendance

Diaz Contemporary is pleased to present new work by Brendan Fernandes, in his first solo show with the gallery. Often drawing on post-colonialist theory, Fernandes' work investigates the concepts of cultural identity and authenticity, and highlights the complexities of such terms in the context of globalization. His work has examined Western notions of an exotic Africa (Fernandes was born in and spent the first nine years of his life in Kenya) as well as how culture is disseminated in the Western world.

Still drawing on Africa, Fernandes has switched focus with his latest work. In *Pray For Us*, a multi-channel video installation in the main gallery, the artist examines ideas of hegemony and power structures through traits of hyena societies. A video piece presented simultaneously on two screens opens to the sights and sounds of a pack of hyenas (a matriarchal society) feeding at night. A narrator tells the story of a power struggle, of one character's struggle to take over her sister's monarchy. Reflecting world politics, the piece demonstrates Fernandes' fascination with changing structures and fights for power.

Echoing the deaths that follow such power struggles, Fernandes has created an environment in the centre of the main gallery, which conjures up feelings of loss, memorial and uncertainty. Incorporating prayer stools, candles and several television monitors flashing SOS in Morse Code, the artist draws from the Catholic tradition to create an altar of sorts. The candles – such as those lit in remembrance of a loved one – juxtaposed with the SOS signals, suggest the call for help has come too late. The south gallery wall bears a text, written in a hybrid, codified language, which ambiguously foreshadows either looming death or a sense of hope.

Born in Kenya of Indian heritage, Brendan Fernandes immigrated to Canada in the 1990s. He completed the Independent Study Program of the Whitney Museum of American Art, and earned his MFA from The University of Western Ontario and his BFA from York University in Canada. He has exhibited internationally, including invitations to participate in The Third Guangzhou Triennial, Guangzhou, China (2008) and the Western New York Biennial through The Albright-Knox Art Gallery in Buffalo, NY (2007). Currently he is based between Toronto and New York.

Brendan Fernandes and Diaz Contemporary would like to thank the following institutions for the loan of equipment:

Art Metropole
The Blackwood Gallery
Images Festival
InterAccess

The Harbourfront Centre
The Power Plant
Ontario Arts Council
Canada Council

Fernandes' work is also featured in *South-South: Interruptions and Encounters*, a group show at the Justina M. Barnicke Gallery at the University of Toronto, from 2 April to 19 May, 2009.