

ROBERT MILLER GALLERY

For immediate release:

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BARTHÉLÉMY TOGUO: THE PREGNANT MOUNTAIN

September 10 – October 29, 2009

Reception for the artist: September 10, 6-8pm

Performance, *Bitter Destiny #2*: October 29, 7pm

New York, NY – August 31, 2009. Robert Miller Gallery is pleased to present *The Pregnant Mountain*, an exhibition of work made in the past decade by Cameroonian artist Barthélémy Togo. This will be the artist's debut at Robert Miller Gallery as well as his first solo presentation in New York City. The exhibition will comprise photography, video, watercolor, and installation, and will close on October, 29 with a new performance, *Bitter Destiny #2*. In 2004 Togo was the subject of *The Sick Opera*, a solo exhibition at the Palais de Tokyo in Paris. A large-scale installation, entitled *Heartbeat*, was presented at BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, New Castle in 2008. His work has been featured in recent group shows including *De Schwitters à Togo*, Centre Pompidou, Paris (2007); *Laughing in a Foreign Language*, The Hayward Gallery, London (2008); *African Art Now: Masterpieces from the Jean Pigozzi Collection*, Museum of Fine Arts Houston (2005); and *Africa Remix: Contemporary Art of a Continent*, which was organized jointly by, and presented at, Museum Kunst Palast Düsseldorf (2004), The Hayward Gallery (2005), Centre Pompidou (2005), and the Mori Art Museum in Tokyo (2006).

Barthélémy Togo's work explores the universal themes of suffering, beauty, identity, pleasure, and exile. Drawing from his own experiences as a member of the African diaspora in France, Togo's work conforms to the contemporary art world's internal vernacular idioms and brings a unique perspective to the cultural dialogue on post-colonialism. In particular, Togo's performance series *Transits* articulates the intersubjectivity of these themes. Photographs documenting these performances will be included in the exhibition. Togo's external critique is echoed in the dissonance between form and content in his work, permitting it to slip past our perceptual defenses. The use of "soft" materials and artistic mediums to present "hard" issues gives his messages an added layer of complexity by addressing the relationships between "distancing and disidentification, as well as proximity and identification, of irony and laconic humor, methods of unsettling expectations and reversing proportions, the diversified application of media and differentiated modes of storytelling" (Lundström, Jan-Erik. *The Sick Opera*. Palais de Tokyo, 2004, p. 30.).

A large-scale installation, entitled "*The AIDS issue cannot be solved thanks to the distribution of condoms*" *Benedict XVI*, forms the exhibition's centerpiece. Evoking an African hospital ward, the title appropriates and re-contextualizes a statement made by Pope Benedict XVI while on his way to Cameroon in March 2009: "You can't resolve [the AIDS issue] with the distribution of condoms... On the contrary, it increases the problem."

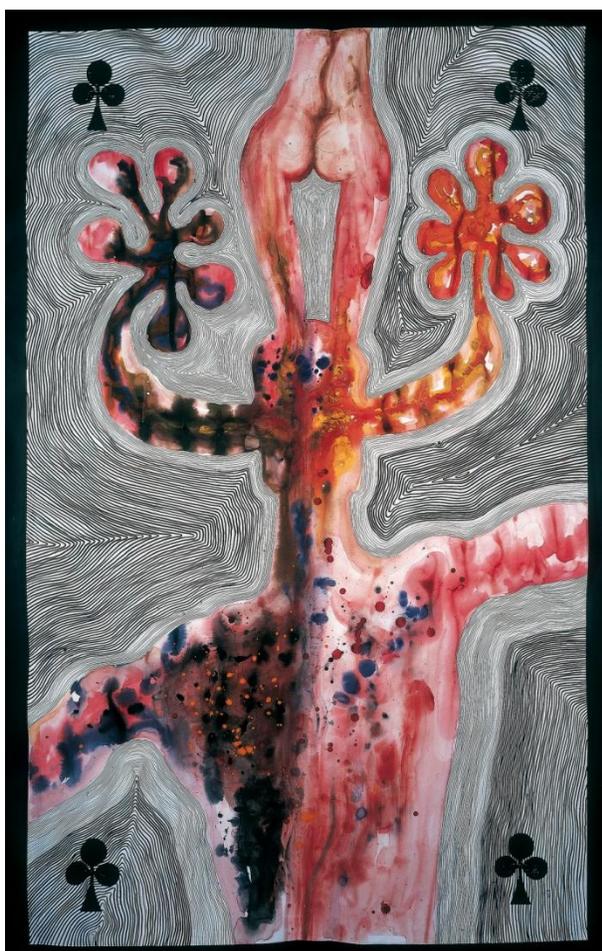
Barthélémy Togo was born in 1967 in Cameroon. In 1993, after studying at École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, he moved to Europe and began exhibiting and performing while finishing his studies at École Supérieure d'Art in Grenoble, France and Kunstakademie Düsseldorf. He currently lives and works in Paris, New York, and Bandjoun, Cameroon where he has founded Bandjoun Station, an arts center and residency program publically launching in January 2010.

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Circumcision 2, 1999-2007, Video



Wild Man, 2003, Watercolor on paper, 81 7/8 x 51 inches