Emmanuel Louisnord Desir | *Rough Ways of the Delicate Ones*
September 19th-October 31st, 2026

Rough Ways of the Delicate Ones marks the second solo exhibition with Sebastian Gladstone Gallery by Los Angeles-based artist Emmanuel Louisnord Desir. Featuring eight new works, the exhibition continues Desir's exploration of metamorphosis, endurance, and reclamation. Across these works, bodies and belief systems shift under pressures accumulated across time and generations.

The exhibition takes its title from Baruch 4:26: "My delicate ones have gone rough ways, and were taken away as a flock caught by the enemies." Desir considers delicacy not as weakness, but as a capacity for care, love, and righteousness—qualities made vulnerable by conditions that harden, corrupt, or lead one astray. His figures appear accordingly converted: amalgamations of bodies, creatures, machines, and symbols at once armored and exposed, guarded and reaching outward.

Evolving from his *Born to Win* presentation, where Desir investigated ancient systems and legacies of resistance, *Rough Ways of the Delicate Ones* turns toward what those systems do to the body over time. Through material, endurance, and faith, Desir asks what must change to survive and what might remain intact despite that change.

Entering the gallery, one encounters works that glisten and take up space. *Field Resonator 4*, *Lukewarm/ Double Minded Nature*, and *SOS Radio Telescope* sit atop sleek black pedestals, their bronze figures mobile and armored. In *Field Resonator 4*, thorned horns—or antennas—emerge from a crown atop a resonator, while a blend of heads rests upon the thorns, anchored by a tripod of Timberland boots, a global symbol of urban culture. The body appears ready for work. What has this body become in order to survive? Who are we functioning for?

Desir often questions humanity through the language of machinery, using function as a metaphor for social value. Their purposes remain indeterminate, creating space for curiosity and imagination. The ambiguity raises another question: what happens to the human body when society values what it can produce more than the humanity it contains? Desir creates bodies that look prepared to labor but cannot be reduced to their usefulness.

Transformation is not merely represented in the sculptures; it is embedded in their making. Bronze must endure heat and change state before assuming the armored bodies that populate the exhibition. In *Hellenization of Jacob,* the shell-like bronze surface glows while wings suggest the possibility of flight. In *Sand of the Sea Engine Block 4,* chains, thorns, bodies, and ghoulish entities intertwine with elements of a car's exhaust system until machine, weapon, body, and creature become difficult to distinguish. A crowned figure reaches toward the heavens, invoking the biblical language running throughout Desir's practice. Job 23:10 reads, "But he knows the way that I take; when he has tested me, I will come forth as gold." Here, Desir invokes a language of fire, refinement, and trial. Material isn't just fabrication; the physical treatment of matter parallels the pressures acting upon the body.

Through endurance, Desir's work turns toward faith and reclamation. In *Fury of the Saints*, dry bones are given life, drawing upon the Valley of Dry Bones in Ezekiel 37 and suggesting that pressure can produce both corruption and renewal. Death itself becomes structural: what once signified an ending becomes part of a newly constituted body.

This possibility returns us to the exhibition's title. Desir's archetypes are not delicate because they are weak; delicacy resides in their capacity to remain caring, loving, and righteous despite pressures that might harden and corrupt them. Roughness, then, is not the opposite of delicacy, but something delicacy acquires in order to survive. These delicate ones have grown shells, acquired machinery, burned, hardened, multiplied, reached outward, and persisted. Roughness becomes evidence not simply of what they are but of what they have survived.

Text by Taylor Bythewood-Porter, curator and writer based in Los Angeles.