

# Monique Castiaux

## Artist Statement

As an artist, I am attracted to the thin edge between the beautiful and the hideous, the personal and the public, the past and the present. Although I have lived in the United States since 1978, I was born and raised in Belgium. The fact that I am the product of two cultures has intensified my desire to convey through my art a sense of time, history and a search for the communality of the human experience. I am interested in making pieces which reveal themselves to the viewer in layers over time, as I believe it makes the work more engaging and intriguing.

Chance takes the leading role when I start a new body of work. An image, an object, even a line will capture my attention and leads my exploring its possibilities. This series started from an image, which I saw in a newspaper, of workers in a rubber plantation in the Belgian Congo at the beginning of the 20th century. I did not know till I came to the United States how brutal Belgium had been as a colonial power. Through this work, I hope to highlight the dignity of the human race, even while under duress, as well as to show the horrific cruelty that is possible between humans, both then and now.

The bottle form, with its figurative aspect, its evocation of containment, and reference to potential curative properties seems like a good vehicle for my thoughts.

The piece called "I Am" interweaves two moments in history: the colonial era of the Belgian Congo, and the sanitation workers strike in Memphis, TN; which Martin Luther King attended the day before his death. The strikers were carrying signs proclaiming " I Am A Man". As with the other pieces in this series, my hope is that the viewer will be engaged with the work on a more personal level. At some point in our lives, we will all have to claim that "I Am".