

David  
Hammons:  
Body Prints,  
1968–1979







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The Drawing Center

# David Hammons

## Body Prints, 1968–1979

Introduction by

**Laura Hoptman**

Contributions by

**Linda Goode Bryant**

**Senga Nengudi**

**Bruce W. Talamon**





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# An Introduction: David Hammons's Body Prints

Laura Hoptman

8 *David Hammons: Body Prints, 1968-1979* brings together a group of David Hammons's (b. 1943) early works on paper, most of which were created over the course of a decade in Los Angeles beginning in 1968. Although Hammons would subsequently become internationally known for his three-dimensional assemblages, performances, and large-scale installations, this first series consists of monoprints created with impressions of the artist's own body combined with silkscreens and collaged found objects.<sup>1</sup> This pivotal group of works on paper is not unknown; in fact, one might argue that they are some of Hammons's best-known works in a career that spans fifty years and counting. Yet this is the first exhibition and publication to focus exclusively on the body prints and the subtypes within that group of works.<sup>2</sup> Together, the thirty-two works highlighted in this presentation argue for the ingeniousness of Hammons's series—a project which introduced the major themes of a fifty-year career that is central to the history of postwar American art.

David Hammons arrived in Los Angeles from Springfield, Illinois, in 1963, and at age twenty, began his studies at Otis College of Art under the Social Realist artist and commercial illustrator

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- 1 Later body prints were made using other people's bodies, but they were always created under Hammons's supervision.
  - 2 The body prints have previously been shown in a number of group exhibitions. Notable among them are *Three Graphic Artists* at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (1971), which featured eleven body prints alongside the work of Charles White and Timothy Washington; *L.A. Object and David Hammons Body Prints* at Tilton Gallery (2006), which presented thirty body prints together with the work of Hammons's contemporaries and collaborators in Los Angeles; and *David Hammons Yves Klein / Yves Klein David Hammons* at the Aspen Art Museum (2014), which featured a variety of Hammons works, including body prints.

Charles White. In the development of his technique of using a body to make a one-to-one likeness, Hammons was inspired by a number of sources including the use of naked female models as living brushes by the French artist Yves Klein (1928-1962); the assemblage and collage practices of Angeleno artists Noah Purifoy (1917-2004), John Outterbridge (1933-2020), John Riddle (1933-2002), and Betye Saar (b. 1926); and the performance work of Studio Z, a cohort of artists that included Hammons's studio mate Senga Nengudi (b. 1943). Hammons was also deeply affected by Marcel Duchamp's readymade art object and use of the pun to expose language as the unstable information system that it is. He connected all of these ideas, gaming them out in two dimensions, and positioning himself—his own body—as an actor in a series of timely vignettes.

Hammons began his body print series during a time when he was surrounded by a community of Black Los Angeles artists and activists who, by the mid 1960s, had created a pivotal exhibition, education, and mutual support system in churches, libraries, furniture show rooms, community centers, and subsequently Black-owned galleries like Brockman Gallery, run by brothers Dale Brockman Davis and Alonzo Davis; Ankrum Gallery, founded by Joan Wheeler Ankrum and William Challee; Gallery 32, founded by Suzanne Jackson; and The Gallery, founded by the artist and art historian Samella Lewis.<sup>3</sup> It was in these spaces that the visual arts expression of the Black Arts Movement was born around 1965 and thrived until the mid 1970s. A phenomenon primarily based in Los Angeles and New York, but active in other American cities like Chicago, the Black Arts Movement encompassed music, theater, and literature, as well as visual art made by artists united by political engagement, activism, separatism, and the desire to build and define, in the art historian Kellie Jones's words, "a black aesthetic."<sup>4</sup>

In the visual arts in Los Angeles, the Watts neighborhood was home to Simon Rodia's extraordinary Watts Towers and also to the Watts Tower Art Center, an art space established in 1964 and directed by the sculptor Noah Purifoy. Purifoy, along with John Riddle, John Outterbridge, and Betye Saar, made sculptural assemblages, often using discarded items and materials found on the street. Hammons showed his work in the context of this group

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3 Connie Rogers Tilton, "Introduction," in Connie Rogers Tilton and Lindsay Charlwood, eds., *L.A. Object & David Hammons Body Prints* (New York: Tilton Gallery, 2006), 16.

4 Kellie Jones, "Black Art West: Thoughts on Art in Los Angeles," in *L.A. Object*, 21.

of *assembleurs* who became his friends. A unique conflation of printmaking and collage, the body prints synthesize developments in the technique of composition with found objects, or *assemblage*, an artistic language born in Europe among the Dadaists between the World Wars, but developed most notably by artists in Los Angeles and the Bay Area beginning in the late 1950s. Influenced perhaps by the postwar concretist ideal of creating a non-metaphoric kind of art that emphasized the thing in itself, artists like Noah Purifoy in Los Angeles and Bruce Conner in San Francisco used detritus from the ruins of city neighborhoods to create potent sculptural commentaries on the violent aspects of urban poverty. Fashioned from the physical evidence left from the Watts Uprising in 1965 (in the case of Purifoy), or the flinders remaining from the savage destruction of Black neighborhoods in San Francisco in the name of “urban renewal” (as did Conner), their works are an important part of the complex art historical context from which Hammons’s body print series emerged.

Later in the decade, Maren Hassinger (b. 1947), Houston Conwill (1947-2016), and Senga Nengudi would become a part of this group. Nengudi shared Hammons’s studio on Slauson Avenue, and they periodically collaborated: Nengudi lent a hand in the body print process, and Hammons participated in several of Nengudi’s performances with the artists of Studio Z, a group of performers who engaged in spontaneous actions and included Conwill, Hassinger, Ulysses Jenkins, and the photographer Franklin Parker. Unlike the *assembleurs* who were almost a generation older, the participants in Studio Z were aiming to expand the notion of sculpture into time and space through performance. Hassinger described to Kellie Jones what she called these artists’ shared “impulse to take the sculpture and expand it so that the idea exists in time and includes movement and includes people, sound and voices, and things.”<sup>5</sup> Hammons’s body print project has roots in assemblage, but it was also performative in nature, and understanding its genesis benefits from a Studio Z context.

Although the body prints began as a solo endeavor, by the early 1970s, other participants, like Nengudi, and subsequently, Linda Goode Bryant, who would become the most important early curator of Hammons’s work, helped him make them. Bryant had been

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5 Maren Hassinger (from May 1996 interview), quoted in Kellie Jones, “Black Art West: Thoughts on Art in Los Angeles,” 48.

based in New York since 1972, first working at The Studio Museum in Harlem, and subsequently opening the Just Above Midtown (JAM) gallery in 1974 in the Fuller Building on 57th Street, the premier location at the time for blue chip contemporary art galleries.<sup>6</sup> In the mid 1970s, Hammons and Bryant organized two body print events—one on the West Coast and one on the East—to support JAM. With Nengudi or Bryant's assistance, attendees were invited to participate in the making of body prints that they could then purchase. From their earliest presentations, Hammons's body prints were popular with the public, and Hammons sold and gave away number of them. Such was the artist's generosity during these early years that there is no record of how many body prints were made in total, nor where many of them are today. The more that come to light, the more complex the series becomes, with body prints incorporating objects like bits of lace, straw, and colored paper, and displayed on supports ranging from doors and windows to shaped Plexiglas. Hammons was disturbed by the commercial success of the body prints and, as Bryant recalls in this volume, his disquiet with sellable artwork made with materials that had to be bought eventually led him to cease making them soon after his relocation from Los Angeles to New York in 1978.<sup>7</sup> When Hammons had his first exhibition at JAM in 1974, Bryant recalls that she expected—even hoped—that Hammons would choose to show body prints. Instead, his first New York exhibition became the platform for his first show of sculpture.

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A number of Hammons scholars have commented on the way in which the body prints are at once figurative and conceptual art, as they offer recognizable images in combination with sophisticated wordplay, and the gesture of the found object.<sup>8</sup> Bryant suggests that the body prints served as a “bridge” between politically engaged figuration practiced by many Black Arts Movement visual artists, and abstraction, the dominant mainstream artistic language in American cultural capitals like New York City.<sup>9</sup> This splitting the

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6 JAM, as it was commonly known, was active from 1974 to 1986. In 1977, the gallery moved from its original location to Franklin Street in Tribeca and then to Broadway in SoHo.

7 In 1986, Hammons explained, “I had to get out of the body prints because they were doing so well. I was making money hand over fist.” David Hammons, quoted in Kellie Jones, “Interview with David Hammons,” in *Eye Minded: Living and Writing Contemporary Art*, 249. See also Linda Goode Bryant on pages 25-26 of this volume.

8 See Kellie Jones, “Black Art West: Thoughts on Art in Los Angeles,” 29.

9 See Linda Goode Bryant in her conversation with Senga Nengudi in this volume, 26-27.

difference between accepted artistic labels that began with the body print series is a hallmark of all of Hammons's work to date, and it allows his oeuvre a continuing *hors concours* status in artistic battles between figuration and abstraction, the message and the object, the mainstream and the avant garde.

While the use of the body to print an image on a page has antecedents, Hammons made the technique literally his own by using his body not only as a physical tool to create an image, but also as the primary subject and the *material* of the resulting works. The physical presence of the body that made them—from skin cells to sweat—encourages associations to the relic, with all the spiritual implications of that term. When incorporating objects into his compositions, Hammons carefully chose each one. Most prized were objects that retained a sacred element of the Black body: hair from the floor of barbershops, bottles that touched lips, balls that were bounced in playground dust, and at the beginning of it all, the warm imprint of a living body. Considered this way, the body print series can also be seen as a bold and highly original interpretation of the self-portrait. The majority of the prints were made using his own recognizable visage, playing various roles and characters, which taken together represent this young artist's experience and examination of being Black in America. In an interview in 1986, Hammons told his interlocutor that his aim was to "mak[e] sure that the Black viewer had a reflection of himself in the work."<sup>10</sup> The body prints are the first example of Hammons making artworks that not only speak to, but also mirror, an intended audience.

Hammons's body print series is an eloquent and consummate first expression of his artistic brilliance and, in many ways, these deeply meaningful works on paper speak for themselves. The body prints contain the techniques, concepts, and messages that Hammons would continue to expand upon in an array of mediums over the next half century, but their singularity lies in that they represent a first act of artistic and political bravery. In a decade that was an inflection point for racial tension and racial justice in the United States, Hammons chose to use his own body to depict the quotidian joys and entrenched injustices of living as a Black man in midcentury America. As Hammons explained to the artist Ulysses Jenkins in 1978, "By using the body, I'm going to have the truth

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10 David Hammons, interviewed by Kellie Jones, January 20, 1986, *Real Life Magazine*, no. 16 (Autumn 1986): 2-9.

whether I want it or not.”<sup>11</sup> Whomever has the good fortune to see Hammons’s body prints cannot help but be captivated, impressed, and in the end, profoundly moved. This exhibition is an honor to present, and it is the hope of its organizers that it is a revelation to those who experience it.

