

A SELECTION OF 20 WORKS BY SOL'SAX FROM 2011

In 2011, I revisited a concept that I first produced work about in 1998. It was a can of soda with a ceramic head on top called, "A Free Can, A Merry Can." I chose to make a body of work using resin and cans of all types, from house paint cans to soup cans. This body of work is titled, "Yes We Can, A Free Can, A Merry Can." I presented this work in a Juneteenth Jubilee solo show at the Bed-Stuy YMCA in Brooklyn.

The appropriation of the can is a reference to a central analogy that is found through out the many Bantu cultures of Sub-Saharan Africa: All vessels represent the body as the vessel for the soul. From the first vessel gourds to ceramic, iron, glass and now, tin cans, the vessel always represents a space where a human soul, or even the soul of an angel, can live. This symbolic meaning is as central to many Bantu religions as the crucifix is to Christianity.

I have been making Ceramic Heads/Vessels since 1991 in celebration of this basic concept. In this body of work, the can is the vessel filled with soul and the potential to act. The Angels can, The Ancestors can, African-Americans can and they did. This body of work is a specific celebration for The African Angels and the African-American Ancestors that have already proven what they can do by the evidence of a Black President.

I have also appropriated plastic milk crates to house figures that I refer to as "SOL'SAIN'T Many Kins" or "Soul/Saint Mannequins" and "Souls Ain't Many Kins," which are just two of the homophonic meanings most of my titles are riddled with when spoken. Milk crates like these can be found on any street in NYC throughout my lifetime. They are used as stools and often when people die on the street they are used as make shift altars filled with candles and pictures of the deceased. The same analogy is used in Africa and Cuba where simple wooden box stools are used as a niche to house the angel or saint. The spiritual stool that supports us is filled with the angels and ancestors of heaven.

In Yoruba, the closest word to the English word art is "Ire." Ire literally means game. African-American slang uses the English word game with a similar conceptual meaning as Ire. In slang, if you say someone has game, it's a reference to a creative skill set they have developed that helps them excel at what they do. When the Yoruba present artwork or "Ire" it is a presentation of the game going on in the artist's head. In the Series, "Yes We Can, A Free Can, A Merry Can," I use game balls of all types to represent heads full of "Ire." I hope you enjoy my Game.



THE SAMO SOL

triptych 2011

For Eshu, Papa Legba and the Jubilee Century

The first work I did in 2011 was a triptych for the Yoruba Angel Eshu-Elegba. It also celebrates an era. The era between 1865 and 1965 is the century African-American culture soldiers moved this country from emancipation to equal rights by law. I call that century The Jubilee Century because the work done then is responsible for the freedom our first Black President enjoys now.

These three pieces celebrate the culture soldiers who lived and died in that century and the cultural weapons they employed. Weapons, that some said were bought from Papa 'Legba himself at the crossroads, were used to fight white supremacy. In these sculptures I use the logo of the English Rock 'n' Roll Group The Rolling stones.

The Rolling Stones got their name from their hero Muddy Waters. Their logo is a disembodied fat red-lipped mouth sticking its tongue out. I use this mouth for a post-minstrel figure called, The SAMO SOL.

Jean-Michel Basquait use to write SAMO, short for the "same old shit." In this case, I'm saying that the same old soul was treated like shit throughout slavery and Jim Crow. It's the SAMO soul that became the hero of The Rolling Stones and now sings soul as the President. The African-American identity start off The Jubilee Century as minstrel clowns with fat red lips to be ridiculed and dismissed by the superior European identity. By the end of The Jubilee Century, The African-American identity had been transformed into the heroic blues men that gave birth to the first global modern music. This triptych celebrates some of the cultural tactics that Eshu blessed those culture soldiers with, which helped them achieve such a powerful change in global culture.



THE SAMO SOL LIKE A SHOE IS USED AND ABUSED TILL IT'S SOL'SPEAKS THEN IT'S (A SHOE WITH AN ISSUE" (SOL'SNEEKER, SOL'SNICKER, SOL'SNIGGER)

For Eshu, Papa Legba and the Jubilee Century

Ingredients: Tin can, a shoe, resin and a plastic Crate

This work is a celebration of the resilience and the graceful communication of suffering that those African-American ancestors demonstrated throughout the cultural war for freedom. A shoe is a homophone for the Yoruba Angel Eshu. It is also one of the symbols that represent Eshu. In Africa, Eshu-Elegba is the beggar that rises to become King. This work also speaks about the social abuse that the impoverished had to endure.

As a child, because money was short, I often had to wear sneakers until the sole came loose in the front. I would be mercilessly teased for having "sneakers that ain't so sneaky cuz they're speaking," like the sneaker in this sculpture. Eshu's has the ability to absorb the abuse society gives the poor. He can also change society's actions by using the power of the word to create empathy and respect.



THE SAMO SOL IS A BALLER THAT MOVES LIKE A ROLLING STONE THROUGH MUDDY WATERS (THE SAMO SOL BALLED FROM MINSTRELSY TO THE PRESIDENCY)

For Eshu "Papa" Legba, Muddy Waters and the Jubilee Century

Ingredients: House Paint can, Basketball, resin, molasses and a plastic Crate

A rolling, rambling stone that can gather no moss is an apt analogy for the experiences of those culture soldiers of the Deep South who migrated to the north during The Jubilee Century. This work celebrates that migration and how it mirrored the hopes of the runaway slaves of the slave era. Both groups were willing to do anything to reach a place where they could have social freedom and rights with a fair chance at prosperity. It is this simple desire armed with the rich cultural weapons of their African Angels and Ancestors that paved the road to the possibility of African-American equality.

THE SAMO SOL IS ABOUT TO PITCH HIS STORY LIKE SACHEL PAIGE (THE SAMO SOL'S TALE LIKE A PAGE IN A SACHEL IS COILED)

For Eshu, Papa Legba and Satchel Paige

Ingredients: house Paint can, Pitcher's Glove, scroll, resin, molasses and a plastic Crate



Satchel Paige was known for his expressive and innovative pitching. The ability to tell a story or even open a window into a different way of seeing the world simply by the way one moves the body is game. This kind of ability has been demonstrated over and over again by African-Americans in sports. What was first derided as showmanship, clowning or dismissed as natural athletic ability, has proven to be creative minds taking the framework of the games and reinterpreting them in ways that were not only entertaining but also have proven to be effective.

In fact, the kind of creative problem solving that propelled Satchel Paige, Jackie Robinson, Julius Irving, Jim Brown and Mohamed Ali has its roots in the creative physical expressions that were retained from Bantu cultural traditions. For instance the lower body gyrations that banned Elvis from the chest down on the Ed Sullivan Show are classic Bantu dance moves, variations of which can be found through out Sub-Saharan Africa. This basic movement is fundamental in creating a convincing hip fake, a move that African Americans introduced to modern sports.

