

Satch Hoyt

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Sculptures and Drawings

Satch Hoyt makes sculptures and images, and there is a dichotomy in the genres that defines two sides of the same coin: a dual and complementary reflection on the black Diaspora and its multifold consequences. On the one hand there are sculptures such as *Inside Out*, shown on the cover and right, in an installation view at a recent exhibition earlier this year at the Walker Art Center ("The Squared Circle: Boxing in Contemporary Art"). Invoking the significance of boxing in American (and British) black experience and history, *Inside Out* is made of mouthpieces and handwraps encased trophy-like in a steel and plexiglass box, added to which is a "soundscape" of boxers breathing and grunting through their practice sessions.

On the other hand, there are Hoyt's surreal-cartoony images, an example of which is also shown on the cover, a large-scale drawing on white velvet. The sculptural trope in Hoyt's work addresses the facts on the ground, so to speak, of black experience, while the drawings tap into a spirit of fantasy, refuge, and transcendence—they're vehicles for an imaginative journey beyond the obduracy and oppressiveness of history.



Above and cover: *Inside Out*. 350 transparent double mouthpieces, 44 handwraps, plexiglass and metal stand, soundscape (boxers' breathing, from suspended speakers). 19 ¾ x 14 x 14". 2003.

Born in 1957 in London to a white British mother and a father of African-Jamaican ancestry, former resident of Paris, and now living in New York, Satch (short for Satchidananda) Hoyt was an accomplished professional musician before taking up art, and he remains an active musician. Hoyt has played with Grace Jones and Louise Bourgeois (in her less-well-known activities as spoken-word poet and rapper), and he is currently a member of Greg Tate's band Burnt Sugar.



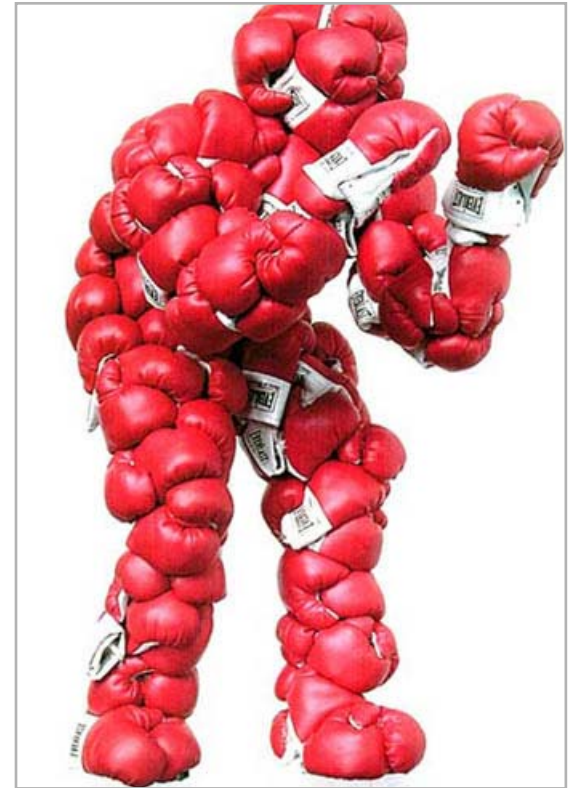
Drawing deeply on that background, Hoyt has made musicality and aurality a base chord of his visual art practice, which (in the case of the object-making) characteristically and pointedly hovers between the categories "art object" and "aural/musical experience." Nearly all the sculptures illustrated in this portfolio contain a sound and/or musical element-what the artist calls a "soundscape." A soundscape will figure prominently in the large-scale installation commissioned by the Tate Liverpool Biennial, opening later this month (opening September 18, 2004). Composed of puzzle pieces that will float on the Thames river (see studio views, right, of the work in progress) the installation is intended to evoke Liverpool's history of involvement in the slave trade.

In Satch Hoyt's studio in lower Manhattan. *Upper left:* The *Octave* series, a set of eight large drawings on velvet. *Upper right:* a sculpture in progress, composed of oversized styrofoam puzzle pieces, to be installed on the surface of the Thames at the Tate Liverpool Biennial. Lower left and right: Satch Hoyt at work and play.



Boxing and the boxer have been prominent in the visual iconography of black experience (see notably Basquiat). Jack Johnson, Joe Louis, Floyd Patterson, Muhammad Ali, and many lesser-knowns-became emblems of individual and racial empowerment, albeit pathos-laden emblems insofar as sports and particularly boxing once (and not that long ago) offered one of the few available paths available to black men toward wealth, success and fame. Whereas Basquiat invoked the likeness of particular tragic-hero boxing champions, Hoyt's boxing sculptures invoke the theme by an accumulation of the mundane and the throwaway.

