

Madame Fraankie

MadameFraankie's work is centered around recontextualizing the day to day documentation of black life. She is drawn to highlighting the various ways Black people hold space and occupy their time. Within her work she attempts to capture micro-communal moments, gestures of love, and curiosity. MadameFraankie's work draws comparison of these documented themes against the social and ethical norms within American Culture as a means to reshape black narration and photographic storytelling.

Desmond Lewis

I am a sculptor that explores political, social, environmental, and economic issues regarding race and ethnicity in the United States. Through the creation of fabricated, carved, and forged sculptures and pyrotechnic displays, my work seeks to stimulate the conversation with regard to American South's dark racial past, challenging present, and questionable future. I seek to develop sculptural forms that incorporate aspects of the past and present to further the notion that society has an affinity of perpetuating an explicit attachment to the "separate, but equal" past.

My work often uses industrial materials to correlate the invisible appearance of structural materials in buildings with the concealed structural importance of Black Americans in the United States. Steel provides a structure that can be beat, heated, and manipulated and yet it is still a strong material. Black Americans have been beaten, burned, and exploited but we are still very strong people. The use of industrial materials requires a commitment from the mind, body, and soul to transform it from a raw state to a finished sculpture. In making my work, I need for the material to challenge me as much as I push its boundaries to borderline failure. If I don't leave the studio tired, it is time to keep pushing the experimentation. Relationship with materials is echoed with my everyday commitment via mind, body, and soul to living in the United States as a Black American male. Everyday, I awaken to the reality that I have to remain conscious of my actions and my competition due to the reality of our society heavily scrutinizing me not only because of my technical abilities and intellectual knowledge but because of my race and gender as well. It is through my impenetrable relationship with materials that I am able to find solstice and comfort from this racist reality yielded by America. I can forge, form, or fabricate a material into what I want it to be in the studio and feel safe from the ignorance of society. My labor is my refuge.

My sculptural pyrotechnic displays seek to remove some of the barriers that hinder smaller Black Communities from access to professional fireworks displays. This work forces me to intentionally place myself in front of local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies to follow stringent regulations in an effort to give these communities a similar celebratory experience abundantly found across White America. This endeavor is taken to hopefully reduce the chances of potential injury or death that Black children face with consumer and illegally obtained professional fireworks. These displays require hours of intensive labor behind the scenes that allow these communities for a few minutes to look beyond the unfortunate circumstances that American society has predetermined for many Black Americans. In a similar manner to the

dynamic build up found in a Black Church sermon from the convocation until the benediction, I seek for my displays to hold the viewer's attention through the conclusion of the finale.