



Stigmata-proof Onesie , 2025, by Coby Kennedy. Oil paint, pressed Kevlar®, steel, wood (Detail)

SHIELDED

WORKS BY COBY KENNEDY

April 17 - May 30, 2025

For his first solo exhibition at C24 Gallery, Coby Kennedy presents a striking new body of work using bullet proof Kevlar, stretched and mounted as canvases, some set in roughly soldered metal frames. The industrial styled, abstract works suggest portals or relics from another age, embodying the artist's exploration of diasporic power and perseverance as a Black American, intensified by the life changing experience of recently becoming a parent to two young girls. The function of Kevlar as a medium of protection symbolizes a shield against an increasingly dystopian environment, while layers of oxidized rust, resin and other symbolic markings provide clues referencing both past and future realities of resistance and survival.

Kennedy channels the dynamics of bringing protection to his family and providing them with the tools for survival into near mythological depictions of his daughters in several figurative works inspired by their wild innocence. Their hair is braided up into powerful horns by the hands of ancestors reaching into the picture frame. Their depictions reference the eternal forces of nature and youth, their energy driving an ongoing engagement with powers of oppression.

MORE ABOUT THE ARTIST:

Coby Kennedy is known for his powerful depictions of life in America that focus on challenging cultural realities. His work upends popular stereotypes and archetypical imagery in service of a bold, speculative, Afrofuturist vision. His sculpture, *Kalief Browder: The Box* was included in the Kindred Arts *Monumental Tour*. Born and raised in Washington, DC in an arts and academia family, Kennedy has transformed an unflinching confrontation with both history and current events into a set of fantastical scenarios and characters that elevate our most challenging narratives to the level of mythology. With a background in industrial auto design, he embraces multiple materials that graphically embody the content of his works, including metal, fiberglass and bulletproof Kevlar. Acknowledging the reality that, "...we (humans) are really good at finding reasons and innovative ways to kill each other," his works explore everything from gentrification to racist violence to light & dark skin colorism within the Black community. His current body of abstract sculptural work reflects his experience as a new parent, with a focus on generational power and protection. A graduate of Columbia University's Fine Art MFA and Pratt Institute's Industrial Design BA programs, the artist and industrial conceptual designer has completed residencies at The Watermill Center, Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Red Bull Arts Detroit, and Anderson Ranch Arts Center. Kennedy is the recipient of the Civil Society Institute Fellowship and One World Award, and has exhibited work domestically and internationally, in Japan, South Africa and Italy.

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