

1-1-2015

Lay Your Burdens Down

Whitnee Levon Davis
Claremont Graduate University

Recommended Citation

Davis, Whitnee Levon, "Lay Your Burdens Down" (2015). *CGU MFA Theses*. 114.
http://scholarship.claremont.edu/cgu_mfatheses/114

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the CGU Student Scholarship at Scholarship @ Claremont. It has been accepted for inclusion in CGU MFA Theses by an authorized administrator of Scholarship @ Claremont. For more information, please contact scholarship@cuc.claremont.edu.

W. Levon Davis
123437
Artist Statement
11/10/15

I'm not of this world, but since I'm here I will do everything I can to live out my purpose; to tell stories that validate, affirm, and make people that look like me visible. Every culture has its storytellers. I translate written stories into images. Those stories can be in the form of a poem, song, novel, or play. The stories are works that I create. I often find my greatest inspiration starts from reading literary works. I am constantly seeking ways to make sure that Black people, especially Black women, are visually represented. Since my background is in poetry, both written and performance; my images move like poems. My work can be described as the Harlem Renaissance meeting the present. You can see Jazz and the Blues. You can hear the echoes of my family that traveled the red dirt roads in Mississippi. You can see the Southside of Chicago because that's where I'm from.

In my videos and photography you will find freedom, identity, sadness, fear, joy, peace, love, pain, grief, faith and more. I can see in my mind what colors to use for lighting to set the mood to bring out the feelings and ideas of the story. When I am concentrating on emotions, I am able to affect the viewer's moods. Another very important aspect of the work is the audio text. I use my voice as sculpture and performance to compliment the videos despite their ability to operate independently. My work pushes against the flatness of popular culture, but yet proves that it can create a life for itself in that space. I want viewers to participate in the experience of my work and the best path that I've found for this is through

feelings. Sometimes you remember what someone says, sometimes you remember what you saw, but you always recall how something made you feel. I want my work to stay with you. Emotions stay with you.