

Darren Ell

Haiti : Holdup

2000-2003

JEAN-BERTRAND ARISTIDE AND HIS PARTY, FANMI LAVALAS, WIN LANDSLIDE ELECTIONS IN HAITI. THE US, CANADA AND THE EUROPEAN UNION CUT AID TO HAITI AND DIVERT FUNDS TO NGOs. THE US FUNDS OPPOSITION PARTIES AND BLOCKS INTERNATIONAL LOANS TO HAITI. THE HAITIAN ECONOMY COLLAPSES. CANADIAN, AMERICAN, AND FRENCH OFFICIALS MEET IN MEECH LAKE, QUEBEC, AND REPORTEDLY EVOKE THE POSSIBILITY OF REGIME CHANGE IN HAITI.

2004-2005

FORMER HAITIAN SOLDIERS INVADE NORTHERN HAITI, OVERRUN TOWNS AND KILL POLICE OFFICERS. US FORCES FLY ARISTIDE TO THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC. AMERICAN, CANADIAN AND FRENCH TROOPS ARRIVE IN HAITI AS REPRESSION OF ARISTIDE SUPPORTERS BEGINS. GÉRARD LATORTUE IS INSTALLED AS PRIME MINISTER. SOLDIERS FROM BRAZIL, CHILE, AND JORDAN ARRIVE TO FORM UN FORCE.

2006-2008

THE BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL, THE LANCET, PUBLISHES ITS HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT ON HAITI'S CAPITAL CITY DURING THE LATORTUE REGIME: 8,000 MURDERS AND 35,000 SEXUAL ASSAULTS. ELECTIONS BRING AN END TO THE COUP D'ÉTAT PERIOD. UN TROOP LEVELS REACH 9,000 FROM OVER 30 COUNTRIES. CANADA PROPOSES EXTENDING UN MISSION TO 2011. PROTESTS AGAINST HIGH COST OF LIVING ERUPT IN HAITI.

2009

IN APRIL 2009, FANMI LAVALAS, THE LARGEST POLITICAL PARTY IN HAITI, IS BANNED FROM THE FIRST ROUND OF NATIONAL ELECTIONS. 90% OF ELIGIBLE VOTERS BOYCOTT THE ELECTION. IN NOVEMBER 2009, FANMI LAVALAS IS BANNED FROM THE SECOND ROUND OF NATIONAL ELECTIONS (TO BE HELD IN FEBRUARY 2010).

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2000-2003

VICTOIRE EN FORME DE RAZ-DE-MARÉE DE JEAN-BERTRAND ARISTIDE ET DE SON PARTI, FANMI LAVALAS, AUX ÉLECTIONS EN HAÏTI. LES ÉTATS-UNIS, LE CANADA ET L'UNION EUROPÉENNE COUPENT LEUR SOUTIEN FINANCIER À HAÏTI ET EN REDIRIGENT UNE PARTIE VERS DES ONG. LES ÉTATS-UNIS FINANCENT LES PARTIS DE L'OPPOSITION ET BLOQUENT LES PRÊTS INTERNATIONAUX À HAÏTI. L'ÉCONOMIE HAÏTIENNE S'EFFONDRE. DES MEMBRES DU GOUVERNEMENT CANADIEN, AMÉRICAIN ET FRANÇAISE RÉUNISSENT AU LAC MEECH, QUÉBEC. ON RAPPORTE QU'UN POSSIBLE CHANGEMENT DE RÉGIME EN HAÏTI Y AURAIT ÉTÉ ÉVOQUÉ.

2004-2005

D'ANCIENS SOLDATS HAÏTIENS ENVAHISSENT LE NORD DU PAYS, OCCUPENT LES VILLES ET TUENT DES POLICIERS. UN AVION DES FORCES AMÉRICAINES TRANSPORTE ARISTIDE EN RÉPUBLIQUE CENTRAFRICAINE. DES TROUPES PROVENANT DES ETATS-UNIS, DU CANADA ET DE LA FRANCE ARRIVENT EN HAÏTI AU MOMENT OÙ DÉBUTE LA RÉPRESSION DES PARTISANS D'ARISTIDE. GÉRARD LATORTUE EST FAIT PREMIER MINISTRE. DES SOLDATS SONT ENVOYÉS DU BRÉSIL, DU CHILI ET DE LA JORDANIE POUR FORMER LES FORCES DES NATIONS UNIES.

