

BLACK WELL RED
THREAD COLLECTIVE

2020-22




LEONOR R. FULLER GALLERY

FUTURE'S RISING EXHIBITIONS



South Puget Sound
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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THRESEA "MAMA TEE" YOST

With the encouragement of my mentor Aisha Harrison and under her watchful eye I was able to explore different mediums and feel I have grown as an artist through this experience. Art takes many forms and I am delighted to have offered such. I hope it speaks loudly for itself.

Thresea P. Yost is a great lover of art in both the written and visual mediums. She was the 2018 Olympia Poet Laureate runner up and has a piece published in the anthology I Hear Olympia Singing. Her motivation as an artist has always been to infuse the artistic space with Black voices and expression. This installation is just the next step in that journey. She is forever grateful to Sean and the SPSCC Leonor R. Fuller Gallery for the opportunity to showcase the work of Black artists in the Olympia area.

FOREWORD

The Black Artist Existence within Olympia, WA

ASHLY MCBUNCH

Overview of the Black Artist representation and existence within Olympia, WA and of three the Black centered art exhibitions held at Leonor R. Fuller Gallery at South Puget Sound Community College between 2020 and 2022.

At the age of five, I found my first love, art. Art gave a welcoming feeling of home. Among blank paper, my heart expressed itself each moment my little hands had the opportunity to create. I would sit with my father wherever he decided to plant his work area that day, watching him sketch whatever came to mind. He would hold a pencil in one hand, a regular #2, and the other kept massaging his brow back and forth as if pulling out the following line to draw, me mimicking his process. He would pace the room taking sips of coffee or a puff off his corn cob pipe and laugh with me as we talked. With age, my ability to observe other artists floats and mixes with memories of my father, where I learned to take time processing each pencil placement while viewing improvised abstract strokes of other artists' tools upon canvases taught me to let go. The love I have for the balance found within art is deep within even the lines I type. And like deep lines upon a page, first loves may be erased from one's existence but honestly not forgotten, and they can also last countless years. Years are built upon a growth that is not only linear but expansive in all directions. The ever-lasting love of art is filled with doubts, success, happiness, joy, failures, abandonment, and fear. Every possible emotion can happen simultaneously upon blank canvases of creation or in shaping a mound of clay. Exploring how or why this love ebbs and flows within the life of an artist is remarkable to witness. The paths artists take to discover their love of art are unique to the artist. Each stroke of a brush, design of a structure, or placement of a word has a starting point. It has a place where the fundamental imagination is molded with talent established to bring forth an observer's memories of the artist's creation. As experiences craft expressions while living in a central lens spiked with mirrored images, artists capture observations and intertwine them with their love of art and all that encompasses the journey of personal fulfillment. I feel this is true for any artist, regardless of the form of expression, artistic background, or acknowledgment of their creative talents within society.

Society's nature and personal influences help form one's ability to perceive their talents and skills by what is shown to them. Some people are influenced by seeing similar humans create worlds where they are represented, and a sense of community can result from that representation. Others do not see themselves and decide to make their own world and expression through art. The voice of Black artists can go unnoticed within communities that do not strive to include them. Appreciation of how and what Black people have brought forth to the art world has a long history filled with racism, punishment, theft, and being overlooked for their accomplishments. Representation of Black art in mainstream society does not always show appreciation for Black people. Instead, overly appropriated ideas from Black

creators zoom through social media platforms without recognition. Yet, they are repurposed for use making the art commercialized for non-Black audiences. Our bodies, stories, and existence have been consistently pilfered and placed on display for entertainment. This form of disregarding the artistic accomplishments of Black people harms the community where Black people work, live, and exist daily. Where we call home.

Olympia, Washington (the traditional unceded territories of the Squaxin Island and Nisqually Peoples), home to approximately 56,000 residents, with 8.9% being Black residents, is referred to as the cultural center of South Puget Sound; however, the representation of Black art within the community was not present. Olympia's art spaces did not seem to depict the nearly 5,000 Black residents that make up the largest city in Thurston County. The lack of art by Black artists represented in Olympia was noticed by Theresa P. Yost, who is affectionately referred to by artists within the community as "Mama Tee". Mama Tee attended local meetings, met with officials to locate Black artists, and was told there were no Black artists to be found. A writer, and lover of art, she became focused on ensuring Black voices were infused within the art community around Olympia and started networking to bring together local Black artists. Three Black art exhibits between 2020 to 2022 were held at South Puget Sound Community College (SPSCC) Leonor R. Fuller Gallery (Leo Gallery). Sean Barnes, Leo Gallery's Director and Coordinator, understood the importance of the work Mama Tee wanted to showcase and provided the resources to enable a space and viewing platform for the exhibits to exist. Mama Tee acted as a shepherd pulling in local Black artists for Future's Rising, Closer, and Black Love exhibits. Each exhibit lives with its own merits, centered on the artists and concepts of celebration, the human experience as a Black person, and the value of mentorship. Barnes and Mama Tee provided a chance for Olympians to take part in witnessing artwork from Black artists and allowed the artists to share their values, unique artistic process, and experience with different audiences through artist talks. The artist talks provided an opportunity to learn deeper essential aspects of each artist's work and speak openly about the importance of their art through music, storytelling, and panel discussion.

Ashly McBunch is the current Poet Laureate of Olympia, WA, a multi-media and performance artist. Information gathered was completed through interviews with some of the artists involved in each exhibit, a review of artist statements and bios, viewing of all works and artists talks of each exhibit.

ARTISTS' REFLECTIONS

SANDRA BOCAS I didn't realize the enormous feat Thresea Yost aka Mama Tee had accomplished until much later when asked to note what showing in the Leonor Gallery means to me. As I looked back, I saw how Black Peoples were shut out of Art Galleries, of showing of showing work, shut out of encouragement. This pain is deep and has many effects.

Mama Tee found us and brought us together as a force and yes, we exist and our Art, our expression is important and contributes to the whole creating the balance.

I very much love showing at the Leonor Gallery because seeing my work on the backdrop of white walls from a distance and having sold paintings encourages the inner map of my paint world.

Thank you, Leonor Gallery.

AISHA HARRISON Mamma Tee has given us such a gift. When I was first contacted by her, I didn't know quite what to expect, but what has transpired these last few years has been spectacular. Where before I felt isolated in Olympia, now I have a community of artists that I am getting to know better. Together we are deepening our commitment to working together and figuring out ways to become a more cohesive and supportive group, not only for ourselves, but also within our communities. The labor of love that Mamma Tee did to bring us together was so greatly needed and appreciated. I feel lucky to call Mamma Tee both a mentor and friend.

TRAVIS JOHNSON When I think back too "Futures Rising ". It reminds me of what it means to see each other. Mama Tee, held the tent pole so that we could all trade recipes of what it meant to be a maker creatives and humans. To be seen by one who sees them self in you is electrifying.

I will be forever grateful for Mama Tee seeing us and holding spaces for us to see ourselves.

DAVID YOST When I found, with delight, the well established art community in our sleepy little town of Olympia Washington I was surprised at the lack of offerings from black artist. There's diversity here so why was it not reflected in the art community? When I put this question to city organizers and leaders the response was that there were no local artists of color. This was unbelievable to me so I looked and found a number of gifted and exciting individuals strong in their art and willing to share. They did not feel welcomed. No one asked them to the table. I did. And I'm so glad I did. What they've shared is nothing short of exhilarating. The many mediums feed my soul as a lover of art. I am blessed to have discovered such uniqueness and honored to have it shared. I'm looking forward to what the future holds for these very talented artists in changing the feelings of exclusion to ones of respect and appreciation. Art matters. The way in which people are brought to understanding each other is a learning and teachable endeavor that transcends. I embrace seeing the world through the eyes of others and have found much to look at here in Olympia. The Leonor R. Fuller Gallery at The Kenneth J. Minnaert Center for the Arts deserves many thanks for their willingness to showcase the local artists of color. The community has only grown as a result.

RENEE WESTBROOK It can be said that The Fuller Gallery at SPSCC under the curatorship of Sean Barnes has given birth to a new black artist collective loosely formed by the urging of Mama Tee. This eclectic group of diverse talent from Olympia culminated in three exhibitions between 2020-2022. I had both the privilege and the pleasure of being selected to show with these remarkable fellow artists, many of whom I had not known prior to our first exhibition "Futures Rising".

Mama Tee is an enigmatic woman. She is understated and humble as a spokesperson for this group of artists now under her banner. I have found her own creative vision and work lets one into a new world of possibilities not easily accessible just from the contours of conversations with her. Lucky for us, art is the gift that keeps on giving, and the collective weaves together a fabric of futures rising for the community just beginning to experience what our particular vision can bring to Olympia.

Early in my career, I've had various opportunities with more experienced artists that help guide my progress, so I fully understand the value of mentorship. Recently, our group decided to mentor younger artists and bring them into the exhibition space alongside us. This mentorship component of our third show was astonishing in how much growth and splendor there was in each partnership. The art talk at the end of the last exhibition fortified the unquestionable need for our voices and vision in this community as well as having a forum like SPSCC to give us an anchor from which to steady our course.

I am thrilled to know that we are to continue as a growing collective at the gallery and that my participation has been a useful and inspiring addition. I look forward to meeting new talent and to learn from those who's once emerging art forms have blossomed with our care and support.

We all have Mama Tee to thank.

SEAN BARNES, MFA

Gallery Director



Thresea “Mama Tee” Yost approached me with some new ideas for the Leonor R. Fuller “Leo” Gallery in Winter 2018. She was already a regular supporter of SPSCC Arts, and I was immediately taken by her new ideas for inclusive community-building in the arts. With the sensibilities of a poet, artist, creator, and mother, she spoke through the warmth of a generous smile. Mama Tee was working to create Olympia’s first African American Arts Gala. In true elder maven fashion, Mama Tee was organizing artists, musicians, poets, performers, soul food culinarians, writers, and others from Olympia’s Black communities to celebrate Black and African American local culture. A life-changing event for Mama Tee shifted the efforts of the gala, placing the event on hold. We continued to talk and in time, to the delight of SPSCC, an artistic collaboration was formed. The Leo was opened to Mama Tee’s vision to host a roster of 12 talented and creative artists, becoming the Futures Rising exhibition in October 2020.

Working with the Futures Rising artists has been a highlight of my SPSCC career, and has had a profound impact on expanding my conceptualizations of gallery curation and the meaning of cultural artifacts. The experience continues to reverberate in my work for the Leo, inspiring me to be more intentional and deliberate in the way I collaborate with artists, seek input from community-builders such as Mama Tee, and release some old ways of thinking and working. The Gallery Committee has incorporated these shifts in our development of future programming that creates unique opportunities for local artists and supports the SPSCC mission to foster transformative education.

Nurturing inclusive communities is what we strive for at the Leo. From Futures Rising came the Closser and Black Love exhibitions, all documented here. Each exhibition and corresponding workshops, performances, and artist talks have connected SPSCC to a vibrant, creative, and historically under-represented community of artists in the Olympia region. Drawing on Mama Tee’s expansive vision and persistence, many of the artists in these exhibitions have spun the work into further community engagement beyond the Leo.

On behalf of the Leo Gallery Committee and SPSCC, I express deep gratitude and appreciation for Thresea “Mama Tee” Yost and the brilliant, creative minds she has gathered around us.

Love and respect,
Sean

Displayed from October 5 through December 11, 2020, Futures Rising, a celebration of Blacks Artists in the Olympia Community was the first of the three exhibits. The artists were Sandra Bocas, Javoen Byrd, Shamenka Gagnier, Cholee Gladney, Aisha Harrison, Travis Johnson, Sun Jordyn, Mskahe, Rhian Parker, Rene Westbrook, Yitagesu, and David Yost. Recognition of local Black artists among the residents of Olympia through the Future's Rising exhibits provided the groundwork for future exhibitions. Futures Rising, curated by Mama Tee, was the first to share the artwork of Black artists working together and separately on their chosen pieces within the Leo Gallery.

One art installation was a collaborative effort of Harrison, Gladney, and Gagnier, who make up the Black Well Red Thread Collective. This group of creatives grew close through their work over the years, each with their individual art styles, and came together to create Future Blanket 2420. The view, a 12-foot display hung from the gallery ceiling, pulled you into each of the 4094 red threads surrounded by rocks over a black glass floor. The reflection of the threads pulsates like red velvet veins of history as your eyes follow it up above to the anchor point. The collective artists' statement speaks on how they worked together to create the piece, passing the thread amongst each other in long and short passages representing the lives of the 4094 ancestors who would have to exist for a person to stand upon this earth today.

The Futures Rising exhibit is an array of expression displaying stimulating artwork filled with artists' principles, cultural influences, and personal responses to current events. Inspired by many artists, Gladney's mixed-media collages encourages storytelling through the visual placement of each element and drawing. The eyes are drawn into faces that provide comfort, understanding and familiarity. This feeling is grounding and invokes a sense of belonging viewed separately and as a trilogy when observed together. Parker also exhibited collage work with the addition of poetic responses to the world. Their work centers around the generational lack of accessibility to mourn within our society as a Black person. During the Future's Rising exhibit, Byrd's artist talk included Afro-folkloric culture and music presentations rotating various African instruments into his storytelling. His reverberating voice wraps you within an engaging environment, keeping one intrigued until the end of the tale, and Bocas' talk provides background into her four portraits of women of color. She opens with a story about how Mama Tee found her while selling her hot sauce in Olympia's farmers market. The portraits portray Angela Davis, Black poet, activist, and educator, is her only hero, along with three other images of women influenced by the varying atrocities women of color face. Harrison's work displayed during this exhibit also shined a light on the horrors of Black women, girls, femmes and trans folx. Harrison's quilted pieces honored lives lost at the hands of brutality and included work with sculptures depicting the effects of ancestral racism on the human spirit and exploring non-human aspects of existences. The visual connection to ancestors is embraced within the work of Johnson. His artwork references the human experience through emotional depth and introspection in colorful arrays of textured, sculpted forms. Paintings shown by Jordyn capture the human figure in emotive body expressions upon the canvases in bright colors and contoured lines radiating the auras of the bodies. Abstract bright colors also help describe the work of Yitagesu and the inspiration he finds through Ethiopian culture in marked black lines varying thickness and shape upon paper. Some of his work highlights the lines without color and leaves one tracing the feeling through each black stroke. The handmade artistry of Mskahe, who creates one-of-a-kind jewelry and purses, a majority voided of metal and constructed from Ankara African fabric, honors the unique and versatile components of creating outside typical materials. Yost presented photography from their work specializing in broadcast journalism with themes surrounding the effects of war and disaster within communities. Westbrook, a multimedia artist and educator, brings intuition and intrigue to the artwork she creates. Westbrook's work for Future Rising consisted of collages and art installations to insightful commentary to the world of social injustices. The artists curated for Futures Rising were only the beginning of building a network of Black artists within the Olympia community.

ASHLY MCBUNCH

ARTISTS

Blackwell Red Thread Collective

Sandra Bocas

Javoen Byrd

Shameka Gagnier

Cholee Gladney

Aisha Harrison

Travis Johnson

Sun Jordyn

Mskahe

Rhian Parker

Rene Westbrook

Yitagesu

David Yost

Black Well Red Thread Collective

Aisha Harrison
Shameka Gagnier
Cholee Gladney



We have been in community and conversations for years, and our relationship has become a kinship. Over the last two and a half years we have been meeting specifically to workshop our individual art practices. We are mothers, partners, teachers, and creatives who work in multiple disciplines. Within our circle we have found many layers of commonality that feeds and drives our work. This has gifted us with a depth of collective engagement when approaching each other's work. Within this container we have formed a collective and installed our first collaboration as Black Well Red Thread Collective. A huge part of our praxis is community engagement and place-based practice; whether that takes place in the future, in honoring our ancestors or within the various intersections we walk. Our hope is to create pathways to new possibilities, remedies, and future - in collaboration.

Our Wildest Dreams,

Artist Statement

Our Wildest Dreams,

A little over a month ago we saw a post on our current (August, 2020) social media platform. @life_as_ceremony shared an image entitled "Ancestral Mathematics" which stated "For you to be born today from 12 previous generations, you needed a total of 4094 ancestors over the past 400 years." We felt profoundly shaken by this new understanding, as we have felt individual, disconnected, and untethered in our experience as human beings. This sense of disconnection is due to colonization, the undermining of our ancestral connections, the patriarchy, and capitalism. It was from this place that we were inspired to create something that would make this sense of connection tangible. To get this feeling of connection into our bodies we made long red threads spanning twelve feet. With the thread we walked back and forth, each pass signifying one life's journey. At times we passed the thread between us to shorten the distance. As we worked we noticed this reinforced a new understanding about just how connected we are. We strive to have this knowledge transform our understanding so deeply that it transfers to future generations, and is a gift to our ancestors who held this wounding as well. After we reached 4094 red threads we cut and braided them into bundles to be hung in a public space.



