

Emmanuel Louisnord Desir

Prisoners of Hope

September 18 - October 23, 2021



François Ghebaly is pleased to present Emmanuel Louisnord Desir's *Prisoners of Hope*, the Los Angeles-based artist's first exhibition with the gallery.

At heart of Emmanuel Louisnord Desir's practice is an exploration of relationships—familial, communal, and above all, spiritual. Often composing his works around seeds of lyrical wisdom, Desir shifts seamlessly between material modes, employing carved wood, welded and cast metal, found object assemblage, 3D printed resin and oil painting. He draws from personal anecdote, diasporic history, arcane symbolism and Abrahamic narrative, inhabiting a cosmology all his own.

Desir's work offers close reflections on the remnant of a divine people and the spiritual and physical infirmities inflicted by contemporary life. In works like *Ode to Job*, his figures are studded with boils, scars, and scorches, in part evoking the maladies of the Biblical Job, who was tested by God and the Devil, yet remained true to his faith. Desir's wooden sculptures are marked with burns and pocks, representations of the physical ailments of those who have been tried by fire.

Desir draws out parables of generational growth through material. The work *Ode to Jesse* depicts an entire genealogy in coiling interconnection. From the sculpture's furrowed base grow generations of figures, each erupting from the last and branching outward. The contorted relationships between successive generations show figures inseparable from their predecessors; after all, each lineage is hewn from a single, continuous branch. Intergenerational traumas—personal, collective, spiritual—migrate along the path of heredity. They invade and inhabit the lives of descendants and their children. Growth demands that individuals navigate alongside and in spite of the obstacles of inheritance.

The portrayal of individuals as vessels is an important motif across Desir's practice. The work *Captive Stew* is a lidded wooden bowl, equally stricken with boils, that houses an amorphous stew of resin figures, melted together as though boiled alive. In *Ms. Lady*, a mother with glassy topaz eyes is constructed as a hinged cabinet, granting safeguard to a small figure inside at her own expense. These vessels bear personal history, collective trauma, interior worlds, and the bonds of kinship.

Quietly nestled in each work is a cry homeward. Guardians and ancestors offer not only the burden of their own adversity, but wisdom, safety, and passage to growth. The title of the exhibition, *Prisoners of Hope*, captures these interrelationships: a generation beholden to and, ultimately, delivered by the lives, lessons, and tribulations of those that came before.

Emmanuel Louisnord Desir (b. 1997, Brooklyn, NY) lives and works in Los Angeles. He holds a BFA from The Cooper Union, and recent solo exhibitions include *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot* in 2020 at 47 Canal, New York. *Prisoners of Hope* at François Ghebaly is Desir's second solo exhibition, and his first time exhibiting in Los Angeles.