

Made in America

New Jersey gets its first contemporary art museum

**Van Hanos Portrait of Benjamin Franklin, 2007**

"The title is *It's All American*, and we wanted to specifically discuss the way that different modes of production approximated Americana. The latter is a complex thing, and involves folk and 'high art' traditions and national pride, but also protest and transgression," says Gartenfeld. A sentiment provocatively interpreted in much of the exhibition, beginning with Rob Pruitt's chorus line of cement-filled Levi's jeans, *Esprit de Corps*, while four oil paintings by Van Hanos (originally from Edison, New Jersey), including his hauntingly serious *Portrait of Benjamin Franklin*, nicely offset Pruitt's clever floor work.

"This exhibition is very clear and invested in what it means to be American now. The work is optimistic, and is filled with sentiments of endurance, individual perspective and wisdom," Mellin states. Particularly resonant in Robert Melee's installation, his mixed media *Mobile* and gorgeously drippy *Untitled (Freestanding Curtain)* draw visitors to the New Jersey native's brightly hued work again and again during the opening. While Berlin-based artist James Adamo's *Four*, comprised of four whittled down baseball bats and chips, is a study of the compulsive, a sharp remark on performance and presentation.