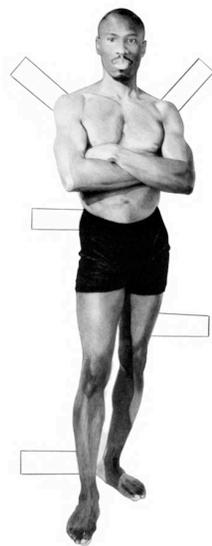




**Damond Howard, *It's Still America's Greatest Problem*
November 1 – 30, 2010**



Damond Howard, *Bone of Contention*, 2009, Mixed media and black-color pencil on paper

The Crisp-Ellert Art Museum is pleased to present a body of work by South Carolina-based artist Damond Howard. Working primarily with charcoal and black pencil on paper, Howard is a skilled draftsman. He uses the self-portrait to explore ideas of identity and representation as it relates to African American history and culture, and the subjugation thereof. This exhibition will include a series of works that delve further into this theme that is integral to his practice.

His most recent body of work consists of diptychs in which he pairs renderings of early American illustrations representing African-Americans with a self-portrait. In *Bone of Contention* (from the series "Wearing the Mask"), he has reproduced a cartoon from ca. 1860 that signified the "bone of contention" between the North and the South. The absurdity of this figure, replete with tattered clothing and a swollen head emblazoned with the word "SLAVERY," is that he is happy. By creating a border of dashed lines around the character, the artist has turned him into a plaything - something to be cut out like a paper doll. Howard then juxtaposes it with a self-portrait in which he poses himself in imitation of his caricature twin, this time with paper doll tabs. The artist's aims are not subtle here. By positioning himself next to overtly racist images and re-making himself into a paper doll with tabs, that when cut out would easily translate to the other figure, the artist attempts to uncover some truths about the perception of African American identity. Howard says that the paper doll tabs are a reference to caricature and portraiture or persona, and how that is a game we play, or perhaps don't play. How then do we perceive Howard, a contemporary African-American man, and further, how does he perceive himself? How has society imposed certain attributes onto the artist's character, and what sort of identity has he imposed upon himself? Howard poses these questions to the viewer but they are not questions and issues that are easily resolved.

As an African-American man raised and currently living in the South, Howard is telling us that racism is as rampant as ever. Racially motivated instances continue to crop up everywhere, and a few highly publicized incidents in the past several years will tell us that there is still an undercurrent of racism in this country ready to re-emerge at any given moment. These situations, such as

the appearance of hangman's nooses on a high-school campus in Jena, Louisiana, hark back to a period of time when there was blatant disregard for black America's humanity. All of these instances inform Howard's work. With the dual images, Howard asks us to acknowledge the *perceived* discrepancies between the two, but perhaps the stereotypical images of African American's are not buried as deep in history's vault as we had originally thought.

Damond Howard is a graduate of South Carolina State University (B.S. Art Education) and University of Florida (M.F.A. Studio Art). He has exhibited his work widely, most recently at the 701 Center for Contemporary Art in Columbia, South Carolina and the University of Tennessee's Downtown Gallery in Knoxville, and was awarded as Fellow in Visual Arts by the South Carolina Arts Commission for 2009-10.

The museum is located at 48 Sevilla Street at Flagler College and open Monday through Friday, 10am to 4pm, while classes are in session.



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