DonKingDom, an ongoing series of figures made of miniature leather gloves and set in pugilistic stances. These are about half-life size (although Hoyt has also made a life-size version of *DonKingDom*, which was shown this year at the Stuttgart Kunstverein in a thematic exhibition about sports). It's also worth noting here that Hoyt is a serious student and collector of African tribal art. These coruscated red-boxing-glove bodies, bearing the same multiplicative esthetic evident in *Inside Out*, conjoin formal references to the Nkisi (medicine) "nail-fetish" statues of the Kongo people (example above right) with the travail of American black boxers, rendered here in the flesh, so to speak, the weltish gloves-as-skin evoking both routine physical punishment and the toughness it took to take it. The title provides a crowning touch, alluding of course to the notorious boxing promoter Don King, and to the double-edged irony of a black man getting rich on the exploitation of other black men's often unfulfilled dreams. Hoyt has produced four *DonKingDoms*, which is envisioned as a series of twelve figures, each bearing the name of a great fighter: Joe Louis (in the collection of the director Spike Lee), Sugar Ray Robinson (in the collection of the entertainer Jay-Z), Floyd Patterson (the version illustrated here), among others.



DonKingDom (Floyd Patterson).
28"x16"x12" Miniature leather boxing
gloves, steel armature. 2004.

In these works the tools and sounds of the boxing trade are multiplied and piled up. As with *Inside Out*, the *DonKingDom* sculptures generate a metaphorical chord out of the repetition and accretion of objects that are conventionally found singly or in pairs. The musical references in Hoyt's object-making are to be found not only in the aural elements but in the selection and composition of the materials. That musicality, and the artist's familiarity with tribal art, both make their impression in the composite sculpture *From Mau Mau to Bling Bling* (right). In this particular conjuration Hoyt brings together in a flute case a faux diamond-studded carved ebony hair pick and ebony key, and a relic from British colonial Africa, a brass identity pendant that blacks were compelled to wear and that served as an instrument and symbol of control and oppression. *From Mau Mau to Bling Bling*, from mid-century revolutionary flashpoint to the more recent history of lookin' good, Hoyt weaves his own web within the matrix of black history. Conjoining made and found, Minimalist esthetics and a historical/political consciousness, Hoyt's objects make connections that by turns resonate with anger, pride, and irony.



From Mau Mau to Bling Bling. Carved ebony hair pick and key, brass ID pendant, velvet-lined wooden case; soundscape; headphones. 15x3.5x8.25". 2003.

Hoyt's image-making is no less based on the same set of concerns. But the artist has made drawing and painting a stage for the elaboration of a phantasmagoric scenic and figurative vocabulary. The drawings in the *Sightings* series typically depict a bare, Little Prince-like lunar landscape, with clusters of buildings and hills crowding a far low horizon, and in the foreground, clothes-less black figures variously engaged in acrobatic play, fanciful stepping and gesturing, communal dancing, and the contemplation of their uncanny surroundings (according to Hoyt the buildings in the far distance reference features of the urban architecture in Mombasa Kenya, which the artist has visited often).

In the sky, in which the earthbound figures behold wondrous skyborne objects. There is notably a barbell-shaped apparition in all the *Sightings* scenes, an ad hoc starship out of which people can be seen falling to the ground and joining the party. "Energy, music, another planet," Hoyt says he was thinking about when he made the "Sightings" drawings. "Wanting to be in a space with no restrictions."