African-American culture rewards and disseminates a kind of expressive physical culture that Europeans Supremacists dismissed and tried to eradicate because they judged it to be inferior and amoral.

African-American athletes were raised immersed in this physical movement aesthetic. Movement originally used to praise African Angels and ancestors have been easily adapted to be a powerful cultural weapon in sports.



SOL'S SAINT BLACK BABE BAT'S SWINGS WIDE OVER HOME BASE

For Oya, Ogun and Josh Gibson "The Black Babe"

Ingredients: Metal Bat, Home base and resin

Oya is the Angel of completion. She is the completion of pregnancy as birth or the completion of life as death. She is the air, the winds of change and all change results in the death of something. Ogun is the Angel of work. Ogun is represented by metal tools because they endlessly work like him. There is a story of Ogun the hunter marrying Oya. Ogun told Oya never to touch his hunting gear. If she did, he would never hunt again. They fought and in the middle of the night Oya flew off with his hunting gear, so Ogun was forced to forge farming gear. This is the Yoruba description of the movement from Hunter-gatherer to agricultural society.

Henry Gibson was the greatest hitter of the Negro Leagues. Many said he was a better hitter than Babe Ruth, but segregation left no way to prove that. However, Segregation did create a strong African-American community whose forced unity was a real bulwark against the storm of European-American supremacy. Henry Gibson was the pentacle of manhood in that community like Babe Ruth and Ogun are in their respective cultures. The wings of change, Oya, is what swung Henry Gibson home when integration killed the Negro League and so many players including Henry Gibson had to leave the game to go home.



SOL'S SAINT JUS A FIEND BAKER BAKES HER BUNS DOING THE BANANA DANCE TO GET THEM FIENDS HOT

For Oshun and Josephine Baker

Ingredients: sugar cane juice can, tin cans, 2 black-eyed peas, brass wire, resin, molasses and a plastic Crate

Ogun is stereotypical young manhood like Oshun is stereotypical young femininity. You know, sugar 'n' spice. Oh, that honey is sure nice. Oshun like all African Angels is also a culture soldier. Her martial art can be seen in a story where Ogun had gone mad from war, and was killing his own. No other warrior was strong enough to control him, until little Oshun stepped up to stop him. She grabbed a fan and a plate of honey. She danced right up to him because he was too mesmerized by her to stop her. She let him lick the honey while she danced and fanned him cooling him back to sanity. This is the story of a beautiful talented woman using sexually charged movement as a weapon to disarm a violent man. A weapon more powerful than force. It is also the story of how Josephine Baker danced like Oshun using her creative sexual expression to sweeten and cool the insanely antisocial hostility of European-American cultural supremacy.



A FREE CAN A MERRY CAN, CAN OPEN A CAN A WOOP-ASS WITH " THE ALI ALLEY APPLE FREE MOJO HAND "

For Chango and Mohamed Ali

Ingredients: Boxing glove, a brick from a dark alley, resin and a plastic Crate

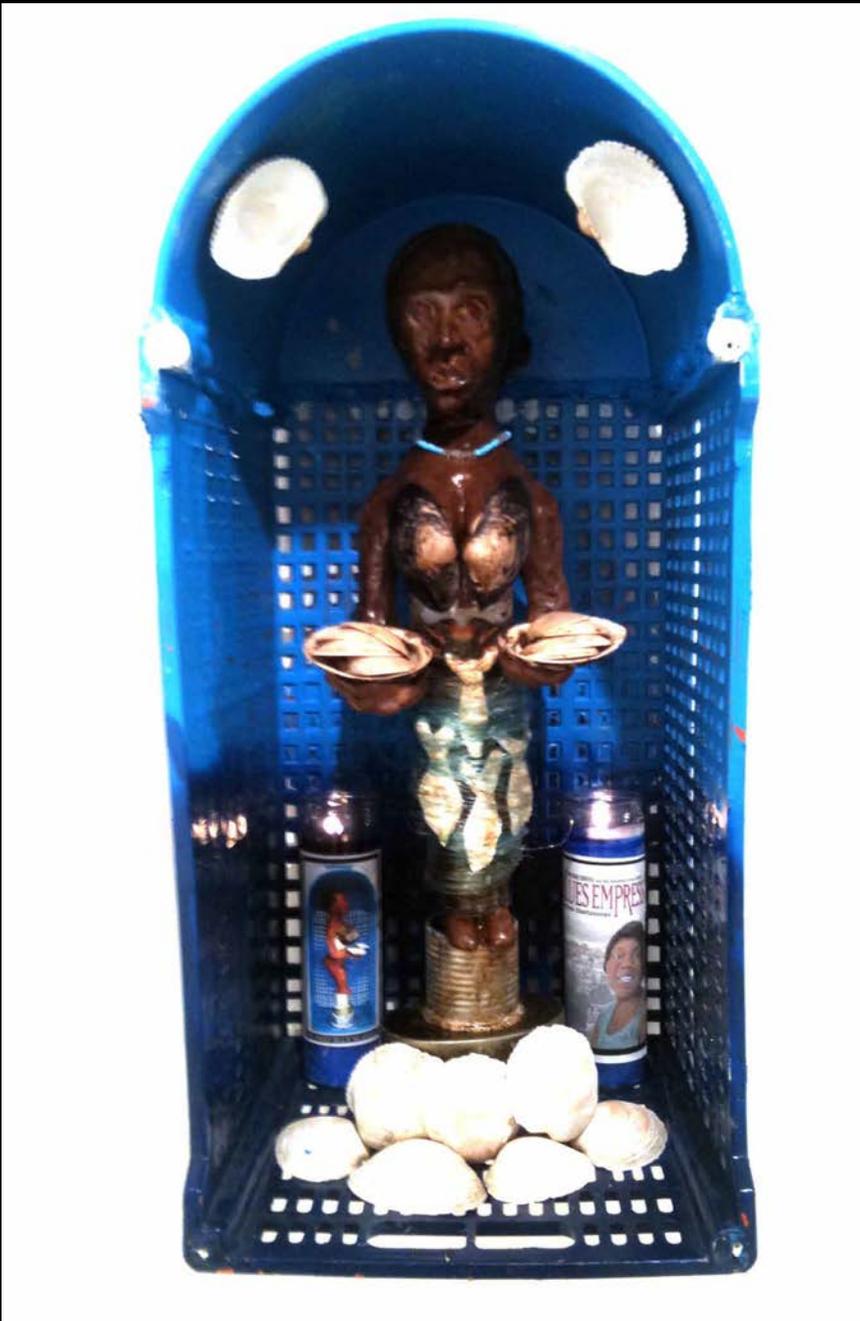
Mohamed Ali, the consummate survivor, lived to see the first African American President. He survived the fires that so many Culture soldiers of the Boomer Generation were lost in. The fires that burned during the Civil Rights culture war defeated the last legal traces of Jim Crow by the end of The Jubilee Century. Chango is also a survivor known to have endured the heat of trial by fire. Chango is the angel of fire, water and lightening, all different types of flowing, sometimes explosive energies. Expressed in humanity as speech, music and dance. Chango speaks and the words illuminate and bring clarity like lightening in the night sky. Chango strikes quick, graceful and light but the ground shakes from the touch. Ali used that kind of Chango electric charisma gracefully in his body and in his words, throughout his career.

