



For Liberation and For Life

The Legacy of Black Dimensions in Art

August 23 – December 31, 2025

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Jamal Ademola

Jamal Ademola is an award-winning artist and filmmaker whose work bridges the gap between the African and the African American experience. Through film, video, animation, installation, and painting, he explores hidden emotional landscapes shaped by longing, migration, ritual, love, and the dream world. His work invites viewers to imagine Blackness beyond trauma, toward healing and spiritual expansion. Whether through animated cosmic deities or a moving image masquerades, each piece asks: Where do we belong when history forgets us? What shape does healing take?

His debut feature film “THEY CAME FROM THE CLOUDS” is currently in production with generous support from Comcast (NBCUniversal), BAVC Media, PAM-CUT, and Kala Art Institute. He’s been commissioned to direct “HOUSE OF AAMA : THREADS OF LEGACY” for PBS American Masters, and his experimental films “I DREAMED OF SEEING MYSELF” and “WHO SHOULD I BE IN THE WORLD?” have screened internationally.

Recent exhibitions and screenings include New York African Film Festival (2025), Wassaic Project (2025), DOC NYC (2024), August Wilson Center (2024), Images Festival (2024), Black Cultural Archives (2023), Alchemy Film and Arts Festival (2023, 2022), Kala Art Gallery (2022), The New School (2022), and White Space in Lagos (2021). He is represented by Where the Buffalo Roam for commercials, film, and television.

Artist Statement

There is no identity outside the formation of language.

And if I dream in English, does this make me an Englishman?

In all of my work, I am interested in what it means to exist in a Black body that has endured the horrors of slavery and colonization. My work seeks to move beyond that categorization into a space of remembering, where Blackness can be self-actualized and understood as the cosmic beginning of humanity. I attempt to reach this space through storytelling and ancestral recalling—calling back what was stolen: our ability to dream, our bronzes, our rituals, our masquerades, our cultures, our identities, our language, our pride, and our way of being.

As a Nigerian-American, born to an African father and a Black American mother, I acutely observe the cultural differences that emerge when living between two disparate Black worlds. By telling stories we rarely see, my work seeks to become a bridge that expands the perception of Blackness across the diaspora in hopes of evoking healing and a new sense of self.

IG @jamalademola

Marcus Kwame Anderson
(b. 1976)
He/Him/His

Marcus Kwame Anderson is an illustrator, cartoonist, and fine artist who was born in Kingston Jamaica, and moved to upstate New York at an early age. He has long been immersed in the arts, and has a particular passion for sequential storytelling. Marcus tells stories through paint, graphite, ink, and through comic book narratives. His most recently published works are collaborations with David F. Walker: the Eisner Award winning “The Black Panther Party: A Graphic Novel History” and the Eisner nominated, “Big Jim and The White Boy”.

Artist Statement

Much of my work is a representation of the beauty and diversity of the African Diaspora. I believe that the arts can be a powerful vehicle for change and I often incorporate social commentary into my work. I have a lot to say and art is my favorite form of communication.

marcuskwame.com
IG @marcus_kwame

Romare Bearden
(1911-1988)

Painter and collagist Romare Bearden (1911-1988) favored subjects related to jazz throughout his career. Influenced by music in his work, among other things, Bearden visually evokes the lively qualities of jazz in this image using brilliant color and layered forms. Created in 1980, this hand-colored etching titled *Out Chorus* is now part of the New York State Museum Collection.

April Bey
(b. 1987)
She/Her

April Bey (b. 1987) grew up in the Bahamas (New Providence) and now resides and works in Los Angeles as a visual artist and art educator. She is currently a tenured professor at Glendale College.

aprilbey.com

Diana Blain Fine
She/Her

Diana Blain Fine is a visual artist from The Gambia whose works across photography, collage, painting and installation represents her engagement with societal norms around beauty and power in Africa and the West; norms that incubated in the shadow of colonialism, Western primacy and aesthetic ideals that continue to reverberate today some six or more decades after we've regained our independence. The work interrogates the ways in which Western ideas of purity of body and beauty have left an indelible imprint on local and diasporic communities some six or more decades after we've regained our independence. Diana places herself in much of her work as both the objectified and objectifier, the ill-favored and the aspiration to create a visual portal for bearing witness to and engaging with the practices and messaging around beauty, skin, otherness/blackness and power. Her work is an offering, an invitation to take an unflinching look at what we take in as consumers and what we ultimately make of ourselves in our human need for worth, power and social advancement.

Diana is a graduate of Columbia University with a B.A. degree in Sociology. An artist and a farmer, she currently lives on her farm in rural upstate New York.

Artist Statement

My current portraiture project, *The Future's So Bright*, represents my engagement with societal norms around beauty and power in Africa and the West; norms that incubated in the shadow of colonialism, Western primacy and aesthetic ideals that continue to reverberate today. The work interrogates the ways in which Eurocentric ideas of purity of body and beauty have left an indelible imprint on local and diasporic communities some six or more decades after we've regained our independence. Specifically, the work explores identity modification through the toxic obsession with skin bleaching that consumes Africa and the "Global South". The portraits and art pieces depict dark beauty as well as an uneasiness with the self, fractured interiority and the disembodiment effects of adherence to prescribed beauty standards. I place myself in much of my work as both the objectified and objectifier. In doing so, I create a visual portal to bare witness and engage with the practices and messaging around beauty, blackness and power.

dianablainfine.com
IG @dianablainfine

Julia Bottoms

(b. 1988)

She/Her

I began working professionally as an artist in 2017 with my first major solo show at Buffalo Arts Studio. My early work developed as a response to the media's repetition of racially biased imagery in the wake of the Trayvon Martin case. It rejected the hyper-sexual, violent, and sinister portrayal of people of color that saturated the media. Some of my most notable projects include Before and After, Again exhibited at the Buffalo AKG Art Museum, The Freedom Wall mural, A Light Under The Bushel exhibited at the Burchfield Penney Art Center, and the official memorial sculpture for Shirley Chisholm's gravesite. My work has been featured in The Buffalo Spree, The Challenger, HBO's Insecure, online through AfroPunk, EBONY, Hyperallergic, the New York Times, and Time Magazine. Additionally my work has been acquired in the permanent collections of the Burchfield Penney Art Center, the Flint Institute of Art, the Buffalo AKG Art Museum, Kenyon College, and The Harvard Club of New York City. I received a BA in Art from Buffalo State college in 2012 and my Masters in 2017.

Artist Statement

I am a visual artist based out of Buffalo, NY working primarily in oils and acrylic. My work often addresses the topic of race and identity as it relates to one's position in mainstream culture. I view my portraits as an opportunity to counter the harmful stigmas and stereotypes imposed on Black and Brown individuals by popular media. My work is reminiscent of classical portraiture, however it carries a contemporary social justice message. Working primarily in oil and acrylic, I push back against the media's misrepresentation of the individuals I select as models. I often present my figures in a vulnerable, sensitive, and innocent manner in an attempt to shine a spotlight on the beauty and humanity of each sitter. The three pieces I am submitting for consideration are specifically about Womanhood and the experience of navigating the world as a Black little girl, mother, and professional. The first painting titled Victory Through Words, presents a powerful young woman who is breaking barriers in her field. She is depicted as an almost saintly and warrior-like historic figure, and yet there are details hidden throughout the work that anchor the viewer in the present. The second and third paintings (titled Girlhood; So Much Is Fortification and Womanhood; So Much Is Letting Go) function both independently and together to tell the story of the transition between Black girlhood to Black woman/ motherhood and the challenges the world places on each role. The figures in the portraits me and my own family, so while these two works speak to a broad theme, they are also some of my most personal pieces as of yet. All three of these paintings also feature a frame I handmade.

juliabottoms.com
IG @Julia_Bottoms_Art

**Kwame Brathwaite
(1938-2023)**

Beginning in the 1960s, photographer Kwame Brathwaite and his brother Elombe Brath (1936-2014) helped popularize the “Black is Beautiful” movement and organized “Naturally” fashion shows in which women wore natural hair, little or no makeup, and African-inspired clothing in a celebration of their African heritage.

kwamebrathwaite.com

**Aleathia Brown
(b. 1963)**

Aleathia Brown is an Artist, Artrepreneur, Teaching Artist, Poetic-Storyteller. Aleathia embodies Community, History, Art and Culture. June 2025 "A Nite at the Apollo" one of Aleathia's paintings was selected as the commemorative piece gifted to VIP guests at the Theater for its closing ceremony to go under major renovations. Exhibition "IYA" Women's Herstory 2025 Arthur Rose Museum at Claflin University Orangeburg SC. Solo Exhibition, Bronx Library Center Black History Month 2025 co-joined with books of Black and Latino History telling visual and written stories. Winner of the McDonald's nugget campaign this collaboration with the Harlem Arts Alliance lead to Her Art on the Times Square digital Billboard January 2024. Annually exhibits Her Art in the Juneteenth Fundraiser with Empower the Village held at the Montclair Museum of Art. Aleathia exhibits frequently with the Harlem Fine Art Show. 2023 their summer series HFAS Curated "DUALITY" Aleathia's Art touched on spiritual wellness. 2025 Harlem Fine Art Show, New Heritage Theater Group in Collaboration with The Dwyer Cultural Center awarded Aleathia a Citation for Her Commitment to Visual Artists and Community. March 2023 a proclamation from Manhattan Community Board 10 Arts & Culture in Central Harlem awarded Ms. Brown for her contribution in Art, Culture and Community.

Ms. Brown is listed with the archival department at the National Museum of Women in the Arts since 1995 preserving Her Legacy.

Artist Statement

My artwork is a visual language expressing my power and my strength. I am a scientist weighing the scales, mixing mediums, provoking open dialogue. The nuances and intricacies of my Art reveals layers of discovery not visual to the naked eye. My diversity is culturally unlimited. I speak to the Human Spirit. On my journey, texture, color, music, poetry embody my visual story they are some of the elements inspiring me to create. Motion, Visually Alluring, Meditative and Spirit-filled are just a few ways to describe the feeling conveyed in the body of my artwork. When the Art starts speaking back to me, that right there, is the flow that finishes my art. I transmit experiences for an audience to ingest. Visual Art lends countless experiences to express. My freedom is unapologetic on and off the canvas as I tell bold, colorful truth without words. Harlem gave me my voice, the Bronx nurtured some of my wounds. Each New York space has cultivated my vast interest to tell stories in a variety of ways using the power of image embracing authentically Me. Art heals spiritually in a world that often erases and edits details that divinely enhance... I am a storyteller illuminating my journey, gender, heritage simply provoking dialogue.

aleathiasart.us
IG @aleathias_original_artworks

**R. Guy Brown
(1929-1997)**

R. Guy Brown, a proud Harlem native, built his career in graphic arts before retiring from the New York State Office of General Services in 1987. Educated at Parsons School of Art and Pratt University, he poured his love for creativity into mentoring young artists in his community. An active member of the Albany and Sanford-Lee County NAACP, he also served as president of the New York State Black Arts and Cultural Festival. His passion for art lives on through the work of his son, Royal G. Brown, carrying forward a legacy of creativity and care.

Royal G. Brown

Royal is as much a shaman and mystic as an artist. He was mentored from an early age by his father, art director in the Office of General Services for the state of New York. Royal experiments with pastels, oil, and acrylic paints, and in sculpture. He earned a BA in fine arts from SUNY Albany in 1995. Going on to earn his MSW he now works full time as a therapist. Gallery showings including the Knott Gallery at the Schenectady Museum, Hudson Valley Community College and the NYS Bi-Annual exhibit. Recent shows 2018-2023 include the Dorsky Gallery, Massery Gallery and the Spring Street Gallery.

He was expected to fully engage in a Western world view but found too many contradictions. So, he delved deeply into mysticism, finding it totally compatible with the findings of quantum physics. He earned a BA in fine arts from SUNY Albany in 1995. This was followed by an MSW from the same university in 2011. During this time, he also continued his study of earth centered traditions. Earning the grade of first-degree Wicca practitioner, devotee of the Yoruba tradition of Ifa, quantum physics and Kabala. In 2011 Royal was initiated as a Babalawo, or priest of the shamanistic Yoruba tradition of Ifa.

Artist Statement

My primary interests have always had a spiritual focus. The paintings and sculptures are inspired by the confluence of myth, magic, and quantum physics. My experiences practicing more tribal or non-western paths is reflected in my work. I use art as a process to meditate, heal, learn, and manifest spiritual forces. The creation of sacred objects like masks, statues or temples have been the purpose of art making predates the western religious caricatures or art for art's sake. Spiritually is emotional and, at times, frightening, for this reason I embrace a lack of mathematical or geometric forms. Instead, I look to bring form out of chaos. The spiritual process expressed in art forms. My paintings and sculptures have become a biography of inner transformation and mental decolonization.

IG @royalbrown2630

Jillian Marie Browning

Jillian Marie Browning (she/they) is an interdisciplinary artist whose work engages themes of feminism, identity, and the contemporary Black experience. Rooted in both personal narrative and broader cultural critique, Browning's practice spans photography, printmaking, and alternative photographic processes. Their work often interrogates systems of representation, reclaiming archival forms and visual language to center Black femme subjectivity.

Born in Ocala, Florida, Browning earned a Bachelor of Science in Photography from the University of Central Florida in 2012, followed by a Master of Fine Arts in Studio Art from Florida State University in 2015. Their work has been exhibited nationally and is included in the permanent collections of the Center for Photography at Woodstock, the Southeast Museum of Photography, and the David C. Driskell Center for the Study of Visual Arts and Culture of African Americans and the African Diaspora at the University of Maryland. Browning currently serves as Assistant Professor of Photography at the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

Artist Statement

This work examines the formation of identity and the enduring significance of place. Through the mediums of self-portraiture and the 19th-century photographic process of cyanotype, I explore the intersection of personal history, ancestral memory, and botany—constructing visual topographies that speak to the layered experience of inheritance and belonging. These works trace the contours of landscapes that appear untamed, yet are rich with whispered narratives—sites where resilient flora act as silent witnesses and carriers of intergenerational knowledge.

Central to this series is the sugarcane plant, a symbol deeply entwined with my familial lineage. Its tall, swaying stalks echo the texture and presence of my locs, creating a visual metaphor that binds my corporeal identity to the land itself. The specific cane depicted in this work was planted by my father and allowed to grow wild for years. It stands now as a living archive—a testament to care, endurance, and continuity. The same hands that cultivated this plant also nurtured me; the same soil that sustained it grounded my earliest understandings of self and place.

The cyanotype process, with its roots in scientific documentation and taxonomy, becomes a vehicle for reclaiming narrative and bodily autonomy. Historically used to catalog botanical specimens, this medium is recontextualized in my work to examine and resist the legacy of exploitation within gynecological medicine—particularly as it relates to the histories of Black women. By positioning my Black femme body within this process, I assert visibility, agency, and a critical reimaging of archival practice. Each print becomes both artifact and act of resistance, embodying the sacred ties between nurture, survival, and self-definition.

jillianmariebrowning.com
IG @jillianmariebrowning

Michael A. Butler
(b. 1955)
He/Him

Michael A. Butler is a self-taught regional painter. He describes his artistic style as narrative folk art. His medium of choice is acrylic having progressed from ink and crayon, pastel and oil. The quick drying time as well as the precision that he is able to achieve influenced this decision.

With a Masters degree in Public Administration Butler's professional working career was in the field of human services. He is in what he describes as his "third retirement" having been last employed as general manager of the Sag Harbor Whaling and Historical Museum. He has conducted art workshops with children and senior citizens alike and periodically curates art exhibits in his locality. Butler briefly operated his own art gallery, Jonkonnu Gallery in Sag Harbor, NY.

Mr. Butler has served as a judge of high school student art competitions for the Ross School, East Hampton, NY; Southampton Youth Services music competition, Southampton, NY; and as a Decentralization Grant Panelist for the NYS Council on the Arts. He is currently a board member of the Long Island Museum of American Art, History and Carriages.

Mr. Butler has had solo exhibits at Gallery Merz, Paradise at Night, the John Jermain Memorial Library and the Eastville Community Historical Society in Sag Harbor, NY; Amagansett Library, Amagansett, NY; the Hampton Library, Bridgehampton, NY; and Ma's House, Southampton, NY. His works are in the collections of the Long Island Museum of American Art, History and Carriages (Stony Brook, NY), Amagansett Library (Amagansett, NY) and Sylvester Manor (Shelter Island, NY).

