



Nayland Blake
Homunculus
1992
Location One



Nayland Blake
Restraint Chair
1989
Location One



Nayland Blake
Arena #1
1993
Location One



Nayland Blake (collaboration with AA Bronson)
Nayland and AA, June 22, 2001 (coat)
2001
Matthew Marks Gallery

GOTHAM ART & THEATER by Elisabeth Kley

A more tragic small figure appears in **Nayland Blake's** retrospective, "Behavior," another exploration of black and white (among many other things) at **Location One** on Greene Street in SoHo until Feb. 14. *Homunculus* (1992), a black leather costume for a very small person, hangs on a stand -- deflated, empty and alone. Body sections are incongruously joined together with little white bows, and the head is complete with a hairy beard and eyebrows.

Blake was included in the 1991 Whitney Biennial and exhibits with **Matthew Marks Gallery**. Harrowing videos documenting performed ordeals, including *Gorge* (1998) (hand fed for an hour by a shirtless black man standing behind him) and *Starting Over* (2000) (tap dancing in a bunny suit of the same weight as his lover, **Philip Hurvitz**) are among Blake's most well-known works, but the Location One retrospective is confined to sculpture, paintings and objects chosen by the artist himself.

A small metal pen called *Arena #1* (1993) features a square black rabbit-eared fabric mask hanging on a T-bar rising from the center of each side, with medical white crosses for eyes. Like S&M scarecrows guarding an undersized boxing rink, the masks are tethered to the fence with the steel cables often used to keep fur coats from being stolen.

Restraint Chair (1989) is a metal Breuer chair with a black leather back and seat outfitted with black leather cuffs, more steel cable and a mirror hanging under the seat. Made at the height of the AIDS crisis, the work takes on a tragic resonance. References to leather fetishes and antiseptic metal hospitals conjure up hedonism, mourning and loss.

In 2002, Blake, who appears to be white but is actually bi-racial, exhibited a video installation called *Coat*. After covering each other's faces with black and white frosting, he and the artist **A.A. Bronson** are seen kissing, blending the colors and perhaps looking forward to a day when differences of race and sexuality become matters for celebration rather than forces that divide.

More delicate recent works sometimes resemble disco **Richard Tuttle's** *Untitled* (2008), a wispy

wire construction, combines three locks of blue back hair, some thin metal chains, a mirror in the shape of a three leaf clover and a few strings of beads -- a collection resembling the shiny things picked up by crows for their nests. (Location One is a non-profit gallery and the works are not for sale.)