## Acknowledgments

This exhibition could not have been possible without the expertise and help of many friends and admirers of David Hammons. This volume features a fascinating exchange between Hammons’s two longtime friends, the brilliant artist Senga Nengudi and the influential curator, gallerist, filmmaker, and activist Linda Goode Bryant, that details their close working relationships with Hammons during the period when he was making his body prints, as well as illuminates a particular moment in art history when Los Angeles and New York were red hot centers of artistic innovation by Black artists. I am grateful to A.C. Hudgins for introducing The Drawing Center to the photographer Bruce W. Talamon, who documented David Hammons at work on his body prints in his Los Angeles studio in 1974. Talamon has contributed an illuminating photo essay and written reminiscences to this publication, and we are thrilled to be able to publish many of these wonderful images for the first time.

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My thanks also go to The Museum of Modern Art, New York, and its Chief Curator of Drawings and Prints, Christophe Cherix, and to the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, whose Executive Director Richard Armstrong very kindly shepherded our loan request through the museum’s lending process. Emily Rales and Mitch Rales of the extraordinary Glenstone museum generously lent their masterpieces, as did Lonti Ebers, Marty and Rebecca Eisenberg, Kathy Fuld, Glenn Fuhrman, A.C. Hudgins, Eric Lefkofsky, and Emily Rauh Pulitzer. I am grateful to these individuals who have so generously lent their work to this exhibition. Jeanne Greenberg Rohatyn is not only a lender, but was also an enormously helpful advisor in the preparation of the show, as was Connie Rogers Tilton, collector and editor of *L.A. Object*, a richly illustrated book that tells the story of Hammons’s body print period in the context of Black

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11 David Hammons (from the short film *King David* [1978] by Ulysses Jenkins), quoted in Mark Godfrey, “Flight Fantasies: The Work of David Hammons,” in Mark Godfrey, ed., *David Hammons: Give Me a Moment* (Athens: George Economou Collection and Artesia, 2016), 20.

Arts Movement artists like Noah Purifoy, John Outterbridge, John Riddle, and Betye Saar. Sukanya Rajaratnam, Partner at Mnuchin Gallery in New York and curator of the Hammons retrospective exhibition at the gallery in 2016, generously shared her knowledge about specific works, and Lois Plehn, Hammons's longtime friend and advisor, was key in helping us secure crucial permissions for this book.

14 Hammons is revered by many as one of America's most important living artists, and in honor of his genius, a significant group of philanthropic collectors have supported the show. In addition to Lonti Ebers, Marty and Rebecca Eisenberg, Kathy and Richard Fuld, Liz and Eric Lefkofsky, and Emily Rauh Pulitzer, our thanks go to Frances Beatty Adler and Allen Adler, Anonymous, Amy Gold and Brett Gorvy, Marie-José and Henry R. Kravis, Marco Perego-Saldana and Zoe Saldana-Perego, Jerry Speyer and Katherine Farley, Bernard and Almine Ruiz-Picasso, Isabel Stainow Wilcox, and the Director's Circle of The Drawing Center for so generously supporting this effort. Major funding for this exhibition was also provided by the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, the Fundación Almine y Bernard Ruiz-Picasso para el Arte, and the Robert Lehman Foundation.

The Drawing Center's exhibitions are accomplished by a team working tirelessly with focus and professionalism. Isabella Kapur, Curatorial Assistant on this project, has exercised her protean research skills, diplomacy, and kindness as a liaison to lenders and institutions alike, as well as lent her prodigious writing talent to the exhibition and the publication. Olga Valle Tetkowsky, Kate Robinson, Allison Underwood, Aimee Good, Rebecca di Giovanna, Rebecca Brickman, and Tiffany Shi contributed their many skills to this endeavor, and I am both grateful and impressed by their professionalism and their sangfroid. The editorial and design team of Joanna Ahlberg and Peter Ahlberg have, as usual, come through to make our publication the best that it can be. We are so lucky to work with them.

Finally, my deepest gratitude and respect are reserved for David Hammons. I was introduced to Hammons as a young curator in the late 1980s and the numerous times I have met him since are the most memorable of my curatorial career. Although Hammons is aware of this exhibition, he is not involved in it. I am enormously grateful to him for his benign neglect, but above all for the art he has produced during his long career. This was the exhibition I dreamed of doing when I began my tenure as Executive Director at The Drawing Center



in 2018, and it is an honor and a tremendous pleasure to see it come to life after a year when we all realized how important visual art is to our understanding of one another and the beautiful but unequal society in which we live. Change will come, abetted and inspired, I am sure, by works like David Hammons's body prints.

# In Conversation

Linda Goode Bryant and Senga Nengudi

16 **Linda Goode Bryant** *Where do we start? Do you want to start at the beginning?*

**Senga Nengudi** Well, I know the story well, but maybe we should start at the beginning-beginning when you met David and you became aware of his body prints. Was he doing body prints before you met?

*Yes, I met his body prints before I met him. And that happened at Spelman College in Atlanta. I was an art major with a focus on painting, and there was a professor—Barry Gaither, who eventually went to Boston, but was down at Spelman for a year or two—who taught a class on African American art. It was the first history class that I recall focusing on African American artists. Many of the older artists I already knew because my work-study project was cataloging works in what is now the Clark Atlanta University collection. Much of that collection came out of the Atlanta University Annual competition for African American artists [1942-1970]. When I was there, the works had not yet been cataloged so I made a proposal to do it and they said OK.*

*So I knew all those folks. I knew their work, I saw it and touched it. I was very much into Jacob Lawrence. But I didn't have awareness of more contemporary artists. In that class, Barry showed slides of David's work, and when I saw his body prints, I was bowled over.*

What year was this?

*Sometime between '68 and '69. I was a sophomore or junior. The body prints were something to me. I tried to track down what I could about how he made them, but that was during the period when David wasn't*

*telling people how he made them. As an artist, I thought there was something really special there.*

Had you always been interested in art?

*Yes, I was five or six when I told my parents I wanted to go to art school. I don't know where they found the money, but they managed to send me to a Saturday class at what was then called the Columbus Gallery of Fine Art, but later became the Columbus Museum of Art.*

*Every Sunday we ate dinner with our whole extended family and friends of the family at my maternal grandmother's house. We called her Big Mom. The house was the size of a shoebox so we were eating all over—the tables were extended, card tables put out. I remember at one Sunday dinner when I was twelve a family friend asked what I wanted to do when I grew up, and I said, "I want to be Picasso's first Black mistress." They asked, "Why is that?" And I said, "Because that's the only way the world will look at my artwork." I was pretty conscious about the world I lived in, and thought, "This is how I'm going to make it happen." Even at that age, I was completely captivated by Picasso's work.*

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My first situation was also with Picasso. It wasn't the mistress thing so much—although that could have been a fantasy at some point—but I was so excited about the fact that he was constantly changing his style. He never rested on one style and was constantly exploring. And I went through a blue period too. In high school, I made a lot of blue paintings in that style. The important thing to me is that he didn't dwell or spend his entire career doing one style. He was ever growing.

*He was also so obsessive about his work, and I connected to that obsessiveness. I have a bit of that. It was inspiring to know that someone could be that focused, dedicated, committed, and obsessive as part of his creative genius.*

I related that a bit to David as well. As I began to know him further down the line, obviously.

*David's work stayed with me after I graduated, and I always hoped that I'd meet him so I could ask him how he made the body prints. There was an organization back in the day called the National Conference of Artists, and ultimately we met through that in 1974, but it took two years. The conference happened annually, typically during spring break on*

*a Black college campus because many of the artists at that time were professors at Black universities.*

*I was at Spelman during the time when Nikki Giovanni and Ida Lewis were there. I somehow connected with them, so when Ida went to New York to start Encore magazine she told me that when I came to New York, I should get in touch with her if I wanted to write. I knew that the artist Elizabeth Catlett was going to be at the NCA that year, which was at Howard University in Washington, DC. I loved Catlett's work so I pitched a story idea to Ida and she said sure.*

18 *When I was interviewing Elizabeth Catlett—who was just wonderful—Connie Harold, an artist I knew from New York, came bursting into the room and said, “Linda! I’m sorry, but Linda, David Hammons is here. Come!” Everybody in New York that I hung out with—and I hung out with artists—everybody knew I had this thing about David Hammons body prints. I said to Connie, “I’m doing this interview.” But she kept rattling on about all these California artists that were there—Betye Saar, and I think Alonzo [Davis] and Dale [Brockman Davis].<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth Catlett was wonderful and insisted that I go and that we would continue our conversation later. I was so silly, saying, “There’s no way I can meet him now. What would I say?” It was such a little girl thing. Catlett looked at me and shook her head. Connie left and I continued my interview. Later, Connie told me they were going to come to New York following the conference and there was going to be a party that I should attend. But I didn’t. The following year the NCA conference was held in Chicago. I know Alonzo was there again because they had the watermelon pins that people bought at the DC conference and other items from Brockman Gallery. They were selling them at a table in the conference center lobby.*

*We finally met there. I was in the lobby talking with folks when Helen Ramsaran, a New York-based sculptor who is also from Columbus, rushed over to me and, though she’s quite petite, pushed and pulled me over to the table. The next thing I knew I was standing in front of him and I said, “Mr. Hammons, are you telling people how to make your body prints? Will you tell me how you make your body prints?” And he said, “Yeah. No big deal.” He told me how he did it and I thanked him. At some*

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1 The artists and brothers Alonzo Davis and Dale Brockman Davis founded Brockman Gallery—one of the first major galleries run for and by Black artists—in 1967 in Los Angeles’s Leimert Park neighborhood. Brockman showed the work of artists such as Dan Concholar, Maren Hassinger, Ulysses Jenkins, Senga Nengudi, John Outterbridge, and Noah Purifoy. David Hammons had his first solo exhibition there in 1971.