2006-2008

LE JOURNAL MÉDICAL BRITANNIQUE THE LANCET PUBLIE SON RAPPORT SUR LES DROITS HUMAINS DANS LA CAPITALE D'HAÏTI SOUS LE REGIME DE LATORTUE: 8 000 MEURTRES ET 35 000 AGRESSIONS SEXUELLES.

LES ÉLECTIONS METTENT FIN AU COUP D'ÉTAT. LES FORCES DES NATIONS UNIES S'ÉLÈVENT À 9 000 SOLDATS PROVENANT DE PLUS DE 30 PAYS. LE CANADA PROPOSE DE PROLONGER LA MISSION DE L'ONU JUSQU'EN 2011. DES PROTESTATIONS CONTRE LA HAUSSE DU COÛT DE LA VIE EN HAÏTI EXPLOSENT.

2009

EN AVRIL 2009, FANMI LAVALAS, LE PLUS IMPORTANT PARTI POLITIQUE DU PAYS, EST EXCLU DU PREMIER TOUR DES ÉLECTIONS NATIONALES. 90% DES ÉLECTEURS BOYCOTTENT LES ÉLECTIONS. EN NOVEMBRE 2009, FANMI LAVALAS EST EXCLU DU DEUXIÈME TOUR DES ÉLECTIONS NATIONALES (PRÉVUES POUR FÉVRIER 2010).

ARTIST STATEMENT

THE THEMES CENTRAL TO MY ARTISTIC PRACTICE CAN BE FOUND IN THE DISCOURSES OF POST-COLONIALISM AND DOCUMENTARY PHOTOGRAPHY. THE WORK IS INFORMED BY THE LEGACY OF COLONIALISM, THE IMPACT OF IMPERIALISM AND GLOBALIZATION, DISPLACEMENT AND EXILE, SOCIO-ECONOMIC INEQUALITY, INJUSTICE, HUMAN RIGHTS, TRUTH IN DOCUMENTARY PHOTOGRAPHY, THE RESPONSIBILITY OF BEARING WITNESS, AND ART AS A TOOL OF SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION.

AS A PHOTOGRAPHER, I AM INTERESTED IN THE PHOTOGRAPH'S SIMULTANEOUS EXISTENCE AS DOCUMENT AND TABLEAUX AND ITS ABILITY TO EXIST BOTH AS AN INDEX OF REALITY AND AS A REPRESENTATION, THAT IS, AS AN IMAGE. I ENJOY EXPLOITING ITS PURELY DENOTATIVE ABILITY, ITS ACCURATE VISUAL DESCRIPTION OF A PARTICULAR PLACE AT A PARTICULAR TIME, AS WELL AS ITS CONNOTATIVE POWERS, ITS ABILITY TO EVOKE MEANINGS THAT TRANSCEND THE SPECIFICITY OF THE CAPTURED MOMENT. I STRIVE TO PRODUCE ARTWORK THAT CAN SPEAK TO A SPECIFIC SOCIO-POLITICAL SITUATION, EVOKE A LARGER SOCIO-POLITICAL CONDITION, AND POINT TO ITS CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES. I AM INTERESTED IN SUBJECT MATTER WITH A DISCERNIBLE LOCAL-GLOBAL CONNECTION, ROOTED IN MY LOCALITY BUT CONNECTED TO A LARGE GLOBAL CONCERN.

I HAVE FOUND THAT A SINGLE PHOTOGRAPH IS INADEQUATE IN DEALING WITH THE COMPLEX ISSUES I EXPLORE. I TEND TO USE A VARIETY OF VISUAL APPROACHES IN MY PRACTICE SUCH AS LANDSCAPE, PORTRAITURE, AND IMAGES OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SPACES GROUPED INTO TRIPTYCHS. THE IMAGES ARE OFTEN

COMPLEMENTED BY AUDIO INTERVIEWS, VIDEO PROJECTIONS, WITNESS STATEMENTS, BIOGRAPHIES AND HISTORICAL TEXTS, ALL OF WHICH ANCHOR, INFORM AND WEAPONIZE THE IMAGES.

