



Positions: Gregory Coates

gregory coates

Gregory Coates' career in painting and sculpture dates back to the late 1980s. Over the years his work has included large- and small-scale sculpture, paintings, assemblages, and installations. He constructs most of his art using a variety of found objects and materials.

Coates studied at Corcoran School of Art, Washington D.C.; and later at Kunst Akademie Duesseldorf, Germany; and the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Maine. Since the late '80s his art works have been included in numerous solo and group exhibition projects including: Magnan Projects, NYC; Galerie Denkraum, Vienna, Austria; Phillips Museum of Art, Lancaster, PA; Studio Sinnvoll, Vienna, Austria; Rhode Island College Bannister Gallery, Providence, R.I.; Thread Waxing Space, NYC; New York State Museum Albany, NY; Philadelphia Academy of Art, Philadelphia; Studio Museum in Harlem; Sotheby's NY; Stamford Center for the Arts, Stamford, CT; Miami Art Museum; and the Paul Pozozza Museum, Duesseldorf, Germany. He has held several artist residencies in Berlin, London, New Zealand, South Africa and has taught at various institutions including the School of Visual Arts, NYC; Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, RI; and Columbia College, Chicago. Coates' awards and fellowships include The Edward Mitchell Bannister Award for Excellence in Art, The Joan Mitchell Foundation Fellowship, Pollack-Krasner Foundation and New York Foundation for the Arts.

Coates' paintings and sculptures are part of both private and public collections including those of Microsoft, Inc.; Burrell Communications; Phillip Morris Corporation; The Coco Cola Bottling Company; Studio Museum in Harlem; Bank of Delaware; Beneficial Corporation; City of Duesseldorf, Germany; and Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts.



(1) *Kiki : Short for Christiane*, 2007, pigment on rubber on wood pallet, 96x96x4"

Positions: movements, directions, viewpoints, proportion

Coates has entitled this exhibition, **Positions**, for both its semantic and syntactic meanings. For an artist who enjoys wordplays, which many of his works exemplify, the notion of “positions open” keeps his intention open-ended. The title refers to ideas as far ranging as his attitude towards art, theory and practice of art, as well as life and contemporary events in a broken world. In regard to his art and the installation process, the title Positions implies both connotative and denotative meanings in order to address issues of correlation between place and memory, conflict and balance, positions and opposition, art and architecture. Coates has stated:

“My position on art or about art-making underscores a change both in subject matter and structural strategies.”

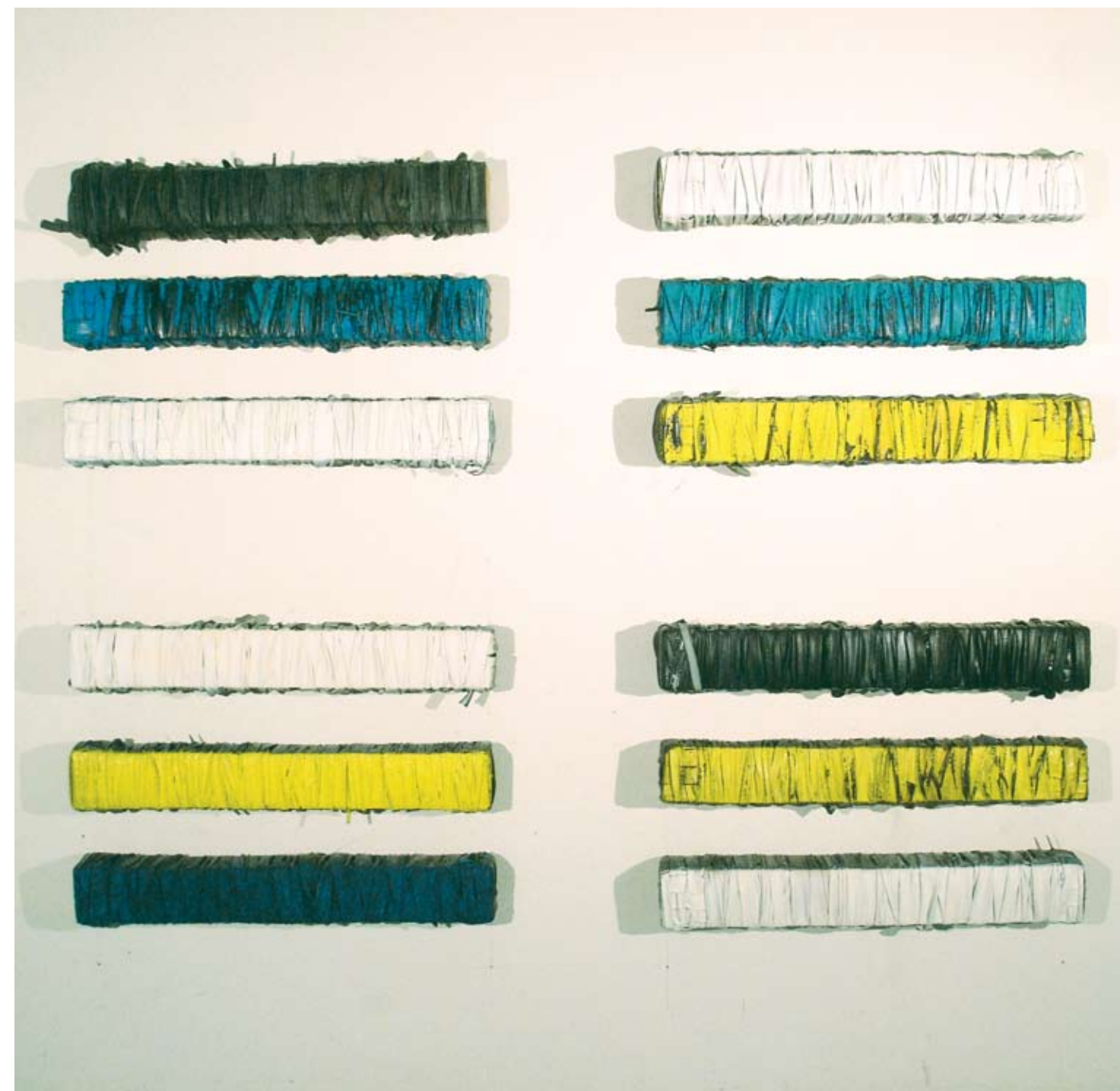
Coates insightfully uses the expansive notion of *Positions* to characterize the exhibit. Its most immediate reference in post-modernist vernacular is that of Jacques Derrida, *Positions*, (published in 1972 and translated in 1982). In this work Derrida speaks to the very nature of deconstruction, a key aspect of Coates' play with materials and categories of art: painting and sculpture. For Derrida, issues raised in *Positions* centered on contradictions and oppositions, absence and presence, conflict and balance, issues that also run throughout Coates' works. Symbolically Derrida, whose writings often fall between boundaries of fiction, criticisms, and philosophy, allows no simple position to be taken or maintained, similar to the position that Coates established with the hybrid of painter and sculptor. In *Positions*, Derrida calls into question the aesthetic as well as the hermeneutic process of interpretation. Coates wants to challenge paintings' position and view within the context of postmodernism art. He wants to transform its meaning similar to the manner in which Derrida's radical phase of deconstruction altered philosophy and literature in which a new sense of writing would be forged.

I. Gregory Coates: Playing with Contradictions

Gregory Coates has over the years created an expansive body of art. His paintings and constructions reflect the diversity of an active and dynamic personal history. Coates has continually operated on very astute lines in order to balance his place inside the lived experience. Over the years his practices, as they have evolved, have been informed by strategies and techniques as varied as his interests.

Coates' art is dynamic, skillfully dislodging the preconceived distinction between the hierarchal modern and more radical conceptual practices of recent art.

