Santa Fe, New Mexico—Nationally published freelance journalist, artist, and poet, Darryl Lorenzo Wellington, will hold a lecture in the Center for Contemporary Arts (CCA) Tank Garage Gallery amidst the current exhibition that includes the politically charged work of David Scheinbaum. Wellington’s presentation will explore the history of minstrelsy, its significance in North American history and theater, and its enduring legacy through his personal experiences and insights. Wellington will share excerpts from his work on minstrelsy, the social contexts that produced minstrel shows, and the ongoing impact of minstrelsy on North American culture. We invite the audience to stay after the presentation for an open discussion that will incorporate a conversation on Scheinbaum’s work that examines racist memorabilia.

Unjust Representations

Minstrelsy in America was an exploitative form of musical theater that exaggerated real-life black circumstances and reinforced dangerous stereotypes. The genre at its core was guided by a belief of black inferiority and is rooted in the values of white supremacy. Blackface, mammy dolls, lawn jockeys and similar racist memorabilia were widely distributed throughout the United States in the 19th and 20th century, and are still collected today. The depictions of blacks in minstrel theater were dehumanizing and grossly inaccurate. Rather than representing black culture on the stage, blackface minstrel performances and the objects minstrelsy inspired reinforced notions of white superiority while commodifying and misrepresenting black culture.

About the Speaker

Darryl Lorenzo Wellington has spent over 20 years as a journalist, syndicated columnist, playwright, poet, surrealist, and performance artist. His essays on poverty, economic justice, race relations, African American history, civil rights history, and post-Katrina New Orleans have appeared in The Nation, The Guardian, The Progressive, Christian Science Monitor, The Atlantic, Dissent, Crisis (NAACP’s magazine), and many more. His poetry chapbook Life’s Prisoners was recently published by Flowstone Press in 2017. He has appeared as a guest on the Tavis Smiley radio show and is currently a writing fellow at the Center for Community Change in Washington, D.C..

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