

HERE Art Center's production of
DISPOSABLE MEN

created, written & performed by JAMES SCRUGGS

directed by KRISTIN MARTING

video performers

Willie Lynch - Tim Braun

Slave - Kenny Griffin

Doctor - Michael O'Reilly

Reporter - Rachel Crawford

Police Captain - Corey Moosa

Policeman - Alec Timerman

Shooting Policeman - Patrizio Busnel

Nurse Bazine - Jeanette Scruggs

original video - James Scruggs

media effects designer - Hal Eagar

original music - Philip Pares

lighting design - Christopher Brown

costume design - Patrizio Busnel

props design & additional videography - Michael O'Reilly

associate production manager - Pamela Salling

Digital performance technology is being created with
The Media Beam & Isadora.

DISPOSABLE MEN was developed over two years through the HERE Artist Residency Program in NYC and premiered at HERE Art Center, NYC in February 2005. It subsequently extended for a limited engagement for four weeks in June 2005.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

James Scruggs (Playwright, Performer, and Video Artist) James Scruggs' multichannel video installation, *Disposable Men*, a piece about New York City police shootings of unarmed black men, premiered in May 2000. In June of 2002, he was awarded a Franklin Furnace Grant. In 2002 he performed and wrote a collection of monologues about taboo touch—*Touchscape*, which opened The Voices from The Edge Festival at New Perspectives in NYC. He was a member of Naked Angels Writers Lab, where *Thuggish*, was performed in February of 2003. In March 2003 he became a resident artist at HERE Arts Center. *Disposable Men* was performed in February 2005 and brought back for 4 weeks in June 2005. In January 2005 *DM* received a grant from the Edith Lyutens and Norman Bel Geddes Foundation for an upgrade in design work. In February 2005 he received New Jersey State Council fellowship for artistic excellence. He was a Mabou Mines Resident Artist where he showed the first WIP of *RUS*, also directed by Kristin Marting. *Disposable Men* is currently discussed in a chapter of a new textbook written by Bob Vorlicky called *Interrogating America*. He will be touring and performing *Disposable Men* this spring starting in March in Atlanta, Mass. and New Providence. He is very grateful to HERE Arts Center and the nurturing process afforded the artists involved in the amazing HARP program.

Christopher Brown (Lighting Designer) recently designed lighting for James Scruggs' *Rus*. Other lighting designs include *Stories Cuentos: How Raven Brought The Light* for Mud/Bone, *Smoldering Fires* at the First Stage Children's Theatre in Milwaukee, *The Lower Depths* and *Machinal* at Bard College, Hazelle Goodman's *On Edge* at Spoleto Festival USA, Terry Dame's *Electric Junkyard Gamelan* at HERE Arts Center in New York, *Anatomy 1968* at the SPF Festival, *Pulling The Lever* for Rising Circle Productions, and *'Membuh: Confessions of the Only Generation* at P.S. 122 and the ODC in San Francisco. He was a visiting artist and guest instructor at The University of Rochester for three years. He received his MFA in Theatre Design from New York University. Chris Brown was awarded the 2006-2007 Princess Grace Award for his work with the Mud/Bone Collective.

Patrizio M Busnel (Costume Designer) started as a young actor. Later on, he launched a non-profit association for teenagers in "difficulties" using acting/writing/designing techniques to regain confidence/interest in life, with the achievement of a major public show every year. Sculptor and painter, this French artist has lately developed a collection of "genetically correct" collectible plush bears.

Hal Eagar (Media Effects Designer) serves as Associate Artistic Director of Gertrude Stein Rep, Technology Director for HERE Arts Center, & Video Associate with The Builders Association. He focuses on facilitating innovation in live performance technology, putting new media on stage. He designs digital puppets & animations for theatrical productions as well as providing technical solutions & creating innovative hardware & software for multi-screen projection, robotic projection, & real-time/live animation. He is currently absorbed in robots, projection, 3d animation, video, puppetry,

& the occasional installation & internet artworks, sometimes all at once. Find out more about him & his projects at <http://haleagar.com>.

