

Petzel

“The Artists: Marching to the Beat of Their Own Drum,” *T: The New York Times Style Magazine*,
November 27, 2020.

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THE ARTISTS

Marching to the Beat of Their Own Drum

Inspired by this year's protests against racial injustice, this Derek Fordjour painting reimagines the stars and stripes of the American flag.



"Boom!
Lockstep!
March!"
(2020) by Derek Fordjour.

Courtesy of the artist and Night Gallery, Los Angeles

In each installment of [The Artists](#), *T* highlights a recent or little-shown work by a Black artist, along with a few words from that artist putting the work in context. This week, we're looking at a painting by [Derek Fordjour](#), whose solo show at the Petzel Gallery, "[Self Must Die](#)," is on view through Dec. 19.

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Name: Derek Fordjour

Age: 45

Based in: New York City

Originally from: Memphis

When and where did you make this work? I completed this work in June at the height of the B.L.M. protest marches, hence the title, “Boom! Lockstep! March!” I added the birds flying in the opposing direction after biking home from my studio through a protest march in the South Bronx, where police helicopters were hovering above.

Can you describe what is going on in the work? Three marchers move in unison playing drums while birds gather overhead. I thought a lot about patriotic symbols — stars and bars from the flag have been remixed here. I think about these figures as shaking up democracy and quite literally moving to the beat of their own drum.

What inspired you to make this work? Like most people, I am excited and intrigued by the frequency and intensity of the national protests. It’s important to me that there is something at stake with every work that I make, especially now. I really wanted to connect what was happening in my studio with what was happening in the streets.

What’s the work of art in any medium that changed your life? My life continues to be changed by works of art. It is impossible for me to isolate a single moment. I hope this never stops.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/27/t-magazine/derek-fordjour.html>