

ETHAN COHEN

Ethan Cohen Gallery

N'Dorah | Braid and Weft: Twisting Codes of Beauty and Desire

November 18 – January 28, 2022

Opening Reception: November 18, 6 – 8 pm

Ethan Cohen Gallery is pleased to present *Braid and Weft: Twisting Codes of Beauty and Desire*, N'Dorah's first solo exhibition in the United States. African of origin and in multiple vectors a veteran of the Parisian creative scene, N'Dorah crafts eloquently mimetic full-size objects out of human and artificial hair. They could be animal or abstract, supernatural, anthropomorphic or deceptively decorative, unfurling in dark, knotty outpourings that deploy traditional Afro techniques of braid and weft. Defiant and irreducible, her pieces seem to cross species and genres, evanescent three-dimensionally in place. Incarnations of sculpture, installation, and drawing challenge the viewer's ordered universe of assumptions – always in hair, dense or loose, centripetal, curlicued or linear. Are we looking at beauty or primeval effusion? At the texture or the depiction? We view a ritual skull, a hirsute armchair, a primate-like hanging – if we choose to see each piece in the realm of figuration. But they also could be, indeed always are, dense symbols denoting much else, intricate process and time and ritual. The process of braiding, the time in the process, the time of nature and of growing hair, the ritual of magic objects, fetishes.

On these and other multiplex levels, the artist's highly conscious creations interweave layers of intentionality. After all, she has worked professionally for many years in the relevant fields of practice: film design, fashion, beauty, music videos. The interface where cultural preconceptions become aesthetics, become assumptions about beauty, the illusory theater of repulsion and desire, are her stock-in-trade. To quote N'Dorah, “with the globalization of appearance, I try to challenge collective representations by twisting the codes and stereotypes of consumer society and its impact on self-perception”. The work of N'Dorah at once embodies narratives and resets perceptual framings. Familiar silhouettes re-envisioned in diapasoned hair ask us to frame afresh the context for seeing. And literally feeling. Her pieces invite touch, radiate tactility, as with the hair of a beloved or the hide of a wild animal.

N'Dorah's questing, questioning, eye ranges so far as to probe equally the gender values buried in her own Cameroonian cultural roots. In a piece like *Shades of Grey*, separate tones of densely combed grey hair comprise a dark cameo-shape, possibly a face, a female face: at one level a statement about how African societies stigmatize the greying beauty of women as they age. Nearby hangs a black oval of buffalo-thick fleece cleft vertically down the middle with miniature blood-red razors sewn into the rift. At first glance the eye is beguiled by the decorative symmetry and glossy darkest fur. Abruptly the mind's

ETHAN COHEN GALLERY

251 W 19TH ST
NEW YORK, NY 10011

T 212-625-1250
ecfa@ecfa.com

KUBE ART CENTER

211 FISHKILL AVE
BEACON, NY 12508

T 212-625-1250
ecfa@ecfa.com

ETHAN COHEN

inner lens shifts. Female Genital Mutilation is the not-so-hidden layer of meaning. Such is the profound and disturbing trompe L'oeil magic of N'Dorah's art. Revelations multiply, perpetually shifting the tectonic strata of our comforting illusions.

Born in Cameroon, educated in France, N'Dorah graduated from Paris XIII University. She studied Visual Communication and Language Sciences and subsequently got a master's degree in design. Photographer, visual identity consultant and studio hairstylist, N'Dorah has had a 30-year career as an artistic director in various fields. She has worked across the spectrum from the music industry to fashion, to contemporary dance and Opera, and as a consultant for many celebrities and major creative brands. All of these elements contribute to her art practice today.

ETHAN COHEN GALLERY

251 W 19TH ST
NEW YORK, NY 10011

T 212-625-1250
ecfa@ecfa.com

KUBE ART CENTER

211 FISHKILL AVE
BEACON, NY 12508

T 212-625-1250
ecfa@ecfa.com