On the works symbolism: An Alley Apple is a brick in African American slang. Chango's colors are red and white and the apple is one of his fruits.

BLUE SEAS' MYTH'S POOL OF FISH LINE'S HER BANK WITH CLAMS (BESSIE SMITH TO MARY J. BLIGE DON'T MAKE ME DO THE ROLL CALL ALL SOL'SWIMMIN IN THE SOL OF THE DEEP BLUE SEA'S MYTH)

For Yemoja, , Bessie Smith and the Jubilee Century

Ingredients: A can of baby clams, assorted tin cans, two red coral beads, twine, fishing line, paint, resin, steel wool, clam shells, Pail, molasses and a plastic Crate



it for a skirt. The spool of fish line is a reference to Daughters of Yemaya, fishers of men, who lure men with the gifts; she blessed them with a plump bottom and bosom accompanied by a sultry voice with a salty finish.

Her brassier is clamshells because she earns clams with those gifts too.

It was the blue oceans of Bessie Smith's emotions that were rocking and rolling her voice in every song. Yemoja is the angel of the blue sea. Her name literally translates as the mother of the children of fishes. Her name implies that humanity descended from fishes. This was a traditional Yoruba concept generations before Darwin. Yemoja is the angel of rules and regulations, she seeks to protect her children; however, those same rules can limit and deny her children what they desire. It is because the world of water is limited, our ancestors adapted to the world of air. Yemoja, scorned by those ancestors, would smother us if we tried to return to her rules.

Yemoja is the Angel that gave birth to the bittersweet lament of a heaving chest. The back and forth waves of desire, fear, hope and pain that causes us to make rules, and then forces us to break those same rules. I feel the most powerful cultural tool in the arsenal of angelic weapons that African-American ancestors used, is the power of the blues lament. Bessie Smith and the countless other chests, that heaved like blue seas heave, are what bound freedom riders and overwhelmed Supremacist society.

On the works symbolism: The figure wears a fish line spool with fishes entangled in



SOL'SAIN'T PULL ROBES ON IS A BOTTLE A SPIRIT ON THE GRID IRON (REALER THAN GORILLA)

For Obatala and Paul Robeson during his college football days

Ingredients: 1 bottle of coconut rum, shrunken football helmet, coconut shell, resin pail, wire crate and two black-eyed peas

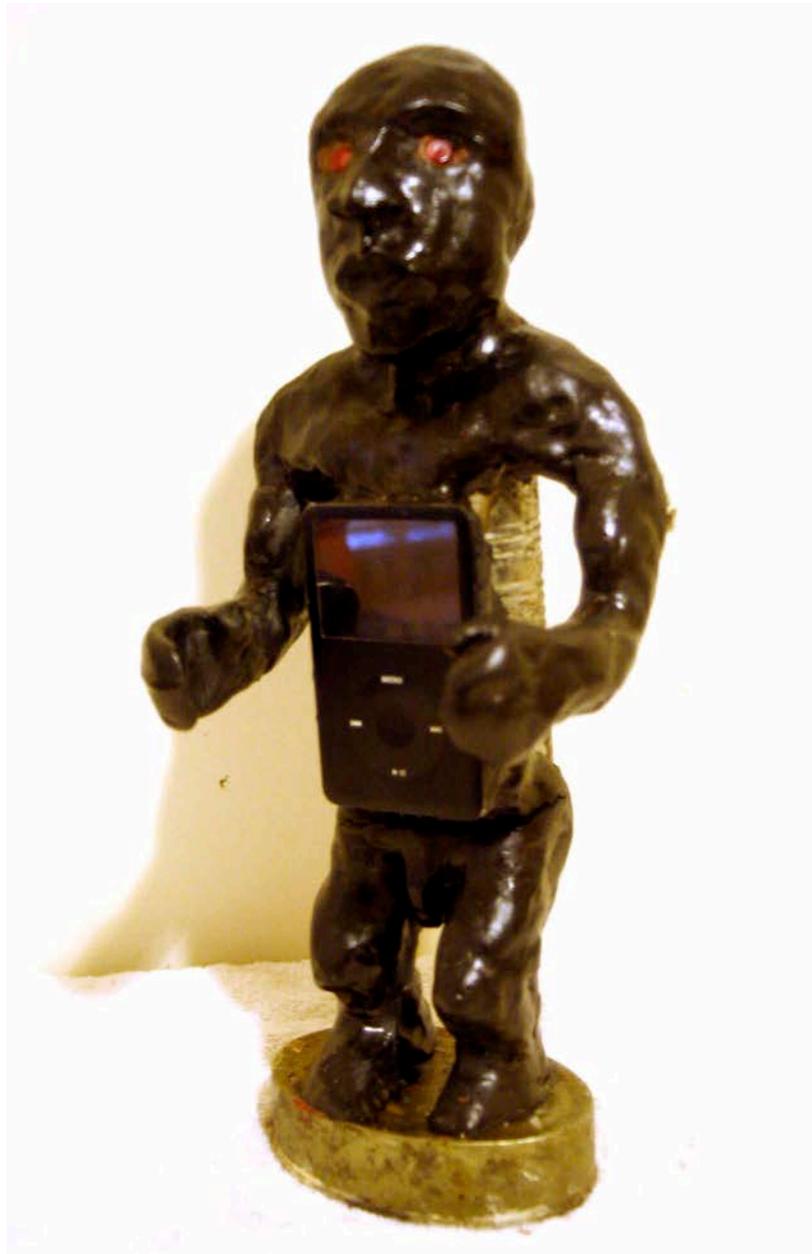
Obatala, The Angel of the immaculate white robes. The white cloth has many connotations. It's an analogy for clean character and innocence, similar to when a baby is born wearing the white caul like a hooded robe. It's also an analogy for clarity of knowledge and insight like when a scientist or a doctor wears the white robes. For Paul Robeson the white robes represented the cultural heights he had reached when he was the first actor of African decent to find fame in the roll of Othello dressed in white robes.

