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Gods

ANDRES SERRANO
(b.1950, Brooklyn, New York)

The conical hats and white robes of the Ku Klux Klan – advocates of White Supremacy in the southern United States – follow the Roman Catholic Nazario tradition being almost identical to that of the Santismo Christo de las Injuras brotherhood in Spain. The ‘blood drop’ cross insignia is said to represent the spilt blood of the ghosts of Civil War Confederate troops.

‘I always felt that my work was religious not sacrilegious. I think if the Vatican is smart, someday they’ll collect my work I like the aesthetics of the church. In my work I explore my own catholic obsessions. I felt I had every right to use the symbols of the church and resented being told not’.
Andres Serrano in conversation with Coco Fusco *Shooting the Klan* High Performance magazine, Fall 1991.

DENNIS MORRIS
(b.Kingston, Jamaica)

A camera fanatic since the age of eight, Morris was eleven when one of his photographs was printed on the front page of the *Daily Mirror*. Stumbling across a demonstration by the PLO one Sunday, the boy took his film to a photo agency on Fleet Street who promptly sold it to the *Daily Mirror* for £16.

The image shows a follower of self-styled black revolutionary Michael X (1933-1975) the first non-white jailed under England’s Race Relations Act, for urging the shooting of any black woman seen with a white man, at Black House, a black power commune in Highbury 1975.

The photograph was never published at the time for obvious reasons, but summed up the growing frustration and anger of black youth who felt overlooked by the system. It remains a poignant image of today’s shootings and violence in urban areas.

Literature:

V.S. Naipaul *The Return of Eva Peron and the Killings in Trinidad* (André Deutsch, 1980)

Opposite **ANDRES SERRANO** *KLANSMEN, KNIGHTHAWK OF GEORGIA V*
Dye-destruction print, 30 x 24ins (76 x 61cms), 1990

Overleaf **DENNIS MORRIS** *THE MEANS NECESSARY*
Youth at Black House, Highbury, London. Fibre-based bromide handmade print, 80 x 60 and 40 x 30ins, Ed 5 (2 x Aps), 1973





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SAGE VAUGHN

(b.1976 Jackson, Oregon, USA)

An Overreaction to Beauty (Opposite), Butterfly baseball bats, mixed media. Wood, metal, linen, water-based paint. Dimensions vary.

(Photograph by Spike Jonze). 2008

KARL BODMER

(b.1809, Zurich, Switzerland - d.1893, Barbizon, France)

Idols of the Mandan Indians. Plate 25 from *Travels in the Interior of North America* by Prince Maximilian zu Wied-Neuwied. Aquatint with colours finished by hand, heightened with gum-arabic, 42 x 36cms.

From 1832 through 1834 Bodmer undertook his celebrated Missouri River expedition. Hired as an artist with the specific intent of travelling through the American West and recording images of the different tribes, their customs, artefacts, idols; the various pentacles and paraphernalia of their culture which he found along the way. Karl Bodmer's America, Introduction by William H. Goetzmann, Annotations by David C. Hunt and Marsha V. Gallagher. Artist's biography by William J. Orr, (Joslyn Art Museum & University of Nebraska Press, 1984).

JEAN-MICHEL BASQUIAT

(b. Park Slope, New York 1960 – d. New York 1988)

A wide, empty landscape exists between the opposing forces of good and evil, 'Bueno' and 'Malo' as Jean-Michel Basquiat positions his bird-headed dudes worlds apart in this late work which, like many of his works, appears unfinessed and inconclusive. Born of a Haitian father and a Puerto Rican mother Basquiat's psyche was ingrained with the superstitions of both cultures. Scrupulously painted in acrylic, oilstick and paintstick on white plankboards and red support, the work, in common with the late masterpiece *Riding With Death* 1988, dispenses with the artist's usual signature graphics, jazzstar texts, three-pronged crown, black icons, while offering a context for the indescribable pull which lies at the heart of voodoo.

