

The New York Times

Friday, September 19, 2008, E31
HOLLAND COTTER, Art in Review

Demetrius Oliver

For his first New York solo, Demetrius Oliver fills the walls of the gallery with fisheye-style photographs shot in the interiors of places he has recently lived or worked, including a hotel, an artists' residency and his Brooklyn studio. He turns each into a kind of stage holding a fixed set of props. Pickaxes stand, handles upright, on a bed; a glistening lump of coal sits like a monument in a room; a camera stares out at us, as if photographing itself.

The artist appears in some pictures, arranging objects. His casual presence suggests the improvisatory, low-tech spirit of the project. He is making technical adjustments, not performing. There is no narrative. Shifts in locale suggest that what's happening could be happening anywhere. The pictures themselves feel almost accidental; some are made from reflections caught in the convex surfaces of a light bulb or a tea kettle.

Opposing this impression of the happenstance is an overriding image of astronomical order. The circular photographs hang like planets in formation. A slideshow displays the image of a single wave, presumably pulled upward by the moon. The repeated fisheye perspective suggests an omniscient gaze taking everything in, like Emerson's egoless "transparent eyeball" seeing unity in all things. In earlier work, Mr. Oliver used his body as a subject, transforming it in various ways. Now that body is barely present, making this show a radical self-departure for a young artist.

*Through Sept. 27 at D'Amelio Terras, 525 West 22nd Street, Chelsea;
(212) 352-9460*



Art

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Review

Demetrius Oliver, *Observatory*” ★★★★★

D'Amelio Terras, through Sept 27



If epistemology were a visual rather than a philosophical study, it might take the form of Demetrius Oliver's photographs. In his show, careful looking is balanced with a persistent consideration of the act of observation itself in a series of works that, through their subject matter, touch upon everything from the history of still life to self-portraiture. Excepting an animated short and a slide show, the majority of the pieces are square, mounted prints taken with a fish-eye lens. The method is uniquely appropriate

here, serving as a literal and metaphorical way of uniting myriad subjects, all of which relate to ways of seeing, whether through a telescope, a camera or the painstaking process of observational painting. There are two main series: "Firmament" consists of interiors, while in "Ember," lightbulbs hovering in darkness have those same interiors projected onto them. In the particularly striking *Firmament #26*, the artist bends over a stone fireplace with a poker, tending a pile of electric lamps. A camera looms on a tripod between this scene and the viewer, as if to remind us of the limits of this particular reality. The photos are digitally altered and sometimes look as if they have been subject to years of water damage. The end result is a painterly surface hearkening to the sumptuous tones and subtle light of Chardin. Oliver's use of light and the camera as both medium and subject underscores the self-reflexivity in his oeuvre. The strength of these pieces is that they both show and tell, and are fulfilling both conceptually and aesthetically.

— T.J. Carlin

the village VOICE

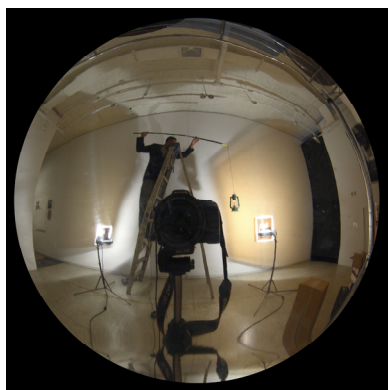
ART

Best in Show

Demetrius Oliver's 'Observatory' at D'Amelio Terras

By R.C. Baker, September 17, 2008. p.42

Pickaxes rise up phallically in the middle of four-poster beds; table lamps colonize a hardwood floor like mushrooms; a lump of coal as big as a breadbasket shares a nightstand with scattered lightbulbs. After he composes these domestic conundrums, Demetrius Oliver photographs each one in the curved, tarnished metal of an old teapot; the effect is akin to an old-master interior seen through a fish-eye lens. A related series features the artist in a dark room, the lightbulbs in his hands illuminated by slide projections of his weird household tableaux—the bulbs' shapes distort the



images even as they impart a palpable volume to the surrounding gloom. Give these dozens of pictures a little time and connections begin to glitter like constellations on a crisp night. A half-open packing crate casts a green glow like an irradiated coffin; the same box appears in another picture, its foam padding creating a bumpy screen for the projected image of a plunging stairwell. Ideas of perspective, space, and gravity are warped here, like the event horizon of a black hole. Any coherent narrative has been drawn into oblivion, leaving behind these tantalizingly beautiful afterimages.

Welcome to the warp! Demetrius Oliver's *Firmament XIV*, 2007-2008

The New York Times

Friday, September 26, 2008, p. E25

ART: Last Chance

★ **DEMETRIUS OLIVER: 'OBSERVATORY'** In a compelling first New York solo, this young artist fills the gallery with fish-eye-style photographs that suggest telescopic views of theater interiors; astronomical bodies lined up in strict formation; and Emerson's "transparent eyeball," seeing unity in all things. D'Amelio Terras, 525 West 22nd Street, Chelsea, (212) 352-9460, damelioterras.com; closes on Saturday. (Cotter)