

BUTCHER'S

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Brazilian artist Marcos Chaves has the last laugh in London

Marcos Chaves

Laughing Mask

Butcher's

183 Royal College Street

London, NW1 0SG

12 October – 15 November

Viewing hours: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

Opening reception: Saturday, 11 October, 6-8pm

Butcher's is proud to present Marcos Chaves's first exhibition in England with the presentation of his video *Laughing Mask* (2005).

Laughing Mask shows a disembodied head floating in the middle of a black screen. A latex carnival mask the artist bought in Rio de Janeiro covers the face from just below the eyes. It is dominated by a grotesquely over-sized mouth, fixed in a horrifying smile, which reveals two banks of yellow teeth. Completely uniform in size and distribution, they resemble an open zip or the cogs of an industrial machine. The uncanny ivories grow directly out of the lips, whose blood red hue is in stark contrast to the powder white pallor of the mask, giving it the character of a Hogarthian harlot or spectacular ethnographic artefact.

Laughing Mask is part of a series of three self-portrait mask videos by Chaves. Each questions the boundaries between the 'reality' of the artist as person / persona and the 'fiction' of the artwork, keeping both perceptions in play simultaneously. As with the most unnerving comedy, there is no laughter soundtrack – viewers are left to decide for themselves in which of the ambiguities to place their trust.

At Butcher's artwork is visible from the street 24 hours a day. Multiple audiences interact with the same space while viewing *Laughing Mask*, a work that oscillates between entertaining and disturbing. Humour is often a relief from anxiety and in this way *Laughing Mask* acts as a release valve for the daily pressures we experience while walking in an urban environment. During the day, when the atmosphere in this part of Camden is primarily residential, the work may suggest a perverse take on family entertainment, while after dark it conjures the inebriated excesses of Camden's nightlife. With the exhibition period spanning the alarming conjunction of Halloween in October and the US Presidential elections in November, *Laughing Mask* reveals that "Humour," as Chaves remarks, "has a political attitude."

ABOUT THE ARTIST:

Marcos Chaves was born in Rio de Janeiro in 1961 and began his practice in the early 1980s. His work is characterized by the use of diverse media and openly moves between the production of objects, photographs, videos, drawings, words and sounds. Chaves has participated in individual and group exhibitions in Brazil and internationally such as Manifesta 7; the 4th Biennial of Havana; the 25th International Biennial of Sao Paulo; Mori Art Museum, Tokyo; NKB, Berlin; and Espace Topografie de l'Art, Paris. He is represented by Nara Roesler Gallery, Sao Paulo. For more information see:

<http://www.marcoschaves.net>

http://www.marcoschaves.net/videos/laughing_mask_en.htm

Notes to editors

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Exhibition Listing Information:

Artist: Marcos Chaves

Work: *Laughing Mask*

Venue: Butcher's

Location: 183 Royal College Street, NW1 8OR

Dates: 12 October – 15 November 2008

Viewing Hours: 24 hours a day

Opening reception: Saturday 11 October, 6-8pm

Admission: Free

Transport: Camden Town tube/ Camden Road rail/ Regent's Canal

Photos Available Upon Request

ABOUT BUTCHER'S:

Butcher's is a project founded by curators Ben Borthwick and Cylena Simonds in 2008. Butcher's provides a platform for a network of artists, designers and producers to develop projects, share resources, and exchange services using the economic model of bartering. There are no fixed members or sites of operation, but shifting affiliations depending on the availability of those involved and the resources they bring. Projects may materialize as exhibitions, performances, publications or any other format depending on the concept.

ABOUT THE FOUNDERS:

Ben Borthwick is Assistant Curator at Tate Modern. He has curated exhibitions at Tate Modern including *Gilbert & George*, *The Irresistible Force*, *Illuminations*, and *Bill Fontana*, and devised Tate Modern's 2007-08 Level 2 Gallery programme of thematic group shows. He has commissioned Latifa Echakhch's exhibition *Speakers' Corner* for the Level 2 Gallery (18 September-23 November 2008) and worked closely with artists such as Bruce Nauman and Doris Salcedo to realise their commissions in Tate Modern's Turbine Hall. Prior to Tate Modern he worked on a number of public art commissions for Artangel and The Henry Moore Foundation Contemporary Projects, as well as at the non-profit space Milch. He is widely published on visual and sound related aesthetic practices, and is a regular contributor to *The Wire* music magazine.

Cylena Simonds is an independent curator and writer based in London. She is currently International Guest Curator at the David Roberts Art Foundation for which she will present the group exhibition *At Your Service* in May 2009. From 2004-2008 she was the Exhibitions Curator at Iniva, heading their on-site and touring exhibition programmes, as well as programming off-site public art projects. Working with emerging as well as mid-career artists, she has developed new commissions with Laylah Ali, Philomena Francis, Meschac Gaba, and Idris Khan in addition to presenting several premieres of work never before shown in the UK. Her most recent exhibition project, *States of Exchange: Artists From Cuba*, was the first exhibition of contemporary Cuban art to be shown London since 1997. She writes for a variety of publications on moving image artwork, international conditions of contemporary art practice, and representational strategies of cultural difference.