

## **EXHIBITION, ARTIST & WORKS STATEMENTS**

The DMST Atelier is pleased to present: For Us By US, a Story of Black Creation, a Juneteenth group exhibition

For Us By Us: A Story of Black Creation, could easily be a case study in REVERENCE if it wasn't an exhibition of art. Artists, of varying disciplines, have assembled to give detailed consideration to their inheritance: the irrefutable resilience and undeniable contribution of Black creativity.

Black folk throughout time, and the world over, have used creativity as our means of survival. It's displayed in our ability to make full-course meals from scraps, and the geometric designs of our hair. It boasts our ability to upcycle a phonograph into a turntable, as well as the boom-bap in our lilt. June 24, 2023, on the heels of Juneteenth and a planet that insists it wants us buried, we invite you to continue being jubilant about the intellect, spirituality, and physicality that keep us rooted, and we encourage you to extend your celebration of the creativity that gives us our flowers.

The six artists exhibiting at For Us By Us on June 24, 2023 (whether it's to pay homage to a dynamic legacy, reflect a tumultuous present, or imagine a brilliant future) serve as living proof that A Story of Black Creation is being written in collective perpetuity.

Written by SondriaWRITES



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APRIL BEY—an interdisciplinary visual artist and art educator who grew up in The Bahamas and now resides in Los Angeles, CA—creatively critiques American and Bahamian culture, feminism, generational theory, social media, AfroFuturism, AfroSurrealism, post-colonialism and constructs of race within supremacist systems on both the introspective and social levels.

**Her work:** *I WAS JUST AN ALIEN THAT CAME DOWN FROM THE SKY TO SAVE YOUR DUMB BEHIND*, made from Jacquard woven textiles, with hand-sewn fabric and sequins, beads, and clothespins, evokes the spirit of *Juneteenth* using the holiday's traditional colors: Red, black, and green. (Note: Jacquard fabric is all about the pattern and the uniqueness is in its application. Long floats in the back of the cloth identify the threads used to produce the pattern and tell us right away that we're dealing with Jacquard.)

Bey's main character—a Black (albeit green-skinned), septum-pierced, alien, with shoulder-length locs, glances over a shoulder to look our “dumb behind” square in the eye. Can you guess which fellow-exhibitor is featured in this work??

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HASEF— is a Los Angeles scholar, passionate about educating young artists and art novices. He uses his conceptual art to introduce viewers to a world often avoided by society. He teaches art and offers art services from his Art Studio in South Los Angeles.

His work: At *For Us By Us*, Hasef will unveil: 2 works—one mixed media piece and two drawings—all showcasing Black men as their primary subject.

Hasef's mixed media piece from August 2021 (48 x 48 in.) shows a colorful, bearded brother, lounging near a potter plant and donning a tight natural. His April 25, 2023 piece, a barbershop portrait, is done with Acrylic, Pastels, and Charcoal (24 x 18 in.).

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**AMANDA FLOWERS**— Amanda is known for her visually **intense** depictions on wood with her precision to specific details. Flowers's visuals range from depictions of her dreams, passed down memories from her grandparents to her intimate life. She believes she is shaping an alternate reality worked together with tones of black mythology and black utopia providing emotional nuisances with undertones of oranges and blues. She is inspired by underground illustrators, animators and innovative painters from the Black community. Flowers's inspirations starts with the 1940's Harlem Renaissance, admiring artists such as Romare Bearden and Emma Amos. Extending her range to Corky McCoy and Varnette P Honeywood, a theme shaped around black excellence.

**Her work:** Flowers showcases two of her works on wood at For Us By Us this month! "*I Wanted To Show You Something*" (2022), is oil pastel on wood. A Black woman sits in grass, her feet cooling in the flowing river as a horn player serenades from beneath a nearby tree. (30 x 30 in.) "*Granny's Kitchen 2002*" (2023) is a warped and trippy pastel on wood where a Black subject works in the kitchen, apparently washing dishes. The emphasis on the pattern of the carpet at granny's house that launches from the kitchen into the living area, is the cause of this piece's trip-factor. (3 x 4 ft.)

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**JESSI UJAZI**— My art practice is rooted in a spiritual exploration of my own identity and connection to the global history and experiences of the African diaspora. It is articulated through painting, digital collage, and paper collage as mediums to construct and compose narratives, both real and imagined.

