



Emmanuel Louisnord Desir

Frieze Los Angeles | Booth C09

Sebastian Gladstone Gallery

Emmanuel Louisnord Desir (b. 1997, Brooklyn)

Lives and works in Los Angeles, CA

Emmanuel Louisnord Desir's practice includes painting, assemblage, and sculpture that addresses colonialism, spirituality, and biblical accounts, particularly Abrahamic narratives and their relevance within the histories of many diasporas around the world. Desir takes inspiration from stories and teachings from the Bible, but at the same time his works question canonical Christianity through gestures that undermine colonial power. His oil paintings on wood panel collage a visual world of symbols that reference both contemporary life and historical moments. These works feature allegories that allude to larger historical and political issues while also serving as spiritual recollections of memory and testimony.



Education

2019

Bachelor of Fine Arts, The Cooper Union

Select Solo Exhibitions

2025

Frieze LA, Sebastian Gladstone Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

2024

Born to Win, Sebastian Gladstone, Los Angeles, CA

2023

Ashes of Zion, 47 Canal, New York

2022

Infirmity, Jupiter Contemporary, Miami

2021

Prisoners of Hope, François Ghebaly, Los Angeles

2020

Swing Low, Sweet Chariot, 47 Canal, New York

Waiting On Burning Babylon Till They Play My Favorite Horn, Senior Thesis Exhibition, The Cooper Union, New York

Selected Group Exhibitions

2024

Recent Acquisitions, Rubell Museum, Miami, FL

City of Quartz 2, Hvw8 gallery Berlin, DE

In Bloom, OPENFORUM.INFO, Berlin, DE

Overserved, Miles McEnery, New York

Works On View, 47 Canal, New York, NY

Raffi & Al's Legendary Garden Party, Vielmetter, Los Angeles, CA

2023

Singular Views: 25 Artists, Rubell Museum, Washington DC

Made in L.A. 2023: Acts of Living, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles

LOYAL, Loyal Gallery, Los Angeles (catalogue)

2022

Supermoon, C L E A R I N G, Los Angeles, CA

One hundred eighty-six billion steps to the sun, C L E A R I N G, New York, NY

Home-Made, Sebastian Gladstone, Los Angeles, CA

Concrete Spiritual, Morán Morán, Los Angeles

2021

47 Canal, New York

2020

11:11, At Peace Gallery, New York

Emmanuel Louisnord Desir

Family Business, 2024

Wood

66" H × 26" W × 26" D
(ELD20)

\$ 35,000.00











Emmanuel Louisnord Desir

Earth Angel, 2024
Wood
54" H × 49" W × 32" D
(ELD21)

\$ 35,000.00







Emmanuel Louisnord Desir

Tonton Belle Cash, 2025

Bronze

33.5" L x 19" W x 44.5" H
(ELD22)

