

Permanent Record Theatre

WHITE by James Ijames

November 15, 2018

Press Packet

PERMANENT RECORD THEATRE PRESENTS



DECEMBER 6 - 22
8PM THURSDAYS - SATURDAYS
AT MASTROGEORGE THEATRE
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the play:

“*White* tells the story of Gus, who wants to be a famous visual artist, and Vanessa, who wants to be a working actor. When these two cross paths, their assumptions about art and being an artist are dismantled. In this modern Frankenstein story, Gus’ desire to be acquired by a major contemporary art museum inspires him to hire a woman to claim his work to meet the museum’s demand for ‘new perspectives.’ This play spins out of control as it explores issues of race, gender, sexuality and art.”

White was the winner of the 2015 Terrence McNally New Play Award; a \$10,000 prize and a year of development support from Philadelphia Theatre Company, including “readings as well as administrative support and networking to help manage the future of the play beyond its time at PTC. This prize has been created by Philadelphia Theatre Company which has enjoyed a long and fruitful collaboration with Terrence McNally. The award is given annually to recognize a new play or musical that celebrates the transformative power of art.

the playwright:



A multi-talented star of Philadelphia theater, James Ijames is a well-produced local playwright, a much-seen actor, an award-winning director, and a mentor to new generations of theater artists as assistant professor of theater at Villanova University. He was recently named one of ten recipients of the 2017 Whiting Award, a prestigious \$50,000 prize. He has acted on stages around the area. His accolades include the F. Otto Haas Award for an Emerging Artist, two Barrymore Awards for supporting actor for *Superior Donuts* (Arden, 2011) and *Angels in America* (Wilma, 2012), and a Barrymore for best director for *The Brother Size* (Simpatico, 2013).

He is a founding member of Orbiter 3 Playwright Producing Collective, a member of the InterAct Core Writers Group and a mentor for the Foundry. James’s writing credits include *The Most Spectacularly Lamentable Trial of Miz Martha Washington* (Flashpoint 2014) and *Moon Man Walk* (Orbiter 3, 2015). His new play *WHITE* premieres this month just outside Philadelphia at Norristown’s Theatre Horizon. A humorous and relevant work about the intersectionality of race, sexuality, and gender, the work was part of the 2015 PlayPenn New Play Conference and the 2015 Gulfshore Playhouse New Works Festival and received the 2015 Terrence McNally New Play Award. James talked to Phindie about the genesis of *WHITE* and its development at PlayPenn, a Philadelphia-based organization for the development of new plays.


the context:

White is loosely based upon the controversy regarding the 2014 Whitney Biennial Exhibition of Contemporary Art. There was an outcry when the curators included a project by Joe Scanlan, a white artist who created work with a fictional persona, an African-American woman named Donelle Woolford. Mr. Scanlan hired African-American actresses to portray this “fictional” artist who then presented his art. The YAMS Collective, an international group of artists of color, withdrew their entry for the 2014 exhibition in protest of Scanlan and Woodward’s inclusion. In an article posted on Hyperallergic, YAMS Collective member Maureen Catbagan commented: “We felt that the representation of an established academic white man posing as a privileged African-American woman is problematic, even if he tries to hide it in an avatar’s mystique... It kind of negates our presence there, our collaborative identity as representing the African diaspora.”

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DONELLE WOOLFORD



**BORN 1977 IN CONYERS, GA
LIVES AND WORKS IN NEW YORK, NY**

Woolford's performance *Dick's Last Stand* explores the central role given to the male sexual organ in both American art and politics, perpetuating the tradition of phallic humor in popular culture. It is a reenactment of Richard Pryor's stand-up routine from the last episode of his short-lived 1977 television show, in which he continually played with the notion that Richard Pryor, comedian, was someone who could not be pinned down or controlled. *Dick's Last Stand* honors Pryor's brash political humor and marks its return to the live stage, with Woolford playing Pryor playing Pryor playing Mudbone—across generations and in drag!

**ON VIEW
FOURTH FLOOR AND OFF-SITE**

Donelle Woolford's work is on view in the Museum's fourth floor galleries. Performances of *Dick's Last Stand* take place off-site, in locations across the country. [View the listings below for additional information.](#)

**DICK'S LAST STAND
TOUR DATES, 2014**

- Jan 31: LA Art Book Fair, Los Angeles, California
- Feb 2: La«art, Los Angeles, California
- Feb 6: Wattis Institute, San Francisco, California
- Feb 6: Solespace, Oakland, California
- Feb 14: MOCAD, Detroit, Michigan
- Feb 18: Dorchester Projects, Chicago, Illinois
- March 7: JACK, Brooklyn, New York
- April 1: The Kitchen, New York, New York
- May 20: Midway Contemporary Art, Minneapolis, Minnesota
- May 21: Duffy's Tavern, Lincoln, Nebraska
- May 22: White Flag Projects, St. Louis, Missouri

Donelle Woolford, Artist, 2007. Digital file. Collection of the artist. Photograph by Donelle Woolford.

In an interview with BOMB Magazine , Joe Scanlan describes his inspiration for Donelle Woolford: “Donelle Woolford began ten years ago when I first appropriated her name from a professional football player I admired. After the first collages happened in my studio, I liked them but they seemed like they would be more interesting if someone else made them, someone who could better exploit their historical and cultural references. So I studied the collages for a while and let them tell me who their author should be. From there the work has changed subtly—like the shift from Analytic to Synthetic Cubism—but the character of their maker, Donelle, has changed dramatically; she has become much more contradictory and complex.”



the significance:

The secret is out. Austin is the only growing city in the nation that is losing people of color. Many believe that may be due to rising costs, but I’m here to tell you as a black gay man living in this city for the last four years that it is not. There is a segregated culture here that does not make space for

underrepresented or marginalized voices. We have to raise that visibility for our citizens of color and varying identities and lifestyles. This project does exactly that.

In such contentious times, we believe we must face the divide with a discussion on race and gender, especially in fields that are still mostly homogenous like the arts community. This play will start many important conversations while also allowing everyone to find commonality in laughter. I chose this play because it tells a new and vital story. We are making something the people need to experience.



Images:















our charge:

“Paula Vogel says the job of the artist is to make the familiar strange and the strange familiar. This has always struck me as deeply true and fundamental to what I hope my work as a theatre-maker does. I’m preoccupied with inheritance and legacy. What do we get from those who came before us? What will we leave behind?

The plays ask an audience to work together towards examining this where we’ve been and where our current actions will lead us in the future. I want the audience to build together. To watch and to listen. The play is a gesture towards building community. Building a new kind of legacy.

Equal opportunity. No one is safe. We all need a mirror to fix our hair. I’m also obsessed with the American experiment. How we can use art to expose how imperfect this place is, in an effort to make it more perfect. ‘A more perfect union.’ One play at a time...amiright?!

Finally, if it’s not entertaining why the hell are we doing it? Make ‘em laugh. Make ‘em cry. Make ‘em call their senator. But by any means necessary. Make ‘em do something. Can’t change anybody’s mind if they’re asleep.”

- James Ijames