*point he looked up and said, “You got another question?” And that’s how I started talking with David.*

*How about you? How did you meet him?*

I met him through my cousin Eileen Abdurashid who came from Chicago—that’s where I was born—and stayed with my mother for a little bit when she first moved to LA. My mother was always the connecting link. Eileen was an artist, and I loved her work. She was a sculptor and a painter, and much more gregarious than myself—I’m the wallflower. She would always say, “Come on. Let’s go to this party. Let’s go to this situation.” Often it was a kind of artist party. David was usually there, and Dan Concholar, LaMonte Westmoreland, and probably Alonzo [Davis]. There was a whole group of Black artists that lived in Altadena. David would always show up in a snazzy car, usually very special classic cars. And he was always dapper. He had the most interesting clothes, as did Dan—that’s why we called him Dapper Dan. This was long before the other person who is now in the limelight, the designer Dapper Dan on 125th Street. We all hung out together, and even at that point, David had a reputation for being all that. I saw his body prints at Brockman Gallery, which was owned by Alonzo Davis and Dale Davis. Actually I went to Dorsey High School with them. I knew Alonzo but Dale was much younger than we were. And Bob Kardashian was our class president. He was a very nice guy, and I think. . . Well, I’m not going there!

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*Did you and Alonzo know each other because you were both artists and in an art class together? Did you have art classes?*

Oh yes, I lived in the art room. There wasn’t a particular relationship with Alonzo, but I know that after I graduated, Dale had the same art teacher that I had. She was a lovely person. Later he came back and became the art teacher at Dorsey himself.

Me and my friends from art class thought we were bohemians. We would frequent jazz venues like the Lighthouse in Hermosa Beach and places on the Sunset Strip, but because we were too young we couldn’t get inside. We would stand outside and listen.

*Were you also interested in dance at that time? Did one hit you before the other?*

I took dance classes—ballet and that kind of stuff at the recreation centers, but art class was mostly in elementary school. I was always taken with it.

*When did you know that was what you wanted to do?*

It almost wasn't a decision. It was a triangle. I wanted to teach, I wanted to dance, I wanted to do art. In elementary school, I was such a freak for the art supply closet. Oftentimes I would be the supply closet monitor, and I would get a genuine charge and a thrill when I went in there and saw all the different colors, the crayons, the notebooks, the pencils, the brushes. I'd get my little freak on just looking at these wonderful things, and seeing how they were lined up compositionally.

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Eventually I was an art major and a dance minor because I felt that I didn't have "the dancer's body" nor a ponytail, and at that point the idea of a dancer was really limited. I felt as though I could do art forever because dance is about the body and that limits you. It's always been back and forth, back and forth. I was really happy with the onset of Happenings and things like that where I could incorporate everything about myself in my work.

*What type of work were you making when you first started out?*

In college I was experimenting with sculpture, stone, and fabric, and printmaking. I didn't see myself as focused on something in particular. I was simply taking it in, developing skills.

In '68, just before I moved to New York, which was in '71, I started making forms and stuffing them with cotton or whatever. I was always into stuffing things. But when I started to do the water sculptures, I decided to use this plastic and then put water in it. I put water in because of this whole interest in the essential and the body. With the water in the plastic forms, just touching it was, to my mind, very essential. It also created a lot of its own energy in the plastic. If you touch it, then it responds to you.

*R.S.V.P.*<sup>2</sup>

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2 *R.S.V.P.* is a series of sculptural installation works by Nengudi that was first shown in the artist's solo exhibition at Byant's gallery Just Above Midtown (JAM) in 1977. The works, which consist of pantyhose that are knotted, stretched, filled with sand, and tacked to the wall in various formations, initially grew

Yes. I was doing that before I moved to New York, and probably when I first met David in the late '60s because that's when Eileen came to LA. We did a show together—myself, Eileen, and my partner at the time, Roger Summers, in a really interesting space. John Manno was one of my teachers at Cal State LA. He was a true New Yorker and he brought a concept that was absolutely new to us in LA, which was to go to one of the worst neighborhoods, down on Main Street, and get a studio for a very reasonable price. He created it as a studio and a gallery space, and that's where I had my first exhibit of my water sculptures. I don't know if David came or not. Then I moved to New York and I lived in Spanish Harlem, and that conference called...?

*...NCA. National Conference of Artists. It was the Black artist organization.*

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Eileen called and said she was going to be in town for the NCA and needed a place to stay. I agreed right away but I had no idea she was going to bring the band, so to speak. They all came in—Dan, David, Eileen, and another woman artist that was a close friend of David's. And then Betye Saar. Betye was there for one night and the next morning she said, "This is too bohemian for me." There were no extra beds and everybody was camped out all over the place on the floor. It was great fun. Everyone did little drawings while they were there. Our real friendship began then, when David stayed with me in New York. When I returned to LA to live, I think he felt as though he should return the favor, and he was very open to me using his studio when I needed it. He was trying to decide whether he wanted to live in LA or New York, and he would go back and forth, back and forth. It took him forever to make that decision, and when he was out of town, I was able to use his space.

*Is that when you were first up close to the body prints? What work was there at that time?*

Yes, it was. I feel as though I recall David doing a whole session of celebrities, printing their bodies and I thought it was a fundraiser for JAM, but I know you said we didn't meet then. I recall that the show—

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out of Nengudi's reflections upon the changes her body underwent during her first pregnancy. Nengudi also stages movement-based performances in which she and others directly interact with and, as the title suggests, "respond to" the installations.

or the event—happened at his studio on Slauson. I was the assistant, and I had to grease the bodies.

22 *Right. So this is how I remember it: One of the questions I asked David that first day we met was about when he was going to come to New York so that we could see the body prints up close and personal. I had only seen them in books. Samella Lewis and Ruth Waddy wrote several books focused on African American artists and I think I saw them there.<sup>3</sup> But David's response was, "I don't show in white galleries." I said, "I guess I'm going to have to start a gallery." Prior to that I was working at The Studio Museum as the Director of Education, and I also oversaw the artist and residency program. Artists were always hanging out at the museum—visiting artists who were in that program and who were older than I was. They would always talk about how, "They won't let us, they won't let us..." I reached a point of frustration with that conversation and said, "Fuck them. We'll do it ourselves." And these older artists were going, "Oh, you're so naïve. We don't have any money. Blah, blah, blah." All the things that make sense, but that's just not me.*

Thank goodness that's the case.

*When David said that, it sealed the deal. I came back to New York to start the gallery and everybody said, "You're crazy, and you can't do it." Now we're going to jump forward: I opened JAM in November of '74, and I came to LA in the summer of '75 because I was trying to raise money to keep the gallery open. We did a body print evening in New York City that made Jet magazine because Charlie Mingus came, along with some other celebrities. I helped that night with rubbing down. The thing that was really wild was that my son was five years old at the time, and his preschool teacher, Suzette Wright, and I had become friends. When I said, "I've got to find somebody who's willing to get naked for the body printing," Suzette said, "I'll do it. Why not?" Suzette is wonderfully insane.*

Oh my god.

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3 The artist, author, educator, and art historian Samella S. Lewis (b. 1924) was the first African American woman to receive a doctorate in art history. Together with the artist and activist Ruth G. Waddy (1909-2003), Lewis authored the publication *Black Artists on Art, Vols. I and II* (Los Angeles: Contemporary Crafts Publishers, 1969 and 1971), which features David Hammons and images of his body prints.



*Here we are, in this snazzy penthouse off Central Park that belonged to Phil Yenawine, who I knew because I had been a fellow and an intern at the Metropolitan Museum when he was head of the education department. He and his wife also took care of all the food and the alcohol as I recall. Lots of people came and I had to oil down Suzette. And Kenneth, my son, was like, "Oh my. What's happening here?"*

Oh my god!

*Oh my! Then we did a second event in LA. Celebrities were invited, and the actress Denise Nichols was one of the celebrities that got printed. But we did do a press conference at David's studio, and there was a female there, but I think David would have introduced me to you unless he was too consumed by doing the body print...*

23

As you're speaking, I remember that it was a press conference and I bet that was me. I oiled Denise Nichols. I think she was married to Bill Withers.

*I can't believe it! We didn't get introduced. That was so wild because David's daughter Carmen was there; she was just a little girl.*

I think some of the sweetest moments with the body print situation was when he did it with Carmen. He did little projects with the kids.

I might say that David has always had the knack of drawing celebrities. He's always had that knack because everybody can sense his genius, and they see it. They don't even have to sense it. His energy is so attracting that he's always had that celebrity vibe.

And so yes, I was there and I did Denise. I said, "Hey, wait a minute. I have to do a girl? I have to grease down a lady?" I thought I was going to grease down muscular men.

*I didn't stay in LA at that time but later I was there for about six weeks, maybe more. I declared freedom as a single mom. I was living in New York with my brother Paul, his friend Ikey, and my two children in a living room, a bedroom, and one bathroom, and I said, "I'm getting out of here."*

*I took the kids, packed them up, and dropped them at my ex's. He opened the door and I said, "Meet your children." I went home to get my bag and said to my brother, who is six years younger, "I'm going to LA. MoMA is hiring guards. You have an interview for a job on Monday morning. Make sure you get it." He did. And I left. I was out*

*there for a while, staying at the studio on West Slauson—a huge Fred Astaire dance studio.*

I don't know if it was Fred Astaire, but it was used during the war. You know those 1940 movies where they have a dance hall that everybody would go to? It was more like that. I think its history could have been that it was a dance hall during wartime.

24

*There were a lot of rooms. I remember that. And I would read a book or two or three. It was the first time I ever had time by myself. David was there when he was making his work. And it was like theater—the way he'd look at the empty page and decide how he was going to lay what part where, and then how that emerged when he sifted the powder on top of it and it became visual. There was something theatrical about it. There was something magical, which theater can be. As you know, dance movement can also be magical. That was another phase of my relationship to the body prints.*

Recently I have been hearing a phrase—usually related to fashion—that I've really picked up on: “And then you create the reveal.” What you're talking about is, once the powder goes on, there's the reveal.

*Yes! I think it was in those weeks that I was there that David and I fought. David and I have notoriously fought from the beginning. We're Cancer Leos. I'm not an astrology buff, but maybe that's it. We can be oil and water, and at the same time be so in unison and so deep. David has a way of wanting to shut it down, and I felt like he was not listening to my point. Somehow or another, I connected with Dan Concholar and went and stayed with him for a few days. Dan was an angel.*

So cool. You could not ruffle his feathers for anything. He was always so chill and so loving.

*I had not seen David create before, and being in the studio, I connected to the thought and deliberation that he goes through when he has a vision in his head. There is so much mental work that goes into what David does to the point that I'm sure it must be painful. You get to the place where you're trying to noodle something out and you're going, “Where is it?” Gosh, you feel like you can almost touch it, but you can't. You're trying to make sense of it, and you have to because you have to make it.*

*There is a lot of agony in that process, and observing him certainly provided an example for understanding that it is just the process, and*

*you'll survive it even though you feel like you can't push beyond. He doesn't seem to experience angst over it because he's not expressive in that way. But at the same time, he is so deep in it—in his thought.*

*I have a high regard for people who go to that place as part of the process of moving a vision to something tangible that can be seen, experienced, and shared with others, because it's agonizing. We all do it in our own way.*

It's like climbing a mountain. You always have the risk of falling off and dying. But there's a drive that keeps you going. And you have to do it. It's so exciting. It's such a charge. In this case, you could say the falling would be maybe a failure. But you still have to do it. You still have to take the risk. And there's no way I can explain it except to say that I know his body posture. I know what it looks like when there's an idea brewing in him, and it's undeniable. It's very distinct when you see it. You feel that something is happening.

