

Sotheby's

For Kim Dacres, few consumer products are as fraught with meaning as the humble tire. She reads the material as a powerful metaphor for the mistreatment and perceived replaceability of Black people in the United States, and traces its ubiquity today to longer histories of colonial extractivism, such as Belgium's brutal rubber trade in the Congo. Even the double meaning of the word *tire* suggests a profound existential exhaustion with the vast systems of waste, disposal and exploitation that govern modern life.

Dacres' sculptures are commanding and startlingly animate. The Bronx-born artist braids and twists strips of black rubber and miscellaneous bicycle parts into intricate, abstracted busts of fictional characters, celebrities and significant individuals from her life: "My mom, my dad, my best friends," she says. "People who encouraged me to show up as myself."



KIM DACRES, *ALEX* (LEFT) AND *SKY* (RIGHT). IMAGES COURTESY THE ARTIST

Each is marked with a distinct hairstyle and facial expression. Some rest on plinths; others seem to meld with their supports, creating a fluid whole. Wrought from a limited range of materials in a nearly monochrome palette, their formal austerity belies a deeper, subtler power. Consider them totems, gods, sentinels.

Dacres spent almost a decade as an educator and administrator in the New York City public schools, becoming principal of a middle school in Harlem at the age of 26. Both works acquired by Celine allude to Dacres' experience in the classroom, where matters of self-presentation plague student and teacher alike.

Sky (2023), on view at Celine's Munich location on Maximilianstrasse, is based on a garrulous fourth-grade student whose 6-foot frame perfectly matched her exuberant personality. *Alex* (2023), at their Taipei 101 store, is an oblique self-portrait of the artist's androgynous, motorcycle-riding alter ego: a reminder of her former self, a fledgling teacher whose freshly shaved head prompted student questions about her dating life.



KIM DACRES, *DJ* (LEFT), *FINEAPPLE* (CENTER) AND *PATRICE* (RIGHT). IMAGES COURTESY THE ARTIST

“What is that personal space, that personal bubble, that the works need in order to be fully seen and fully respected?”

- KIM DACRES

During her weekly ritual of “Tire Tuesdays,” Dacres visits her favorite bike shops in New York to inspect and select damaged goods. Over years of collecting she’s amassed an impressive studio inventory and fostered an unmistakable connoisseurship: “It’s like being a librarian,” she says. Now she can quickly identify rare tread patterns, which are desirable for their contrast with more typical designs, and has even mapped broader social trends. The rising popularity of Citibikes, for example, led to the homogenization of her stock.

Lately, she’s been thinking about delivery gig workers, mostly Black and Brown people whose livelihood depends on ratings and tips. “There is a flippancy toward how we treat labor that I find very jarring,” she says, reflecting on the market forces that transform individuals into vehicles of ease and convenience for customers.

For Dacres, tires symbolize literal and social mobility. In her 2021 installation *Black Moves First*, she populated a life-size chessboard with eight elaborate, towering figures, providing an eloquent framework for the question: What might reality look like if the traditional rules of the game were reversed and Black people set the terms and conditions of play?



KIM DACRES, ALEX, 2023. IMAGE COURTESY CELINE TAIPEI

As Dacres' own installations grow more ambitious and richly realized – including an immersive, speculative environment collaboratively staged with April Bey in their two-person exhibition at UTA Artist Space in Atlanta – scale is increasingly a consideration. At one gallery opening, an older woman propped her elbow on Dacres' sculpture while chatting with the artist, seemingly unaware of her transgression. “What is that personal space, that personal bubble, that the works need in order to be fully seen and fully respected?”

Monuments and the construction of historical memory have been lightning-rod topics in the national conversation, and Dacres has particularly admired interventions by Simone Leigh, Kara Walker and Alison Saar. Recently she's been thinking about commemorating Seneca Village, the predominantly Black settlement cleared to make way for Central Park. How might large-scale sculpture, rather than celebrating and inscribing triumphalist narratives of social progress, disclose more complicated and layered stories – and honor those omitted from the record?

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