

Aspen Art Museum
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Educator Notes



Installation view: *David Hammons Yves Klein / Yves Klein David Hammons*, 2014. Photo: Tony Prikryl

David Hammons **Yves Klein /** **Yves Klein** **David Hammons**

August 9–November 30, 2014

About the artists

David Hammons was born in 1943 in Illinois and currently lives and works in Harlem, New York. In his installations, sculptures, body prints, and performances, he often confronts stereotypes and social issues, especially those faced by the African American community.

Yves Klein (1928–1962) lived in France. He was an avant-garde artist who experimented with a range of forms during his brief career. He created his own signature color, International Klein Blue, and was one of the founding members of the Nouveau Réalisme movement.



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About the exhibition

An unprecedented coupling of two of the most significant artists of modern times, *David Hammons Yves Klein / Yves Klein David Hammons* explores points of aesthetic harmony within two seemingly different practices. Weaving a larger narrative through Hammons's Basketball and Kool-Aid Drawings, Klein's Fire Paintings and Monochromes, to both artists' explorations of performance and public intervention, the exhibition looks at Hammons and Klein as artists who perform a kind of aesthetic alchemy—investing the humblest of everyday materials with deep aesthetic significance.

The museum space allows us to freeze space and time by putting artworks that were made in different contexts in

dialogue. Whether the original motivation for Klein was the abstraction of color, or for Hammons, the sociopolitical experience of post-Civil Rights Movement life in the African American community, the artworks presented in this exhibition dynamically connect with the viewer.

Quite often, the actions the artists took to create the artworks—through the positive or negative print of a body or object, for example—are discernible. Many of these works were created through a performative action, and the object itself is actually the trace of this moment. Our imagination is called upon to complete this conversation.



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Questions for discussion

The use of materials in both artists' works varies. Yves Klein and David Hammons experimented at times with very specific messages, but also harnessed the unpredictability of chance in sources such as fire or basketballs to determine the form of an artwork. Many of these materials often are directly related to the elements:

Water: Selling snowballs or capturing rain on a canvas painted with pigment

- | David Hammons, *Bliz-aard Ball Sale*, 1984
- | Yves Klein, *Cosmonogy of Rain*, 1961

Fire: Using flames to make marks on the surface of cardboard

- | Yves Klein, *Untitled Fire Painting (F2)*, 1962

Air: Documenting or imagining a jump into space

- | Yves Klein, *Leap into the Void*, 1960
- | David Hammons, *Flight Fantasy*, 1978

Earth: The use of pigments or natural materials such as hair and earth

- | David Hammons, *Basketball Drawing*, 2001
- | David Hammons, *Nap Tapestry*, 1978

Discuss the symbolism of different materials found in the exhibition:

- | Blue pigment
- | Kool Aid
- | Earth/Dirt
- | Hair

Pair two of these words on a piece of paper, or any other elements you find in the exhibition, trying to find connections between them.

What similarities can you find between the artists? What makes them unique?

In some artworks, we see the presence of a material; in others, we see the absence. When is something that is not said more powerful than what is said?

Suggested activities

Chance Print

- | Have students leave a piece of blank paper outside overnight. What happens?
- | Or, place the paper on the ground and bounce a ball covered in pigment on it.

Personal Monoprinting

- | A monoprint is a form of printmaking in which a surface is covered in paint, pigment, or another material and drawn into with an object. A piece of paper is then pressed against the surface to create a print that is only produced once.
- | David Hammons often uses his own body to make body prints; he also uses other objects familiar to him as his subjects. Ask students to think of an object that is meaningful or symbolic, and make a monoprint of that object. If possible, try to use that object itself to make the print.

David Hammons Yves Klein / Yves Klein David Hammons, an illustrated catalogue, is currently available in the Shop.

For more information, please contact the Education Department at 970.925.8050 ext. 133 or email education@aspennartmuseum.org.

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