Operating within a realm of contradictions between painting and sculpture, intention and meaning, formalism and spontaneity, the geometric and the organic, the serial and the unique, chaos and order, Coates' art is deliberately complex and provocative. While operating in the domain of paintings, Coates' works are highly sculptural in approach and technique. The conflict in Coates' painting pushes them to sculpture. His conscious handling of his material endows the works with a decisive tension. His rubber-tubing and surface-treatment art hang like paintings, while the layers of material evoke the painters' methods and touch. Case in point: *Strut* (fig. 4) presents rubber-tubing extending from the ceiling to a blank wooden base platform playing off an empty frame. The demarcation between the space of the viewer and that of the artwork is collapsed. In *Strut*, painting and sculpture can no longer be neatly distinguished.



(2) *3x4=1*, 2006, acrylic on rubber on wood, 84x96x4”

A primary aspect of Coates' work is the notion of movement, which is apparent in his titles: *Flounce* (fig. 5), *Strut*, *Roam* (fig. 7), etc., all referencing human gait. This issue of movement is directly linked to the viewing process. His early involvement with issues of flow and movement consisted of installing the work in elongated configurations in order that the viewers would approach them as if they were moving panoramic screens.

Traditionally, the viewer encounters a painting or sculpture at a glance, the aspects of shape and color being immediately absorbed and aesthetically evaluated, even as one moves back and forth. This does not happen with Coates' works, which only gradually reveal their ultimate form. Presented in sections that remain static within their span, there's a tension created in anticipation of the developing construction. At first, you wait for a change in the blue or yellow, but eventually simply look at the blue more deeply than you thought possible and begin to discover texture and other aspects of the work, essentially its own worlds. Approaching Coates' construction, one is left with a memory of segments of a whole, their relationship to each other and the details contained therein.

One unique aspect of Coates' art, in which the didactic nature of the work appears impressively bold and ambitious, is the energy derived from his engagement with materials and forms. The art history dialogue often present in his art is informed by the connections between the visual and material. Coates' constructions have continuously evolved from a host of multifaceted concerns and considerations that define and ultimately guide his creative production. Through this process he creates works that reflect a finely tuned balance between self-containment and the referential. But it is not a narcissistic art, rather Coates wants the work to have a life beyond the immediate.

While his themes and concerns are multifaceted, familiar and often varied, Coates' vocabulary is formal and not particularly abstract, as the sources are often derived from human conditions, issues of politics and cultural codification. Despite his preoccupation with nonrepresentational forms, Coates' content operates outside the purely cerebral. For Coates, abstraction must have a subject, or subjectivity, that is often expressed through title in his works that range from *Nighttime* (fig. 10) *Strut*, *Flounce* and *How Do You Like Me Now* (fig.3) and draw their inspiration from real situations and people. His seductive surface and subversive construction strategies are equally intended to offer the viewer another path to encounter art and ideas.

Coates is an astute student of art history, and his work constantly echoes art history itself: Pre-Columbian artifacts, Modernist painting, Arte Provera, Architectural history, post-modernism. However, Coates' preoccupation with the history of art is less to challenge the canon, as it is to transform it in order to move to a highly unique personalized language. His work aims for a conflation of Modernists' color field and what Coates describes as "street-wise performance."

Coates' formal language is aligned with both Minimal and Conceptual practices of art and object making. Coates' engagement with post-modernism results in art in which various idioms are fused. The result is a harmonious body of work that combines the richness of modernism with a cutting-edge contemporaneity that simultaneously contradicts the rules of these particular genres. His works invoke art's modern, extensive and diverse history while striving to create something that's new and loaded with possibility.

To view Coates' art within strict abstract terms is to miss the point. Coates' art is informed by a host of influences and aspirations. Coates' language is one of abstraction while its content is varied and multifaceted.



(3) *How do you like me Now*, 2006, acrylic on rubber with pvc installation, 12'x30'



(4) *Strut*, 2006, rubber and wood installation, 48x150x170"

II.

“There is a necessity in the material I use that provokes itself. It’s needy. The palette is off the street. The rubber is off the street. It’s about the need to create something out of nothing, translate the physical into a separate form. I like freeing myself within the painting format simply by using found materials.” – Coates

Coates approach to his materials is overtly immediate. Their malleability and durability guide Coates' engagement. Shaping, wrapping and assembling pieces together are a direct by-product of the inherent quality of the materials. His constructions are composed of found wooden packing palettes extracted from local dumpsters, around which more materials are wrapped: twisted bicycle tire inner tubes, rope, duct tape, painted wood, plastics and feathers.

Coates imbues synthetic materials in his installations and sculptured paintings to build something with more artistic significance. His multifaceted approach often leads to works that are at once familiar in their material means but disarming in artistic terms. Coates defines the structure he creates as “painting” and “drawing.” In Coates' constructions there is no substantial hierarchy between the material means and the resulting constructed object or painting.

Coates' strategies are applied to rather ordinary means – rubber, plastic, wood, paper, recycled materials each with its own inherent history. It is within the treatment and reconstructing of these materials that the contextual aspects of Coates' work finds its original and metaphorical associations.

Part of the excitement of Greg Coates' works comes out of the metamorphosis of the materials during the artistic process. Coates involvement with consumer materials is less about symbolism and more about the inadequacy of symbols. Discarded objects on the street become elegant dominatrices in minimal power play against the painting field. Coates notes that information lies in the accentuation of restriction and the drama of the material accumulation and fabrication.

Coates' art reflects a generation of artists whose aim is to re-imagine contextual possibilities using found, fragmented and discarded material. Their works address what has been described as fractures and contingencies for our volatile contemporary existence. It is for this reason that cast-off, throw-aways become easy materials for him to adapt. There is an elegiac way in which the recovery of found objects and the rediscovery of lost narratives are made more poignant by the elegance of their discoverers and narrators.

Exploring such means as recycled materials and found objects reflects Coates' complex processes of manipulation, absorption, and adaptation. Binding materials – duct tape, rubber, and rope – provide control in the same manner that strokes of color accentuated the surfaces of a painting.

In the process of accumulation and repetition, Coates' structures may have a coating of pigment added or a covering of powder over materials removing any glossing of the surface. The wrapping of the inner tube or plastic tubing has been described by Coates as a type of drawing style whose formal approach, interruption and width relate to architectural spaces, the pleating of grids, and the metaphorical implications of lines.

“I came from playing around with materials, looking for something, getting literal with it. Using these rubber things I found that it’s close to being foreground and background, but there’s not much variation between them. With these works there’s a bit more sculptural concern, installation concern, and site-specific concern. I started looking at my work that way, seeing early pieces as fractions, bits and pieces These works are units, segments of a whole; they are societal.” – Coates

For Coates, the history of his materials is never created. Through his diverse and often experimental approaches to his recycled means in the forms of art works, objects are reborn in new manifestations. Process is symbolic of our human conditions: What we consider as the end of one era culturally and artistically is actually the start of another. Often the very means that give rise to a particular cultural or stylistic moment are built on the transformation or the alteration of that which preceded it.

Despite Coates' art eccentricity, a common element runs throughout his work which can be defined as a preoccupation with movement, volume and gravity that speaks to a type of modulation and change in real space. For Coates, the final work must emphasize the dynamics of the interaction between material and space, in which forms remain open, near linear in quality, and space becomes more materialized in the definition of a sculptural entity. Coates' art aims to establish what can be termed a "syntactical dialogue" between the properties of line and volume, surface and substance, openness and enclosure, stasis and movement, and between the sculptural and real space.

Meaning and comprehension of Coates' works shifts depending upon the way the art is installed, viewed and categorized. His installations often present objects in state of metamorphosis. Part of his works' disorientation is derived from the very physical space in which it's presented and positioned. In these installations, Coates wants the objects to maintain a presence within the architecture so as to establish a relationship with the viewer. He wants his work to function didactically, pose questions for both himself and the viewer. This dialogue can be defined as an ongoing exploration of relationship between space, form and volume. Coates wants to push that point where the two-dimensional and the three-dimensional meet, and essentially direct the viewer to the point at which they dissolve into each other.

