The Department of Anthropology
The Chinese University of Hong Kong

presents a seminar

by

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on

Artists or Slave Laborers? Performing Uncapturability in Burkinabé Performers' Labor Rights Struggle in South Korea

Friday, 12 October 2018
1:00 – 2:30 pm
Room 12 Humanities Building
New Asia College, CUHK
A light lunch will be served at 12:30 pm. First come first served.
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Eight performers from Burkina Faso working at the Pocheon African Museum of Original Art as so-called "authentic performers from Africa" exposed to the press their inhumane working condition in February 2014. Their struggles, framed and publicized as "slave labor" and "migrant workers' shattered Korean dreams," reveal both South Korea's imagined vision of itself as a humanitarian, multicultural state as well as the convoluted labor and immigration policies that fail to capture the performers' complex working conditions. Their dual positions as performers/migrant laborers inform us of the seemingly unresolvable contradiction in the relationship between labor, work, and performance in the age of global capitalism. This talk explores such relationships by focusing on Burkinabé performers and their working conditions, and to that end, attends to the meanings of "uncapturability" that animate the politics of embodiment which exceeds the limits of the existing discourses of labor, performance, migration, and human rights. At the same time, by traversing heterogeneous yet overlapping spaces – a museum space, a space of labor activism, a space of politics, and a space of performance – I attend to the ways in which the conviction in humanistic and benevolent Koreanness materializes itself. As a conclusion, I offer a closer look at the "African Sound Party" and other recent performances that the Burkinabé performers created as a space of performance, which troubles the expectation for the black suffering throughout the process of labor rights struggle and political negotiation.

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ALL INTERESTED ARE WELCOME