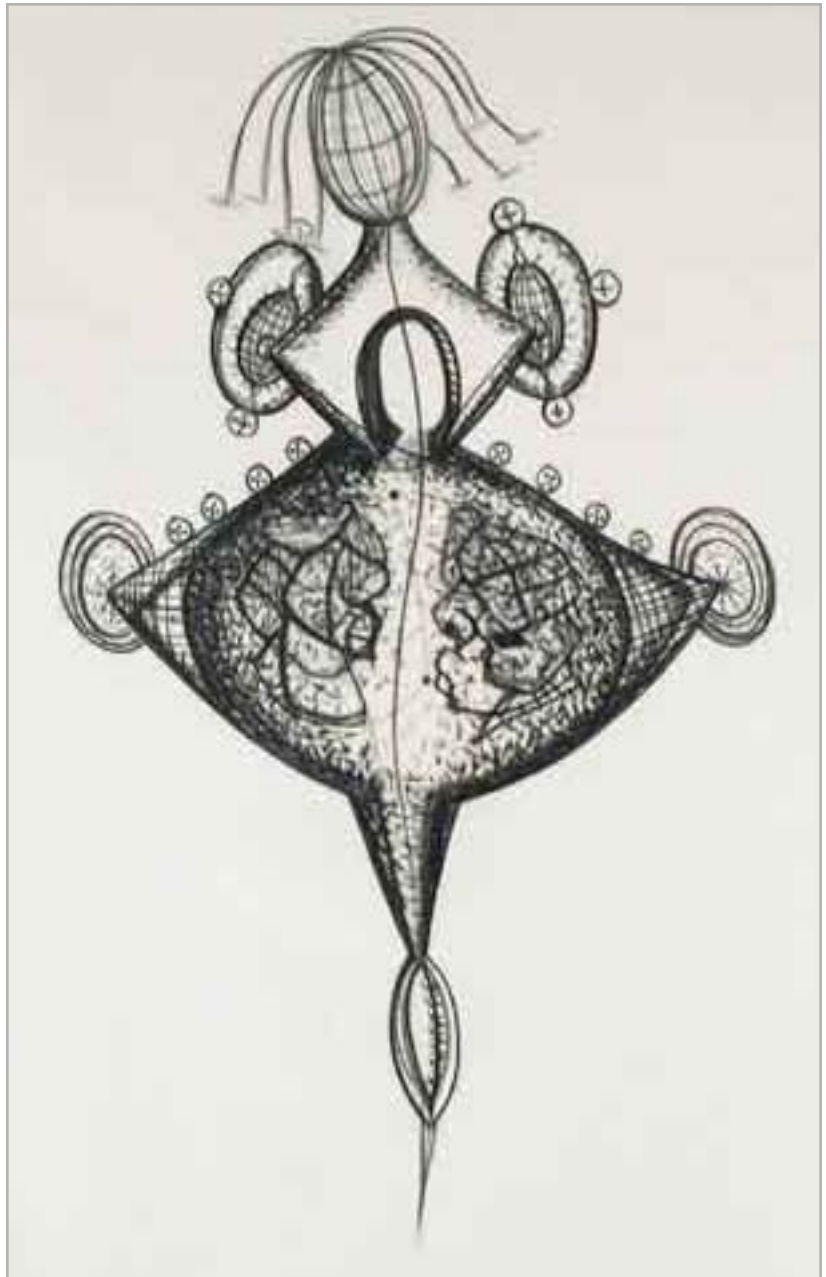


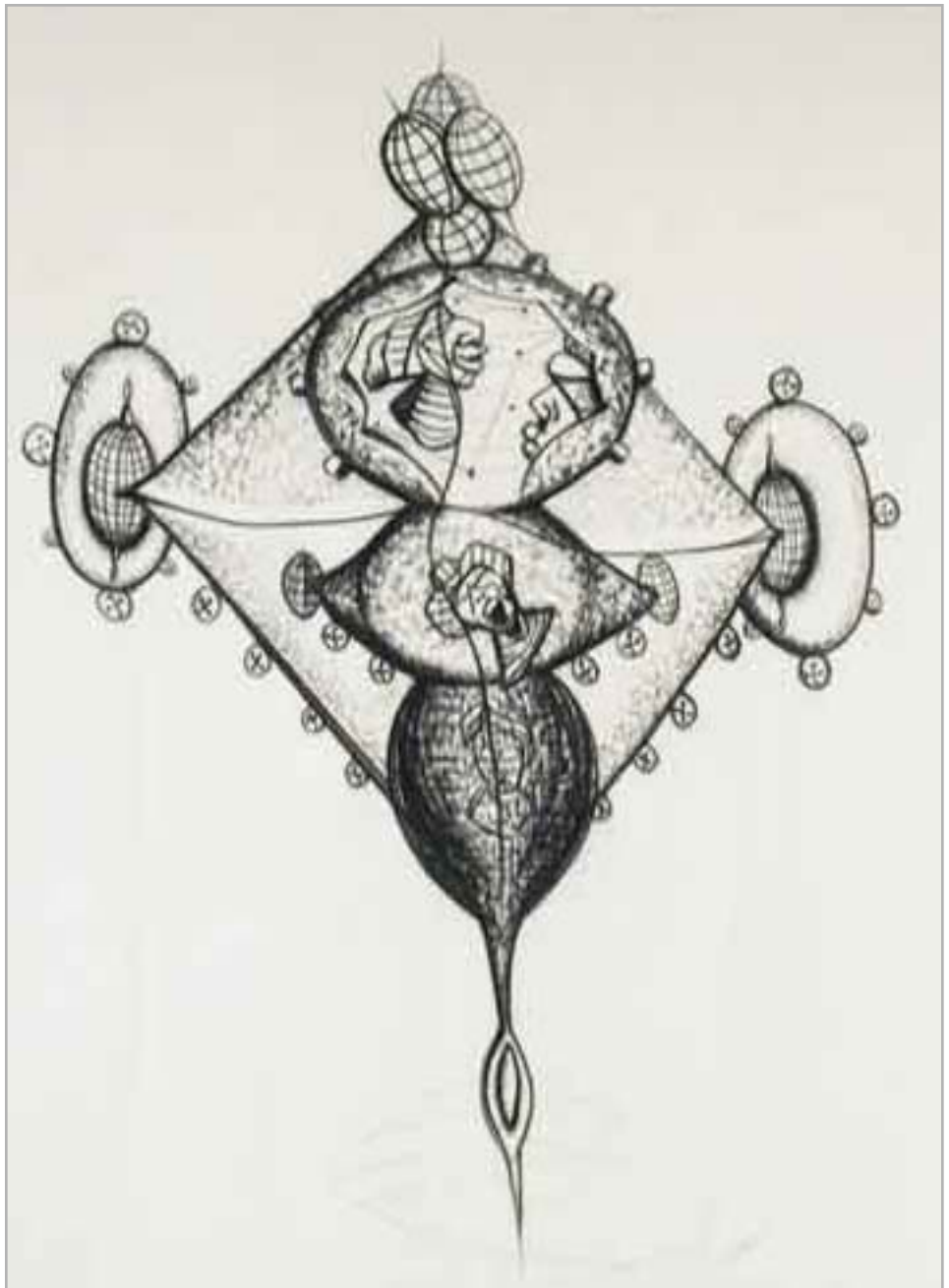
Drawings from the *Sightings* series. Charcoal on paper. 11x 17". 2002-2003.

