

I N M A N G A L L E R Y

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 2006

Inman Gallery presents an exhibition of
new work by:

DEMETRIUS OLIVER

Extracts

February 25 - April 1, 2006

*Opening Reception: Friday February 25,
6-8pm*

Artist's talk at 5:30pm



Fin, 2005 Digital C-print, ed. 5

Gallery hours: Tues. - Sat., 11-6

Inman Gallery is pleased to announce an exhibition of new work by **Demetrius Oliver**. Oliver, born in Brooklyn in 1975, grew up in South Florida. He received a BFA from Rhode Island School of Design in 1998 and an MFA from University of Pennsylvania in 2004. He moved to Houston in 2004 to participate in the Core Artist in Residency Program at the Glassell School of Art, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. From 2004-2005, Oliver was also Artist in Residence at Project Row Houses, Houston.

In his first solo exhibition at the gallery, Oliver uses his own body and skin as visual context to construct simple yet powerful images that explore a range of social and historical topics. Often obliquely referring to classic American literature (Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*, for example), or historical events (such as the murder of Emmett Till), he engages the viewer with elegantly restrained compositions, whose stark simplicity belie their complex multi-layered readings. The work is characterized by a cool, aloof treatment that belies the visceral and sometimes absurd combinations of body and object. **Halo** shows the back of the artist's head, his hair frizzed up into an 'afro' and a dozen or so No. 2 pencils stuck through his hair. The black background and Oliver's hair contrast sharply with the brilliant orange of the pencils, and allude to not only the piece's namesake, but also a crown of thorns. In **Polaris**, buttons and a sports coat become a map of the night sky, referring the viewer to the act of navigating by the stars and one's wits. Other pieces in the exhibition refer to travel while also pointing us to issues of the homeless; **Fin** presents a feet in broken down shoes, wrapped in clear tape; in **Anchor**, a stuffed black garbage bag hangs around the neck of the figure whose brown skin is barely visible at the top and bottom of the image frame.

In the north gallery, Oliver presents **Chart**, a slide projection comprising 40 images looped. Occupying a tense middle ground between still image and film, the slide projection unfolds slowly; a disembodied hand pushes a piece of raw bacon around a dusty white backdrop. As the images progress, the bacon picks up the dust and the backdrop becomes whiter.

Oliver's work was included in the recent exhibition **Frequency**, at the Studio Museum in Harlem, and is currently on view at PS1 Contemporary Art Center, Long Island City, New York. His work will be included in a survey entitled **Black Alphabet - Context of Contemporary African American Art** at the Zacheta National Gallery of Art, Warsaw Poland this fall, and he will have a solo exhibition at the **Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston**, also in fall 2006.