



Blanka Amezkua, *Calypso*, 2012, reproduction of intervened and enlarged comic book cover on art photographic paper, nail polish, 22 x 24." Courtesy of the artist.

SuperHUMAN

On view at Aljira, a Center for Contemporary Art, Newark NJ, through March 30, 2013.

IN AN INTERVIEW WITH FAYEMI SHAKUR, VICTOR L. DAVSON, executive director of Aljira, a Center for Contemporary Art, discusses the issues behind the superhero figures in the exhibition and how the show came to be.

What compelled you to exhibit *superHUMAN* at Aljira?

Victor Davson: Several years ago, Edwin Ramoran (Aljira's former director of exhibitions and programs) and I had a conversation about doing a show on superheroes. There was a comic book store, Fortress of Solitude, right next door to Aljira at the time. Comic books and graphic novels seemed to be such a big part of popular culture, particularly among local graffiti writers.

Aljira was shifting focus then to things that were happening out in the street, bringing them indoors. So, there was a pre-disposition to doing a show around the theme of superheroes. Later in 2011, I started talking to Jorge Rojas, who curated *superHUMAN* with David Hawkins, about this new project. Jorge was also the curator for *Low Lives* in which Aljira was participating. I was impressed with the *Low Lives* project, particularly an

international festival of live performance-based works transmitted via the Internet and projected in real time at multiple venues around the world. Jorge asked me if I would be interested in taking the *superHUMAN* show. Of course, I said yes.

Part of our discussion was about how to make the show relevant to the community we serve, which led me to recommend a number of artists for the show. He already had an impressive list of artists lined up including Kerry James Marshall, a former MacArthur Fellow genius award recipient. Kerry's work was shown at Aljira once before in 2007 as part of a private collection curated by Carl Hazlewood, one of Aljira's co-founders. I was also interested in showing the work of Robert Pruitt and Xaviera Simmons, another up and coming artist. I also had an interest in supporting Jorge's curatorial projects.

In what way does the subject matter of the show relate to Aljira's mission?

VD: Aljira strives to be current in terms of engaging youth, youth culture, popular culture and engaging diverse



Chitra Ganesh, *Hidden Trails [Triptych]*, 2007, C-print, 24 x 25" each. Courtesy of the artist and Thomas Erben Gallery, New York.

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