

Galerie



Genesis Tramaine. PHOTO: KEENON PERRY

Artists throughout history have channeled divine inspiration to make sense of the universe and one's place within it. Following in that tradition is the contemporary Brooklyn painter Genesis Tramaine, whose hypnotic paintings explore biblical allegory through the vibrant lens of West African culture. "Each piece is a gospel song," Tramaine says of the 19 works that were recently featured in her first solo show at Almine Rech Gallery in London.

With an aesthetic rooted in modernism and a strong connection to the 1980s graffiti scene in New York, her singular portraits emerge from a monochromatic backdrop of cobalt blues, ochers, or deep crimson reds. The fragmented faces are an energetic frenzy of color, line, and shape, revealing the many facets of the black experience. "There are messages embedded in the foreground, the background, and the middle ground of the work," she says. "As a black woman, my grandmother taught me never to reveal everything—don't show all your colors up front."

Titled "Parables of Nana," the exhibition was an homage to the maternal line that runs through her family. "I was taught by my nana how to be strong in the face of adversity. She shaped my understanding of the journey of life." A few years ago, after working as a math teacher, Tramaine rejoined the Southern Baptist church as a queer woman and found her calling. "I always knew I wanted to be an artist of sorts, even if fine art wasn't something that I was aware of."

Working in her studio in Newark, New Jersey, Tramaine begins her daily practice with a prayer before starting work while still in a deeply introspective space, for up to ten hours at a time. "It's amazing to not be in the driver's seat of the process," she says. "I don't decide when I begin, and I don't decide when I am done. It's just one of the most beautiful things. The process is as much of a mystery to me as it would be for you."

"I think my work sings a very human song". And when each painting is complete, Tramaine's faith shines brightly. "I think my work sings a very human song," she says. "It's been so interesting to see people's connection with my art even if they don't have a direct connection with my form of spirituality. Our job as artists is to heal. We are healers."