

MARY BOONE GALLERY

745 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, NY 10151 . 212.752.2929

PATRICIA COFFIE

On 7 January 2009 the Mary Boone Gallery will open at its Fifth Avenue location the debut exhibition of photographs by PATRICIA COFFIE.

One of the two series of photographs on view documents the imaginary tribal life of an African male and the other presents an emotion-driven essay on childhood. The chance encounter with the black performance artist Michael Calloway on the streets of New York has led to a vibrant amalgam of her vision and his powerful and versatile presence. With his face and entire body first covered in blackface, her subject, now nude, now elaborately costumed in ad hoc finery, has been variously transformed into a snarling warrior, an angel, a strutting nude dandy, a medicine man clutching a powerful doll, and countless other personas – almost always dynamically posed in a suitably gorgeous panoply of color and texture. A displaced tribe of one, he seems to reinvent some of the rich tribal life and rituals of Coffie's native Ghana.

In the second group of photographs, a young black girl, also covered in blackface, stands precariously or sits in self-enclosure in deeply beautiful embodiments of the dreamy inner turmoil of early adolescence – inner turmoil that might later inform acts of creating.

Like the artists she has been drawn to that include Chester Higgins Jr., Kara Walker, Cindy Sherman, Hans Bellmer, Richard Avedon, and Seydou Keita, who blur and/or cross the border between documentation and mythopoetic invention, Coffie creates a world that celebrates imagination with a beauty that might enlighten.

The exhibition, at 745 Fifth Avenue, will continue through 14 February 2009. Please contact the Gallery for further information, or visit our website www.maryboonegallery.com .