

# PATRICIA SWEETOW GALLERY

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By Jessica Dawson

## Jefferson Pinder, 37

Video artist

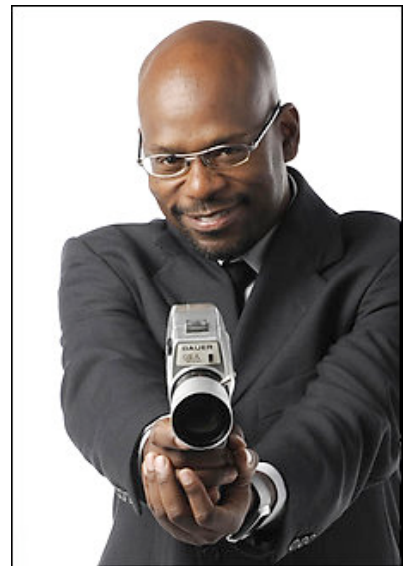
Thank you, Jefferson Pinder, for challenging this painting-friendly city's oil-on-canvas habit. The District native plants himself -- and his blackness -- in almost every frame of his racially charged video works. "I play the role of social scientist and specimen," Pinder says, "to get beyond the cliched ways of looking at ethnicity."

One of Pinder's recent videos, "Juke," showed black people lip-syncing to "white" songs by the likes of David Bowie, Radiohead and Dolly Parton.

Pinder grew up on Capitol Hill and in Silver Spring. Now a resident of Hyattsville and member of the University of Maryland arts faculty, Pinder rues Washington's reputation. "I get so angry when people only want to see D.C. as a hub of politics," he says. "There is a cultural scene that is rich and distinct."

Call him an ambassador of sorts. He's secured entry into major national exhibitions, including shows at the Studio Museum in Harlem and Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, Conn. Right now he appears in "After 1968: Contemporary Artists and the Civil Rights Legacy" at the High Museum of Art in Atlanta and the National Portrait Gallery's "Recognize! Hip Hop and Contemporary Portraiture."

Next on the docket: a performance in Mexico City's subway. This winter, Pinder will strap speakers to his body and ride that city's underground hawking mix-tapes for 10 pesos a pop. Though modeled on established commuter-line commerce, Pinder's performance subverts tradition by selling black music exclusively -- from Mos Def to Muddy Waters. As usual, Pinder's goal is major. Says the artist: "I hope to redefine what blackness is."



(Bill O'leary - The Washington Post)