That ship trope, an element among many in the *Sightings* drawings, takes center stage in the subsequent *Octave* series, a set of eight large-scale black charcoal drawings on white velvet fabric made this year. The *Octave* series present so many variations of a kind of vessel, or vehicle, now taking on a body- and cartouche-like shapes, inhabited by heads, like so many travelers on their way to some other, better, planet. In his sculptural objects Hoyt makes works that evoke the inescapable matter of black identity in all its tangled historical and contemporary contradictions and complexities. In his drawings and paintings, by contrast, Hoyt often evinces a desire to transcend a social-political regime that makes racial identity all but mandatory, with all its attendant myriad pressures and oppressions. In many of his recent drawings and paintings Hoyt evokes fable- and sci-fi- inspired tableaux and scenarios in which black people exist above and beyond the usual shackles, in some deeply yearned dreamspace of freedom and wonder.

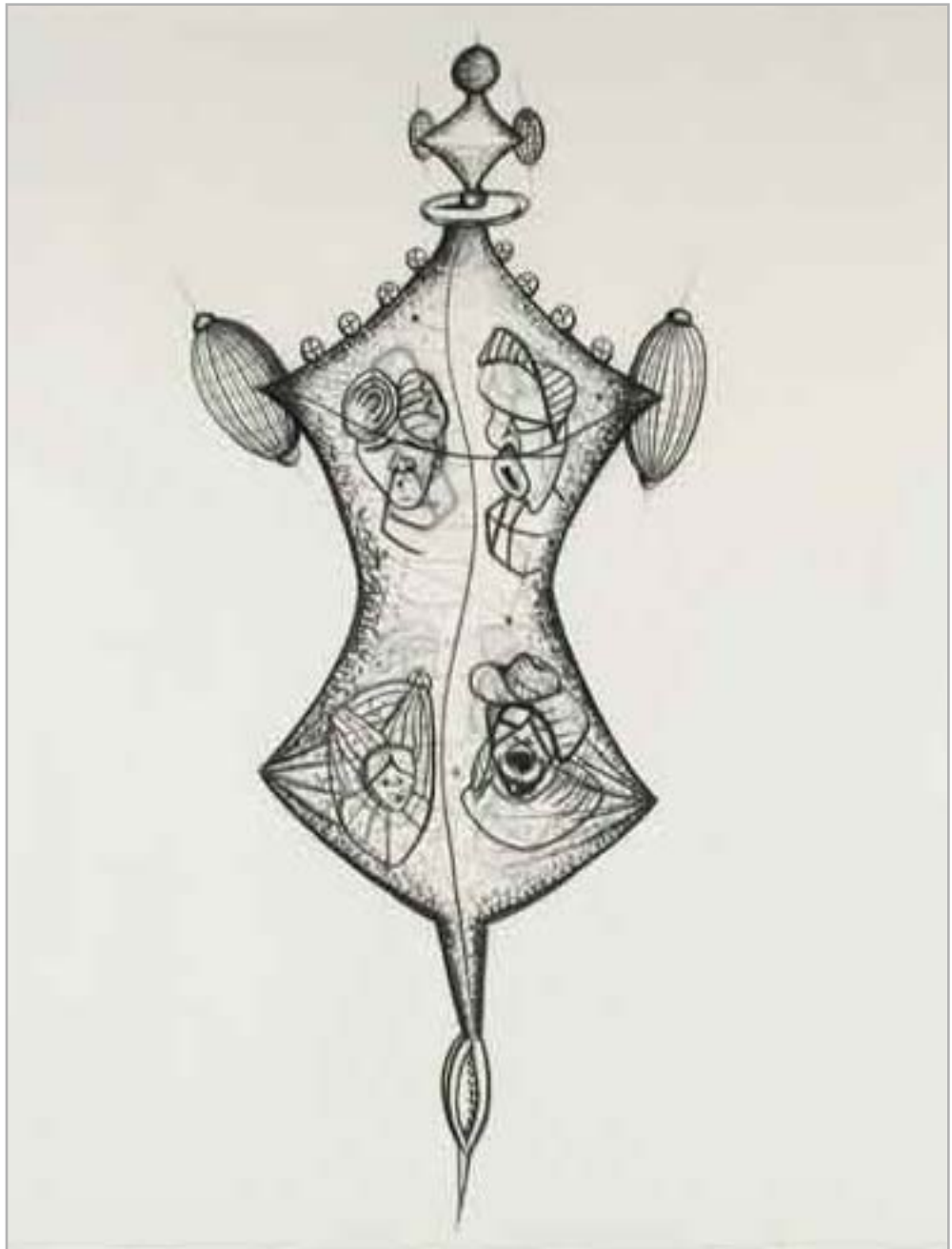
Robert Knafo

Drawing from the *Octave* series. Charcoal on velvet. ~36x48". 2004.