25

*The other thing that fascinates me is that he is always making things. It can be anything. I'm looking at things on his desk, and all of a sudden he'll wonder, "How can I deal with this?" And it's quiet. He's not saying anything out loud. He's with people, but he is in this as well.*

If he could not do art each day, he would die.

*I think so too. Even if that art is silent. Like I said, that process where he's trying to distill down, "What is this idea? What is this vision?" He can be very quiet in his body. He's not verbalizing. He's very quiet, but he is constantly working.*

And he sees it in everything. He sees whatever concept he's dealing with. It could be a spider web or a line of crackers with a little toy fighter. You know that piece. He takes something as simple as crackers, and then all of a sudden it has this social, political meaning.

*Yes. I'm so glad you said that. There was a bodega down in SoHo where water was running out of a hole in a trash can and making an indentation in the sidewalk. He would examine and explore it. Everything he saw became part of his library, his archive, his tools, his supplies.*

*As I have experienced David's work, the body prints really were the last work he did that required materials he purchased from art supply*

stores. Quite frankly, he was like, "I'm not making those anymore." His whole thing was, "I should not have to buy to make." He was doing the shovels, the spades, when I was out there, along with body prints. That was when he was shifting from the body prints to the spades. His first show at JAM was hair, wire, barbecue bones, and brown paper bags. When I opened JAM, that was at a time when the debate among Black artists about who is a Black artist, and what defines you in terms of being a Black artist, was still raging.

26 You had those folks who worked figuratively, and those who were increasingly working more abstractly—that was a huge debate. Everybody was going crazy. You're not a Black artist if you're not doing red, green, and black flags and mothers nursing. And that translated to you're not a Black artist if you're doing European art, which is abstract. The body prints somehow bridged that. The body prints were figurative, and at the same time abstract and conceptual in many ways. But in New York, those debates were constant as artists came through JAM, which was an artist's place, but also, Black folks from all walks of life would come to see what was at JAM.

You were on front line with that one.

I was totally on the front line, and the objection by Black artists in New York City, whether they were working figuratively or in an abstract continuum, was, "You cannot show LA artists. This is our real estate." Those two camps were fighting too. And when I first opened up, I showed both camps. I showed artists that were working figuratively, and I showed artists that weren't. I stood my ground and said, "No one can tell me who I'm going to show. I'm going to show LA artists because I think they're doing experimental shit, and y'all ain't doing it here." I wanted to do that. I wanted to bring that energy to New York.

Incredibly brave.

It was unbelievable. People were really not happy with me. But like I said, I think the body prints, once they were here and in the gallery—though I never did a body print show because David said, "I ain't doing that anymore. I'm doing this."

Wow. And so he allowed you to have those to sell to sort of support the gallery?

*Yes, we worked together to come up with the body print evening events to raise money for JAM in New York and LA. They were hosted by celebrities in each city and guests came to see him make body prints. They could also have their bodies printed and purchase those prints. Prior to David's initial solo show at JAM, I showed and sold the body prints along with other work that wasn't on exhibit. When his show was scheduled I assumed it would be a body print exhibit and prepared collectors who wanted body prints. When I contacted David to get the title of the show and an image for the invitation, he let me know he wasn't doing body prints anymore.*

*For a new collector or a seasoned collector who always bought figurative work, the body prints were not a stretch. They were such a tremendous bridge. They had political content, and then at times they weren't political. The body prints were always Black bodies, to my knowledge—that was concrete. The image wasn't conceptual or abstract. The images were Black figures. At the same time, the composition, proportions, and image of the figures were abstract. Lips weren't lips. Eyes weren't eyes. They were abstractions of lips and eyes—marks he made with a bent finger or an object to suggest rather than realistically represent lips and eyes. The body prints were a bridge from figurative to a kind of abstraction that people connected to and didn't associate with or reject as being European.*

*I think the most significant night was in 1975 when he opened his first solo show at JAM [Greasy Bags and Barbecue Bones] with the hair, wire, bags, grease, and barbecue bones, and everybody came—artists from Camille Billops and Vivian Browne to Joe Overstreet. Steve Cannon and that whole crowd.<sup>4</sup> It was a large swath and everybody was angry. David was the first LA artist that showed at JAM.*

Oh my goodness.

*Oftentimes the arguments about me showing LA artists descended on David. It might have been okay if I done Raymond Saunders, who was already showing with Terry Dintenfass. His work might have been more palatable. David's position was always, "I can't be bothered with all the stuff you're bothered with like selling. I can only be bothered with making*

---

4 Poet, playwright, and novelist Steve Cannon (1935-2019) was the founder of *A Gathering of the Tribes*, a literary magazine and gallery, performance space, and salon that he ran from his home in New York City's East Village. Cannon met Hammons on a park bench in the late 1970s and the two became close friends and collaborators.

*what I want to make. I won't be confined by art supplies." He brought an edge to everything he did. So everybody wanted to come and see what he was going to do for his JAM show. If I've ever had a regret about technology it is that we didn't have video at that time at JAM.*

You weren't able to photograph or film it?

*Yeah. It should have been filmed. People were angry. Furious. And that night, they all got into it. Everybody was talking. It was crowded; you couldn't get in or out of the door. At some point I tapped a wine bottle with a knife and I turned off the music. I said, "Instead of everybody talking at once, why don't we talk with each other in our little corners?"*

28 *David's charm is manifested in different ways, but what's consistent is his way of observing, listening, and taking in everything that's going on around him. In those moments he doesn't speak. So he didn't speak. A couple of times male artists in the room got very aggressive with him: "Say something. Say something, motherfucker." It got so heated. I was nervous. There was an exchange between Janet, Henry, and Joe Overstreet. I thought Joe was going to let loose on Janet, and I wondered how I would throw myself between them. Still, David would not speak. In that way, he diffused the anger. It took a while, but he diffused it by not talking. People had to talk it out for themselves. For David, the work speaks for itself.*

The thing about David is—and I've seen him in all settings—that he can charm an alcoholic that's been sitting on the same corner for three weeks, and he has equal charm with the head of a corporation. There is no difference to him. It's a kind of kindness. I've seen him with all sorts of people, and they all gravitate to him and feel comfortable with him.

*One of the arguments people were making was, "How can you call this art? These are dirty brown paper bags." Everybody was already angry because he was from LA, and also because of whatever extra energy David causes people to have. But then all of a sudden other people in the room were wondering, "Well why do we have to buy art supplies to make things? What are you trying to say? Are you saying it's not art because it's a brown paper bag instead of a white piece of paper from Pearl Paint? What's your point?"*

*He became this catalyst—or that show became a catalyst for people questioning and then resolving that it was okay to make work with*

*whatever you need and want to make work with. That was the last time I heard any debates about abstract versus figurative and using any material you want to use.*

It was an exciting time to have this exchange of ideas.

*Let me ask you, when did you and David discover you both had a fascination with Japan and Japanese culture?*

That's a really good question. I would tell David about my adventures in Japan, and somehow it just clicked and he fell in love with it as much as I did.<sup>5</sup> I would tell him about my adventures, and my feelings about Japanese culture. I shared artwork with him, classical as well as conceptual stuff.

29

*What was it about the culture that drew you to Japan?*

It started with a book of the contemporary art of Japan. The beginning of the book was just warmed over New York kind of painting, but in the back was the Gutai group, and I was instantly taken with them. I was validated by the way they did stuff. That was my driving force, though I never met any of them while I was in Japan.

And David, he has such grace with what he does. He has such a special touch. So there's always a cultural aspect of it, and humor. There are a lot of layers to what he does, and you have to kind of search for it and be a part of it when you're looking at the work. You have to be actively involved. He has that kind of grace, and it's usually relatively simple. It's not weighed down. There is also that aspect of Japanese culture. I hate to use the word simple because it usually means simple-minded, but there is a simplicity, grace, and elegance in the Japanese culture.

*We meet people who are very covered and cloaked, and then you've got people who are confident in their essence, and you're drawn to that. I can't imagine anyone not being drawn to or hypnotized by the essence of something.*

*It's the same with David's work. His gallery, his museum was the streets of Harlem. The wine bottles, the basketball hoop, everyday life in the world itself was where the work existed, and that drew people.*

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5 In 1966, Nengudi traveled to Japan to attend a year-long postgraduate program at Waseda University in Tokyo.

*It wasn't self-conscious work. It was essence. But it forced you to go to it, and to explore it, and not need anybody to mediate or shape your relationship with it.*

*Your relationship with his work was dependent on what you brought to it, and what it said to you. That conversation was very personal and intimate.*

I'm thinking of two body prints of his. One is the man who is wrapped in the American flag and the other was the admissions door. Those were amazing and they speak to social issues. Even now, the Black Lives Matter movement has taken on his Black flag [*African American Flag*, 1990]. They've taken it on as a symbol, and it is so exciting. He's given so many gifts to us.

30

*I'm also reminded of David's Jesse Jackson piece—How Ya Like Me Now?<sup>6</sup>*

I loved that.

*In terms of the initial response to it, I love it too. It's an amazing piece, and it was amazing when everybody was raising hell and trying to tear it down. He was like, "Motherfuckers, just hold up a second. Look at what that is. Use your eyes, take it in, think about it."*

But then what happened? He took the sledgehammer that they had used for a destructive act, and put it into the concept of the piece. Genuinely genius.

*How egoless that was in terms of the primacy of the work! It wasn't about his ego in that moment. This is the reaction; it should be in the work. It wasn't, "I don't believe they didn't understand it," which is my line.*

A lot of it has to do with David telling you to think. Just simply think. See what's around you, and understand how it can be transformed

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6 Hammons's 1988 work *How Ya Like Me Now?*—which takes its title from the song by Kool Mo Dee—was commissioned by the Washington Project for the Arts for the 1989 exhibition *The Blues Esthetic: Black Culture and Modernism*, organized by Rick Powell. The large-scale painting portrays the African American civil rights leader and two-time presidential candidate (1984 and 1988) Reverend Jesse Jackson with pale skin, blonde hair, and blue eyes. During its installation on 7th Street facing the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, DC, the work was attacked by several young Black men who used sledgehammers to knock it down. Hammons subsequently repaired and installed the work inside the WPA gallery with a row of sledgehammers placed between the painting and the viewer.



into something so much higher than what you're seeing. It's the crackers again. You never can look at a stack of Saltine crackers again without thinking about that piece. Think not only about what I'm saying here, but about what I'm using, and what you too can use.