My process reflects the complexities of navigating self-discovery in a world that has historically suppressed and erased the memories, experiences, and contributions of my ancestors. Finding inspiration from historical research, I reclaim and recontextualize archived media acquired from oppressive colonized experiences. I manipulate scale, perspective, and juxtaposition to create “larger-than-life” depictions of Black folks, thriving beyond the limits of space, time, and mortality.

My art illustrates a harmonious, reciprocal relationship between Black folks, nature, and the otherworldly. I consider my artistry to be *Afro-Omniscient*, encompassing the past, present, and future of Black existence and imagination simultaneously.

**Her work:** *“Afrimagination”* (Materials - digital collage; Dimensions - 18x24; Year - 2023) and *“Open Mindscape”* (Materials - digital collage; Dimensions - 18x24 inches; Year - 2023). *are digital collage pieces created to visually depict the power of an uninhibited, unsuppressed imagination. What if the playful magic and wonder of our youth was allowed to thrive into adulthood? Play and exploration go hand in hand. Exploration leads to discovery, which leads to innovation. Jessi Ujazi encourages us all to connect to our inner child and explore the universe and its endless possibilities.*

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JOSEPH SHERMAN—I navigate the polyrhythmic Black Vernacular and bring it into the space of visual representation. Sampling, bricolage, and improvisation are techniques that I utilize as I share my epiphanies on topics concerning Black Xcellency and the infinitude of the contemporary Black Archive.

A central curiosity that I have is how the interference, flipping, or manipulation of symbols and signs shape one's understanding and construction of race and cultural authorship. I use a gumbo of disparate historical narratives and materials in [my] analysis, from Japanese manga and HBCU yearbooks to my Mother's personal collection of family photographs. My practice features a variety of mediums including installation, photography, printmaking, and sculpture.

His work: Joseph Sherman presents *red, white and blue*—a screen printed image of Michael Jackson on newsprint with oil made in 2023, at For Us By Us, June 24-July 8, 2023. Sherman chose an image of the eventual “King of Pop” in his youth, the Jackson 5 era. The “red” portion of the image is a darkened version of the photo in black and white, with the words “AFRO HALO” written in bloody script. The “white” portion washes out the image of young MJ and emphasizes the lips in black. And “blue” section of the piece is a lighter version of the black and white image, framed and in some places colored over in blue. The piece conjures the tragic tale of America's most popular king, and gives a new meaning to the idea of “crossing over” into the mainstream. (Dimensions: 70.5 x 36 in)

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MARANTZ MOON— a visual performance and installation artist born in Chicago, currently based in Los Angeles. Co-founder of DMST Atelier, a studio gallery space located near DTLA. Using mediums like hip hop music, clothing, graphic design, and fine art visually, Moon strives to metaphorically “open boxes, rearrange, break norms, close, crush, cut apart the box, and escape the paradox of failing forward into subjective composite”. This artist’s work “heavily influenced by issues such as racism, classism, and current societal dialogues, “explores beauty through symbolism and subtle references to Pop, Hype, and African American culture. Moon uses traditional mediums, like acrylic on canvas, pastel drawings, photography, and digital art. Recently the creative has incorporated found objects, clay and resin...

### His work:

Boomers all go out in it & Boom fallout

These works in the most direct way are about the idea of a literal bomb exploding after being pressed like a doomsday scenario. On the other hand they speak to the idea of being such a polarizing figure in today’s world that you lose yourself in the massive idea of success.

The title is inspired and pays homage to Jean Michel Basquiat's Boom for Real mantra and my interpretation of rising and falling in American culture concerning success and more specifically the black plight in success.

The painting is meant to communicate a story of a 6 perspective fallout within the psych. Wrestling with the idea of fame, fortune, greed, love, lust and death.

I believe that many of are black stars, icons, musicians, actors, artists, activists have once or twice and even some paid in death for their celebrity. They dealt with being built up to be destroyed by their own ego, others or systemic pressures.

Certain aspects of black culture get wrapped in violence, against the body and mind. Sports, and entertainment highlight a lot of the glorification of violence towards each other and how success in those fields can be a function of furthering that narrative.



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With success there's often greed and a struggle of control to follow. Not wanting to lose the limelight or feeling invincible to laws and nature. This work investigates what it means to have power and who controls the narrative, the idea of the fallout is purposely pressing the button. I want to Boom For Real.

What do they say, \_\_\_\_\_ really blew up overnight.



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