Future Blanket-2420
Acrylic, Stone, Glass,
Velvet, Brass
11'5" x 5'9"

In our time, in our community, there are spaces where we are underrepresented. An elder named Mama Tee arrived in our community almost five years ago. She went to City Council meetings, the local colleges, and even met with the mayor to find the people. The mayor said there were no Black artists and very little artists of color in what is now Olympia, WA, USA (the traditional unceded territories of the Squaxin Island and Nisqually Peoples: coordinance 47.0379N -122.9007W.) Over the last two years Mama Tee has worked to find artists, and performers, and bring us together to celebrate. These spaces are so healing and vital. The 4094 threads are being seen and witnessed in this space.

During the viewing, conversations happened between artists and art works, interfacing with stories and generations—reverberating connections that those threads represented. . . . At the end of the viewing, the threads were gathered up and braided again to be woven into the blanket that now enfolds you, our future children's, children's, children's, children's, children's, children's, children's, children's, children's, children's, children's, children's, children. We hope and pray this finds you in a place where you are protected, connected, nourished, and free— that you are surrounded by community, wise family, and health, and that you know who you are. We pray you have a life that is filled with purpose, and you live in balance with the things that support your life.

Love you through space and time Aisha, Cholee, and Shameka

Sandra Bocas



Sandra was born in Venezuela, growing up in Trinidad having moved there with her family when she was five. She spent her teenage years in Aberystwyth at a girls' boarding school, before starting an extensive career in fashion as a make-up artist that spanned over 30 years. She has always been fascinated by the character and the soul behind the mask, which is revealed in her startling array of women's faces. Self-taught, but guided by some considerable mentors: Bosco Holder (Trinidad), Patrick Betaudier (Paris), Andy Warhol (The Factory) and more recently Rafael Calzada (Mexico), she also draws inspiration from one of her favorite artists, the late Alexej von Jawlensky. Her style can be described as a unique blend of abstract and soulful portraiture. Indeed the memories of the light and colors of Trinidad and Tobago, her mother's birth place, are also seen as the influence in her play with color.

I have chosen these four portraits for this exhibition 'Futures Rising' because each portrait represents a particular plight that has and continues to face women of color around the world.

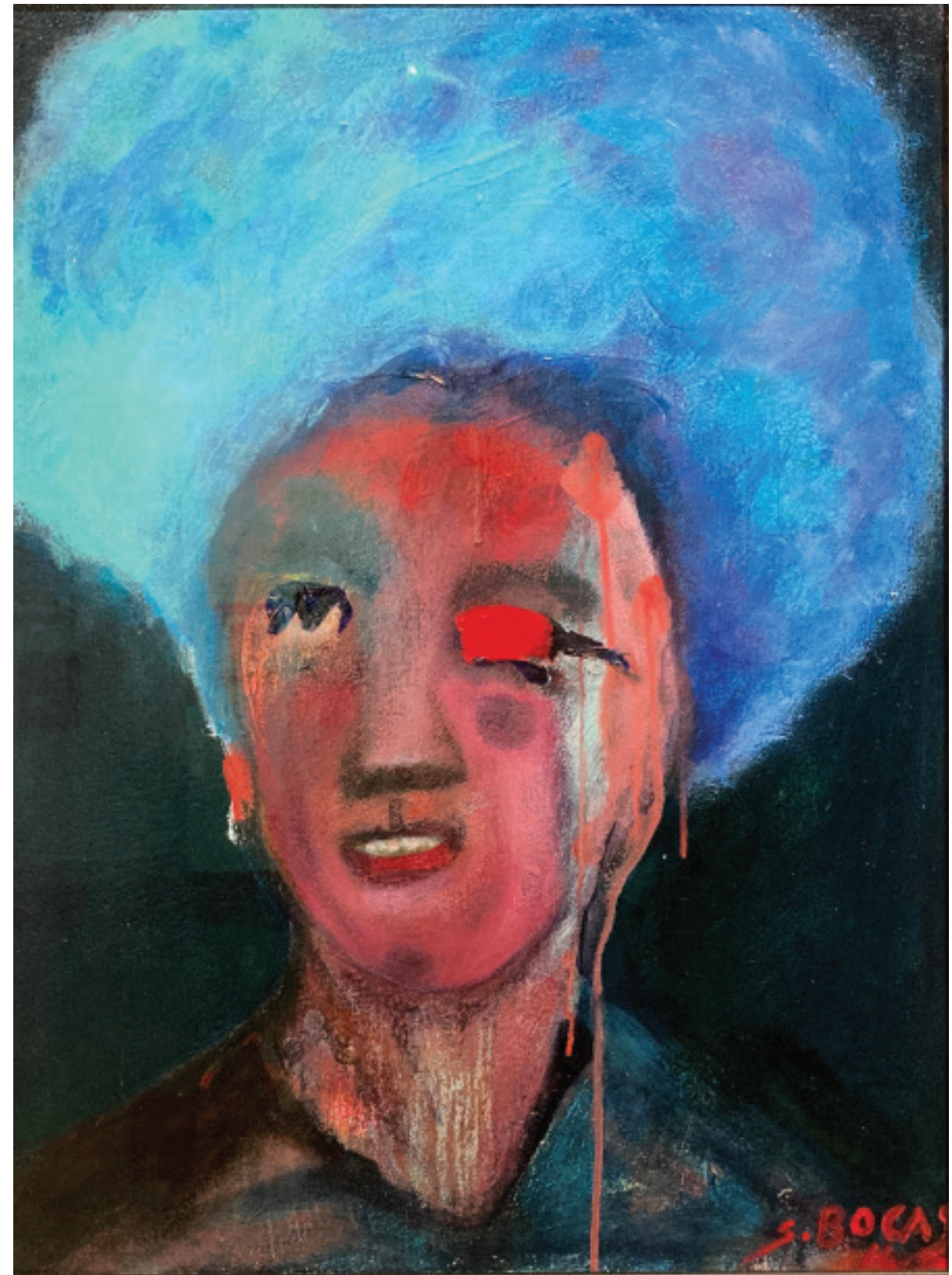
- *Black Face* has no features because it represents not being seen. As a woman of color working in the fashion world in the 70s and 80s, there weren't even foundation colors for our skin tones. Black women are still under-represented in fashion.
- *And You...What are You Doing?* The recording of the brutal killing of George Floyd brought the violent suppression of people of color into everyone's lives. I chose not to paint a nose or mouth in reference to his plea "I can't breathe" and the eyes engage the viewer to answer the question.
- *War Weary* This soulful portrait of a Muslim woman highlights the ravages war brings on families. She is crying a river of tears for the mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, husbands, sons and daughters lost to the war machine. She represents the desperate, displaced, discounted and forgotten victims of war.
- *Angela* is my only hero. My painting of her is here to remind the next generation of activists working for equality that through perseverance we will prevail.



War Weary
Acrylic on paper
30" x 22"



Black Face
Acrylic on canvas
40" x 30"



Angela
Mixed media on paper
30" x 22"



And You...What are
you Doing?
Acrylic on canvas
40" x 30"

Javoen Byrd

Javoen Byrd is an Olympia based Ethnomusicologist. He received his BA at The Evergreen State College and Masters at The University of Washington. He is dedicated to providing multicultural education and drum facilitation through the Pacific Northwest and beyond. He is a serial entrepreneur who created the nonprofit "The Hawk Foundation for Research and Education in African/African American Culture" and also owner of Awodi Drumming LLC which has won a State contract through the Department of Children and Family Services to provide African music education for incarcerated youth. He is excited to share Afro-folkloric culture with SPSCC and the greater Thurston County.



Shameka Gagnier

Black Well Red Thread Collective



Shameka Gagnier presently resides with their partner and family in the unceded traditional territories of The Nisqually, Puyallup and Squaxin Island Peoples. They carry bloodlines from Central (Pure'pecha) and Northern (Cherokee Nation) Turtle Island, Africa (Northern and Western), and Europe (Ireland, England, Spain); many stories and names have been lost due to exploitation, foster care, and adoption. They are committed to working within those intersections to create and support spaces that center art, food, and nourishment for black and indigenous communities. Currently they are a first generation student working towards their undergraduate degree at The Evergreen State College, where they are focusing on Indigenous Studies, Multi-cultural Communications, and Art.

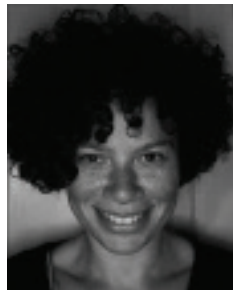


Gagnier is a multimedia artist, working as a wood carver, metalsmith, printmaker, performance artist, music maker, and gardener. Currently they are working with a collective called Black Well Red Thread Collective. This collective creates multimedia art installations with community engagement elements. Within the last year Gagnier has had the opportunity to work as a project coordinator in community lead projects. Much of Gagnier's work as an artist is done in collaboration, as is their teaching pedagogy. Gagnier works as a coordinator and an artist mentor. This learning exchange is one of the most generous and transformative. Working as an artist mentor is deeply enriching work, the young people bring new perspectives, curiosity, skill, adaptability, and courage. As an educator these engagements continue to shape and enrich Gagnier's approach to teaching, creating, and connecting. It is through community arts engagements that future projects emerge such as "7 Blankets for The Future Project."



Future Blanket-2420
Acrylic, Stone, Glass,
Velvet, Brass
11'5" x 5'9"

Cholee Gladney



"The Understory" series was created in mixed media collage, a combination of acrylic paint, colored pencil, ink, and watercolor. Influences and inspiration for the series include artists John Biggers, Frida Kahlo, and Emily Kngwarreye, saxophonist John Coltrane, socionomist Leticia Nieto, the earth, and the spirit world.

I am asking,

What existing and new archetypes can serve as spiritual resources to move us through our most challenging moments? How can we create spaciousness from scarcity? How do we transform pain into learning? How can we know our inner worlds more intimately so that we may connect more deeply to our truest nature and to one another?

I am interested in how we communicate the deeper stories that reveal themselves through openings, even if only slight glimpses, into our subconscious. Image making provides us this window into the interior world- a place to process and locate a sense of wholeness and peace. Imaging is my spiritual practice - a bridge to transformation and healing. My intention when I return to this practice again and again is to transform what I have been given into something I can use, to heal intergenerational injury while tending the wounds of my current life's journey, to connect with divine sources of energy and clarity for supportive guidance.



Tending to the Fires
Mixed-media collage
18" x 28"



Queen of the Understory
Mixed-media collage
30" x 30"



Gifts from the Sea
Mixed-media collage
23" x 23"

Aisha Harrison

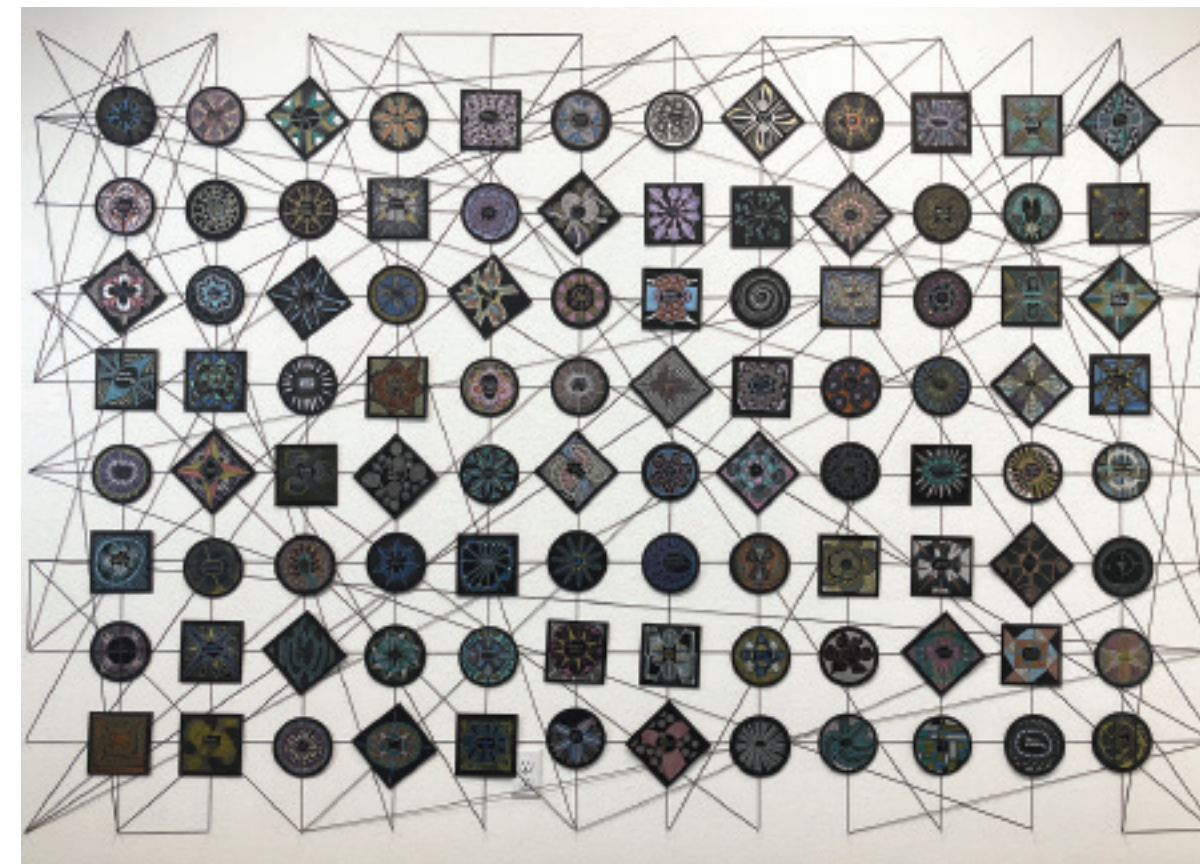


Aisha Harrison uses the body and sculpture as a site for exploration of the lived experiences of racism, ancestral (human and non-human) learning and connection, and the blend of histories held within her body. Her work shows reverence for real bodies (often her own) while also incorporating elements that are physical manifestations of the intangible.

Aisha has roots in Olympia, WA going back four generations. She studied abroad in Spain during high school, prompting her to be a Spanish major as an undergraduate. She loved studying Latin American literature because of the ways in which the Indigenous people used Spanish stories and images, subverting them and intertwining them with their own, to ensure that Indigenous peoples, images, and stories survived. These camouflaged acts of resistance reminded her of ways that she navigates being of African American and European American mixed heritage in predominantly European American spaces. Her work today, as both an artist and arts educator, attempts to navigate the spaces between, to create personal symbolic imagery, and to encourage others to subvert dominant narratives by telling their stories in hidden and/or overt ways.

Aisha works as a solo artist and is also a cofounder/member of the Black Well Red Thread Collective along with Shameka Gagnier and Cholee Gladney.

Aisha discovered clay in a community studio, while working toward a degree in Spanish at Grinnell College in Iowa. After graduating, she spent the next two years teaching third and fourth grades in Atlanta, Georgia, and exploring clay at Callenwolde Fine Arts Center in Georgia, and Penland School of Crafts in North Carolina. Aisha decided to go back to school and received a BFA from Washington State University, and an MFA from University of Nebraska- Lincoln. Her work is shown nationally with recent work at Bainbridge Museum of Art and in the Store Front Windows Project in downtown Olympia (as a collaborator in the Black Well Red Thread Collective). She has done residencies at Watershed Center for the Ceramic Arts, Women's Studio Workshop, and Baltimore Clayworks. She has taught workshops/courses/programs at Bainbridge Island Museum of Art, Penland School of Crafts, The Evergreen State College, Bykota Senior Center, Baltimore Clayworks, University of Nebraska- Lincoln, and the Lux Center for the Arts.



