

Tavares Strachan
How To Make Someone Invisible

November 27, 2015–January 16, 2016

Art critic Stamatina Gregory states that “language itself inevitably involves questions of power relations and forms of domination.” The title of Tavares Strachan’s first exhibition at Fergus McCaffrey, St. Barth, *How to Make Someone Invisible*, offers a great deal to ponder.



Fantastical in tone, this title could be the opening line from a magician’s act, a coldly framed question for biological inquiry, or an investigation of historical revisionism. Strachan has spent the past decade investigating the nature of invisibility, as well as the way a given society determines which aspects of culture become part of its historical narrative and which parts are erased. The artist is

considering aesthetics as part of society’s established power structure that guides who and what becomes relevant over time.

Born in Nassau, the Bahamas, in 1979 and currently working in New York, the artist is exhibiting in the Caribbean, far outside the known centers of the art world, for the first time since childhood. Regardless, Strachan has always considered his collaboration with neighborhood schoolchildren a strong part of his practice. His social sensibilities parallel his material awareness. This is made clear with a work titled *Uriah McPhee*. This earthwork-like sculpture is a cast elementary school desk and chair made from calcium carbonate, better known as classroom chalk. Eighty percent of the Bahamian landscape is made of this material, which allows these objects to be an extension of their complex origin.

In the neon sculpture titled *Us, We, Them*, the artist uses the format of a Venn diagram to deconstruct societies relationship to invisibility. Overlapping circles of turquoise (us), and yellow (them) intersect to produce the color green (we) at the center. In this work, there are questions of belonging, colliding with an attempt to contort the difficult choice of figuring out how we fit in.

The Invisibles (Jack Johnson) refers back to the invisibility in history of the American world heavyweight boxing champion Jack Johnson (1878–1946). Strachan’s technical prowess with glass and materials is seen in these vitrines, where Johnson’s boxing gloves, a cane, and a wrench float in mineral oil—becoming half present and half absent.

Strachan has been the subject of many international shows, most notably in 2013 at the 55th International Venice Biennale, where he represented the Bahamas for the first time. Other recent shows include Prospect.3, in New Orleans, 2014; and La Biennale de Lyon, France, 2013. In 2011, he produced *Seen/Unseen*, an exhibition at an undisclosed location in New York, and *Roundabout* at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art.

About Fergus McCaffrey

Founded in 2006, Fergus McCaffrey is internationally recognized for its groundbreaking role in promoting the work of postwar Japanese artists such as Sadamasa Motonaga, Natsuyuki Nakanishi, Kazuo Shiraga, and Jiro Takamatsu. The gallery also exhibits the work of emerging and seminal Western artists such as Jack Early, Marcia Hafif, Birgit Jürgenssen, Richard Nonas, and Sigmar Polke.

Image:

Tavares Strachan, *Us, We, Them* (detail), 2014–15. Blue, green, and yellow neon, with two 220-volt transformers, 27 x 43 x $\frac{3}{8}$ inches (68.6 x 109.2 x 1 cm)

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