



At MoMA PS1, David Hammons's 'African American Flag' Beckons Visitors to 'Greater New York'

BY VICTORIA L. VALENTINE OCTOBER 11, 2015

MOMA PS1 HAS ASSEMBLED a sprawling exhibition featuring 157 New York artists and collectives that span generations and mediums, and includes more than 400 works, as well as performances and films. Before visitors enter the main museum building, they get an Afrocentric welcome. Flying out front is David Hammons's "African American Flag," the New York artist's red, black and green interpretation of Old Glory.

Opening today, MoMA PS1 is presenting "Greater New York," an ambitious group exhibition in collaboration with the Museum of Modern Art. This is the fourth edition of the exhibition series that began in 2000 and occurs every five years.

In its original form, "Greater New York" was intended to provide a platform for emerging artists living and working in the greater New York metropolitan area. However, changes in the city, the art community and art market have led the curatorial team, which includes Thomas J. Lax, a former curator at the Studio Museum in Harlem, who now serves as associate curator of Media and Performance Art at The Museum of Modern Art, to reconsider the focus of the exhibition.

Social media, the proliferation of art fairs, and the burgeoning online art market are among the developments that have opened up more opportunities and provided greater exposure for emerging artists. At the same time, the museum notes there is a "burgeoning interest in artists who may have been overlooked in the art histories of their time" as well as "a nostalgia for earlier periods in New York—notably the 1970s and 1980s, and the experimental practices and attitudes that flourished in the city during those decades."

The 1990s factor into the exhibition, too. Hammons created the "African American Flag" in 1990, when David Dinkins was elected the first (and only, thus far) black mayor of New York City. It flies on the front of the Studio Museum in Harlem and when Jack Shainman Gallery opened an outpost of its New York gallery in an old school building in upstate Kinderhook, Hammons's flag sat atop a pole in front. The dyed cotton flag is in the permanent collection of MoMA.

Grounded in the culture and character of New York and intended to reflect its evolving creative context and community, there is a tight selection of African American artists contributing to "Greater New York," including: Hammons (b. 1943); Kevin Beasley (b. 1985), Deana Lawson (b. 1979), Simone Leigh (b. 1968); Glenn Ligon (b. 1960); Howarda Pindell (b. 1943); Lorna Simpson (b. 1960); and William Villalongo (b. 1975).

The multigenerational aspect of "Greater New York" is represented in the slate of African American artists—several are mid-career; Beasley is barely 30; and Hammons and Pindell are both 72.