Harlem Art Speaks! at pop-up

October 9, 2012

Normally, we connect art with music, especially jazz, in Harlem galleries. But an imaginative new show *Art Speaks!* featured in a hot new pop-up gallery, pairs visual art with theater.

*Blacken the Bubble*, a theatrical “affirmative action comedy” examines post-racial America. The play follows a Black guy who refuses to “blacken the bubble” on his employment application at a firm that hired him to fix their diversity numbers. Presented by *Art-in-FLUX Harlem*, New York’s hottest movement for pop-up art galleries, *Art Speaks!* which opened last week, will feature the play’s cast and participating artists in a community dialogue *Art and Identity: Obligation or Choice*, Saturday, October 13, 3-5pm, 118th street & 7th avenue (Adam Clayton Powell Blvd.) The moderator will be NYU Prof. Michael Dinwiddie.

Inspired by playwright Eric Lockley’s farce about race, class, gender and sexuality, each artist featured in *Art Speaks!* tells their own mixed-media narrative about identity. All the art on display, created by artists who live or work in Harlem, is for sale and a portion is donated to Harlem children’s programs. A mounted video screen shows excerpts from the theatrical production.

“The community response since the show opened last week has been wonderful. We believe that most were thrilled by the amazing ways theater and art can intersect and by the
diverse artists assembled by our curator Daniel Pizarro,”’ said Leanne Stella, Art in Flux/Harlem founder/director. “We are thrilled to create positive use of vacant retail spaces that stimulate Harlem’s vibrant emerging art scene, commerce and community.”

Senegalese artist Idou Ndoye’s *Facial Scarifications* deals with African scarifications meant to decorate, beautify or convey complex messages. Such marking can also identify one’s specific tribe, ethnic group or societal rank, he explained.

Dominican artist Leonardo Benzant described his *Kalunga Inbetween World Series - Sunset, Twilight and Tierra* as an allusion to the Middle Passage. With its straight line/rod bound by colorful beads and fabric, each of his mixed-media pieces reflected a quiet and rhythmic Afro-centric sensibility.

The other notable art work on display that explores identity via race, culture and gender included: Margaret Rose Vendryes’ *African Diva Project*; Jill Knox’s *Black at Heart* and *Action: 1964*; Ivan Forde’s *De I section*, improvisational spatial collages; Beatrice Lebreton’s *Still I Rise*, inspired by Maya Angelou’s poem; and Andre Woolery’s *President Obama Wet Paint*. *Art Speaks!* will be on display through October 26. *Blacken the Bubble* will be presented October 16-21 at the Harlem School of the Arts (HSA) Theater.