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My Barbarian

*Broke People's Baroque Peoples' Theater:
Flat Busted Wig Beauty Window Fatale*

September 22 – November 10, 2012

OPENING RECEPTION:
Saturday, September 22, 6 – 8 pm

PERFORMANCE:
Classical Music Dance Party
Friday, October 12, 5 - 7 pm
Hirshhorn ARTLAB+ (Inside the Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden, off Jefferson Drive, SW)

ARTIST TALK: Saturday, November 10, 4pm, followed by reception



Deeply inspired by their April 2010 participation in Transformer's FRAMEWORK Panel #12: *Radical Art - the evolution of artistic revolution*, and their corresponding artistic actions on the steps of the Hirshhorn's Sculpture Garden and at our 1404 P Street, NW project space, Transformer proudly launches our 2012 season with LA-Based art collective My Barbarian (**Malik Gaines, Jade Gordon, and Alexandro Segade**), and the latest project in their *Broke People's Baroque Peoples' Theater* series: *Flat Busted Wig Beauty Window Fatale*. Featuring site-specific mixed-media installation, video, and performance, My Barbarian highlights the paradoxes of an art practice founded in critique, which nonetheless relies on economic forces that are worthy of serious criticism.

Broke People's Baroque Peoples' Theater is a series of performances, texts, videos, and installations. In this time of spectacle and disparity, excess and poverty, the baroque figures as an ornate frame that contains all of these extremes. My Barbarian accumulates a set of performative and stylistic strategies including camp drag, baroque opera, communist drama, countercultural performance, pop culture and world-theater in narratives that assimilate too much information. Evolving out of a 2011 performance at The Kitchen, New York and a 2010 workshop and installation at Grand Arts, developing works within *Broke People's Baroque Peoples' Theater* have been presented within a gallery exhibition context at Human Resources, Los Angeles in 2012, a screening and interactive performance at the Museum of Modern Art, New York in 2012, and live performances at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and the San Diego Museum of Art in 2012.

The latest work in the series, developed for Transformer, *Flat Busted Wig Beauty Window Fatale* is a site-specific window display featuring a bevy of sculptural assemblages that play with artifacts of class, culture, femininity and queerness. In the front window of Transformer, plaster busts cast from wig heads are arranged facing the street, faces hidden by hand-made paper mache theater masks, topped with elaborately styled wigs and headdresses made from remnant and dead stock textiles and bric-a-brac. The window display, accented with colored lights and paper dolls, re-imagines a baroque wig shop.

Inside Transformer, videos selected from the *Broke Peoples' Baroque Peoples Theater* productions, including "Shakuntala DuBois," "Haironomy," and "Broke Baroque Suite" screen continuously. "Shakuntala DuBois" (HD video, 28 min, 2012) is the story of a petit-bourgeois everywoman's journey through her day, and her

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ambivalent quest to find a job. She encounters a variety of characters who are loose allegories for different conditions; these characters reflect on Shakuntala DuBois's inability to transcend her situation. Shot on location at a decrepit mansion in Rancho Santa Fe, the video meditates on class immobility, elite ennui, and the fleeting magical possibilities imagined therein. "Hairromancy" (HD video, 9 min, 2012), a pun on the oracular practice of hieromancy, or divination by observing sacrificial objects, mimics a shampoo commercial as a seemingly endless array of grotesque masked faces wearing flowing wigs stare into the camera. With "Broke Baroque Suite" (HD Video, 12 mins, 2012) the three members of My Barbarian perform a trio of songs that playfully, teasingly discuss and critique the place of the artist within competing and colluding forces of economics, class, taste and aesthetics.

Following the mission of Transformer, and the notion of excess, My Barbarian will present related events and performances throughout the run of the exhibition. Collaborating with the Hirshhorn ARTLAB+, on October 12, My Barbarian will present *Broke People's Baroque Peoples' Theater: Classical Music Dance Party*, bringing together ARTLAB+ teen artists and audience members for an interactive performance involving a series of games based on Baroque festive performances of the 17th century, while a DJ spins classical records. On Nov 10, there will be a performative artist's talk at Transformer, placing the *Broke Baroque* project within the group's 12 years of collaborative production, using video and oratory to illustrate the points made therein.

ABOUT MY BARBARIAN:

Based in Los Angeles since 2000, My Barbarian has performed and exhibited internationally. Solo exhibitions have included Participant Inc. (NYC), Hammer Museum (LA) and Museo El Eco (Mexico City). Performance sites have included The Kitchen, New Museum, Whitney Museum, (NYC), LACMA, MOCA, REDCAT, (LA), Power Plant, (Toronto), De Appel (Amsterdam), El Matadero (Madrid), Galleria Civica (Trento), Peres Projects (Berlin) and Townhouse Gallery (Cairo). The group was included in Performa 05 and 07, the 2006 and 2008 California Biennials, the 2007 Montreal Biennial, and the 2009 Baltic Triennial, and has appeared in group shows at the Studio Museum in Harlem, ICA Philadelphia, Hyde Park Art Center Chicago, MOCA Miami, Den Haag Sculptuur, Museum Het Domain, CCA Tel Aviv, Anton Kern Gallery in New York, and many others.

My Barbarian has received grants from Creative Capital (2012), Art Matters (2008), and the City of LA Cultural Affairs Department (2010). Their work has been discussed in *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *Artforum*, *Art in America*, *Frieze*, various international newspapers, and in José Muñoz's *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*.

Image: My Barbarian, *Object Opera: Dido and her Entourage Hunt*, video still, 2012.

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