Kristin Marting (Director / Choreographer) Over the last 18 years, Kristin Marting has constructed 20 works for the stage, including 8 original dance-theatre pieces, 8 new adaptations of novels and short stories and 4 classic plays. Recent projects include co-creation with Juliet Chia and David Morris and direction of a collaborative alternative musical, *Orpheus*, based on the Greek myth; also with Chia and Morris, she developed and directed *Erendira*, a hybrid performance work adapted from Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *Innocent Erendira and Her Heartless Grandmother*; direction of James Scruggs's solo work *Disposable Men* (winner of an NY Innovative Theatre Award); *Dead Tech* a collaborative, sitespecific theatrical collage based on *The Master Builder* by Henrik Ibsen and architectural texts. For the last 10 years, she has been developing a unique hybrid directorial/ choreographic form that features a "gestural vocabulary" used both as an emotional signifier and as a choreographic element. This vocabulary, though specific to each project, is in a state of constant development with an ever-growing set of permanent gestures being added to the repertoire. She is a co-founder and Artistic Director of HERE, where she cultivates artists and programs all events for two performance spaces—including 8 OBIE-award winners—for an annual audience of 50,000. She created and curates HARP, HERE's Artist Residency Program; THE AMERICAN LIVING ROOM, an annual summer festival featuring over 30 new works by emerging artists; and for 8 years, she curated QUEER@HERE, an annual festival of gay and lesbian work. She regularly serves on grant panels for TCG and the New York State Council on the Arts, among others. In 2005, she was honored with a 2005 BAX10 Award for Arts Managers. Previously, Marting co-founded and served as co-artistic director of Tiny Mythic Theatre Company for nine years. She served as Robert Wilson's assistant for *HAMLETMACHINE* and *SALOME*, and as a director for Children's Theatre at the Berkshire Theatre Festival. She graduated from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts with honors in 1988. She has lectured at New York University, and Playwrights Horizons Theatre School, and has been a guest artist and teaching fellow at Harvard University's Drama Program, and New York University, among others.

Michael O'Reilly (Props Designer / Additional Videography) has been a consumer product and packaging designer for over 25 years. *Disposable Men* was his first experience as a props designer and the opportunity to work with James, Kristin and HERE on this project has been priceless. He recently also collaborated with them on their newest work, *Rus*.

Philip Pares (Composer) is a graduate of Queens College and New York University receiving Master's degrees in both music performance and composition. He has been composing and performing music for dance and theater productions in NYC for 12 years. Gethsemene is his first CD. Author, Edmund White wrote, "I was wowed... It's so exotic and so varied, everything from temple bells to Japanese flutes." David Hurst, music reviewer for Show Business Weekly called the music "Beautiful" and "Relaxing". For more information please see his website www.philippares.com.

Pamela Salling* (Production Stage Manager) is thrilled to be working with James, Kristin, Hal, Mike, Chris, Katy and everyone at the HERE Arts Center again after having PSMed both productions of *Disposable Men* in 2005. Favorite NYC: PSM for *Clocks and Whistles*, *Communion* (Origin Theatre Company); *Shakedown Street* (NYC Fringe Festival); *Muerte, Twelve Ophelias* (Baruch Performing Arts Center); and ASM for *The Music Teacher* (The New Group); *Massacre* (LAByrinth Theater Co.); *The BeautyInside* and *Three Seconds in the Key* (New Georges). National Tour: ASM for *Miss Saigon*. Regionally Pam has worked at George St. Playhouse, Cain Park, Phoenix Theatre, and most recently for the New Crowned Hope Festival in Vienna, Austria.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF DISPOSABLE MEN

In 2000, the phenomenon of the African American male as an endangered species was a constant and recurring thought in the mind of video artist James Scruggs. Living in New York City, Scruggs was bombarded with signals, clearly indicating that somehow the life of a black man was not as highly regarded as the lives of other men. This was very disturbing to him. In May of that same year, Scruggs created an eight-channel video installation that was shown at an open house in DUMBO that dealt with the notion of the African American man as a larger-than-life, threatening being, who because of this perception, was easy to kill without conscience. Segments of *Disposable Men* were also shown at Brooklyn Arts Exchange, Performance Mix, and Live One at WAX. *DISPOSABLE MEN* has been in development at HERE since 2003.