Top
Details
To Name A Few

To Name A Few
Paper and Yarn
Dimensions variable
2020



Through
Clay, embroidery
thread, graphite, glue
29" x 14" x 11"
2018



Take You apart to
build something new
Clay and Paint
31" x 19" x 17"
2018

Travis Johnson



In this ensemble of sculptures and paintings, "Elder to Ancestor 1", "Elder to Ancestor 2", "The Children", "The Complicated Future", and "Breathing While Black", play a dual function as the looker and the performer. Each sculpture holds its own joy, life, and narrative while speaking clearly as kinfolk. The sculptures play in harmony the song, molded by art, machine, and the earth. The "Elder to Ancestors", and "The Children" speak and listen to the narratives expressed in "The Complicated Future" and "Breathing While Black". This is a visual conversation amongst kinfolk that rises and falls with color, shapes, lines, and textures. These elements hold space for acknowledgement of ancestral truth, trauma, and healing. Special thanks to: Kellan Kilmer, A.WES, Sean Barnes, Nicole Gugliotti.

Travis Johnson has spent the last 3 decades developing his craft as a creative and uses his art to explore the human experience by touching on the whimsical, silly, serious, and sometimes painful side of life. He uses the subtle nuances of classic western world iconography to tell a highly illustrated and visually rich narrative. His main artistic inspirations are: Bill Watterson, Justin Bua, Thomas Hart Benton, Kerry James Marshall, Kara Walker, Michael Hafftka, Bill Turner. Along with his visual art, Travis has spent the last 25 years singing throughout the US on various tours with his family singing group Fivacious. He continues to share his music as a solo act throughout the US.



The Children
Wood, Stone, Acrylic
23" x 6" x 9"



Elder to Ancestor
Wood, Acrylic, Stone
38" x 9" x 12"



Elder to Ancestor 2
Wood, Stone, Acrylic
28" x 9" x 9"

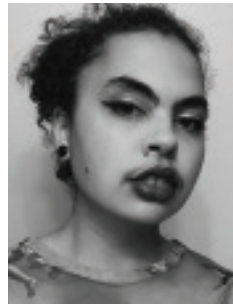


Breathing While Black
Acrylic and Oil on
Canvas
48" x 60"



The Complicated
Future
Acrylic and Oil on
Canvas
48" x 60"

Sun Jordyn



I love playing with colors and shaping them in ways that make them pop to the eye. I'm always chasing the feeling I get when I see those kinds of contrasts in nature, and I want to put that exhilaration on a canvas; I want my art to radiate. The first thing I have in mind when starting a new piece are the colors and energy that I want the figure to express. I see the figures not quite as real people, but dreamlike manifestations of certain feelings or auras. I want people to experience beauty in the way that I do. I want to see beauty not as something to visualize and aspire to, but as a spiritual and visceral experience.

Sun was born on January 19th, 1999 in Tacoma, WA. She spent her youth bouncing between small towns in Washington and Silver Spring, Maryland. Shortly after graduating high school, Sun left for New Mexico where she honed her skills in graphite portraits. She wanted a life where she could continue her growth, and so returned to Olympia, WA where she discovered her current art style, and has been meditating on her dreams and paving a career in art ever since.



Mars in Retrograde
Acrylic on canvas
40" x 60"



Venus Ascending
Acrylic on canvas
40" x 60"



In Utero
Acrylic on canvas
40" x 60"

Mskahe



I have lived and worked in the Pacific Northwest for over 20 years. I started my craft making fabric covered jewelry due to my sensitivity to metals. I made bangles, chokers, bracelets, and necklaces using wood, strings, rope, and mainly Ankara African fabric.

I expanded to making coordinating accessories to the jewelry. I started making scarves for the head or neck, pins, clutches, bows, small cross body bags, buttons, and one of a kind handmade, conversational, unique, and fun purses.

My inspirations and ideas for my unique purses comes from several things. I have several theme idea's that I could turn into a purse using different fabric and materials. I build the purse according to the themes colors and symbols and let my imagination take over while listening to music.

Making things by hand is extremely rewarding for my mind, body, and soul. I enjoy the inner peace and tranquility I experience, while my creativities flow out from my imagination.



Top
Black 'n' Bling
Box, velvet fabric, &
beads
8" x 8"

Bottom
Dollie Jean
Weave strips, Anka-
ra fabric & Bamboo
handles
12" x 12"



3



5



4



6

Top
Madonna Weave
Strips, fabric, ribbon &
beads
10" x 10"

Bottom
Breast Beware
Latch hook, canvas,
yarn, ribbon, & Charms
with snap closure
11" x 10"

Top
12th Man Cheer
Latch hook, canvas &
fabric
10" x 10"

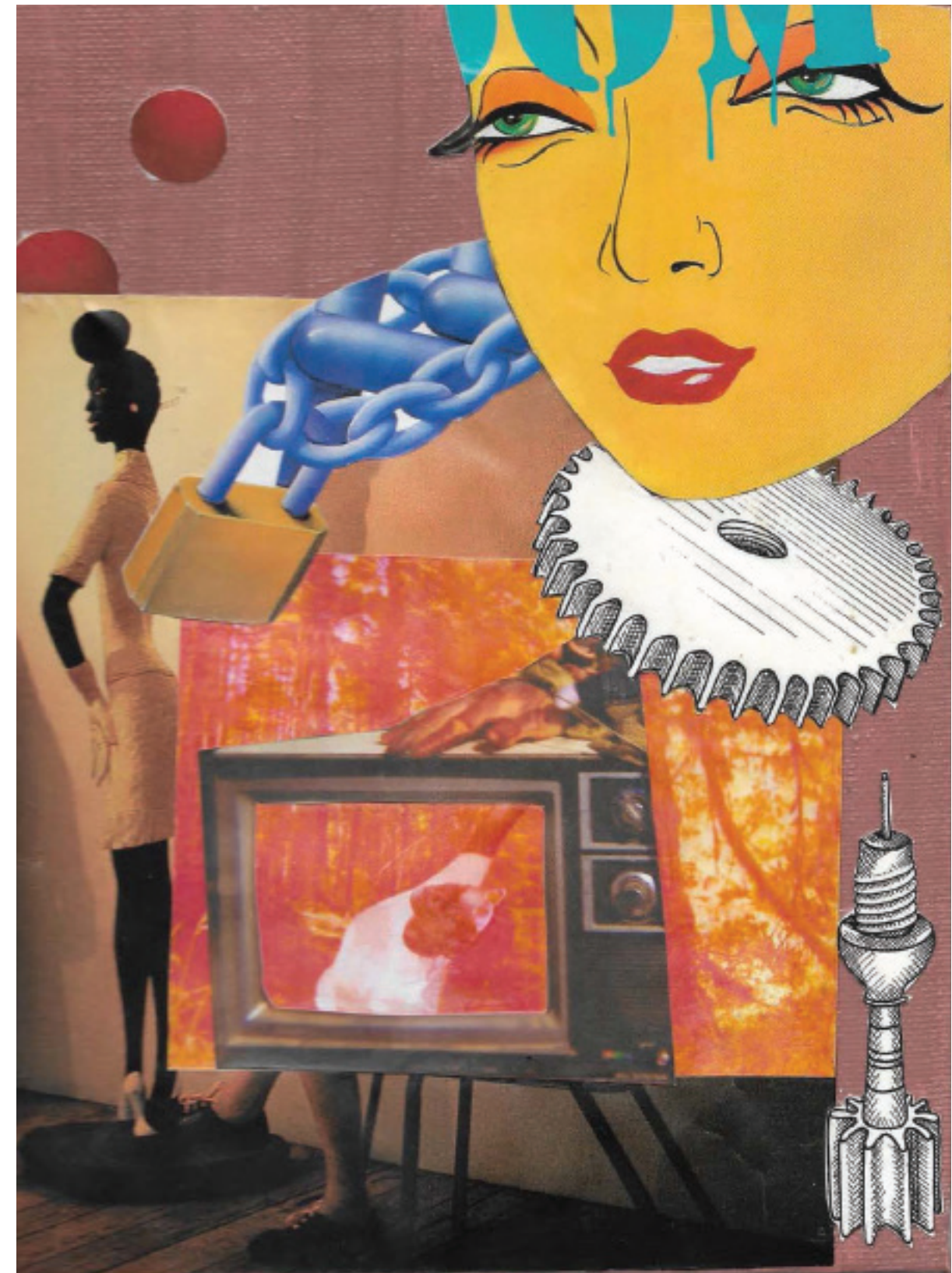
Bottom
Tag It
Book, fabric, patches,
& pin
9" x 11"

Rhian Parker



Rhian is a black, Southern dyke from Atlanta, Georgia. They are curious about collective memory, possessions (objects and spiritual), experimental genre forms, bad movies, and handcrafts. When she is not making art she is watching sci-fi, imagining new futures, listening to audiobooks, and wondering if an obscure topic is already a JSTOR article.

This collection of work goes with a larger, personal collection of grief. This collection of work is made in place of the years that grieving wasn't accessible to a black young person trying to grow, trying to move on from the ghosts grabbing at their ankles. The poems do not beget the collages. The collages do not beget the poems. They both exist in the same space, at the same time — working together to grasp at the thin wisps of black death and mourning, spirals, and just barely tangible generational curses. Be with yourself when partaking in my work. Be with your vulnerability. Un-comfortability and "Coincidences." Mourn with them. Thank you.



Untitled 1
Mixed media
6" x 8"



Untitled 2
Mixed media
6" x 8"



Untitled 3
Mixed media
6" x 8"

A Short Take

according to me
the film written and directed by quentin tarantino has two things

niggers and niggers
nosebleeds and niggers

self indulgence and restraint
irritable bowels and niggers
quentin tarantino casting himself in his own movie
to explain away his plot holes and to say more slurs
than I could ever, would never say and niggers

niggas and niggers
the 90's and niggers
the 50's and niggers
milkshakes, cocaine, and niggers
divine intervention, monologuing and niggers

bad men who do bad things — badly
sexy women who do bad things — sexily
and niggers
the f word and niggers
secrets and niggers
cult classics and niggers
the subversion of the rule of threes
with the suspenseful rule of twos
and
according to me, the film written and directed by quentin tarantino has two things.

In my own thought house

Part I

a ghost grabbed my cat by the tail
and my sink has a leak
there's a smell of death in the kitchen
and the carpet is coming up by the edges
the mow on the lawn is uneven
and the bathroom sink is on the floor
there's a bed in the garage
and there's a bed without a frame

there's no fan in the kitchen so the house
fills with smoke
and blinds don't match the drapes
the washer machine shakes the walls
and the candles wick all the air out the room
there's a swan on the roof
and gulls in the tub

the doorknob fell off the door
and the door fell off the hinges
and the stairs fell down themselves
and the flight took off
and the foundation sags...

Part II

I feel the need to grow out my hair
to feel bigger than I actually am.
run my fingers through something that is
intrinsically mine.

I wish to manipulate myself: bend, stretch, tear (gently),
let loose, and breath hard in the eucalyptus shower.
I miss the roughness. the mysterious
callouses explained away.

I want to be big again.

Anonymous again.

A magician again.

For my anxious hands to seek out rest again.

What does Grieving Feel Like?

a butterknife scooping out the meat of my heart
stuck upright by the ghost of an alternative life.
lift the veil softly
[so my i can peak through]

paint by numbers every trauma of everyday
blue for the good. yellow the middle.

it's a jump.
that's not right.
it moves like
a
river.
i cannot feel if i am truly out.
i think
i'm
all in.

years without or
years with
the sick joke on a laugh track
that keeps skipping and clipping and jumping back.

during my gift I saw green grass with dog shit everywhere.
luxurious couches covered in plastic. the biggest mirrors
with the clearest glass, shrouded by curtains. it was curtains.

i have dreams where you are in them.
all of you at once or one of you at least
and sometimes
it's pleasant
but most times
i'm crying and i'm praying that it won't end
most times
i hold my breath

to keep you close.

O Grief, Look on to my Family and See your Works

no matriarchs
dead dad
dead mom
black sheep
twice removed
forced militarization
forced militarization
head shot
chin pistol
undiagnosed C-PTSD
rampant alcoholism
the assault of young girls
cancer riddled
heart stop
suicidal brothers
dead broke
broken men
over-asked favors
non words
missing fathers
one twin
open orphanage

high blood
hidden birth
across river
bad bones
rolling stones
death walls
death gates
blown coffins
scare tactics
mailed apologies
never coming
green grass?
day job?
table dinners?
mom-dad?
no secrets
coming of age
crying weddings
penchant for peace
dark rooms
a poet

Top
What does Grieving
Feel Like
Poem
8.5" x 11"

Bottom
O Grief, Look on to my
Family and See your
Works
Poem
8.5" x 11"

Rene Westbrook



Rene has worked professionally as a sculptor, painter, photographer, multi-media artist and educator for 40 years. She is an award-winning recipient in fine arts, sculpture, and photography. Rene's artwork has been exhibited on both coasts and internationally. Her wide range and eclectic background has created a diverse portfolio that lends itself to her teaching a variety of art techniques.

Rene graduated from the Massachusetts College of Art and Design (BFA) in Classical Sculpture and Arts Education. She has been an Artist in Residence at many notable centers, including Master Artists in Residency Program at Northeastern University, (AAMARP) Boston, California Council on the Arts, and the Alana Community Outreach and Training Center in Vermont. Her work has been exhibited in many solo and group shows including the Museum of the National Center of African American Artists, Boston, Simmons College, Harvard University, Boston Museum of Fine Arts, and the International Arts exhibition at the University of Hawaii, Hilo.

In addition to these accomplishments, Rene is an award-winning poet, a puppeteer, and has spent several years in theater and television. She describes herself simply as a creative explorer of life's mysteries; regardless of the medium so long as the inquiry has a way of expressing itself!

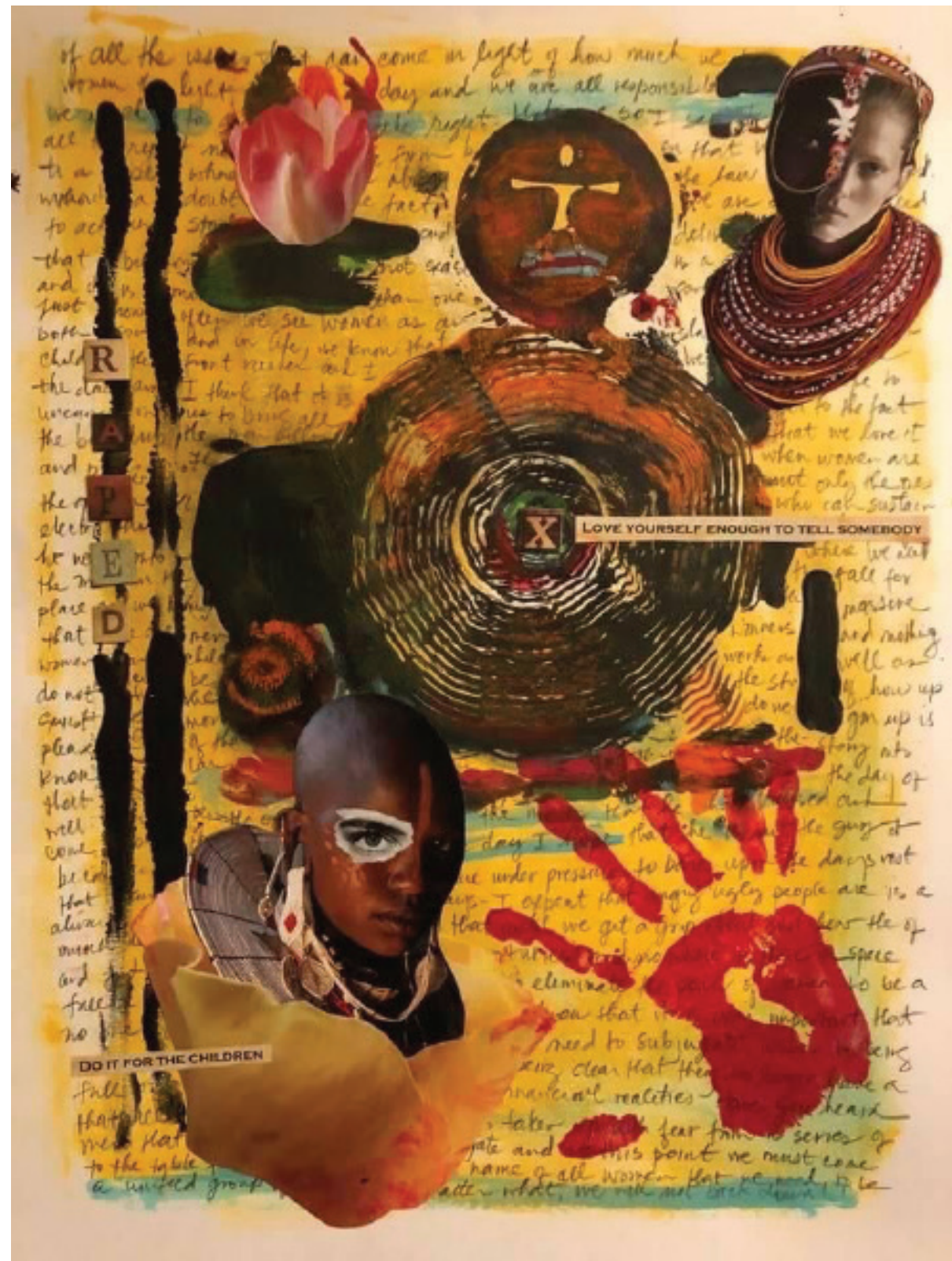
As a multi-media artist, the Collage is the best artform that includes most of the elements I love to explore on paper. Many of the pieces here are from a new body of monoprints that have collage elements added to give both contextual and visual depths to the imagery. As an evolving artist who has been steeped in social justice and cultural dynamics of the sixties, much of my creative pursuits into these issues keeps the work current and relevant. Fellow artists who have used the collage format to give voice to the daily barrage of racial and social injustice include Romare Bearden, Kara Walker and Ernest Crichlow. The power of imagery that can piece together disparate elements that bring into focus a poignant picture of an idea is what makes the collage a worthy visual construct. And it is for this reason, I am totally in love with how much it can thread the needle to weave a tapestry of emotion and social statement for the viewer.