Among Basquiat's structural mix of language and image, an added halo or crown of thorns lends a religious aura to his mural scrawl with its skeletal figures. The name Miles Davis appears in the painting *Joy*, 1984, (acrylic and oil stick, xerox and paper collage on canvas). In the more itemised *Venus* (1986), only the bare bones of his graphic and painterly signatures survive; the three-pronged manalishi crown, the headless womanly outline, the title.





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“Basquiat’s best work gives new and particular meaning to the inspiring phrase with which Barnett Newman characterised the emergence of Abstract Expressionism: ‘We are making it out of ourselves’. The ‘self’ that Basquiat had to work with provided unusually fertile soil. Whether his eccentric patched-together images are spare and linear or dense with bright paint, he was at his best juggling disparate, often conflicting bits of information, so that huge chunks of human endeavour effortlessly float through the mind”. R.Smith, New York Times, 23 October, 1992.

GRACIELA ITURBIDE
(b.1942, Mexico City)

In 1979 Iturbide travelled to the city of Juchitan in Oaxaca. Over the next decade she made emotionally charged photographs of the people there, including, in the words of writer Elena Poniatowska, “mountain women, rattle women, drum women, women whom nothing can hurt”.

Our Lady of the Iguanas, Zoraida, was photographed at the local market – iguanas are a delicacy of Juchitan cooking – Zoraida had already sewn the animals mouths shut. The image becomes totemic, animal and human, male and female. *“The image has been interpreted by critics, by chicanos, by the Juchitan people themselves, who made a banner of it and baptised her the ‘Juchitan Medusa’.”* Courtesy Judith Keller, J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles.

Opposite **GRACIELA ITURBIDE** *NUUESTRA SEÑORA DE LAS IGUANAS* (Lady of the Iguanas)
Juchitán, Oaxaca. Gelatin silver Print, 21 x 17ins. 1979

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Passage of darkness

VOODOO FILM

The Devil Doll d.Tod Browning (1936)

Adapted from Abraham Merritt's novel, *Burn, Witch, Burn* (1933). The sight of the great Broadway actor Lionel Barrymore bent on revenge probably affected me more than the various 'mcguffins' littered throughout Tod Browning's diabolical fantasy. As Paul Lavond, a banker wrongly accused of fraud Barrymore breaks out of his swamp island cell to open a doll shop in Paris posing as a dried-up spinster. He proceeds to wreak havoc on those former colleagues who 'done him wrong'. Sticking pins in living shrunken people, a skill learned in prison, becomes his chosen method; the act of revenge itself being a precariously unbalanced option as, having committed further crimes he will always be 'on the run'. For perfect examples of the 'revenge format' see also *The Count of Monte Christo* and *The Bride Wore Black*.

White Zombie d.Victor Halperin (1932)

Story and dialogue, Garnett Weston, starring Bela Lugosi, Madge Bellamey, Joseph Cawthorn. The first film to feature Zombies. A young couple accept an invitation to get married in Haiti...

The Believers d.John Schlesinger (1987)

Screenplay by Mark Frost, based on the book *The Religion* by Nicholas Conde, starring Martin Sheen, Helen Shaver, Robert Loggia. A New York police psychiatrist uncovers links between a series of human sacrifices and the hovering presence of a mysterious voodoo cult.

La Noche de los Brujos - Night of the Sorcerers (1973)

