



# Performing Afro-Cuba: Image, Voice, Spectacle in the Making of Race and History

*Kristina Wirtz*

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**Performing Afro-Cuba: Image, Voice, Spectacle in the Making of Race and History** Kristina Wirtz  
Visitors to Cuba will notice that Afro-Cuban figures and references are everywhere: in popular music and folklore shows, paintings and dolls of Santería saints in airport shops, and even restaurants with plantation themes. In *Performing Afro-Cuba*, Kristina Wirtz examines how the animation of Cuba's colonial past and African heritage through such figures and performances not only reflects but also shapes the Cuban experience of Blackness. She also investigates how this process operates at different spatial and temporal scales—from the immediate present to the imagined past, from the barrio to the socialist state.

Wirtz analyzes a variety of performances and the ways they construct Cuban racial and historical imaginations. She offers a sophisticated view of performance as enacting diverse revolutionary ideals, religious notions, and racial identity politics, and she outlines how these concepts play out in the ongoing institutionalization of folklore as an official, even state-sponsored, category. Employing Bakhtin's concept of "chronotopes"—the semiotic construction of space-time—she examines the roles of voice, temporality, embodiment, imagery, and memory in the racializing process. The result is a deftly balanced study that marries racial studies, performance studies, anthropology, and semiotics to explore the nature of race as a cultural sign, one that is always in process, always shifting.

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