

Press Release
For Immediate Release From April 8th - August 19th, 2010
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African American Art and Culture Complex

Presents

PAST FORWARD: African Spirituality in Contemporary Black Art

April 8 through August 19, 2010.

Opening Reception: April 8, 6-9 PM

The Sargent Johnson Gallery presents *Past Forward: African Spirituality in Contemporary Black Art*, an exhibition organized and curated by Demetrie Broxton at the African American Art and Culture Complex. *Past Forward* brings together a multigenerational group of seven Bay Area artists of African descent whose works consciously reawaken and revisit spiritual forms originating in Africa and passed down through the generations. Including 16 works of sculpture, photography, assemblage, and video, each of the works resurrects a traditional African shamanistic aesthetic while remaining unquestionably contemporary.

The artists highlighted in *Past Forward* look to the sacred arts, symbols, and rituals of Central and West Africa to reclaim aspects of African knowledge systems which were forced underground through the experiences of the Middle Passage and slavery in the “New World”. Whether each of the artists has physically stepped foot on African soil or not, their art serves as a vehicle to psychically journey back through “The Door of No Return”. Thus, in “returning” to Africa for inspiration, each artist is able to ground his or herself in an aesthetic tradition which originates in Africa rather than being steeped in Western art traditions.

“The exhibition explores the aesthetic approaches taken by a select group of African American artists connecting to a history pre-dating slavery,” said Demetrie Broxton, curator of *Past Forward*. “The works assembled encompass the ways in which cultural memory can survive and transcend both time and space.”

“We are so proud to share Past Forward at the Sargent Johnson Gallery,” said Melorra Green, the African American Art & Culture Complex Visual Arts Coordinator. “An exhibition like this is significant in dispelling myths and preserving the rich African culture that so many do not understand and could possibly be afraid of.”

Demetrie Broxton is an artist, educator, and independent curator. Broxton most recently co-curated *Decoding Identity: I Do it for My People* at Museum of the African Diaspora.

PAST FORWARD: African Spirituality in Contemporary Black Art will be accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue featuring texts by Demetrie Broxton, Duane Deterville, and Jacqueline Francis.

Artist List:

Duane Deterville, Nicole Dixon, Willie L. Little, Ramekon O’Arwisters, Kamau Amu Patton, Karen Seneferu, Malik Seneferu.

African American Art and Culture Complex

Background:

The African American Art and Culture Complex (AAACC) is a community based 501(c)(3) nonprofit arts and cultural organization. Our mission is to nurture and facilitate the empowerment of our community through Afro-centric artistic and cultural expression, mediums, education and programming. The AAACC is dedicated to inspiring children and youth to serve as agents of change, cultivating their leadership skills and fostering a commitment to community service and activism. In addition,

the AAACC is dedicated to encouraging, supporting, and promoting the work of young aspiring Bay Area artists. We also strive to develop partnerships with organizations that are similarly committed to our mission driven objectives.

Admission: Free and open to the public. Donations Accepted. Free Parking.

762 Fulton Street, San Francisco, CA 94102

Gallery Hours: Tuesday-Saturday 12 - 5pm

www.aaacc.org

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