Coates' constructions are comprised of objects often conditioned by a particular field of inquiry and investigation into the aesthetic experience and rigors of painting's and sculpture's potential, resulting in installations that are reflective of a hybrid of painterly idioms. Coates' works provoke inquiry and thought because his approach is both intuitive and deliberate.

II. Between Material and Surface

RUBBER SOUL: POSITIONS

Coates' early works consisted of a series of wall mounted horizontal sculptural forms. The Rubber series addresses the idea of interiority and exteriority; a kind of hide and seek. Essentially geometric abstraction, most of these works were constructed from wood and pieces of rubber. The use of the plastic and rubber while sculptural are in a truer sense a type of alternative canvas in which the artist paints the surfaces in various hues. Many of these constructions maintained painted surfaces indicative of Coates' primary involvement with painting.

He therein aligns the viewer's sense of considering how these works act as both painting and sculpture. Coates wants the viewer to consider their three-dimensionality, while their flat monochromatic surfaces are advanced as two-dimensional/illusionistic terms that are for the most part expressed in a painterly idiom. However, those terms are less the active expressive gesture of most recent painting and more the monochromatic surface tradition of the Minimalist.

Coates built these seemingly monolithic works by covering an armature with thin strips of painted rubber inner tubing that essentially becomes the "skin" for these serial structures. The final painted structures resulted in monochromatic surfaces, which hide the "plasticity" of their material means.



(5) *Flounce*, 2006, industrial plastic wrap on wood pallet, 11x46x5"



(6) *Meander*, 2006, industrial plastic wrap on wood pallet, 42x51x5"

Arranged in single and multiple units, these works acquire a type of architectural inference with the surrounding space. The work is directly aligned with the artist's process of constructing during this period, which he has defined as thinking of their development in the realm of building construction rather than traditional modes of making sculpture or painting. Thus his approach became rather architectural: overlapping, cutting, shaping, fitting, stretching, twisting, contorting forms. The creation of seemingly rectangular linear sequences leads to the notion of thinking of the works as a series of adaptable units. Arranging the works in varying units allows Coates to work in a variety of scales from the intimate to the monumental.

However, Coates subverts the notion of seriality in novel manner within these works. Although similar elements run through the various units in the work they are never exact to form, rather each "module" varies in underpainting, contrasts between rough and smooth surfaces and between smaller and larger numbers of units.

There are certain contradictions in approaching Coates' use of units during this period. The use of units that allow the artist to vary the scale's horizontality and verticality within the works' installation formats, conversely functions as "detail" of large work while retaining their ability to function as separate works. During this period Coates often presented the rubber works as units; however, they were never conceived as sequential objects. Rather, the individual unit expresses a unique autonomy and an associative relationship with a series of related units placed together to form a single composition. In the context of site-specific installations the collective works are to be understood functioning as a single composition. Despite the serial nature of the units the works no matter how they are reassembled they're meant to be understood simultaneously as a singular object that's part of a larger construction.

Coates' use of multiple panels functions to express his notion of repetition and concept of seriality, allowing the works to exist in a variety of shapes, sizes colors, and formats whose re-constructions often lead to a multiplicity of meaning creating a direct link with Minimalism.

Coates has stated that seriality in his paintings are a by-product of his involvement with building materials; that he often found himself needing to take things apart only to reassemble them to create large sections. By working with building materials in some of his earlier works Coates was actually mimicking the building experience. It allows the artist to get away from the traditional notion of "hanging" his paintings and work within the architectural settings. Working with the rubber in panels was also a practical methodology, as it made it easier to move them in sections of 4 x 8 or 4 x 4 feet, which could then be expanded into larger works. The painted rubber assemblages could then have a logical relationship with the space in which they were exhibited, making them truly site-specific. They lose their linear quality and are read left to right. The viewer moves through the paintings in a sort of panoramic motion, as opposed to traditional up and down reading of paintings.

These early works talk to the tradition of sculptural abstraction through monumental forms aligned with an individualized approach to processing nontraditional materials. But the works simultaneously reject the strict notion of "eccentric abstraction." As paintings, these works were intended to dissolve any pure association with objecthood and function to create an interplay and encounter with the viewer.

For Coates architecture is a highly visual cultural signifier both in its associative aesthetic meaning and historical implications that by their very nature imply power, memory, entitlement, and restriction. This idea was made profoundly clear in a project entitled "**To be Distributed**" for Thread Waxing Space, NYC, in 2002. For the exhibition Coates created a series of works incorporated in decisive arrangements of adaptable units within the space. He described the installation as an encounter between a past utopianism posited by abstraction and the complexities of present day exhibition practices.

In the Thread Waxing Space installation the viewer must come to terms with the “horizontally” painted construction in order to achieve a proper “reading” of a Coates’ painting from one side to another. Part of the beauty of the exhibition (or at least one aspect of it) lies in the choices made regarding shape placement in the space within the architectural setting that parallels viewer perception of the work. The works occupy space as paintings but without a center. The units tend to evoke a type of implied movement both longitudinally and latitudinally. The works are made emphatic by the contrasts of texture and color. The architectural element of the works is further implied through the use of industrial colors and common house paint. Coates seemingly creates a long stretch of almost a single color. Echoing the neutrality of Thread Waxing’s minimal environment, Coates’ constructions are rather conciliatory with their architectural environment.

In the installation he has achieved a new “space” by using a series of planes that are all parallel to the picture plane rather than having the units installed in a manner in which the planes are not clearly articulated as separate parallel units. However, keeping true to tradition, spatial depth is created along diagonals, while the front of the planes is emphasized. The works functions as both site and object. Similar to the architecture, they speak to the notion of a type of psychological space.

In these works Coates reveals his understanding of the formal nature of sculpture, as he strikes at the very foundation of the notion of the planar versus the recessive. However, these constructions are meant to operate within the realm of paintings. In this presentation of these creations works the very notion of the traditional concept of spatial recession.

Conceptually, the works in-situ must be approached as site-specific paintings. They function perhaps unconsciously almost in a manner of frieze; however they reject the traditional narrative quality implied in frieze form. Coates varies both scale and arrangement as a strategy to accentuate viewer awareness of the work. By this approach the viewer brings his/her own context to the work. These constructions and serial sculptural paintings allude to the reality of an un-monumental world.

The contrasting gestures in Coates’ rubber constructions have been the subject of numerous interpretations. The manipulation of the tubing simultaneously provides the works with suggestions of violence of the tying and aesthetic beauty of the painted surface. The knotting and tying in many of the works has been equated to the context of power and displacement. Coates has stated that his reference to bondage (restrictive, binding material with a specificity of knots and hardware) speaks to the issue of the transference of power, a type of Sadosomochism both in its social and overlapping aesthetic circumstances. Collectively, these creative strategies provide a clash between two apparent worlds whose lines are now confused.

Lia Gangitano has proposed that Coates practice of building up and coating the rubber with pigment tends to accentuate the materiality of the rubber. They comprise a drawing style of their own whose formal duration and interruption of width relate to architectural spaces, pleating of grids, and metaphorical implication of lines, highlighting the versatility that Coates demands of painting.

In these rubber works color plays a crucial role, first to situate them squarely between the realm of painting and sculpture. But the variation in application creates an impressive surface that affects the viewer’s perception of the works and emphasizes their three-dimensionality.

“For me color is flat because I like to play with contradictions. Pigment is very still; it’s the nature of the powder. So in my work it’s a matter of the quick and the slow. I could use an oil-based paint but the shine would throw it off. I want it flat. The color is arresting then you involve yourself in what it’s sitting on, bicycle inner tubes.” – Coates



(7) *Roam*, 2006, industrial plastic wrap on wood pallet, 42x42x5”

Because Coates has stated that the works are inspired by word games such as Scrabble, the critic Grace Glueck has describe the works' flat painted squares of abstract glyphs of twisted rubber tubing as a type of alphabet of a mysterious language. Specifically, Glueck compares the shiny black tubing formations that appear on smoothly finished tiles of deep royal blue alternating with matte black blanks in the work "Chill" as a type of asymmetrical arrangement one might find in a crossword puzzle.