Artist Statement

In my more recent works I am exploring the themes of bringing to fruition the hidden stories and forgotten histories of unrecognized populations. Specifically, I reference the enslaved or recently freed individuals and/or indigenous peoples of eastern Long Island in Suffolk County, New York. My paintings have typically depicted scenes from mythology, religious iconography, personal stories or dreamscapes and these local histories provide me with ample subject material. I am further influenced by the ocean and bays which surround this region and my paintings frequently incorporate such scenes.

Raúl Ayala Carrasquillo

(b. 1946)

He/Him

Raúl Ayala Carrasquillo, son of Castor Ayala and Pastora Carrasquillo, received his primary and secondary education in Loíza, Puerto Rico, before earning a Bachelor of Liberal Arts with a concentration in economics from the University of Puerto Rico. His public service career included roles on the Puerto Rico Planning Board from 1971 to 1975 and as a Government Management Specialist in the Puerto Rico Office of Management and Budget from 1975 to 1999. He was also a foundational member of the first City council of Loíza when the town's municipality was restored in 1970.

Beyond his professional career, Raúl is a renowned artisan who carries on the tradition of his father, Castor Ayala, famous for his vejigante masks. Raúl's carved coconut masks are a significant part of Loíza's history, and they have gained international recognition, attracting collectors from around the world. He has participated in numerous international fairs and exhibitions across Europe, United States, and Puerto Rico, showcasing his artistry and cultural heritage.

Raúl is also the director of the Ballet Folklórico Hermanos Ayala, a Folkloric Ballet he has been a part of since its establishment in 1959. In this role, he contributes as a Bomba player, singer, and dancer. This year, the Ballet Folklórico Hermanos Ayala celebrates its 66th anniversary, a testament to its enduring mission of preserving and sharing African cultural heritage. Throughout his long tenure, he has become a leading expert on the Puerto Rican bomba, a knowledge he is dedicated to sharing with others.

Artist Statement

The coconut vejigante masks that Raúl creates are a journey through the history of the town of Loíza, Puerto Rico. They are used in a festival called "Fiestas Tradicionales en Honor a Santiago Apóstol" (Traditional Festival in Honor to St. James Apostle) These masks have traveled the world, as people from all over come to Loíza to obtain them as collector's items.

They are made of coconut and painted with enamel paint. You can wear them in the festival or display them at your home, offices, or museums among others.

William PK Carter
(b. 2001)
She/He/They

William PK Carter is a quilter and puppet artist based in Central Valley, New York. She bridges the puppet and fine art worlds by fabricating wondrous creatures that exist at the intersection of queerness and blackness. She received her Bachelor of Science in Studio Art from Skidmore College in 2023, and her work has been exhibited and performed in theaters, galleries, and museums across the east coast. Notable venues include Puppet Showplace Theater (Brookline, MA), La Mama Experimental Theatre Club (New York, NY), Dixon Place (New York, NY), The Old Stone House of Brooklyn (Brooklyn, NY), The Ritz Theatre (Newburgh, NY), and The Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery (Saratoga Springs, NY). Carter is the recipient of Skidmore College's President's Racial Justice Award (2021), the Van Dewater Memorial Award (2022), and the John P. Heins Award: Outstanding Senior Thesis Exhibition (2023). She has just completed her time as part of the 2025 cohort of Puppet Showplace's Creative Residency for Black Puppeteers (Brookline, MA) and as a resident artist at Ma's House (Southampton, NY). Carter is currently a fellow in Ann Street Gallery's Emerging Artist Fellowship (Newburgh, NY), and is currently developing a full-length theater piece about removing the "prey mentality" from the Queer Black identity.

Artist Statement

My work consists of illustrative quilts and fabric puppets that coalesce into fantasy-inspired musical vignettes. Featuring human-faced creatures, stitched together with golden thread and adorned with glitter tulle, my quilts and puppet performances theatricalize the many aspects of my experience as a queer person of color in this country. Working with commonly found textiles, the vibrant colors and textures of my work invoke the comfort of a warm and safe blanket- inviting my audience to engage in narratives that may be otherwise uncomfortable.

Making work that exists between the puppet and fine art worlds, I am able to use formal elements from one to inform the other. I incorporate the effectiveness of movement from puppetry and the visual impact of fine art to create transformative installations and performances. Maintaining their power even without puppeteers, my puppets act as soft sculptures. Conversely, my quilts are constantly moving, becoming a theatrical play with characters, scenes, and plot as the eye travels through their stitchwork. Using the tactility of feathers, beads, and other materials that are found in costume and scenic design, I combine my quilts and puppet performances into one unified body of work.

Following in the footsteps of Black American and Caribbean quilters, my work serves as a documentation of the current state of our world, and provides my own insight into traversing it. I tell stories of finding community- of longing for love- of performing identity- of metamorphosis- of internalized shame- and of being a spectacle. My work communicates these vulnerable and intense themes by presenting them as beautiful universal truths. Coming from the mouths of singing creatures as they change form, it helps those who relate feel seen and understood.

I believe that human beings are larger and more abstract than their bodies appear to be, and my work gives physicality to that unseen extensivity. Creating works of fantasy allows the audience to relate to other worldly characters, encouraging them to identify with creatures that don't physically resemble themselves. My work envelops the viewer in a world where they can release the outside expectations that they subconsciously uphold, and find connection and community in avenues that they would never have expected.

williampkcarter.com

IG @baeslleaf

Elizabeth Catlett
(1915–2012)

“The big question for me as a Black woman is how do I serve my people? What is my role? What form do I use, what content, what are my priorities?” – Catlett quoted in Gouma-Peterson, *Elizabeth Catlett: The Power of Human Feeling and of Art*, 1983

Catlett’s sculpture is characterized by curvilinear shapes and smooth materials that emphasize the depicted beauty of the subject. *Woman Figure* blends stylized abstraction and realism to portray strength and the elegance and dignity of Black women. As a printmaker and sculptor, Catlett lived in Harlem, New York and taught at the George Washington Carver School prior to moving to Mexico in 1946. While living abroad, her work continued to be produced in solidarity with the Civil Rights and Black Power movements.

Mika Chante

Mika Chante is a self-taught beadwork artist creating heirloom-quality pieces that honor African diasporic traditions, folklore, and ceremony. Beading since the age of eight, Chante's work blends meticulous hand-weaving techniques—such as brick stitch, netting, and Ndebele stitch—with cultural symbolism and storytelling. Her designs span from ceremonial masks and bridal veils to beaded collars and tapestries, often incorporating materials like Japanese and Czech glass, gems and crystals as well as Swarovski elements and vintage beads.

Artist Statement

My work is rooted in memory, tradition, and the power of adornment. I use beadwork as a language to explore identity, grief, ancestral connection, and beauty within the African diaspora. Without inherited patterns or passed-down instruction, I've taught myself to weave threading stories into every piece I create.

I am drawn to the ceremonial and symbolic. Whether I'm building bridal veils, collars, masks, or tapestry, my intention is to honor what has been lost, stolen, or forgotten, and to offer something lasting in its place. I use time-intensive hand weaving techniques, not just for their visual impact, but as acts of reverence toward cultures and traditions that span both continents and centuries.

TaMeuBem.com
IG @TaMeuJewelry
YT Beadwork Beyond Ceremony

Peter M. Clarke Jr.

I am an English born, mixed race American artist. My artistic journey started with the least expensive supplies my mother could afford us. As a dyslexic person I found my peace in lines. The search for finding comfort in my chaotic existence has always been the solitude of deep concentration and understanding simplicity. I have worked as a muralist, designer, illustrator and Tattooer. I am a student of Japanese tattooing and have worked in the Albany area as a Tattooer since 2009, during which time I have also published illustrations, sold paintings and drawings and continuously added to the ever growing encyclopedia of tattoo designs. My fine art is currently the search for balance and I try to display that through simplicity, legibility and an understanding of our natural world.

Ja'Deana Cognetta-Whitfield

Ja'Deana Cognetta-Whitfield (they, them, she) is a multimedia artist, curator, and community activist from Schenectady, NY. They received a BFA from Russell Sage College in 2023 and anticipate their MFA from Maryland Institute College of Art in 2027.

They focus on documentary/analog photography, curating, and collage as their main mediums; specifically using found and captured images to create works that focus on the Black subject. Ja'Deana's practice includes themes such as identity, community, and family, both biological and found. Regardless of the outlet, their mission is always to strive to tell the stories of the unheard and show the faces of the overlooked, with hopes of making space for them in and outside of the art world. And to remind their peers of the importance of Black creativity, which is and can be absolutely revolutionary.

They received recognition for their art and advocacy work through Capital Region's Times Union, The Daily Gazette, and were awarded two Usher Fine Arts Awards and the Emanuel's Friedens Baptist Church, Dignity for All Award. They have been featured in group exhibitions throughout Upstate NY, such as Opalka Gallery, Capital Region Arts Center, Saratoga Arts, etc. And has curated four shows through Sage's Little Gallery in Albany, NY. Ja'Deana is a grantee of CRNY Guaranteed Income for Artists, and a member of Black Dimensions Arts Inc. & Black Women Photographers.

Artist Statement

The 50th Anniversary of BDA to me is 50 years worth of preserving and continuing community. Liberation and Life has been the ability to capture community. Each person is more than just a subject or a sitter, it's family..found family. Family that will continue to grow and survive with helping hands and recognition of our legacies. To 50 years, and 50 more!

jcwvisions.com
IG @afro4rt_

**Cornelia Cole
(1924–2006)**

“Art has given me great satisfaction and a sense of well being since I was a child. My first attempts at drawing and painting were to draw things exactly as they appeared to me. Later I discovered clay—The excitement of building—adding, taking away, pushing; a live thing under my fingers.

If I can give someone else that sense of accomplishment, of constant discovery, new areas to explore and discover with whatever materials they choose to work with, I will feel a sense of satisfaction. To me art is for everyone. Beauty can be seen anytime, anywhere, however fleeting the moment; if the senses are educated and open to absorb.” – Cornelia Cole, 1976

D. Colin

D. Colin is a multidisciplinary artist who works primarily in poetry, visual art and theater. A muralist, collage artist, and painter, her work explores themes of identity, healing, and Black cultural memory. She has exhibited at the Tang Teaching Museum, Albany Center Gallery, Spring Street Gallery, the Arts Center of the Capital Region, and the Henry and Miriam Butzel Art Gallery, among others. She is a board member of Black Dimensions in Art, Inc. and a founding member of the Social Justice Artists Collective.

In theater, D. Colin recently made her debut as a set designer for *Eclipsed*, a production she also previously performed in. As an actor and playwright, she has collaborated with Black Theater Troupe of Upstate NY, Creative Action Unlimited, Troy Foundry Theater, and WAM Theater—most recently performing in *Where We Stand*. Her original plays, *Simone: a one-woman show* and *Psalm 91: Releasing Religion*, merge poetry and memoir to tell powerful stories rooted in resilience and transformation.

She is also a Cave Canem and NYS Writers Institute Fellow, with poems published in *EcoTheo Review*, *Portrait of New England*, *Porter Gulch Review*, and *Trolley Literary Journal*. Across disciplines, D. Colin uses art as a tool for reflection, resistance, and collective healing.

Artist Statement

My art is a journey inward and outward—an exploration of identity, memory, and resilience. As a multidisciplinary artist and Black woman of Haitian descent, I create to reclaim space, confront silence, and transform personal and collective experiences into visual language. Self-portraiture and portraits telling stories that have impacted me have become central to my practice, not as an act of vanity, but as a practice of witnessing myself with honesty, care, and power. I am drawn to themes of healing, grief, joy, and the sacred. Through layering, symbolism, and color, I invite viewers into a conversation about what it means to be whole in a fragmented world.

dcolin.com

Miki Conn
(b. 1944)

Miki Conn is an artist and craftsperson who works in a variety of mediums including clay, collage, fabrics, paintings and graphics design. Her work has been exhibited in Boston, Syracuse, Albany, Schenectady, and Nairobi, Kenya. Miki has taught creative arts in schools, recreation programs, churches and community centers to children and adults and facilitates workshops to encourage people to access their creativity. Miki is a storyteller, specializing in stories from the African Diaspora and a poet, having read her poetry in many local settings, on local television and published a book of her poetry. She has published 3 children's books and a memoir.

Ms. Conn studied art at Howard University, the Corcoran School of Art, Massachusetts College of Art, State University of New York at Albany and Junior College of Albany and has taken workshops in a variety of creative techniques.

Born in Brooklyn, NY, Miki spent her childhood years in Alaska. A rich African American/Native American heritage inspired Conn's interest in indigenous art and multiculturalism. Her travels and independent studies have taken her to several African Countries, including 4 years in East Africa, and visits to South, West and North Africa, Europe, Hawaii, Brazil and Cuba. The impact of these travels can be seen in the themes expressed in her art and stories.

Conn was a founding member of Black Dimensions in Art through which she helped plan numerous exhibitions of work by Black Artists. She was director of the Hamilton Hill Arts Center, and managed several art galleries which featured work by artists of color.

Speaking of her work, Conn says, "My art is grounded in the African American experience. It expresses moments, feelings and objects in our lives that want to be recognized and remembered. Much of my work concerns people and the beauty of the lives we live in a way that connects all of us. I enjoy bright colors and patterns in my art and storytelling is important in my imagery and my poetry."

Robert Cooper

Robert Cooper is a photographer and journalist living in upstate New York with 15 years of experience. Born in Lansing, Mi., he moved to Hartford, Ct. where he got his start in photography before moving to the capital region of New York. His photography fluidly encompasses portraits, fashion, concerts, and events. His photography has been published along with his writings in the Hartford Advocate, New African Woman a magazine out of England, The Alt weekly alternative paper in New York's capital region, Essence magazine, and Black Hair Magazine. His photographic eye has been used by various poets for their book and cd covers, as well as music artist for promotion and marketing purposes. He has had his photos exhibited in shows in Hartford, Ct., Manchester, Ct., Springfield, Ma., Troy, NY and Waterford, NY. He has a series of photography zines that range in themes including his Hip-Hop photography (Elements), Dancehall/Reggae concert photography (Stage Show), film photography (Captured on 35mm), and photos from Detroit (Scenes from the 313) as well as others. Recently he started a YouTube series called "The Gallery," which focuses on photography as an art form and he was part of the curation team that brought the exhibit "Can't Stop Won't Stop: 50 Years of Hip-Hop," to the Albany Center Gallery.

Artist Statement

As a Black photographer with a Pan-African worldview, my work is a celebration of representation—both as an artist behind the lens and through the images I create. Specializing in portraits, events, and concerts, I strive to capture authentic moments that honor the creativity, individuality, and humanity of Black people across diverse contexts.

robertcoopermedia.com

David Cottes
(1919-2009)

Born to Puerto Rican immigrants, Cottes was an active member of the Puerto Rican Art Movement in East Harlem and worked at the Center for Puerto Rican Cultural Relations. Known to paint scenes of figures in crowded subways, Cottes' *The Ride* depicts abstracted, androgynous figures in earth tones grouped together with fists upraised. The upraised fists act as representations of people holding onto subway rails while simultaneously referencing the raised fist as a symbol of power and solidarity. Cottes did not prefer to adhere to one type of style according to a quote from 1981: "Art is a part of life, and life just goes on...when painters get too personal they reach a cul de sac - they can't go further, and what happens is repetition."

**James Counts
(1925-2006)**

“In my work, I attempt to instill the true sense of History, Strength, Character, Beauty and Pride of Black People.” – James Counts, 1976

Counts was a self-taught sculptor invested in creating art pertinent to Black History, with a majority of his work celebrating the beauty of Black women. He credits his time in the United States Navy, where he said he learned how to braid and tie knots, as influence for the beautiful and intricate details of the braiding he produces in his sculptures, as seen in *Black Female*. Counts believes braids have important, historical ties with Black women. The visual element of the braid is one example of his larger artistic goal: to expose the overlooked history and contributions of Black people to audiences everywhere.