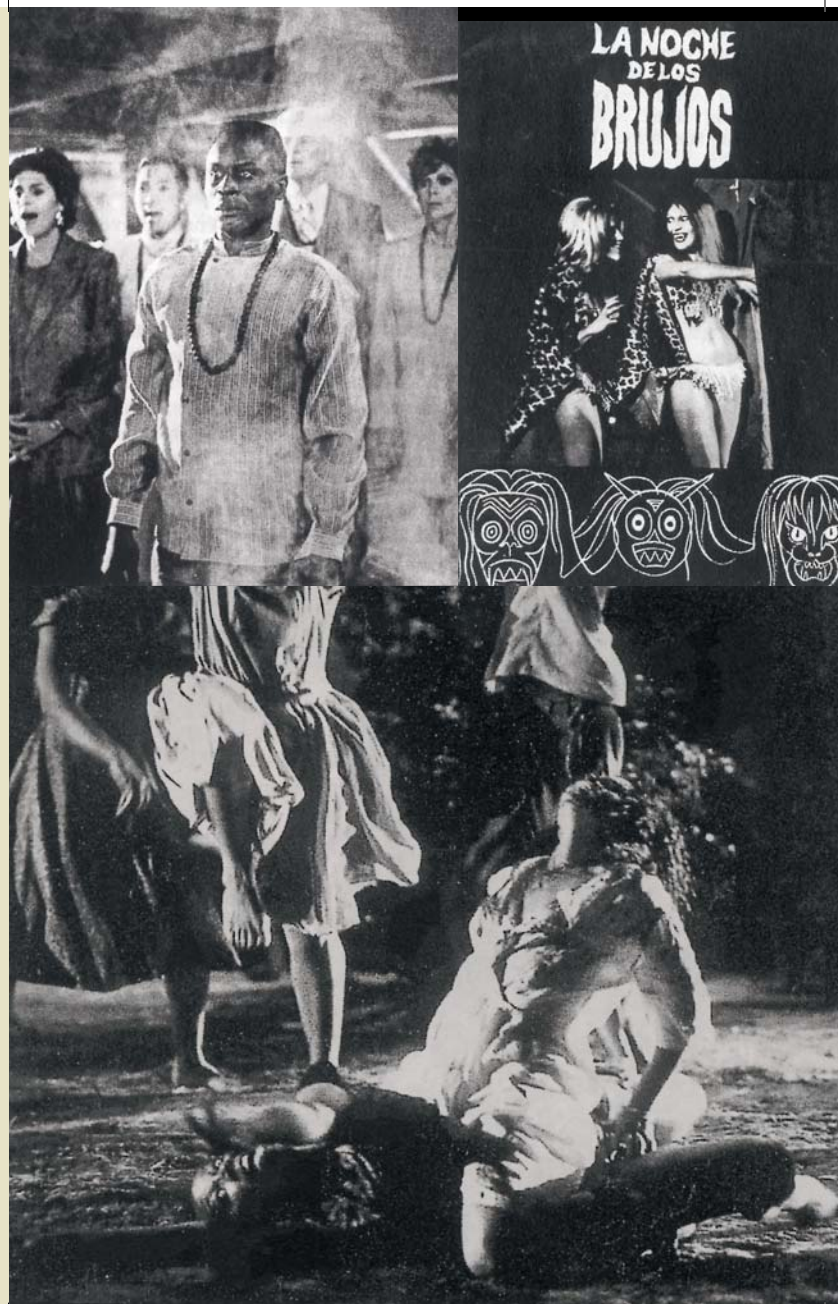
d.Amando De Ossorio

Profilm/Hesperia. Starring Rod Carter, Liz Meredith, Lorena Tovar. Voodoo vampire vixens in epic Spanish sexploitation.

Angel Heart d.Alan Parker (1987)

An example of 'Voodoo noir' with Mickey Rourke, Robert de Niro, Lisa Bonet, *Angel Heart* is adapted from the novel *Falling Angel* by William Hjortsberg

Opposite, left **THE BELIEVERS** Right **NIGHT OF THE SORCERERS** Below **ANGEL HEART**



Babia of All The Saints d. Jana Bokova (1988)
selected by Zina Saro-Wiwa.

Probably the most well-known Voodoo film is *I Walked With A Zombie*, d. Jacques Tourneur (1943) with a plotline extremely similar to that of *Jane Eyre*, it tells the story of an American nurse who, in Haiti to care for a woman in a 'zombie-like' state takes the patient to a Vodou ceremony.