Kiki, Short for Christine (fig. 1) is a large-scale horizontal work measuring 8x8 feet composed mostly of blue pigment applied to the rubber and a wooden frame. It's perhaps one of the clearest works by Coates that link him with modernist painting. Herein the work is organized into two separate large-scale panels and is installed so that a small narrow space between the two segments creates a "white" band. The slight divide within the center of the piece has an almost a direct relation to Barnett Newman's famous "zip" which he introduced as a single stripe that vertically bisects a field of color. Coates appears to have changed the "zip" from a vertical line to a horizontal. *Kiki, Short for Christine* can be compared to a series of large-scale paintings Newman created in the early 1950's, each done in a rich blue tone: *Day Before One* (1951), *Prometheus Bound* (1952), and *Ulysses* (1952).

It is not surprising that echoes of Newman's work would appear in one of Coates' most Minimalist of paintings. By the '60s, a suggestive relationship with Newman's work and the hard edges of both the Minimalists and the Pop artists had already been acknowledged, actually prompting Newman to change his own working method. Newman's works became equally important for the conceptual practices of artists Judd and Stella whom Coates acknowledged as important to his approach.

Unlike Newman, Coates never strives for absolute abstraction in his painted constructions. Nor is he interested in Newman's reductionist austerity. However, the wrapping of pigmented tubing in *Kiki, Short for Christine*, echoes Newman's saturated color fields introduced with one or more vertical stripes of color created with multiple bands and sharp edges.

A related work, ***3x4=1*** (fig. 2), continues Coates' modernist inferences with a Minimalist vocabulary in that the work also has a relationship to Donald Judd's primary structures, which are defined as "specific objects." Donald Judd often rejected labeling as a minimalist, but he clearly united to the movement and its engagement with neutral surfaces and cerebral dexterity. The monochromatic surface, the simplification of forms in the work, a concentration on volume, and presence of the structure and space around it places Coates squarely within the Minimalist domain. The use of "units" in this work shares a commonality with Judd's "progressions" or "stack" works.

Similar to Donald Judd, Coates is essentially a painter not a sculptor. Although Coates continues Judd's Minimalist exploration of industrial material, he rejects Judd's notion of the purity of color in order to create a work loaded with tactile presence. Coates' similarity to the Minimalist has everything to do with the interaction between the viewer and the space around the artwork, rejection of all aspects of illusionism, and his aim for certain neutrality. Conversely, in direct response to a Minimalist's anonymous neutral surface, Coates has built up the painted surfaces of this painted rubber work in order to make the artist's hand an active presence in the execution of the work.

Also similar to Judd's constructions, *3x4=1* is an assemblage of a single shape, its surfaces consist of blue, yellow, red, yellow rectangles. But one could argue that conceived as singular works each unit functions also as a "detail" or in terms of painting – a series of lines that only come together outside the work – in the viewer's mind. The tactile surface brings the viewer into the work, challenging the passive status of viewer re-inventing Minimalism for a contemporary time. With *3x4=1*, Coates wants to turn the viewer inward which he makes emphatic in more recent works using a type of centrifugal movement in the feathered paintings: *Nighttime, Daytime* (fig. 9), and *Noontime* (fig. 8). *3x4=1* also echoes the art of Mondrian. Mondrian aimed for the infinite shaped as finite.

For Mondrian a straight line was infinitely extendable, an open-ended space between two parallel straight lines. It is that type of connection that Coates wants to establish in *3x4=1*. In the work each unit stretches beyond its borders; it becomes a fragment of the larger work, interweaving the painted surfaces and the space between carefully placed units. The viewer engages not only the singular units but also the distances between the various parts, which by extension establish a secondary, illusory scale to the entire work. Both the positive space of the work and the negative space between the units propose a subliminal oneness.

Strut is an installation of black rubber tubing measuring 8x8 feet and extending from floor to ceiling. *Strut* plays with both the minimal structures of the grid and the opposition to verticality, opening the grid structure. As a painter, lines are important for Coates such that in these works the system of line versus frame creates the dynamic of dividing and at the same time joining. Eva Hesse, in her work, often refers to such dynamics as "windows" or limitations of linear boundaries.

In *Strut*, Coates intends to question the nature of connections, pressing the discourse about linking and the lines that keep things inside and outside of themselves. *Strut* explores issues of linking. The separation of space is undone. In using rubber tubing line has ceased to be two-dimensional. *Strut* confronts us with a hanging mass of tubing and the horizontal. The intersection of form shifts from framing or "boxing in" to joining. As they return repeatedly to the crossing and linking of tubular forms, these images ask the question: What is the nature of connection? The apex of the work consists of a series of knotted vertical rubber tubing that meets at the ceiling and whose base consists of forms attached to a wooden plank base. Between the top and bottom of the work, the tubing creates a visual tension that reinforces the variation of the knotting.

How Do You Like Me Now is Coates' take on David Hammons' now infamous Billboard installed in Washington, D.C., in which Jesse Jackson was presented with bleach white complexion, blues eyes, and blonde hair. Coates has created a monumental installation of rubber and paint expanding twelve feet in height and thirty feet in length, in which the black rubber tubing has been covered with a white pigment similar to Hammons' alteration of Jesse Jackson's facial features. It is an ironic and masterful take on how the abstract idiom can have the referential affect on both the political and artistic. *How Do You Like Me Now* could be the myriad lines of a painting or drawing. Comparing the artist's approach towards the issue of the support between *How Do You Like Me Now* and *Strut*, there is a clear distinction between the two works; whereas the wooden frame support adds a background for the *How Do You Like Me Now*, the construction *Strut* appears to shed its material support.

PLASTICS: SUBSTRATUMS

Recently Coates moved from New York to Pennsylvania and the art that emerged from the period talks to this upheaval in both the transitional nature of the work and the very material means which consist of objects, wood, cardboard, and building materials which Coates encountered in both moving and renovating his new studio and living space in rural Allentown, Pennsylvania.



(8) *Noontime*, 2007, acrylic on feathers on wood panels, 96x96"

While the new works have a certain continuum with the earlier rubber wrapped pieces the use of plastic wrapping endowed the works with new translucent surfaces and better access to their interior. The plastic helps to establish a play of light over the surface creating patterning of lights and shadows more aligned to a painterly tradition.

In the *Plastic Wraps* series Coates continues his engagement with the overlay process. Here he takes lengths of clear vinyl plastic wrap and twists and crisscrosses the material around wood and cardboard. The viewer is immediately struck by the disparity between the juxtaposition of the translucency of the plastic and the solid roughness of the wood structure which it binds. The plastic wrapping gave the work a transparency that defies the solidity of the underlining structure and continues Coates' fascination with the concept of interior and exterior space. The plastic wrap pieces are rich in potential because of their layered surfaces. They possess a quality that suggests the notion of skin.

By tying and pulling of the plastic across the surfaces, the works evoke painterly surfaces, the very tension becoming an imitation of painterly brush strokes. The continuous wrapping and crisscrossing of the vinyl applies a sense of line drawings or the build-up of brushstrokes, thereby referencing the artist continued creative dialogue with painting.

The works with their thin shimmering surface also echo the art of Eva Hesse. There is a strange symmetry that runs through Hesse's and Coates' artistic intentions and strategies. Both artists are intrigued by exploring boundaries, where painting ends and sculpture begins. Both artists delight in the disturbance of opposites. Both seek to challenge conventional dimensionality in which painted surface can lead to a third dimension.

These works propose a type of expansion from within, in which the vinyl wrapping makes apparent the volume being contained inside. This has an affect to dissolve any clear spatial relationship between the viewer and the interior works. Using the clear vinyl wrapping the viewer is made more aware of the impenetrable surface. While we are presented with a particular object it remains intangible, hidden by plastic wrapping. Coates has intentionally concealed the interior space of the work made visible only beneath multiple layers of vinyl wrapping. The viewer can only establish an imagined notion of the interior of the piece although it's visually present. The interior space becomes a type of secret space loaded with enormous conceptual potential.

