



SI OFFSITE | James Bantone

202420242024

March 15 – May 5, 2024

11 Mercer Street
New York, NY 10013

Visiting Hours:
Fri / Sat / Sun
12-6PM

Swiss Institute (SI) presents *202420242024*, the first solo exhibition in the US by artist James Bantone, featuring a suite of newly commissioned works. Bantone's practice brings together photography and sculpture to extend a querying and queering of the uncanny as a gendered and racialized site of both horror and play.

For *202420242024*, the artist has selected photos from display mannequin sales catalogs, where figures are posed nude albeit in shoes. Clothing chain stores, designers and retail companies looking to purchase the models may identify their desired figure via its serial number in the brochure. Bantone's works resonate with Achille Mbembe's elaborations on the "entrepreneur of the self."¹ Workers, Mbembe suggests, have been replaced by laboring nomads, and turned into "superfluous humanity." Technological models collapse subjectivity, and neuroeconomics appear as psychic life. The resulting subject is one of pure plasticity who is bound to the coercive logics of the market and financialized debt. This fusion of capitalism and animism brings about institutionalized fungibility, symbolized by what Mbembe calls "the Black Man:" both "the living crypt of capital" and a plastic "symbol of conscious desire for life."²

Hung on walls and mounted on standing displays, Bantone's works have a textural residue akin to wheatpasted street advertisements. Applied with an acrylic transfer process onto steel plates, the bodies are rendered simultaneously as subjects and as objects, put on view in a Soho storefront. Men wear loafers and women wear high-heeled pumps. Information is lost, distorted and re-created through various interventions on the images.

The works' titles include each featured mannequin's designated serial number along with an ad lib from popular music artists, recalling the lyrical accidents that occur through the repeated image transfer process. A legion of soliloquies, the figures call out again and again.

From the rear of the gallery space, morphing mannequin parts loom at different scales, a mass of haunting echoes. Ciphering between traces of vacant bodies and the documented memory of them, they are at once visible and indiscernible. Walk back through them and out of the store.

¹ Achille Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 3-4.

² *Ibid.*, 6.

SI gratefully acknowledges SITE [DION LEE] for hosting the show at 11 Mercer, marking their first in a series of events and programming under the platform. Words by Angeliqe Rosales Salgado.

James Bantone wishes to thank: the SI team, Angeliqe Rosales Salgado, Griffin Stoddard, Dion, James, Donald, Treat and Kyle.

About James Bantone

James Bantone (b. 1992 in Geneva; lives and works in Paris) graduated with a Bachelor of Art & Media - Video at the Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK) in 2019 and completed the Work.Master - Contemporary Artistic Practices at the Geneva University of Art and Design (HEAD) in 2021. He has had solo exhibitions at Karma International, Zurich (2023), Coalmine, Winterthur (2020), and participated in group exhibitions at Kunsthalle Zurich (2023), Simian, Copenhagen (2023), Klemm's Gallery, Berlin (2023), Museum Morsbroich, Leverkusen (2023), Centre d'Art Contemporain de Genève (2022) Cordova, Barcelona (2021), Swiss Institute, New York (2020), Kunsthalle Fribourg (2020), and UV Estudios, Buenos Aires (2019).

About Swiss Institute

Founded in 1986, Swiss Institute (SI) is an independent non-profit contemporary art institution dedicated to promoting forward-thinking and experimental art making through innovative exhibitions, education, and programs. Committed to the highest standards of curatorial and educational excellence, SI serves as a platform for emerging artists, catalyzes new perspectives on celebrated work, and fosters appreciation for under-recognized positions. SI is committed to being an organization that is diverse, equitable, accessible, and environmentally conscious in its work, structure, and programming. Open to the public free-of-charge, Swiss Institute seeks to explore how a Swiss context can be the starting point for international conversations in the fields of visual and performing arts, design, and architecture.

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