
THE SHED

THE BLOOMBERG BUILDING

545 West 30th Street

New York, NY 10001

Working on my commission for the Shed has been a very rewarding and healing experience. It allowed me to conceptualize an idea as a result of an experience I had as a child. I put it forth as a performance piece to a group of white women artists at the AIR Gallery where I was a founder in the early 1970s. They turned it down. (I was the only non-white member of the gallery.)

As a child, I was visiting a friend whose mother was cooking dinner consisting of cooking meat. On their living room table they had a recent issue of Life magazine. In it, there was a picture of an African American man who was lying on his back on a log, who was burning from the inside out. White men surrounded the gruesome scene bubbling over with self-congratulatory smiles seeing what they had done. The smell of the meat cooking made it impossible for me to eat and I could not eat meat for about a year.

The film Rope/Fire/Water is the centerpiece of the exhibition. The film spun off the two large black paintings, one about Columbus in part and the other about the murder of the 4 little girls in a church bombing in Birmingham, Alabama. I with a friend made a pilgrimage to Alabama to the site of the church and one of the parks where the police with dogs attacked demonstrators. I also refer to the burning of Black churches and Black towns by mobs of angry whites who hated the prosperity of the towns.

The beauty of the abstract paintings is for me a healing place where I go after seeing, reading about and experiencing throughout my life the ravages of “caste,” class, bigotry, and violence throughout the world.

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