On the works symbolism: Obatala is the Angelic Potter who made these vessels for our souls dwell in. "A Bottle A Spirit" is a homophone for "Obatala's Spirit," which is what he put into every vessel he formed. Obatala is the angel of brains and brawn both of which blessed Paul Robeson. Paul Robeson demonstrated the Obatala quality of being the 500-pound Gorilla that you fear to argue with because of his knowledge and wit. The Football is made of coconut shell one of Obatala's herbs.

A FREE CAN, A MERRY CAN iDOLL

For Nkisi

Ingredients: IPod, tin cans, resin, molasses, 2 red coral beads, twine and a plastic Crate



Most of my work refers specifically to the Yoruba related cultures of West Africa. In this work however I reference the cosmology of the Congo of Central Africa. Congo culture is another Bantu tradition that was deeply retained by African-Americans and a source of many types of the cultural weapons used to fight European-American supremacy.

Nkisi in Congo is a word that refers to medicine or knowledge bought down from heaven by an ancestral soul/saint. The ancestral soul/saint is called a Mojo. The African Sculptures, referred to as Nkisi, that this artwork is based on depicts the heavenly Mojo with Nkisi, from heaven packed in his chest. Protected by a mirror so that anyone trying to disrespect the knowledge/medicine from heaven would only disrespect his or her own reflection.

The Congo word Mojo has actually become a word in our popular culture though few people know what it means. Blues men introduced the word to popular culture. There is a famous story of how Robert Johnson, the great blues man, went down to the crossroads to meet Eshu-Elegba to buy a Mojo hand.

"Papa 'Legba," was what Blues men called Eshu-Elegba, they also called him The Devil. Christians incorrectly identified Eshu-Elegba as the Devil and Yoruba Angels called Orisha

as Gods. The Yoruba are monotheistic and none of The Orisha represents an enemy of God or Evil. Robert Johnson met Elegba at the crossroads and sold/exchanged his soul for a Mojo (Soul/Saint) hand.

What this story describes, using a mix of Bantu traditions, is that Mr. Johnson went to the Angel Eshu for help to learn to play and sing guitar. Eshu responded by sending to him from heaven an ancestral soul/saint hand. The Mojo hand's knowledge or Nkisi would spiritually inspire him to play great. In fact Robert Johnson was one of the first Idols in what would become a long tradition of Rock Idols (Eshu being The first Rock Idol, literally). Robert Johnson was also one of the first blues men to be recorded. Today, we can listen to our iPod to hear The Nkisi that Robert Johnson got from that Mojo Hand sent down from heaven by Eshu.



COCONUT FACED CHAMPIONS RAISE THE BLACK POWER MOJO HAND

For Nkisi and Obi

Ingredients: tin cans, coconut shells, coconut water cans, molasses, Black power glove and a plastic Crate

European-American Supremacists called African-Americans coconuts as a racial slur while in the Caribbean the enslaved Yoruba recognized the coconut as being such a magical herb that it could replace Kola nut (called Obi) as the herb of divination. European-American Supremacists often chose qualities that African traditionalists would view as strengths to be the source of their scorn. Thick lips, large butts, primitive drum rhythms, beastly gyrating dances and abstract fetishes were all reasons to hate African-Americans and their culture at the beginning of The Jubilee century. Today European-Americans overwhelmingly renounce supremacy and embrace many African aesthetic qualities as the signature of modern taste.

In this work, I'm celebrating the Black Power movement as a multi-generational collaboration. The boomer generation of African-Americans was guided by the Soul/Saint, Mojo Hand of all the past generations going back to Africa to shrug off the insults and abuses so that there could be real pride in the Bantu aesthetic.



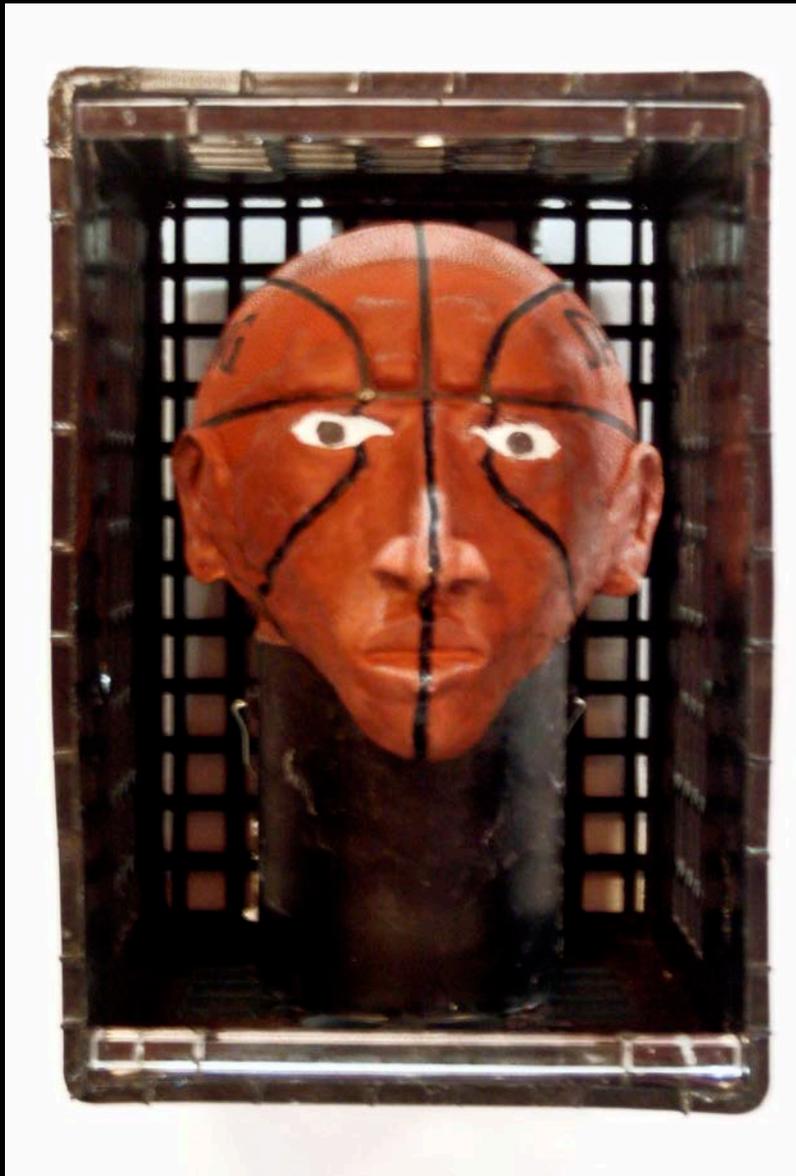
SOL'SAIN'T BOB MERRILY HAS GOT HIS SOCKA FACE ON

For Dada and Bob Marley

Ingredients: 1 Paint can, a soccer ball, steel wool, resin and a plastic Crate

Dada is the Angel of Dreadlocks. When Dada was born he had thick woolly beads of hair that resembled cowry shells, the ancient Yoruba's form of money. The Yoruba saw the baby Dada as a mind so full of game and profound that it was spouting money before Dada was even born. It became a tradition not to cut or unravel the hair of any child born with a hairy head because for Dada's children that represents their riches. Dada went on to be a great artist and musician and earned a crown of cowries that were tied into his long Dreadlocks.

