

STUDENT-CURATED EXHIBITION EXPLORES NOTIONS OF ART AND RACE IN AMERICA

Embodied: Black Identities in American Art from the Yale University Art Gallery

David C. Driskell Center, University of Maryland, College Park, September 16–October 29, 2010

Yale University Art Gallery, February 18–June 26, 2011, first floor



Kerry James Marshall, *Untitled* (detail), 2009. Acrylic on PVC. Yale University Art Gallery, Purchased with the Janet and Simeon Braguin Fund and a gift from Jacqueline L. Bradley, B.A. 1979

Continuing a tradition of hosting challenging, exploratory exhibitions organized by student curatorial teams, the Yale University Art Gallery, in collaboration with the David C. Driskell Center at the University of Maryland, College Park, present an exhibition that probes the notion of African American Art. *Embodied: Black Identities in American Art from the Yale University Art Gallery* features more than 50 works that engage with issues of race and call into question the meanings that have been mapped onto African American bodies throughout history.

The exhibition is on view at the Driskell Center from September 16 through October 29, 2010, and at the Gallery from February 18 through June 26, 2011.

The exhibition encourages the audience to reexamine basic assumptions about race and prompts the viewer to question the categories of “African American” and “black” by asking whether “black art” is recognizable or even exists in any coherent sense. The works are grouped into three sections, each with a specific focus: the performance of race through art and artifice; the absent or dematerialized body, and how that absence comments upon identity; and displacement and its effect on shared histories, cultural geography, and national identity. Each of the three sections highlights one work that serves as a point

of departure for understanding the concept in question. The highlighted works are, respectively, Kerry James Marshall’s *Untitled* painting (2009), Lorna Simpson’s *Wigs (Portfolio)* (1994), and Barkley L. Hendricks’s *APBs (Afro-Parisian Brothers)* (1978).

Embodied features works from the collection of the Yale University Art Gallery in a rich variety of media, including paintings and sculpture; decorative arts; and prints, drawings, and photographs. The number of works by African American artists within



Lorna Simpson, *Wigs (Portfolio)* (detail), 1994. Waterless lithographs on felt. Yale University Art Gallery, Katharine Ordway Fund

the permanent collection of the Gallery has increased multifold over the past decade, providing a springboard for the exhibition, which both celebrates this rapidly growing area of the collection and highlights the contribution of African American artists to the canon of American art. Robert E. Steele, Executive Director of the Driskell Center, states, “What distinguishes African American art as a body of work in and of itself? How do ideas about content, authorship, or ethnicity help us form such distinctions? It is my hope that *Embodied* will answer these questions, but more so, that it will initiate a dialogue that is well worth having.”

Embodied: Black Identities in American Art from the Yale University Art Gallery is the latest in an ongoing series of exhibitions collaboratively curated by students and presented by the Gallery, but as Pamela Franks, Deputy Director for Collections and Education at the Gallery, notes, “This collaboration is unique in that it is the first time that a student-curated exhibition at the Gallery has been organized by two institutions of higher education. By having the student curators come from different educational entities, our work has been strengthened by the multiplicity of viewpoints brought to the curatorial process.”

Exhibition Support

Embodied: Black Identities in American Art from the Yale University Art Gallery and its accompanying publication are organized by Yale University and University of Maryland students under the direction of Pamela Franks, Deputy Director for Collections and Education, Yale University Art Gallery, and Robert E. Steele, M.P.H. 1971, M.S. 1974, PH.D. 1975, Executive Director, David C. Driskell Center, University of Maryland, College Park. Made possible by Lois Chazen; Laura M. and James A. Duncan, B.A. 1975; Mr. and Mrs. Elliot L. Schlang, B.A. 1956; Francis H. Williams; the Jane and Gerald Katcher Fund for Education; the Nolen-Bradley Family Fund; the Florence B. Selden Fund; and the John F. Wieland, Jr., B.A. 1988, Fund for Student Exhibitions. The David C. Driskell Center’s Exhibition Program is supported by a special fund from the University of Maryland’s Office of the President and a grant from the Maryland State Arts Council. The exhibition at the Driskell is supported by a grant from the Ford Foundation.

Catalogue

Embodied: Black Identities in American Art from the Yale University Art Gallery is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue, published by the Yale University Art Gallery. The publication features an introduction by Pamela Franks on the museum’s history of collecting African American art, a personal reflection on the subject by Robert Steele, and brief catalogue entries on each object written by the student curators. The 72-page publication also features 51 color illustrations and will be available in the Gallery’s Bookstore (\$16 paperback).



Barkley L. Hendricks, *APBs (Afro-Parisian Brothers)*, 1978. Oil and acrylic on linen. Yale University Art Gallery, Janet and Simeon Braguin Fund

Yale University Art Gallery

The Yale University Art Gallery, America's oldest and one of its most important university art museums was founded in 1832, when patriot-artist John Trumbull donated more than 100 of his paintings to Yale College. Since then, the Gallery's collections have grown to number more than 185,000 objects, spanning the globe and ranging in date from ancient times to the present day. In addition to its celebrated collections of American paintings and decorative arts, the Gallery is noted for its important holdings of Greek and Roman art; early Italian paintings; later European art; Asian art; African art; art of the ancient Americas; and Impressionist, modern, and contemporary works. The Gallery's ongoing installation of works from these collections is complemented by a variety of special exhibitions and public programs. Moreover, in an effort to share its works with a broad public, the Gallery also organizes collections-based exhibitions that travel to museums nationwide.

Located at 1111 Chapel Street in New Haven, Connecticut, the Gallery is open to the public free of charge: Tuesday–Saturday 10:00 AM–5:00 PM, Thursday until 8:00 PM (September–June); Sunday 1:00–6:00 PM. For additional information, the public may visit <http://artgallery.yale.edu>, or call 203.432.0600.

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