

The New York Times

ART IN REVIEW

Devin Troy Strother: ‘The Me and You, Your Mother and Maybe Even Your Cousin Too & The Hey Sister, Soul Sister Go Sister, Woah Sister.’

By **Holland Cotter**

Sept. 15, 2011

Monya Rowe Gallery

504 West 22nd Street, Chelsea

Through Nov. 5

As suggested by its loquacious title, there’s a lot going on in Devin Troy Strother’s terrific first New York solo, which is full of many small things. The artist, born in California in 1986, explains in a news release that he conceived the show as a self-portrait, and it does seem to offer an index of at least some of his interests, most of which lie in art.

Sculpture is one: a set of free-standing shelves in the center of the gallery holds several abstract varieties, all on a hand-holdable scale. He’s also into art history; several very shallow shadow-box constructions lining the wall hold miniature tributes to individual artists who have in some way influenced him, among them Adrian Piper, Gerhard Richter and Willem de Kooning. Each tribute takes the form of a vignette made from bits of colored paper, wood, yarn, paint and so on.

A Felix Gonzalez-Torres candy pile, for example, is composed from what appear to be crumbs of dry colored pigment. A Kurt Schwitters environment includes stacks of postage-stamp-size pieces of collage-ready paper. In addition each tribute comes with its own set of curators — or docents, or cheerleaders — in the form of tiny cut-paper figures of exuberant young black women.

Their names are part of the titles, as in “Keisha and Yvette in Contemporary Arrangements Exhibit 2, Featuring La’Meesa and Wilma Doing Their Performance ‘A Black Tracy Emin and the Triangle.’”

A final interest in evidence here is in black vernacular culture, demonstrated by an entire wall covered with collages — 247 in all — the size of index cards, each titled with women’s names like Antawnique and Zaquisha. Mr. Strother, like the performance artist Kalup Linzy, has a sharp eye (and ear) for parody, and clearly loves his material. And as Mr. Linzy does in his Afro-centric, art world-centric performances, he has found a disarming way to introduce black culture into a closed-door museum-gallery world and, basically, stage a takeover.