One of the praise names I have heard Bob Marley called by Jamaican Rastafarians is Don Dada. Bob Marley did don the hairstyle of Dada, the hairstyle of creative spiritual and material prosperity. In this work, instead of using white cowries against black dreadlocks, the traditional contrast that connotes Dada, I used a soccer ball, Marley's favorite sport.



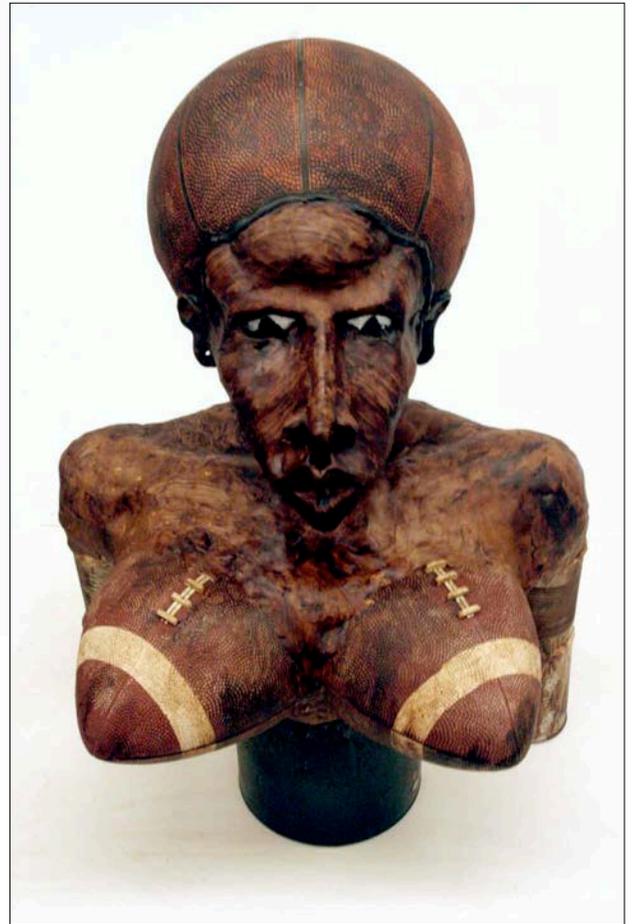
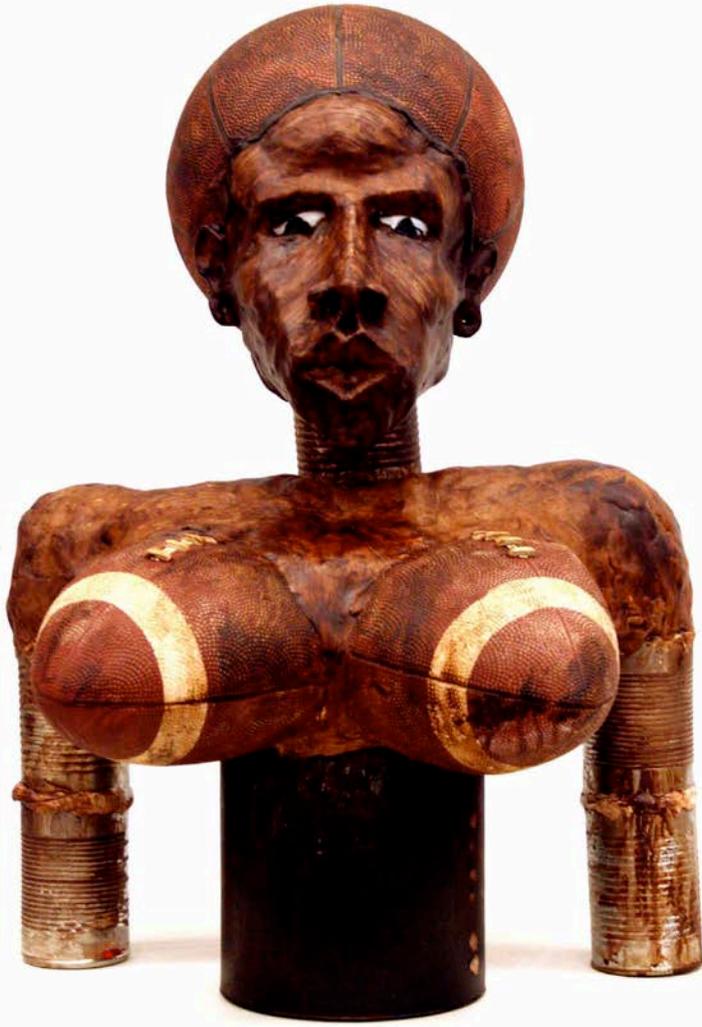
A FREE CAN, A MERRY CAN'S BALDING BALLER

For Eshu-Elegba

Ingredients: a Spalding basketball, 1 paint can, resin and a plastic Crate

Eshu in Yoruba means the force or angel that gathers things into a ball. In other words, Eshu is the Angelic Baller. In fact the black seams of a basketball form a variation of the traditional symbol or signature for Eshu-Elegba.

