

Fusco, Coco (1960-) Encyclopedia Article

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Fusco, Coco (1960—)

Born Juliana Emilia Fusco Miyares in New York City, Coco Fusco is a Cuban-American performance artist, writer, teacher, and cultural critic. After earning a B.A. in Semiotics and Literature and Society from Brown University in 1982 and an M.A. from Stanford University's Modern Thought and Literature program in 1985, Fusco first worked as a curator and writer and then turned primarily to developing sociopolitically infused performance art that would, as she writes in her book *English Is Broken Here*, "make sense out of the clashes between cultures" that shape U.S. Latino/a identities. One of her more controversial *tableaux vivants*, titled "Two Undiscovered Aborigines Visit..." was first performed in 1992 to critique the quincentennial celebration of Columbus' discovery of America. Fusco and collaborator Guillermo Gómez-Pena posed as "exotic" Caribbean islanders in a museum cage for three days, performing what anthropologists call "traditional tasks." As a symbolic act expressing five hundred years of resistance to colonial oppression, the piece, as Fusco states in *English Is Broken Here*, performs a "reverse ethnography," blurring the distinctions between art object and body, reality and fantasy, history and dramatic enactment. In 1993 "Two Undiscovered Aborigines Visit..." was invited to several international exhibitions including the 1993 Whitney Biennial, the 1992 Sydney Biennial, and the 1992 Edge Festival in London and Madrid.

Fusco has brought her performance art on tour to Europe, Australia, the United States, New Zealand, South Africa, Canada, and Latin America. She is also actively committed to identifying—through her journalism, teaching, and curatorial work—films and other art media that have been censored within the U.S. and abroad. Coco Fusco's performance art and other critical inquiries into Latino/a culture have complicated the erstwhile notion of an "authentic" Latino identity; her interrogation of identity as formed by senses of nation, race, sexuality, gender, and class has helped to dramatically alter the way ethnic identity is understood today.

Further Reading:

Fusco, Coco. *English Is Broken Here: Notes on Cultural Fusion in the Americas*. New York, New Press, 1995.