

Y. Malik Jalal and Rosa Duffy at Hi-Lo Press, Atlanta

By Taylor Janay Manigault



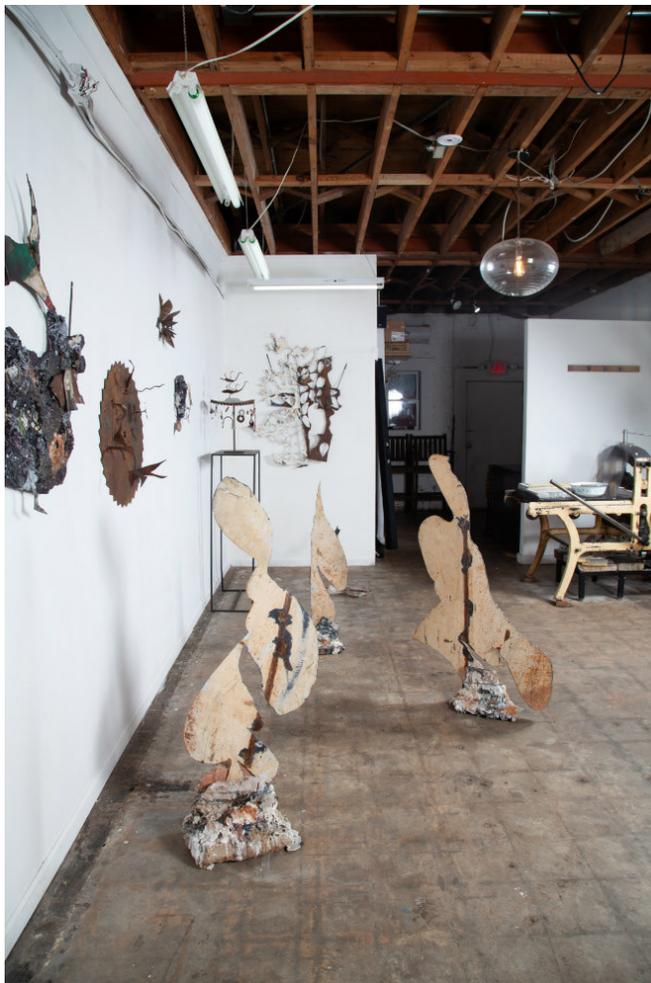
Rosa Duffy and Y. Malik Jalal, *because pearls and diamonds have not yet been heard to speak* at Hi-Lo Press (installation view), 2020. All photographs courtesy of Mo Costello and Hi-Lo Press, Atlanta.

because pearls and diamonds have not yet been heard to speak—the title of Y. Malik Jalal and Rosa Duffy’s exhibition of collaborative works at Hi-Lo Press in Atlanta—is a quote from *In The Break*, Fred Moten’s 2003 book on the aesthetics of jazz and the Black radical tradition. Moten’s choice of words—“have not yet”—suggests that the speech of these commodities exists even in the absence of a witness. Because our ancestors were themselves made into commodities, Black people challenge the conventional wisdom that objects do not speak. In their joint exhibition, Jalal and Duffy continue this disruption, complicating traditional understandings of commodities and subjectivity. The exhibition comprises ten difficult sculptures, dense in their appearance and emotional presence.

Though their combination may be unfamiliar, the materials used in the exhibition—steel, concrete, clay, paint, jewelry, wire, photographs, earth, rust—appear almost magically amalgamated. Three of the floor sculptures are tall, thin, amorphous plates of steel partially buried in mounds of concrete wrapped in metal wire. The steel plates, burnished tan on one side, reveal themselves as scraps of a sliced up painting by Jalal on the other. Both sides are weathered, worn over time, and, in some spots, caked with Georgia clay or dirt. Also weathered and smothered in materials, one of the boulder-shaped mounds of concrete is adorned with gold jewelry and a silver-studded cross, as though the mound is the jewelry’s material forebearer.

Black-and-white photographs of Black folks hang precariously—unlike the cemented jewelry—from several of the wall sculptures. A crudely cut, rusted and circular gear-like plate of steel is pierced with rusted steel: small, sharp, triangular plates and twig-like pieces. From one of those twig-like pieces hangs a black-and-white photograph of a Black couple posed in front of a floral background, perhaps less glamorous than the figures in photographs by Malick Sidibe but beautiful nonetheless.

Aside from the sculpture that appears as a strange hat with jewelry dangling from the brim, these objects have no technical use. These beautiful but “useless” objects may mirror the current predicament of Black people: we are no longer enslaved human commodities, which gifts us an illusory sense of freedom, but we are still often treated as objects even if we refuse to be used—even if we manage to emerge from that hell.



Rosa Duffy and Y. Malik Jalal, because pearls and diamonds have not yet been heard to speak at Hi-Lo Press (installation view), 2020.