**Ernest Crinchlow
(1914–2005)**

Born in Brooklyn, Crichlow was the second child in a family of nine children to parents who immigrated to the States from Barbados. He studied at the School of Commercial Illustrating and Advertising Art in Manhattan. Crichlow supplemented his income as an artist by working as an instructor, an illustrator for children's books and as a consultant for the Board of Education of the Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood. Crichlow was a strong advocate for Black art and artists and in 1969, he cofounded the Cinque Gallery with Romare Bearden and Norman Lewis. The gallery remained in operation until 2004.

During a 1968 Oral History with the Smithsonian Archives of American Art, Crichlow stated that he wanted to portray an inner strength within his painted figures: "a purple, black strength that is almost like wood, like ebony, that has a tremendous beauty and strength and at the same time almost looks fragile."

Stanwyck Cromwell

I am a Guyanese-born artist and a Naturalized American Citizen, who have spent the vast amount of my adult life, in the United States of America. Despite my lengthy absence from my country of origin, my memories of Guyana, are rich and abundant. A visual kaleidoscope from this exotic country reveals itself in my work. My self-portraits are mythical mirrors through which I am able to reflect and reminisce about the Guyana I once knew as a child. My other works reflect the social and political situation that I'm continually witnessing. Despite the dates of creation on these pieces, the topics and issues, still remain relevant today.

Artist Statement

These four pieces of work submitted are much more than artworks. They are very relevant to the current, social, economic and political situation that we've found ourselves in. Moreover the choice of these four pieces, were motivated by the lyrics of two songs of the 70s.

1. "Who's gonna the weight", by Kool and The Gang
2. "War", by Edwin Starr

stancromwell.com

**Margaret Cunningham
(1919–2016)**

Margaret Cunningham was born and raised in Brooklyn, NY and moved to the Capital District with her husband and children in 1957. Starting from a natural interest in art during her early childhood, she studied and developed her skills at Hampton Institute, Howard University and State University of NY in Albany. As an artist, she painted in oils and watercolors and was also a potter. She taught pottery in Mt. Edgecumbe, Alaska, at the Arbor Hill Community Center in Albany, at the YWCA in Schenectady, and at the Hamilton Hill Arts Center. Much of her painting was done when on vacation, visiting with other artists and enjoying nature.

Mrs. Cunningham was the founder of the Hamilton Hill Arts Center and served as Executive Director for 23 years. She was also a founding member of Black Dimensions in Art, Inc. serving as President for the first thirteen years, and of the Benign Enous Tough Luck fund, a revolving loan fund for area college students. During the sixties, she was a founding member of the CORE SINGERS, a folksinging group that raised funds for the Congress of Racial Equality and carried the message of the Civil Rights movement to the public in their concerts. She played guitar for the group and sang and taught folk guitar in her home. She also served on numerous local boards.

Margaret was the mother of two daughters, both of whom became artists and was married to Dr. James Cunningham. The Cunninghams traveled extensively and lived for four years in Alaska.

**Fern Cunningham-Terry
(1949–2020)**

Fern Cunningham-Terry was born in New York, New York, daughter of Dr. James F. Cunningham, and Mrs. Margaret B. Cunningham, artist. She spent her younger years in Alaska and upstate, NY.

Fern excelled in art and knew she wanted to be an artist from a young age. She attended college in the fine arts program at Boston University, where she was mentored by John Wilson. She began teaching at the Elma Lewis School of Fine Arts in 1970. Her commitment to teaching and creating art continued throughout her life. She taught in Boston Public Schools and then at the Park School in Brookline, where she taught art for over thirty years. She mentored countless students throughout the years.

Cunningham-Terry is best known for her public works of art, which beautify spaces throughout the City of Boston and honor Black history, experiences and communities while celebrating families and relationships. Her first public sculpture, “Save the Children”, was completed in 1973, and was installed in concrete. After it was destroyed by vandals, Fern determined that she could still create outdoor art if she used a stronger medium. Her subsequent public pieces, cast in bronze, include Family Circle, which depicts a man, woman and child embracing, The Value of a Life, depicting two children remembering loved ones lost to violence, The Sentinel, depicting an African woman overlooking Forest Hills Cemetery, Step on Board, a memorial to Harriet Tubman, and Rise, completed with her cousin, artist Karen Eutemy, a tribute at the entry to Mattapan Square which honors the legacy of the various communities that have lived there throughout history. To honor Fern’s “significant impact on Boston public art and the surrounding community,” Mayor Martin Walsh declared August 20, 2020, Fern Cunningham-Terry Day in the City of Boston.

I. Joseph Daniel

I. Joseph Daniel is a self taught artist, born in a little steel town just south of Pittsburgh, PA, called Duquesne in the year 1939. He spent the majority of life in Saratoga Springs, NY and now resides in Port St. Lucie, FL. He has been painting for over sixty years. He works in all mediums however he has mastered oils and watercolors and this has enriched him in all subjects. His work depicts all aspects of life (spiritual, ethnic, wildlife, and landscape), but his preferred subject matter is the spiritual.

Artist Statement

As with the meaning of life, my paintings must be explored and dissected to find deeper meaning. Yet in the end, the obvious and the mysterious and the blending of colors together, presents a stunning picture of scenes in life. My wide range of subject matter, however, has elicited awe and praise from my critics, who have found their own favorites in my works, from fruit on exquisite lace, to glorious walks through the canals in Venice, Italy. So world, journey with me through past and present, with my special blending of brilliant oils on canvas and watercolors on paper. With these eclectic views of people, nature, animals, architecture and scenes, I have attempted to capture for the viewer what the eye can behold yet only the mind and spirit can interpret.

**Francelise Dawkins
(b. 1951)**

Francelise Dawkins is a Parisian “textile collagist”, who’s been living in the U.S. for four decades. She first studied Fiber Arts at the Art League School of Indianapolis before moving to NY, where she developed her “meditative” concept in textile collages. She has since exhibited or taught in venues such as the Museum of American Design in NYC, the Smithsonian Institute in Washington DC, the New Orleans Museum of Art, the New York State Museum, in Albany, NY. One of her installations was part of the “Putt-Modernism” show at the Hyde Collection Museum in Glens Falls, NY. She’s produced essays about her art and the role of intuition in publications such as Margaret Blanchard’s “From the Listening Place”. She designed the art cover for Gisele Pineau’s French novel, “L’Espérance-Macadam”. Many of her pieces have been shown in magazines, on cable network TV, and books, such as Carolyn Mazloomi’s contemporary art quilt book, “Spirit of the Cloth”.

New York State Gov. Andrew Cuomo recognized her with a certificate of appreciation for her support of and dedication to perpetuating the Arts.

Her work is part of the permanent collection of the Museum of the American Quilter’s Society in Paducah, KY.

Artist Statement

When done, some pieces feel complete early, causing no struggle to the artist. Some, like the ones I am showing in this exhibit, surgically scissor-shaped, periodically resculpted, with sharp angles visually softened under layers of transparent fabrics, remain in my care for decades. Community Vibes reached that degree of luminosity and free-flowingness I searched for since 2003.

Having multiplied as three guardians of the sanity, and simplicity of African memory, “Présence Africaine”, inspired from the Ankh, stands watchfully firm.

Artists, like animals in nature, in oceans, near volcanoes, or faced with massively melting ice, know of coming dangers long before others do, who choose denial. It is in this baffled state of perception that I composed “History Relaunch”, a pop-up planet of my imagination, pointing to the next impaling coup de grâce to hit Africa for its terres rares.

The making or remaking of my work mirrors the uncertain state of the world leading me to oscillate consciously or unconsciously between the past, an evanescent present, and a possible future, erased.

francelisedawkins.com
IG @FranceliseArtStudios

**Avel de Knight
(1923-1995)**

Avel C. de Knight was born in New York City to parents from the Caribbean islands of Barbados and Puerto Rico. He was educated in the public schools and studied art at Benjamin Franklin High School. After his service in a segregated U.S. Army unit during World War II, he studied at the École des Beaux Arts, the Grande Chaumière, and the Académie Julian in Paris under the GI Bill. Avel de Knight along with other African-American ex-GI artists like Herb Gentry and Romare Bearden, bravely sought to cultivate their artistic interests and talents in the environment of postwar Paris. In the 1950s, he began writing as an art critic for various French and American publications.

After returning to the United States he continued to develop his artistic craft, exhibit his paintings, and subsequently taught at the traditionally respected Art Students League of New York. Pursuing his eclectic cultural interests, he took advantage of an opportunity to travel to the former Soviet Union on an exchange grant sponsored by the State Department, where he visually recorded his impressions of Islamic culture. This experience would later influence the dreamlike vistas of his popular "Mirage" series, which he began in the late 1960s.

aveldeknight.net

Roy DeCarava
(1919–2009)

“I want to photograph Harlem through the Negro people. Morning, noon, night, at work, going to work, coming home from work, at play, in the streets, talking, kidding, laughing, in the home, in the playgrounds, in the schools, bars, stores, libraries, beauty parlors, churches, etc.” – Roy DeCarava quoted in *Roy DeCarava: a retrospective*, Museum of Modern Art, 1996

In 1947, DeCarava made the official transition from painter to photographer. DeCarava was interested in creating photographs with symbolic and metaphorical elements that allow a viewer to reflect on the image using their own memory and imagination. His unique way of printing his photographs allowed him to transition away from stark black and white photography and experiment with lighting. DeCarava subtly contrasts black, white and gray in his imagery to enhance complex and contemplative compositions.

James Denmark
(b. 1936)

James Denmark worked in a variety of mediums as a sculptor, printmaker, painter, and textile artist. His passion for art began as a young child living in Florida with his artistic family. His grandmother was a quilter and wire sculptor who tasked Denmark with cutting her quilt patterns—a task some believe may have inspired the collage-style of painting that Denmark has become most noted for in his career. While attending college at Florida A&M University, he studied under renowned art historian, museum curator, and artist, Samella Lewis. After graduating from college, he moved to New York City where he lived, worked, and exhibited for several decades before moving to South Carolina.

Head of a Young Black Woman was created after Denmark moved to New York City in the mid-1960s but before he attended Pratt Institute for his Master of Fine Arts degree in sculpture.

Sean Desiree

Sean Desiree is a conceptual and interdisciplinary artist, born and raised in the Bronx. Their interest includes social engagement and disruptive interventions that counter biased societal structures. In addition to being an artist, they are an educator facilitating the BIPOC Builders Immersions at Soul Fire Farm in Grafton, NY. In 2024, they attended the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture. In 2022 they were awarded fellowships at Leslie Lohman, and Socrates Sculpture Park. They have attended residencies at More Art, MASS MoCA, and Wave Hill. While an Artist in Residence at More Art, they debuted their socially engaged public art sculpture, BEAM ENSEMBLE in collaboration with the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs.

Artist Statement

As a conceptual artist, my work takes on many forms. My interests include social engagement and disruptive interventions that counter biased societal structures. The subject matter spans topics such as climate change and homoeroticism in sports to white supremacy/delusion. My practice functions to curate and shift discomfort in all forms to make space for more dialogue and behavioral changes. The work materializes in multiple ways including public art, interactive installations, and sculptures with video and sound elements. I'm interested in contributing to systems and structures of care. Applying conducive architecture, a term I have claimed to give language to functional forms that heal rather than harm. I'm directly responding to the hostile architecture such as spikes on ledges or window sills, used in most cities as an exclusionary design tactic to prevent poor people of color from loitering or resting. My work is an offering of support to meet our basic needs as a society.

seandesiree.com

B.A. DiLella

I'm B.A. DiLella, a visual artist and founder of The Painting B LLC. I create work that reflects my deep belief in art as a tool for truth-telling, healing, and social change. My paintings are shaped by a desire to honor the stories we carry—especially those shaped by protest, care, and survival. I'm interested in how we hold memory in the body, and how rest, empathy, and resistance can live side by side.

Artist Statement

B.A. DiLella's recent body of work explores the tension between protest and perception, rest and resistance, legacy and loss. Through portraiture and symbolic abstraction, these paintings interrogate systems of power while honoring the emotional labor of survival.

In *Progress?*, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. is shown mid-arrest—flanked by police, surrounded by cameras. His posture is composed, but heavy. The painting captures not just a man, but a system: one that criminalizes protest and commodifies its image. King's radical views—his critiques of capitalism, militarism, and American exceptionalism—are often erased in favor of a more palatable legacy. This work confronts the politics of respectability and the spectacle made of resistance. It does not offer resolution. It offers reflection.

Dreaming is a portrait of rest—not as retreat, but as restoration. A reclining figure lies among vines and blossoms, her body rooted in the earth, her spirit suspended in stillness. Across the water, a city looms, but she does not rise to meet it. She has already done the work. Now, she dreams. This is care made sacred. The painting reclaims rest as a radical act—earned, essential, and generative.

A meditation on destruction as agency, LET IT BURN depicts a female figure walking through water beneath a sky in flames. She is not fleeing the blaze—she is becoming it. This work explores the tension between beauty and violence, ritual and rupture. It is about aesthetic combustion: rage made visible, silence undone, and the sacred act of letting go. Not everything that burns is lost. Some things are finally seen.

KING THE MARTYR presents a dual portrait of Dr. King and his son in grayscale, evoking both mourning and myth. A jeweled imperial crown gleams in red, green, and gold—casting a golden reflection across the canvas. On King's head rests a second crown: a golden-accented crown of thorns. The juxtaposition speaks to the burden of legacy and the cost of prophetic leadership. His son, silent and watchful, becomes both witness and heir. This is not just a portrait—it is a reckoning with memory, martyrdom, and the weight we place on Black fatherhood and Black hope.

Somewhere Under the Rainbow explores the intersection of Black identity and the LGBTQIA+ experience through a lens of vulnerability, beauty, and belonging. A solitary figure stands in water, surrounded by lush, dreamlike foliage and radiant color. The water reflects not just light, but complexity—fluidity, memory, and transformation. It is a portrait of becoming—somewhere between resistance and rest, somewhere under the rainbow.

Together, these works form a visual archive of unrest and empathy, where fire, rest, and reflection become tools of survival—and transformation.

thepaintingbllc.com

IG @badilella_

Emory Douglas
(b. 1943)

For me the most important part of the Black Panthers' legacy is a belief that one can effect change even when things seem hopeless. – Stephen Shames

Huey Newton and Bobby Seale cofounded the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense in 1966. The party's Ten Point Platform and Program included demands for freedom, employment, restitution for slavery, decent housing, education, fair trials, and an end to police brutality against black people.

The Black Panthers set themselves apart from other civil rights organizations of the time with their firm belief in their right to defend themselves from racist attacks “by any means necessary,” a position adopted from Malcolm X. Acting legally, they carried loaded guns in public, patrolling police to ensure they treated people of color justly. Those firearms, as well as black berets and leather jackets, visually united the party.

Although notorious for its guns and violent altercations with the police, by the early 1970s, the BPP focused heavily on “survival programs,” providing needs left unfulfilled by the government. Grassroots initiatives included free breakfasts for children, free health clinics, free clothing programs, political education classes, and disease prevention education.

Paula Drysdale Frazell

Paula Drysdale Frazell is an award -winning, published mixed media collage artist living in Albany, New York. Paula has a degree in Commercial Art from Russell Sage College and has exhibited in solo and group shows in California, Arizona and New York, Much of her work explores the natural beauty and grace of African American women.

Artist Statement

As an artist, the muse is not merely a source of inspiration but a guiding force that shapes thoughts, emotions and expressions. In my journey, Black women have emerged as the quintessential muse, the embodiment of beauty in its most authentic and powerful form-a beauty that does not conform to the narrow definitions set by society but creates its own narrative. My art is a tribute to all Black women. It is a celebration of our range, essence and grace. A dialogue with the world that needs to see and acknowledge our rightful place in the annals of greatness.

collagesista.com
IG @collagesista

Robert S. Duncanson
(1821-1872)

The May 30, 1861, issue of the *Cincinnati Gazetteer* reported that Robert Duncanson “enjoyed the enviable reputation of being the best landscape painter in the West.” This was an impressive laurel bestowed upon a man of African American descent—his mother was a free Black and his father Scottish Canadian—who was essentially self-taught and barely forty years old. Yet by sheer virtue of his wonderful talent, intellect, tenacity, and devotion to purpose, Duncanson had risen from humble economic circumstances in antebellum America to become a man of very considerable achievement. By 1861 he had painted the portraits of Michigan’s abolitionist Senator Lewis Cass and Cincinnati’s prominent lawyer and social leader Nicholas Longworth. He had toured Europe, moved with grace through all manner and strata of society, assembled an important portfolio and exhibition record, and completed his great picture *The Lotus Eaters* (His Royal Highness, The King of Sweden). At the midpoint of his career, Duncanson could survey a life of accomplishment and look forward to additional tours abroad (1863-1867 and 1870-1871), significant patronage, the creation of an important body of work, and an expanding reputation as a genius of thematic landscape painting.

