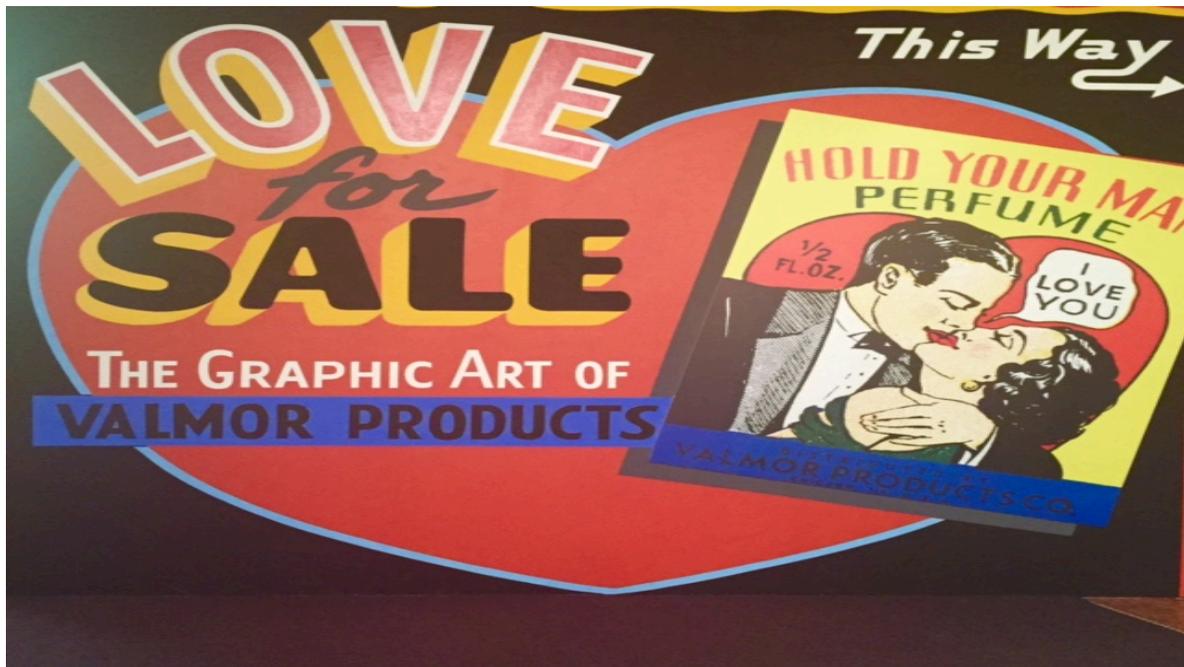


## Race, Magic, Mojo: Explorations of Culture, Identity and Spirituality

A free, two-day Symposium examining the ongoing connections between race, appearance, social desirability and economic mobility in popular art, design and visual culture from the Valmor Products Company's heyday on Chicago's South Side (1920s-1980s) to now.



**Friday, July 24 and Saturday, July 25, 2015**  
**Chicago Cultural Center, 78 E. Washington Street, Chicago IL 60602**  
**Exhibition Hall (Fourth Floor)**  
**No Reservations Required**

Quietly operating from Chicago's South Side between the 1920s and 1980s, the Valmor Products Company offered perfumes, hair pomades, incense, and a wide variety of other 'mystical' products including Van-Van and High John the Conqueror. These items often packaged in small bottles and tins with eye-catching, racially ambiguous labels were successfully targeted to minority, mostly Black, but also ethnic White consumers. The historically significant Valmor products were nearly forgotten, but in a fortunate circumstance of "lost and found", the Chicago Cultural Center is displaying the first comprehensive exhibition of Valmor artifacts through August 2. This mini-symposium of three panels featuring esteemed artists, cultural practitioners, and scholars will help to close out the Love for Sale: The Graphic Art of Valmor Products show.

See more at [http://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/dca/supp\\_info/Valmor.html](http://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/dca/supp_info/Valmor.html).

## **Panel 1: Friday, July 24, 6-8 pm**

### **Watu Wazuri/Beautiful People: African-American Hairdressing and Beauty as Social Meaning and Style**

This panel looks at hair techniques and beauty practices in the African-American community and the role they have played in supporting social and economic mobility, connoting desirability, as forms of protest, and in communicating a Black imaginary.

SPEAKERS:

**Afrobella/Patrice Grell Yursik:** Considered a pioneer of Black beauty blogging, Grell Yursik's Afrobella site has over 11 million followers. Featured in Essence, Ebony, Glamour, and Fast Company, Afrobella was listed as one of Ebony Magazine's Power 100, and has won numerous awards, including inclusion to the Black Weblog Awards Hall of Fame

**Joy Bivins:** Curator at the Chicago History Museum Bivins' lauded exhibitions include Inspiring Beauty: 50 Years of Ebony Fashion Fair; Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America; Facing Freedom; and Colonia to Community: The Southeast Side.

