



## Jayson Musson @ EAI Impose Magazine May 2012

### Hennessy Youngman had no prepared remarks

BY ALAINA STAMATIS on May 22, 2012



Jayson Scott Musson stepped onto the speaker platform of his sold-out screening at Electronic Arts InterMix and was handed a microphone to introduce a series of his Hennessy Youngman videos. Hennessy Youngman (“AKA the Pharoah Hennessy, AKA Mr. Museums”), a character of Musson’s invention, is a street-wear-collecting, expletive-employing (literally, every sentence ends with “and shit”), high art critic/theorist/authority whose “ART THOUGHTZ” YouTube videos decrypt the complexities of critical theory and explain the impacts of contemporary art giants through absurd and reasonable tangents, like so:

“YOU BE LIKE, GOD IS GOOD, AND POST STRUCTURALISM IS LIKE, GOD CAN SUCK MY FUCKING DICK. YOU BE LIKE, MAURY, I AM NOT THE FATHER OF THAT BABY, AND POST STRUCTURALISM IS LIKE, YOU ARE THE FATHER OF THAT BABY. YOU BE LIKE, THE SKY IS A BEAUTIFUL BLUE, AND POST STRUCTURALISM IS LIKE, NIGGA THAT’S A DEEP CERULEAN, GET YOUR SHIT RIGHT, GET YOUR COLORS RIGHT, MAN.”

Now amplified in a room full of hungry fans, Musson explained that he had nothing prepared to say before the shorts screened, and then thanked everyone for being there, and **then apologized**.

EAI screened 10 ART THOUGHTZ, including “How to Be a Successful Artist”, “How to Make an Art”, “Post Structuralism”, “Beuys-Z”, and “The Sublime”, and debuted “The Studio Visit” and “Grad School”.



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EAI also played Musson's short titled "At the Shoe Shine Stand", which combined black face (or painted face) as it often appears in performative work with the look of a tourist portrait stand (different black celebrities' photographs under a clear plastic sheath, mounted on an upright board, organized by skin tone) beside a shoe shine chair. Did the short stand out? Not really. It was the same length as anything else, and ART THOUGHTZ, in debunking art world hysteria, also diagnoses the racism of the typically unvaried art world: "IF YOU WANT TO BECOME A SUCCESSFUL ARTIST: 1. UMMM BE WHITE. ALRIGHT, BEING WHITE HELPS 'CAUSE UMMMM, WHITE MAKES THE WORLD GO ROUND... UMM, 2. BE A WHITE MALE. BEING A WHITE MAN, YOUR VOICE IS A UNIVERSAL VOICE, THEREFORE ANYTHING YOU MAKE WON'T BE BURDENED WITH ANY KIND OF LIKE, CULTURAL LABELS THAT NIGGAS AND BITCHES HAVE TO DEAL WITH."

During the talk after the film, moderator Josh Kline of EAI, who knew Musson from Philadelphia (where the artist attended Temple and UPENN for his MFA), noted that Hennessy Youngman is a YouTube anomaly because he's actually discussing art in one of the most public forums, when the environment of art is exceedingly narrow and exclusive. The Hennessy Youngman project began as a response to Musson's extensive digestion of critical theory from his MFA courseload. Initially he performed it as a standup routine at a Philly bar, alongside Spank Rock, as a "Def Comedy Jam '90s comedian talking about art". Musson had founded rap group Plastic Little and was making posters and drawings that dealt with his experiences being black in close-minded Philly and his interpretations of corporate hip hop culture's deep-seated racism (with three solo shows titled "Too Black for BET"). Deciding that the footage of the standup routine was unusable, he re-filmed a neater version of it seated at his computer, and the rest is recent history.

For me, the subtext of Musson's relationship to Youngman is: "I'm not really famous, I'm just garnering attention in a small, insular community for doing a thing that requires the least amount of my talents and soul. And everybody celebrates it with a love and fervor that I had wished to obtain through my painting and musical pursuits. And now people are going to call me Hennessy but he's just an outlet for ideas, MY IDEAS, and we're not the same. But actually it's a pretty good outlet, and I do put a lot of energy into this shit, and the opportunities I'm afforded are amazing."

He recounted a few losing battles he had with YouTube regarding censorship. One of his videos had reached 100,000 views, which was a milestone at the time; later, at a party, he received an email from YouTube that the video had been removed for language. A censored version could not be uploaded in its place, and no representatives from YouTube would respond to his attempts at contact. A handful of Hennessy videos are on Vimeo, including one titled, "The Female Gaze," which shows a lot of views of dicks from below (it wasn't playing properly when I tried to watch it). Still the majority of his videos are on YouTube because of the audience it reaches. Musson also takes some pleasure in interacting with viewers in the comments section, imploring perceived haters to meet with him and talk it out – WWHD. (During the Q&A he asked if anyone was familiar with his videos' comments, but when the majority didn't raise their hands, he moved on.)

In the Youngman video about grad school, he rants: "THAT'S HOGWASH, INTERNET. WHO GIVES A FUCK ABOUT MICHAEL FRIED WHEN YA DESPERATELY SCOURING NYFA JOB LISTINGS FOR ANY JOB THAT PAYS MORE THAN \$12/HOUR AND HAS THE REMOTE PRESENCE OF ART IN THE JOB DESCRIPTION."

Musson spoke of his disassociation between art world success and receiving an MFA, and then plugged his very real DVD with PDFs of many of his grad school readings, which Kline advertised as, "An ivy league education for \$4.99." To which Musson replied, "Plus shipping."