Mikel Elam

I began my journey as a visual arts student in Philadelphia. I attended University of the Arts graduating with a degree in Painting. I moved to New York City. Attended School of the Visual Arts focusing on Painting and Illustration. I did not finish the program instead focusing on a travel journey with the legendary musician Miles Davis for the next 5 years. I continued to work and evolve as a visual artist . I exhibited at a gallery in SoHo NYC as well as a gallery in Los Angeles. After 5 years on the West Coast, I returned to Philadelphia. I have been in exhibitions both nationally and internationally

Artist Statement

I don't really resonate with the ideals that art are either abstract or figurative. I see them as one and the same. A word which inspires my artistic content would be Afrofuturism. I see an abundance of Black people in prominent positions in a future culture. This is where my work resides.

mikel-elam.format.com

Patricia Encarnación

Patricia Encarnación (she/they) is an Afro-Caribbean interdisciplinary activist and scholar based in New York City. Their work challenges colonial tropes within African diasporic culture, with a particular focus on the Caribbean, approached through an anti-colonial lens.

Encarnación has participated in numerous residencies, including The Shed, Smack Mellon (as a Van Lier Fellow), MuseumsQuartier Vienna, Kovent Catalonia, and the Silver Arts Project at the World Trade Center. Their work has been recognized by the CIFO Foundation, the NALAC Fund for the Arts, and the Centro León Jiménez Biennial, where they received the City of Cádiz (Spain) cultural immersion prize, as well as a second fellowship in Martinique through the Tropiques Atrium Caribbean art program.

Their exhibitions include Documenta 15, the Tribeca Artist Award Program, the Hudson River Museum, the Museum of Latin American Art (MOLAA), the NADA Art Fair, and La Biental de La Habana. Alongside their artistic practice, Encarnación leads curatorial projects at New York University (NYU), the Centro de la Imagen (CDMX), the Bronx Museum, ChaShaMa, WOPHA Miami, and various alternative spaces in NYC, Miami, and the Dominican Republic.

Encarnación holds a BFA in Communication Design from Parsons School of Design (The New School), where they received a full-tuition scholarship, and is a recipient of the MacCracken Fellowship for graduate studies in Caribbean and Latin American Museum Studies at NYU.

Artist Statement

My artistic practice reflects on the quotidian, inspired by the Caribbean material culture. Through everyday imagery, I employ a visual language to both (re) construct and challenge the skewed notions of “Caribbeaness” globally.

As a feminized immigrant of color, I face these intersections imposed by society by embracing a humanistic and auto-ethnographic research method to interrogate and expose their origins.

Motivated by a desire to dismantle imposed beliefs within the Caribbean region, my research is rooted in the nuances of tropicalization, decolonization practices, and a commitment to reclaiming personal and communal histories. Themes such as identity surrounding blackness in the Caribbean, epigenetics, limerence, and fostering inter-regional communication are central to my inquiry.

As an interdisciplinary artist and scholar, I explore these concepts through diverse media, including ceramics, photography, and video, offering varied perspectives on Caribbean quotidian objects, landscapes, and bodies.

patriciaencarnacion.com/artspace
IG @patricia.encarnacion.c

Lola Flash
(b. 1959)
She/Her/They/Them

A New Jersey native and long-time figure in New York's downtown scene, Lola Flash is an activist documenting themes of race, age, and gender. Flash was an active ACT UP member during the AIDS epidemic in New York City and featured in the 1989 "Kissing Doesn't Kill" poster. Their art and activism are deeply connected, fueling a life-long commitment to visibility and preserving the legacy of LGBTQIA+ and communities of color.

Flash works primarily in portraiture with a 4x5 film camera and a digital medium format camera, engaging those often deemed invisible. With numerous international exhibitions and commissions, their work is included in collections such as MoMA, the National Museum of African American History and Culture, and the George Eastman Museum. Flash is also a Kamoinge Collective member and President of the Queer Art board.

A committed artist, Flash uses photography to provide "new ways of seeing." They create visually alluring images while initiating change and progress. Their work invites viewers to not only look but see.

Artist Statement

A New Jersey native who is a longtime figure in New York's downtown scene, I am an activist documenting themes around, race, age, and gender. After 4 decades as a photographer, I turned the lens on myself, in my latest series, "syzygy, the vision". Moving from analogue to digital, I imagine myself as a superhero - an arresting, gender-fluid mythical being. The series began in 2019, with me wearing an orange prison uniform and a space helmet, one arm handcuffed, the other free evoking my optimism for the future. In my large scale photographs, I channel the spirits and distinctive visions of many of my favorite artists, pioneers who forged their concepts and iterations of Afrofuturism.

Sun Ra, The Funkadelic's, Octavia Butler, Renee Cox, Missy Elliot, and Janelle Monae, have explored various concepts of Afrofuturism. Syzygy uses these iterations as a referential idea within a visual call and response tradition, to elicit recurring responses from syzygy's audience.

I stage each image. In Tulsa, for example, I could feel the heat of the fires and could almost hear the screams of those who lost their homes and lives. Syzygy inserts themselves into reimagined spaces that reflect realistic possibilities as the universal, timeless character exemplifying hope, self-agency, and freedom.

This series reflects my hope for a divine future where we can soar far away from hashtag chatter into a narrative of substantive pure joy and value.

Raè Frasier
(b. 1987)
She/Her

Raè Frasier is a multidisciplinary artist and educator based in Schenectady, New York, and the visionary behind the brand Art Money. With a practice rooted in wearable art, large-scale murals, and canvas work, Raè's creations serve as both personal expression and powerful social commentary. Her art challenges the depth, beauty, and brilliance of Black culture.

As a muralist and mentor, Raè is deeply committed to community engagement. She teaches youth how to design and construct murals from concept to completion, empowering the next generation to find their voice through public art. Whether painting a wall or creating one-of-a-kind clothing pieces, her work inspires self-belief, pride, and authenticity.

Raè's wearable art encourages individuality and celebrates the uniqueness of each person. Every piece is created with the intention of helping people "bask in what makes you you," proudly and unapologetically.

Through Art Money, Raè merges creativity with purpose—uplifting others and reminding artists of their worth.

Artist Statement

My work lives at the intersection of identity, culture, and self-celebration. Through wearable art, murals, and canvas work, I create from a place that seeks to challenge limiting perceptions and reframe how we see ourselves and each other—especially through the lens of Black culture. To me, art is the language that connects us all as living beings. Art is the heartbeat of humanity.

IG @artmon3y

Laura R. Gadson
(b. 1964)
She/Her

Second Generation visual artist Laura R. Gadson explores and blends mediums, techniques, and materials based on her love of textiles, paper, glass and other materials. She is a graduate of the renowned Fiorello LaGuardia High School of Music and Art and holds a BFA from the City College of New York. Her work has been widely exhibited, reproduced as public art in her community, and is proudly part of various public and notable private collections, including the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture and the Smithsonian's Renwick Gallery. She is a native New Yorker that has lived and created in Harlem, NYC since 1993.

Artist Statement

Art is impacted by the time and space it is created. In these times I am impassioned to create tools of remembrance and reflection as well implements of healing and spiritual growth. Imagery has power and the making of powerful imagery is therapeutic.

thegadsongallery.com
IG @gadsongallery

Tamika Galanis

Tamika Galanis is a Bahamian-American documentarian and multimedia visual artist, whose work considers the contentious relationship between historical documentary accounts of the Caribbean and lived experience. With current climate crises in mind, her work emphasizes the importance of archival futurities for cultural preservation and focuses on documenting aspects of Bahamian life not curated for tourist consumption. This work counters the widely held paradisiacal view of the Caribbean, which was established through a controlled, systematic, commodification of the Tropics and maintained by the historic archive.

Galanis's practice is image-based, incorporating traditional documentary photography and film, short experimental films, new media abstractions of written, oral, and archival histories, along with a number of hybrid works including sculpture, collage, and installation.

Galanis's work has been exhibited in The Bahamas, the United States, Europe, and the Caribbean with film screenings including the Trinidad and Tobago International Film Festival, The Bahamas International Film Festival, International Film Festival Rotterdam, BlackStar Film Festival, L.A. Film Forum, MOCA Los Angeles, Hong Gah Museum in Taipei, and the inaugural Smithsonian African American Film Festival.

Galanis earned her MFA in Experimental and Documentary Arts from Duke University. She is a former Jon B. Lovelace Fellow for the Study of the Alan Lomax Collection at the Library of Congress; the inaugural Post-MFA Fellow of Documentary Arts at the Center for Documentary Studies at Duke University; and, former Fellow of Film and Media Studies at Emory University.

Tamika currently splits her time between The Bahamas and Upstate New York where she is an Assistant Professor of Film at Syracuse University.

tamikagalanis.com

Daesha Devón Harris
(b. 1979)
She/Her

Daesha Devón Harris is an interdisciplinary visual artist whose work probes the interstices of narrative, history, the politics of place, and the greater African Diaspora, intertwined with photography, mixed media, text, and video. The gentrification of her hometown of Saratoga Springs in New York, and its effect on the local Black community, has played a major role in both her advocacy and artwork.

Harris holds a BFA in Studio Art from the College of Saint Rose, and a MFA in Visual Art from the University at Buffalo, and her work has been exhibited in solo and group exhibitions throughout the United States. Harris has received various awards, honors, and fellowships, and her work has been featured in a number of publications and books. Harris was a grantee of the Pollock-Krasner Foundation; a recipient of the Aaron Siskind Foundation Fellowship; a New York Foundation for the Arts Artist's Fellow in Photography; and has participated in artist residencies across the country including the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts; Yaddo; and the Sitka Center for Art and Ecology. She is also Visiting Artist-in-Residence and Director of the MDOCS Storytellers' Institute in the John B. Moore Documentary Studies Collaborative at Skidmore College and was named as one of the Royal Photographic Society's Hundred Heroines.

daeshadevonharris.com
IG @daeshadevonharris

Kim Vincent Harris

Kim Vincent Harris is a self-trained artist based in Upstate New York, working across both traditional and digital mediums. An experienced portrait artist, Harris brings a strong sense of character and emotion to his work, whether capturing likenesses or building worlds on the page. His illustrations have been published in Blue Shack Comics, contributing to original comic book titles, and continues to expand his portfolio through freelance collaborations. Balancing storytelling with technical skill, Harris explores themes that merge imagination, humanity, and visual impact, creating art that resonates with both readers and collectors alike.

Lucia Hierro
(b. 1987)

Lucia Hierro (b. 1987) is a Dominican American conceptual artist born and raised in New York City, Washington Heights/Inwood, and currently based in the South Bronx. Lucia's practice, which includes sculpture, digital media and installation, confronts twenty-first century capitalism through an intersectional lens. She received a BFA from SUNY Purchase (2010) and an MFA from Yale School of Art (2013).

Hierro's work has been exhibited at venues including the Guggenheim Bilbao, the Bronx Museum of the Arts, The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum and Jeffrey Deitch Gallery LA, among others. Her works reside in the collections of the Guggenheim Museum New York, the Museum of Fine Arts Boston, Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego (MCASD), El Museo del Barrio in New York City, the Perez Art Museum Miami, the JP Morgan & Chase Collection, among others.

In 2025, Lucia held a solo booth at Independent New York, alongside Swivel Gallery. Fall of 2024, Lucia came together with Hermès and Petit h to re-envision their windows//in-store scenography for the Madison Avenue flagship stores Anniversary. Recently she was part of "Yes, Chef!" a group show curated by Zoe Lukov at WSA NY. She will be taking part in X factor Artists and the Reconquest of the Everyday at the USF Contemporary Art Museum January 17 to March 25, 2025.

Hierro is now showing in the permanent collection exhibition "Tender Loving Care: Contemporary Art from the Collection" at the MFA Boston up til July 28th 2025.

Artist Statement

Hierro's practice, which includes sculpture, digital media, and installation, confronts twenty-first century capitalism through an intersectional lens. Appropriating imagery that ranges from commerce to art history, Hierro's choices manifest her own multidimensional experience as a Dominican American artist raised in Washington Heights. With a studio methodology steeped in Pop Art, Minimalism, Conceptual Art, and European still life painting, as well as her own biographical circumstance, Hierro's work surveys power, individuality, and opportunity specific to the communities she orbits.

Lifting visual matter off the street and media outlets, Hierro expresses subjective storylines that speak to the elasticity of identity—a symptom of our hyperkinetic present. Featuring a body of work composed of Hierro's distinctive past series, the Mercado (Market), and the debut of the Gates from 2021, the artist uses scale as a primary preoccupation and a predominant feature of this presentation. The Mercado sculptures are composed out of Poly Organdy fabrics, felt, and hard-celled foam, and sewn with the assistance of the artist's mother. See-through and life-sized, they impersonate the ubiquitous tote and bodega bags that saturate our urban landscape. Stuffed with digitally printed objects—popular Dominican foods, trendy merchandise, cultural souvenirs, and collectibles—each bag embodies an individualized storyline that intersects race, class, and gender.

Representing the concept of simulacrum, meaning an image or representation of someone or something, the works act as the thing, in a larger-scale. Alluding to the ever-lasting reality of economics, and the way people live their lives in a sea of uncertainty and debt, when, in fact, larger systems and structures are talked about theoretically-but never in terms of their direct impact on people, or the fact that so much of our culture is manufactured and branded conceptually drives the materialization of Hierro's visual language.

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Candace Hill Montgomery
(b. 1945)

Candace Hill Montgomery makes weavings that explore the many ways in which threads can tell stories and make cultural commentary. Using a wide variety of fibers—linen, cashmere, cotton, wool, even horsehair—she creates complex layers of allegories and fables that reference her own life as well as current social and political challenges. While creating this visual dialogue about race, feminism, poverty, and the environment, Hill Montgomery integrates subtle inner observations into the weaves. Made on handmade looms, the works are mounted on fabricated hangers, found objects, or vintage farm equipment from the South that reference her family's heritage. Her partnership with the Sag Harbor Whaling & Historical Museum resonates with her visits to the museum as a child during summer vacations spent in Sag Harbor with her family.

Hill Montgomery's work has been presented in exhibitions at major arts institutions, including the Bronx Museum for the Arts, New Museum, Printed Matter, Artists Space, Franklin Furnace, Fashion Moda, and Creative Time, among others. She was an artist-in-residence at the Studio Museum in Harlem (1979), and a recipient of the John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship (1985) and a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts (1981). In 1985, Hill Montgomery curated a group exhibition including Lorna Simpson with Lucy R. Lippard titled *Working Women/Working Artists/Working Together* at Gallery 1199. Her work is in the Digital Archive of the New Museum. Her essays have been published in the *Women's Art Journal*. She received a master's degree in Art Education from Hunter College.

Clementine Hunter
(1886-1988)

Clementine Hunter is one of the best known 20th-century folk artists. A descendant of slaves, Hunter spent the majority of her life on Melrose Plantation in Louisiana. Hunter's art was inspired by her plantation life. She depicted plantation hands at work, at church, and at play, as well as floral still lifes, and portraiture. Hunter's early works were brought to the attention of François Mignon, a writer, and James Register, a professor at the University of Oklahoma. From the beginning, both men encouraged her work, and they arranged for her first public show in 1946. From then on, Hunter became increasingly well known.

Linda Jackson-Chalmers
(b. 1951)
She/Her

Linda Jackson-Chalmers is a retired public school administrator, having served thirty-eight years in positions as an art teacher/supervisor, principal of the Arbor Hill Elementary School and Assistant Superintendent of Schools for Human Resource and Community Relations for the City School District of Albany.