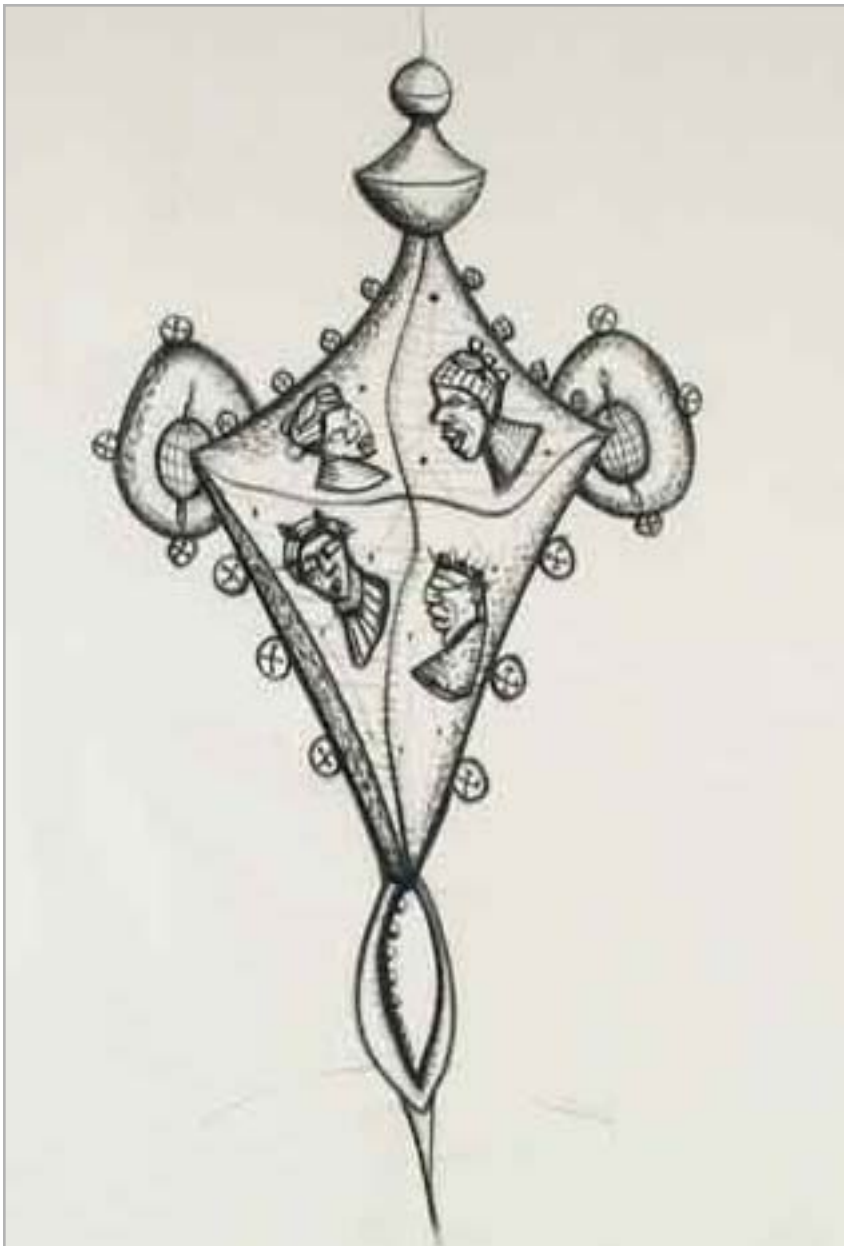




Drawing from the *Octave* series. Charcoal on velvet. ~ 36x48". 2004.