Stoned
Mixed Media Collage
19.5" x 14.5"



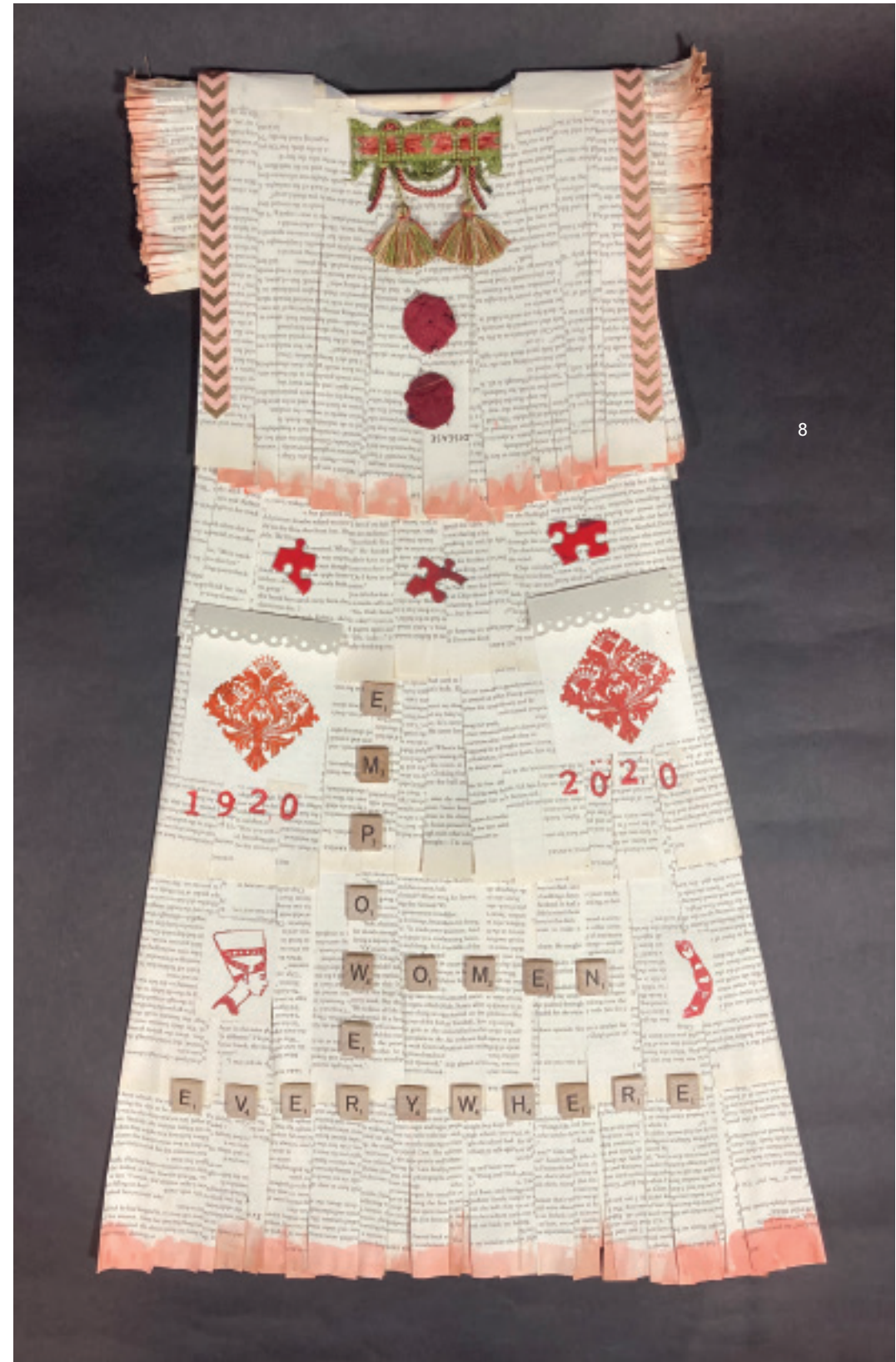
Murdered
Mixed Media Collage
15.5" x 20"



Raped
Mixed Media Collage
21" x 15"



Books Not Bondage
Mixed Media Collage
15" x 21"



8

Empower Women
Everywhere
Mixed Media Collage
18.5" x 29"



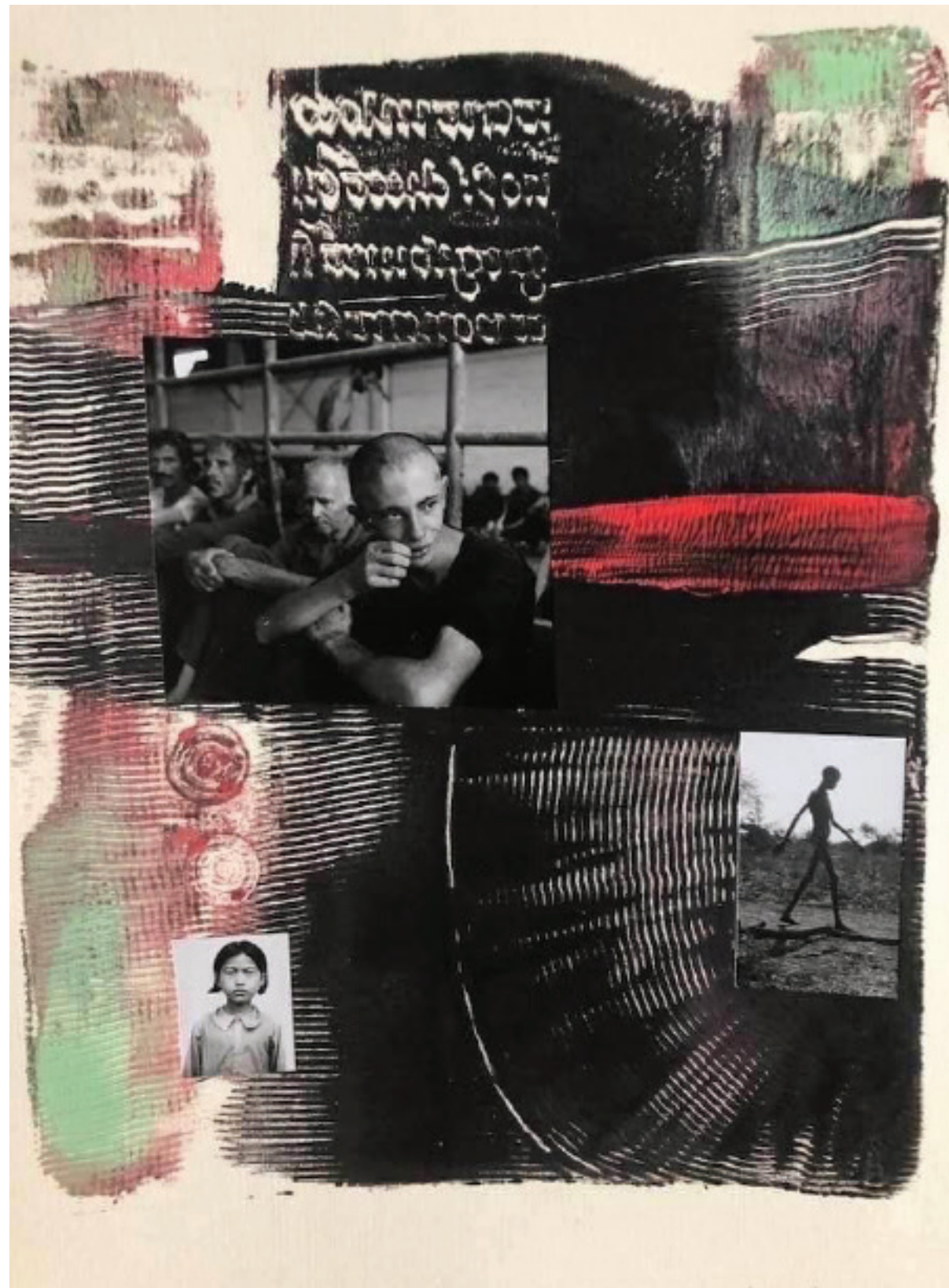
Top
Negroes
Mixed Media Collage
6" x 4"



Bottom
Look Around for Light
Mixed Media Collage
6" x 4"



Creativity Takes
Courage
Mixed Media Collage
6" x 4"



Behind Enemy Lines
Mixed Media Collage
11.5" x 9"



Mother and Daughter
Mixed Media Collage
11" x 9"

Yitagesu



I am inspired by so much and so many and they are all important to me. One of my favorite artists is musician Juice WRLD; his songs touch my soul and speak to my heart. Halal Youself is from Sudan; his work is amazing and always pushes me to want to be a positive influencer to other artists. Adiskidan Ambaye, another amazing artist whom I admire and look up to has a unique style. I wish one day to meet her.

My greatest influence is my homeland. Ethiopia has a culture that appreciates beauty in various ways. It has particular color designs and styles which are incorporated in their dress and hair styles. Growing up there, it is part of who I am, more so as I mature.

Addis Fine Art is a museum that inspires me to one day exhibit my artwork in my home country. I would like to share my work with those who knew me as a youth. It would be a privilege and blessing to have the ability to display my art among family and friends from my childhood.



Abstract 1
Black pen, Prisma
colors, Sharpie
6.5" x 4.5"



Top
Abstract 2
Black pen, Prisma
colors, Sharpie
6.5" x 4.5"



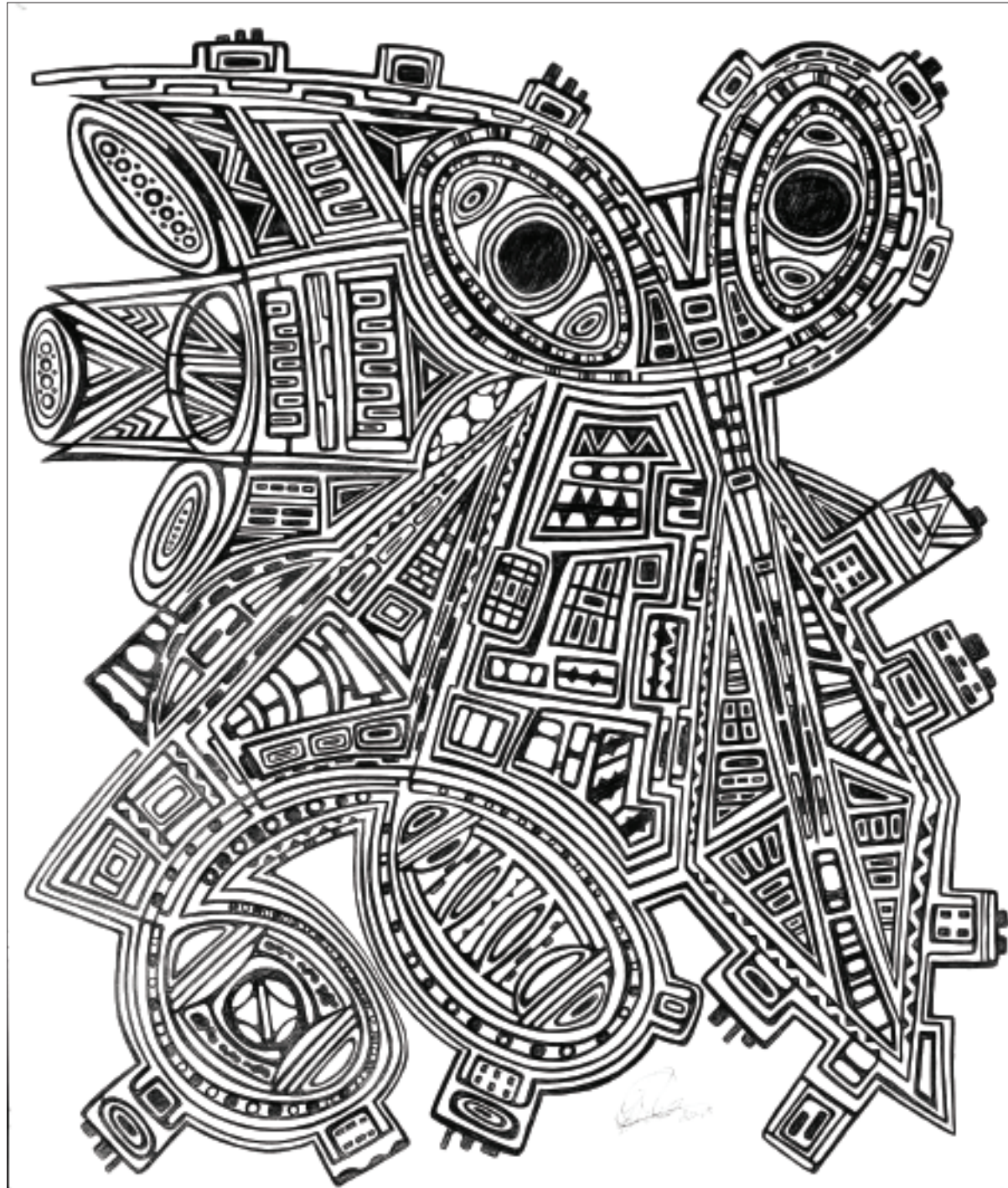
Bottom
Abstract 3
Black pen Prisma
colors, Sharpie
22" x 28"



Top
Abstract 4
Black pen, Sharpie
4.5" x 6.5"



Bottom
Abstract 5
Black pen, Sharpie
11" x 14"



Abstract 6
Black pen, Sharpie
22" x 28"



Abstract 7
Black pen, Prisma
colors, Sharpie
13" x 10"



Top
Abstract 8
Black pen, Prisma
colors, Sharpie
22" x 28"



Bottom
Abstract 9
Black pen, Prisma
colors, Sharpie
22" x 28"



Abstract 10
Black pen, Prisma
colors, Sharpie
22" x 28"

David Yost



David L. Yost is a photographer, videographer, writer, broadcaster, and graphic designer that has worked as a journalist and content creator for various government agencies. He has covered subjects including war, politics, and disaster, relying on his news background to seek creative ways to convey stories to audiences. David is currently living in Oregon, and spends time in Washington State.

Please consider donating to people affected by western wildfires at www.redcross.org.



Top
Phoenix 1
Photograph Digital
Print
8" x 10"

Bottom
Blue River 1
Photograph
8" x 10"



Top
Blue River 2
Photograph
8" x 10"



Bottom
Lincoln City 1
Photograph
8" x 10"



Phoenix 2
Photograph
8" x 10"

CLOSER

The works of Sandra Bocas, Travis Johnson and Rene Westbrook



FEB. 15 – MARCH 19, 2021

Building upon the groundwork laid with Futures Rising, Closer highlighted three artists from the 2020 Futures Rising exhibition ran from February 15, 2021, to March 19, 2021. Displayed through photographs, collages, and paintings, the artists created impactful statements surrounding their perceptive insight into human existence. The conversations around color prejudice, hegemony, and an exploration of life's mysteries were expanded through the artwork of Bocas, Johnson, and Westbrook. Bocas artwork for Closer presented portraits with a celebratory theme around existing in one's skin with similar paintings varying in shades. About half of the paintings have a full face with the eyes staring back, asking the viewer to examine their own prejudices, while the others allow for further dialogue around how we see color within our lives. Johnson's figurative forms move upon the canvas and pull the mind into a rabbit hole of intrigue. The symbols create multiple narratives one can explore as introspective observations into emotional responses to life. The work of Westbrook is a bountiful array of bright joyfulness and examines the concept of isolation faced within social distancing and plays with the idea of space travel. The pieces, a mix of collages and paintings, show collective social ideas within society, the transformative power of togetherness and the cycle of life. Each work continues the conversation and acknowledgment of Black artists from Futures Rising and makes room for a deeper look into one's existence.

