

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

ARTSPACE

50 Orange Street (corner of Orange & Crown)

New Haven, CT 06510

<http://artspacenh.org>

Phone – 203.772.2709

Email – shannon@artspacenh.org

'Toonskin: May 11–Jun 30, 2013

Artspace is pleased to announce the upcoming exhibition, '*Toonskin*, organized by artist Kenya (Robinson) and running from May 11 through June 30, 2013. An opening reception will be held on May 11, 2013 from 5:00–8:00 PM.

Sequential art holds an important place in the development of American myth making and within this sphere the caricature of Blackness has a long animated history. Tom and Jerry, the best of enemies, present a compelling model for the complex relationship between Blacks and whites, while the minstrel underpinnings of Mickey Mouse offer a glimpse into the convoluted histories that inform American pop culture. The symbiotic relationship between early animation and Jazz emphasizes the American-ness of Black identity, codified by the likes of Betty Boop, Coal Black, and The Sebben Dwarves. Bugs Bunny is a direct descendant of the irrepressible Br'er Rabbit, while the *Road Runner* series freely samples tenets from trickster folklore of the African Diaspora. Even "The Man of Steel," the preeminent figure of comic book superheroism, bears traces of John Henry, the original "Steel Drivin' Man." Often acting as the foil to the main characters or, in the case of Felix the Cat, serving as the inspirational touchstone for design and mannerisms, these representations are ultimately limiting in nature.

'*Toonskin* attempts to perforate and expand these limits by bringing together contemporary visual artists who reinterpret, recreate, and redefine Blackness—and otherness more generally—within an animated context. The artists featured in '*Toonskin* represent the ongoing exchange of influences that characterize the American cultural landscape. '*Toonskin* will not examine Blackness solely as an expression of identity; works included will also consider the physical nature of 'black' and blackness as a formal choice. The inking of printed comics and animation cells is monopolized by the color, while 'zine culture relies upon black as the photocopier standard. '*Toonskin* will dip into the inkwell to investigate the visible and engrossing trail of these wanderings.

Featured artists include:

DAWOLU JABARI ANDERSON

MICHAEL PAUL BRITTO

COLLEEN COLEMAN

KARA CROMBIE

DAMIEN DAVIS

JASON HUFF

LAUREN KELLEY

NYEEMA MORGAN

JASMINE MURRELL

JON PECK + BEN NIZNIK
SHANI PETERS
ROBERT PRUITT
ERIKA RANEE
JACOLBY SATTERWHITE
JEFFERY SCUDDER
PETER SLUSZKA
KATAYOUN VAZIRI

About the Organizer:

'Toonskin' curator Kenya (Robinson) is a community-taught artist from Gainesville, Florida and a past resident of the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council's WorkSpace Program (2009–2010) and the 2010 Triangle Arts Workshop. Her work is included in the White Columns Artist Registry and her sculptural work has been exhibited at the Museum of Contemporary Diasporan Arts, the Jersey City Museum, the Aljira Center for Contemporary Art, the Brooklyn Academy of Music, and the 60 Wall Street Gallery of Deutsche Bank. Curatorial projects include *Ves.sel* (2010) and *African-Americana* (2009), both at the Brennan Gallery in Jersey City and *Sonic Diagrams* (2012) at Recess Activities in Soho. In addition, her performances have been featured at Rush Arts Gallery, the Museum of Modern Art, the DUMBO Arts Festival, Walmart–Store #2371, and the Kitchen Performance Space in New York City. Her bibliography includes selections in the Home and New York Regional Sections of the New York Times as well as the International Review of African American Art. She is a regular contributor to the Huffington Post (<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/kenya-/>). Ms. (Robinson) is currently pursuing an MFA in sculpture at the Yale School of Art and is serving as a visiting teacher at the Metropolitan Business Academy in New Haven.



Jacolby Satterwhite, *Country Ball 1989–2012*, 2012
Video still, image courtesy of the artist.



Colleen Coleman, *Capt. Sisko Was a Friend of Mine*, 2012
Digital collage and animation, image courtesy of the artist.

Artspace is very grateful to receive exhibition and operating support from the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, the City of New Haven Office of Economic Development, the Connecticut Office of the Arts, the Greater New Haven Community Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, First Niagara Bank and New Alliance Foundations, Webster Bank, Yale University, and individual Friends of Artspace.