\$ 40,000.00









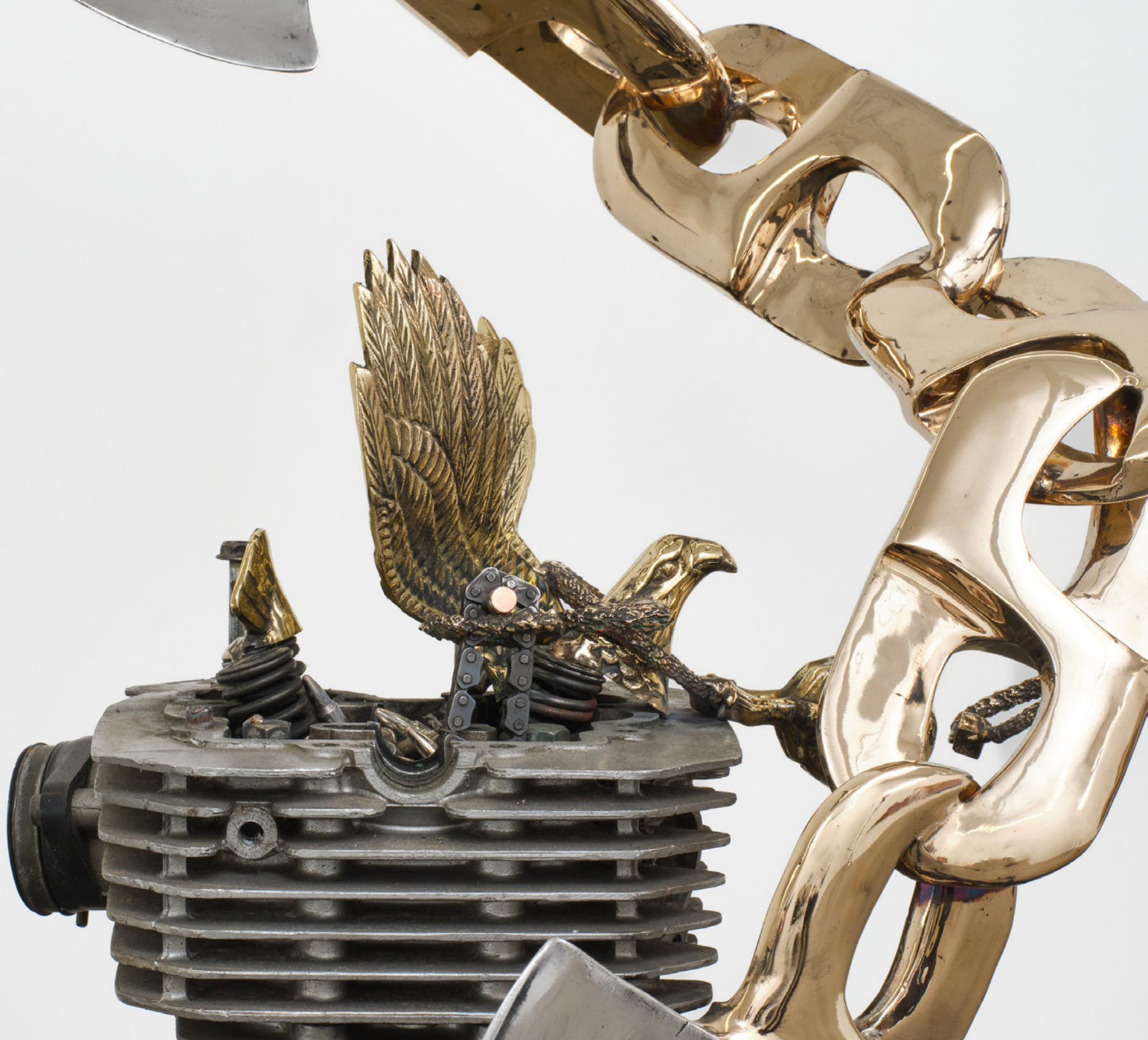


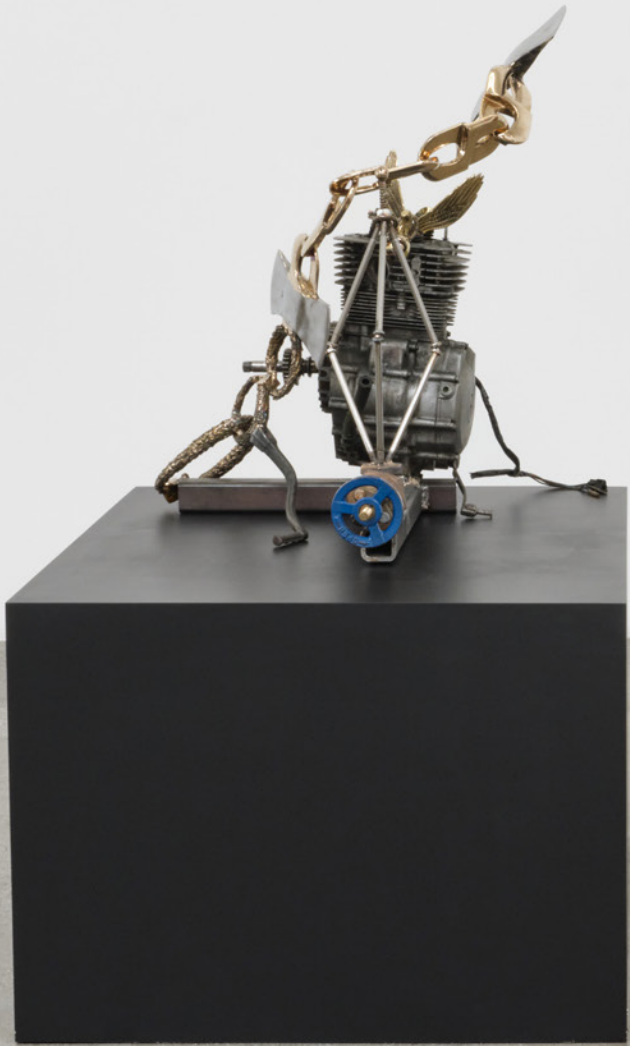
Emmanuel Louisnord Desir

Raging Machine, 2025
Bronze
32.5" L x 26.5" W x 33" H
(ELD24)

\$ 35,000.00







Emmanuel Louisnord Desir

Temporary Confinement, 2025

Bronze

25.5" L x 26.5" W x 35.5" H

(ELD23)

\$ 35,000.00











Emmanuel Louisnord Desir

Fragment (#1), 2024

Bronze

5/8" H × 16 1/2" L × 11 1/2" W

(ELD19)

\$ 11,000.00







Emmanuel Louisnord Desir

Spoil 9, 2023

Bronze

7.5" H x 7" W x 7" D

(ELD18)