Linda did her undergraduate studies at Skidmore College where she earned her Bachelor of Science in Studio in Art. She has a Masters degree from UAlbany in Education Administration. Linda has served on numerous community Boards throughout her career. She is currently on the Board of Albany Institute of History and Art and formerly on the Boards of Skidmore College, and the African American Cultural Center of the Capital Region, Inc, where she served as President. Linda is also a member of the Albany District (NY) Chapter of the Links where she Chairs the Arts Facet and a member of Delta Mu Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.

Over the long course of her career, she has earned numerous awards and honors for both her professional accomplishments and her community involvement. While her administrative career made it difficult for her to seriously practice her painting skills, she's remained an appreciator and supporter of the arts and has produced and exhibited her work in local art shows and venues.

Artist Statement

"We are all born with some form of creative talent. It takes an inspiring teacher to help bring it out." The paintings that I have chosen to submit represent the span of my painting career that has been greatly influenced by the Impressionists.

LeRoi Johnson
(b. 1949)

LeRoi Callwell Johnson of Buffalo, New York known just as “LeRoi” has been presenting his artistry for more than 45 years, utilizing his varied thematic tones to craft consistently eye-catching and aesthetically pleasant art forms.

As Mr. Johnson defines his artistic expression as “electric primitive”, his awareness is rooted in the very minimal formal training that he received in a commercial art class while matriculating in the academically oriented Hutchinson Central Technical High School in Buffalo, New York. His interest in drawing and painting was nurtured during his student years, as he oftentimes utilized this hobby as an outlet for balancing his career aspirations at the time. While at Georgetown University Law School in Washington, D.C., it appears that his amateurish instinct culminated into the seeds of his prolific expressionism, having created several innovative geometric paintings during the height of this form’s popularity. Similarly, a large portion of this artwork would be represented in his first major one-man show in the future.

He pinpoints his residency in Washington, DC during the 1970’s as the stimulus for his entrée into an Art world where his mediums and subjects has evolved and paralleled the times. While employed as a senior executive with District of Columbia government, he had occasion to patronize many of the city’s world-class collections influencing his creative impulses as well, as formulating his appreciation for art history. Resultantly, during this era, he participated in the expansion of the city’s prolific collection by co-founding the Museum of the City of Washington, DC.

With his departure from the District of Columbia, he endured somewhat of a creative hiatus perhaps internalizing his artistic inclinations to travel the world and meet the budding generation of the global world culture. This self-discovery period occurred during the years of 1981-1994.

In 1994, LeRoi returned to painting utilizing a form, which blended modernism, pan-africanism, and geometric forms in colorful symbolism.

In 1996, LeRoi officially re-introduced his art to the public with the informality of it being showcased in a hair salon owned by his close friend and mentor, Jon Simon. By virtue of the popularity of this salon, LeRoi enjoyed great exposure and receptiveness during this display. One of the salon patrons was Don Metz, then, Director of the Burchfield Penney Art Gallery in Buffalo, a relatively new and growing museum which focused on Western New York artists, with its namesake, Charles Burchfield being instrumental in its development. With Mr. Metz’s leadership, Mr. Johnson’s first One-Man Show was exhibited at Buffalo Niagara Partnership, a first art show for both Mr. Johnson and the Partnership. This exhibition, which featured many of Mr. Johnson’s geometric painting from the Georgetown period, was successful and became the impetus for future gallery exhibits for Mr. Johnson.

Benjamin Jones
(b. 1942)

“Art is a celebration of life for me. It’s my way of communing with myself, my people and humanity. People are the center of my art. Their elegance, funk, courage, visions and cosmic character illuminate for me warm spirits of humanity and the universe.” – Benjamin Jones, 1977

Benjamin Jones was born in 1942 in Paterson, New Jersey and worked as a painter, sculptor, printmaker and instructor. He received his Bachelor of Arts degree from Paterson State College and his Master of Arts degree from New York University. Jones continued his studies long after his degrees to learn different artistic techniques such as printmaking and serigraphy. African history and imagery were important elements of Jones’ art. He traveled throughout Africa studying traditional African art and wrote a book on West African architecture and design. Additionally, Jones taught African Art at Jersey City State College.

Danny Killion

Danny Killion robbed banks and, in 1996, he was incarcerated. He was charged under an alias, and spent over a decade in prison as Paul Blackman, or Paul Black Man. Paul, really Danny, turned to artmaking to combat the frustration, anxiety, and depression that overwhelmed him. He left Connecticut's prisons in 2005, finishing his sentence in 2007 and he chose to live in Troy, NY. After several construction jobs, Danny found himself making furniture out of the wood that washed ashore from the Hudson River. He was making art again, and again remembering his time in the Prison Arts workshops. By 2013 he'd open Weathered Wood, a gallery and workshop for his artwork and furniture, as well as a gallery and central hub for dozens of other upstate New York artists and artisans. His work has been featured in many exhibitions, including the 2019 show *How Art Changed the Prison*, at the Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum in Ridgefield, CT. "I just want to continue to make a growing, authentic, body of artwork from my own, perhaps bizarre, perspective."

Jacqueline A. Lake-Sample

(b. 1955)

She/Her

Jacqueline A. Lake-Sample founder, of JALL CREATIONS; past President of Black Dimensions in Art, Inc. (BDA), President of House of Nehesi Publisher's Foundation, criminologist, and current Co-Treasurer of BDA.

Originally from the Caribbean Island of St. Martin, Jacqueline has lived in New York since childhood and has long been a lover and student of the arts. Once described as "a criminologist with a passion for the arts", Jacqueline holds master's degrees in criminology from C.W. Post Long Island University and SUNY at Albany.

Jacqueline has exhibited in numerous venues in the Capital Region, including the Schenectady Museum (now miSci), the New York State Museum, Capital Repertory Theatre, the Jerry Burrell Gallery, Wellington's Herbs and Spices, the Albany Barn, the Art Center of the Capital Region, African American Cultural Center of the Capital Region Inc. (now Alice Moore Black Arts & Cultural Center) the Saratoga Arts Center Gallery, Living Resources Arts 70 Beekman Street Gallery, Arts Associates Gallery Inc. and Pause Gallery.

At her company, JALL CREATIONS, she designs fine handcrafted jewelry incorporating sterling silver, pearls, 14k gold, gemstones, and treasures from the sea. Her designs are unusual and eclectic. Jacqueline enjoys putting her energy into creating. She is an abstract artist that uses mixed media in various aspects of her work.

Artist Statement

Art allows us to see possibilities and provides opportunities to interact with each other. It tells our stories; it is healing and is spiritually uplifting. The Journey series (I, II, & III) explores the transformative power of personal adornment. Each material- pearl, labradorite, cowrie shell, and sterling silver-carries layered symbolism, both ancient and contemporary, evoking wisdom, feminine energy, love, spiritual growth, creativity, prosperity, protection, and clarity.

**Hughie Lee-Smith
(1915-1999)**

Hughie Lee-Smith was born in Florida but settled in Ohio, studying art at the Cleveland School of Art. In 1970, he worked as artist-in-residence at Howard University where he oversaw a series of murals on Black history. In his painting, *Boy Reading*, the boy stands at the edge of a remote and rocky mound with a large body of water separating him from the scenery in the far background of the painting. During an era where painters often chose abstraction as their preferred style, Lee-Smith's sentimental and quieter portrayals of loneliness in his work is often compared to the realist paintings of Edward Hopper (1882-1967).

**David R. MacDonald
(b. 1945)**

David R. MacDonald was born in 1945 in Hackensack, New Jersey, the third oldest of nine children. He graduated from Hackensack High School in 1963 and was awarded an athletic scholarship to Hampton University (Hampton, Virginia) where he majored in art education. While there he was greatly inspired by noted African American ceramic artist Joseph W. Gilliard.

During his studies at Hampton his work became influenced by the political and social issues of the time (the Civil Rights Movement). After graduating, he was awarded a graduate fellowship at the University of Michigan where he studied with John Stephenson and noted African American ceramist Robert Stull. During this time, his work continued to focus on social and political commentary and expand technically.

After receiving his Master of Fine Arts degree he joined the faculty of the School of Art and Design at Syracuse University. During the late 1970s and early 1980s, MacDonald's work received most of its creative inspiration from his investigation of his African heritage. Looking at a variety of design sources in the vast creative tradition of the African continent, MacDonald draws much of his inspiration from the myriad examples of surface decoration that manifests itself in the many ethnic groups of sub-Saharan Africa (as pottery decoration, textiles, body decoration, and architectural decoration). MacDonald's work spans the complete spectrum of ceramic forms of a utilitarian nature.

MacDonald received the Excellence in Teaching Award from the National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts (NCECA) in 2011. His work is in the permanent collections of The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York; Montclair Art Museum, New Jersey; Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, New York. Galleries offering a selection of MacDonald's work include Everson Museum Gift Shop, Syracuse, New York; Cazenovia Artisans, Cazenovia, New York; Edgewood Gallery, Syracuse, New York.

Artist Statement

The nature of the art experience for me is one of self-discovery and communication. In one sense, it is a very private and personal journey in search of order, reason, reality and beauty. In another sense, it is a very public act in the attempt to express and share, with others, my realizations and discoveries.

The principal concern of my art is the articulation of the magnificence and nobility of the human spirit; and a celebration of my African heritage. The material I use is clay. The primary vehicle for expressions the vessel.

In my view, the vessel represents unique social and spiritual connections and associations, to all people, that do not exist in non-vessel ceramic forms. There exists in the vessel a timelessness and universality that records, contains and continues the very essence of humanity.

Anina Major
(b. 1981)
She/Her

Anina Major (she/her) is a visual artist from the Bahamas. Her decision to establish a home contrary to the location in which she was born and raised motivates her to investigate the relationship between self and place as a site of negotiation. By utilizing the vernacular of craft to reclaim experiences and relocate displaced objects, her practice exists at the intersection of nostalgia, and identity. She holds an MFA from Rhode Island School of Design and is the recipient of numerous awards and residencies, including the Armory Show 2024 Pommery Prize, the 2023 Joan Mitchell Fellowship, and the EKWIC, Centre-of-excellence for ceramics international artist-in-residency. Major's work has been exhibited in The Bahamas, Europe and across the United States, with a permanent display at the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, DC. Her work is included in permanent collections of the National Gallery of The Bahamas, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Carnegie Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design Museum and Perez Art Museum of Miami, among others. Her work has also been featured in the New York Times, Forbes magazine and published in Phaidon Press Great Women Sculptors.

Works are currently on view at the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, DC, the Museum of Fine Arts Boston, the Pommery Experience #18 in Reims, France and The Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, in Madrid, Spain.

Artist Statement

The decision to voluntarily establish a home contrary to the location born and raised (The Bahamas) motivates Major to investigate the relationship between self and place as a site of negotiation. By utilizing the lexicon of craft to reclaim experiences and relocate displaced objects, her practice exists at the intersection of nostalgia, and identity. Often taking form in a wide range of media, including installation, sculpture, time-based video and performance, it references tropical ecologies as well as historical and contemporary ethnography. The work unpacks the emotional complexities inherent to the transcultural dialogue that surfaces when mapping the migration of traditions versus foreign influences.

Through the vernacular of weaving as a creative language, Major explores the dichotomies of history, identity, and place in relation to cultural preservation. Cleopatra is from the helmet / crown series, which honors matriarchal legacies with skills imparted to the artist by her late grandmother. Finished with a gold surface, the piece not only serves as an autobiographical expression but a statement of inherent power and prosperity. Prompting others to consider the contributions of longstanding weaving and knot tying practices to notions of memory and legacy.

Kerry James Marshall
(b. 1955)

Engaged in an ongoing dialogue with six centuries of representational painting, Kerry James Marshall (b. 1955) is known for his expansive body of work, which also includes drawings and sculptures. At the center of his oeuvre is the critical recognition of the conditions of invisibility long ascribed to Black figures in the Western pictorial tradition, and the creation of what he calls a “counter-archive” that brings them back into this narrative.

Marshall was born in Birmingham, Alabama. He received his BFA from the Otis Art Institute in Los Angeles in 1978, where he was later awarded an honorary doctorate in 1999. In 2014, Marshall joined David Zwirner. *Kerry James Marshall: Look See*, an exhibition of new paintings by the artist, marked his first gallery solo show at David Zwirner in London that same year. *Kerry James Marshall: History of Painting*, the artist’s second solo presentation with the gallery, was on view in London in 2018.

Marshall has exhibited widely throughout Europe and the United States since the late 1970s. In 2018, *Kerry James Marshall: Collected Works* was presented at the Rennie Museum in Vancouver and *Kerry James Marshall: Works on Paper* at The Cleveland Museum of Art. His site-specific outdoor sculpture *A Monumental Journey* was also permanently installed in Hansen Triangle Park in downtown Des Moines, Iowa. From 2016 to 2017, *Kerry James Marshall: Mastry*, the first major museum survey of the artist’s work, was on view at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, followed by The Met Breuer, New York, and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. In 2015, he created a large-scale mural specifically for the High Line, marking the artist’s first public commission in New York. In 2013, his work was the subject of a major survey entitled *Kerry James Marshall: Painting and Other Stuff*. The exhibition was first on view at the Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst Antwerpen in Antwerp. In 2014, it traveled to the Kunsthall Charlottenborg in Copenhagen and was co-hosted by two venues in Spain, the Fundació Antoni Tàpies in Barcelona and the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía in Madrid.

In September 2025, the Royal Academy of Arts, London, will present *Kerry James Marshall: The Histories*, the largest survey of the artist’s work in the United Kingdom to date. The exhibition will travel to Kunsthhaus Zürich and Musée d’Art Moderne de Paris in 2026–2027.

Other prominent institutions that have presented solo shows include the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC (2013); Secession, Vienna (2012); Vancouver Art Gallery (2010); San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (2009); and the Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, Ohio (2008). Previous traveling solo exhibitions include those organized by the Camden Arts Centre, London (2005), Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago (2003), and The Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago (1998).

**Eugene J. Martin
(1938–2005)**

Eugene J. Martin is best known for his imaginative complex mixed media collages on paper, his often gently humorous pencil and pen & ink drawings, and his paintings on paper and canvas that may incorporate allusions to animal, machine and structural imagery among areas of “pure”, constructed, biomorphic, or disciplined lyrical abstraction. Martin called many of his works straddling both abstraction and representation “satirical abstracts.”

After attending the Corcoran School of Art in Washington D.C. from 1960-1963, Eugene James Martin became a professional fine arts painter, considering artistic integrity his only guide. He did not adhere to any particular school or art movement, remaining an individualist throughout his life. His art defies categorization.

While spending most of his life in Washington D.C., Martin briefly lived in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, from 1990-1994, returned to Washington D.C., and in 1996 moved to Lafayette, Louisiana with his wife, Suzanne Fredericq, a biologist, whom he married in 1988. In December 2001 he suffered simultaneously a brain hemorrhage and stroke while in Belgium. After undergoing physical therapy in Lafayette, he resumed painting and continued creating art until his death.

Eugene J. Martin is represented by galerie Zlotowski in Paris, France

Artist Statement

Among Eugene J. Martin’s vast artistic production, collages occupy an important place to which little attention has been paid so far. Whereas Marin’s collages from 1980-81 were created contemporaneously, those from the late 1990s are best viewed through the lens of Time, hence heterochronic – literally of different times. Time here is not viewed as linear but well as cyclical. The heterochronic collages were created from drawings from the 1960s-1980s, or from acrylic fragments, or photographs from his own artworks that typically become incorporated into larger acrylic paintings on rag paper from the early 1990s. An acrylic painting on canvas created in 1991 might incorporate a pen & ink drawing from 1982, a mixed media drawing from 1969, and a photograph of one of his acrylic paintings on canvas created in 1993. How are we then to date a heterochronic collage? To date such complex and puzzling collages which represent a unique aesthetic is perplexing since Martin often dated the final collage with the year it was assembled, most frequently 1997.

Heterochronic collages, a concept uniquely developed by artist Eugene J. Martin, are multi-sourced artworks that only incorporate previously existing imagery of his own creation (paintings, drawings, photographs, etc.) into a new context, creating a single, unified piece while maintaining the individuality of each component. This process of reusing and remixing past artistic materials results in a unique visual language that explores the interplay between time, memory, and artistic transformation. In his heterochronic collages Martin bridges Time but also genres, styles and media.