ASHLY MCBUNCH

ARTISTS

Sandra Bocas

Travis Johnson

Rene Westbrook

Sandra Bocas



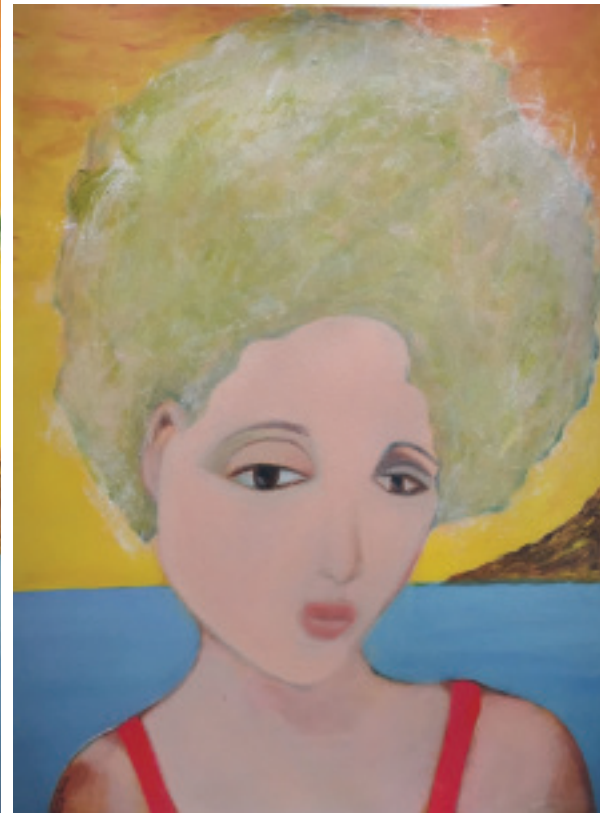
The goal with my art is to provide a door through which the viewer can enter a world beyond color and beyond prejudice. I build that door by challenging proportions, color norms, anything in fact that I feel will get the viewer to visit this new space in their mind.

I am saying "it's fabulous to be black - celebrate it". I'm also saying "it's fabulous to be any color under the sun - again celebrate it". The key is Celebration. That's what brings back dignity to each human being.

In this particular exhibition, I encourage you to look, to see what you feel about your prejudices and use these images to wonder and dream of a new moon under which we all lie.



Pink Bikini
Acrylic on paper
22" x 30"



Sisters on the beach
1-4
Acrylic on paper
10" x 15"



Brightness of Beige
Acrylic
22" x 30"



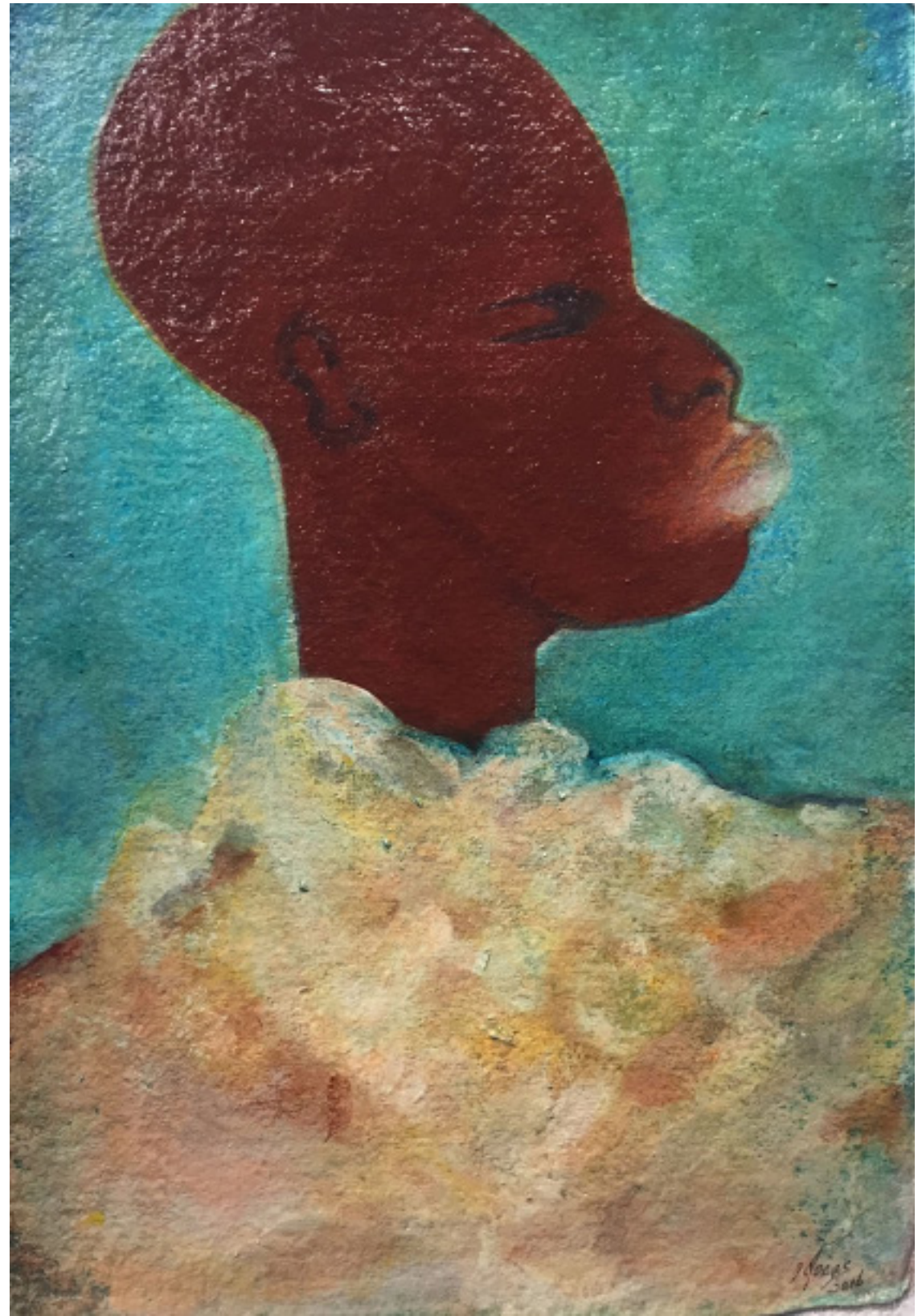
He Black 'till He Blue
Acrylic
29.5" x 41"



The Purer the light,
the deeper the blue
Acrylic
22 x 30



Passing for white
Acrylic on Paper
22 x 30



Light footed dancer
Heavy hand pressed
Watercolor Paper
15 x 22



Light footed dancer 1
Heavy hand pressed
Watercolor Paper
15 x 22



Light footed dancer 2
Heavy hand pressed
Watercolor Paper
15 x 22



Light footed dancer 3
Heavy hand pressed
Watercolor Paper
15 x 22



Light footed dancer 4
Heavy hand pressed
Watercolor Paper
15 x 22

Travis Johnson



Travis Johnson's art uses paint, and other mediums, to tell stories of self and ancestors. He approaches the blank canvas with the intention to act. Paint is the tool and catalyst that takes him on a journey into his subconscious. There, he builds an archive and draws upon a catalogue of knowledge that moves him forward into the next painting, and that inspires new work.

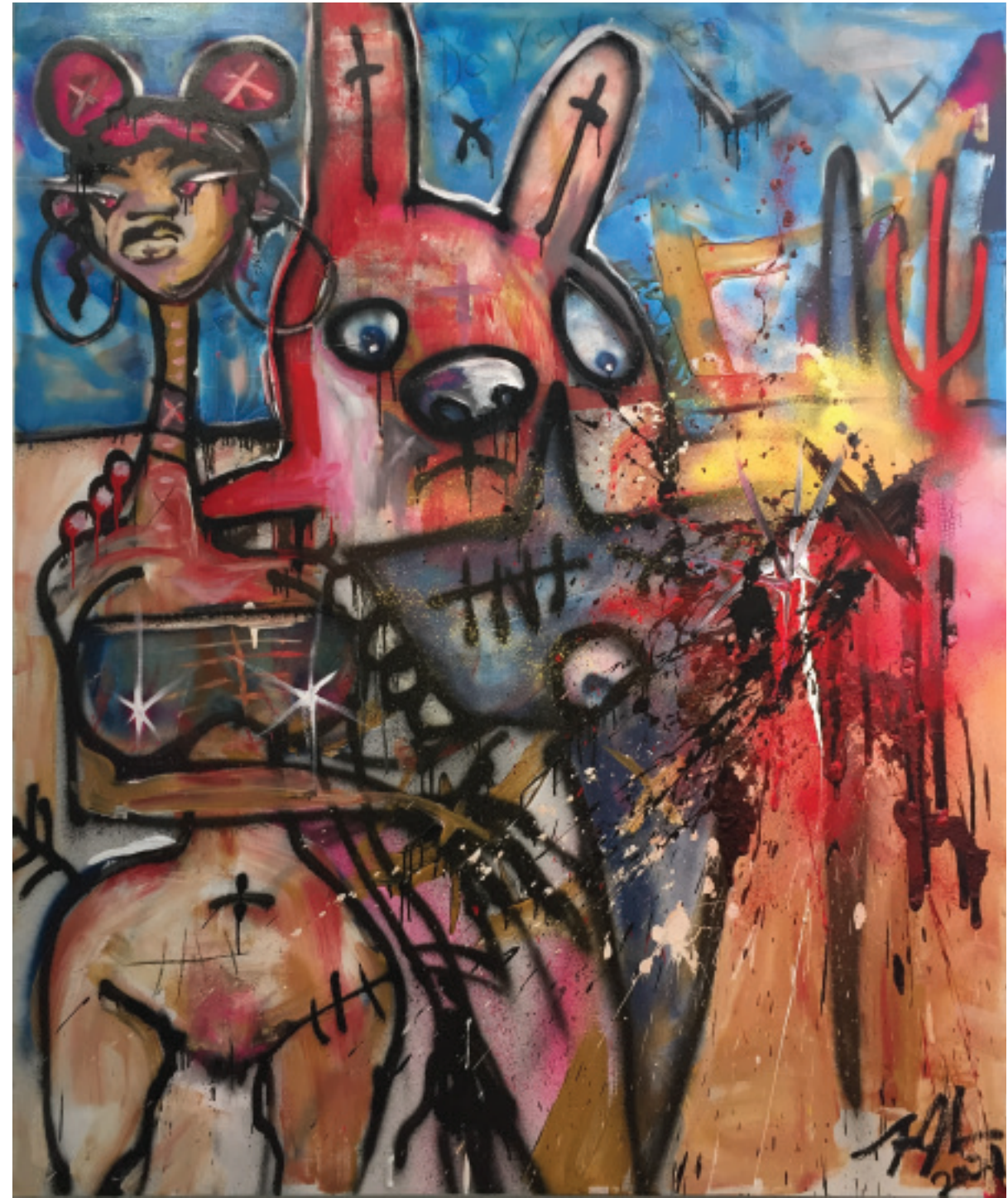
His artwork can be realistic or abstract, and he uses figurative forms and expressionist images to tell complex human stories and to evoke emotions. At times, he integrates animals and the natural world into his narratives. He paints striking faces, oddly proportioned animals, and uses cartoonish images to tell stories. He leans on the power of traditional drawing and painting techniques, but at times he uses unconventional materials, such as spray paint. These diverse materials create texture and serve as drawing tools that emphasize the forms, and that move the viewer through the paintings. Symbols and icons are important in his work as they evoke multiple narratives, meanings, and shared points of view. They speak to the ancient act of mark-making as a way of communicating stories about self and identity.



Fully Triggered
Spray paint and acrylic
on canvas
60 x 72



The Awkward Truth
Spray paint and acrylic
on canvas
60 x 72



Hope won't save you,
but without it,
You won't make it
Spray paint and acrylic
on canvas
60 x 72



Mojave Green
Acrylic on Canvas
36 x 48

Rene Westbrook



Collage Wall Hangings

This new format of mixed media on canvas, paper and wood is an exciting approach for me, in that I find Collage is the best art form to explore both contextual and visual depths of the multilayered aspect of an idea that is unfolding. As an evolving artist steeped in social justice and cultural dynamics from various ethnic communities, I learned early on the power of imagery that can piece together disparate elements which bring into focus a poignant picture of an idea is what makes the Collage a worthy visual construct, and paramount in my work.



Left
Family Love
Mixed media
9 x 28

Right
Rene Westbrook
Find Love
Mixed Media
13 x 18



Left
We the People
Mixed Media
15 x 20



Right
Killers
Mixed Media
12 x 15



Left
BLM
Mixed Media
15 x 20

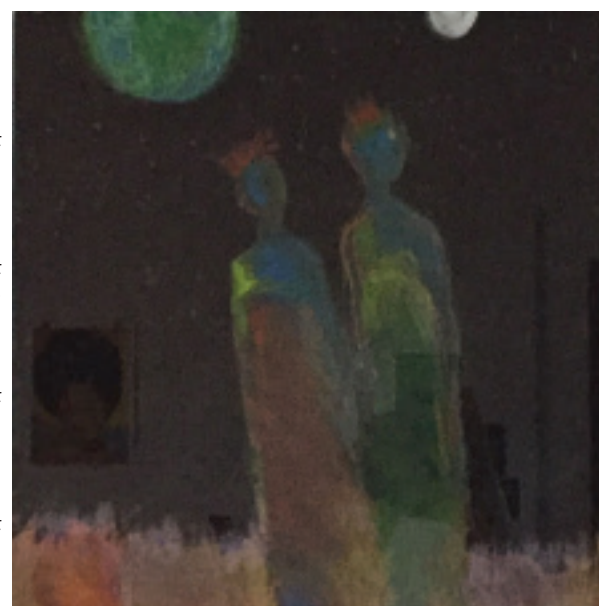
Right
Dream Girl USA
Mixed Media
12 x 28



Top Left
We
Acrylic on paper
12 x 12



Top Right
Wombs
Acrylic on paper
12 x 12



Bottom Left
US
Acrylic on paper
12 x 12



Bottom Right
Them
Acrylic on paper
12 x 12

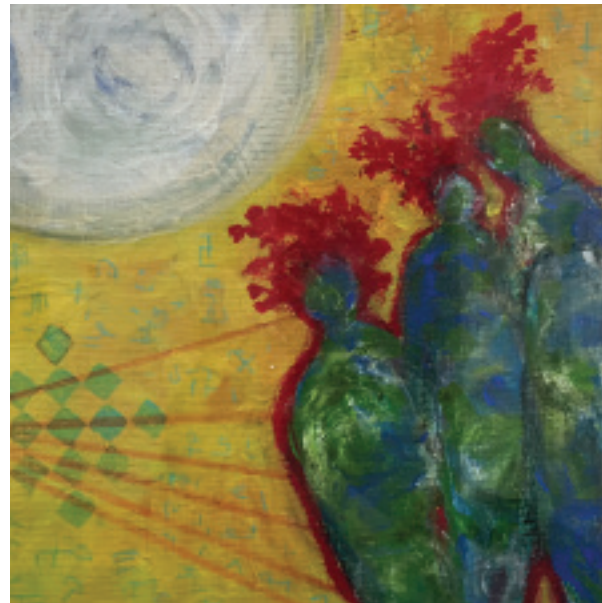


11

Sirens
Acrylic on Paper
16 x 20



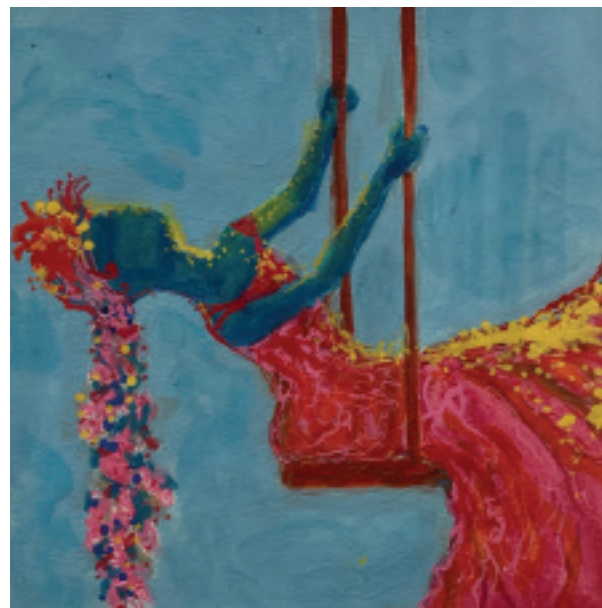
Top Left
Dancers
Acrylic on paper
12 x 12



