

PICKS

New York
CRITICS' PICKS**Context and Contextualism:
Siemon Allen, Melissa Gould,
Coco Fusco****ARTISTS SPACE**
January 12 - March 02

The title of this show may sound vague and academic, but it's actually quite fitting. It is also a reference to an article by Okwui Enwezor, artistic director of Documenta11, in which he questions today's prevalent conceptual practice in international contemporary art. Despite this quasi-academic angle, the artists in this show let images do the talking, and use conceptualism as a strategy to make sense of historical events and current circumstances. Art vet Coco Fusco offers *Els Segadors (The Reapers)*, a video exploring the existence of specifically Catalan culture within the scope of Spain and its culture today. Melissa Gould presents *From Adler to Zylber*, in which she uses pictograms to translate names taken from a list of Jews transported to Auschwitz. The real gem of the show, however, is Siemon Allen's collection of South African stamps. Lined up along three walls, they provide a miniature epic history of South Africa over the last century, seen through the nationalistic, propagandistic, and "official" philatelic lens. While the "contexts" of Fusco, Gould, and Allen are unconnected and geographically diverse, the conceptualism is the same: images serve as the handmaids of ideas—and ideas, these artists demonstrate, can never be divorced from context.

—Martha Schwendener