Barry L. Mason
(b. 1959)
He/Him

This New York-based Afro-American Artist sees himself as a “composer” as he constructs his large, shaped, and sculpted abstract paintings.

Born and grew up on the Eastern Shore of rural Snow Hill, Maryland.

“He states: for as long as I can remember, I’ve always been inspired by shapes/forms, hard and soft edges, how they all relate.”

A process that begins on his studio floor, a large sketch pad, so to speak. Starting with scraps of thin lumber, in different lengths to form varying shapes and forms. This may take place over a few days or weeks, steadily adding, taking away, and manipulating the shape. Constantly paying attention to the positive /negative and spaces every step of the way.

Mason’s abstract styled graffiti paintings, artistically pushing the boundaries (within himself) using more explosive, bold colored brush strokes to super fine lines on the painted surface. As with most of his paintings, constantly weaving in and out of colors, global thoughts expressed in backward words, and the use of rhythmic lines and forms, all to create a lyrical symphony.

An addition to a variety of materials used in his paintings, from traditional paint brushes, to oils, enamel paints, chains, ropes, letters, wood, etc. Nothing is out of bounds in his studio.

Artist Statement

For as long as I can remember, I’ve always been inspired by shapes, forms, and the Interplay Between hard and soft edges, as well as their relationship.

The process begins on my studio floor, my large sketch pad, so to speak, and the creative design process of my painting stretchers begins. Starting with scraps of thin lumber, in different lengths to form varying shapes and forms. This may take place over a few days or weeks as I steadily add, remove, and manipulate the shape. Consistently changing it to create an innovative order. Part of the joy is when the shape suddenly feels absolute.

Constantly paying attention to the positive /negative spaces and the beauty and depth in how they’ll be related.

I’m hoping to bring the viewer into a painting that feels as if it’s floating because of the integration of circular and straight angular shapes. Wanting the viewer to feel the power. For me, it’s a representation of liberation. The calling continues during the transformation.

Using a composed surface of abstract styled graffiti, I wanted to artistically push the boundaries (within myself) using more explosive, bold colored brush strokes to super fine lines on the painted surface. As with most of my paintings, that constant weaving in and out of colors, global thoughts expressed in backward words, and the use of rhythmic lines and forms, all to create a lyrical symphony.

An addition of spray paint to outline the variety of materials used in my painting, from traditional paint brushes, enamel paints, chains, ropes, letters, wood, etc.

While always looking to go beyond - Nothing is out of bounds in my studio.

It's always spontaneous when the trail ends - The Power of the Journey.

barrymasonart.com

IG @barrymasonart

Leita Mitchell
(b. 1949)

“I live in Harlem and most of my work is drawn from the people who live, work, play and struggle and survive there.” – Leita Mitchell, 1976

Leita Mitchell spent her life in Harlem. Inspired by the collage work of Romare Bearden, Mitchell is known for her vibrant, vivid, and bold collages that imaginatively depict the people of Harlem. She earned her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in media arts at the School of Visual Arts in 1974. Along with children's book cover designs, her illustrations have been published in magazines such as *Cosmopolitan*, *Black Enterprise* and *Redbook*.

Zanele Muholi
(b. 1972)

“The power of naming means to put something into existence.” – Zanele Muholi

Three people stare directly at you, fierce and proud. These black-and-white photographs by visual activist Zanele Muholi, from the artist’s Faces and Phases series, document black lesbian women and transgender men in South Africa. Despite the nation’s liberal constitution, black queer people face severe homophobia and transphobia that lead to “curative” rape, beatings, and murder.

In recognizing the Faces and Phases participants through the camera lens, Muholi, who grew up in South Africa under apartheid, not only bears witness to disenfranchised people but also creates an archive for the future: These people exist(ed). They are human. They are complex. See them.

Woodrow Nash

Woodrow Nash builds a sense of mystery and charisma into each of his sculptures. Through his pieces, Nash achieves his goal of integrating expression, complex symbolism and sophisticated aesthetics to yield striking embodiments of the human soul and sensuality.

Certain creative individuals seem to know what they want to do with their lives from the moment they are cognizant. For others, it is a fascinating, intellectual and emotional journey sinuous with adventure, phenomenal discovery and a labour of love.

Born in Akron, Ohio in the late 40's, Woodrow Nash is the product of sanctified churches, 1950s television images, and black inner city neighborhood schools run by predominantly white middle-class educators. The young student immersed himself in art during an era when artists sought nothing less than old-fashioned honesty in their imagery. As a freelance artist, he painted murals for local institutions, and worked as an illustrator. In 1975, he abandoned Akron for the brighter lights of New York, where he became a fashion illustrator. There he also designed and illustrated record albums for jazz labels that represented such greats as Father Hines, Cat Anderson, Arnett Cobbs and Jeff Lorber Fusion.

By 1977, armed with an Associate Degree in Commercial Art from Pels School of Art in New York City, he worked as a freelance illustrator. Less than a decade later, his artistic journey landed him back in Ohio working as a technical illustrator at Goodyear Aerospace Corporation, followed by a stint as an illustrator for American Greetings Corporation.

In 1991, Woodrow moved to Madison, Wisconsin, and worked as a graphic artist, a trade that has undergone the full infiltration of computer and electronic imaging. While still an art form, it seemed light years away from the tactile expression offered by the manipulation of clay. "I'm looking for that expression that cuts across a cultural grain." That attitude leads many artists into the bizarre and oblique; for Woodrow the search lead him to the very foundation of mankind – Africa and world tribal culture.

Nash's sculptures transmit human delicacies and inner harmony. Examining the contemporary male and female physique, he explores the body's natural form and mythology. Incorporating various styles and techniques utilizing stoneware, earthenware, terracotta or porcelain, Nash's work is fired electronically, pit fired or via a "raku" effect – creating an "African Nouveau" trademark that's solely his own. While the images are African, in general, the concept is 15th century Benin with the graceful, slender proportions and long, undulating lines of 18th century Art Nouveau.

In his pieces, Nash achieves his goal of integrating expression, complex symbolism and sophisticated aesthetics to yeild striking embodiments of the human soul and sensuality. Today, the work of Woodrow Nash is collected internationally. His collectors' demographics have no racial boundaries, and include everyone from working professionals to affluent sports figures and entertainment superstars.

Otto Neals

Otto Neals, painter, sculptor and printmaker was born in Lake City, South Carolina. His family moved from the south to Brooklyn, N.Y. where he has resided ever since.

He is basically self-taught, however, he did study briefly at the Brooklyn Museum with Isaac Soyer and at the Bob Blackburn Printmaking Workshop with Mohammed Khalil, Roberto DeLamonica and Krishna Reddy. He is proficient in many mediums including oils, watercolors, pastels and wood and stone carving.

In 1958 he participated in the newly founded Fulton Art Fair where he met artists such as Tom Feelings, Al Hollingsworth, Vivian Schuyler Key, Vincent Smith and Ernie Crichlow and Jacob Lawrence who were the co-Directors of the fair. To date, he is the only artist that has taken part in the exhibitions each year since its inception. He was also a founding member of the Harlem based group called the Weusi Artists which maintained a gallery called, Nyumba Ya Sanaa.

Neals' works are in the collections of several notables including Harry Bellafonte, the Honorable Una Clarke, former N.Y.C. Council member, Randy Weston, Musician, Congressman John Lewis, Ruby Dee and Oprah Winfrey. His works are also included in the Ghana National Museum, The Studio Museum, and The Schomburg Library. He was commissioned by the Ezra Jack Keats Foundation to create a work of bronze, entitled, "Peter and Willie", for the Imagination Playground in Brooklyn's Prospect Park for which he was awarded the N.Y.C. Arts Commissions Award for Excellence in Design. Other commissions include ten bronze plaques for the "Harlem Walk of Fame" and a bronze work called "Discovery" for The Brooklyn Children Center.

His works have been exhibited at Kenkeleba Gallery, The Studio Museum, The N.Y. State Museum in Albany, N.Y., The Herbert Johnson Museum at Cornell University, Ithaca, N. Y. and one-man shows at The Schenectady Museum, Schenectady, N.Y., Benedict College, Columbia, S.C. and The Columbia Museum, Columbia, S.C. He was also chosen to create a cover for the June 1986 cover of Black Enterprise for which he also posed. Images of his works was also included in Ebony Magazine, Elan Magazine, Sculpture Magazine, Time Out, African Voices, The International Review of African American Art, and Who's Who in American Art. The artist, writer, Elton Fax included him in "Black Artists of the New Generation", one of his many books about art.

Artist Statement

My talent as an artist, I believe, comes directly from my ancestors. I am merely a receiver, an instrument for receiving some of those energies that permeate our entire universe, and I give thanks for haven been chosen to absorb those artistic forces. I try to paint and sculpt African people, working always to portray those characteristics true of their beauty, their power and their love. We are but shadows of those who have gone before us and I enter the world of the spirits. I hope to by example to touch a positive nerve in our youth.

**Nefertiti
(b. 1950)**

Nefertiti, an accomplished painter, printmaker, and designer, earned her Master of Fine Arts at the Rhode Island School of Design and a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the Massachusetts College of Art.

Throughout her career, Nefertiti developed her signature intricate relief prints and paintings, while also receiving commissions to create art for public and residential spaces. One of Nefertiti's notable commissioned projects was for the Criminal Justice Center in Philadelphia, where eight of her ceramic tile panels and large paintings were installed.

While known for her exquisite linoleum cut prints and paintings, she has recently shifted her focus to include intricate digital prints.

Nefertiti has showcased her artwork across the United States, Canada, Eastern Europe, and South America. Her pieces have been featured in numerous museums, including the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, the Berman Museum, the DeCordova Museum, the Montclair Art Museum, the Schenectady Museum of Art, the Smithsonian (SITES), the Studio Museum in Harlem, and the Taipei Museum of Fine Arts, among others. Additionally, Nefertiti's artworks are part of various museums, corporate collections, and significant private collections.

neferfineart.com
IG @nefertiti_artwork

Clifford Oliver
(b. 1949)
He/Him

Although Clifford Oliver was born and raised in New York City, he has lived his entire adult life in rural upstate New York where he has raised a small family, a few dogs and chases horses. Always appreciative of and fascinated by the visual arts, Clifford Oliver didn't start out to be a photographer. Writer, veterinarian, and anthropologist topped his lists of what he was going to be for a long time. Photography allows study in all those occupations and then some.

Clifford began his career in photography while serving in the U. S. Navy. While maintaining staff photographer positions with Upstate Medical Centre and later NYS Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, Clifford freelanced for local artists, stables, farms, magazines and even weddings.

He has been a volunteer at his local library for the last twenty years. A testimony to his constant search for knowledge. Photography is Clifford's tool to explore, to expose, to celebrate the world we live in. He believes in the power of the still image; the ability of a photograph to freeze time. Unlike other visual arts a photograph is a testimony to truth.

Artist Statement

The Corning Tower and the Umbrella Girls was made at one of the Albany Black Family Festivals in homage to and admiration of the style my people showcase. The umbrella harkens me back to Caribbean roots where umbrellas are a necessity and could be a fashion statement. This one is surely necessary.

Black Capital is my statement that America (this means you too Albany) was built on the backs of Blacks. Even now civil servants represent the capital invested in making New York and America.

cliffordoliver.zenfolio.com
IG @cliffordoliver9613
FB Clifford Oliver Photography

**Gordon Parks
(1912–2006)**

Culminating this series is the photograph titled *American Gothic*, in which [Ella] Watson poses coolly with a mop and broom in front of the U.S. flag. Among the most famous pictures Parks ever took, it points to the complexity of his mature style. Not only does the photograph connect the intimacy of one person's life with a national state of affairs, it also engages with a larger history of American images by referring to and reinterpreting Grant Wood's celebrated 1930 painting of the same name.

Curtis Patterson

Born in Shreveport, Louisiana Curtis Patterson began life in a humble setting as one of five siblings. Early on a series of impetuses enveloped Patterson and forged a path towards expression through the arts. Like many African Americans living in the South in the 1950s and 60s, perpetual social barriers and stark civil injustices served as vivid reminders of the inequities which continued to exist as the nation mulled through the Civil Rights struggle. Grandson of a master carpenter, Patterson developed a gravity towards building and construction and an affinity for working with his hands as a child. Both his parents provided unwavering discipline, structure and emphasized achieving harmony while leading a balanced and spiritual life.

His talents and abilities as an artist initiated in high school and were later strengthened during his academic pursuits at Grambling State University, where he received a BA degree in Art Education. Patterson's career in art reached full-circle shortly after through his involvement as a secondary art instructor. Seeking further artistic development he attended Georgia State University in Atlanta and became the first African American to receive a Master of Visual Arts in Sculpture from the institution.

Media such as painting, wood and ceramics were centric to Patterson's earliest works. During his graduate study his interests quickly shifted towards sculptures made from cast iron, fabricated steel and some large scale ceramic works. In 1976 he became a member of the faculty at The Atlanta College of Art. Almost in parallel to the onset of his professional career as a professor Patterson entered the realm of large-scale commissioned public work with a fabricated core-tin sculpture titled Cometh the Sun. Since his initiation with development of large scale public work, Patterson has gone on to produce several major works in several prominent cities in the United States.

Artist Statement

Over the last four and a half decades I have been producing sculpture on a variety of scales for a number of indoor and outdoor settings. In 1977 the City of Atlanta's Bureau of Cultural Affairs commissioned me to produce my first public work, Cometh the Sun. Additionally, I taught sculpture for twenty nine years at the Atlanta College of Art, during which time I had the distinct honor of being commissioned to do a number of public commissions, both locally and nationally in venues such as Hartsfield Jackson International airport, The Ohio State University stadium plaza and the Minnesota State Capitol grounds.

My approach to creating public art is heavily based on the circumstances surrounding the art work being commissioned. I would consider whether there are historical references, commemorative of an individual or event, or environmental factors that are relevant to the site. My ultimate goal with each new art challenge is to develop a piece that is well received by the community where it is located and compliments the environment where it is placed.

In developing project proposals my primary objective is to perform research and, in concert, to seek consultation from community advisory groups or key stakeholders of the community. This approach allows them to voice their concerns or issues they might have relative to the site or the work being commissioned. This kind of collaborative approach and involvement enables members of the community to feel sense of pride and ownership of the work being created.

Long lasting and durable materials such as bronze, stainless steel and corten steel utilized in the fabrication of my work and generally require little maintenance.

cpatternsonsculptor.com

Charlese Annette Phillips

Charlese Annette Phillips is a Delaware based artist whose work is focused around color, texture and identity. She explores her creativity through many artistic mediums including fiber, painting, photography and more, utilizing formal training and self-taught skills. In constructing each work, she hopes to connect with and inspire viewers. She also creates digital marketing materials for businesses, functional and decorative art and works as an arts educator throughout the state. As a Maryland native, she graduated from Salisbury University with a BA in Fine Arts, focusing in ceramics and received a M.Ed degree from Wilmington University. She is also a recipient of a 2023 Individual Artist Fellowship from the Delaware Division of the Arts.

Artist Statement

As an artist, her goal is to use her art to explore her deeper self. Anchored in the themes of identity, nature, color and texture, with her combinations of multiple mediums, she often uses fiber as a connecting foundation. Charlese began experimenting with macrame during 2020 and through that exploration found weaving, and fell in love with searching for or creating new fibers to add to her work, even spinning yarn to add to her pieces. The idea of combining portraits and weavings together came to her one day and she worked to develop a process to bring that idea to life. The subjects in her work are typically of individuals who have inspired her in some way through their own experiences, aesthetic, or turning to herself as the subject. By using guidance from the elements in her portraits, she is able to carefully select the materials and color palettes for the weaving that surrounds them. She hopes that as her work is observed, that viewers find joy in seeing all of the little details that have come together to create each piece.

charleseannette.com
IG @charleseannettecreates
FB Charlese Annette Creates

Tina Raggio

ransome

ransome received his MFA from Lesley University. In his practice he combines acrylic paint with an array of found, created, and purchased papers. His work embraces the spontaneity in jazz and the resourcefulness of rural Gee's Bend quilters, utilizing materials at hand to collage and paint to blend a unique yet personal creation.

