



ABOVE:  
**Authentic Syracuse**, installation view (detail)  
Bookshelf publications and commemorative plates  
from the Onondaga Historical Association collection

COVER:  
**Authentic Syracuse**, installation view; Vault, 2013

## EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

Notes: Dimensions are in inches, height x width x depth. Unless otherwise noted, all installation photographs are courtesy of David Broda.

### **BENJAMIN FAGA: AUTHENTIC SYRACUSE, 2013**

Site-specific installation, dimensions variable

### VAULT:

Table (36.5x139x39), green artificial grass turf mat (97x72); with five cones made out of cardboard (29.5x20.5) a display of international spices (turmeric; spinach, red beets; cinnamon; paprika); the walls, covered in mosaic-style with photocopied images of a London multicultural neighborhood market (116x209x181).

### MAIN GALLERY:

Diana/Arctura Fountain, 60x160 Duratrans photograph and lightbox, a bookshelf (14.75x161.25x7.5) presenting 8 books (1. *The Craftsman*, Vol VI, April 1904 No 1; 2. *Syracuse from Salt to Satellite*; 3. *Syracuse: A Good Place for Manufacturers*, 1910; 4. *1000 prominent Syracusans*, 1897; 5. *Geschichte der Deutschen*, Syracuse and Onondaga County;

6. *Souvenir of Syracuse*, opened, displaying two photographs of Salina and Fayette Street; 7. *Syracuse from a Forest to a City*, M.C. Hand; 8. *Early Landmarks*, Strong 1894); 3 plates 10 inch diameter (1. Syracuse Chamber of Commerce Breakfast; 2. Soldiers and Sailors Monument; 3. United in Progress Syracuse Centennial 1848-1948); 1 fan depicting a map of Siracusa in Sicily(10x16.5); brochure rack (74x60x3.5) with brochures about Syracuse; two television monitors featuring videos (each 32min.) about Syracuse (New York), its sister city Siracusa (Italy), and the Syracuse Crunch hockey players.

Reception desk: **Benjamin Faga: Authentic Syracuse**, 2013 (A book of recipes collected from Syracuse community [10.75x8.25]).

## THE WAREHOUSE GALLERY

Syracuse University  
350 West Fayette Street  
Syracuse, NY 13202

The Warehouse Gallery is an international contemporary art venue of the SU Art Galleries at Syracuse University. The gallery's mission is to present exhibitions and programs by artists whose work engages the community in a dialogue regarding the role the arts can play in illuminating critical issues of our life and times.

### DESIGNER

Rainer M. Wehner

### GALLERY STAFF

Anja Chávez—Curator of Contemporary Art  
David Lake Prince, Associate Director,  
Curator of Collections, SU Art Galleries  
Rainer M. Wehner—Exhibition Designer and  
Preparator

### GALLERY ASSISTANTS

Nicole Borington—Gallery Assistant  
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Marika Martinez Cleto—Gallery Assistant  
Paul Dressen—Gallery Assistant  
Mariano di Guglielmo—Intern  
Hikari Ito Matsuo—Gallery Assistant  
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Wisconsin-born, London-based artist Benjamin Faga (born 1986) addresses the influence of globalization, technology, and its impact on our global society. Faga often uses a variety of media (photography, installation art, sculpture, public art, video, performance art, writing, and design) while collaborating with local communities. For his installation **Authentic Syracuse** Faga focuses on food as an indicator of cultural diversity and identity. In the vault, Faga created a market atmosphere with international spices on display, while the main gallery was made to look and operate like a tourism office center where visitors can read, see, and learn about Syracuse's many offerings as a diverse city that is home to immigrants from around the world. This is Faga's first solo museum show in the United States.



## BENJAMIN FAGA: AUTHENTIC SYRACUSE

28 FEBRUARY–11 MAY 2013

THE WAREHOUSE GALLERY  
GUIDE#20

## Ben Faga: Authentic Syracuse

BY

ANJA CHÁVEZ

**Authentic Syracuse** is London-based emerging artist Benjamin Faga's first solo museum exhibition in the United States, for which he has created a new site-specific multimedia installation. He combines research and collaboration with local communities (as he did for a previous project in Andore, Northwest India), with an emphasis on a conceptual approach. For **Authentic Syracuse**, Faga focuses on food as an indicator of cultural diversity and identity in order to question preconceived notions of authenticity, and to point towards Syracuse's globalism and diversity.

