

# MNUCHIN GALLERY



MNUCHIN GALLERY PRESENTS  
**DAVID HAMMONS: FIVE DECADES**

March 15 – May 27, 2016

New York— Mnuchin Gallery is proud to announce *David Hammons: Five Decades*, a career survey of David Hammons (b. 1943, Springfield, IL). Organized with Hammons' support, this will be the first exhibition of its kind in over twenty years, and will trace the evolution of the artist's entire oeuvre from the late 1960s to the present day. The exhibition builds on Mnuchin Gallery's history of collaboration with the artist, following its presentations of new work in 2007 and 2011. On view from March 15 – May 27, 2016, the exhibition will be accompanied by a fully-illustrated catalogue authored by Dr. Kellie Jones, Associate Professor in Art History and Archaeology and the Institute for Research in African American Studies at Columbia University, with an introduction by Dr. Robert Storr, Dean of the Yale School of Art, and a contribution by Alanna Heiss, founder and former director of P.S. 1 and current founder and director of Clocktower Productions.

One of the most inventive and influential artists of our time, Hammons creates work that addresses the experiences of African American life and the role that race plays in American society. He began his career in Los Angeles in the late 1960s, where he was influenced by the politically charged imagery of the Black Arts Movement, the found-object assemblages of Dada, and the humble materials of Arte Povera. In his breakout body of work, the body prints of the late 1960s and early 1970s, Hammons paired life-sized depictions of his own face and figure— created by coating his skin and hair with margarine, pressing his greased body onto paper, then covering the imprint with pigment powder— with politically charged symbols, such as spades and the American flag.

By the mid-1970s, in part as a rejection of the status quo of the predominantly-white art market, he abandoned the format of two-dimensional, framed works hung flat on a wall, instead devoting his practice entirely to (often ephemeral) sculptural assemblage, installation, and performance. In these works, Hammons recycled found objects specifically associated with urban African American life— chicken bones, cheap liquor bottles, paper bags, and hair swept from the floors of black barber shops— into witty, increasingly abstract creations that subverted expectations for a work of fine art and spoke specifically to an audience traditionally barred from inclusion in the art world.

In the 1980s, after his relocation to New York, Hammons became known for his public sculptures and installations created in the streets, from materials found on the streets. Famous among these is *Higher Goals* (1986), a group of five, 20-30-foot tall telephone poles topped with basketball hoops and covered in mosaics of discarded beer bottle caps that were commissioned by the Public Art Fund. As in so many of Hammons works, the title and physical object worked together as a verbal and visual pun to generate meaning— in this case, an allusion to the unrealistic dream of basketball providing an escape from urban poverty, and encouragement for black youths to seek loftier goals than athletic prowess. Hammons continued to explore the theme of basketball in works like the *Basketball Chandeliers* and the *Basketball Drawings*, examples of which are on view in this exhibition.

Hammons work of the past decade, such as the *Kool Aid* drawings, the *Tarp* paintings, and the *Mirrors*, explore new levels of abstraction and reengage with traditional artistic means, but to unfailingly subversive ends. In the *Kool Aids* and *Tarps*, Hammons creates bright, gestural abstractions— a nod to the Modernist canon— whose lushness he then denies us, shrouding his drawings and paintings in old sheets, crumpled plastic tarps, and torn burlap lifted from construction sites. In the *Mirrors*, Hammons similarly obscures the baroque gilded frames of mirrors that appear straight from one of the Metropolitan’s period rooms with materials from the street, such as dirtied steel plates and torn fabric, wryly uniting two realms of the city that typically exist side by side, but never touching. They also subvert the concept of portraiture, denying the viewer the Renaissance idea of representing his own “mirror image.”

The exhibition will include examples from Hammons’ major series from the past five decades, including early paintings, *Body Prints*, found-object assemblages such as the *Heads*, *Basketball Drawings*, *Basketball Chandeliers*, *Kool-Aids*, *Tarps*, and *Mirrors*. It will feature works on loan from both museums and private collections.

### **About Mnuchin Gallery**

Mnuchin Gallery is located in the historic five-story townhouse at 45 East 78th Street on Manhattan’s Upper East Side and is dedicated to presenting museum-quality exhibitions of postwar and contemporary art. Owner and founder Robert Mnuchin, whose passion for the arts developed through his childhood and his longstanding career in the financial sector as the head of the trading desk at Goldman Sachs, began a successful second career as an art dealer in 1992, co-founding C&M Arts in 1992, and the bi-coastal operation, L&M Arts, in 2005. In 2013, the gallery was renamed Mnuchin Gallery under the direction of Robert Mnuchin and his partner, Sukanya Rajaratnam.

Mnuchin Gallery carries on the tradition of presenting thoughtfully curated, carefully researched exhibitions, documented with scholarly publications. Its first two years of programming included solo shows by some of the most influential artists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, including Ellsworth Kelly and Donald Judd, as well as important contemporary artists, such as El Anatsui, and thematic exhibitions, such as *Casting Modernity: Bronze in the XXth Century*.

For more information on Mnuchin Gallery, please visit [www.mnuchingallery.com](http://www.mnuchingallery.com).

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Image details: David Hammons, *Untitled*, 2004, rock and hair, 12 x 9 x 5 1/4 inches (30.5 x 22.9 x 13.3 cm) Art © David Hammons