FOUND Footage AND MUSIC

Frankenstein, Bride of Frankenstein, Son of Frankenstein, Ghost of Frankenstein, The Wolfman, Frankenstein Meets The Wolfman, Creature From the Black Lagoon, Revenge of the Creature, The Creature Walks Among Us, Bamboozled, 1984, Birth of a Nation, Mississippi Burning, Ken Burns, Jazz, Planet of the Apes, Spider Babies, Jurassic Park, Running Man, The People Under the Stairs, Scream 2, The Shining, Deep Blue Sea, Ghost Ship, Serpent and the Rainbow, Blue Velvet, Bulgarian Womens Chorus, C & C Music Factory, Kraftwerk, J-Hood and Jadakiss, Unforgiveable Blackness, Four Little Girls, Lock Down, Massive Attack

DISPOSABLE MEN is being presented by HERE Arts Center and Gertrude Stein Repertory Theatre's Digital Performance Institute, and was developed through the HERE Artist Residency Program (HARP). *DISPOSABLE MEN* is made possible, in part, by the Edith Lutyens & Norman Bel Geddes Foundation; the Franklin Furnace Fund for Performance Art, supported by the Jerome Foundation; and the New York & New Jersey State Councils on the Arts.

Disposable Men is dedicated to the many African American men who have been killed unjustly. The list below displays only a sample of the unarmed local men who lost their lives.

Timothy Stansbury 19
January, 2004

Malcolm Ferguson 23
March 1, 2000

Patrick Dorismond 26
March 16, 2000

Richard Watson 32
September 1, 1999

Larry Cobb 30
August 18, 1999

Amadou Diallo 22
February 4, 1999

Kenneth Banks 36
October 29, 1998

Paul Anthony Maxwell
28
July 31, 1998

Christopher Malone 24
July 19, 1998

Christopher Jackson 28
July 1998

William J. Whitfield 22
Dec. 25, 1997

Richard Singleton 18
January 20, 1997

Charles Campbell 37
October 4, 1996

Joseph Stevens 20
September 18, 1996

John Cochran 26
August 18, 1996

Nathaniel Gains 26
July 4, 1996

Aswon "Keshawn"
Watson 23
June 13, 1996

Leonard Lawton 25
January 20, 1996

Perry Walker, Jr. 36
January 6, 1996

Christopher Wade 28
December 31, 1995

Richard Butler 40
December 23, 1995

Roger Eppes 26
April 28, 1995

Kuthurima Mwaria 25
April 13, 1995

Eric Pitt 27
Donald Taylor 31
December 7, 1994

Richard Larrier 30
December 2, 1994

Keith Richardson 34
November 25, 1994

Anthony Merisier 25
October 24, 1994

Jason Nichols 27
October 17, 1994

Nicholas Heyward, Jr. 13
September 27, 1994

Ernest Sayon 22
April 29, 1994

Shu'aib Abdul Latif 17
January 11, 1994

Lester Steven
Yarborough 34
October 13, 1993

Johnnie Cromartie
May 25, 1993

Grady Alexis 26
May 1991

Dane Kemp 28
January 1, 1990

Kevin Thorpe 31
July 10, 1989

DISCARDING OTHER: Contextualizing *Disposable Men*

By Nigel Smith, Assistant Director, *Disposable Men*

Haven't we been constantly bombarded with the question, "look at what we've done to our black men?" Hasn't there been 35 years of serious artistic and academic criticism surrounding our understanding of race and sex in America? James Scruggs's *Disposable Men* takes this seemingly familiar dialogue and restructures it through a media-saturated storytelling that asks its audience to make the critical links between Hollywood monsters, multiple media markers, personal histories, minstrelsy, government experiments, and searing emotional landscapes to rediscover our fascination with 'otherness' and to give a more complicated understanding of the mental and social anguish lurking between cause and effect.

ENTERTAINMENT AND MEDIA

In 1935, the Lewis Plantation and Turpentine Still reopened its plantation for public consumption. Scores of families visited each week to watch little jig-a-boo children dance, sing, and play. The families joined the children in buggy rides around the plantation and observed the adults in their natural habitats working the land and creating turpentine—just as it would have occurred prior to the emancipation. The Lewis Plantation was an instant success, and over 30 years, thousands of families would visit this small South Georgia town to interact with the past.