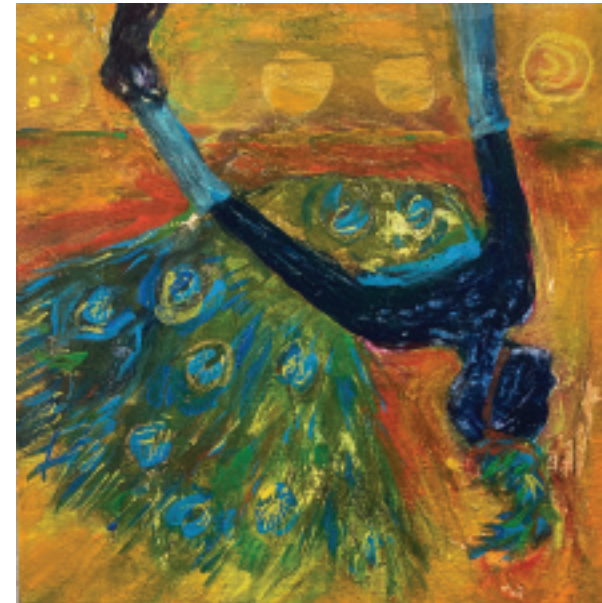
Top Right
Redheads
Acrylic on paper
12 x 12



Bottom Left
Birthing
Acrylic on paper
12 x 12



Bottom Right
Swing Life
Acrylic on paper
12 x 12



Top Left
Tiny Dancer
Acrylic on Wood
8 x 8



Top Right
Many Moons
Acrylic on Wood
12 x 12



Bottom Left
Blue Bird
Acrylic on Wood
12 x 12



Bottom Right
Sunny Day
Acrylic on Wood
12 x 12



Top
Seven Sisters
Acrylic on paper
13 x 38

Bottom
Twins
Acrylic on Wood
16 x 20



Family
Acrylic on paper
16 x 20

BLACK LOVE

Community Building Through Mentorship



FEB. 15 – MARCH 18, 2022

Black Love, Community Building Through Mentorship was the third exhibit at the Leo Gallery. This curation embraced the significant characteristic of the mentor and mentee relationship. Running from February 14, 2022, to March 18, 2022, the exhibit blended levels of knowledge, experience and skillsets and expanded on each artist's individual and collaborative work. Mentorship relationships help guide one past limiting beliefs, into the light of focus and provide expressed support of one's vision. Bocas, Johnson, Gladney, Harrison, and Westbrook facilitated as mentors and the mentees included Kyle Cebron Bradford, Kari Davis, Ruya Lamont, De'Ja Marshall, and Mama Tee. Each artist, known or unknown, school trained or self-taught, found a venue of support for their artwork and room to build further connections with other artists within Olympia. Due to the mentorship component, Black Love was the most different and the most interactive. Reaching out into the community of emerging artists allowed the establishment of Futures Rising to come somewhat full circle. Emerging artists were able to work with their mentors to grow a deeper understanding of their own work while simultaneously providing the opportunity to show their work within a gallery setting.

The artwork within Black Love explored the many facets love entails. The ability to explore their identity as a black, masculine presenting gay man through abstract pieces of red hues and black marks was created by Bradford during his mentee experience. Davis, a musician, poet, and visual artist, was able to explore spiritual truth on an individual and collective level. The women depicted within Lamont's work of powerful abstract women are in honor of her own self-love and healing journey. While Marshall explores the divine feminine energy through ethereal self-portrait photography. Her work explores the sense of Black beauty outside the gaze of white eyes. Mama Tee does not refer to themselves as an artist; however, her journey as a mentee showed her how she could push past the limiting beliefs of her own artistic journey. She combined her love of life through poetic writings, the human body, and golden expression in each piece. While the Black Love exhibit was the first time mentoring for others, some hold many years of experience in the role. Through the mentorship approach, Westbrook was able to work with an emerging local artist and share how she brings courage through her creative expression and how this process is not based on race nor void of race but is a holistic experience of living. The methodology around Westbrook's mentorship finds the creative genius she believes is within everyone and is shaped by her dynamic views of the good, bad, and ugly within the world. Boca's innate ability to guide others through beauty was vital in working as a mentor. She carried with her the importance of her role as an elder within the Black community as she assisted her mentee in moving forward through their own creative expression. Harrison felt the exchange to be a magical creation flow between the language shared by a mentor and mentee. She valued the ability of the close connections built amongst the artists. Black Love demonstrated the depths love can travel in a unique stream of continuous respect, support, and guidance.

ASHLY MCBUNCH

ARTISTS

Sandra Bocas

Cebron Kyle Bradford

Kari Davis

Cholee Gladney

Aisha Harrison

Travis Johnson

Ru'ya Lamont

De'Ja Marshall

Rene Westbrook

Theresa Yost

Sandra Bocas



Sandra was born in Venezuela, growing up in Trinidad having moved there with her family when she was five. She spent her teenage years in Aberystwyth at a girls' boarding school, before starting an extensive career in fashion as a make-up artist that spanned over 30 years. She has always been fascinated by the character and the soul behind the mask, which is revealed in her startling array of women's faces. Self-taught, but guided by some considerable mentors: Bosco Holder (Trinidad), Patrick Betaudier (Paris), Andy Warhol (The Factory) and more recently Rafael Calzada (Mexico), she also draws inspiration from one of her favorite artists, the late Alexej von Jawlensky. Her style can be described as a unique blend of abstract and soulful portraiture. Indeed the memories of the light and colors of Trinidad and Tobago, her mother's birth place, are also seen as the influence in her play with color.

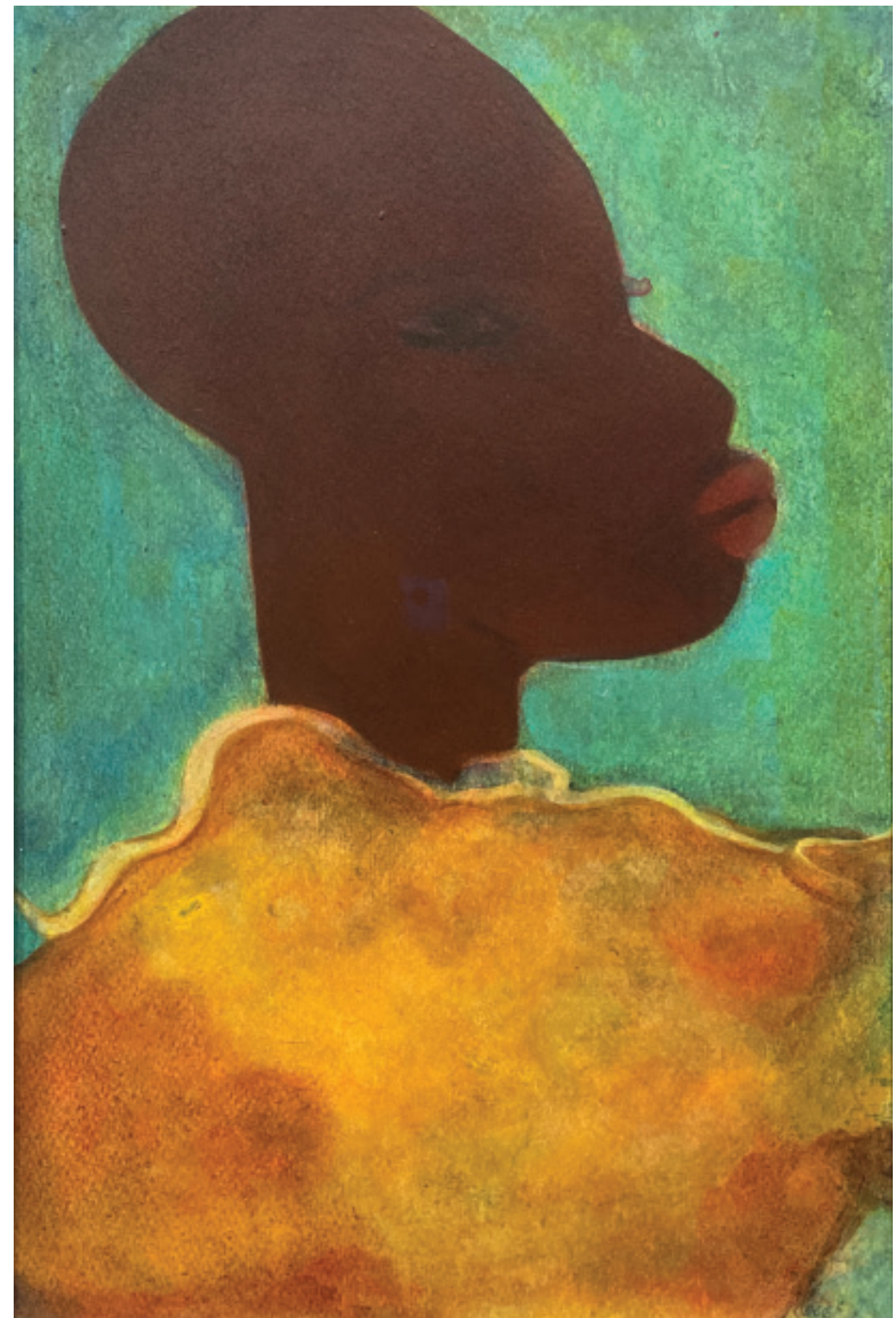


Colored Girls I
Acrylic and ink on
watercolor paper print
16" x 11.5"

Left
Colored Girls II
Acrylic and ink on
watercolor paper print
16" x 11.5"

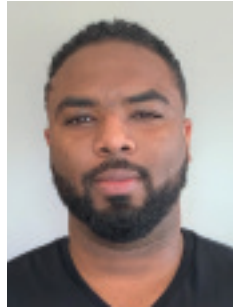


Right
Colored Girls III
Acrylic on
watercolor paper
22" x 15.5"



Colored Girls IV
Acrylic on watercolor
paper
22" x 15.5"

Cebron Kyle Bradford



I am working in the space of duality as it pertains to navigating the world as someone who is black, gay, masc presenting, and in environments that constantly put those identities against each other; and what it looks like to find inner peace by way of loving the deeper understanding of life that those battles bring. I'm looking at portraying that through a modern retelling of the weight of the heart and feather as seen in the Egyptian book of death to ask the underlying question: How can one truly attain a fullness of love while also staying true to all identities within?



Top
In Search of Peace
Acrylic & modeling
paste
48" x 36"



Bottom
Duality Of...
Acrylic & modeling
paste
48" x 36"

Kari Davis



I am a visual artist, musician, and poet. I tell hidden stories through my art/writing that need to be revealed in this society we live in. This project, Najja, reflects self-discovery and spiritual healing; a vision that embodies the seeds to stars theme of growth, ancestral energy and survival of the indigenous people. I am my ancestors, using sacred energy and spiritual intuition to approach life situations, the collective bond, and the roots, just as nature interconnects everything in the cosmos. I am interested in compassion, diversity, and the universal experiences of humanity that can move us out of racism with collectively open hearts and a deep attachment to nature.

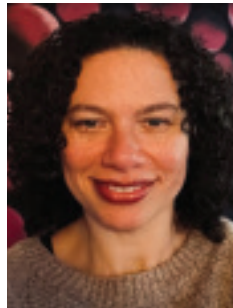
Pushing beyond physical life, I want my work to challenge you and make you think deeper. I integrate my journeys across the world and the unknown with sound and colors, storytelling about my senses. My art shows my memories of the past, present and future.

Bakari Davis is a musician, storyteller, healer, a traveler and a visual artist who was raised in Northwest America by a single mother of two that occasionally moved around due to financial issues. Life was too volatile and in perpetual displacement for Bakari who was conditioned to spend his childhood in 6 different cities and over 10 schools for him to identify with any place he can call home. Racism, equity, toxicity, injustice; he has witnessed them all since the onset of his being. There was nothing there to hold on to except telling stories in his head, wandering outside alone and building a solid relationship with nature. He depended on pre-technology indigenous history that channeled his energy to approach his life situations using his ancestral knowledge within limited circumference of reality. That was not enough, for there had to be something that bonded humankind to the roots, as nature interconnects everything in the cosmos! In that unpredictable journey without an influential figure in place, there was only the road and nature to rely on; and the pen and paper to tell the story; the challenges, emotions, surprises and expectations as they manifested themselves in his infantile solitude. Yet, he had to be a role model for his younger brother who was growing faster than other kids. Bakari was destined to adopt love, patience and perseverance from the mother; empathy and responsibility from the brother. He found compassion, diversity and universalism out of racism that collectively opened the heart with deep attachment to nature and exploring other cultures and human conditions around the world. His favorite subjects as a kid were writing and art, hidden talents that exploded in time as his mind kept on reflecting self-discovery and spiritual healing that had to be communicated in original musical format and diaspora art. Bakari stands relaxed and in control to share his cumulative concept of existence in the universal podium of ART!



Mu Beings
Acrylic, oil stick on
canvas
69" x 59.5"

Cholee Gladney



Protective Patterns series

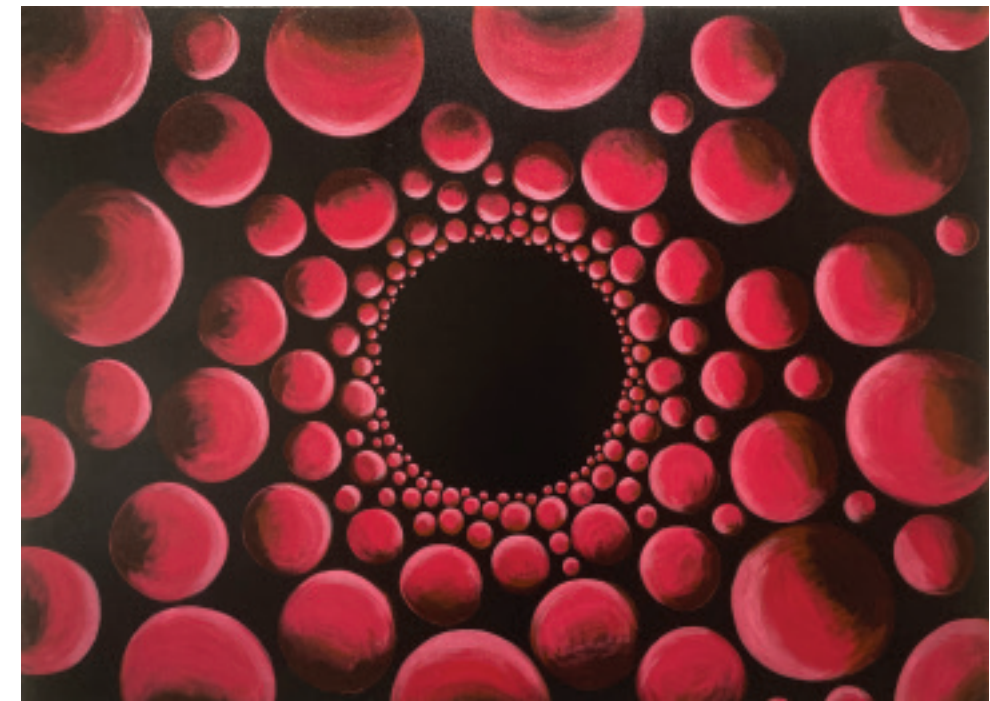
I am very grateful for the opportunity to participate in the Black Love show. It is an incredible gift to be in the company of such brilliant Black artists and to be able to partner with and learn from De'Ja Marshall, whose work I respect deeply.

The theme of protective patterns emerged from a growing awareness of my own negative thought patterns. As I began to work on the pieces for this show, I reflected on my use of the creative process as a remedy for anxiety and negative thought patterns. Working intuitively on creative projects allows me to enter a state of flow which provides relief from the usual mind chatter as I center my awareness on image, color, texture, and pattern. Intentionally replacing these negative loops by focusing on the healing images of nature and simple shapes allows freedom from the internalization of what society tells me about who I am.

