

Time Out

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Ralph Lemon

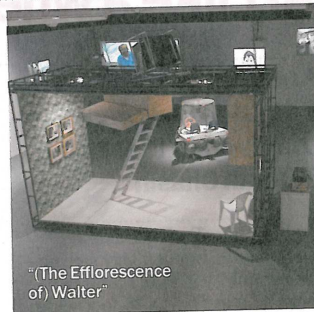
★★★★★

The Kitchen, through Sat 23 (see Chelsea)

Walter Carter, resident of Little Yazoo, Mississippi, is 99 years old—a living witness of Southern history. Carter is the subject of an ambitious, if scattered, show titled “(The Efflorescence of) Walter” by choreographer Ralph Lemon (making his solo debut as a visual artist).

We see Carter sorting through the past in his own eccentric way. A video installation documents him mending old records and smashing a ceramic rabbit; in a later sequence, Lemon himself dons a bunny suit to play the part of Uncle Remus’s Brer Rabbit, only to end up shooting himself and fleeing across a field.

While Carter appears to be in good health, he also seems to be contemplating the end. Lemon’s sculpture of a ramshackle spaceship—cobbled together from an old boat, some hubcaps and a cage, and made in collaboration with Carter, his family and friends—hints at this final journey. Let your gaze follow a ladder into the attic-like room that Lemon has fashioned



“(The Efflorescence of) Walter”

and you’ll see footage of Carter donning a space suit, as if heading off into the great unknown. An animation of James Baldwin, a guardian angel of sorts, chimes in with aphoristic asides.

Lemon’s work onstage is renowned for addressing themes of race, place and history, concerns that translate powerfully here. The installation may seem fragmented, and a more seasoned artist might have married the parts with a more imaginative use of materials. But Carter is, to say the least, an inspiring subject, and Lemon’s lively show is a fitting tribute.

—Morgan Falconer

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