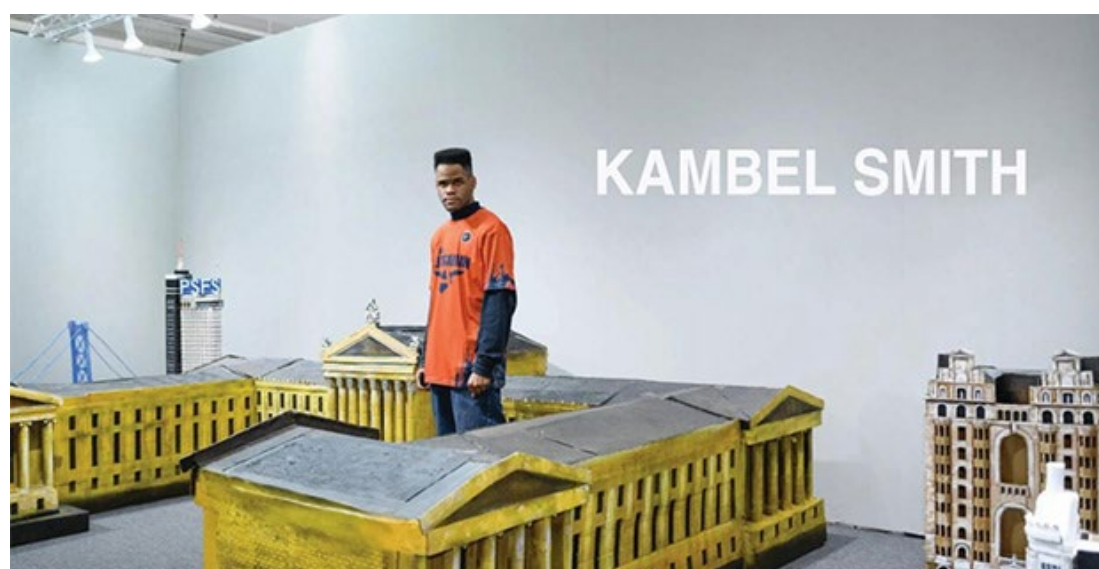


Kambel Smith: RAW



March 8 - May 2, 2024

From Barbara Davis Gallery:

“Barbara Davis Gallery is pleased to announce “Raw”, a solo exhibition by artist Kambel Smith, with an artist reception Friday March 8, 2024 from 6:00PM to 8:30PM.

Kambel Smith declares himself to be superhuman — “Autisarian,” to be exact. Redefining what it means to be autistic, Kambel approaches both his art and his life from an extraordinary point of view.

After a difficult childhood spent struggling to communicate, Kambel’s father, Lonnie Smith, discovered a number of drawings Kambel had hidden in the air vent of his room out of fear that no one would understand him. These drawings depicted highly detailed and precise comic characters, the “Survivor” character standing out to Lonnie. “Autisarians” were born in collaboration with Kambel, his father, and his brother, Kantai (a talented coder who also just happens to have autism), finding the power where people often forget it exists. These comics, these “Autisarians,” told the stories Kambel had never been able to express otherwise, and became the catalyst to his artistic career.

After discovering art as an outlet, he sketched and painted until his father could no longer afford canvases and materials. This was the true birth of Kambel’s practice today, as he expanded to do both painting and sculpture, then he is started working with discarded cardboard boxes from packaging they conveniently had lying around the house. Kambel’s fascination with architecture and buildings and his skill with manipulating found material helped reveal his superpower — he creates replicas of famous buildings without the use of any sort of measuring tool, seeing exactly how all the pieces need to fit together naturally. Since this discovery, Kambel has been unstoppable.

Soon after this discovery, Kambel was introduced to the contemporary art world and his career as an artist exploded. In 2019 he had a solo exhibition at the Atlanta Contemporary Art Center, Atlanta Georgia, and a solo exhibition and a residency at the Elaine de Kooning House, East Hampton, New York; his work was exhibited at the Outsider Art Fair, New York City. Kambel was also featured in One Day Your’ll See: A History of Afro- futurism, curated by Brian Chidester at the Brooklyn Print & Photo Fair, Brooklyn New York.

Kambel’s sculptures were displayed at the Elaine de Kooning House in 2018, Chris Byrne organized exhibition of Kambel’s sculptures at the Outsider Art Fair in New York City. There, they gained the attention of Holland Cotter, co-chief art critic for the New York Times, and Jerry Saltz, senior art critic for New York Magazine who called Kambel’s work “magnificent.”

As precise and meticulous as Kambel’s sculptures may seem, a close look shows the soul behind each creation. They are not exact architectural replicas, but art deeply to the core. Handmade texture, vibrant color, and countless hours of care are infused into each piece. His work helps the viewer appreciate the small and the huge of daily life through totally new eyes; there is no material that is waste, and there is no building too large to escape the human touch of those who made it.

Kambel Smith’s upcoming exhibition “Raw” at Barbara Davis Gallery highlights a revelation of his genius, the crudeness of his hand, his obsessiveness, and his close relationship with the most modest of materials. These works are as touching and awe-inspiring as they are historical, as he makes these scaled down replicas feel larger than life. His work emphasizes human connection to our own built environments and how our buildings become architectural icons through their aesthetics, scale, and surroundings. They achieve monumentality, becoming symbols of our own cultures. Some buildings are created icons, while others become iconic. In the same vein, Kambel Smith’s work grow into iconicity. Today’s outsider artists have become very mainstream in the world of contemporary art.

“It’s magical and transformative, what he does with the city just by shifting its scale, he kind of humanizes it ... it’s still monumental, but wonderful in the way that artists make their own world,” said art critic and curator Carlo McCormick, who met Kambel at the Outside Art Fair in New York.

Inspired by the power of outsider art, works from the hands of untrained artists, Barbara Davis Gallery will be donating a percentage of the show’s proceeds to The Orange Show in Houston, Texas.”

Reception: March 8, 2024 | 6–8 pm

[Barbara Davis Gallery](#)

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