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## The Columbus Dispatch

# Artist Alteronce Gumby's use of color, texture in clay stands out

Staff Writer

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The paintings of Alteronce Gumby beckon visitors to the back walls of Hammond Harkins Galleries.

Two giant abstract works in Plastilina — an oil-based modeling clay — offer hues in blue and red, and a third presents a long, thin strip in a rainbow of colors.

The artist's vivid palette commands attention, but his talent for tactile textures — upon closer inspection — proves impressive. It is one reason that the 30-year-old Gumby's works were included in the gallery's group exhibit “Surfaces.”

The show spotlights artists whose selection of materials — ranging from photographs on aluminum to burlap — is as significant as the content of their creations.

In addition to those by Gumby, pieces by Laura Alexander, Kaveri Raina, Marcia Smilack and Mariana Smith are on view.

The exhibit is an offshoot of a brainstorming session among Hammond Harkins co-directors Marlana Keynes, Chet Domitz and Laura Savage.

“We realized that we had a lot of artists who, ... in dealing with the materiality of their mediums, are working very directly with surface,” said Domitz, who curated the show.

Gumby, a graduate of Hunter College and the Yale School of Art who divides his time between the New York borough of Brooklyn and New Haven, Connecticut, was a late addition. In May, after Keynes encountered Gumby's work in the magazine *New American Paintings*, Domitz and Savage traveled to the artist's studio in New Haven.

“Having a really great conversation with him,” Domitz said, “we realized that he would be perfect for this show, and he is.”

The exhibit features seven pieces by Gumby, whose work has been displayed at venues in New York, Connecticut and California but not previously in Columbus. The most striking pieces are three in the rear of the gallery.

In “My president’s black but my painting’s blue” and “What is this thing called Red,” Gumby depicts planes of colors on which thick, ridgelike lines are embedded. The lines are patterned after the inclined head of the television cartoon character Gumby.

The artist was led to the character while taking a class in Afro-Modernism at Yale University, during which he became intrigued by the “idea of inheritance,” including his surname.

“I couldn’t really trace it back to Africa,” said Gumby, who turned to pop culture and found inspiration.

“Gumby was a really interesting character on his own: He had this way to travel through time and interact with history, and he has his own form of liberation or finding himself,” said Gumby, who began depicting the character in his work. Some representations are literal; others — such as those seen here — are more subtle.

The exhibit’s highlight is “Colors Only,” which consists of eight square panels in different colors. Inside each panel, a triangular shape can be discerned, with rougher or flatter patches of paint either within the shape or outside it.

The other artists highlighted are noteworthy, especially Smilack, for her photographs-on-aluminum piece, “Bells of Kiev,” featuring images of the domes of St. Michael’s Golden-Domed Monastery; and Raina, for four works in which paint seeps through burlap.

But the show belongs to Gumby, who dazzles in his Columbus debut.

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**"Surfaces"** continues through Sept. 4 at Hammond Harkins Galleries, 641 N. High St.

Hours: 1 to 5 p.m. Sundays and 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturdays.

Call 614-238-3000, or visit [hammondharkins.com](http://hammondharkins.com)



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