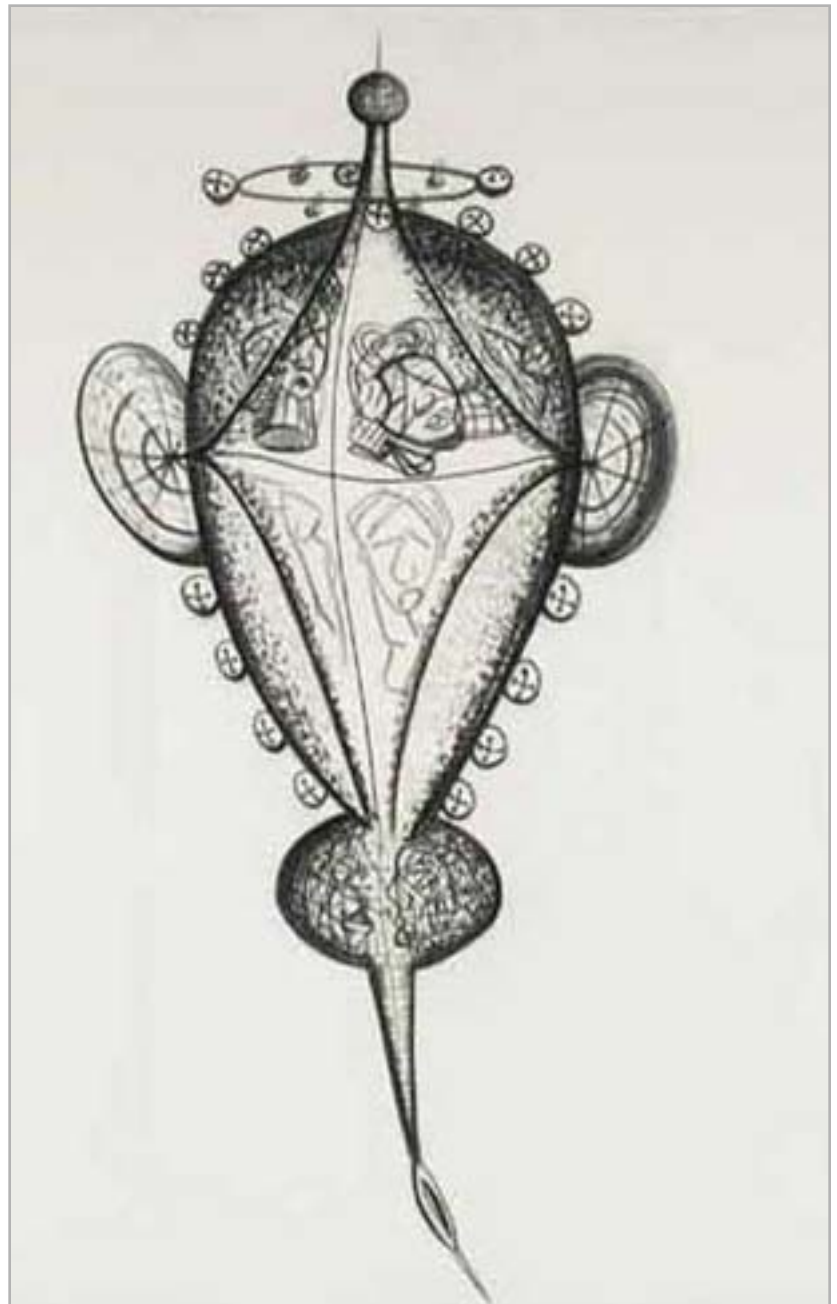
Drawing from the *Octave* series. Charcoal on velvet. ~ 36x48". 2004.