\$ 9,000.00









Emmanuel Louisnord Desir

Spoil 2, 2022

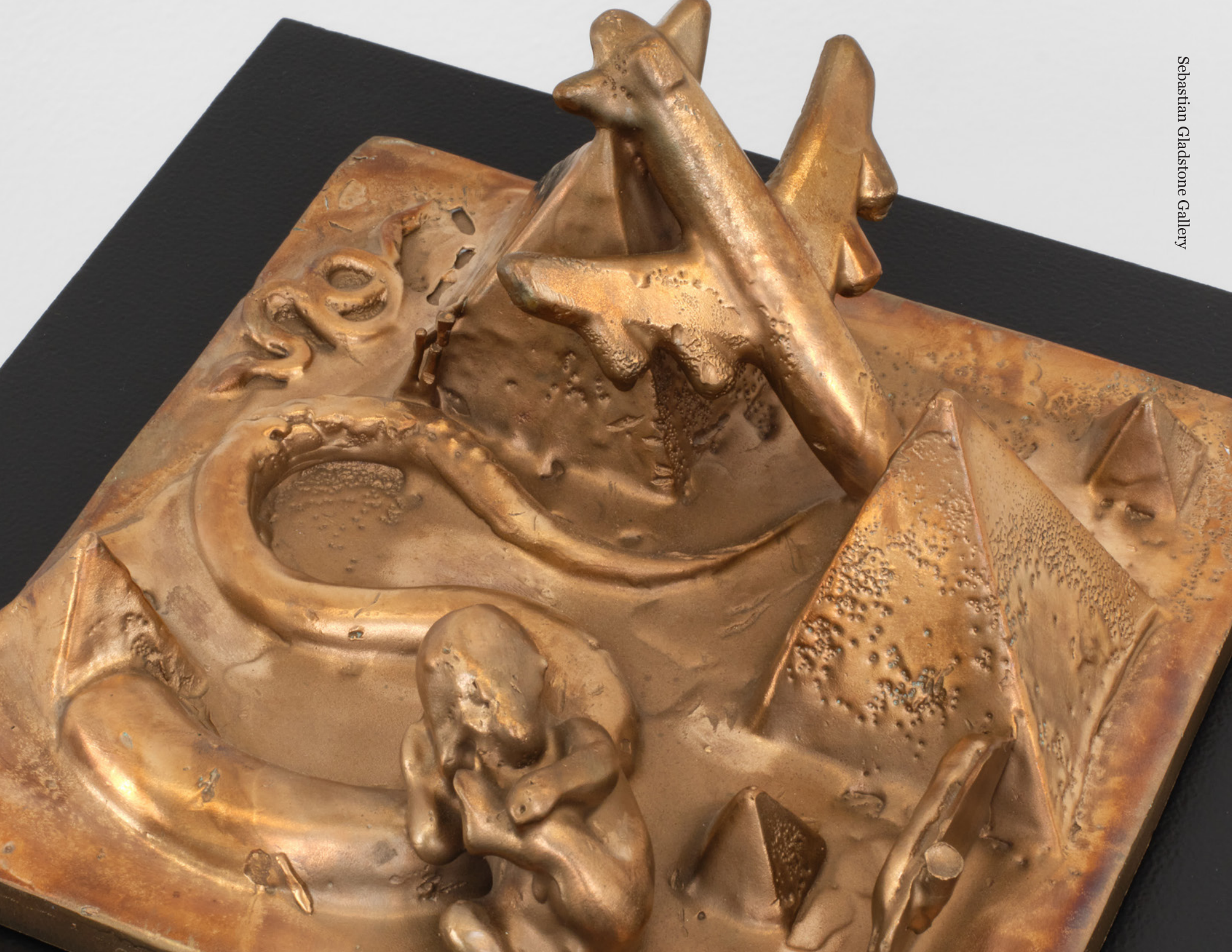
Bronze

3" H x 6 7/8" W x 6 7/8" D

(ELD17)

\$ 9,000.00





Press

CULTURED

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.

- Sara Roffino

ArtSeen

Emmanuel Louisnord Desir: *Ashes of Zion*

By Andrew Paul Woolbright



Installation view: Emmanuel Louisnord Desir: *Ashes of Zion*, 47 Canal, New York, 2023. Courtesy the artist and 47 Canal, New York. Photo: Joerg Lohse.

In Emmanuel Louisnord Desir's *Ashes of Zion*, painting and sculpture employ a skeuomorphic glitching of material to address biblical stories and collective histories. The work is remarkably attuned to the American vernacular, but the energy of it builds out of the artist's ability to produce softness in the material resistance of wood. Desir gives us an allegorical metanarrative that begins with the garden and ends with the fall of Babylon.

In Desir's record, Biblical suffering produces grotesques of survival, as figuration morphs between objecthood and subjecthood. In sculptures such as *A Stiff Necked People* (2023) wood boils with biomorphic tensions and abject erotics. The bodies of Desir are often segmented in ways that Linda Nochlin would characterize as responses to authoritarianism. However, in Desir's case, each body suggests an open ended process. They become systems that refuse to be closed off. Instead they act as trees with different roots that

sprout at their own rates, producing bodies of abbreviation and extension, asymmetric and arriving at new ways to balance and stand. Each figure produces an idea of self-engineering or physical mitosis. In *Grandpa's Infirmity Couch* (2022) we have a bulbous excess. The body becomes the couch that is accompanied by the loose change in its recess, which alludes to an internal richness. Depicted here is a world before a Messiah, a world of physical suffering awaiting spiritual transcendence.

The paintings become soft through the wood panel's resistance. The absorbency of the ground receives the paint slowly—producing a complicated act of ceremony and presence that evokes egg tempera icons. Desir is inspired by the Old and New Testament narratives, interpreting their most dramatic images and numerology, entangling political critique within its phrasing of allegory. The works channel the best of Jim Shaw, while replacing his humor and paranoid caricature with meditation and prophetic annunciation. Desir's figures and scenes are simply rendered to impose themselves as eidetic, but together form complex groupings in the way that recalls how Blake and other Swedenborgians were able to invent mirror realities to our own.

In works like *Transformation of the Meek Hearted* (2022) the idea of the skeuomorph is present, which has become a larger dominant strategy within sculpture. Augusta Savage, Martin Puryear, and Simone Leigh have all similarly worked with sculpture that conjoins disparate objects and realities, an act that can imply material glitching and multivalent possibilities. While it is possible to both signal an uncanny reality of objects and the experience of 3D models overlapping, it also maps a political language—one that is active and unsettled as a hybrid reality of people of color. Desir's form applies the skeuomorph, the glitch, and a body of refusal and introduces it into ancient lore, to engage as bodily acts of sympathy, survival, and diasporic experience.

