

Gregory Coates

Struttin'

"In street reality as in genealogical fact, "blackness" is both an abstraction and a spectrum."—Robert Storr

The new work of Gregory Coates, like those before it, comes from a deep and long tradition with abstraction and common materials—discarded, excess or just plain forgotten. Assembled of wrapped rubber and plastic, the works are layered and often three-dimensional. Yet, as Deirdre Scott has noted, Coates "works at the junction between disciplines, media and meaning creating works that are wholly constructed, at once painting and wall sculpture."

While much of Coates' work has become known for its particularly black aesthetic of inventive material reuse and repetition of form, his work's materiality remains immersed in the abstraction of improvisation. Depending on where you're coming from in the encounter with the work, they hint at and/or shun any form of narrative. Even when monumental in size, the work remains elusive to categorization, further enhancing its provisional character.

One might find that Coates' works speaks of the fabric of the urban landscape. The materials come from warehouse, perhaps like those of the garages that once populated the now gallery-filled streets of Chelsea. Fittingly, this show is called Strut. Walking sidewalks or streets—the changing urban landscape—the material is a reminder of the erosion of working-class urban landscapes. As a modernist-inspired flaneur, Coates struts and works at the same time. The disappearance of neighborhoods in favor of marketable development is also very much at the heart of these works. Using industrial colors like beige and a house paint white, the constructions seemingly celebrate a more gritty reality that takes comfort in the fact that there is so much to offer in the material world at our hands. Fortunately for us, Coates brings that reality to life.

Franklin Sirmans