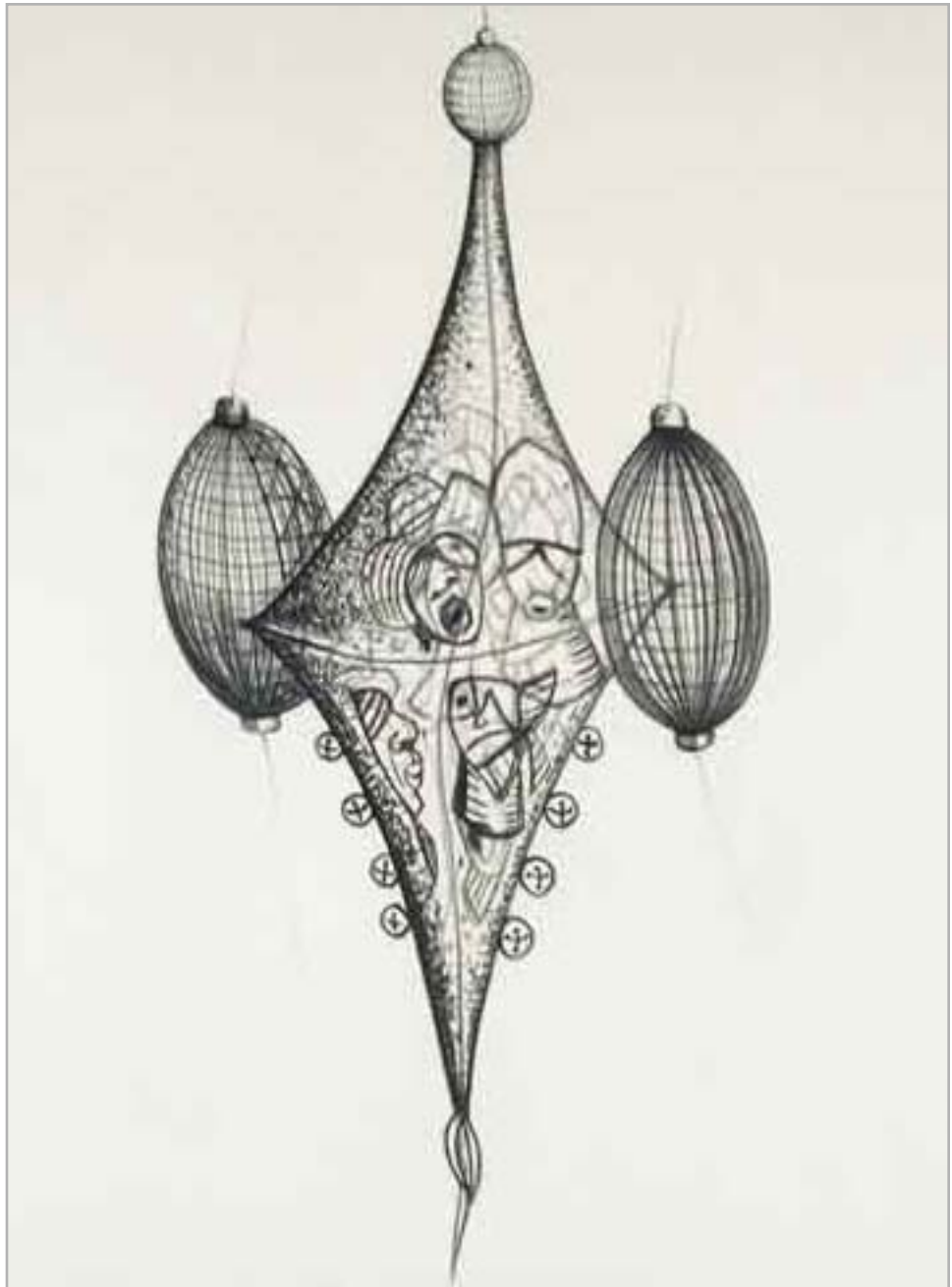
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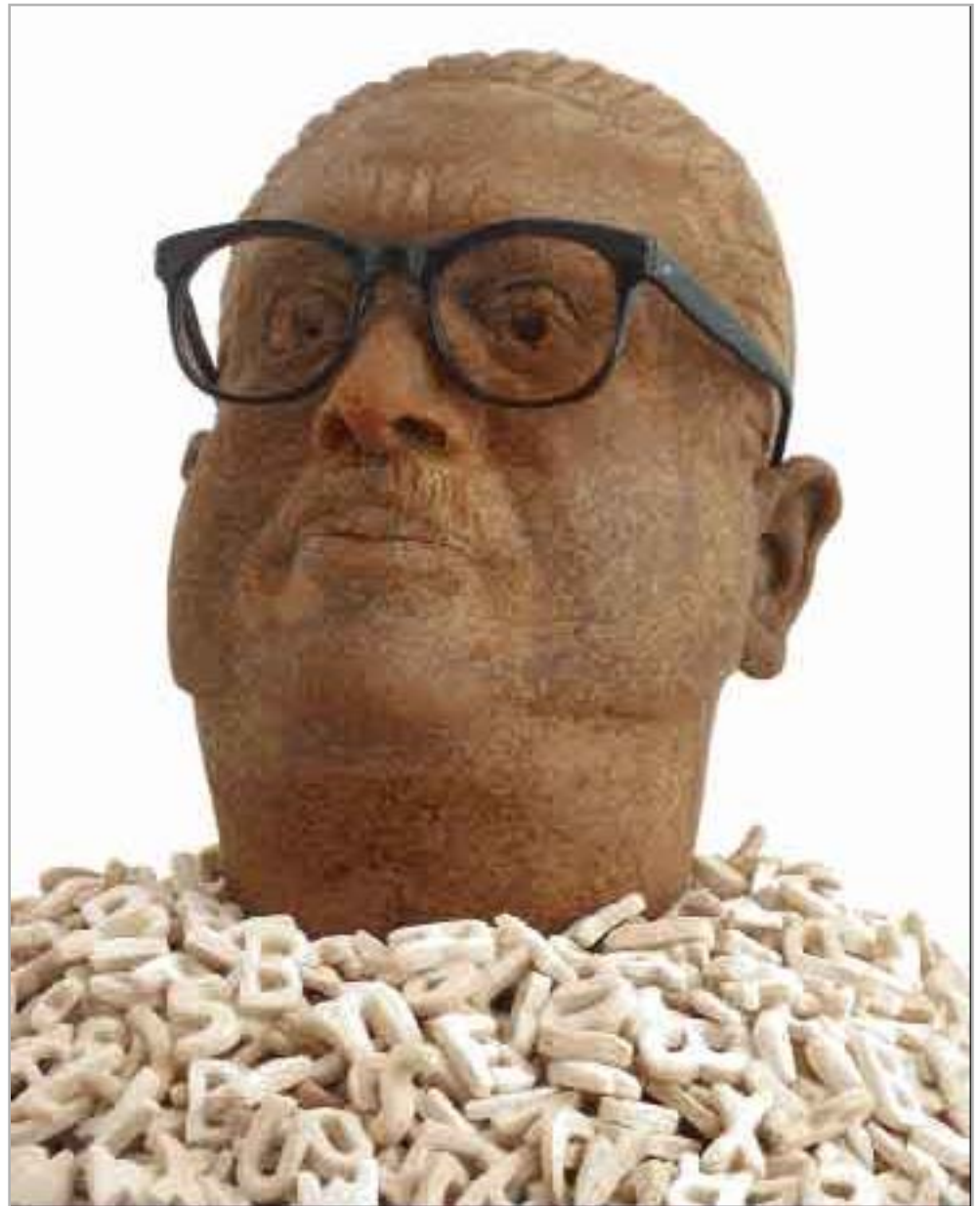
Drawing from the *Octave* series. Charcoal on velvet. ~ 36x48". 2004.



Drawing from the *Octave* series. Charcoal on velvet. ~ 36x48". 2004.