He has exhibited in a solo exhibit at The Gibbes Museum of Art in Charleston, SC, CAM Raleigh NC at Alpha Galley, Opalka Gallery, and group shows at Katonah Museum of Art, The Sigal Museum, The SECCA Museum, MASS MoCA, the Visual Art Center of New Jersey, Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art, and Weatherspoon Museum of Art.

Artist Statement

My work focuses centers on my African American lineage; and is traced to sharecroppers of the American South who migrated to northern cities along the east coast. The pictorial narratives are personal, yet the symbols interplay with larger social, racial, ancestral, economic, and political histories that speak to current issues. My work aims to imbue each piece with the lyrical yet authentic effects of resilience, limited resources, and frugality, exploring the struggle and hope, pain, joy, and soul of folks in the black community.

Born of a generation infused with soul and R&B music, my representational and abstract works incorporate symbols, patterns, and marks to assimilate powerful images that possess rhythmic properties of music that are woven throughout my oeuvre. Combining acrylic paint with an array of found, created, and purchased papers, I work with the same spontaneity of Hip Hop artists and the resourcefulness of rural quilters of Gee's Bend; using materials at hand to assemble, collage, and, in the tradition of my ancestral heritage, work to create something out of nothing.

ransomeart.com

Stacey A. Robinson

Stacey A. Robinson, MFA, born in Albany, NY is an Associate Professor of Graphic Design at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The influence of science fiction, Black liberation politics, and comic books fuel Stacey's multimedia practice. He moved to NYC the day that Tupac died and the next day became an intern for Milestone Media Inc., a Black owned comic book company that inspired many of today's comic creators. Soon after he interned at Black Enterprise magazine, and Acclaim Comics. Soon he moved to Fayetteville, NC where he attained his associates, and bachelors degrees while working professionally as a graphic designer. Receiving a full scholarship, and the Arthur Schomburg Fellowship he attended the SUNY Buffalo where he received his MFA in 2015.

Artist Statement

Stacey A. Robinson, graphic novelist, curator, and DJ is an Associate Professor of Graphic Design, and Studio at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He was a 2019-2020 Nasir Jones Hip-Hop Fellow at Harvard University's Hutchins Center for African & African American Research who completed his MFA at SUNY Buffalo. His work discusses decolonized Black futures, their obstacles, and securities. Books include: 'I Am Alfonso Jones' from Lee & Low Books, written by Tony Medina, and 'Across the Tracks: Remembering Greenwood, Black Wall Street, and the Tulsa Race Massacre', from Abrams Books, written Alverne Ball. Exhibitions include: Ascension of Black Stillness (CEPA Gallery) in 2021 and The Black Angel of History (Carnegie Hall) in 2022.

staceyarobinson.com

Alison Saar
(b. 1956)

“I feel that in all my work, sculpture, painting and prints and drawings, my women simultaneously testify to their history of inequity and to their strength and perseverance.” – Alison Saar, 2017.
Interview by Kiki Glah. *Of Color: Race & Identity in Artists' Books*.

Stephanie M. Santana

Stephanie M. Santana is a textile artist and printmaker whose work explores wayfinding technologies and resistance strategies of Afrodiasporic origins. Through the lens of cyclical time, Santana investigates recurring events and ideological flashpoints in American history, and the legacy of Black women as visionary stewards of information.

Recent solo exhibitions include Call & Response at A.I.R. Gallery, Brooklyn, NY (2025), and Ways of Knowing at The Print Center, Philadelphia, PA (2024). Santana's work is held in permanent collections that include Whitney Museum of American Art, Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Library of Congress and Getty Research Institute. She is a 2025 Dieu Donné Workspace Residency recipient, 2024-25 A.I.R. Gallery Fellow, 2023 NYSCA/NYFA Artist Fellow: Printmaking/Drawing/Book Arts, and 2023 Kahn/Mason SIP Fellow with EFA Robert Blackburn Printmaking Workshop.

Artist Statement

"Neighborhood Watch (For Faith)" is a quilted textile work referencing the mutual, intergenerational care necessary to sustain our communities. This work incorporates screenprinted photographic images from my family's archives, including a childhood photograph of my mother and aunt in 1950s, Jim Crow-era Dallas, Texas; watching the world from their particular vantage point. While making this piece, I thought about how that time and place shaped their worldview, as well as the injustices that they must have seen and navigated around from a young age. The "star-spangled" border of the quilt is a nod to the ways that social and political constructs frame our understanding, and the myth of American freedom perpetuated by iconography. This work also features two pitchers, a "glyph" that I've used often in my work to symbolize the knowledge and information that women and girls carry with them across generations. My practice is concerned with the continuation of that lineage; the ability to recognize patterns and carry ourselves forward through shared knowledge. There are protective gestures in the piece as well, including a woman with her arm around two children. In April 2024, during the making of this quilt, I learned of Faith Ringgold's passing. The piece became a sort of homage to her, as she's had a significant influence on my practice through her art, activism and commitment to self-determination.

stephaniesantana.com
IG @stephanie__santana

**Charles Searles
(1937–2004)**

Charles Searles knew he wanted to be an artist at a young age and studied art in his hometown of Philadelphia. He was awarded the Cresson Memorial Traveling Scholarship (1971) and the Ware Memorial Traveling Scholarship (1972) from the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts which granted him the opportunity to travel to Africa. Searles has described this trip as “life-changing” because it had profound effect on his art. Searles’ *Dancer* series was inspired by his trip and his love for percussion instruments, particularly the congas. *Two Dancing Figures* incorporates both bright and colorful African imagery he saw in his travels and rhymical musical movement. Searles’ dynamic *Dancing* series appears to come to life as color, shapes and sounds dance toward the viewer.

In 1978, Searles moved to New York City where he remained until his death in 2004.

Yvonne Shortt

Workshop of Shortt is a social practice and interspecies art studio. Its work centers on ecological stewardship, interspecies collaboration, and community-rooted material making. Founded by artist Yvonne Shortt, the studio explores through sculpture, installation, and public engagement. Drawing from lived experiences, their projects use natural materials like mud, seed, and syrup to challenge extractive systems and invite reflection. Workshop of Shortt is committed to creating with awareness, reciprocity, and care; for people, for place, and for the more-than-human world.

Artist Statement

Do No Harm, an installation by Workshop of Shortt gathers objects made from black raspberry purée, bird seeds, mud, maple syrup (all grown and harvested on our land through practices of land reciprocity), and other materials. The installation responds to Pattern Recognition and the repeated, often unconscious patterns creators follow: creating while ignoring ecological harm. Lollipops walk, words hold sweetness, syrup rests in jars. These quiet acts resist extractive making. These works trace a different pattern: one of awareness, reciprocity, and restraint. “Do No Harm” is not a claim, but a vow in motion. This installation is part of a larger, ongoing project that includes land regeneration, interspecies collaboration, and community-rooted material making. What does it mean to create without wounding? To make art that leaves no scar, only presence? When finished, all natural materials from this installation will be returned to the earth: eaten by birds, floated down creeks, put on pancakes, and naturally decomposed. The textiles from this installation will be held in a handmade ceramic urn sourced from local clay and buried as part of our one acre regeneration project, offering a place of release and reflection.

IG @yvonne_shortt

Alisa Sikelianos-Carter

Alisa Sikelianos-Carter is a Black, Queer mixed-media artist from upstate New York. Her practice is informed by intuitive research and explores themes of infinitude, psychic landscapes, shadowwork, spirit, and futurity. She is endlessly inspired by light (both physically and metaphysically) and the dark night sky.

Artist Statement

My practice investigates personal memory, mythology, and mysticism. I create images and installations that engage with intimate and collective grief, divine knowledge, and the luminous manifestations of ancestral and animistic spirits. I'm in a devotional relationship with these entities; my work is the offering.

I shift between painting, drawing, printmaking, installation, and sculpture, which are informed by my spiritual, emotional, and material investigations. Corporeal themes manifesting as teeth, eyes, and hair occur throughout my work as representations of power, protection, trauma, time, and divinity. I'm drawn to materials with dramatic responses to light, as it helps us to visualize the metaphysical. I use matte gouache, glitter, interference, glass, metallic foil, etc., to visualize the depth of the metaphysical. It is because of my interest in shadow and light as an exploration of the spiritual that Black is a consistent foundation in my work, not as an absence but a presence, a bridge to the unseen, and a spiritual container for reflection. The focus moves between these small reflective details/surfaces to the large-scale compositions to expand the viewer's visual experience.

At the core of my work is intuitive research and a sincere desire to connect with the spirit world. I'm interested in spaces where the divine and shadow self-converge, and I build psychic landscapes to guide my inquiry.

alisasikelianoscarter.com

IG @alisasikelianoscarter

George W. Simmons

(b. 1955)

He/Him

I was born in Trinidad and Tobago and grew up in Barbados and North Eastern USA. I was introduced to photography in Boy Scouts and ultimately chose that as my career. I earned a B.S. in marketing and photography from Hampton Institute, a Masters in Studio Art from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, with further study in NY City. I worked with the NY State Assembly after my education, all the while making art. I retired from the Assembly as the Director of Photography in 2019 and now live in Conway SC.

Artist Statement

I make art in a variety of media: Photography, painting, drawing, digital drawing, collage, and print making. My work may explore personal, cultural, contemporary issues. I am also interested in abstraction and formal aesthetic concerns.

gwsphotos.smugmug.com

Winosha Steele

Winosha Steele fearlessly incorporates her identity, heritage, and passions into her work, crafting pieces that are bold, introspective, and deeply personal. She creates with flamboyance and intention, striving to forge a connection between the viewer and the artwork. Steele believes that the nuanced themes in her art ignite meaningful conversations and foster a deeper understanding of the world through introspection.

Drawing inspiration from her Antiguan heritage, Steele's art is boundary-pushing, celebrating both cultural pride and individuality. Her self-portraits delve into the complexities of mental health, particularly the internal dialogues that shape personal identity. These works serve as visual explorations of vulnerability and resilience, inviting viewers to reflect on their own inner narratives.

Steele's desire to expand her artistic horizons and explore themes of racial correlation—however radical—stems from her perspective as a small islander navigating broader societal landscapes.

A graduate of SUNY Plattsburgh with a B.F.A. degree in 2021, Steele has exhibited her work in numerous local and regional exhibitions across New York. Beyond her artistic practice, she finds fulfillment in collaborating with nonprofit organizations, seeking to leave a lasting impact and inspire others who share her commitment to fostering a better future.

winosha.com
IG @winoshaart

Jean-Marc Superville Sovak

(b. 1976)

He/Him

Jean-Marc Superville Sovak is a multidisciplinary artist whose work critically fabulates around silent histories absent from dominant historical narratives. His current projects include *There Are NO Black Shakers*; *A Contemporary Folk Opera*, and *a-Historical Landscapes*, 19th-century landscape engravings altered to include images from contemporaneous Anti-Slavery publications. His participatory performance works include retracing the Underground Railroad at Hudson Valley historic sites, and organizing a “Burial for White Supremacy.” His public art includes a memorial to some of the first Africans to arrive in Rhode Island. A Bard College graduate (M.F.A. Film/Video) Jean-Marc has exhibited at Columbia University’s Wallach Art Gallery, Shirley Fiterman Art Center, RecessArt, Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, Arts Westchester, Socrates Sculpture Park , and Manifesta 8 European Biennial. Jean-Marc has been a Visiting Artist/Lecturer at Bard College, SUNY New Paltz, Columbia University and Vassar College, and in 2020 was guest curator at the Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art.

Artist Statement

As a person of mixed race, I am always sensitive to the evidence of cultural hybridization that is the result of colonization and slavery – events which make up the DNA of this country, as well my own. Consequently, my work seeks to shine a light on the invisible communities and silent histories that shape the landscapes I inhabit. As a multidisciplinary artist and teaching professional whose work is deeply rooted in the community around me, my art practice takes the shape of public works designed to generate collective engagement in a culture of remembrance.

supervillesovak.com

Taiitan
(b. 1996)
He/Him/His

I am an artist from The Bronx, New York, who is interested in Afro-Surrealism and Afro-Futurism, focusing on exploring the intersection of decolonization and psychoanalysis within art. My career has been profoundly influenced by graffiti, manga, anime, and music, which have shaped my mission to share stories that are often overlooked or left untold by those who are underrepresented. These art forms frequently address emotional, spiritual, and societal oppressions and have been crucial in my investigation of the complex relationship between the subconscious and artistic creation, especially in the context of inner-city communities facing challenges such as gentrification, racism, institutionalization, and trauma.

In my work, I enjoy engaging with these themes through various methods and mediums, including cardboard, watercolor and oil paintings, collages, poetry, graphite and ink drawings, murals, ceramic and epoxy sculptures, illustrated books and interactive exhibitions. My creative practice often revolves around questions like, “How can individuals become more aware of their thought patterns?” and “How does understanding others contribute to self-awareness?” By blending manga elements with informational text, I explore potential answers to these questions. I also draw on psychological studies and the works of epistemologists like Frantz Fanon and Octavia Butler to provide additional context and bridge gaps in understanding. Ultimately, I aim for my art to serve as a tool for self-reflection and to inspire others on their own journeys of self-discovery.

Artist Statement

Using various mediums—such as cardboard, watercolor and oil paintings, collages, poetry, graphite and ink drawings, murals, ceramic and epoxy sculptures, illustrated books, and interactive exhibitions—I aim to engage with themes of self-awareness, empathy, and understanding others. My work often explores questions like, “How can individuals become more aware of their thought patterns?” and “How does understanding others contribute to self-awareness?” Through blending manga elements with the informative text of thinkers like Frantz Fanon and Octavia Butler, I aim to offer insight and bridge gaps in understanding that may be often created through educational disparities and more. Ultimately, I hope my art serves as a tool for self-reflection and inspires others on their own journeys of self-discovery through art.

behance.net/Taiitan
IG @Taiitan

**Henry Ossawa Tanner
(1859-1937)**

An African-American artist, Tanner made this work during a time when American artists of color experienced obstacles pursuing training and living as professional artists. They had to travel to Europe to find opportunities to exhibit their work and paint and continue their art education. After two years of study with Thomas Eakins at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Tanner traveled to Paris, his off-and-on home from then on, and attended the Académie Julian. The son of an African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) bishop, he met with much success that translated into wider recognition in the United States and a commitment to empathetic portrayals of African-American life, followed by a deep engagement with Biblical subjects. In 1898-99 he traveled to Palestine in the Middle East and painted this bird's-eye view.

Eric Treece

Born and raised in upstate New York in the blue collar working class town of Troy, Eric's art is shaped by the images of hard working families from a melting pot of ethnicities, brick and concrete buildings, factories and manufacturing plants. His art reflects his love of family, music, nature, and dance, with a flare of color. Repurposed items such as electronic components, rocks, slate, sand, tree branches and bark are commonly used in his artwork. His body of work includes an African themed series called "The Motherland", "The Human Body", and "Nature". Eric is a former US Marine Corps Veteran and often his work is influenced by his experiences while serving home and overseas. When asked about the pricing of his artwork; his response is: "How do you put a price on a Man's soul".

Artist Statement

"King Baobab", the tree of life, represents the coexistence between man and nature. The Baobab tree is a majestic representation of life, nature the universe. Man and the Baobab tree incorporated as one is harmonious and complete.

IG @treece.eric

FB Treece Eric

Stephen J. Tyson

Stephen J. Tyson, Sr. was born and raised in New York City. Tyson graduated from the High School of Music & Art and attended the Art Students League of New York where he studied with Isaac Soyer and Gustav Rehberger. Initially enrolled at the Rhode Island School of Design, Tyson went on to earn his BFA from Manhattanville College and MFA from the City College of New York. Tyson later received the Manhattanville Distinguished Alumni in the Arts award.

He was tenured as an art teacher with the New York City Board of Education and as an associate professor of studio art and art history at the University of Pittsburgh in Johnstown, Pennsylvania. He has been a fine arts faculty member at Siena College, SUNY-Albany, Union College, SUNY-Adirondack, and he is currently an Instructor of Fine Arts at SUNY-Schenectady, where he received the SUNY Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Teaching.

In 1988 and 1995, he was awarded Fulbright-Hays Fellowships to study in Nigeria and in Namibia and Botswana, respectively. Those experiences further inspired his interest in pattern design, evident in a series of paintings and drawings he has continued to produce since 1994. He has also drawn inspiration from the field of cellular biology, astronomy, illuminated manuscripts, Australian Aboriginal art, the mural designs of the Kassena in West Africa, digital photography, and music, among other sources.

