

## David Hammons: Five Decades



*By Danny King*

For *Higher Goals* (1986), the artist **David Hammons** erected four twenty- to thirty-foot-tall telephone poles — all decorated with a slew of cheap bottle caps — and placed a backboard, a basketball rim, and a net at the peak of each one. Over the course of five decades of illustrious production, Hammons has fascinated with these kinds of pointed jabs concerning black opportunity and visibility in America, not to mention frustrated with his disdain for conventional avenues of art-world recognition. His work has seeped into public spaces — whether with *Higher Goals* or, more infamously, the Eighties episode in which he urinated on a Richard Serra sculpture at Franklin and Broadway — but just as often confines itself to gallery interiors, as in his sheets of white paper that carry the residue of materials ranging from a dirty basketball to Hammons's own margarine-coated body. In its new career-overview survey, organized with the support of Hammons himself — no minor qualification, given the artist's history of evasion and difficulty — the Mnuchin Gallery attempts an outline of Hammons's fifty-year trajectory, from his beginnings in Sixties Los Angeles to the present day.