*His resourcefulness is the best. Can I add another word to your "think"—which is "feel"? A lot of his work makes me emotional, hits me emotionally, and that runs the gamut of what I've known him to make from body prints to the paintings.*

I think my adjective would be "graceful." I'm constantly taken by how gracefully he does things. They are exquisite, like a violin concerto. Graceful and elegant. Elegant. That's what I would say.

31

*You know what's wonderful about life? When we're fortunate enough to wake up the next day, wake up into tomorrow, and it's another day to learn and discover. I've discovered a lot about us in this conversation.*

Yes. Me too. Me too.

*I didn't expect that, so thank you.*

Thank you. It was so much more fun doing it together.



# Plates









**PL. 3**

*Astonishing Grace*, 1975

**PL. 4 (following)**

*Untitled (Man with Flag)*, n.d.























PL. 8  
*Untitled*, 1969

PL. 9 (following)  
*The Wine Leading the Wine*, c. 1969



1871









PL. 11

*Close Your Eyes and See Black*, 1969









1900/1901

PL. 13

*Black Boy's Window*, 1968



PL. 14

*The Door (Admissions Office)*, 1969

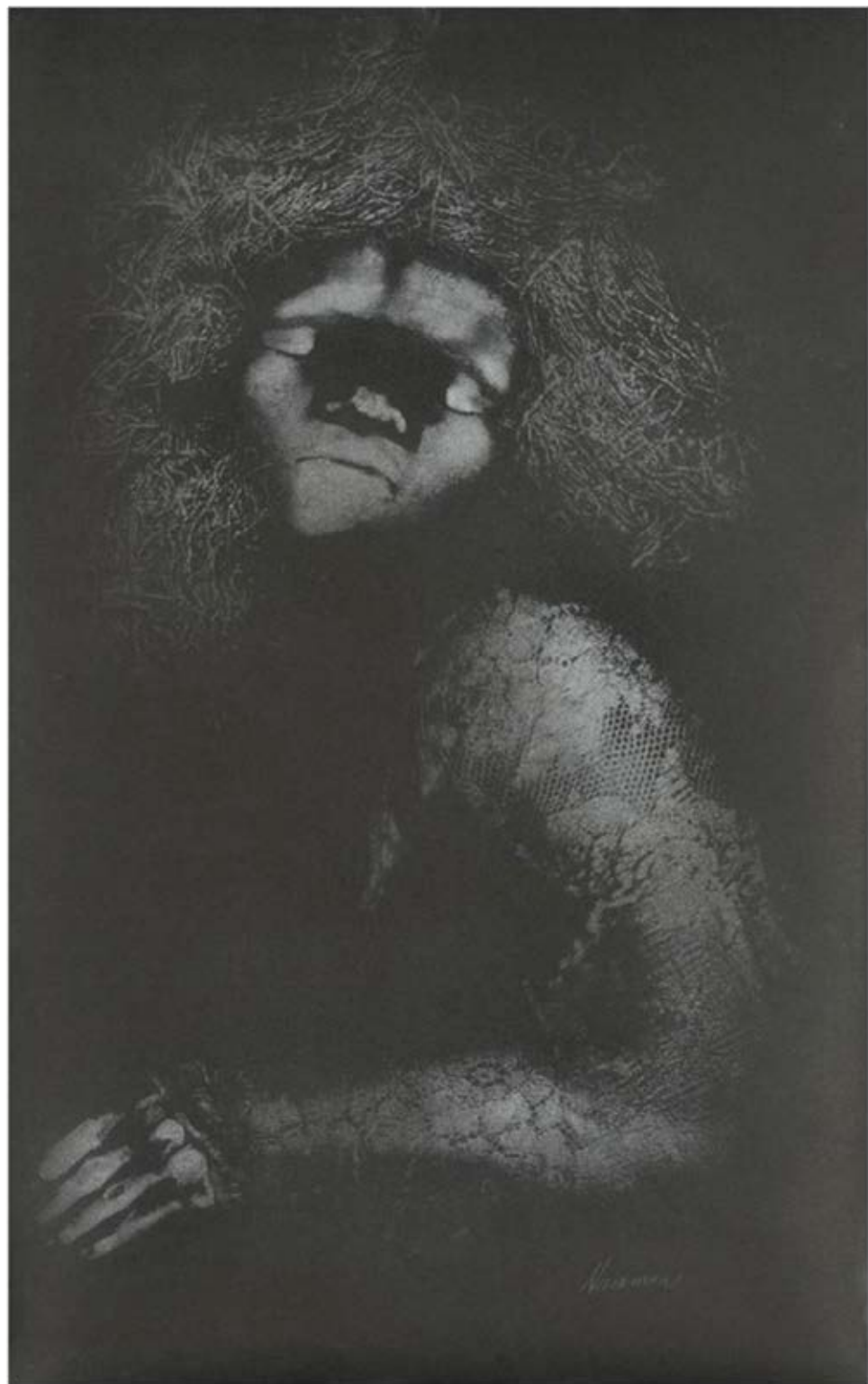
**ADMISSIONS  
OFFICE**



PL. 15

*Untitled (Woman with Mop Hair and Lace Shawl)*, c. 1975













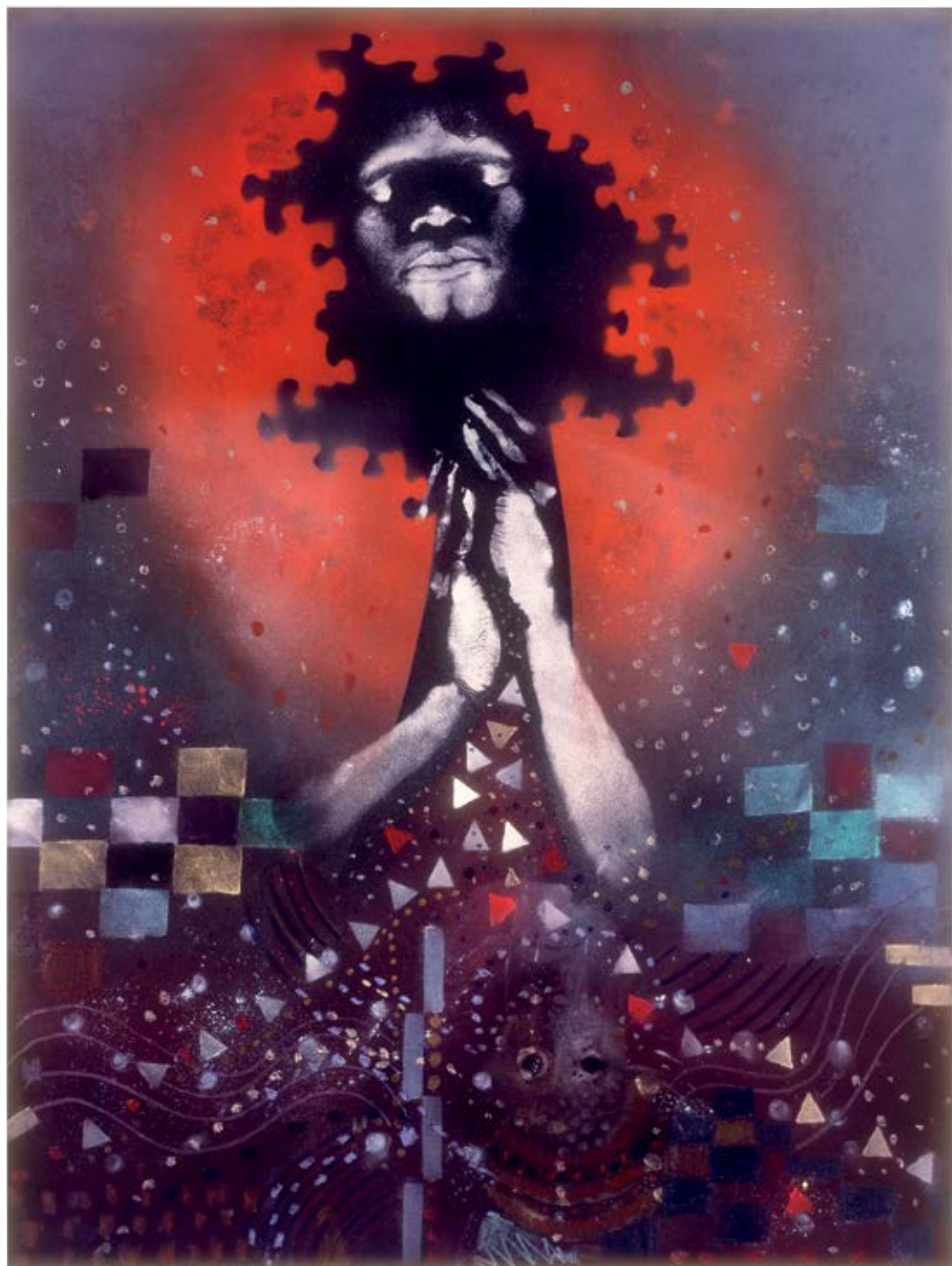




PL. 19

*Untitled (Body Print)*, 1975









PL. 21

*Body Print With Burn Mark*, c. 1969



PL. 22

*Body Print*, c. 1974-79







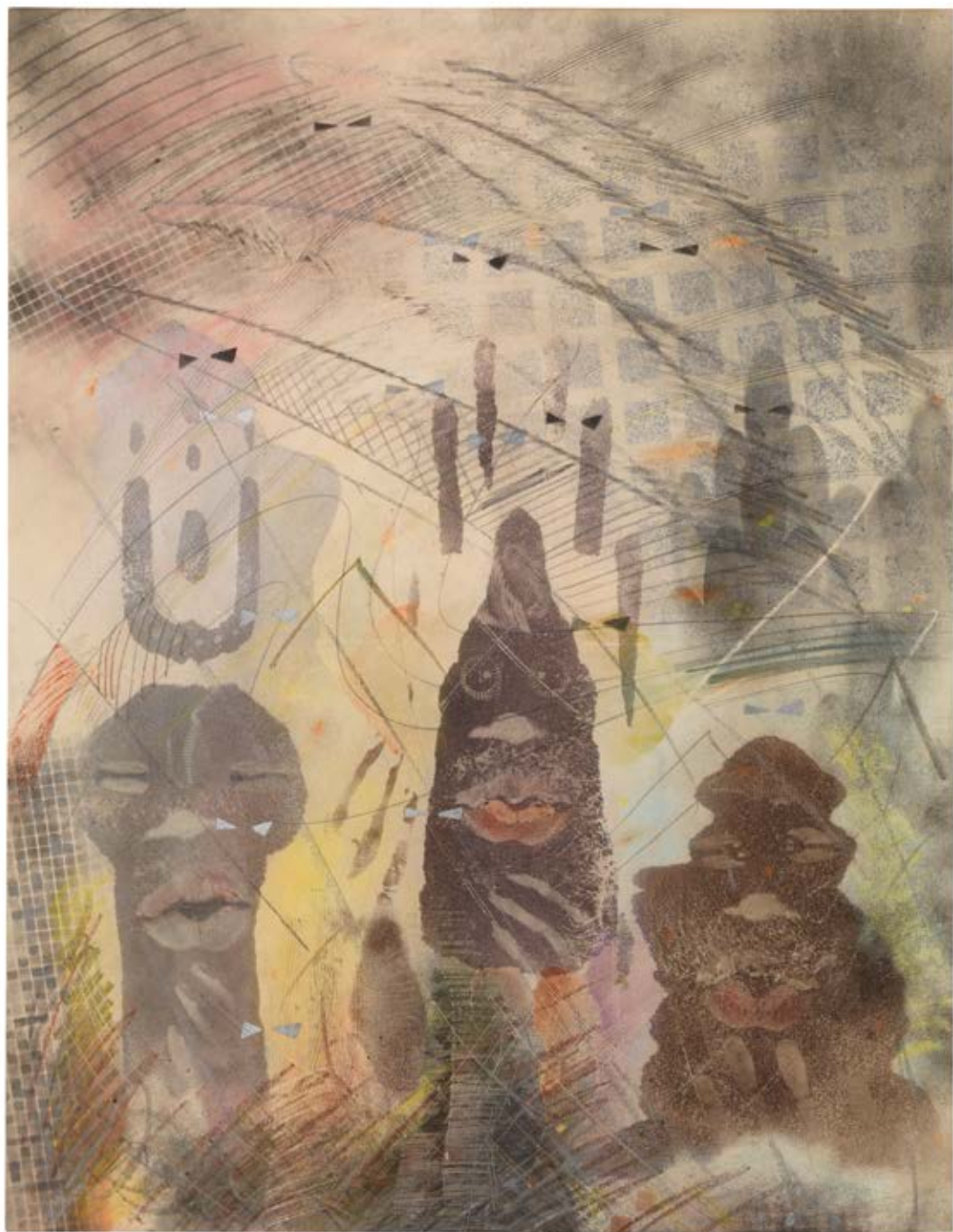


PL. 24

*Untitled (Body Print)*, 1975-77

PL. 25 (following)

*Bye-Centennial*, 1976





*by centennia*



Anonymous  
76









250



251

252

253

W. H. M. 7/1

PL. 28  
*Untitled*, n.d.

PL. 29 (following)  
*Untitled*, 1975

PL. 30 (following)  
*Untitled (Double Body Print Collage)*, 1976

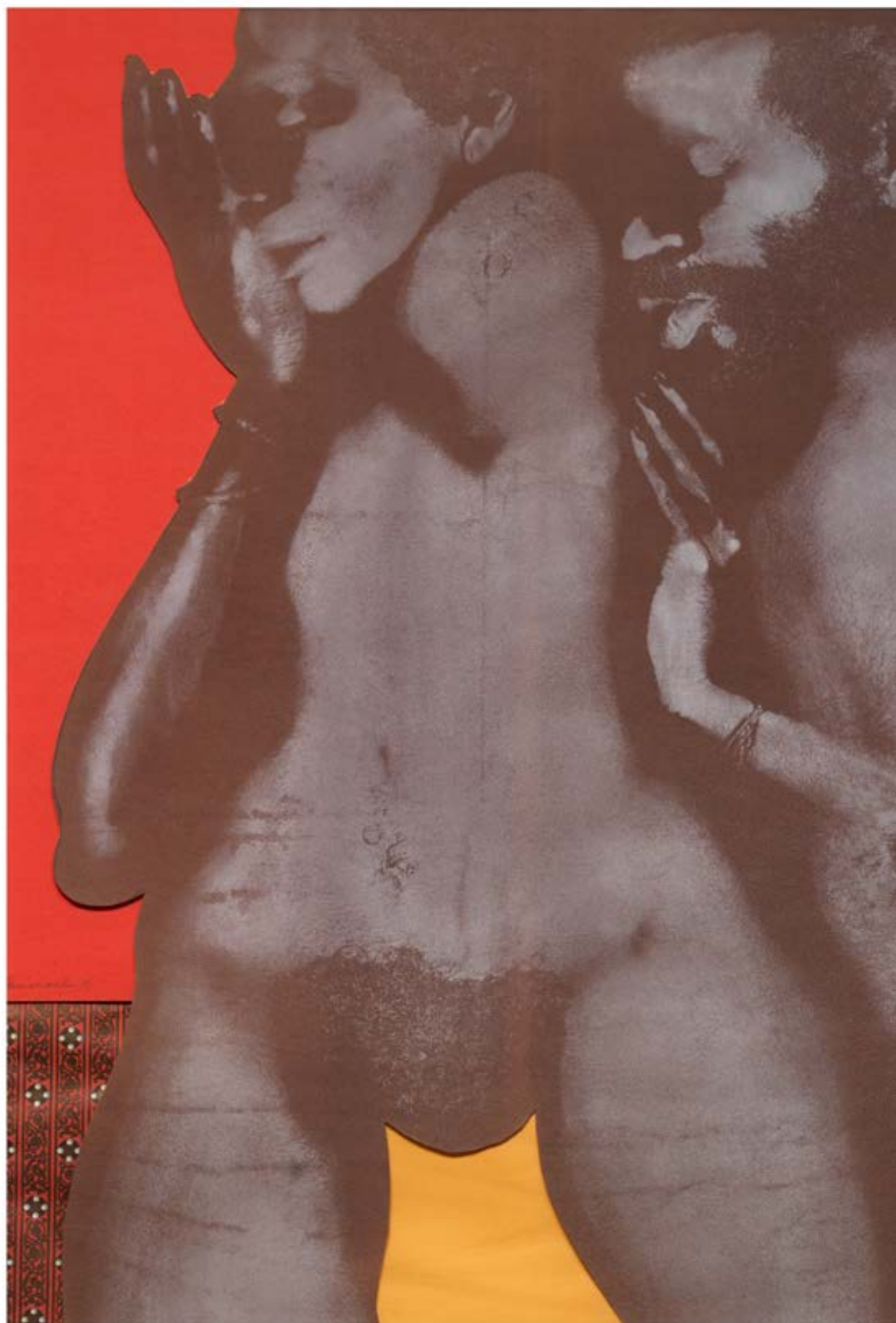
PL. 31 (following)  
*Untitled*, 1975 (recto/verso)

PL. 32 (following)  
*Don't Bite the Hand That Feeds*, 1974

















BLIND





Hammond 74



# David Hammons, Photographs 1974–1980

Bruce W. Talamon

I was introduced to David Hammons in the summer of 1974 in Los Angeles. These photographs represent a visual record from 1974 through 1977 at the 2409 West Slauson Avenue studio and from 1977 at the LaSalle Street studio that he shared with Senga Nengudi.

David could always find the most interesting spaces. The Slauson Avenue studio was huge, maybe 3,000 square feet of open space. In another life, it was a former ballroom with beautiful painted wood floors, twenty-foot-high ceilings and a stage. Located on the north side of Slauson Avenue, the studio was upstairs and had a bank of windows facing south. The LaSalle Street studio was much smaller—a storefront located at street level with huge display windows that were painted white. In both studios, the light was wonderful.

100 These are photographs of David Hammons as seen through the lens of a young African American photographer at the start of his career. I've known David for more than forty-five years. To this day, I don't know why he gave me such intimate access to his process, but I recognize the responsibility I had. I would like to think that we developed a certain level of trust. From 1974 through 1978, when he moved to New York, we had adventures. I look back on that period fondly.

