



December 7, 2015



GALLERIES—CHELSEA

Ralph Lemon

Forty years into his career, the American artist is having a moment. In the past few weeks alone, the poet Anne Carson (who shares his Delphic intensity) wrote a “Ralphabet” in Lemon’s honor, and he was short-listed for a prize at the Guggenheim. “Scaffold Room,” an exhibition of photographs, intricate drawings, neon sculptures, videos, and found wooden figures (two dressed as Jay-Z and Beyoncé), is a pendant to Lemon’s recent performance piece of the same name, a searing rumination on power dynamics with monologues, singing, and dancing—and one unendurable scream. The live work’s electricity, provocation, and wide net of references (from Moms Mabley and Kathy Acker to Ben Webster and Biggie Smalls) are unmatched by this disjointed show. But it does have its strange pleasures, notably three videos shot in the Mississippi Delta. Dogs bark in silver suits, boys dress as giraffes, and four elderly, dignified men and women tend the garden of an Afrofuturist satellite. (To dive deep into Lemon’s concerns, see the upcoming book “On Value,” published by *Triple Canopy*.) Through Dec. 5. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 212-255-5793.)