Alphabetical Justice. Molded sugarcane, spectacles, handmade alphabet cookies, steel, Plexiglas, soundscape. 2004. Commissioned for a recent exhibition in New York commemorating the anniversary of the landmark Supreme Court decision *Brown v. Board of Education*, *Alphabetical Justice* features a brown-sugar cast of a likeness of the civil rights leader and later Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall, and combines references to the transatlantic commodities trade (sugar, cotton, tobacco, slaves), the civil rights movement, and the school desegregation battle. The soundscape on this piece (heard through headphones) mixes classroom sounds (writing on blackboard, etc.) with clips of speeches by Malcolm X and others.



Born in London, 1957. Lives and works in New York.

Selected Group Exhibitions

- 2006 "The Endless Line", Beijing, China
- 2004 Tate Liverpool Biennial, Liverpool, U.K.
 "Open House: Working in Brooklyn", Brooklyn Museum of Art, Brooklyn
 "Brown v. Board of Education 1954-2004", Gallery 138, New York
 "The Squared Circle: Boxing in Contemporary Art", Walker Art Center, Minneapolis.
- 2003 "Black President: The Art and Legacy of Fela Anikulapo-Kuti", New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York.
- 2002 "A Moment's Notice", Inman Gallery, Houston
 "Body Power/Power Play", Württembergischer Kunstverein, Stuttgart, Germany
- 2001 "Boxer", Kunsthalle Tirol, Hall, Austria
- 1999 "Art of Latin America and the Caribbean", UNESCO, Paris, France

Solo Exhibitions

- 1997 "Star Worshippers", Ileana Bouboulis Gallery, Paris, France
 "Satch Hoyt", Galerie de l'Autre Cote de la Rue, Brussels, Belgium

Residencies and Awards

- 2002 New York State Council on the Arts Grant
- 2002 Art Omi International, International Artists' Colony
- 1998 CCP Foundation, Marrakesh, Morocco

Selected Bibliography

- 2003 Trevor Schoonmaker (ed.), "Black President: The Art and Legacy of Fela Anikulapo-Kuti" (cat.), New Museum, New York
 Holland Cotter, "King of Music and All He Surveyed", The New York Times, New York, July
 Barbara Pollack, "The Afrobeat Generation", The Village Voice, New York, July
 Deidre Stein Greben, "A Multimedia Tribute to an African Icon", Newsday, New York, July
 Jonathan Adams, "King of Cool and Kalakuta", Newsweek International, August
 Olukemi Ilesanmi (ed.), "The Squared Circle: Boxing in Contemporary Art" (cat.), Walker Art Center, Minneapolis
- 2002 Victor J. Fleming, "Surrealism", NY Arts Magazine, New York, July/August
 Andrea Jahn, "Body Power/Power Play" (cat.), Württembergischer Kunstverein, Stuttgart, Germany
 Birgit Kolgen, "Sport in der Kunst (Body Power in Stuttgart)", Schwäbische Zeitung, Stuttgart, Germany, September
 Dietlind Hebestreit, "Hallo, New York gibt es noch", Kultur Nachrichten, Linz, Austria, September
 Adrienne Braun, "Sport vor Ort", Stuttgarter Zeitung, Germany, September
- 2001 Helen Allen, "SportCult, apexart, New York", Flash Art International, November/December

Checklist | Sculptures

Works in this portfolio are for sale unless otherwise indicated. Prices for the sculptures range from \$7,000 to \$18,000. For individual prices please inquire. T. 917 340 3760 | E. office@studiovisit.net



Inside Out. 350 transparent double mouthpieces, 44 handwraps, plexi-glass and metal stand, soundscape (boxers' breathing, from suspended speakers). 19 ¾ x 14 x 14". 2003.



DonKingDom (Floyd Patterson). 28"x16x12" Miniature leather boxing gloves, steel armature. 2004.



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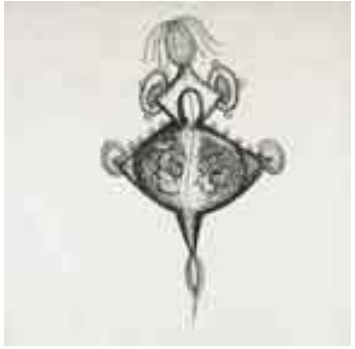
From Mau to Bling Bling. Carved ebony, brass ID pendant, velvet-lined wooden case; soundscape; headphones. 15x3.5x8.25". 2003.

Checklist | Drawings

Octave series (1-8) are charcoal on velvet and are approximately 36x48". *Sightings* series are charcoal on paper and are 11x17". Prices are \$1,200 for works in the *Sightings* series and \$6,000 for works in the *Octave* series. (Please inquire about additional works in the *Sightings* series.)



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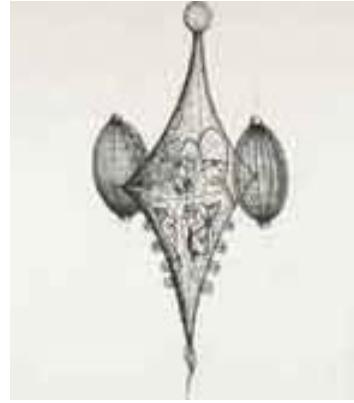
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