Collectively, the works are characterized by a play against three-dimensional space and an anti-illusion of the two-dimensional surface of the plane. Because the physical nature of the surface remains important to Coates, its three-dimensional nature speaks to issues of form as replacement for texture and color.

Flounce, measuring 11 x 46 x 5 inches, is an elongated construction of plastic wrapped in wood. The plastic functions to erase the neutrality of the wooden frame. It continues Coates' exploration of human movement, inferring the act of walking with exaggerated jerky motions and abrupt turns. But the title is deceptive because, as a noun, flounce can refer to a strip of pleated material used as decoration or a piece of cloth gathered for trim, a suggestion of adornment, color, or decoration added to relieve plainness. Another definition of flounce involves the act of quick movement often flinging or twisting. One could therefore infer that Coates is referring to the very act of wrapping the plastic around the constructions, while continuing his love of wordplay and open-ended meanings.

Meander (fig. 6), measuring 42 x 51 x 5, is a horizontal wood structure in which plastic is continuously wrapped to create a remarkable undulating surface. It's almost reminiscence of streaming water which it partially inferred by its title, *Meander*, which as a noun refers to a bend or curve as in a stream or river. Taking the lead from the way the plastic continuously extends across the work, Coates plays off *Meander* as a verb that refers to weaving or threading, indicative of the spiral, circular and sinuous, overlapping the plastic surface. The horizontality of the work and the wrapping of the plastic suggest an elongated line extending from side to side of the construction and seemingly beyond.

Roam, measuring 42 x 42 x 5, consists of plastic wrapped around a pallet much like the rubber only using shipping plastic for the surface. Coates has stated that this work represents the painting quality of layering and his continued history with the overlapping of material.

THE FEATHER SERIES: RESEMBLANCE AND CONTIGUITY

This is a departure from Coates' most recent works in approach and attitude. These paintings are far more introspective. Coates has discontinued the use of serialized forms in favor of single albeit related works. The recent Feathered Series has a painterly strategy endowed with a moody atmospheric quality. These paintings are loaded with subtlety, complexity, and variety, moving beyond the apparent simplicity of paint and feathers. While these works are essentially mixed media assemblages in construction, in a truer sense (in surface treatment and approach), they are of a higher painterly gesture, highlighting Coates' true nature as a painter.

These new works are loaded with a multiplicity of undefined references, both artistic and allegorical. They have an overall affect that aligns them with spiritual and ceremonial objects of nonwestern cultures. The spiritual aspect of these feathered works is partly due to their association with grief and eulogy given that Coates wants them to function as a memorial to loss. The artist came to work after a series of personal losses over the last few years and his own personal health crisis. They function rather phenomenologically but reject a direct topical reference to death and grieving and become sites for sanctuary and contemplation. They are not meant to speak to finality, but metamorphosis.

These works mark a departure for Coates from the implied monumentality of the earlier works to objects that are far more human in scale. The monumental that was once expressed through scale in his work has been reduced to the metaphorical. They are more modest in scale in order to speak to the complexity, anxiety, and redemption of loss, the central theme of these works.

Perhaps more intimate than many of his earlier works, for Coates these are emotional paintings in which he wants to evoke feelings, memories, the casualty of loss. Here Coates sums up one of the greatest challenges of art – translating a sensation into a mesh of feathered markings.

His changing views and subject matter have pushed him in new directions. This is most apparent in his use of color. His contextual intent has greatly affected the palette of his works, imbuing mostly black and whites and somber grays. Color in the new work has a profound and emotional significance. Color is now used as a means to both symbolic and emotional ends. Despite a couple of small white-feathered paintings, and the brilliant **Daytime** and **Noontime**, the palette in many of the recent works is dark and rather subdued. Color thus becomes a metaphorical suggestion of skepticism, hope, quietude, and revelation. Gray which is predominate in one of the large-scale recent works, **Nighttime**, is further approached as a material and psychological condition. As such the color gray in **Nighttime** becomes a means for thinking about human absence both conceptually and colorfully.



(9) *Daytime*, 2007, acrylic on feathers on wood panels, 96x96"

Color is used in complex ways as exemplified in *Daytime*, in which the surfaces gradually lighten as one moves to the center of the painting. If Coates' use of color was rather stark and emphatic in early works, in these recent works color is far more complex but somber. In fact texture, which provides the lead in these new works and results in a complex building up and modulation of varying surface treatments created by the applications of the feature to the wooden surfaces, accentuates the complexity of the color scheme.

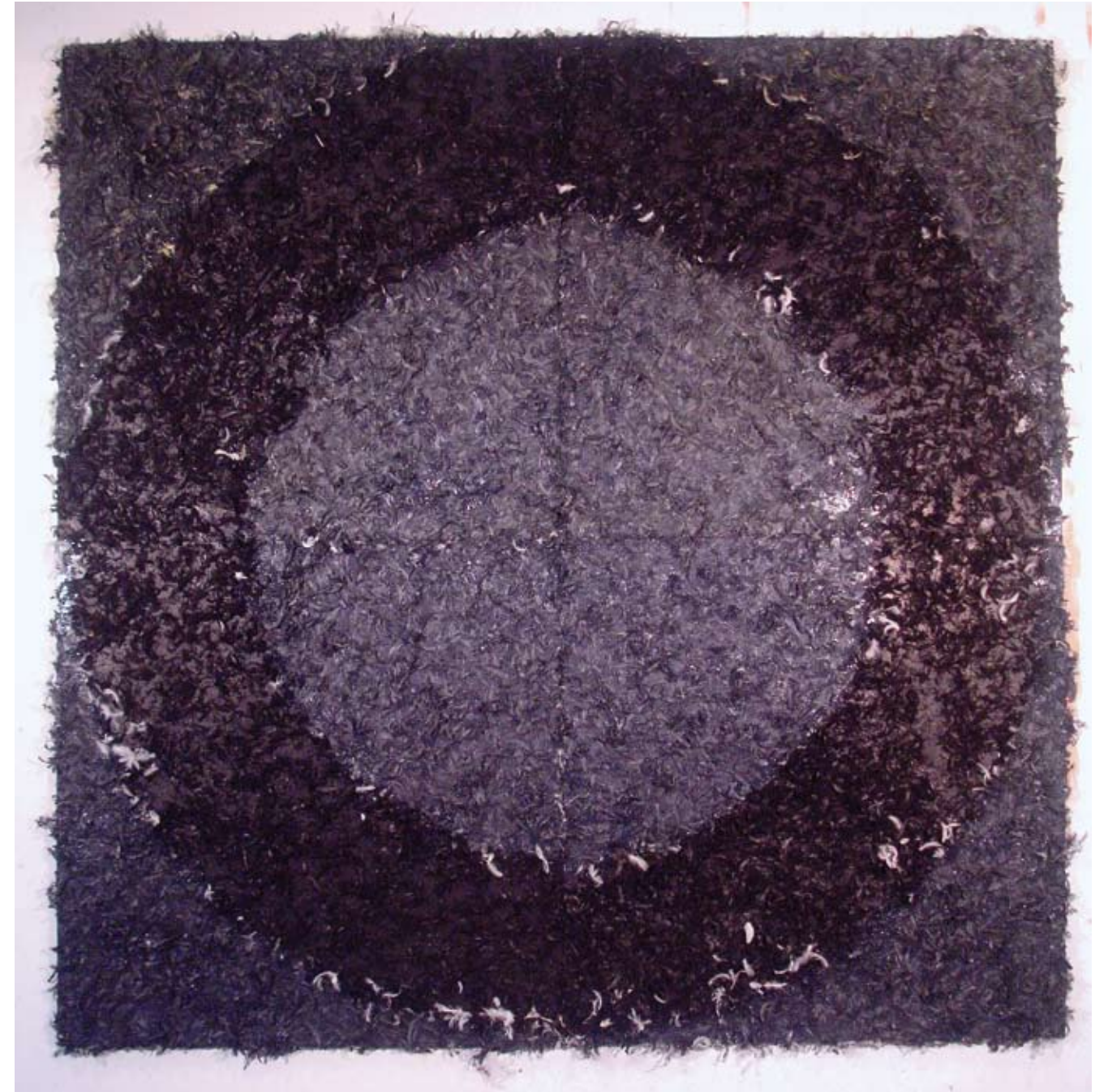
The vocabulary utilized by Coates in the works is essentially formalist which prevents any possibility of the paintings becoming too decorative. Despite the accumulative build-up of the surfaces, Coates' structures remain for the most part essentially paintings. He has reduced the sculptural aspects of these works in order to make their painting nature emphatic. Here the stress is on paint and surface. Because he has returned to more formal issues of painting criteria such as color, line, space, mass, scale, linearity, dark vs. light, painterliness returns as conscious factors in the work's execution.