The space of love and protection I have created for myself through image making has become my sanctuary. Creating and focusing on protective patterns rather than perpetuating harmful ones has grounded and held me through many difficulties, providing a place of respite and hope. If we can replace negative patterns with patterns that convey growth and possibility, I hope we can come to know what soothes and strengthens us. If we can transform pain into healing, I hope we may be able to be more present and compassionate toward one another.

Partnering with another Black woman who understands the need for these adaptive practices around transforming patterns has been invaluable. This experience has taught me that while my insular creative processes may have certainly helped me develop awareness of harmful automatic thought patterns, the connections we create by revealing our struggles and sharing our healing practices is truly what will sustain us.

With love and gratitude to my ancestors for keeping me grounded and protected,
Cholee Gladney



Top
Meditation: The Void
Acrylic on Canvas
3' x 4'

Bottom
Protective Patterns
Acrylic on wood
4' x 4'

Aisha Harrison



In my work, I use the body as a site to explore the lived experiences of racism, ancestral (human and non-human) connection, and the complicated blend of histories held within my body. My work shows reverence for real bodies while also incorporating elements that are physical manifestations of the intangible. The humans I make are often interconnected with elements of the natural world, many of whom are native to the Pacific Northwest where my family has lived for four generations. Trees, roots, animals, water, stars, and salt are common threads throughout my work. I love paying attention to and learning from our non-human relatives and incorporating their teachings. My work balances the individual and the collective. Each piece contains a unique individual but also references to a larger collective of people and/or the natural world. I want my work to encourage people to think about their relationships to each other as well as our non-human relatives that surround us. In the connections between the individual and the collective, I hope to encourage us to build community, activate webs of support for all living beings, and reflect on and act toward being the best future ancestors we can possibly be. I want my work to live in the stream of "good trouble" that is pushing our country to reckon with its past, recognize how the past is implicated in our systems now, and live up to our country's best ideals.

Aisha Harrison discovered clay in a community studio, while working toward a degree in Spanish at Grinnell College in Iowa. After graduating, she spent the next two years teaching third and fourth grades in Atlanta, Georgia, and exploring clay at Callenwolde Fine Arts Center in Georgia, and Penland School of Crafts in North Carolina. Aisha decided to go back to school and received a BFA from Washington State University, and an MFA from University of Nebraska- Lincoln. Her work is shown nationally with recent work at Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art -WSU, Percival Plinth Project, Bainbridge Museum of Art, The Leonor R. Fuller Gallery, and in the Store Front Windows Project in downtown Olympia, WA (as a collaborator in the Black Well Red Thread Collective). She has done residencies at Watershed Center for the Ceramic Arts, Women's Studio Workshop, and Baltimore Clayworks. She has taught at Penland School of Crafts, Bainbridge Island Museum of Art, The Evergreen State College, Bykota Senior Center, Baltimore Clayworks, University of Nebraska- Lincoln, and the Lux Center for the Arts.



Mama Tee
Clay and paint
\$ Check with artist
29" x 24" x 24"

Travis Johnson



This group of assemblage sculptures is me asking the objects to transmute and hold different narratives. On the one hand, these objects are tools of a trade that is connected to violence, labor, blackness, and culture. I am asking these objects to hold a personal history and a black ontological cultural narrative. I am also asking the objects to be art and to be beautiful and to not be concerned with any assumptions.

These works for me hold a collage of meaning that feels different depending on what lens I am viewing them through. On one level I have many personal memories of sparring with my father and listening to him tell me the history of boxing while we worked, played, and existed together. On a more distant level, I am thinking about the function and placement that boxing (fighting) sits in our culture. Who do we think of when we hear the phrase "He's the baddest man on the planet" or "the greatest of all time"

The combination of gloves, sticks, vices, and hammers is a recontextualization of labor objects and the ontological placement of black bodies. I am looking at the normalization of labor as it relates to black bodies and the black experience.

I am thinking about the duality of the fragmented black diasporic body being both celebrated and exploited in support of the reproduction of culture.

These pieces are an open-ended effort to honor blackness, black bodies, and black labor without the exploitive observation of black bodies.



9 Rounds
Two Hammers
Leather, gloves wood,
and steel
13" x 11" x 9"



Heavy Weight Vice
Hammer, gloves,
and vice
15.5" x 31" x 11.5"



Glove In The Desert
Gloves and wood
27" x 7.5" x 7.5"



Down For The Count
Leather, gloves,
wood, and steel
11.5" x 7.5" x 5"

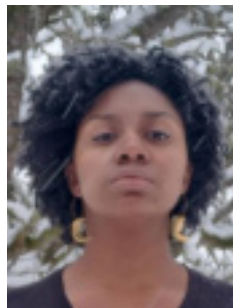


Top
Golden Gloves
Leather, gloves,
and wood
37" x 14" x 8"



Bottom
What I Do For Love
Gloves and hammer
12" x 7.5" x 4"

Ru'ya Lamont



This group of assemblage sculptures is me asking the objects to transmute and hold different narratives. On the one hand, these objects are tools of a trade that is connected to violence, labor, blackness, and culture. I am asking these objects to hold a personal history and a black ontological cultural narrative. I am also asking the objects to be art and to be beautiful and to not be concerned with any assumptions.

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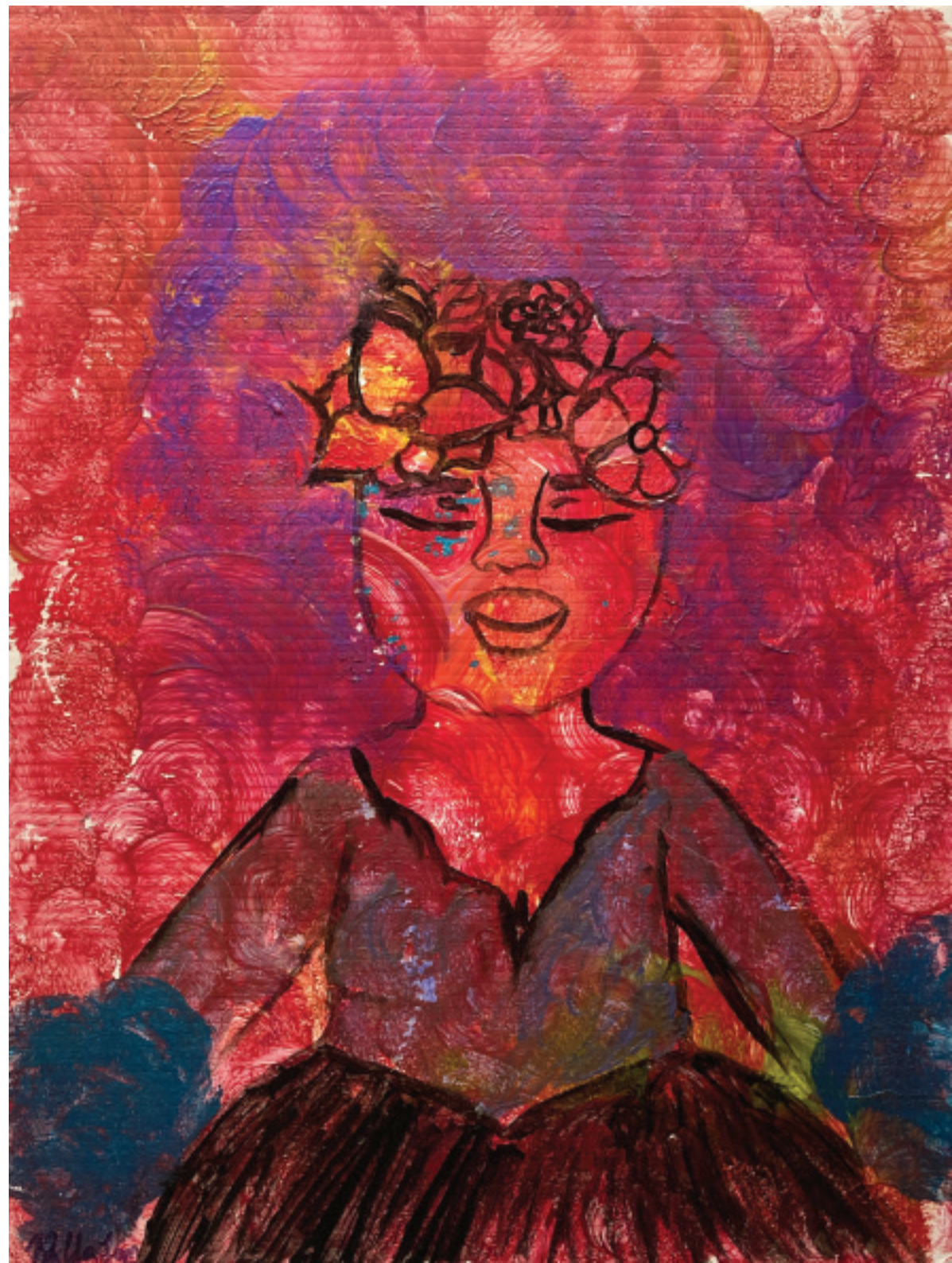
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Black Persephone
Acrylics vinyl record,
markers
12" x 12"



Empress of Abundance
acrylics and
poster board
24" x 18"



Transformation
Canvas, acrylics
and markers
20" x 16"



The Spirit of Water
Acrylics, and
poster board
24" x 18"

De'Ja Marshall



De'Ja Marshall is a narrative tableau photographer based out of Tacoma, Washington. Her interest in photography was first piqued at ten years old while spending time with her grandfather's digital camera. Over the course of her extensive photography journey, the subject matter with which she grappled through her art ebbed and flowed with the ever-changing interests of her youth. The latest iteration of her work centers Black women and serves as a culmination of the development of her artistic praxis at the Evergreen State College; more pointedly, exploring the nature of Black femininity and the fluidity of divine feminine energy as it persists outside of the white gaze.

Artist Statement

Dear Diary,

I am feeling called to sincerely reevaluate how the love I offer to myself maintains the unwavering disposition assumed of it.

Simply put, it doesn't; at least not well.

Does this break the illusion?

My self worth-

Fragile and sensitive,

Fleetingly contingent on others' outward, overt perception of myself.

It's true, you see

There she goes

Constantly reassuring,

Redefining,

Constantly in conversation.

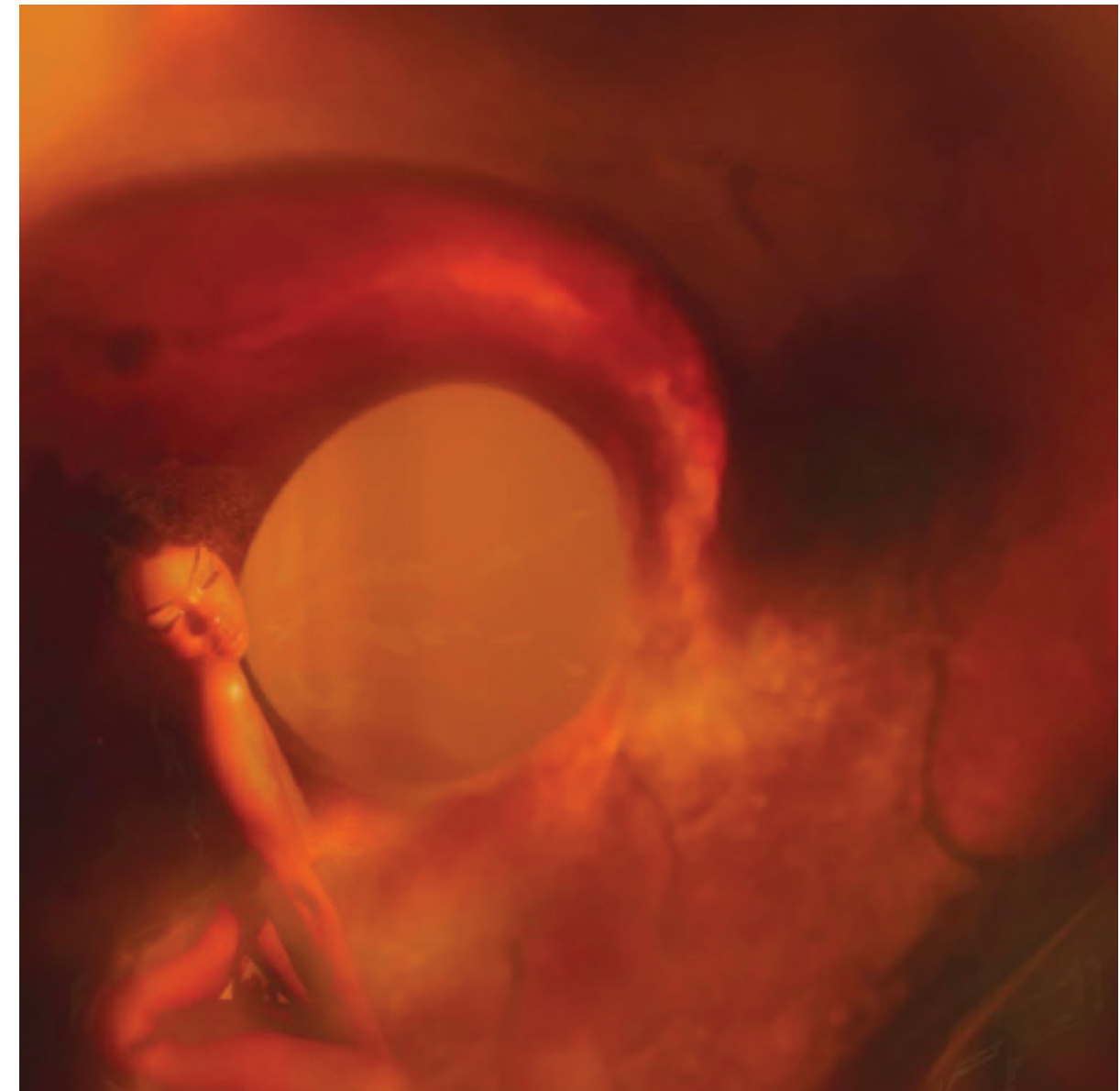
She is made of

Mind, spirit, body,

All coming together to collect.

She brings pieces back together.

Here is where I bring pieces back together.



Even If I got a
Photography, digital
17" x 25"



Fill My Cup
Photography, digital
17" x 25"



Be Waiting
Photography, digital
17" x 25"

Rene Westbrook



Mysteries and coded messages were always fascinating to me as a child. Stars were the ultimate conundrum and I sought out every inch of the night sky looking for the doorway. Art is like that for me. It is a doorway into a mystery that begs to be uncovered. As a young woman, I studied abroad, examining Hieroglyphs, indigenous markings and wall paintings at the British Museum looking for the secrets of the ages. It took a long time to understand that I, too had secrets that could be revealed through the exploration of my inner soul. I am highly influenced by ideas and ancient wisdom. Books and films and other visual media keep me attached to the unknown corners of what is still possible and what can be discovered. Writers and artists like Ralph Ellison, Albert Camus, Simone de Beauvoir, Franz Fanon and Albert Giacometti of the Existentialist movement informed my early thinking. Later, I became interested in the writings of Jiddu Krishnamurti, Satprem and Helena Blavatsky, which added another dimension to the use of symbols in my artwork. Yet, African Animism, with its complex system of polytheistic elements and ancestor worship has had the biggest influences on both my artwork and my life, giving rise to an etheric underpinning forged in social commentary. I am of this world but also not rooted in it.

DELIVERANCE

This painting is a companion piece to Hieroglyphics of Hate, both of which were commissioned for the BLM exhibition funded by the Schnitzer Family Fund grant in 2020 and debuted at the WSU Art Museum last year.

The impact of DELIVERANCE speaks to the savagery of racism that is depicted in the first painting, Hieroglyphics of Hate and its deliverance from such evil that is clearly rendered in the second painting. The sanctity of survival throughout history is the ultimate message of DELIVERANCE. We honor our resilient ancestors and their LOVE FOR ONE ANOTHER as they remain part of our important history of salvation in a hostile environment.

Rene Westbrook
2022



Eden Uprising
Acrylic on canvas
4" x 8"

Thresea Yost



With the encouragement of my mentor Aisha Harrison and under her watchful eye I was able to explore different mediums and feel I have grown as an artist through this experience. Art takes many forms and I am delighted to have offered such. I hope it speaks loudly for itself.

