



If Everybody's Work Is Equally Important? (II)

Date
2017

Primary Maker
LaToya Ruby Frazier

Medium
Four cyanotypes

Description

Braddock, Pennsylvania, near Pittsburgh, is a Rust Belt city that has been in economic decline since the 1930s, although it is still the site of the country's oldest fully integrated active steel mill. With the cessation of most industrial operations, however, the town's residents have been left in poverty and ill-equipped to contend with the negative health effects brought about by factory waste. "Braddock is one of the most toxic places in America," says the artist LaToya Ruby Frazier, who grew up in Braddock and is currently an assistant professor of photography at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Much of Frazier's practice to date has centered on her hometown. She captures the lives of her family

and community through portraiture, self-portraiture, and performance in an effort to probe issues of social responsibility, environmental pollution, class structure, race relations, and the health care crisis. *If Everybody's Work Is Equally Important? (II)* is part of a body of work created in reaction to a tone-deaf advertising campaign by Levi Strauss & Company that ran in 2010 comparing Braddock to the American frontier and including the slogans "Everybody's Work Is Equally Important" and "Ready to Work." Frazier remarked, "It's particularly insidious when you put a black man in a photograph, and then you slap on top of it 'Everybody's work is equally important,' especially when you know the history of the steel mills in Braddock. They didn't want to employ us; they barely employed us." This print series is related to a 2010 performance Frazier created in collaboration with the video artist Liz Magic Laser and performed outside a Levi's pop-up store in Soho, the once gritty and arty, now thoroughly commercialized New York City neighborhood. In the performance, Frazier—clad in Levi's denim—executed a series of choreographed movements borrowed from midcentury advertisements for the steel industry until she wore holes in the jeans. Issued in an edition of twelve, this suite of four cyanotypes—which recall denim in their coloration—documents four of the gestures. (SOURCE: Alcauskas, *INNOVATIVE APPROACHES, HONORED TRADITIONS*, 2017)

Dimensions

Sheet (each): 28 x 22 in. (71.1 x 55.9 cm) Frame (each): 32 3/8 x 26 3/8 x 2 in. (82.2 x 67 x 5.1 cm)