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“Art Man” unveils new exhibit

By **DeNeen Brown**
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B.K. Adams, who is known throughout D.C. as the “Art Man” the ubiquitous artist in the French beret, who wears painter’s pants and World War II goggles, who surreptitiously plants sculptures in vacant fields, glues “I Am Art” posters to telephone poles, installs chairs, ladders and bicycles to abandoned roofs-- aims to blow your mind once again.



"Braneac" by B.K. Adams. (Susana Raab/Susana Raab)

The “Y,” he says better captures the weight of the word, the weight of the world, the weight of the mind. Most people, he says, only use a small fraction of their “mynds.” His goal is to get you to expand your brain cells as much as is humanly possible.

In his new exhibit, "Exercise Your Mynd--B.K. Adams I Am Art," which opened at the Smithsonian Anacostia Community Museum, Adams presents more than 50 pieces of sculpture, painting, film, video and drawings--each containing a message of understanding, a philosophy, a code, a meaning about life, so deep, a viewer must look not once but twice and sometimes thrice. And then, you see it--the message in the art.

"B.K. Adams challenges his viewer to see the world not as it is, but as it might be," says Portia James, the curator of the exhibition. "Adams calls the viewer to get involved with art."

The exhibit, which runs through Nov. 27, launches a three-part series by the Anacostia Community Museum. The series, entitled "Call & Response Community and Creativity," was created as a long-term effort by the museum to "call out" artists in the D.C. community and give them a space to put their art and creativity "in context."

"Each segment of this exhibition examines how creativity is expressed, embraced, and applied in everyday life," the museum's director Camille Giraud Akeju says in a statement. " 'Call & Response' celebrates the unlimited realm of imagination."

The series gives the museum an opportunity to highlight "the everyday creative genius to be found in the communities east of the river," says the museum's deputy director Sharon Reinckens. "Our efforts are intended, in partnership with local organizations, to document, preserve and protect our cultural asset."

The museum sought out Adams, who was born in the District and has spent years creating art in his studio in Anacostia installing it in public places throughout the city. Adams says his philosophy is to prompt viewers to use "100% of the mind."



"The Saint" by B.K. Adams (Susana Raab/Susana Raab)

Individually, each piece of art is stunning and could mesmerize a viewer. Collectively, they astound visitors who after making their way to the Smithsonian Anacostia Community Museum, step into the gallery and after looking closer, often see something deeper. Something more profound in the art. In this exhibit, perspective is the key.

It begins with the sculpture entitled "Sitting on Knowledge 1" which displays a stack of books leaning precariously. On top of the stack of "knowledge," sits a blue chair, tipping slightly right or left depending on your perspective.

Explaining the sculpture, Adams writes: "Where Do I Belong? If U want 2 B a Teacher/ shoot/ 4 a PRINCIPAL/ If U want 2 B a Lawyer/ shoot/ 4 a JUDGE/ If u wanna B SOMEBODY/ SHOOT 4 yourself."

Next to the sculpture "Sitting on Knowledge 1," Adams writes: "A Genius/ Sleeps with his tools/ Until they become/ Extension/ Of Him/His Mynd/ Faithful 2 the Vision."

"Throwing Biscuits" is an impressive large-scale painting--a gray painted canvas covered in yellow globs of paint that appears to have been thrown sporadically. Adams said the painting reminds him of making biscuits.

Under magnificent glowing lights, stands a blue horse. Adams explains, "This is called 'Transformation; Make Me Over Twice But Make Me Nice Blue Horse.'" The horse is made of foil, acrylic paint and fiber glass. Inside the horse's belly, Adams has installed bicycle rims painted yellow.

In one photograph, "Mold Me," Adams is depicted in his ubiquitous thinking man pose. The photograph by Steven M. Cummings shows Adams in a white lab coat, fingers spread, legs extended as if he is about to take off.

A video near the end of the exhibit shows Adams "swimming" in a field of sunflowers. In the video, Adams dips, dives and leaps in a field of sunflowers, much like a fish in a vast ocean--leaping free.

"EXERCISE YOUR MYND: B.K. Adams I Am Art," runs through Nov. 27.

The second exhibition in the series, runs Dec. 12 through March 18, 2012, presents the art of Steven Cummings and the work of Creative Junkfood, a multi-media production studio.

In "Artuaré," Cummings examines how objects shape ideas and shape "who we are." Cummings, a photographer who has collaborates artistically with Adams, also explains his response to the "artistic vision" of Adams.

The artists of "Creative Junkfood," directed by Candice Taylor and Nabeeh Bilal, present "Conversations in the Contemporary," which is a varied installation including video, poetry, animation and sound. The installation examines "personal identity" in the current "political, social and cultural environment."

Smithsonian Anacostia Community Museum is at 1901 Fort Place SE, Washington, DC 20020, 202-633-4820. anacostia.si.edu.