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26/12/2011

Art --- "Hair" by Virginie Sommet: "White people know nothing about Black hair."



"Hair", installation by Virginie Sommet (December, Miami 2011)

"White people know nothing about Black hair."

Virginie Sommet is a French artist based in New York City. She's spent over 10 years creating pieces that enable people reflecting on societal constraints such as gender and urban subcultures issues. She is one of the most inspirational artists I got a chance to meet as her pieces describes our society and its inner troubles.

-“She realized that when it came to hair, White people were completely unaware of what really went on in Black America. Before she fell asleep that night, Amy made a mental note to add Black hair culture to her growing list of phenomena to explain to the rest of the world.” Amy Thomas (Hair Stories).

Even the Black Barbie has long straight hair, black celebrities, politicians, entrepreneurs, singers, models and actors. We see them everywhere in the magazines, on TV and on the news.

For the White majority Black people have natural straight hair floating in the air!

- No, they don't, they are using the “Relaxer” called also “Creamy Crack” and “Perm” which is Sodium Hydroxide mixed with water, mineral oil and emulsifiers to kill the proteins of the hair and make it totally straight. They are also using the “Hot Comb” to make it flat.

It is often painful, time consuming and money for adults and children.

Black hair is a \$9 Billion business. Relaxer is mainly white owned (they bought it) and waves and wigs, which are straight too, are 60% owned by Asians.



Black hair is a \$9 Billion business

-In 2011, we still have Black Hair Salon and White Hair Salon. They do not mix.

White salons do not know how to do Blacks hairs and white people do not go to Black salons. No scientists have ever done research on Black Hair to understand it.

“Trips to the beauty parlor for most White Women are primarily functional.

In contrast, when African American Women go to the beauty parlor- and this was especially true when so many more were

"hot combing"- there is a lot of time to share problems with others." (Midge Wilson and Kathy Russell)

It is the same thing for men at the Barber Shop.

"America was built on the myth of the melting pot, but despite the efforts of the powers that be, the ingredients never fully blended. At best there is a patchwork quilt of various ethnic groups struggling to live peacefully with one another while something called "mainstream culture" is offered up as the national example." Amy Thomas (Hair Stories).

We are facing a struggle for African American identity in a mainstream White culture which has succeeded in keeping many people unaware (including themselves) of the diversity surrounding them, including the unique culture of Black hair.



Virginie Sommet by Eva Muller

If you would like to know more about Virginie Sommet's work, check out her [website](#)

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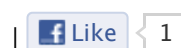
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