EXPLANATION, ADVOCACY, AND PROVOCATION ARE IMPORTANT COMPONENTS OF MY ARTWORK. I CHOOSE ISSUES THAT ARE MISREPRESENTED OR DOWNPLAYED IN THE MAINSTREAM MEDIA AND THEREFORE POORLY UNDERSTOOD BY THE PUBLIC, BUT THAT ARE NONETHELESS OF IMPORTANCE ON A LOCAL AND GLOBAL SCALE. THEY ARE ISSUES THAT CHALLENGE MODERNIST NOTIONS OF PROGRESS AND WESTERN SUPERIORITY. MY POINT OF VIEW IS OFTEN CONTRARY TO PREVAILING PUBLIC OPINION. FOR EXAMPLE, STUDIES REVEAL THAT MOST CANADIANS SEE CANADA'S ROLE AS POSITIVE IN THE WORLD. MY WORK, HOWEVER, LOOKS AT THE DAMAGING EFFECTS OF CANADIAN POLICIES ON PEOPLE FROM PALESTINE, EGYPT, SYRIA, ALGERIA, RUSSIA, SOMALIA, TURKEY, COLUMBIA AND HAITI. CHALLENGING RECEIVED TRUTHS REQUIRES SEVERAL YEARS OF FACTUAL RESEARCH FOR EACH OF MY PROJECTS. COLLABORATION IS AN IMPORTANT COMPONENT OF THIS PROCESS: I WORK WITH RESEARCHERS, INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISTS, ACTIVISTS AND LAWYERS IN ORDER TO ACQUIRE AN IN-DEPTH UNDERSTANDING OF MY CHOSEN ISSUES.

SINCE ALL OF MY PROJECTS FOCUS ON VICTIMIZED GROUPS OF PEOPLE, I INVOLVE MYSELF IN THEIR STRUGGLE AS AN ARTIST-CITIZEN. DURING THE TWO TO THREE YEARS IT TAKES TO COMPLETE A PROJECT, I ENGAGE IN JOURNALISM AND ACTIVISM TO BRING THEIR CAUSE TO A LARGER AUDIENCE. THIS IN TURN GENERATES INTEREST IN MY ARTWORK.

SOCIAL CHANGE REQUIRES SUSTAINED COLLECTIVE ACTION. A BODY OF ARTWORK, NO MATTER HOW WELL-EXECUTED, ENGAGED AND WIDELY-VIEWED IT MAY BE, WILL NOT ALONE CHANGE THE OUTCOME OF THE ISSUES IT ADDRESSES. HOWEVER, TO THE EXTENT THAT THE ART GALLERY CAN BE A MEDITATIVE SPACE FOR REFLECTION AND A VENUE FOR COUNTER-HEGEMONIC VOICES, THE EXHIBITED WORK CAN CHANGE CONSCIOUSNESS AND FULFIL THE AMELIORATIVE ROLE OF DOCUMENTARY-BASED ARTWORK.

DARREN ELL
January 2010

Darren Ell – Biography

Darren Ell works primarily in portraiture and documentary reportage. His portraits of illegal detainees and refugees facing deportation were exhibited at Montreal's Dazibao Gallery in 2006 and again in Montreal's Maison de la culture in 2009. His documentary coverage of the impact of the 2004 coup d'etat in Haiti was published with the National Film Board of Canada's Citizenshift, and with the Haiti Information Project, winner of a 2008 Project Censored award for making events in Haiti one of the most important under-reported stories in the world. His stories on Haiti were picked up by independent news sites around the world. His documentary work on the impact of the Israeli occupation in the West Bank and Gaza during the Second Intifada was published by Chicago's Electronic Intifada and became an exhibition exhibited in Montreal and Winnipeg in 2004 and 2005.

Ell is currently working on two portrait projects: one explores the lives of students in a high school for the poor located in the richest neighborhood in Haiti; the other investigates the struggles and aspirations of adult immigrant students in Montreal.

His images have been published with media organizations such as CBC-Radio-Canada, the Toronto Star, the National Post, La Presse, Aljazeera International, Citizenshift, Montreal Mirror, Hour, Dominion, Canadian Dimension, Briarpatch Magazine, Alternatives le journal, Siafu Magazine, Tadamon, Montreal Serai, Electronic Intifada, and Haiti Action.

He is originally from Regina, Saskatchewan where he studied Political Science, Religious Studies and French as a Second Language. He began photographing and writing for alternative media in the 1990s. In 2000 he began studies in Fine Arts at Concordia University and completed his MFA in 2008. Ell also teaches French as a Second Language in Montreal.

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In Canada

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Peter Hallward and Patrick Elie
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To learn more about Canada and Haiti, contact the artist at elldarren@gmail.com or consult the website of Canada Haiti Action at <http://canadahaitiaction.ca>

Haiti : Holdup is dedicated to Lovinsky Pierre-Antoine, Haitian human rights activist disappeared in Port-au-Prince on August 12th, 2007.