About the cover art  In Desire and the Black Masseur (2007), a series of graphite and charcoal drawings, Wardell Milan renders two skeletal, almost ghostly male figures frolicking or grappling against a white background. Inspired by the Tennessee Williams short story of the same title, Milan’s drawings bespeak both sexual and racial obsession, homoeroticism, and masochism. In Desire and the Black Masseur, one male figure is in ambivalent anguish, the other seemingly in glee, as arms and hands blur and melt together. Milan’s schematic and worked-over image exposes simultaneous fantasies of violence and vulnerability, of tangled bodies that not only invoke conceptions of race, manhood, and civilization but also make bare the rawness of life and death.

Milan, born in 1978 in Knoxville, lives and works in New York City. He has exhibited his artwork at the P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center, Long Island City; Studio Museum in Harlem, New York; Museum of the African Diaspora, San Francisco; and National Gallery of Art, Warsaw.


