

Harlem Chamber, New Heritage and EMBCA, Hammons at Mnuchin

Ron Scott | 4/7/2016, 5:41 p.m.



Untitled (wine bottles) glass and silicone glue RON SCOTT PHOTO

On April 14 the Greater Harlem Chamber of Commerce, celebrating its 120th anniversary and New Heritage Theatre Group, celebrating its 52nd anniversary join forces with the Eastern Mediterranean Business Cultural Alliance to present a first-time gathering of Eastern Mediterranean musicians and blues singers from Harlem.

The blues is the root of Black music, emanating from the African-American folk tradition. The Eastern Mediterranean blues called rembetika (urban Greek folk music) is a style of blues music that emerged out of the Greek and Eastern Mediterranean region.

These musicians and Harlem blues singer and musician Keith “the Captain” Gamble, the Nu Gypsies and award-winning singer/actress Sandra Reaves-Phillips will bring another perspective to Manhattan’s St. Peters Church, 619 Lexington Ave. at 54th Street, at 7p.m. For information, call New Heritage at 212-926-2550 or visit www.newheritage theatre.org.

David Hammons is one of the most significant American artists of this century. From the beginning of his career in the late 1960s, Hammons was that outside voice whose creativity warranted a place among the art world's somewhat snobbish inner circle.

Although Hammons has forged his own path, he carries the torch of his influential predecessors, Elizabeth Catlett, Jacob Lawrence, Romare Bearden and his much younger art colleague Jean-Michel Basquiat, whose inventive art works represent the experience of Black America, which is always in an activist mode.

From now through May 27, the "David Hammons: Five Decades" exhibit will trace the evolution of his creative exuberance from the late 1960s to the present. It will be the artist's first exhibition of this kind in more than 20 years.

Many art critics refer to Hammons work as an extension of the Dada movement, an anti-art movement coined by the artist Marcel Duchamp around 1913. The term was inclusive of anti-war and anti-bourgeois, with political affinities. The European avant-garde artists used this concept to offend the straight art world and power brokers by using unconventional materials, such as toilet bowls, and painting a mustache on the Mona Lisa.

Hammons' use of discarded materials, such as elephant dung, chicken bones, strands of black hair from Harlem barbershops, paper bags, bottle caps and wine bottle sculptures, isn't a reflection of the European avant-garde perspective, but more from a hardcore jazz avant-garde swing inspired by Butch Morris, Eric Dolphy, Ornette Coleman, Charlie Parker and Sun Ra.

His mural of a white Jesse Jackson reflects his awareness of race and political and economic power in America, which are all related. His works clearly demonstrate his creative insight into the capitalist bourgeois and its effect on Black America.

For this career survey of 25 years, he is in a commercial gallery where blue-chip stocks are the order of the day, on the Upper East Side of Manhattan. The show of 34 objects, about half on loan from public and private collections, cover Mnuchin's two-story space.

The soundtrack, which is usually jazz, has been replaced by classical Japanese court music. Music, like art, can unite souls. The Mnuchin Gallery (45 E. 78th St.) hours are Tuesday to Saturday 10 a.m.-6 p.m.