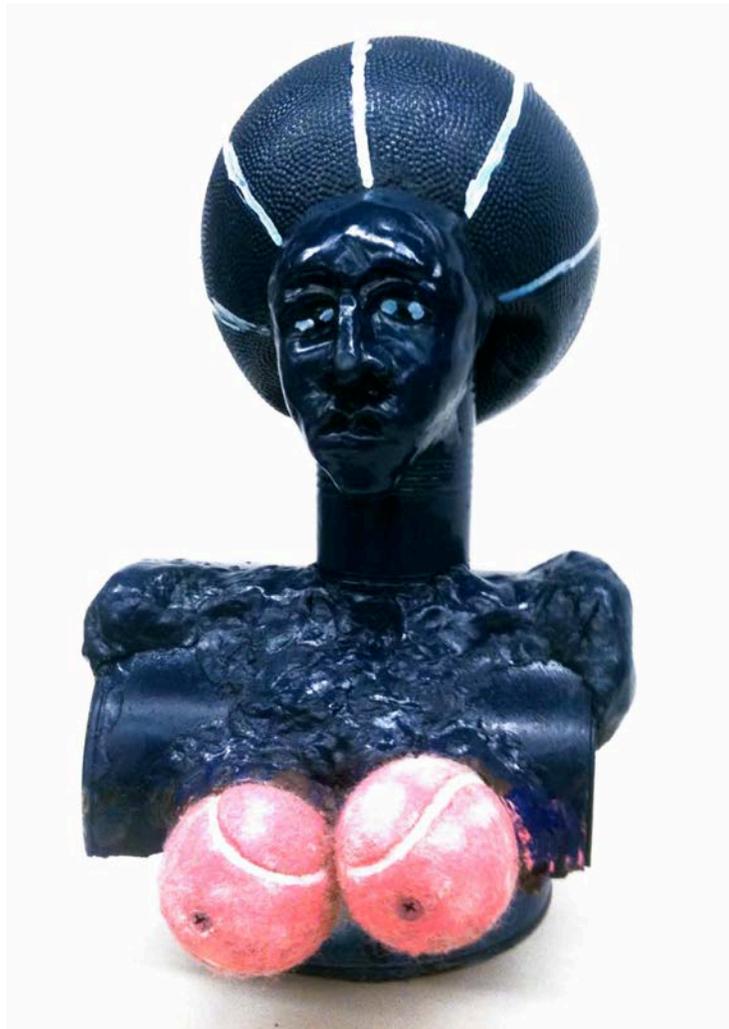
The basketball used in this work is a brand called Spalding. The title has many homophonic meanings like most of my titles do. Two of them are: "African-American's Balding Baller" and "African-American's Spalding Baller." There is a tradition of punning in Yoruba that is associated with Elegba because he is the Angel of words, of how sounds symbols and common experience merge to become meaning. Yoruba is a tonal language so very similar sounding words can mean different things. What is interesting is that the different meanings a sound can have are related to each other. Yoruba poets often write lines that can have multiple analogous meanings. It is the magic of Eshu-Elegba's words that makes this very complicated type of punning possible. My titles seek to find Eshu-Elegba's magic in the English language.



MY AFRO-DEITY GET'S DOWN AND DIRTY IN CONTACT SPORTS

Ingredients: FootBall, BasketBall, House paint and soup cans, Burnt Siena, Molasses and Ping-Pong Balls

Onile means owner of the house, in this context it means the earth itself. Onile is the Angel of the ground and everything under it. Ogun, the farmer and Ogun, the miner both has their way with her. Humanity, in general, fights over her and passes her around like a game ball.



MY AFRO-DEITY GOT GAME LIKE VENUS AND SERENA

For Yewa and Yemoja

Ingredients: House Paint Can, Basketball, Breast cancer Awareness Tennis balls

I consider myself a culture soldier on the frontline. As in French Avant-garde, one of the frontline issues that my work confronts is the general ignorance popular culture has regarding Bantu cultures. I think that it is important that most people are familiar with both the Greek and Roman name for the God Aphrodite/Venus. This popular familiarity is necessary for a communal insight into our own culture that is deeply influenced by those ancient cultures. I feel the same can be said of Bantu cultural influence on modern culture.

I use Yoruba and Congo concepts in my work to try to familiarize my audience with a small part of the Bantu world. The references I make are deeply entrenched in popular cultural ideas that were built into American culture since Columbus. African-American Culture soldiers, like myself, who in the face of laws made specifically to band Bantu culture, somehow retained it, and weave it, into the cultural identity of the USA. In this era of an African-American President, I work towards us as a country to Sankofa, an Akan term, that means go back and get it. Go back and get, not just Bantu culture, but all the cultures that were dismissed, outlawed or all but destroyed during the era of European Supremacy.

Each Pre-Columbian culture round the world was deeply injured by Supremacist philosophy including European culture. Other than a healthy Earth, the greatest legacy we could leave for the future is for culture



soldiers to weave the concepts and words of the multitudes of human cultures into popular cultural products. I see this as the only option to heal the scars of supremacist rule. If the only contact with these cultures is in the museum then we aren't keeping them alive for our descendants.

I WAS A FREE KING, A MERRY KING IN LONDON IN 2011

Paradise Row Gallery flew me out to London in June 2011 for a week to join a show called "Beneath the pavement, the beach." Guillaume Paris and Mick Finch curated the show. The title is a reference to French protest graffiti that, implied social upheaval can make society crumble, like sand under the street can make the pavement crumble. I was invited to do serial works in London based on the works from a series called, "Strange Fruit From The Concrete Jungle." "Strange Fruit From The Concrete Jungle" was first exhibited at Momenta in Brooklyn 2005. Here is a selection of some of the concepts that I reworked and recreated in London.

CONCRETE COVERED COCONUT CONFINEMENT CELLS

For Eshu-Elegba

Ingredients: Coconuts, Brass wire, Palm leaf and Concrete

"Strange Fruit From The Concrete Jungle" is a body of work addressing the similarity between the Jim Crow penal system and the penal systems of modern urban centers. The song Strange Fruit, that Billie Holiday made famous, was a protest song associating the fruit hanging on trees with lynched bodies. In this work, the strange fruit is covered in concrete Elegba's material. Elegba is usually made of what the street is made of and the bars form the abstracted face of Elegba. For people, the color of a coconut the streets became a trap that could reach up and smother you whole, to hang high in some Prison. Prisons that are usually the biggest employer in some European-American Suburban or rural area were the same street drugs were sold and used but European-Americans were much less likely to be policed for it or even penalized as badly if caught.





FOR ALL THE SOL'S IN DA BLOCK (SOL'S CINDER BLOCK)

For Eshu-Elegba

Ingredients: Brass wire and Ciderblocks

Both the cinder blocks and the souls in da block are Elegba's. This work refers to the block I grew up on. My block on Halsey Street, in Bushwick, Brooklyn, was called a million dollar block in the 90's. It was called a million dollar block because so many people from the block had been sent to prison that it cost the state more than a million dollars a year just to imprison the convicts from my block alone. These works unfortunately resonate well in London because communities of color are also disproportionately filling their prisons. In fact what can only be called race riots, in response to being over policed and under employed burned London the month after I left.



