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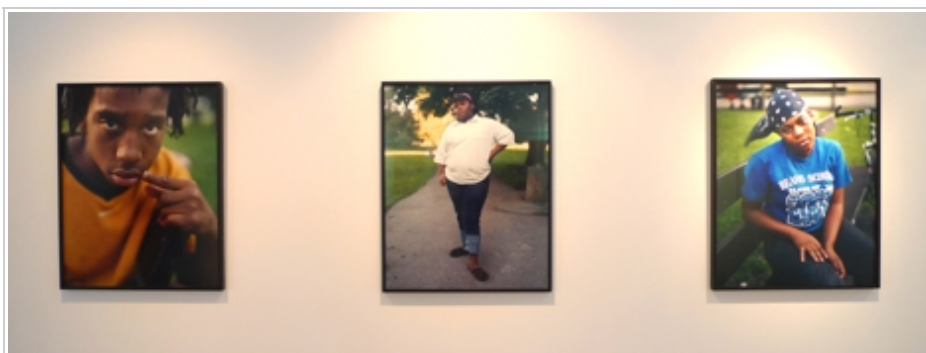
CHICAGO AROUND TOWN

The Power of Art

Posted: 05/11/2012 2:04 pm

Dawoud Bey's career and art exemplify the power of art. While a teenager living in New York, the now Chicago-based artist went to the Metropolitan Museum of Art to see the noise and demonstrations regarding the highly controversial *Harlem on My Mind* show. But when he got there nothing was going on outdoors, so instead he went to see the show. This was the first time the young Bey, as well as a lot of white folks of northern European heritage, had ever seen black subject matter in a museum. He was particularly moved by the significant work of James Van Der Zee (who if it weren't for this show would probably have been lost to history.)

Dawoud Bey got a camera from a relative and began to shoot. Just eight years later he had a one-person show of his own at the Studio Museum of Harlem -- which is now on exhibit at the Art Institute of Chicago. And at the [Renaissance Society](#), opening Sunday is a survey of Bey's work since then; most often pictures of youths of color who look directly into the lens, and because of the remarkable man behind the camera who is gentle, powerful, trusting and trusted, reveal themselves.



Vera Klement is an octogenarian kid, with the knowledge, wisdom and talent of her years and the energy, output and enthusiasm of someone a quarter of her age. She is a remarkably gifted painter whose work continues to grow -- as is apparent in her show opening tonight at [Zolla/Lieberman](#). Her sectioned paintings are like symphonies of self-contained movements that contribute to a larger whole. The poignant beauty of her work references literature, history and us.



Arturo Herrera was a popular Chicago artist when he left about a decade ago. He returns in a just opened show of collages at [Corbett vs. Dempsey](#). This current body of work is about "series" as the installation reveals and the theme is carried further with additional exhibits to open this month in New York and Europe. Clearly, his popularity has grown, and he makes some exceptionally gorgeous pieces, but they often feel facile, quick, prolific and unedited.



A while back a friend of mine we'll call Phil, who has a layman's knowledge of art, told me I was in a dream of his. Phil said he thought the dream was a good idea for a book and a movie because it was about art and fraud. In his dream he laid down a solid color of paint, and cooked up a pot full of noodles and while still moist dropped them onto the canvas, spray painted over them and then threw away the noodles. My part in the dream was to write about how wonderful this was and we'd charge big dollars for the paintings and split the profit... You know how sometimes "good"

ideas happen in multiple places in the universe at the same time? Scott Reeder's paintings open at [Kavi Gupta](#) on Saturday.

Thank you,

Paul Klein

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