

CRITICS' PICKS BRUSSELS

Grace Ndiritu

ARCADE

Rue de Marché aux Porc 10

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By Àngels Miralda



Grace Ndiritu, *Community* (United Kingdom), 2012–15, HD video, color, sound, 42 minutes.

Grace Ndiritu's solo show "Post-Hippie Pop Abstraction" offers a glimpse into the artist's allegorical teenage bedroom, revealing the references, experiences, and source material that have informed her large-scale projects on healing and togetherness. Postcards, collages, and elaborated fashion advertisements imbue the room with an air of innocence that is simultaneously undercut by the inclusion of clippings on recent wars, terrorist cells,

and past pandemics. On closer inspection, the seemingly idyllic postcards turn out to be from natural areas pockmarked by resource extraction.

In 2012, Ndiritu decided to reject the frenetic pace of urban life and consumerism's ties to forms of exploitation, whether sweatshop labor or rare-earth mining. Faced with the contradiction between the advertised ethics of the art world and its petro-dependent reality, the artist instead spent time living in a series of alternative communities in rural areas. She documented some of these experiences in two films, *Community (United Kingdom)*, 2012–15, and *Community (Argentina)*, 2014. In contrast to the previous room, with its collages of American football players and Gucci ads, the films depict daily rituals in a Hare Krishna ashram in Scotland and a fossil-fuel-free co-op of tree dwellers in Patagonia. Ndiritu managed to escape the consumer culture of large cities, but not instances of sexism and racism, which pervade the cultlike rituals that appear on-screen. (For instance, in one scene, young brides are paraded by their older protectors, reinforcing Hare Krishna's teachings about the innate inferiority of women.)

While the exhibition may grapple with social issues on multiple levels, it ultimately boils down to personal politics. In Ndiritu's work, our desire for sustainability collides with an inevitable reliance on exploitation for contemporary "convenience." The artist does not attempt to justify hypocrisy, but rather issues a call for accountability.

A longer version of this article appears on artreview.com, 06 June 2022.