

# HYPERALLERGIC

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## Projects by Ohad Meromi & Brendan Fernandes Open at Art in General

by [Hrag Vartanian](#) on December 13, 2010



A view of one of the rooms of Meromi's "Rehearsal Sculpture" at Art in General (click to enlarge)

On Friday, Art in General opened two newly commissioned works by Ohad Meromi and Brendan Fernandes. I'll reserve judgment on Meromi's "Rehearsal Sculpture" (2010) [*the entrance is pictured above*] as it is an evolving performance that began Friday night and continues until February 12, 2011. For the duration of Meromi's "performance," the artist will be working in the theatrical stage/studio space in Art in General's 6th floor space, which combines elements of modernist architecture, Israeli Kibbutzim (that's the plural of Kibbutz), Constructivist set design, and the plays of Bertolt Brecht.

The [press release](#) explains that:

Rather than leading to an ultimate event, this project will use the "rehearsal" as its preferred mode of engagement: creating a stage yet avoiding the notion of a specific finished project.

We'll have to wait and see how successful that is.



Brendan Fernandes's "From Hiz Hands" (2010) on the other hand is complete and is installed on the ground floor of the Art in General space. The work is comprised of three elements: white vinyl text on a black wall, three neon sculptures depicting African masks in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum, and a looping audio track.

The haunting neon elements hang in the windows and each are named based on their Metropolitan Museum accession numbers [above are (left) "1978.412.367" and (right) "1979.206.143" (both 2010)]. Simplified in neon the masks look remarkably contemporary, like Ray Johnson's [famous character](#) but with a heavy dose of the 1980s. They will shine 24 hours a day for the duration of the show and their glow is remarkably beautiful.

The audio portion of the piece is a series of spoken word segments and interviews with people who sell African masks on the streets of New York. Fernandes's piece explores the idea of origins and the disconnect that results when we explore the history of African art.

An African immigrant to Canada, who is of South Asian origin, Fernandes understands the role of identity in the world today but his project seems interested in breaking down the strict concept of identity that we often assign to historical objects and data. Our idea of African sculpture is as shaped by their interpretation by modern artists, who sought inspiration in their forms, and trinkets sold everywhere nowadays (some of which are even made in China).

Fernandes asks us to consider where these forms come from and what the role of the maker is. He focuses on one reputed master, which the Met refers to as the [Master of Buli](#) or the Buli Master, which according to the Met's website, is someone "who was known to imbue his works with particular emotional intensity." We really don't know who that is, yet connoisseurs and art historians can recognize what they believe to be the Master of Buli's style. But how much do they really know? I found myself asking a lot of questions looking and listening to "From Hiz Hands" and being frustrated by the fact that there are no real answers.

*Ohad Meromi's "Rehearsal Sculpture" and Brendan Fernandes's "From Hiz Hands" continue until February 12, 2011 at [Art in General](#) (79 Walker Street, Manhattan).*