The visitors, most often white, received a comfortable, hospitable environment where they were sure no slave riots would erupt, as the Plantation now paid its 're-enactors.' The traditional and unjust class systems based on landholding, racial demarcation, and sex were glorified, celebrated, and offered as entertainment for any motorist willing to take his family on the journey.

The theater, minstrelsy, and the films of studio Hollywood made it even more accessible for a family to engage passively in a separation between the "them" (black people) and the "us" (white audience.) When not subverted by the black-face minstrel performances by white entertainers, black folk were consistently cast as maids, pick-a-ninnies, minstrels, Toms, coons, bucks, et al., and continues today with the all too familiar street thug, potential rapist, ex-con, or drugged up welfare freeloader. These stereotypes of black people perpetuate the underlying fear, disdain, and mistrust that permeate our media.

Popular media often kills off the black man in the first 10 minutes of a horror or action film (coined by critic Roger Ebert as "BADF," as in the Brother Always Dies First), and it offers the all too simplistic renderings of black men as the dazzling entertainer or hard-edged murderer/rapist. These media images and texts create a social psyche and consciousness that inform the decisions and performance of every black American man and those who engage with him.

KILLING, FEAR, AND MOB MENTALITY

The lynching of black men has plagued America for over 400 years. These often public performances point to a morbid pre-occupation with catharsis and revenge that lurks in communal fear.

On June 14, 1920, the John Robinson Circus arrived in Duluth, Indiana. On June 15, police arrested three young black men, employees of the circus, who had been accused of raping a white woman. "An examination of the woman that

morning by Dr. David Graham, a family physician, showed no physical signs of rape or assault,” yet, that evening, “Wielding bricks, rails, and heavy timbers, the mob forced its way into the jail, tearing down doors and breaking windows.”

The men—Elias Clayton, Elmer Jackson, and Isaac McGhie—were taken from jail by the mob. “After a hasty mock trial, Clayton, Jackson, and McGhie were declared guilty and taken one block to a light pole on the corner of First Street and Second Avenue East. A few tried to dissuade the mob, but their pleas were in vain...the three men were beaten and then lynched, first Isaac McGhie, then Elmer Jackson, and lastly Elias Clayton.”

(<http://collections.mnhs.org/duluthlynchings/html/lynchings.htm>)

It is disturbing to consider the amount of organized chaos that created a space—outside of law and order—where several men could be mockingly tried and killed by hundreds of participants. Just like when the angry mob pursues Frankenstein through the forest, these fear-motivated killings occur within a social rupture, where logic and method are hastily abandoned for passion and the immediate cleansing of the ‘threatening other’ from society.

The equally disturbing news of NYC police over-reacting to unarmed black men has been revealed by high-profile cases such as the abuse of Abner Louima in August 1997, the shooting death of Amadou Diallo in February 1999 and Patrick Dorismond in 2000. In all three of these cases, the police both misidentified the man and *assumed* he was carrying a weapon. When several cops take down a single black man who may look like a suspect—a black man who has no weapon and who shows no visible means of resistance—one has to wonder if it is simply a learned response to that individual’s sex and race that provokes the police officer to respond lethally.

AN ARTIST RESPONDS

Driven by the appalling amount of unjust murders, James Scruggs began to create *Disposable Men* a visual/aural/textual world that interplays, dialogues with, and contextualizes America’s fascination with “otherness.” *Disposable Men* asks its audience to consider how that otherness transfers from Hollywood monster to black entertainer to sexual predator. Scruggs, a video/performance artist, developed *Disposable Men* through the HERE Artist Residency Program and with the guidance of HERE co-founder and Executive Director Kristin Marting. Scruggs has used multimedia to capture the uneasy relationship between a black man’s vision of self and the reality of his social positioning.

Scruggs’s work attempts to create spaces where boundaries are smeared and even erased—where thoughts and ideas easily push and interact with one another. Easy correlations cannot be made, and each image/text creates a space for reconsideration and emotional weight. The audience is asked, not to sit and be passively preached to, but to engage actively with the immediate experience and our shared history. And, it is through this intense communal engagement, where the audience is implicated and given ownership, that those seemingly posed questions concerning America’s black men and our Hollywood monsters are given new insight, life, and understanding.