

# Thomas Erben Gallery

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## **Oladele Bamgboye**

Thomas Erben Gallery  
516 West 20th Street, Chelsea  
Through June 10

The British artist Oladele Bamgboye, born in Nigeria in 1963, comes with impressive credentials. He has appeared in international exhibitions like Documenta X and the last Johannesburg Biennial and was included in the memorable exhibition of African photography at the Guggenheim in New York in 1996.

For his first New York solo he has brought both early photographs and a new digital-based multi-piece. The latter, created during a residency at ArtPace in San Antonio, is in part an electronic update on ethnology and its obsession with authenticity. It is also a cyberspace take on the ever present question of the status of the original in the age of mechanical reproduction.

He has scanned a handful of ancient Egyptian artifacts into one computer, then digitally manipulated the images to create new candy-colored shapes. Clones of these customized, presumably unique forms appear on a second computer. This exercise in archiving as reinvention is accompanied by digital films, one of a laborious reinstallation of Egyptian art at the British Museum, the other of Mr. Bamgboye sitting at a terminal making his scans.

Viewers of the Erben show are invited to have small items of their own scanned for inclusion in a boundless online museum where display is dust-free and all things are of equal value.

Mr. Bamgboye presents these somewhat abstract ideas with wit and style, and with the glitches inevitable in a technology that has only recently been taken seriously as an art medium.

The show's main visual interest comes from large-print 1980's photographs in which the artist's nude figure seems to be half-submerged in backgrounds of patterned fabric or wallpaper. The pictures may look computer-assisted but were produced from studio setups, giving the question of "the real" yet another workout.

HOLLAND COTTER

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## ART IN REVIEW

516 West 20th Street New York NY 10011-2820

phone 212-645.8701 fax 212-645.9630

email [info@thomaserben.com](mailto:info@thomaserben.com)