

Dear Son,... Lamar Whidbee

Documents submitted to the Faculty of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of the Master of Fine Arts in the Department of Art

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Lamar Whidbee
Artist Statement

In my work I combine found materials with paint to create mixed media work that operate as both paintings and sculptures. Using assemblage along with both abstract and representational painting as formal approaches, my work raises questions about the social conditions of black and brown people living in rural America. The materials I use reference rural America, and the upbringing that I had growing up in Hertford, North Carolina. The materials I use suggest vernacular architecture and domestic and other everyday materials that talk about the social conditions that brought me knowledge and shaped who I am today. Most of my work deals with several main formal approaches and also themes. I use portraiture in my work along with assemblage, and my work also addresses themes of black identity, and systems of education.

My work is informed by a lot of the black artists that came out of the identity politics movement. The identity politics movement that emerged in the mid 1980s out of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement questioned identity, repression, inequality and injustice. My work continues the conversation of this movement because all of the issues and problems around racism and injustice still dominate our culture and our institutions today.

Originally trained as a painter, I approach all of my materials like canvas and paint. In many ways, all of my work are like portraits of people who have made an impact on my life, or who are in my community. I use portraits of them in combination with materials in order to create a sense of intimacy and allow viewers to connect with my work and the larger themes I raise.

I often use found wooden materials to use as a substrate or to create assemblages that incorporate painting as a way to suggest a sense of history and specificity of place. I use found materials to reflect my environment and the environment that I grew up in. In my pieces, materials from the past and present are intertwined. This correlation exists to depict the generational cycle of life that characterizes our relationship to the past. I choose materials such as worn wooden doors, history books, chairs, baby bottles, bullets, and window panes, selecting them to evoke or reference a specific person, place or event that has taken place within my own life but universal enough to reflect everyday experiences and thoughts. We live daily around such objects; we ignore them, but when we place those same objects in a different environment they are given power.

Much of my work is about education and jobs in lower income communities specifically because I believe lower income areas lack essential knowledge and tools to access the same opportunities of those in upper class areas. The educational system gives educators very little pay, especially in the state of North Carolina. The school system teaches students to go to school and take standardized tests without catering to specific interest and needs. In rural areas, such as Hertford, North Carolina where I grew up, a strong North Carolina dialect exists. With the combination of limited access to knowledge and career paths paired with a southern drawl, what are the chances that the youth find success outside of this place? Drawing from my own experiences growing up in Hertford, North Carolina, I often use materials that reference learning and its relationship to labor to evoke larger questions around place and identity.

Overall, my work deals with black identity, and uses assemblage and painting to create sculptural works that I hope will get the audience to think about the conditions that perpetuate poverty and the lack of education in the communities like the one I grew up in. My work is based on my own experience, and I use people I know and people in my family as the inspiration for my work. I use portraiture and aspects of representational painting to give the viewer a sense of intimacy for people to get to know the subjects that I make work about, and the materials I use reference rural America, and the upbringing that I had.

Lamar Whidbee

Dear Son,...







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SCULPTURE
WOOD
2000





Art Installation
African Art
African Art in Cultural Perspective





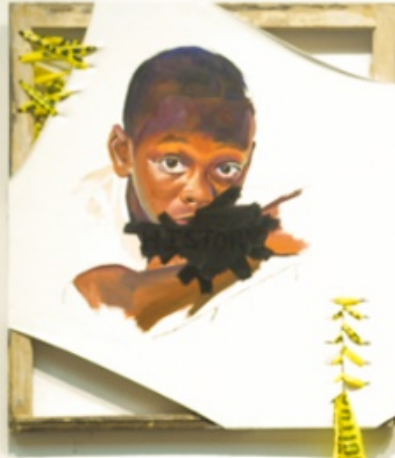
Work For Pennies
Mixed Media







GOODYEAR
SCHLITZ
BLUE





I'll like you for always
As long as you living your days like

ADO
CAL



WONER

For the man and I am
today because of the man that is

My not like me
I am not like me

1987

of S. Do
no life



I am not like me
I am not like me















be happy
the only thing
I hope that
the subject is
not dropped.
I hope my parents
that you never
on the lot of
followed around
up to
that



SMILE