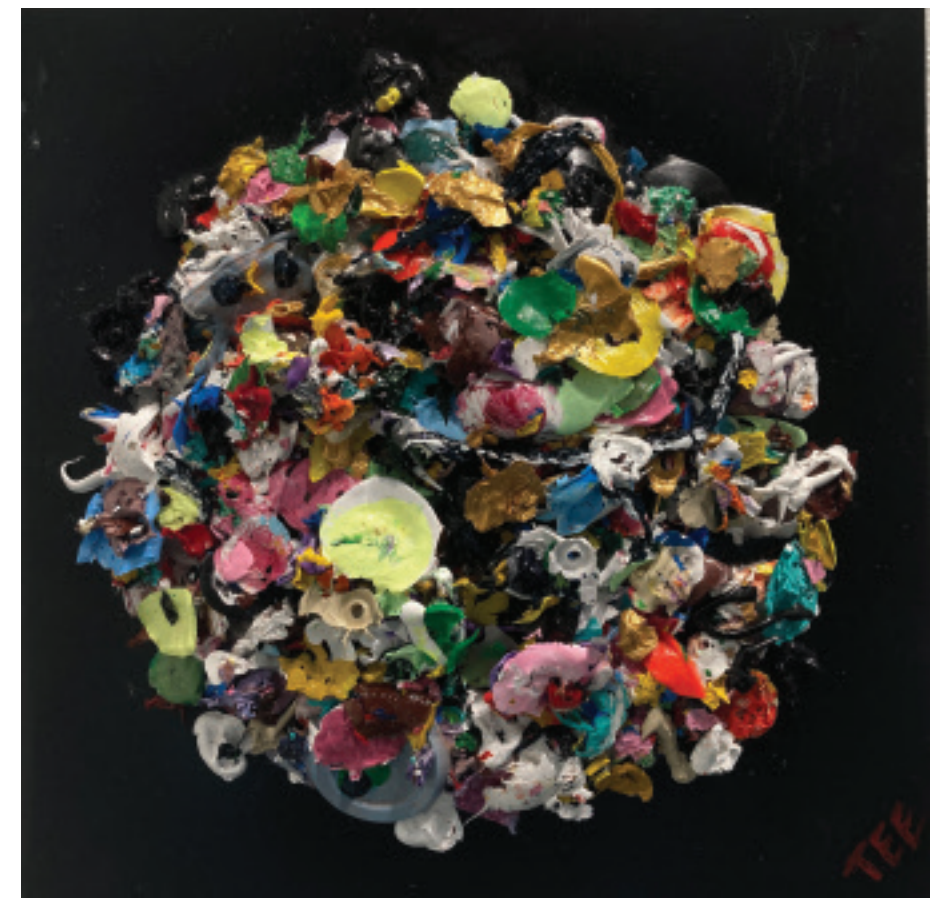
Thresea P. Yost is a great lover of art in both the written and visual mediums. She was the 2018 Olympia Poet Laureate runner up and has a piece published in the anthology *I Hear Olympia Singing*. Her motivation as an artist has always been to infuse the artistic space with Black voices and expression. This installation is just the next step in that journey. She is forever grateful to Sean and the SPSCC Leonor R. Fuller Gallery for the opportunity to showcase the work of Black artists in the Olympia area.



African Flag
Paint acrylic
8" x10"



Black Love 1-4
Pencil
8" x16"

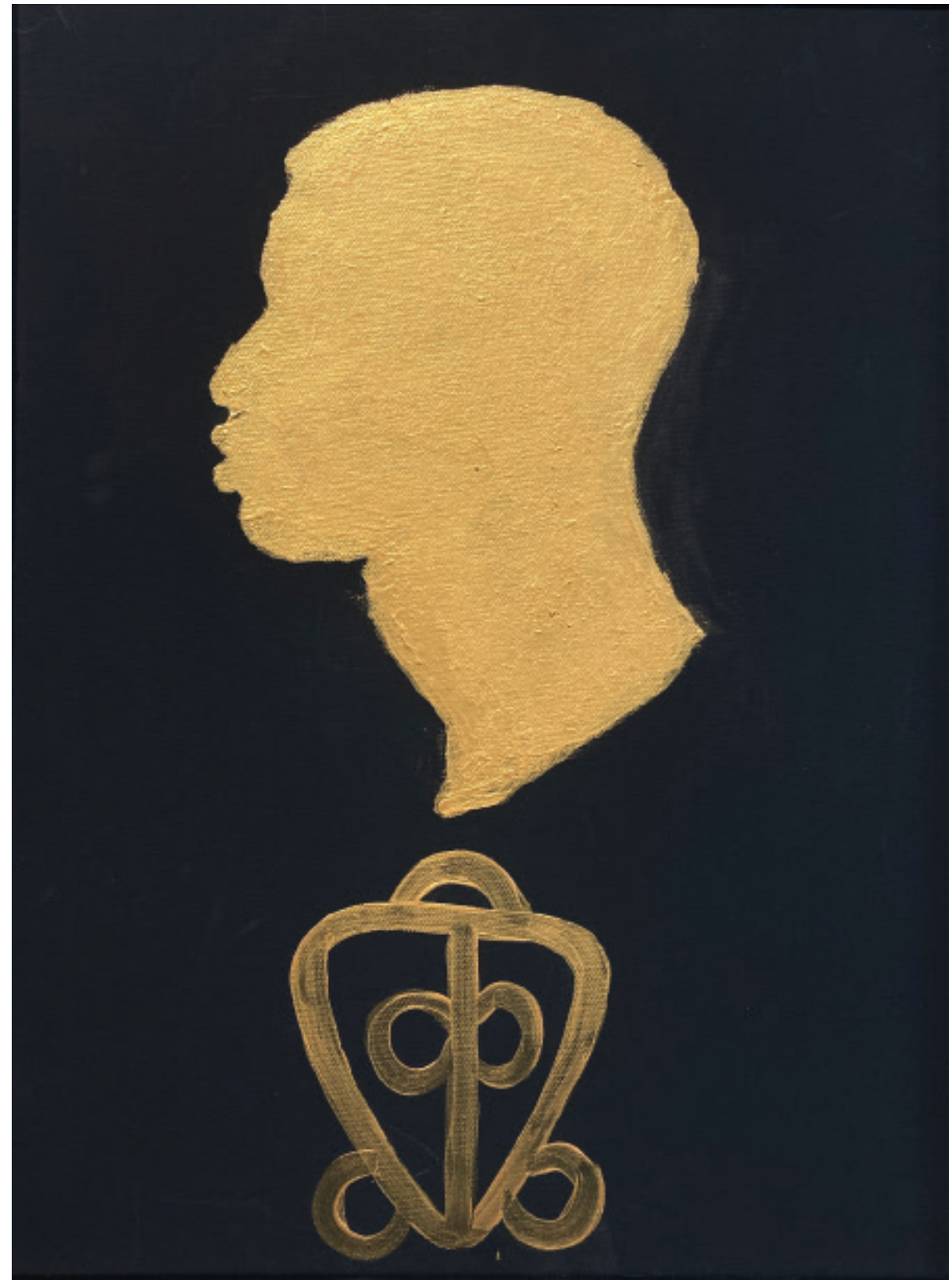


Top
Black Heart
Paint acrylic
8" x10"

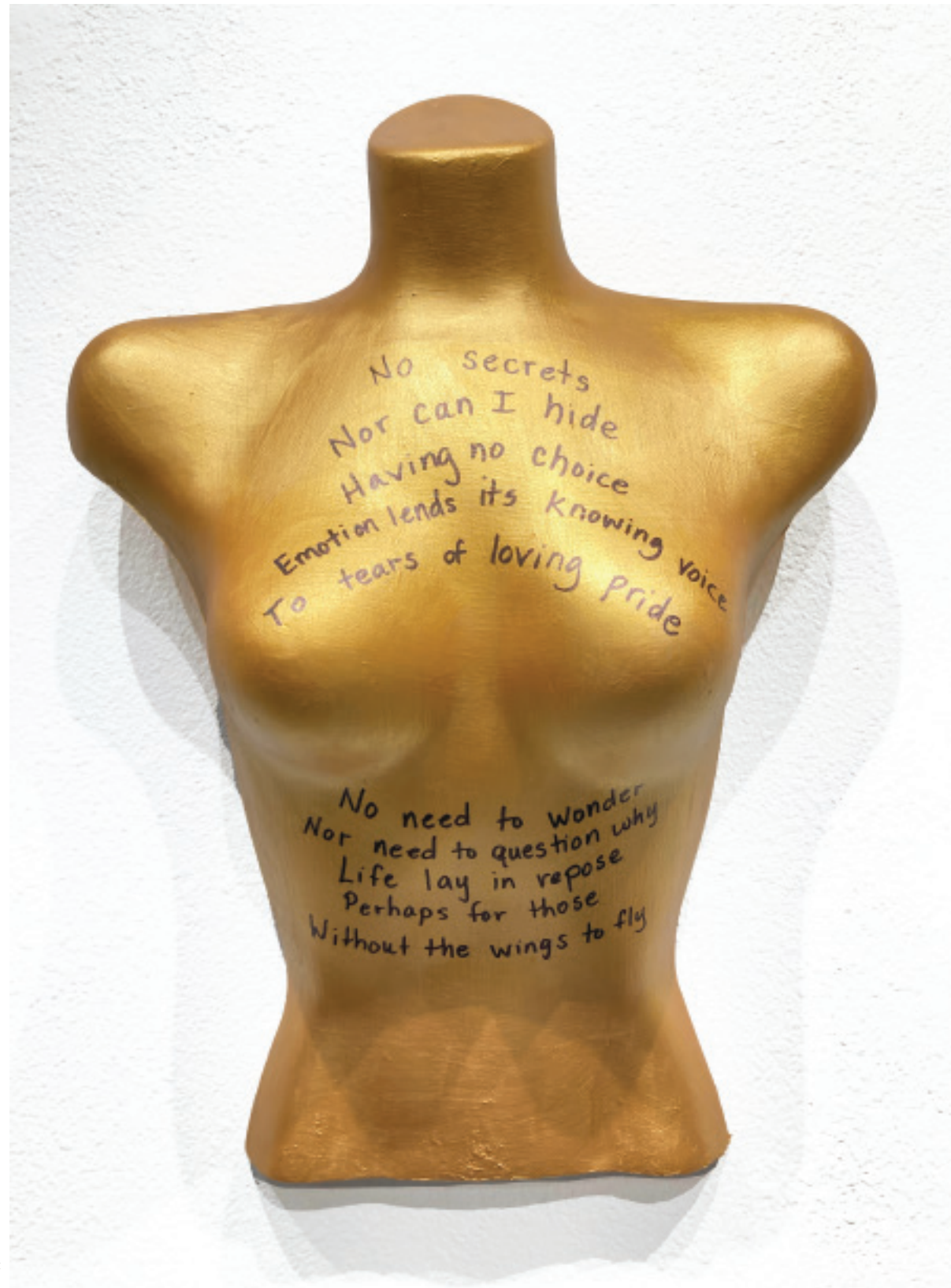
Bottom
Waste
Paint acrylic
12" x12"



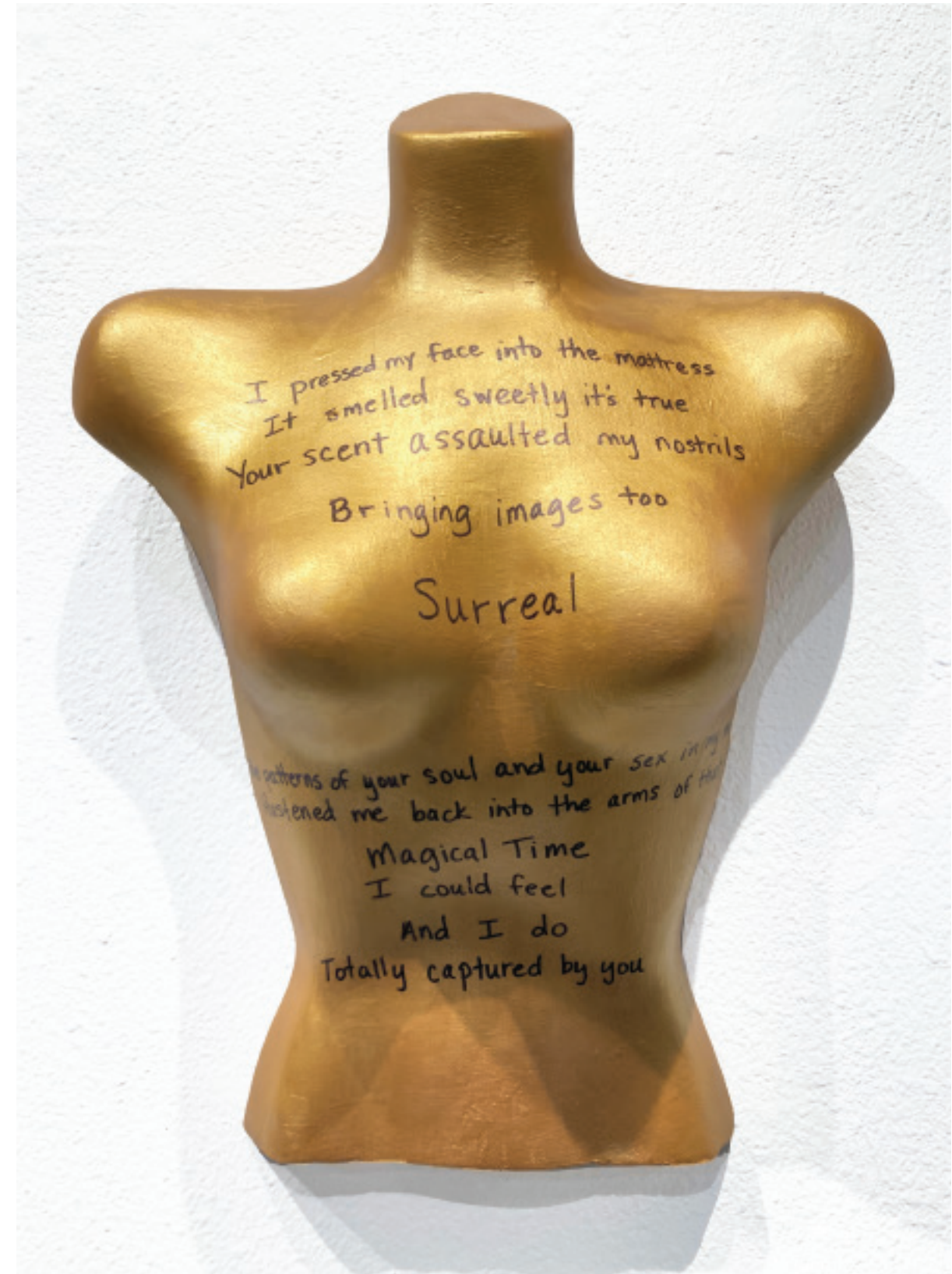
We Stand
Variable dimensions
Acrylic gold and black



We Stand
Variable dimensions
Acrylic gold and black



Words of Love...
Written
Plastic
21" x 15.5" x 1.5"



Love Said
Plastic
14" x 11.5" x 4"

AFTERWORD

ASHLY MCBUNCH

Mama Tee's love of art, across various mediums, combined with her passion for ensuring Black voices were integrated within the community, were catalysts to build the network of creative space necessary to support, mentor, and provide an opportunity for Black artists to be shown within Olympia. Throughout Puget Sound, we can continue to see the artistic works such as Boca's Red One, purchased by SPSCC, which won the Viewer's Choice Award 2021, and Bradford's work which received a merit award for work created during the Black Love mentorship exhibition in the 2022 Southwest Juried show. Westbrook's exploration of our spiritual experiences as humans, displayed in golden orange hues throughout shops in downtown Olympia, reminds us of our ancestral connection, and Harrison's public art sculpture Women with Graves at Her Back, located at Percival Landing, give visitors to Olympia a look into the artists' depiction of an ancestor who survived tragic life events.

Appreciation of one's artistic talent, the root from which it grows, and curiosity about an artist's process are where my love for art lives now. This appreciation is formed into questions that glide into the air and arrive upon the open ears of artists I have the chance to speak to. These conversations are energetic exchanges that provide answers full of wit, truth, and authenticity about how they have seen their artistic journey exist within their world. The conclusion is often the same; Black artists are worthy of being seen, recognized, and awarded, yet not always appropriately represented. The significance of Black artists in our communities has suffered from colonization to capitalism. There is a generational disconnect solidified through attempts at viewing historical narratives that exclude the artistic work of the Black experience. This history must be recognized, and Black artists must continue to be a part of the future narrative of the arts community within Olympia. Their works provide an impactful reality check on the duality of injustices and beauty within our world. Futures Rising, Closer, and Black Love exhibitions exist because when Mama Tee heard there were no Black artists, she wanted to do everything in her power to show that Black artists exist within the community, which was beyond time to start acknowledging their artistic works.



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