

Kendell Carter weaves references to hip-hop into abstract works.

Carter strives for a post-black art



Courtesy of the artist and moniquemeloche

Installation view of "Kendell Carter: Liberation Summer," 2011.

Kendell Carter's drip paintings immediately bring to mind "post-black" art. Heralded by the Studio Museum in Harlem's 2001 exhibition "Freestyle," this movement's African-American artists, according to Studio Museum curator Thelma Golden, aren't bound by 20th-century identity politics. In his artist's statement, Carter writes that he wants to transcend a false opposition of "subjective blackness" to "objective mark-making."

The materials that the Southern California artist chooses for his abstract works are so charged, however, that identity remains at the forefront of "Liberation Summer," even as the show flouts expectations that black artists will interpret black history. The "drips" in works such as *Drip and Stroke* (pictured, 2010) are actually fat, colorful shoelaces. These and other clothes and accessories, such as Enyce shirts and big gold chains, root Carter's mixed-media assemblages in hip-hop's visual culture.

Carter's uses of street fashion thwart attempts to find and decode any messages about race. *DJ* (2010), a column of copper-plated Timberland boots anchored to a wall, refers to a Donald Judd sculpture. The artist's Day-Glo palette and graffiti recall the work of white fashion designer Stephen Sprouse, and a drawing of Mark Wahlberg reminds us of the actor's origins as rapper Marky Mark. The latter piece, one of several examples of literal "mark-making," reflects the show's unexpected and utterly refreshing humor.