

PATRICIA SWEETOW GALLERY

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DAVID HUFFMAN, *Floating World*



Ernest Jolly, *The Labor Party*

PATRICIA SWEETOW GALLERY is pleased to present Bay Area artists' **David Huffman**, *Floating World*, paintings; and **Ernest Jolly**, *The Labor Party*, sculpture, drawings and installation. Exhibition dates are January 5 through February 11, 2012. The artists' reception is Thursday, January 5, from 5:30 - 7:30 pm.

In 1997 David Huffman began painting the image of the Minstrel, which by 2003 morphed from Blackface to Black explorers in spacesuits. The explorers, referred to as Traumanauts were depicted as migrants – without home, without borders, perpetually traveling in celestial space.

In 2005, Huffman introduced the basketball, painting it as a pyramid, floating nebula, or playful game of sport. The basketball quickly transformed, becoming the Traumanauts' altar of hope and despair, offering eternal salvation or certain degradation. Fast forward to 2011, and the current exhibition, *Floating World* where the basketball remains the harbinger of the Traumanauts and their epic battles, but as Huffman says, "...they are now understood as part of the underlying structure".

Huffman's new paintings continue to talk the politics of race, power and conflict, but instead of figures floating on an abstract ground, the underpainting has come forward. Within this vast terrain of luminous brushwork and pourings, Huffman has reframed the basketball as a stunning metaphor of dissociated spheres, an evolving vision of dissolution, floating in and amongst the play of paint. Kenneth Baker says of Huffman's new paintings, "In these pictures, Huffman uses the basketball - distinguished from more numerous monochrome circles only by a few lines - as a symbol of African American social elevation, euphoria and, potentially, of a transfigured world. Huffman has reinvented the abstract pictorial space of color-field painting as a field of dreams, not forgetting their flip side, nightmares: See his titles. He demonstrates a sweet and confident artistic economy..."

David Huffman's work gained national attention during the The Studio Museum in Harlem's celebrated *Freestyle* exhibition in 2001. Huffman was recently included in Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, *Bay Area Now 6*, along with an exhibition funded by the NEA at the San Francisco Art Commission Gallery. Huffman was the recipient of the Artadia Foundation Award in 2006, and the Fleishhacker Foundation Eureka Fellowship in 2007. In November 2008, Huffman was a panel speaker at *Transformations: New Directions in Black Art*, the 3rd Annual Conference for African American Art, hosted by the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA) and the W.E.B. DuBois Institute for African and African-American Research at Harvard University. Exhibitions include the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London and the Institute of International Visual Arts, London; CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts, San Francisco; New Langton Arts, San Francisco; Santa Monica Museum of Art; de Saisset Museum at Santa Clara University; Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco; The Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento; and The Luggage Store, San Francisco. Huffman's work has been reviewed and written about in *Frieze*, *Artforum*, *Art Papers*, *Flash Art*, *The San Francisco Chronicle*, *The New York Times*, *The International Review of African American Art*, *NY Arts*, *Art Journal*, and the *San Francisco Bay Guardian*.

PSG is pleased to welcome **Ernest Jolly** in his second solo exhibition, *The Labor Party*. *The Labor Party* is an exploration of the relationship of the black agricultural worker in the Southern United States before the First World War.

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Jolly has crafted a poignant installation that gives life to the plight of the laborer in the South. The installation begins with a horizontal pastel drawing, divided into 3 quadrants, two night skies representing pre-dawn to night, and a yellow panel between referencing the sun. The title of the drawing, "Can't See To Can't See", is the response a field laborer gives to describe the length of their working day, sun-up to sun-down. As you move through the installation you view hand-crafted "speed" punching bags sewn with leather and thread, some bursting at the seams. The bags are standing on a grey concrete floor, with one bag mounted on a strip of mirror, "Staggered" between plexiglass. The punching bags represent the hero of the field laborer, a Black Prize Fighter, whose strength was respected in a world where the laborer was powerless. If only for a brief moment, and with great cathartic justice, The Prize Fighter could break the color barrier, by competing with, and potentially beating the white opponent.

Many laborers desperately tried to escape the horrific conditions of the South, often referred to as "Hell", and escape North, to "Heaven", hoping life would be greatly improved. Ernest has provided a Nkisi, *Nkisi Luna* for their safe journey. Nkisi were spiritual objects made by various peoples of the Congo to invoke supernatural power. The nails driven into the Nkisi awaken the spirit world for the purpose at hand.

Migration and Transformation are central themes of the exhibition. "Carry Me Home", a wheelbarrow crafted from plexiglass and metal, become a spectral tool of labor. The wheelbarrow is transformed into an elegant instrument of spiritual delivery, "passing to the other side", where death becomes a release from the harsh realities of life, and the other side completes the cycle of life. Casting stars on the walls and objects, is a disco ball half covered with yellow flocking. The globe, while being a ubiquitous object at dance halls, also gives voice to the specific dance "Limbo" - dancers move under a pole that is gradually lowered from chest level, and when cleared is considered the triumph of life over death. In Jolly's "Limbo" the transformation of hope, life, and place are revolving in his disco sun, casting an eclipse in a profound struggle for life.

Ernest Jolly is a musician, and visual artist who combines his interests in unique ways. His installations bring together sculpture, sound and light using common building materials, such as concrete, wood & wire - his exploration of material and form is inspired by social and ecological issues. The work for this exhibition began at his residency at The Luggage Store in 2010. Recent exhibitions include *Natural Reaction*, San Francisco Art Commission Gallery; *Depth of Surface*, San Francisco State University and *The Alchemist Suite*, Oakland Museum of California, Gallery 555.

Please visit our website at: www.patriciasweetowgallery.com
For further information and press materials
please contact the gallery at 415-788-5126.
Gallery hours: Tuesday through Saturday 11:00 - 5:30 pm
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