When David called, I never knew where we would end up, but I always brought extra film. I was working for a small African American music and arts newspaper, photographing R&B, funk, and jazz musicians. I approached working with David Hammons with the same respect and attention I gave to Marvin Gaye, Dexter Gordon, Max Roach, Earth Wind & Fire, and later, Bob Marley.

This collection of photographs includes a series that captures the process of making a body print at the Slauson Avenue studio [PLS. 34–42]. It could have been Marvin Gaye or Earth Wind & Fire in the studio. For me, the same rules applied:

*Pay attention. The pictures are all around you. And don't mess up the vibe.*

You can see him rubbing oil on his arms and then you realize he's using Johnson's Baby Oil. He presses his body onto the paper, leaving an imprint. Next, he takes powdered tempera paint and pours it through a kitchen strainer onto the paper. He uses the strainer to make sure that any lumps of powdered paint are removed. Holding the paper with both hands, he shakes the fine powder over the imprint. The paint will stick only where the oil imprint is on the paper. Sometimes he would repeat this process with different colors.

During this period, I documented a number of projects. The body prints, the spade chain masks, and then newer work that incorporated the hair he collected from barbershops for the performance pieces.

When documenting visual artists or musicians, one of the things you don't want to do is to become a distraction. You learn to wait. Did I know this was "Important"? I would say that I knew that David was special. Even though our relationship was casual and unstructured, I always made sure that I treated David the same way I treated my biggest assignments: Focused. Always with respect. I never had an assignment. But I knew it was important to have a record. He was brilliant.

David was also generous. You just had to listen. In 1994, he gave me the title for my first book, *Bob Marley: Spirit Dancer*. In my introduction, I acknowledged David's contribution. Now reading it again I realize that my friend had given me much more than a title. He gave me a gift. Here's what I wrote then:

101

My friend, artist David Hammons, planted the seed for the title, "Spirit Dancer." We used to talk a lot about jazz. And now on those too rare occasions when we get together, we still talk until the early morning. David used to say that the sound check for musicians before a concert was the place to be. That final rehearsal was where the artist jammed. This was what you didn't see at a concert. Sharpening and honing. Adding and deleting songs from the set list. Waiting. When you were backstage, you were an observer and a participant. It can be argued that by simply being there and photographing, the reality was altered. But you shared that moment with the artist as you recorded the process. You had just witnessed something special. The saxophone player Eric Dolphy once said, "When you hear music, it's gone. In the air. You can never capture it again."

It was the same when photographing David.

I have often described my professional career as one of access and opportunity. That I got to photograph David Hammons and have adventures along the way—to be able to say that means a lot. I would like to think that maybe I was able to keep up; and that I was able to create a visual record that will last long after we are gone.

Thank You, David. You taught me to use my eyes.

