

Title: *Ah-round*
Date: 2008/09
Format: 03:00 HD Digital Loop

Ah-round was made in the summer of 2008/09, during which time I was involved in a romantic relationship with Madou Coulibaly, the man in the video. Madou and I endeavored to jointly make a work that celebrated our shared experiences, in spite of our differences. He is from the landlocked Mali and has been living in Aotearoa for almost fifteen years now. I, the woman behind the camera, am a European Australian from Black River, which is Wulgurukaba Country in far North Queensland. Madou, confident in front of the lens and I preoccupied with the lens based medium of video, realized that it was quite ordinary for us to make a moving image piece together. Yet we were acutely aware of all that we represented as people and how that would affect the reading of the work. We decided that it would be best to confront our concerns candidly, whilst trying not to be too inhibited by the histories that separate us.

The images in *Ah-round* are quite literal. They intentionally appropriate iconography found in Romantic representations of the Other, depictions that support Imperial power structures by incorporating motifs that reinforce existing stereotypes. In this instance the Noble Savage located in the faraway South Pacific jungle. However, this particular "jungle" is made up of potted plants and exists in an overtly constructed space, a greenhouse. There are satellite dishes, urban brick houses and a man-made ceiling; these elements intrude upon the fantasy of an untouched wilderness. *Ah-round* is intended as a parody, with romantic conventions lampooned in order to make them seem ridiculous.

Edward Said's *Culture and Imperialism* guides this work; of particular interest is the idea of the active subject, hence it is vital that Madou actively negotiates the situation as an autonomous being. Whilst the camera position and pace implicates the viewer as they look in on his world. We also engaged with Marcus Garvey's writings and speeches when preparing to make this work. Garvey was an advocate of Pan-Africanism and in his pursuit to celebrate this movement he established a shipping company entitled the *Black Star Line*. The BSL functioned as a business, as Garvey believed that empowerment could be achieved via financial security, it was also a strategy to move people who were affected by enforced diaspora back to Africa, the Motherland. Financially the BSL failed in the end, however the power of Garvey's ideas remain. The 360-degree camera movement of *Ah-round* presents the idea of coming full circle and pays tribute to Garvey's BSL ambitions. The song that Madou is listening to is *Traveling*, by Burning Spear, from the album *Spear Burning*. Burning Spear, also known as Winston Rodney, cites Garvey's philosophies as a major influence in his work.

Directed by Rebecca Ann Hobbs in collaboration with Madou Coulibaly with help and guidance from Kate Haywood, Paul Haywood and Julie Tapper.

Track: *Traveling*
Album: *Spear Burning*
Artist: Burning Spear

Said, Edward. *Culture and Imperialism*, Vintage, 1994.
Grant, Colin. *Negro with a Hat: the Rise and Fall of Marcus Garvey*, Oxford University Press, 2008.
Nelson, Stanley. *Marcus Garvey: Look For Me in the Whirlwind*, 2001.