WHEN THE BILLIE CLUB'S WINGS TO CROWN THE SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE QUEEN

For Yemoja and Billie Holiday

Ingredients: Billie club and Gift Shop Queen Crown

The Billie club swings even on a Holiday. This work is for Billie Holiday as well as Oshun Brassy Angel of society and Yemoja the blue angel of rules and regulations. The Brass Wings from an American eagle flag finial Represents Oshun as Society itself. It's in the name of society that the police swing violence with the blessing of Yemoja's Rules and Regulations.

When a minority become the enemy of a supremacist society individuals like Billie Holiday have to absorb the pain of society sanctioned police abuse for her heroine usage. Laws specifically written to abate minority culture like the NYC cabaret laws also curtailed her business. In London, The Queen is the symbol of society like The Federal Eagle in The USA. Due to the special relationship between the two countries we share many of the same Blue laws that are often applied to marginalize abuse and incarcerate people of color in the States and England. Society will realize that righteous puritanical laws against drug use and culture have to high a human price and to low a pay off.

This country learned that lesson when they tried to outlaw alcohol for similar moral reasons. The war on drugs has been basically a war on communities of color around the world.

All of society is slowly realizing the generational pain that righteous supremacist cultural rules and regulations have imposed on us all. Culture Soldiers like Billie Holiday have used their gifts and the stories of their lives to change and move Yemoja and Oshun.

SOME BROTHAS GET OVER CUZ THEY CAME WITH BIG BALLS AND LONG GAME, BUT THE SAME TRAITS THAT WON THEM FAME ARE USED TO BLACK BALL THEIR NAME. THEN THEIR FAME WON'T RISE OR FALL IT WILL JUST HANG LIKE A BASKET BALL IN A KOONS SCULPTURE OFF THE WALL.

For Eshu Elegba

Ingredients: Baseball Bat, Basket balls and Basketball net

This sculpture didn't make it into the show in London but it is a favorite of mine. Originally done in 1993, this sculpture and verse is for The Angel of Balls and Game Eshu-Elegba.

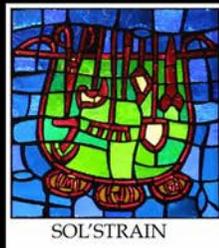


SOL'STYLES IN SOL'SCRYPT

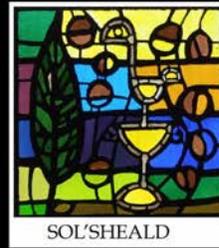
16 SOL'S FROM THE HOUSE OF THE RISING SOL



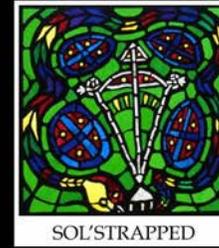
SOL'S FOR ELEGBA



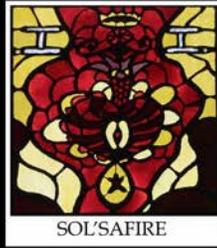
SOL'S FOR OGUN



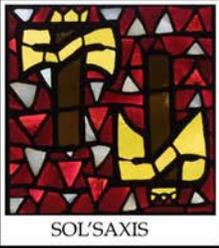
SOL'S FOR OSAINYIN



SOL'S FOR OCHOSSI



SOL'S FOR OSHUN



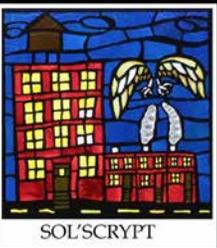
SOL'S FOR CHANGO



SOL'S FOR YEMAYA



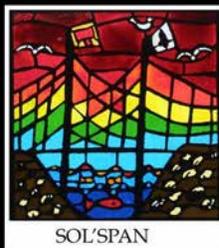
SOL'S FOR OBATALA



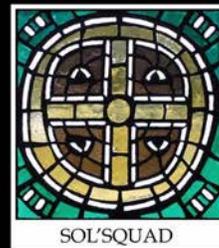
SOL'S FOR OYA



SOL'S FOR ACHE'



SOL'S FOR OSHUNMARE



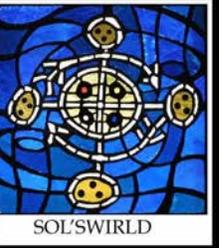
SOL'S FOR IFA



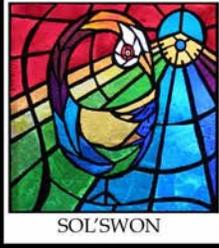
SOL'S FOR HIP HOP



SOL'S FOR EGUN



SOL'S FOR NKISI



SOL'S FOR SANKOFA

SOL'STYLES IN SOL'SCRYPT

For IFA

Ingredients: Digital print on paper

Art Space published this Print for Rush Arts Gallery's 15-year anniversary show that I participated in the fall of 2011. This Print features 16 images from The Halsey Street elevated subway station on the J line in Bushwick, Brooklyn. The images are photos of the mosaic glass windows in that station that I designed for Arts for Transit. The 16 designs are for the 16 Odu. Odu or Ifa is the divination text of the Yoruba. There are 16 possibilities or concepts that combine to make 256 related possibilities that describe most situations and how to navigate them. My design seeks to place this system into a context that is more familiar to popular culture, Tarot Cards.

THE HOUSE OF THE RISING SOL

4min. 48sec.

Che're is what Yoruba artists call it when an artists present their body of work. Che're literally translates to "Do game" or "play game" in African-American slang it's when the artists "put their game down." In Nigeria traditional artists haven't put their game down on a concept or an issue unless they've dealt with it in every medium. The issues have to be played with through sculpture, 2 dimensional symbols, dance, music, poetry, and fashion. This tradition was maintained in the Americas as carnival. What is interesting is that so many contemporary fine artists are moving from the European tradition of medium specialization and drifting to the Bantu aesthetic of medium fusion.

Since 2001, I have been producing regularly in all mediums adding on to my portfolio of music videos, where I can really put my game down. This song will be the feature in my next video.

My whole body of work is for THE HOUSE OF THE RISING SOL'SCAR NAVAL a carnival for the owners of the naval scar. It is an event where SOL'SAIN'T MANY KINS WILL COME MARCHING IN FROM KINGDOM COME. This song and all my work are just steps to make that carnival a reality. This song is also about the culture wars I fought at Cooper Union and Yale during the 80's and 90's.

I perform vocals, Mike Miller on guitar, Phillip Racz on bass, and on congas, Orlando Hall, a sacred Bata drum player in the Yoruba community of NYC and the father of one of my friends from my block that did 15 years in the Penitentiary. The cover song we are doing was a cover song when Leadbelly did it in the 40's, a generation before the Animals version that most people assume was their original song. Earlier versions of the song imply that The House of The Rising Sun was a Traditional African Religious house In New Orleans one of the cities in the US that is famous for retained African cultural traditions.