Desir draws the parallel between the Biblical narrative and that of the Black diaspora to find moments that intertwine both. In his complex language imbrication, what has been kept at the periphery is foregrounded, revealing the heroism of endurance and survival. It is an important dismantling. Through phase-shifting bodies and their processing of bursts of time the figural and affective formations that spread across the deep past extend into the distant future. Desir gives us a new and deep reservoir of access and modes of being.

EMMANUEL LOUISNORD DESIR IS THE ART WORLD'S NEXT ARTIST TO WATCH

By Bianca Grade | May 15, 2023



Emmanuel Louisnord Desir, "Home of the Free, Land of the Brave" (2022) PHOTO BY RUBEN DIAZ/COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND 47 CANAL, NEW YORK



Emmanuel Louisnord Desir "GRANDPA'S INFIRMITY COUCH" PHOTO BY JOERG LOHSE

Emmanuel Louisnord Desir, a Brooklyn-raised and Los Angeles-based artist, offers a youthful interpretation of the Bible while also exploring the various cycles of relationships—whether familial, church-based or romantic.

A sculptor and painter, Desir discovered his passion for art as a toddler. “Ever since I was three years old, I would watch my older brother Max draw Dragon Ball Z and Yu-Gi-Oh! characters,” he recalls. “Every time he would make a mark, I would make the same one in my notebook. I just wanted to be like him. My father was a handyman of all kinds of trades and would oil paint and use different tools to make things, I wanted to be like him too.” Desir’s talent has led to solo exhibitions at 47 Canal in New York, François Ghebaly in Los Angeles and Jupiter Contemporary in Miami. Now, he’s prepping for his second solo showcasing at 47 Canal (47canal.us).

Can you discuss the journey leading to your upcoming presentation?

The title of the show is called Ashes of Zion and it’s an amalgamation of my interests in materials like wood and metal and in Biblical stories and prophecies. At this stage of my practice, I’m using painting, sculpture and visual abstraction to speak to the spiritual connections between the Israelite tribes in the Bible and those affected by the many slave trades and the diaspora today.

How do Bible parables play a role in your work’s storytelling?

Sometimes the events in the Bible speak to me on a level that calls for an ode or homage to them; sometimes it’s more collagelike. Taking from different parts to create a whole. I see my work as an outlet to investigate these stories and their spiritual significance in relation to the many marginalized groups of today’s time, whom my family and I stem from.

Your sculptures also reflect the physical impact of relationships. I’d like to know the significance of capturing these nuances in physical form.

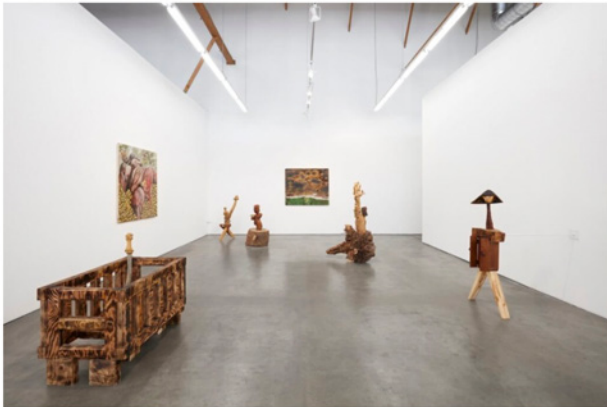
These two pieces share my effort to communicate the human condition of servitude assumed by these groups today. These renditions of bodies are fused with forms speaking to utility (a bowl, or shelf). The idea of being exploited for the benefit of another, where one’s humanity amounts to their usability.

Do you find there’s different ways to convey messages through sculptures versus paintings?

Yes and no. I’ve usually made sculptures in a subtractive method and to speak to the human figure or objects. Painting has been more scenic, abstract and additive. Both mediums offer nuance and inspire different facets of thinking and associations that can be interchangeable in their conceptual and physical nature.

I’m curious to know how your artwork fulfills you.

Art has transformed from something I did as a kid to fit in with my role models, an interest in constructing objects with varying materials and improving my craft, into a portal that allows me to give thanks to my power, investigate my identity, uplift with my people by sharing light.



