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Gerald Jackson at White Columns

A wonderful show at White Columns ushers visitors into the world of this octogenarian artist-poet, who was born in Chicago and became an artist on Manhattan's Lower East Side, during the creative ferment of the postwar jazz and Black art scenes. (He is currently based in Jersey City.) The gallery's walls are lined with magnetically casual compositions in which colors often manifest as both hues and incantatory words—BLACK, WHITE, BLUE, GREEN—contributing to the exhibition's alluringly cryptic, lively, and metaphysical mood. These drawings are interspersed with collages that convey Jackson's syncretic imagination; in one, found images of a Japanese "lucky cat" and an ankh join a hand-drawn dancer and two poems. He also designs functional works of art: brightly colored, sutured, and appliquéd clothing, seen on mannequins here. One sports a pair of coveralls that have been spray-painted red and shortened into a boxy mini-dress. The men's ensembles (many of which Jackson has worn) combine African textiles, denim, and pajama plaid, among other elements. The stylish figures evoke a new archetype—the laid-back superhero.

Johanna Fateman, "Goings On About Town." *The New Yorker* (April 26 & May 3, 2021), accessed online.