

‘Us the broad communion of the mermaid people
who travel between earthly and aquatic territories

looking for mermaid congregations
and making it work to be together while we can

us mermaids want appreciation
us mermaids who walk around on big broad feet
and who were made to swim well
because of mermaid blood in our DNA

and us who live underwater preserving
negros historical information systems

let this room be meeting place for us
the communion of the mermaid people
and any peoples who are making it work to be together while they can.’

Jeffrey Stark is pleased to announce an exhibition of new work by Tau Lewis entitled *making it work to be together while we can*.

Tau Lewis' self-taught practice is rooted in healing personal, collective and historical traumas through labour. She employs methods of construction such as hand sewing, carving and assemblage of found and repurposed materials to build portraits. Lewis' conceptual framework investigates black identity and agency, memory and recovery.

Lewis' recent works consider the undocumented, sometimes inaccessible historical information centers of black life such as the oceans, forests, and deep underground spaces. Her figures are often colored and textured to mimic the oceans, earth, and cosmos. Lewis uses animal and insect imagery as playful and ironic references to the demarcation of black bodies as separate from other genres of being human, and the usefully confined and unfree existence of black people. Infused with personal belongings, found objects and material markers of time, each portrait is an energetically charged microcosm of memory. The unreal, unbelonging and bulletproof characters of an imaginary landscape, joyfully realized through sculpture.

At Jeffrey Stark, Lewis will present a series of three new works comprising a human scale plaster sculpture, a soft sculpture, and a quilt that together address the conditions of the black body's inextricable ties to nature and the histories of erasure and replacement at the heart of those

relationships.

Describing the show as portraits of landscapes, Lewis considers what an undocumented or inaccessible landscape might hold and how we can re-access these spaces through storytelling and imagination. The works on view contemplate the role of water as a central medium within the transatlantic slave trade and in an act of invented remembrance, Lewis employs the mythological creature of the mermaid to reanimate a history of loss.

‘I’m considering the millions of black people who died at sea during the transatlantic slave trade and looking at the water as holding all of these secrets that belonged to those communities/ learning systems, spiritual traditions, stories, information systems. And what if those things all existed still underwater, and what if those people all became mermaids. I think of ancestors as mermaids because there are so many of them whose spirits live underwater or travel back to the water.’

-Tau Lewis

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