The introduction of feathers required that Coates avoid any question of the decorative, which he has skillfully achieved by partially transforming their material quality through a series of overriding rhythmic patterns that dominate the works and saturate the painted surface. While the use of the feathers initially suggests a build-up of forms that propose to push the works to a certain three-dimensional state, Coates constructs the works with a skillful degree of control to keep them squarely in the domain of painting. The build-up of surfaces functions here to enhance the illusionist effect. This approach achieves paintings that are rich and lustrous in their surface treatment, yet somewhat elusive.

In the most recent feather paintings, Coates in the treatment of their painterly surfaces has abandoned the Minimal heritage and jumped full and center into the vocabulary of the abstract expressionists. Upon immediately viewing these works I was struck by their connection with works by Kline and Rothko. There is a sense an expressive quality that is easily equated with the profound active ground and surface art of Pollock, Rothko, or Kline. Two particular works, a large-scale black feathered work, which during a visit to the artist's studio was partially finished, clearly echoed the atmospheric paintings of Rothko, while a white smaller feather effect recalls Pollock's drip paintings. Such associations should not be surprising given Coates' nature as an astute painter.

But Coates' art is not reductive or imitative. He is less concerned with evoking the historic as he is with using it for new purposes. These are new paintings for new times, not re-configured modernism. Coates through these constructed paintings aims to reinvigorate the creative dialogue between foundations of modernism and their place in contemporary art in order to evoke something new and different all the while acknowledging the parallels.

Attention in the recent paintings is now focused on the surface of the paintings. These works play against an interaction of painted forms and painterly surface implied both by a sense of density of the feather build-up and their mass. Technically, these new feathered paintings are labor intensive works. The process of attaching the feathers to the canvas and then painstakingly painting the surfaces with a precision that activates these works is time consuming. In order to achieve this degree of variation on the surface, Coates has to consider proportions and degree of thickness of feathering in order to equate the final surfaces with an animated gesture of brushstrokes. Different forms can distinguish one aspect of the surface from another and other techniques used in their construction. Still, there is a greater sense of spontaneity built into the process of constructing these works in which Coates appears to start with a general methodology rather than intuition.



(10) *Nighttime*, 2007, acrylic on feathers on wood panels, 96x96"

Visually, the works are a little deceptive in that the viewer's initial impression centers on the overall visual density of the work. However, upon closer inspection one discovers that the surfaces are almost screen-like in the transparency and delicacy of the feather. Closer inspection reveals the variety of materials and textures. The receding depth of the feathered surfaces heightens our awareness of these densely painted surfaces. Unlike Coates' earlier work with their impenetrable interior surfaces, here interior space appears rather open and the exterior is loaded with rich tactile quality. These works exemplify an important aspect of Coates' entire approach, namely the comprehension of information, essentially how a work of art can present different information from multiple points of viewing.

There is urgency to the painterly surface here that was purposed in Coates' early works by the wrapping of plastic or rubber around the wooden frames of his previous constructions. The new urgency is created by the centrifuging movement of the feather on the surface, which pulls the viewer inside the paintings. Coates understands rightfully that focusing inward is involvement. This is the one key intention of these works. For while these works are partially a requiem to loss, Coates doesn't want to languish in the tragedy or sorrow; rather he wants the viewer to feel a harmony beyond the tragic in order to transcend it.

Equally, the circling gesture on these painted surfaces continues Coates' preoccupation with repetition that he explored in both the Rubber and Plastic works. However, the repetitive circling gesture is now used to give the work both a depth and a type of symmetrical balance.

Daytime and *Nighttime* have a crucial affinity to Jasper Johns' series, entitled *Target*. Johns appropriated the symbol of the target motif as early as 1965 and has throughout his career returned to it through a host of work in various mediums. Robert Hughes has said of the Target series: "The target is a test, and Johns took it with a sort of deepened irony to test what one expects a work of art to do. For a painted target automatically negates the use of a real one. Once a target is seen esthetically, as a unified design, its use is lost. It stops being a sign and becomes an image. We do not know it so clearly. Its obviousness becomes, in some degree, speculative. The center is not more important than the rings." (Robert Hughes: "*Shock of the New*")

In *Daytime* and *Nighttime*, Coates treats the target solely as painting. Despite their target format the paintings are actually in the tradition of the visual, essentially a contiguous system of marks. In his approach, Coates' target form turns into signs and marks, two systems of seeing locked in mutual opposition, the sign becoming a painting and a painting becoming a sign.

Coates' most recent installation pays homage to Steve Cannon's alternative art space, called Tribes, in Manhattan. *A Gathering of the Tribes* is an arts and cultural organization located on the Lower East Side of New York City. It was founded in 1991 by Cannon, a poet, playwright, novelist, and retired professor from the City University of New York, who converted a portion of his apartment into an informal salon. Despite his loss of eyesight to glaucoma, he encouraged the exchange of alternative points of view traditionally overlooked by mainstream media. The ideas raised in the discussions served as inspiration to the pieces later published in *A Gathering of the Tribes Magazine*. In 1993, the space was transformed and became Tribes Gallery. Since then, Tribes has evolved into a performance venue and meeting place for artists and audiences to come together across all artistic disciplines, all levels of complexity, and all definitions of difference. In this pan-disciplinary, multicultural environment, artists exchange ideas, create peer relationships and find mentorship. Through Tribes publications, readers encounter a unique synthesis of literature, visual art, criticism and interviews with promising artists of all kinds. In an attempt to attract a wider audience for these artists, Tribes additionally organizes an annual outdoor event — The Charlie Parker Festival — to engage members of the community who have seldom, if ever, attended literary or artistic events.

(11) Studio shot, 2007, Allentown PA





(12) *Monument for Steve Cannon*, 2007, mixed media installation, 10x12x8x10" with sofa 33x67"

Monument to Steve Cannon (fig. 12) consists of a large feathered painting measuring 12 x 10 feet in which the artist has combined acrylic and rubber into precisely arranged twelve silkscreen panels mounted on the wall. Directly opposite the painting, Coates introduces an area rug, 8 x 10, and situated on the rug is a couch measuring 33 x 67 x 26 feet.

Of the work Coates has stated,

"The piece is installation work. . .new positions. . .making use of the feather work as tactile ingredient. The idea of the rug (also tactile) and the sofa. . .well. . .that's indicative of Steve Cannon and Tribes. Often I sat on the sofa in Tribes and chatted with Steve about what I had seen in the art world. Steve would do this with everyone. . .interview them on what they are able to see. Steve has actually sat on the sofa in the work and has also walked on the Carpet in the work. . .so I felt it served my interest to give him this monument idea, with respect. I wanted the work to be about the idea of sensory and sharing. . .this being another idea of Positions." – Coates

Monument to Steve Cannon is a work that raises several issues relating to the malleability of post-modernist art. As a memorial it speaks to the notion of the object as a symbol of displacement, ambiguity, and emotional connection, links between the past and present.

