

# I Can Make You Feel Good

I often think about what White fun looks like and this notion that Black people can't have the same. Growing up with Tumblr I would often come across images of sensual, young, attractive White models running around being free and having so much fun—the kind of stuff Larry Clark and Ryan McGinley would make. I seldom saw the same for Black people in images—or at least in the photography I knew. My work comes from a place of wanting to push back against this lack. I feel an urgency to create a body of images where Black people are visualized as free, expressive, effortless, and sensitive.

I aim to visualize what a Black utopia looks like or could look like. People say utopia is never achievable but I love photography's possibility of allowing me to dream and make that dream become very real.

In my work I use the tools of documentary reportage, portraiture, fashion photography, art photography, and filmmaking. I view fashion as a space and opportunity to have clothes enhance my message about the Black body. I make very little distinction between my commissioned and my personal works, using them both as an opportunity to create this utopian universe—whether that's photographing Beyoncé, Spike Lee, skaters in Cuba, or my very close friends.

Documented and real, or fictitious and staged, my images are characterized by an interest in purity and intimacy. In them, models recline, embrace each other closely, and peer into the lens, leaving evidence of a public display of affirmation in Blackness and a unifying visual text of hope. I also occasionally weave symbols into my portraits such as water guns and plastic resin chains—symbols of repression as a subtle reminder of the ways in which the Black body is still politicized, and sometimes unable to move through the real world as freely as I would like.

*I Can Make You Feel Good* is simply a declaration. And one that I feel is gut-punching in its optimism. It feels important at a time like this to declare such a thing.

— Tyler Mitchell









