In the 21st century, Tyson's work has been featured at venues such as the New York State Museum, the Schenectady Museum (now miSci), Arts Center of the Capital Region, Albany Center Gallery, Saratoga Arts, and the National Black Fine Art Show (NBFAS) in New York City, and is included in the collections of the New York Public Library's Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, the Schenectady Museum (miSci), Hudson Valley Community College, Siena College, as well as in numerous private collections.

Mr. Tyson has also served as a curator, lecturer, arts consultant, panelist (including NYSCA's Special Arts Services), reviewer, moderator, and gallery assistant and, with his son, currently co-hosts the Style Free Podcast, which explores a wide variety of interesting topics in music, art, family, and culture.

Artist Statement

From my "pattern paintings" to the more recent shaped wooden panels and digital photographs, I have drawn inspiration from a diverse range of artists in the field of music, including Tuvan Throat Singers, Miles Davis, and King Sunny Ade.

On the visual side, Australian Aboriginal art, African textile designs, Islamic geometric patterns, stain-glass windows, and New York City graffiti are among the many forms of human expression that continue to intrigue me. Recent explorations in photomicroscopy, and celestial discoveries as revealed through the Hubble Telescope, have also contributed to my relentless curiosity about life.

The visual forms revealed from these areas of science reinforce my appreciation for the connection between the micro- and the macrocosm, a relationship also acknowledged by artists of antiquity. I feel linked to this mysterious blend of past and present cultures, sight and sound, nature, science, and spirituality. I am delighted to share with you these works produced along my artistic journey.

stephenjtyson.com

IG @stephenjtyson

**James Van Der Zee
(1886–1983)**

At the young age of 14, James Van Der Zee began taking pictures of his family and friends around his hometown of Lenox, Massachusetts. In 1906, he moved to New York City. Ten years later, Van Der Zee set up a studio in Harlem that launched a visual legacy of the documentation of Harlem's people, events, celebrations, and influential members of the Harlem Renaissance. The subjects of his studio portraiture varied from middle-class families to celebrities, with each photograph composed with great care and attention to detail. Van Der Zee used painted backdrops, lush furniture, and decoration for his sitters and carefully positioned them in ways that would capture their beauty and elegance. His photography combated the prevailing twentieth-century stereotypes surrounding Black Americans, and instead, presented his subjects in a respectful and celebratory manner that continues to influence and affirm the history of Harlem today.

Takeyce Walter
(b. 1980)
She/Her

Takeyce Walter is an award-winning contemporary American painter (Jamaican-born), art instructor, and media producer living and working in upstate New York. Since her formative years, the impulse to create has driven her, resulting in a lifelong journey of artistic expression. Takeyce's work is a testament to her deep-rooted connection with the Northeastern landscape, reflecting her profound contemplation of humanity's relationship with nature and the environment. Through the masterful manipulation of oil paint, gouache, and pastels, she crafts evocative portrayals of the natural world, capturing its essence in every stroke—be it the meandering rivers, the ethereal skies, or the tranquil lakes. Each composition exudes a sense of intimacy, serenity, and veneration, inviting viewers to find belonging and connection in the beauty of the natural world.

Beyond her artistic endeavors, Takeyce serves as a staunch advocate for both art and the environment, dedicating her time and expertise to local non-profit organizations championing these causes. Her philanthropic efforts underscore her commitment to nurturing the very landscapes that inspire her work. In her latest explorations, Takeyce delves into the intricate interplay between humanity and nature, probing questions of access and connection to natural landscapes. Through her artistry and advocacy, she continues to illuminate the significance of preserving our natural heritage for generations to come.

In 2022, spurred by her volunteer work, Takeyce initiated a youth program titled, Art and the Environment in collaboration with The Nature Conservancy, Adirondack Chapter, and Black Dimensions in Art. This program aims to provide young artists with opportunities to engage with local preserves, learn the art of plein air painting from professional artists, and understand the significance of natural landscapes in both art and life.

Artist Statement

The beauty found in nature often overwhelms me. I am driven by an ever-present and irresistible urge to capture that beauty and share it with others. My recent work reflects the exquisiteness I see in the natural landscape around me. I am most inspired by and drawn to quiet and peaceful scenes. I am forever intrigued by light and its effects on color in the landscape. The paintings are of places I've experienced with all my senses, composed with the intent to reconstruct the sense of peace and connectedness I feel within nature. My process of creating art is nourishing, energizing, and exhausting all at once. My goal when starting a painting is to capture the impression a place or a moment has left upon me. Recently, inspired by the joy of seeing my children in nature, I have begun to include figures in the landscape. This series is exuberant and a reminder of the positive effects of time spent recreating in nature. I aim to capture the mood and atmosphere that originally drew me to a composition; relying on memory and intuition to create works that evoke the presence of the place. I work primarily with oil paint, gouache, and soft pastels in my home studio, and occasionally in the field to capture these moments.

I am inspired, and I hope my work inspires others to take a pause and experience the beauty around us.

takeycewalter.com
IG @takeycewalter

Jade Warrick

Jade Warrick is a community-centered muralist, arts educator, and advocate dedicated to transforming public spaces into vibrant canvases for connection, reflection, and collective joy. She is the host of WMHT's PBS program A House for Arts and the founder and co-director of Amplified Voices, an art and wellness initiative empowering youth and adults to tell their stories through public art and creative expression. She sits on the board of Collar Works and has worked with several local arts organizations to spread the power of what art can give. Through her murals, educational programs, and community partnerships, Jade's mission is to build a more empathetic world - one where creativity restores critical thinking and art becomes a catalyst for understanding and healing across generations.

Artist Statement

"Dreams Found Within a Trash Bag" is a self-portrait series chronicling my journey as a Black queer female artist transitioning away from the corporate world and into a life devoted entirely to creativity, expression, and access. Each painting captures an emotional state from a specific moment in that transformation- part vulnerability, part reclamation.

The figure in these works often wears a paper bag over their head, a visual metaphor for my introversion and preference to exist behind the scenes. It is in that hidden space, unseen, unjudged - that I feel most grounded and able to speak freely through my work. The bag becomes both a shield and a stage, where I can express what I cannot always articulate aloud.

This series reflects a personal unraveling and rebuilding. It documents the shedding of self-doubt and the corporate shell that once defined me, making room for a more honest, instinctive version of myself. As the series progresses, more of my inner being with start to surface revealing not just who I am, but who I'm becoming and reflecting on who I once was.

Through this work, I aim to affirm that healing and reinvention are possible, and that artistic freedom is not just a dream but a lifestyle and a lifeline.

IG @Trashkid_art

**Pheoris West
(1950–2021)**

“Africentricity is what explains the structure of my art work while not neglecting the aspect of making art. Making the art comes from a passion to create that artists are blessed with. Making artwork is a way of creating life.” – Pheoris West, Official Website

West studied art at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art and Yale University. He had his first major solo exhibition at the Studio Museum of Harlem in 1974. In his application for the Harlem Art Collection, West explains why the city of Harlem had a profound impact on his work: “My own personal research in looking for elements of black art, centered upon Harlem and some of the lifestyles of Harlem. I looked at Harlem for direction and understanding the culture of ‘street life’, the subject matter in many of my paintings... Although I was not born in Harlem, the Harlem life-style is a magnified version of my own life style.”

Deborah Willis

(b. 1948)

She/Her

Photographer Deborah Willis is University Professor and Chair of the Department of Photography & Imaging at the Tisch School of the Arts at New York University. She is the recipient of the MacArthur Fellowship, a Guggenheim Fellowship and a member of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences. She is the author/co-author of several books including KAMALA: Her Historic, Joyful, and Auspicious Sprint to the White House The Black Civil War Soldier: A Visual History of Conflict and Citizenship and Posing Beauty: African American Images from the 1890s to the Present, among others. Professor Willis's curated exhibitions include: "Framing Moments in the KIA," "Migrations and Meanings in Art", "Let Your Motto Be Resistance: African American Portraits" at the International Center of Photography; Out of Fashion Photography; Framing Beauty at the Henry Art Gallery and "Reframing Beauty: Intimate Moments" at Indiana University. Her art works have been exhibited at the Park Avenue Armory, Philadelphia Academy of Fine Arts, The University of Arts, Monument Lab and the Philadelphia African American Museum and Common Cause in Chicago, Brooklyn College, Photoville, among others.

Artist Statement

I met Faith while researching for the Mural Arts/Philadelphia African American Museum Rendering Justice exhibition in 2019. Faith is an advocate for prison reform. She helps women re-enter society after incarceration. "I am passionate about helping these women that's coming home, digging out resources because nobody was there to do it for me!" she said to me. The calligraphy of Faith's tattoo on her hands spells out her name and Psalm 91, God's promise of protection. Both of these women, Ruth and Faith, hold on to the promise of a higher power, a commitment made more extraordinary in the face of 2020, when the photograph was taken, a difficult year of Black death marked by the mortality of Coronavirus and abusive policing. This photograph is an extension of an ongoing photography project, in search of beauty. I have written about the Black female body in photography for over thirty years and thought often about spirituality and transformation. I find it particularly evident in the hands of Black women living in Black communities for an extended period of time. For this project, I decided to photograph the tattooed hands of a prison reform activist, Faith, who lived in Philadelphia. She finds power in the word of God as she thrives and survives from this foundation.

debwillisphoto.com

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**Fred Wilson
(b. 1954)**

Fred Wilson uses objects to encourage the reconsideration of social and historical symbols and narratives by reframing their conventional interpretations. Here the artist emphasizes the Western “fetish” for Egyptian artifacts by placing a plaster pharaoh, a common souvenir for tourists traveling Egypt, on a pedestal. The repeated use of ankhs—an ancient Egyptian symbol of life—and images of Egyptian queen Nefertiti, allude to the power of Egypt. Meanwhile, leather cords reference enslaved peoples and beaded necklaces and Pan-African colors symbolize the American Black Power movement of the 1970s. What makes an object a tourist commodity and what defines it as “authentic”? Which, if any of these objects, represent African identity, and who is to decide?

In Wilson’s sculpture, African and black diasporic identities merge. But what of the many other African countries besides Egypt? What does Egypt offer or symbolize that has created such a fetish for it, both in Western conceptions of Africa and in African identities?

Michael K. Wilson, PhD

Michael K. Wilson, Ph. D., is an artist, art historian, and curator. He is currently an Assistant Professor of Art History and Pan-African Studies at Lincoln University and the Assistant Curator at the African American Museum in Philadelphia. His research interests include contemporary African diaspora art practices, decolonial aesthetics, and collective identity formation within visual culture, particularly among artists of Caribbean descent. Michael is also a Fulbright Fellow and two-time Nelson Mandela Museum Fellow recipient. His publication contributions include the edited volume *New Frontiers in the Study of the Global African Diaspora*, the monograph, *Visible Man: Fahamu Pecou and La Vaughn Belle: A History of Unruly Returns*. Michael's curatorial contributions include the 2023 collaborative exhibition between the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art (PAFA) and the African American Museum in Philadelphia (AAMP) titled *Rising Sun - Artists in an Uncertain America*. As a visual artist Michael is interested in the relationships between realism and abstraction as techniques to engage with the complexities of history and culture. The folds of head wraps or texture of natural hair become visual modes of communication that stress the representational boundaries of how viewers respond to form and texture compared to how they are perceived as cultural signifiers.

Artist Statement

Crowns is an ongoing project representing both historic and contemporary investigations on the various ways men and women style head wraps throughout the African diaspora. The headdress signifies a complex history of representation: from using head wraps as ritual and rites of passage, as symbols of rebellion, to coding messages through during enslavement, and its purely aesthetic styling as representations of beauty, pride and culture. Each shape and fold carries a unique and complex story. I attempt to visually reflect these complexities in a series of drawings that celebrate the stories carried within each fold and crease.

michaelwilsonartist.com

Paula Wilson
(b. 1975)

Paula Wilson lives and works in Carrizozo, New Mexico. Working in a desert town with a population of 900 outside of urban art centers has allowed her space and time to explore deeply interconnected synergies between art and life. Her artwork is a hybrid, pattern-filled mosaic of materials and imagery that mixes biography and body with fashion and technology—equal parts grounded craft and visionary thinking. She is a feminist multicultural maker experimenting with new ways to realize her artwork from how it is developed in collaboration with others to how it is physically deployed in spaces. In 2008, Wilson and her partner, Mike Lagg, started MoMA ZOZO, a unique artist-in-residence series/gallery/studio/community gathering space that is fast becoming a hub of creativity in their small town.

Hale Woodruff
(1900–1980)

Hale Woodruff was born in Illinois, grew up in Tennessee and studied at several institutions in Indiana, Massachusetts, Chicago and Paris. Woodruff's move to New York in 1946 represented a major shift in the artist's career. While teaching at New York University, he became involved with the Abstract Expressionist scene and transitioned his style from figural and landscape art to abstract imagery inspired by African art, as seen in *Celestial Gate*. Together with artists Romare Bearden and Norman Lewis, Woodruff joined Spiral, the seminal collective of African American artists that formed in response to the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.

**Barbara Zuber
(1926-2019)**

Barbara Johnson Zuber was a Black American painter who grew up during the Harlem Renaissance living at the famous Dunbar Garden Apartments built by John D. Rockefeller where many notable Black artists, musicians, actors and important civil rights leaders lived. She attended extremely progressive schools at the time such as The Little Red School House and the Walden School whose direction was to develop a student's identification through the visual and performing arts. She then went on to attend Yale University's School of Fine Arts and is recognized as the first woman to graduate from the prestigious School of Fine Arts.

Zuber's art developed in three distinct experiences in her life. The first is from the time she grew up in Harlem being exposed to and interacting with the leading figures in the arts, business, sports and politics. Her circle included Jacob Lawrence, James Baldwin, Bill "Bojangles" Robinson, Paul Robeson, Adam Clayton Powell Jr., Thurgood Marshall, David Dinkins and the playwright Lorraine Handsberry whose 1959 "A Raisin in the Sun" was the first Broadway play written by an African American starring Sidney Poitier and Ruby Dee. Barbara's mother Marion was also one of the first Black fashion designers known as Verta Hayes who had a shop in midtown Manhattan where she catered to clientele such as Eleanor Roosevelt.

Early in her marriage her husband, Paul, would gain notoriety as a leading voice and civil rights attorney winning landmark cases forever changing the landscape of segregated schools in the North. Her art at this time reflected the protests and the civil rights movement, always helping to organize parents in bettering education for their children.

Finally, many of Zuber's works are influenced by her childhood trips to Jackson, Mississippi where her uncle, Addison Branch, was the vice-provost to Tougaloo College and one of the only all Black private colleges existing. This is where the famous "Tougaloo Nine" meticulously planned the first sit-in at the White-Only Jackson Public Library in 1961. Her exposure to these times were indelible.

From the beginning Barbara Zuber was remarkable in every way possible. Her educational path is unsurpassed by any woman of that time let alone a Black woman. She transferred her passion and dignity through her wide-range of human experiences into her art in the purist of ways.

Elizabeth Zunon

Elizabeth Zunon is the award-winning illustrator of over twenty children's picture books, an author and mural artist. Born in Albany, New York, Elizabeth spent her childhood in Côte d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast), West Africa, where she loved to draw, paint, make up dances, and play dress-up. Surrounded by the bright, vibrant colors of everyday West African fabrics and tropical vegetation, Elizabeth's love of color and pattern grew and lingered past her return to the United States as a teenager. She attended the Rhode Island School of Design and graduated with a B.F.A. in Illustration in 2006. Elizabeth now lives in Albany with her husband and young son, where she explores a multicultural world through painting, collage, silk-screening, embroidery, and more. Her work is largely influenced by the people, places and things from her childhood in Côte d'Ivoire as the product of two cultures. Elizabeth's illustrated children's books include "Through Sand and Salt: A Tale of Discovery Across the Sahara" and "Grandpa Cacao: A Tale of Chocolate, from Farm to Family" (published by Bloomsbury Children's Books), both of which she is also the author.

Artist Statement

My work celebrates the quiet daily moments where we validate our traditions and celebrate our heritage.

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