Through photography, video and sound, Faga's work reflects on how a city's identity can be constructed remotely via information culled from the internet, historical records, photographs, online, and in-person interactions with students from Syracuse University and SUNY Purchase. For instance, Faga worked with the Warehouse Gallery's 2012 summer interns (Emily Edwards, Shannon Licitra, Kelly Nolte, Michelle Noe and Allison Sarensk) who researched Syracuse, its demographics and its constituencies in preparation for this exhibit. He also worked closely with SU student Ellie Brown'13, who collected recipes from Syracuse community members and beautifully portrayed the individuals according to Faga's instructions. Their work became part of a publication of a "local/international" recipe book. Faga also worked closely with Syracuse residents, with Syracuse Crunch hockey players, the Syracuse Convention and Visitor's Bureau, curators, historians, as well as Onondaga Historical Society's staff (Dennis Connors, Thomas Hunter, and Pamela Priest).



**Authentic Syracuse**, main gallery, 2013

The role of the curator is always that of a researcher, project manager of a larger team, and to serve as a link between constituencies including the artist. For this exhibition my role as curator consisted in interviewing students for the project, supervising them, guiding and mentoring them through their research projects, asking them to present their results in a concise format. I also brought in specialists valuable to Faga's project, and introduced the artist to the city and to some of its residents upon his arrival.

**Authentic Syracuse** alludes to destination branding. It also evokes, not without a touch of humor, every tourist's desire to see, hear and feel the real city and taste real food. Spread throughout The Warehouse Gallery's main gallery and vault. The exhibition is a single work consisting of a series of objects in dialogue with one another, playing off elements Syracuse is known for versus the artist's imagination of the city of Syracuse. It also refers to the artist's thought and work process, from afar, since he is based in London and was on site only during his seven-day sojourn in Syracuse, New York.

The main gallery is made to look and operate like a tourism bureau featuring a brochure rack that lets visitors read about "things to do" in Syracuse. There is a wide range of perspectives, from branding Upstate New York as a manufacturing city, to being a destination of outdoor activities throughout the seasons, a shopping town (Syracuse's Destiny USA mall), and a cultural destination due to its numerous cultural institutions. Beyond this, Faga also points towards Syracuse's architectural, historical and political landmarks.

On an adjacent shelf, there is a display of books on Syracuse and its history, including a copy of *The Craftsman* by upstate New York furniture maker Gustav Stickley, and examples of fine china manufactured by the Syracuse China Corporation (1871-2009); historic publications presenting Syracuse as an immigrant manufacturing town, all of which proposes a certain perspective of Syracuse's history. Another wall of the main gallery features forty-eight color photographs (taken on-site by Faga) of twenty-four large and small ethnic grocery stores across the city. On the opposite wall two video screens reference a promotional video featuring

two Syracuse Crunch hockey players (filmed during their visit to The Warehouse Gallery for the purpose of Faga's work), using as a background images from Syracuse (New York) and its sister city Siracusa (Sicily), and a lightbox showcasing, of all things, a loose replica of the Arethusa (or Diana) Fountain just outside London, an unexpected British-style comical reference that serves to bounce between Syracuse (New York) and Siracusa (Sicily), where the "original" fountain (itself a powerful magnet for British travelers in the early days of tourism) is to be found.

In the vault a market atmosphere prevails through recorded, audible market sounds and a display of international spices (tumeric, paprika, spinach, cinnamon, red beets) presented as cones. The walls are covered mosaic style with photocopied images of a multicultural neighborhood market close to the artist's home. A book of recipes collected from Syracuse communities reflects on the city's own cultural diversity.

Standing in the vault, and listening to the sound of London's shoppers, one is reminded of the artist's point of departure for this installation; especially when looking at the image of London's Arethusa (or Diana) Fountain that represents for Faga a clear connection between the cities: London and Syracuse/Siracusa. It will remain his very personal view of the link between the city he calls home and ours.



**Authentic Syracuse**, installation view; vault, 2013



**Authentic Syracuse**, detail; main gallery, 2013



**Authentic Syracuse**, Installation view; main gallery with view into vault, 2013