**Aymar Jean Christian:** Assistant Professor at Northwestern University, Christian researches new media and creative economy. He has documented the changing television market for Slate, Indiewire, First Monday, and Cinema Journal and has provided commentary on web TV, film, race and sexuality for The New York Times, Reuters, and NPR.

**Krista Franklin:** Visual artist, poet, and cofounder of 2nd Sun Salon and Tres Colony, Franklin's work often engages the Afrosurreal. Her collages and paintings are shown widely in galleries and her poetry has been included in several anthologies.

**Alexandria Eregbu:** Eregbu is an interdisciplinary artist, whose work often takes shape in the form of performance, programming, and curatorial practices. Her works frequently address community, materiality, performativity, and public vs. institutionalized visibility of racialized and gendered bodies in space.

### **Gallery Talk: Saturday, July 25, 12-12:45 pm**

Hear Love for Sale Curator and Chicago City Historian, **Tim Samuelson**, speak about the legacy of the Valmor Products Company and its fascinating founder, chemist Morton Neumann whose own Hungarian Jewish immigrant background would inform his connection and response to the beauty norms, cultural, and spiritual practices he observed among his African American neighbors in Chicago's Bronzeville; and that would eventually grow Valmor a wide customer base throughout the US.

### **Panel 2: Saturday, July 25, 1-3 pm**

#### **Conjure Women and Medicine Men: Traditional and Contemporary Medicine and Vernacular Healing Practices as Cultural Work and Artistic Practice**

This panel explores the critical ways that indigenous medicine and communal healing practices have supported community health and well-being, notions of place and identity, and have evolved as important social and art practices.

#### **SPEAKERS:**

**Stephanie Rose Bird:** A widely exhibited artist and author of five books including "Sticks, Stones, Roots and Bones" and "A Healing Grove: African Tree Remedies and Rituals for Body and Spirit," Bird is an accomplished herbalist, aromatherapist, and documenter of African diasporic and eclectic pagan healing practices

**David Boykin:** Saxophonist and curator, Boykin has been called one of Chicago's "best kept secrets" for his richly complex, avant-garde approach to jazz. He is founder of Sonic Healing Ministries an organization "dedicated to the evolution of the human spirit through music."

**Kim Crutcher:** Crutcher, a licensed psychotherapist, healer, artist and educator, has been creating spaces for community building, transformation, learning, healing and ritual for the past 20 years. An ordained minister (New Seminary, NY, NY) Crutcher is also a traditional medicine practitioner.

**Stacy Rene Erenberg:** Erenberg is a musician, healer, organizer and mama to-be dedicated to radical social change. Co-founder and practitioner of Chinese Massage at Sage Community Health Collective in Logan Square, she uses a harm reduction, body positive framework to create liberatory health care experiences.

**Elisha Hall:** Hall is a father, healing-arts educator, and social entrepreneur. He believes in the power of subaltern sacred spaces and intentional homeplace(s) as means of self, land and cultural preservation.

### **Panel 3: Saturday, July 25, 3:30-5:30**

#### **Identity, Passing and Fluidity: Depicting Race from Valmor to Now**

Quietly operating on and undoubtedly influenced by Chicago's South Side, from the 1920s through the 1980s, the Valmor Products Company offered a variety of popular products from hair pomades to perfumes packaged in eye-catching bottles and tins often featuring racially ambiguous images of men and women seeking romance, prosperity or both. This panel will focus on the ongoing connections between race, appearance, and socio-economic mobility in art, design and popular culture from Valmor's heyday to Rachel Dolezal.

#### **SPEAKERS:**

**Nicole Melanie Davis:** Davis is a sculptor, installation and culinary artist. Her work has probed the implications of Eugenics, explored relationships between black memorabilia and hip-hop imagery, and her sculptural practice has explored representations of black female-hood in visual culture. In 2014 Davis founded Mindful Indulgence, a collection of vegan and gluten free confections.

**Janette Gayle:** Gayle is Assistant Professor at Harold Washington College where her field specialties are African American and West Indian history. Much of her work focuses on race, gender, migration, labor, cultural politics and the Black industrial working class.

**Fo Wilson:** Assistant Professor at Columbia College, Wilson uses design "to investigate ideas around identity and re-present histories that counter...Western historical

narratives.” A recipient of a NEA grant, her work is in the collection of The Cooper Hewitt National Museum of Design.

**Rashayla Marie Brown:** Named a 2015 Breakout Artist by Newcity, Brown’s work connects multiple cultural production modes including image-making, writing and performance and has been commissioned by the MCA, the Museum of Contemporary Photography and other institutions. Brown is currently Director of Student Affairs for Diversity and Inclusion at SAIC.