As a "public" work alluding to a type of private space (Tribes Gallery), it flips the very convention of the salon format in the sense that placed within the gallery /exhibition the very concept with its intimate private environment is transformed into a new anonymous space through which the public viewer can pass. Coates as he has done with most of his art blurs lines, dissolve boundaries. Now the difference between the memorial as a site of commemoration for an admired individual and that of a public space is blurred. By

introducing the couch and rug as elements of the complete work, the distinction between the feathered painting on the wall and the installation elements of his work and the viewer/ artistic space and the real environment, echoing issues of the architectural treatment addressed in his early rubber works installation, is blurred. Except now he creates this relationship using real objects to establish open dynamics between place and objecthood.

VIDEO: PRACTICES

Recently, Coates found himself creating a series of single channel video works. Rather than playing with elements of modern digital video practices, Coates rejects devices such as pacing, cutting, tilting, multi-framing, and overlapping in order to create works that appear simplistic. However these works are highly choreographed pieces. The final result is a visual structure that emerges as explicitly sensual, dissolving any narrative intent. They are closed to any precise reading. Disallowing a true situation, viewers are left to find their own way through the works. Coates has observed that these videos are intended as critiques of the video medium as opposed to finished complete works. Coates' videos are an attempt to subject the art form itself to a closer interrogation. By approaching the video Coates hopes that it will help him better understand the language of the medium.

Coates' preoccupation with video is essentially intellectual. The artist's involvement with video must be seen as a counter-attempt to object making that required real physical and psychological involvement. The anti-auratic quality of video is in direct opposition to object-related art. Media art has insisted on the temporary nature of a process whose uniqueness and unpredictability can be limitless or confining.

The cinematic action of Coates in the video works can be compared to the timing of a sweeping second hand of a clock. The works were actually conceived in under a minute. The works are intended to loop, as a result there is no clear entrance into the works. No linear pattern makes for a clear beginning or end. Repetition echoes the serial quality of his practice, similar to his use of "units" in the rubber construction that extended and varied in size, in the sense that the continuing looping of the work makes it a lot longer than it is in actuality.

Visually, the works are rather grainy because as Coates observes, they are transfers, which he finds as acceptable. The effect was not what he trying to achieve but rather a by-product of the process.

Coates acknowledges the works were made between a point of transition from the more recent feathered constructions and the wrapped plastic media works. They allowed Coates to temporarily move away from his constructions. Thus the purpose of Coates' videos remains experiments to explore alternative models and ways of seeing, establishing an emotional and mental framework. Coates had never envisioned making video, but it clearly helped him move forward, and it is something that he has not completely abandoned.

Although created as experimental works by the artist, the videos still managed to introduce his earlier works into their context. Elements from the rubber tubing series served as both background and material for these video works. Coates acknowledges that the videos are in no way related to his sculptures, rather he introduce elements of his work, as background or “stage prop,” in order to pull in the viewer.

For the most part these are rather semi-abstract performance-orientated videos. The videos are essentially about people and place. They are about being and seeing things, looking and being observed. While the works have audio track, the notion of sound in the works is secondary

These works are less about pushing content and more about the nature of the video medium. Coates understands the key element in video is time and appears to play against its very spatiality, subverting his pacing and structure. In viewing these works there is no clear distinction between the exterior and interior of these videos. They speak to another type of reality, a certain ambiguity. The paradoxical undertone to these eccentric videos invokes uneasiness about the spatial position of the figures in the videos that opens them up to fantasies of the real and the imagined, what Friedrich Nietzsche describes as a sphere between dream and intoxication.

There is a certain degree of sexual connotation in the videos. Subtle erotic sexual gesturing of the female figure in each video seems to move opposite the simplicity of the cinematic language. In *Butoh* it is conveyed through the procession of the woman swaying across the screen in which one of his earlier tubular paintings act a type of backdrop. In a related video work, *Another W (rap) Video*, the push and pull action of the female(s) holding the rubber material is provocatively erotic.

Butoh is derived from the actual practice of the butoh, a type of performance art with a diverse range of techniques that fuse motion and dance that emerged in post-World War II Japan. It consists of rather stylized short subtle movements. It has been compared to aspects of meditation and martial arts training.

In this short video we are presented with a single figure who dances across the screen. By introducing his works as backdrop for the dancing figure, Coates introduces the video media metaphorically into his art. Because Coates is not a video artist his interests here are more investigative. He states that he wanted to understand the technical aspects of the media in order to relate to his students' preoccupation with the medium.

Another W (rap) Video presents two figures. His main collaborator, Mariko, and another woman are depicted holding different ends of a piece of rubber. He intentionally selected two Japanese models to portray the protagonist because of Japanese cultural preoccupation with women as consumers. There is a push and pull interaction between the figures that is highly erotic. Coates notes that the figures are actually squaring off and going clockwise. The two women are taking their cues from each other, evaluating each other's gestures. In *Another W (rap) Video* the boundaries between video and performance are fluid. The result is a rather open dramatic concept in which the participants are free, at least in theory, to decide how far they wish to involve themselves in the action. However, these are not performative video rather they are issues of process within the video cinematic medium, such as framing, timing, looping. As such while the work is visually seductive it's conceptually intriguing.

The performative aspect of both videos aligns itself with video as a democratic medium, a tool which was far easier to work with than film and is historically aligned to works by artists such as Charlotte Moorman, Joan Jonas and Yoko Ono, who used video for themselves as women to formulate an independent position in relation to the media society.

III. RECAPITULATIONS: CONSIDERATIONS

Coates' practices must be viewed within the context of a generation of artists who share an intrigue for the flexibility of contemporary art. Coates' art reflects a type of improvisation and innovation that remains true to the humanist quality of art. What distinguishes Coates from many of his contemporaries is that he always approaches each new investigation as a fresh start. For Coates there is no guide only possibility. His individual voice speaks to the potential of art to be vital, cerebral, and relevant without forsaking its creative and artistic curiosity. He is an artist who delights in pushing his work towards new metaphors. Coates is both intrigued by expanding the definition of painting and by the way the visual can prompt us to reflect on the now in order to critique both cultural and aesthetic issues.

His work is a clear indication of the present moment. Coates has constructed an artistic language reflective of the complexity of our contemporary world. In a contemporary world marked by global destruction and disorder, its not surprising that an artist politically and socially attuned to the present, such as Gregory Coates is, would make his art from the refuse of the decay of consumerism as well materials such as rubber, which has its own historical association with industrialization, suppression, and dominance.

Coates approaches the materials, the readymade consumer discard, and, using a highly formal abstraction of minimalism and modernism, dissects them, disengaging them from their utopian promise. Coates artworks are an assemblage of projects in which references to environment, painting, sculpture, sound are interlaced. The historical dialogue often present in many of the works is informed by the connections between the visual and material. His various works are linked by contextual and conceptual intent in their aim to develop a public discourse around seemingly private issues, rejecting artistic neutrality and embracing their position as part of the culture.

Coates art, developed from often found and recycled materials, speaks to the very notion of the creative process in which things are taken apart, tried out and reassembled. However, looking at Coates' work, we are not seeing simple objects shifted into another environment in order to perceive them in a new way but rather materials transformed. Coates' painted construction objects are never identical with the structures from which they were derived.

Coates' artistic motives are never simplistic, nor are they nostalgic. In Coates' recycling process there is no attempt to revisit 1980s appropriation practice. Coates' art works are informed by a quest for visual and structural language that is essentially unique. Coates is constantly trying to balance the tactile and sensate aspects of his works. He is less concerned with confronting the same issue repeatedly. It is the endless investigation of artistic strategies in Coates' works that characterize his approach. Despite the materials or shifts between sculpture, painting, and video, Coates' works are rather linked by a condition that moves all his art forward through structure, time, space, and existence.

In Coates' art, resolution and contradictions are inherent in his handling of paint, creation of abstraction, and finally in his technical devices. The interdisciplinary aspect is what characterizes Coates' work. Coates approach is often unpredictable, as he continues to draw on a host of experiences and strategies that move his art to unique and unprecedented spaces. His stylistic nuances remain in flux in order to open a stream of creative development. Technical materials and subject matter are malleable conditions within his strategies. Coates approach exemplifies Meyer Schapiro's statement that materials are significant mainly for the textural quality and colors although they may affect the conceptions of forms.

