

David McGee's *Ready Made Africans*

On view at the Menil Collection through January 30, 2011



Houston, October 27, 2010 – *Ready Made Africans*, a 2006 portfolio of lithographs by Houston-based artist David McGee (b. 1962), is now on view in the Menil Collection's Surrealism galleries.

Produced by the artist at San Antonio's Hare and Hound Press, the portfolio is composed of five portraits of Hip Hop performers, including 50 Cent, Notorious B.I.G., a.k.a. Biggie Smalls, and Ghostface Killah. The name of a prominent Dada

figure is emblazoned across the bottom of each sheet: Hugo Ball, Marcel Duchamp, Max Ernst, Kurt Schwitters, and Tristan Tzara. "These prints," said McGee, "reflect my belief that the theories and principles of Dada are similar to those that dictate the theories of American-born Hip Hop, an African-American form of music whose influence crosses racial divides. These prints cross-pollinate word and image, blurring the line between Hip Hop and Dada identities."



Sometimes called "anti-art," Dada, in the wake of World War I, embraced public gatherings, demonstrations, political discourse and cultural writings; like Hip Hop many years later, it became an international movement.



Like McGee's work of the past several years, *Ready Made Africans* investigates issues of stereotyping by employing references drawn from literature, music, and the history of European art. In the Menil's Surrealist galleries the portfolio is presented in conversation with a selection of works drawn from the permanent collection, by such artists as Marcel Duchamp, Max Ernst, Francis Picabia, and Kurt Schwitters. (Down the hall, the museum is also presenting the new exhibition *Kurt Schwitters: Color and Collage*.) Also included are seldom-seen early

publications from the Menil library's rare book room by Arp, Ball, Huelsenbeck, and Tzara. In this context the prints create a new frame of reference for the museum's noted collection of Dada and Surrealist art.



KURT SCHWITTE

Born in Lockhart, Louisiana, David McGee received a BA from Prairie View A&M University in 1985. David McGee collaborated with the Menil in 2005, curating *Deep Wells and Reflecting Pools*, a selection of works from the museum's archives and collection. His work has been the focus of solo exhibitions at DiverseWorks, Houston (2007, 2004), Texas Gallery, Houston (2005, 1995, 1994), Rhode Island School of Design Museum, Providence (2001), Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston (1998), Galveston Arts

Center (1996), and Project Row Houses, Houston (1994). McGee's work has been included in numerous group exhibitions and is held in the collections of The Menil Collection, Houston; Museum of Fine Arts Houston; Rhode Island School of Design Museum; Providence, Addison Gallery; Philips Academy, Andover; Dallas Museum of Art; and Harvard University Museums, Cambridge, Massachusetts.



MAY ERNST

For more information contact press@menil.org or visit www.menil.org

Image credit: David McGee, *Ready Made Africans*, 2006. Courtesy of the Artist and LMF, LLC. Photo: Photo courtesy of Hare& Hound Press