—Los Angeles, 2020

PL. 33

David Hammons, Slauson Avenue studio, Los Angeles, 1974

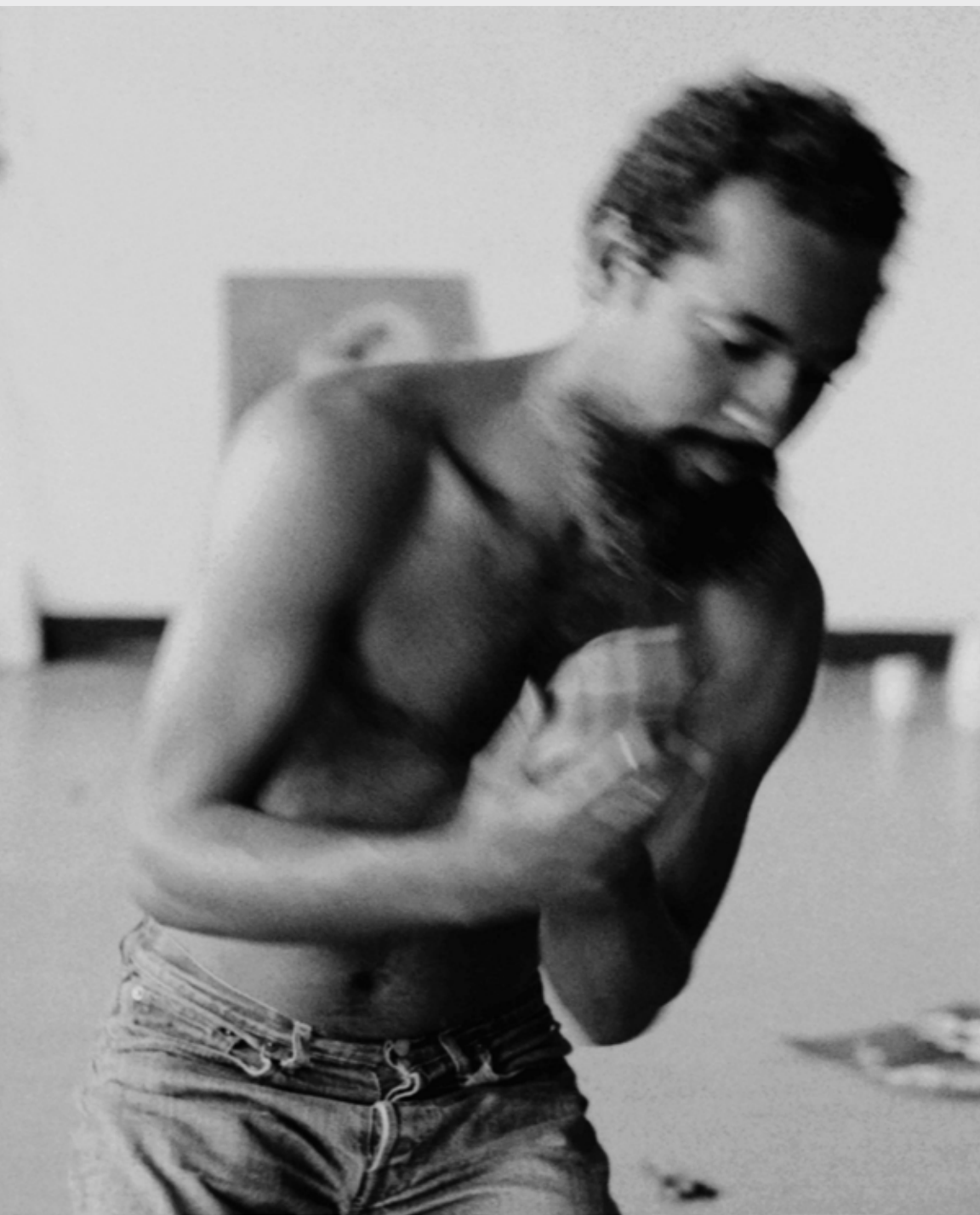








PLS. 34-42 (opposite, above, and following)  
David Hammons making a body print, Slauson Avenue studio, Los Angeles, 1974



















PL. 43 (opposite)

David Hammons with *Three Spades*, Bakersfield College, June 18, 1974

PL. 44 (following)

David Hammons between *The Wine Leading The Wine* (1969) and *Defend Your Walk* (1974) at the exhibition *David Hammons: Selected Works 1968-1974*, California State University, Los Angeles, 1974









PLS. 45, 46

Two unidentified patrons at the exhibition *David Hammons: Selected Works 1968-1974*, California State University, Los Angeles, 1974







PL. 47 (above)

David Hammons, La Salle Street studio, Los Angeles, 1977

PL. 48 (opposite)

David Hammons and Bruce Talamon self portrait, La Salle Street studio,  
Los Angeles, 1977



**PL. 49 (opposite)**

David Hammons, Slauson Avenue studio, Los Angeles, 1975

**PL. 50 (following)**

David Hammons, Linda Goode Bryant, and Bruce Talamon photographed  
by Chester Higgins in Harlem, New York City, 1980







## Works in the Exhibition

126

### PL. 1

*Pray for America*, 1974  
Screenprint and pigment on paper  
60 1/2 x 30 inches (153.7 x 76.2 cm)  
The Museum of Modern Art, New York,  
and The Studio Museum in Harlem.  
Gift to The Museum of Modern Art  
and The Studio Museum in Harlem by  
the Hudgins Family in honor of David  
Rockefeller on his 100th birthday, 2015.  
Installation view of exhibition, *From  
the Collection: 1960-1969*, March 26, 2016  
through March 12, 2017, The Museum  
of Modern Art, New York. Photograph  
by Martin Seck. Digital Image  
© The Museum of Modern Art/  
Licensed by SCALA/Art Resource, NY

### PL. 2

*Feed Folks*, 1974  
Mixed media on paper board on fabric  
39 3/4 x 29 1/2 inches (101 x 74.9 cm)  
Collection of Lonti Ebers, New York  
Photograph by Bruce M. White

### PL. 3

*Astonishing Grace*, 1975  
Grease, pigment, and white crayon  
on paper  
27 x 21 inches (68.6 x 53.3 cm)  
Private collection

### PL. 4

*Untitled (Man with Flag)*, n.d.  
Grease, pigment, and white crayon  
on paper  
29 3/4 x 39 3/4 inches (75.6 x 101 cm)  
Glenstone Museum, Potomac, Maryland  
Photograph by Alex Jamison,  
courtesy of Mnuchin Gallery, New York

### PL. 5

*Black First, America Second*, 1970  
Grease, pigment, and silkscreen  
on paper  
41 1/4 x 31 1/4 inches (104.8 x 79.4 cm)  
Tilton Family Collection

### PL. 6

*Untitled (Man with Flag)*, 1975  
Grease, pigment, and crayon on paper  
24 x 18 inches (61 x 45.7 cm)  
Collection of Liz and Eric Lefkofsky

### PL. 7

*Spade (Power for the Spade)*, 1969  
Grease, pigment, and silkscreen  
on paper  
51 1/2 x 33 1/2 inches (130.8 x 85.1 cm)  
Tilton Family Collection

### PL. 8

*Untitled*, 1969  
Pigment on paper  
36 1/4 x 25 1/8 inches (92 x 63.8 cm)  
The Museum of Modern Art, New York,  
The Friends of Education of  
The Museum of Modern Art, the  
General Print Fund, and Committee  
on Drawings Funds, 2009  
Digital Image © The Museum  
of Modern Art/Licensed by SCALA/  
Art Resource, NY

### PL. 9

*The Wine Leading the Wine*, c. 1969  
Grease and pigment on paper  
40 x 48 inches (101.6 x 121.9 cm)  
Hudgins Family Collection, New York

### PL. 10

*Shine*, 1969  
Grease and pigment on paper  
31 3/8 x 23 3/8 inches (79.7 x 59.4 cm)  
The Carter Collection  
Photograph by Bruce M. White



PL. 11

*Close Your Eyes and See Black*, 1969  
Pigment on gold-coated paperboard  
35 7/8 x 24 3/4 inches (91.1 x 62.9 cm)  
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum,  
New York, Purchased through prior  
gifts of Daimler-Benz in honor of  
Thomas M. Messer, the National  
Endowment for the Arts in Washington,  
DC, William C. Edwards, Jr., in  
memory of Sibyl H. Edwards, the  
Estate of Karl Nierendorf, Mr. and  
Mrs. Morton L. Ostow, and  
Dr. Solomon W. Schaefer, 2018

PL. 12

*Untitled*, 1969  
Grease and pigment on paper,  
cut out, in plexiglass  
32 3/8 x 19 1/4 x 1/4 inches  
(82.2 x 48.9 x 0.6 cm)  
Courtesy Tilton Gallery, New York

PL. 13

*Black Boy's Window*, 1968  
Silkscreen on glass  
35 3/4 x 27 3/4 inches (90.8 x 68.6 cm)  
Collection of Liz and Eric Lefkofsky

PL. 14

*The Door (Admissions Office)*, 1969  
Wood, acrylic, and pigment construction  
79 x 48 x 15 inches  
(200.7 x 121.9 x 38.1 cm)  
California African American Museum,  
Los Angeles, Collection of Friends,  
the Foundation of the California African  
American Museum

PL. 15

*Untitled (Woman with Mop Hair and  
Lace Shawl)*, c. 1975  
Grease and pigment on paper  
32 1/4 x 20 1/4 inches (81.9 x 51.4 cm)  
From the collection of Liz and  
Eric Lefkofsky

PL. 16

*Sexy Sue*, 1970  
Grease and pigment on illustration board  
60 x 40 inches (152.4 x 101.6 cm)  
Collection of Glenn and  
Amanda Fuhrman NY, courtesy  
the FLAG Art Foundation  
Image courtesy of Mnuchin Gallery,  
New York

PL. 17

*Body*, 1960-69  
Print and white pigment  
26 x 20 inches (66 x 50.8 cm)  
Collection of Lonti Ebers, New York  
Photograph by Bruce M. White

PL. 18

*Body Print*, 1976  
Grease and pigment on paper  
29 x 23 inches (73.7 x 58.4)  
Private collection  
Photograph by Bruce M. White

PL. 19

*Untitled (Body Print)*, 1975  
Mixed media on paper  
39 x 29 inches (99.1 x 73.7 cm)  
Collection of Martin and  
Rebecca Eisenberg

PL. 20

*Untitled*, n.d.  
Grease and pigment on paper  
29 x 23 inches (73.7 x 58.4 cm)  
Hudgins Family Collection, New York

PL. 21

*Body Print With Burn Mark*, c. 1969  
Grease and pigment with burn mark  
on paper  
38 x 19 1/2 inches (96.5 x 49.5 cm)  
Hudgins Family Collection, New York  
Photograph by Bruce M. White

PL. 22

*Body Print*, c. 1974-79  
Grease and pigment on paper  
25 x 20 3/4 inches (63.5 x 52.7 cm)  
Private collection

## PL. 23

*Untitled*, 1976

Grease, pigment, oil pastel, and embossing on paper  
25 1/2 x 19 1/2 inches (64.8 x 49.5 cm)  
The Studio Museum in Harlem,  
gift of Glenn Ligon 2016.17

## PL. 24

*Untitled (Body Print)*, 1975-1977

Grease, pigment, and graphite on wove paper  
26 x 21 inches (66 x 53.3 cm)  
Hudgins Family Collection, New York  
Photograph by Bruce M. White

## PL. 25

*Bye-Centennial*, 1976

Grease and pigment on paper  
19 x 24 inches (48.3 x 61 cm)  
Collection of Lonti Ebers, New York  
Photograph by Bruce M. White

## PL. 26

*Body Print*, 1975

Pigment on paper  
29 1/8 x 23 1/4 inches (74 x 59.1 cm)  
The Museum of Modern Art,  
New York, The Judith Rothschild  
Foundation Contemporary  
Drawings Collection Gift, 2005  
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## PL. 27

*Itty Bitty Titty Committee*, 1979

Grease, pigment, and graphite on paper  
30 1/2 x 22 inches (77.5 x 55.9 cm)  
Hudgins Family Collection, New York

## PL. 28

*Untitled*, n.d.

