

Village Blues

Adeshola Makinde

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Ross + Kramer is pleased to announce Adeshola Makinde's first exhibition with the gallery entitled, *Village Blues*, at the Ross + Kramer East Hampton location.

Makinde's exhibition features fourteen new collages and four printed works on canvas. This new body of work focuses on iconic jazz musicians, including Ella Fitzgerald, Louis Armstrong, and Miles Davis, among plenty of others. The artist sources archival magazines, specifically vintage issues of *Downbeat Magazine*, an American music magazine devoted to "jazz, blues and beyond" that was founded in Makinde's hometown of Chicago, and collages cutout fragments of text and images. This pre-internet source material gives Makinde a plethora of lesser known images of iconic artists to work with. The mixtures of laudatory phrases and pieced together bits of text, mostly headlines from the magazine, exemplify sampling culture that was nascent in Jazz before becoming the lingua franca of Rap.

Makinde writes of this body of work:

Jazz music is a genre Adeshola Makinde discovered through his lifelong love for Rap. And like Rap, Jazz was birthed out of a need for Black Americans to create music that allowed them to fully express themselves. Jazz was the first time that Americans weren't looking to Europe to inspire their sound. The freedom, energy, love and soul can't be replicated because it comes entirely from an improvised space. Late cultural critic Greg Tate once said, "Bebop musicians were rocket scientists. You can compare Bebop to the Manhattan Project." Jazz musicians have created some of the most complex and intellectual music we've ever seen, and in many ways American culture doesn't seem to respect that. 'Village Blues' is Makinde's personal survey of Jazz, depicting just how liberating of a genre it has been over the last two centuries, by highlighting various figures that helped shape the genre in their own way.

Makinde is a Nigerian-American multidisciplinary artist based in Chicago, Illinois. The artist's upbringing is precisely why he approaches art the way he does. He was raised in the Chicagoland suburbs and in his younger years, attended predominantly white schools. This is something that shapes his work today, due to the fact that it was such a stark difference from the life he led at home with his immigrant parents from Nigeria. By going to schools with this sort of racial makeup, he didn't learn a great deal of Black history, if any at all. This is why the mission statement of his art practice is to educate by sharing the information that he learns on his personal journey of Black consciousness. His work today tends to challenge viewers to question the systems they find themselves in, which will hopefully cause them to have much needed conversations with those closest to them regarding social justice issues. Makinde's drawn to highlighting Black life in his work because he feels as though it's something that is often neglected. The social justice themes found throughout his work is his way of advocating for those without a voice.

Adeshola Makinde (b. 1990) has previously been the subject of solo exhibitions at Anthony Gallery in Chicago; as well as Stony Island Arts Bank, a Chicago museum helmed by Theaster Gates; and Playground, Detroit.