

FIFTY ONE

FINE ART PHOTOGRAPHY

Voodoo

Jean-Dominique Burton

9 May – 21 June 2008

Opening: 8th of May from 18.00-21.00

Voodoo is a solo exhibition of Jean-Dominique Burton's (°1952) photographic encounter with an ancient, knowledgeable and powerful form of spirituality. Throughout his journey in Dahomey (present-day Benin) the Belgian photographer Burton was steadily confronted with one mysterious word: "Vodoun", Voodoo.

Voodoo started in Dahomey and goes back to the dawn of time being derived from the highest form of initiation. It is defined by belief in a particular idea of Divinity, in a particular understanding of the concept of God, and yet Vodoun theology has two faces:

An exoteric aspect, made up of beliefs and legends that are open to the masses who, being not very developed spiritually, cannot attain the Truth. However, when stepping behind the scenes, the esoteric aspect is revealed which is reserved for the initiates who have reached the maturity required for the inner realization of God. The true adepts deliver their knowledge through symbolic language keeping it encrypted for those who are untaught.

His interest in Voodoo led Jean-Dominique Burton to seek out for the great Vodouns (deities) and Vodounons (initiates of the Vodoun religion). His series of encounters and exchanges brings today's public face-to-face with a fascinating world of respect and legends, frequently being symbolized by unbelievable abstract shrines that are a subtle mix of sculpture, painting and installation. The Vodounons themselves are captured in their most sacred environment, such as temples, convents and holy forests. They are presented in a classical way, following the traces of European traditional portrait photography. These black and white portraits present however, a visual contrast to the colorful and material abundance of the shrines; photographed in a more conceptual way.

Jean-Dominique Burton did get in touch with Africa earlier. His black and white portrait series on traditional chiefs and kings of Burkina Faso, called Naabas, has been shown in various places around the world. Most recent exhibitions of his work were held in Greece, Germany, Finland as well as in the USA.

The captions next to the images show the name of the initiates (black and white portraits) and of the Vodoun deities they are linked to (colour photographs).