

Hammons

L&M Arts

January 18 – March 10, 2007

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David Hammons's current installation at L&M Arts is the first new work that the artist has presented in New York since 2002's "Concerto in Black and Blue" at Ace Gallery.

Born in 1943 in Springfield, Illinois, Hammons studied art in the mid to late Sixties in Los Angeles, eventually settling in New York and Rome with his wife, Chie.

Hammons's work is most closely associated with the black experience in America, particularly in an urban environment. His work ranges from installations and performances to videos and sculpture. Some of his most well known work includes found material such as bottle caps and basketball hoops as well as prints made of the artist's body on paper. More recent work involves Hammons bouncing a basketball coated in dirt on paper. In all of Hammons's different creative outlets, his wry humor and unique perspective are the common thread.

Hammons's artistic choices are deliberate and considered – he purposefully chose the location and timing of this current installation. However, there is always an improvisational quality to the process. Hammons often makes aesthetic decisions as the work is being installed, instead of following a strict pre-designed model or plan, allowing the dialogue between the work and the gallery space to develop organically.

Hammons explains that the fur coats, a favorite choice of cold weather garb for the doyennes of the gallery's Upper East Side neighborhood, become the canvases for the exhibition. These "canvases" made of mink, wolf, chinchilla, etc., are altered by Hammons, offering a glimpse of the timeline of post war-art, echoing artists that came before him, artists who are frequently shown at L&M: Pollock, de Kooning and Klein among others.

By holding the show in the winter months, the artist could ensure the opportunity for fur clad visitors to mingle with his work – art and the viewer become one in the same. The fur, "found material" on the Upper East Side, is both a statement about the insular wealth of the neighborhood and the blue-chip art world, as well as the oppositional insular world of the animal rights movement.

Further, the placement of the work is critical. Hammons purposefully leaves the front gallery space empty, forcing the viewer to go in search of the experience (this act of discovery sends the viewer to the back room of the first floor and up to the second floor as well). The fur draped dress forms are intentionally set in a seemingly random pattern – they are not evenly placed or paced throughout the gallery. Hammons rejects the assumption and expectations of how a typical

show should be hung, intentionally throwing the viewer off-balance. Immediately the tone is set that nothing should be taken for granted.

Hammons leads us on a journey into a different point of view. This viewpoint is new to some or, for others, one that was forgotten long ago – the one where we never took things for granted and we understood the difference between actively *seeing* the world around us, as opposed to passively *looking* at it.

In Hammons words, “I’m not here to entertain you.” No, maybe not, but he does make us think, and in that he certainly succeeds.