Despite Coates' creative investment in an abstract idiom, his contextual intentions remain. Coates wants his work to function as artistic context, but he is adamantly aware of its function in social context, reinforcing the idea of the art object's ability to move one to feel, act and think about broader political and cultural issues as well as the historical process. The logic of his creative process remains; he critiques contextual concerns through the use of simple artistic devices. Coates' constructions are thus about issues of life and experience in the language of post conceptualism. As a painter, he works with life itself and metaphorical signs. His is always a calculated attempt to make his audience think as opposed to provoking them to think. He retains his self-conscious philosophy about the nature of art, but he is equally optimistic about mankind.

Several central themes run throughout Coates' investigations: ambiguity that gradually produces a very strong emotional involvement; that space between artist and public that's charged with a psychic energy; the use of non-traditional materials, the application of colors, and finally the use of the artist's own experiences as a part of the artistic concept.

Painting and the process of painting remain the central theme of all Coates' investigations regardless of the format. Coates has developed a visual vocabulary that endows his works with a special kind of intensity, a process-orientated quality that is incompatible with – and stubbornly resists – codification. It follows often, off-centered conceptual patterns. It has its own dynamic, which often includes an element of randomness. Coates' process is endless. Measured against his goals, the result is esoteric, shamanistic and didactic. Coates' art remains provocative, important, and considerable.

“(He) wanted to use things so simple and familiar that, as he put it, they left him free to work on other levels.” (Hughes)

Selective Bibliography

Cassel, Valerie, et al. *Double Consciousness: Black Conceptual Art Since 1970*. Houston, Texas, Contemporary Arts Museum, NY, D.A.P., 2005

Derrida, Jacques, *Positions*, translation and annotation by Alan Bass, Chicago, London, Athone: University of Chicago Press, 1981, Phoenix Edition, University of Chicago Press, 1982 see: Derrida, Jacques, *Positions*: Entretiens avec Henri Ronse, Julia Kristeva, Jean-Louis Houndebine, Guy Scarpetta, Editions de Collection, "Critique", Paris, Minuit, 1972

Flood, Richard, et al. *Un-monumental: The Object in the 21st Century*, London/New York, Phaidon with the New Museum, 2007

Grace Glueck (*New York Times: Slang: Art In Review*". *New York Times*, Friday December 10,200)

Gregory Coates, *To be Distributed*, Threadwaxing Space, NYC

Hess, Thomas, *Barnett Newman*, Greenwich Conn., New York Graphic Society, 1971

Hughes, Robert, *The shock of the New*, New York, Knopf, 1981

McEvilley, Thomas, *Art and Otherness: Crisis in Cultural Identity*, Kingston, N.Y. Documentext/McPherson, 1992

McEvilley, Thomas, *Exile's Return: towards a redefinition of painting for the postmodern era*, Cambridge/New York, Cambridge University Press, 1994

Minimalism, Liverpool, Tate Gallery Liverpool, 1989

Museum of Modern Art, NYC, *Gregory Coates*, Artist File

Passages: Contemporary Art in Transition, The Studio Museum in Harlem, NYC

Rosenberg, Harold, *Barnett Newman*, New York, Abrams, 1978

Schapiro, Meyer, *Theory and Philosophy of Art, Style and Society*, New York,

George Braziller, 1994

Scott, Deirde, Surface, Stratum Substance, Cynthia Broan gallery, NYC 1999 ex. Cat.

Simms, Lowery, et al. *Art As Verb*, the evolving continuum, Baltimore, MD,

The Institute, 1988

Sussman, Elizabeth, editor, et al, *Eva Hesse*, New Haven Conn., Yale University Press, 2002

Sylvester, David, *About Modern Art: Critical Essays, 1948-1997*, New York, Henry Holt, 1997

Tradition and Transformation: Contemporary African American Sculptors, NY, Bronx Museum of Art, 1989

Wiehagen Renate, *Minimalism and After*, Osfilden, Hatje Cantz, NY, D.A.P. 2007

horace brockington

Curator/ Art Historian Horace Brockington trained at Columbia University and Brown University. He has also been trained in museology at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Whitney Museum of American Art. Since 1973 Mr.

Brockington has organized numerous exhibitions, and written catalogues for various institutions including the Studio Museum, PS One, Metropolitan Museum and Whitney Museum of American Art, Franklin Furnace, Real Art Ways, and a series of national and international projects. He is a co-recipient of the Wittenborn Book Award for the exhibition catalogue, “Manet: The Execution of Maximilian” (Brown University). His writings are included in various journals and anthologies on contemporary and modernists art. In 1980 Mr. Brockington co –founded with Gylbert Coker and David

Hammons, the public art project Art Across the Park, which was instrumental in creating some of the early contemporary site specific art works/ projects in public parks throughout New York City. More recently (1996-2000)

Mr. Brockington served as curatorial and gallery director for City University/IRADAC Art Gallery. He also served as juror for art commissions and acquisitions including the Pittsburgh Convention Center, (designed by Raphael Vinoly).

He is a regular contributor to New York Arts Magazine, and founder/director of Migratory Media: Institute for Collaborations in Visual Culture, NYC. Mr. Brockington has taught at Brown University, R. I., Kean College, and N .J.

Mr. Brockington is currently faculty at City University, New York, where is conducting university granted research for a book on sculpture.

Mr. Brockington current curatorial projects include “ Painting Towards Abstraction “; “ Strangely Familiar, Eccentric Formats: Recent Sculpture”; “Relocating the Landscape”; and “Broken English” (Beijing, China). Recent publications include “Artistic Bedfellows: Artistic Collaborations” edited by Holly Crawford, and “Carlo Ferraris” (Charta).

Mr. Brockington current curatorial projects include “ Painting Towards Abstraction “; “ Strangely Familiar, Eccentric Formats: Recent Sculpture”; “Relocating the Landscape”; and “Broken English” (Beijing, China). Recent publications include “Artistic Bedfellows: Artistic Collaborations” edited by Holly Crawford, and “Carlo Ferraris” (Charta).

Mr. Brockington current curatorial projects include “ Painting Towards Abstraction “; “ Strangely Familiar, Eccentric Formats: Recent Sculpture”; “Relocating the Landscape”; and “Broken English” (Beijing, China). Recent publications include “Artistic Bedfellows: Artistic Collaborations” edited by Holly Crawford, and “Carlo Ferraris” (Charta).



OPALKA GALLERY

Sage College of Albany
140 New Scotland Avenue
Albany, NY 12208

Jim Richard Wilson, Director
tel: 518.292.7742 fax: 518.292.1903
www.sage.edu/sca/opalkagallery

Opalka Gallery is the formal exhibition facility of The Sage Colleges. Located on the Sage Albany campus, the Opalka's primary concentration is on work by professional artists from outside the region. An important aspect of the cultural life in the Capital Region, the Gallery frequently features multidisciplinary projects and hosts poetry readings, recitals, and symposia, often in conjunction with its exhibitions.

The Opalka Gallery was constructed in 2002 with funds donated by the Opalka family. The 7,400 square-foot facility includes a vaulted gallery and a 75-seat lecture hall with Internet connectivity. The Opalka replaced Rathbone Gallery, which served The Sage Colleges for 25 years and garnered international attention for the quality and significance of its exhibitions.

Opalka Gallery is a member of the Exhibition Alliance, the Association of College and University Museums and Galleries, and the Museum Association of New York.

© 2008 Gregory Coates, Horace Brockington, The Sage Colleges
Sheila Carmody, editor | Publication design by Nicole Clayton

Positions: Gregory Coates

January 22 - March 16, 2008

courtesy of Christiane Nienaber Contemporary Art

curated by Horace Brockington

coordinated by Jim Richard Wilson

assisted by Patricia Cestero