Voodoo Island d. Reginal le Borg (1957) with Boris Karloff, Beverley Tyler, Elisha Cook Jr. *The Four Skulls of Jonathan Drake* d. Reginald le Borg (1960) with Eduard Franz, Paul Wexler, Valerie French. *Mondo New York* d. Harvey Keith (1988) with Joseph Arias, Karen Finley and Lydia Lunch features a Voodoo ceremony taking place in New York City. In *Night Trap* d. David A. Pryor (1993) with Michael Ironside and Lesley-Anne Down. Set during Mardi Gras in New Orleans, a detective uses the help of a Voodoo queen to help track down a murderer. Further adding to the dark reputation of Voodoo was the 1973 film adaptation of the James Bond thriller *Live and Let Die*. Ian Fleming's depiction of the schemings of a fiendish Soviet agent using Voodoo to intimidate and control a vast network of black followers played to a much larger audience than any other Voodoo-inspired feature.

The 'act of creation' as portrayed in the Hollywood blockbuster...

In Bennett Miller's 2007 film *Capote* Philip Seymour Hoffman, playing the inspired author, is shown spending time not so much writing, but 'thinking about it'; reading and absorbing his topic and theme in preparation for writing. Dwelling on this 'welling-up' is unusual in mainstream cinema. Milos Forman's *Amadeus*, 1984 tagline - 'the Man, the Magic, the Madness' - explores the process of creation as we encounter the newlywed Wolfgang Mozart, music rushing through his mind, confused and agitated by the demands of domestic life and the necessary attention to commissions for royal patrons. The key scene being when Mozart, literally 'possessed' by his fortieth symphony - the orchestral imaginings presented in full surroundsound - is slowly brought down to earth by the sound of his father Leopold's knocking on his front door. *Shine* d. Scott Hicks (1996) with Geoffrey Rush as pianist David Helfgott shows the performer battling with the demands of Rachmaninov's notoriously difficult to perform third piano concerto at the same time as his own mental breakdown.

Books

ARTHUR SCHNITZLER

Rhapsody

A 'dream' novel, first edition in English, New York (1927)
The inspiration for Kubrick's *Eyes Wide Shut*

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

The Case for Spirit Photography

First US edition. Green & Gibson, New York, (1923)

OSCAR WILDE

The Picture of Dorian Gray
(1891), Laurel Editions US

JOHN FOWLES

The Magus, 1955 - 1977

Fowles began writing the novel in the 1950s, partly basing it on his experiences as an English teacher on the Greek island of Spetses. He wrote and rewrote *The Magus* for twelve years before its publication in 1966, and despite critical and commercial success, even after it had been published set about reworking it for a revised version, published in 1977. *The Magus* was a bestseller, partly because it tapped successfully into - and even arguably helped to promote - the 1960s popular interest in psychoanalysis and mystical philosophy. *The Magus* is heavily quoted and referred to in Timothy Leary's *High Priest*, 1968.

"The nineteenth century dislike of Realism is the rage of Caliban seeing his own face in a glass" Oscar Wilde.

WILLIAM BURROUGHS

(b.1914, St. Louis, Missouri, d.1997, Lawrence, Kansas)

Wishing Box (replica, 2008)

"Norman Mailer kindly said of me that I may be possessed by genius. Not that I am genius, or that I possess genius, but that I may be at times, possessed by genius. I define 'genius' as the nagual, the unpredictable, uncontrollable, the shotgun blast, grids, masks, circles; spontaneous, alive, capricious and arbitrary. An artist is possessed by genius sometimes, when he is so lucky". William Burroughs, *Nagual Art* January 1989

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and all of the artists, galleries and curators who have contributed,
we wish you all extremely good Voodoo

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*“One this is certain, no one would want to own my work because
it is beautiful”* (Francis Bacon, in conversation with Melvyn Bragg,
South Bank Show profile)

*“He went into a kind of trance. I think you have to be very much in
touch with your inner life to be able to do it”* Surrealist Leonora
Carrington on the automatism employed by Andre Breton,
(interview March 2008, Joanne Moorhead)