In My version The House of The Rising Sol, the second verse tells the story of Chango, Life on earth, and my Biography by analogy. Chango was born from The Angel of the Volcano Aganju and the Angel of the Ocean Yemoja. Many scientists believe Life was born in that trial by fire where lava meets the sea. My Mother always had a cool detached parenting style coupled with waves of nurturing sometimes-violent emotions. She was in perennial conflict with my father who when at peace was nurturing like the earth around a volcano but once he was disturbed, an eruption guaranteed a scorched earth policy. The lyrics like the rest of my work are multi-layered puns or homophones that marry the stories of African Nature angels with the reality of life in The United States.

THE HOUSE OF THE RISING SOL (SOLSNOW MO YO)

[listen to audio](#)

SOL'SAX

Trevor Jemal Holtham
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BORN

1969 Kings County Hospital, NY

EDUCATION

1993-1995 Master of Fine Arts, Yale university, New Haven, CT
1987-1992 Bachelor of Fine Arts, Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art, New York, NY
1987-1990 Hochschule der Kuenste, Guest Student, Berlin, Germany
Cooper Union Saturday Program, New York, NY
Arts Students' League, New York, NY,
Leonia H.S., Leonia N.J.,
Phillipa Schuyler School for the gifted and talented, Kings County, NY

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

Solo:

2011 **Yes We Can, A Free Can, A Merry Can: 2nd Annual Juneteenth Jubilee**
Bedford Stuyvesant YMCA Bed-stuy Brooklyn

2005 **SOL'SNYPD, Strange fruit from the Concrete Jungle**
Momenta Art, Williamsburg, Kings County

2004 **Chain Link Theory**
Kenny Schacter Gallery, West Village, NYC

2003 **Rock On SOL'SHEAD**
Silverstein Gallery, Chelsea, NYC

2002 **These Hand Me Down Black 'N' Blue Jeans**
Project Room, P.S. 1 MoMA, Long Island City, Queens

2001 **Hood Flags**
New York City Library, Grand Army Plaza, NYC

1997 **The Wild Herb of Bushwick Presents: My Tea Blessed Heads of Kings County**
Rush Arts Gallery, Chelsea, NYC

1995 **Recognize the Real**
Silverstein Gallery, Soho, NYC

- 1994 **Entrenched in the University, Out to take the Bread and Bakery**
African American House, Yale University, New Haven, CT
- 1991 **Underground Houses**
Cooper Union, Great Hall Gallery, East Village, NYC
- Group:
2011 **15 x 15: 15th Anniversary Exhibition**
Rush Arts Gallery, Chelsea, NYC
- Beneath The Pavement The Beach**
Paradise Row, Chelsea, London, England
- 2010 **American Ship (A merry Kinship)**
A Juneteenth Jubilee Curated by SOL'SAX, Junto, Bushwick Brooklyn
- 2007 **A Jamaica, Queens Thing: Rap and the Crack Era in South Jamaica**
The Jamaica Center for Arts and Learning Queens NY
- For the Love of the Game: Race and Sport in America**
The Amistad Center for Art & Culture New Haven CT
- SOL'SAX and Dread Scott: Life, Liberty and Pursuit...**
Karl Drerup Art Gallery, Plymouth State University NH
- 2006 **The Pulse of New Brooklyn: A review of Contemporary art in New York**
MoCADA Brooklyn NY
- 2005 **Make It Now**
Sculpture Center, Long Island City, Queens
- 2004 **Open House: Working in Brooklyn**
Brooklyn Museum of Art, Brooklyn, NY
- Armory show**
Kenny Schachter Contemporary
- 2003 **Armory show**
Kenny Schachter Contemporary
- Scope**
Silverstein Gallery, Miami
- Confrontation or Commentary: the Role of Political Art in Society**
Nathan Cummings Foundation, Midtown, NYC
- This is Lagos: Yabis Night, Music and Fela**
Skoto Gallery, Chelsea, NYC

2002

I Love New York

Galeria Ferran Cano, Barcelona, Spain

Bird's Eye View

Grand Army Plaza Gallery, Brooklyn, NY

Tensionisms

Kenny Schacter's Rove, West Village, NYC

Shine

An Internet Gallery for Amnesty International and Downtown Arts Festival

The Black Arts Festival

The Puck Building, Soho, NYC

2001

Bigger than Hip Hop

Rush Arts, Chelsea, NYC

2000

Jackin 'n' Robin Sons

Downtown Arts Festival, Chelsea, NYC

New York Now

The Museum of the City of New York, El Barrio, NYC

The Black Arts Festival

The Puck Building, Soho, NYC

Existence

Silverstein Gallery, Chelsea, NYC

Ypay2K

Trans Hudson Gallery, West Village, NYC

1999

The Ecstatic

Trans Hudson, West Village, NYC

Paradise 8

Exit Art, Soho, NY

Rhythm, pattern, Color: the Drum

Grand Army Plaza Gallery, Brooklyn, NY

Pavement: Inside/Outside

Martinez Gallery, Brooklyn, NY

Straight No Chaser

Puffin Room, Noho, NY

1998

The 1998 Challenge Exhibition

Skylight Gallery, Brooklyn, NY

- 1996 **National Black Arts Festival (Invitational)**
Georgia State University, Atlanta, GA
- Bead Body and Soul** (Art and Light in the Yoruba Universe)
UCLA, Fowler Museum, Los Angeles, CA
(traveling exhibition arriving at Studio Museum in Harlem in June 2000)
- Social History Show V**
Bronx River Art Center and Gallery, Bronx, NY
- 1995 **Two by Two, M.F.A. Thesis Show**
Yale University Art School Gallery, New Haven, CT
- 1994 **Tenth Anniversary Outdoor Sculpture Show**
Socrates Sculpture Garden, Long Island City, NY
- 1992 **Sankofa**
Annex, West Village, NYC

SELECTED AWARDS, GRANTS

- 2008 Halsey St Station on the J train Permanent Public Commission "Art's for Transit"
- 2005 New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship in Sculpture
- 2004 Guggenheim Fellowship in Sculpture
- 2001 MTA Arts for Transit (public art commission for Halsey St. subway station)
- 1996-1997 Artist in Residence Socrates Sculpture Park, Queens, NY
- 1995 Rockefeller Traveling Grant
Yale International Sculptor award
- 1994 Phillip Morris Fellow
- 1994-1996 College Arts Association Graduate Fellow
- 1992-1993 Yale Sculpture Scholarship
Artist in Residence Bronx Council of the Arts at Longwood Arts Project
- 1993 Ruth Gutman Memorial Honor for the Excellence in Sculpture:
Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art