



*Outer Body Experiences*  
Darin Cooper, Emmanuel Massillon  
12.07.22 - 07.09.22  
Opening 12 luglio 2022

***Outer Body Experiences***

Critical essay written by *Skylar Mitchell*

Andrea Festa Fine Art is proud to present a duo exhibition of contemporary artists Emmanuel Massillon and Darin Cooper. The show consists of eleven evocative works that form a visual meditation on Black American critical consciousness. *Outer Body Experiences* will run from July 12th to September 7th, offering patrons a joint show with two of the most promising young figures in American visual art.

The combined presentation of sculpture and paintings depict the intercultural conversations that occur within Black space. The artists comment on systemic experiences - such as gentrification, over-policing, and the creation of food deserts - in tandem with material references of African-American culture in each artwork. Cooper achieves this pairing through a careful incorporation of printmaking and collage with acrylic painting, whereas Massillon combines found objects like bullet shells and sand with brass instruments with carefully carved wooden masks to present a pun-like reimagining of symbols in contemporary African American culture. Massillon and Cooper deconstruct these symbols in their art - subliminally and literally - in order to offer glimpses of their unique experiences within Black life.

Raised in Newport News, Virginia, Darin Cooper is heavily influenced by his Southern upbringing, where the Church, hip hop, and the legacies of American slavery were ubiquitous. In this collection of mixed media paintings, Cooper presents his interpretation of the various methods of spiritual release Black people created throughout history. Working primarily in acrylics, he achieves his signature watercolor-resembling look by using rubbing alcohol to disintegrate parts of the original pigment, creating a glaze of color across different shades. He then collages this foundation with referential prints to complete the intended image, building a mixed media take on traditional acrylic painting.

There is a palpable chemistry between Darin Cooper's aqueously pigmented acrylic paintings and Emmanuel Massillon's austere sculptural improvisations. Both trained at the School of

Visual Arts in New York, Cooper and Massillon share a reverence for the abstract, belying a subtext that is both autobiographical and expository. For this show, their selected works even offer a level of whimsy based on the artists' ability to play on the sensory and employ a deliberate level of pastiche.

As a conceptual artist, Emmanuel Massillon derives his work through an entwined process of interpretive craftsmanship and artistic intentionality. Born and raised in Washington D.C. where he first learned woodworking from his grandfather - also a skilled carpenter - Massillon's ability to manipulate natural materials is one of the features that make his work so texturally unique. Over the course of his creative development, he has refined these initial skills to their current dexterity, allowing him to create physically immersive work that reflects their meticulous construction process. He employs some of the most naturally-occurring supplies available to an artist, building sculptures much derived from the earth. Scavenged wood, sand, and even upcycled dog food are combined to create the soil-resembling compound that eventually forms a new life on one of Massillon's canvases or sculptures. Massillon's sculptures explore ideas of rebellion by deconstructing familiar items historically associated with Black oppression or culture folklore, creating captivatingly uncanny objects in the process.

Though drawing from different regional histories and personal inspirations, Cooper and Massillon powerfully reflect the mutuality of Black ideation, paying homage to traditions and material culture instead of pathologizing trauma. Their deconstructed visuals convey diverse narratives about the withstanding fabric of African-American life, and in turn, evoke a fanciful and engrossing conversation on *Blackness*.

**Darin Cooper** (2000, Newport News, USA) is a multidisciplinary artist based in New York City. Born and raised in Newport News, Virginia, he is heavily influenced by African American Southern cultural traditions, exploring themes of spirituality, family, and preservation. His acrylic paintings ruminate on these concepts while incorporating experimental usages of pigment, print, and engraving. After a number of successful international and New York-based group exhibitions, Cooper was named a Hudson Valley resident artist at the Macedonia Institute where he completed his tenure in June 2022.

**Emmanuel Massillon** (1998, Washington D.C., USA) is a New York City-based mixed media artist born and raised in the historic Northwest area of Washington D.C. In March 2022, Galerie Julien Cadet in Paris, France presented a solo exhibition of Massillon's works entitled *Wait, Just Hear Me Out!* Massillon's art has also been part of a historic acquisition by the Baltimore Museum of Art in an effort to highlight Black subjectivity in its collections. His sculptures and paintings often offer an exploration of the theme of "double consciousness," depicting the Black cultural navigation of oppressive systems.