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YOUNG ARTISTS 2023 ART

Emmanuel Louisnord Desir Prays at the Altar of His Art

The artist blends religious symbolism with references to contemporary fashion, offering a new perspective on marginalization and individuality.



Even among a list of young artists, there are some who stand out for their combination of youth and prescience. Emmanuel Louisnord Desir is one such artist. At 24, just three years after his graduation from Cooper Union, he has had solo shows with 47 Canal in New York, François Ghebaly in Los Angeles, and Jupiter in Miami Beach.

Born and raised in Brooklyn, Desir moved to LA two years ago, where he is now preparing for another presentation with 47 Canal. The works are larger this time around, perhaps something to be attributed to the scale of his new city or to the mental space one can find after leaving home.

Desir's practice is bravely and earnestly rooted in the Bible. References to Job, the Twelve Tribes of Israel, or the Book of Revelations are present throughout his work, which includes found objects as well as elements that are welded, cast, and carved. There might also be a sneaker or a baseball cap. Desir makes paintings, too. "With sculpture, you're using material to define something, and with painting, you're using colors and composition," he explains. "It's almost like with painting you're illuminating, or projecting your mind onto it, but with sculpture you're pulling out from the material."

The Bible in Desir's studio is as alive as it may be in any pulpit—but do not misinterpret his work as religious. "Art is my churchlife," he affirms. Rather, the stories are shared as parables. "The Bible speaks about a lineage of people who have been marginalized and neglected," Desir explains. "These analogies are overarching." His piece *Infirmity*, which was on view at Jupiter earlier this year, features an oversize wooden pendant strung on gold chains. "A pendant activates an outfit or your outlook on yourself, or is a nice accent," he explains. "But here it's a piece of jewelry that overcomes the size of the chains it's hung on. It's a poetic way to speak about the overwhelming nature of disenfranchisement, the overwhelming nature of being tired." Desir's ability to comment with an incision undergirded by compassion may be the best harbinger of what's to come that we can hope for.