

# Harlem Art Speaks! at pop-up

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Art Speaks! explores theme of 'identity' and how theater and visual art intersect. (Sylvia Wong Lewis)



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Art Speaks!

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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**.