Installation view, Emmanuel Louisnord Desir, *Prisoners of Hope*, 2021, François Ghebaly, Los Angeles



Emmanuel Louisnord Desir, *The Fall of Babylon*, 2023, Oil on wood, 48 x 68 in
(Private Collection. Photo: Joerg Lohse. Courtesy of 47 Canal)

Emmanuel Louisnord Desir makes painting, assemblage, and sculpture that sings a strange song of ancient times and modern life, mysticism, empire, religions of the book, global diaspora and allegorical testimony. Within this ambitious framework, Desir's stylistic approach is omnivorous in its influences and yields an edgy, folk-infused surrealism. His contorted arks, sweeping scenic histories, individual creatures of human, animal, and otherwise unknown origin all combine and consort, arraying themselves inside symbol-rich political and personal parables—as inscrutable and poetic as biblical verses, but also just as clear in their intention to impart a higher message. With his large-scale painting, *The Fall of Babylon*, Desir contributes a perspective of faith to the biennial's focus on everyday life as inspiration.

L.A. WEEKLY: When did you first know you were an artist?

EMMANUEL LOUISNORD DESIR: There was never a distinctive moment where I thought of myself as an artist. Creativity has always been around me due to my father and older siblings. Drawing and painting was something I did as a way to bond with my family at a young age. Looking back on my past, the need to make art has always persisted.

What is your short answer to people who ask what your work is about?

I would say my art is an exploration of my different fascinations in biblical history, spirituality, and objecthood. It strives to shed light on the many diasporic histories of old, and the effects of this in today's reality. It aims to uplift the integrity of the many who have been marginalized, exploited, and deprived of their history.

What would you be doing if you weren't an artist?

If I wasn't making art today, I probably wouldn't even be alive.

Did you go to art school? Why/Why not?

Cooper Union School of Art.

Why do you live and work in L.A., and not elsewhere?

I think about moving back to New York once a week, haha! L.A. still feels like a new world to me. I find that the inspiration I get from the different facets of the city and the culture here bleed into the way I use material and abstraction to articulate my thoughts through art. It also feels like the artists I've gotten to know in L.A. are all really immersed in their practices in a refreshing way, inspiring me to keep striving for growth in my own practice.

When was your first show?

"Swing Low Sweet Chariot" at 47 Canal, NYC, Summer 2020.

When is/was your current/most recent/next show or project?

The Hammer is ending on December 31; then I'll be participating in a few art fairs this and next year, but primarily focused on developing the practice and uncovering new ways to express myself. I'm considering a few group shows and solo show options but nothing is finalized at the moment.

ART

Emmanuel Louisnord Desir

In “Ashes of Zion,” a show of twenty-three riveting new works, this Los Angeles-based artist weaves richly layered critical narratives about the origins, and the inheritances, of the African diaspora. Here, he brings characters from the Bible—a book full of tales about the exiled and the enslaved—together with earthly figures, animals, and objects. Paintings in oil on burnt-wood panels depict such unsettling scenes as Abraham’s near-sacrifice of his son Isaac and a three-headed archangel wielding a sword over a small soul afloat in the sea. In the gallery’s back room, a wide plinth displays eight small bronze sculptures that Desir calls “Spoils”—haunting hybrids of reptiles, jewelry, and hardware intertwined with Black heads. The show’s mytho-apocalyptic subjects feel most personal in “Grandpa’s Infirmary Couch,” from 2022, a stately piece in carved wood and 3-D-printed resin. Handfuls of shiny gold dollars are scattered where the elder might otherwise be seated—a heart-wrenching acknowledgment of ancestors whose legacies have been valued solely in terms of capital.

—*Jennifer Krasinski*

Los Angeles

Christine Burgon

February 20th - April 5th, 2025

Brian Sharp & Denzil Hurley

Curated by Jonas Wood

April 12th - May 17th, 2025

New York

Emma McMillan

March 7th - April 19th, 2025

G.V. Rodriguez & Bennet Schlesinger

April 26th - May 31st, 2025