Grease and pigment on paper  
24 x 19 1/2 inches (61 x 49.5 cm)  
Hudgins Family Collection, New York

## PL. 29

*Untitled*, 1975

Grease and pigment on paper  
30 1/4 x 39 3/4 inches (76.8 x 101 cm)  
Hudgins Family Collection, New York

## PL. 30

*Untitled (Double Body Print Collage)*, 1976

Pigment and ink on paper and printed paper collage on cardboard  
30 x 40 inches (76.2 x 101.6 cm)  
Hudgins Family Collection, New York  
Photograph by Bruce M. White

## PL. 31

*Untitled*, 1975

Grease, pigment, and mixed media on paper, on two sides  
41 x 31 inches (104.1 x 78.7 cm)  
Collection of Eleanor Heyman Propp

## PL. 32

*Don't Bite the Hand That Feeds*, 1974

Grease and pigment on paper  
10 3/4 x 13 inches (27.3 x 33 cm)  
Collection of Nicolas and  
Jeanne Greenberg Rohatyn  
Photograph by Bruce M. White

Photographs by Bruce W. Talamon

All:

Digital silver gelatin prints  
16 x 20 inches (40.6 x 50.8 cm) /  
20 x 16 inches (50.8 x 40.6 cm)  
Courtesy of the artist

PL. 33

David Hammons, Slauson Avenue studio,  
Los Angeles, 1974

PL. 34

David Hammons making a body print,  
Slauson Avenue studio, Los Angeles, 1974

PL. 35

David Hammons making a body print,  
Slauson Avenue studio, Los Angeles, 1974

PL. 36

David Hammons making a body print,  
Slauson Avenue studio, Los Angeles, 1974

PL. 37

David Hammons making a body print,  
Slauson Avenue studio, Los Angeles, 1974

PL. 38

David Hammons making a body print,  
Slauson Avenue studio, Los Angeles, 1974

PL. 39

David Hammons making a body print,  
Slauson Avenue studio, Los Angeles, 1974

PL. 40

David Hammons making a body print,  
Slauson Avenue studio, Los Angeles, 1974

PL. 41

David Hammons making a body print,,  
Slauson Avenue studio, Los Angeles, 1974

PL. 42

David Hammons making a body print,  
Slauson Avenue studio, Los Angeles, 1974

PL. 43

David Hammons with *Three Spades*,  
Bakersfield College, June 18, 1974

PL. 44

David Hammons between *The Wine*  
*Leading The Wine* (c. 1969) and *Defend*  
*Your Walk* (1974) at the exhibition  
*David Hammons: Selected Works*  
1968-1974, California State University,  
Los Angeles, 1974

PL. 45

Two unidentified patrons at the  
exhibition *David Hammons:*  
*Selected Works 1968-1974*, California  
State University, Los Angeles, 1974

PL. 46

Two unidentified patrons at the  
exhibition *David Hammons:*  
*Selected Works 1968-1974*, California  
State University, Los Angeles, 1974

PL. 47

David Hammons, La Salle Street studio,  
Los Angeles, 1977

PL. 48

David Hammons and Bruce Talamon  
self portrait, La Salle Street studio,  
Los Angeles, 1977

PL. 49

David Hammons, Slauson Avenue studio,  
Los Angeles, 1975

PL. 50

David Hammons, Linda Goode Bryant,  
and Bruce Talamon photographed  
by Chester Higgins in Harlem,  
New York City, 1980

## Contributors

Artist, curator, filmmaker, and activist **Linda Goode Bryant** is the Founder and President of Project EATS. Originally from Columbus, Ohio, she moved to New York City in 1972. After working as Director of Education at the Studio Museum in Harlem, she opened Just Above Midtown, Inc. (JAM) in 1974. JAM was the first gallery to show work by African American artists and other artists of color in a major gallery district. In the mid 1990s she began making experimental and documentary films. While filming a project on voting in America, Bryant started Active Citizen Project (ACP) to provide opportunities for non-voters and disenfranchised individuals to be more active and effective in having their social, economic, environmental, and cultural priorities addressed by local and national leaders. In 2009, ACP's work shifted from elections to Project EATS, a network of community-based small-plot production farms and programs located in communities throughout New York City, where many individuals and families live on low incomes. Project EATS (PE) partners with residents to support their ability to directly create and shape the resources and conditions they need to live healthy lives and thrive, regardless of income. PE has built and operated nineteen farms on approximately five acres of land located throughout New York City's five boroughs. Bryant holds a MBA from Columbia University and a BA in painting from Spelman College, and is a Guggenheim Fellow and Peabody Award recipient.

**Laura Hoptman** is the Executive Director of The Drawing Center.

**Senga Nengudi** is an artist who began her career exploring performance art through dance at California State University in the late 1960s. She joined the emerging community of African American artists in Los Angeles while moving toward more abstract, dematerialized, and conceptual artistic modes. Following the birth of her son, she introduced stretched and filled pantyhose into her work, arriving at her seminal *R.S.V.P.* series.

Nengudi's work has been shown at the 57th Venice Biennale and the 54th Carnegie International, and has been the subject of solo exhibitions including: *Improvisational Gestures*, a traveling retrospective organized in 2015 by the Museum of Contemporary Art, Denver; *Head Back and High: Senga Nengudi, Performance Objects (1976-2015)*, which opened in 2017 at the Baltimore Museum of Art and traveled to Art + Practice, Los Angeles. A retrospective of Nengudi's career, *Topologies*, is currently on view at the Denver Art Museum in Colorado, following its presentation at Lenbachhaus, Munich, and The Museu de Arte de São Paulo.

Nengudi's work is also in the permanent collections of The Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York; the Brooklyn Museum, New York; the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; the Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh; Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Tate Modern, London; and Jerusalem Museum of Art, Jerusalem.

**Bruce W. Talamon** is a photographer who grew up in the South Central neighborhood of Los Angeles, California. His photographs catalog the journeys that have taken him around the world. In 1971, while on foreign study, he bought an Asahi Pentax camera. From 1972-82 he photographed the music scene in Los Angeles, documenting soul, R&B, funk, and jazz music. In the 1980s he was a contract photographer for *Time* magazine. For the last forty-five years he has worked in the film industry, shooting photographs for movie posters and publicity campaigns for feature films. His most recent project was for the Universal Pictures film *News of The World*, starring Tom Hanks. In 1974 he formed a friendship with David Hammons that became a lifelong conversation.



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Published on the occasion of  
the exhibition *David Hammons:  
Body Prints, 1968-1979*

Organized by Laura Hoptman,  
Executive Director, with  
Isabella Kapur, Curatorial Assistant

**The Drawing Center**  
February 5-May 23, 2021

Major support for *David Hammons:  
Body Prints, 1968-1979* is provided  
by The Andy Warhol Foundation for  
the Visual Arts, Lonti Ebers, and  
the Robert Lehman Foundation.

Generous funding is provided by  
Fundación Almine y Bernard Ruiz-  
Picasso para el Arte, Amy Gold and  
Brett Gorvy, Kathy and Richard Fuld,  
Marie-Josée and Henry R. Kravis,  
Liz and Eric Lefkofsky, Marco Perego-  
Saldana and Zoe Saldana-Perego,  
and Jerry Speyer & Katherine Farley.

Additional support is provided by  
Frances Beatty Adler and Allen Adler,  
Anonymous, the Blue Rider Group  
at Morgan Stanley, Martin and Rebecca  
Eisenberg, Emily Rauh Pulitzer,  
Almine Rech Picasso, Isabel Stainow  
Wilcox, and the Director's Circle  
of The Drawing Center.

This is number 144 of the Drawing  
Papers, a series of publications  
documenting The Drawing Center's  
exhibitions and programs and  
providing a forum for the study  
of drawing.

**Editor**  
Joanna Ahlberg

**Design**  
AHL&CO

**Printing & Binding**  
Shapco Printing, Minneapolis

**About the Type**  
This book is set in Publico Text  
(Roman, Italic, and Bold). It is part  
of the Publico Collection, designed  
by Ross Milne, Christian Schwartz,  
Paul Barnes, Kai Bernau, and Greg  
Gazdowicz, and released incrementally  
by Commercial Type in 2009, 2013,  
and 2014. This book also uses Plain  
(Regular and Italic), which was  
designed by François Rappo and  
released by Optimo Type Foundry  
in 2014.

ISBN 978-0-942324-41-9

Artworks © David Hammons, 2021

Photographs © Bruce W. Talamon, 2021

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THE  
DRAWING  
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# David Hammons: Body Prints, 1968–1979

Now internationally renowned for his three-dimensional assemblages, performances, and large-scale installations, David Hammons (b. 1943) began his career with a series of monoprints created with impressions of his own body combined with silkscreens and collaged found objects. *David Hammons: Body Prints, 1968–1979* is the first publication to focus exclusively on these pivotal early works on paper in which the artist used the body as both a drawing tool and printing plate to explore performative, unconventional forms of image making. Together, the thirty-two body prints highlighted in this volume introduce the major themes of a fifty-year career that has become central to the history of postwar American art.

This edition of the Drawing Papers series features a conversation between curator and activist Linda Goode Bryant and artist Senga Nengudi, as well as a photo essay by photographer Bruce W. Talamon, who documented David Hammons at work in his Los Angeles studio in 1974.

Introduction by  
Laura Hoptman

Contributions by  
Linda Goode Bryant  
Senga Nengudi  
Bruce W. Talamon

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