



## Media Release

Contact: Roderic Southall  
Email: [obsidianarts@gmail.com](mailto:obsidianarts@gmail.com)  
Phone: 612-787-3644  
website: [www.obsidianartscenter.org](http://www.obsidianartscenter.org)

# Balls: Modulating Maleness in Black Communities

October 5, 2010 - A first in the nation look at black maleness through the lens of the contemporary urban house ball scene is on display at Obsidian Arts through November 27, 2010. Eleven artists from across the country, in their, turn poke, pick, and bite at concepts related to maleness as it is being transformed by the urban house ball scene.

"Urban House Balls" are performance and cultural competency contests engaged in by the members of gay, bi, and trans black and Latino "house" or "family" networks. Emanating from these contests, which are set to music and wearable trends is an increasingly fluid framework of self identification which contradicts typical western ideas of black maleness. Urban house culture and its army of members have been marching on the black male identity for more than two decades. Beginning in the 80's these cultural warriors have again and again been mischaracterized as fragile, glamour groupies as they have increasing enticed more and more men and women to surrender their western patriarchal lenses. This exhibition is the nation's first visual arts exploration of the ways urban house ball culture is/has shifted tonal and visual notions of maleness in the black community and beyond.

Participating artists include: Andrea Jenkins (MN), Kevin Moore (MN), Leslie Smith III (NY), Pamela Council(PA), Ernest Jolly (CA), James Jaxxa (NY), Carlo Quispe (NY), Luna Luis Ortiz (NY), and Jacolby Satterwhite (NY). Icon Benny Ninja (NY) and cultural critic Frank Leon Roberts (NY) are also participating in the exhibition experience.

From Pamela Council's playful reconsideration of the disco ball to Jacolby Satterwhite's video tracing of playground habits for the stage to the self essentialism of works by Ernest Jolly and James Jaxxa the artists capture the shiny, multi-focused nature inherent in the cultural evolution of maleness provoked by the urban house ball scene.



Photo - Luna Luis Ortiz



Video Still - Jacolby Satterwhite



Minne Mini (Red) Ball Event

Image by Photographer Anna Min/Min Enterprises

### Obsidian Arts

Obsidian Arts seeks to be a place for discovery and growth. We encourage artists, curators and the interested public to take an aggressive and passionate look at black visual culture. Each year we develop a series of exhibitions, art history workshops and artist development activities. Find out more about us at [www.obsidianartscenter.org](http://www.obsidianartscenter.org).

This exhibition is funded by The Jerome Foundation, the Archie D and Bertha H Walker Foundation, the Buddy Taub Foundation, the Jerome Foundation and the Funding Exchange's OUTFund. Additional guidance and support was provided by the Soap Factory, Frank Leon Roberts and Todd Rowlett.

Obsidian Arts' Gallery is located at 3501 Chicago Avenue South, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 55407. Hours are: M-F 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.; Sat-Sun 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.



## **Balls . . . Modulating Maleness in Black Communities**

### **Overview**

Obsidian Arts is pleased to present an exhibition on the cultural “care” and “advocacy” system known as “Urban House Balls”. Popularized with the general public through the film “Paris is Burning” and updated by the film “How Do I Look” the house ball system is not readily given credit for its impact on the performance arts, urban fashion and trends in social norms among black and Latino urban communities. Instead it is too often seen as a place of entertainment and fast nights. This exhibition is an attempt to consider the tonal and visual legacy of the urban house ball system on what is considered positive male behavior.

### **Artists**

The artists in the exhibition come from across the United States. Each artist was challenged to consider the current state of maleness and/or gender identity, to couple that with the urban house balls scene, and create a work of art that casts light on the essence of how the two ideas collide or co-exist.

The artists are: Andrea Jenkins (MN), Kevin Moore (MN), Leslie Smith III (NY), Pamela Council (PA), Ernest Jolly (CA), James Jaxxa (NY), Carlo Quispe (NY), Luna Luis Ortiz (NY), and Jacolby Satterwhite (NY).

Two artists and thinkers involved in the exhibition tangentially are Benny Ninja who Obsidian Arts sponsored as a part of the recent Minneapolis Mini Ball hosted by Twin Cities Black Pride and cultural critic Frank Leon Roberts who is writing original text for the exhibition catalogue. Additionally, Andrea Jenkins is writing text for the catalogue.

### **Obsidian Arts**

Obsidian Arts seeks to be a place for discovery and growth. We encourage artists, curators and the interested public to take an aggressive and passionate look at black visual culture. Each year we develop a series of exhibitions, art history workshops and artist development activities. Find out more about us at [www.obsidianartscenter.org](http://www.obsidianartscenter.org).

This exhibition is funded by The Jerome Foundation, the Walker Foundation, and the Funding Exchange OUTFund.

**(Description of Works on other Side)**



## Balls . . . Modulating Maleness in Black Communities

### Works

Each artist has tackled the subject matter from different places of distant. Some artists active in the urban house ball scene have provide a look from the inside out that harkens to both the familiar and the strange. Other artists had the advantage of the distance of sex or of ethnicity. Still of artists, like Kevin Moore, created original works for another purpose that provide adept commentary on the exhibitions thematic.

**Andrea Jenkins** - A look at pop culture's fixation on the glamour of woman juxtaposed with the results of rejection of feminine identification

Title: Untitled

Materials: Paper collage

**Kevin Moore**—Performance created for the 2010 production of “Fierce Love” which considers the parallel use of colored bandanas by two seemingly divergent communities in their ongoing search of maleness.

Materials: Video

**Leslie Smith III**—Introspective paintings about the ideas of maleness and power / powerlessness.

Title: Zip—Tie and Red Light

Materials: Acrylic Paint

**Pamela Council**—A critique and toast the urban ball scene re-casting a mirrored disco ball as a hunk of dress to “present-yourself” essentials.

Title: Hot Blooded NP 406 / Fuel NP 418

Materials: Acrylic fingernails, Nail polish, mirror ball motor

**Ernest Jolly** - A commentary of the essential battle of urban house ball participants . . . the battle with self.

Title: Image Battle

Materials: Mirror, Speed Boxing Bag

**James Jaxxa**—A commentary on the increasingly egalitarian and self focused, nature of the music related to urban house scene. Long, dazzling, and if you get close enough it is all about little parts of your whole.

Title: Untitled

Materials: Cosmetic compacts

**Carlo Quispe**—Coming—The artist will create four pillar wraps that evoke the energy of being at a urban house ball. To be install the week of October 11th.

**Luna Luis Ortiz**—Considered the primary photo documenter of the east coast's urban house ball scene these works present varied ball participants.

Title: Untitled (series)

Materials: Photography on canvas

**Jacolby Satterwhite**— A two part video work that considers the practical cultural origins of urban house ball movements/appointments.

Materials: Video