

Mashell Black Bio - Long

Born in a small rural community on the island of Jamaica in 1980, Mashell Black found a calling in expressing himself creatively when school supplies and local resources were not available to provide him with the foundation of a traditional education. Black saw drawing not only as an outlet for his dreams and memories, but as a fountain for his imagination. And from an early age, he often delighted his grandparents with his artistic skills when his father was away traveling for work.

After moving to the United States in 1994, Black's mother, stepfather and step-grandmother encouraged him to continue pursuing his art. With the watercolor lessons that his step-grandmother gave him, he also learned to read and write, improving on the limited education he received in his native country.

Black went on to excel in a traditional school environment in Tenafly, NJ, while maintaining his love of drawing and painting. With a substantial scholarship in hand, he attended Syracuse University, graduating in 2003 with a Bachelor of Fine Arts. Black continued his education and pursued a Master of Fine Arts at Rutgers University's Mason Gross School of the Arts, completing his degree in 2006.

Although dedicated to his artistic practice, Black held a number of jobs after graduation that allowed him to focus on building the ideal art studio space. From construction work to picture framing to substitute teaching, he and his wife, Rabiya, worked to create a space where he could concentrate on his art. Along the way, he also started his own house painting business. With the blessing of his wife, Black returned to creating art, developing new techniques, and engaging the art world full-time in 2016.

With the start of the new decade, Black is expanding his art practice even further, channeling his experience as an immigrant and an African American. With one foot firmly planted in the world of painting and the other in drawing, his technique reveals a common theme of isolation as he exists between a state of belonging to one nation and not belonging to another, each constantly trading places depending on his environment.

Early in Black's artistic career, drawing and painting allowed him to navigate those changing environments and explore the place he occupies between them. Equally devoted to both disciplines, Black now uses drawing to process his dreams and struggles while documenting his life and the way he experiences the world. And as a painter, he uses simple images and colors to bind energy and passion to issues of identity, class and opportunity. Whether creating for a commissioned client, an art gallery, or a close family member, Black recognizes the spiritual connection that art manifests within an observer, within a community and within our society.

Solo Exhibitions

- 2003 – “Simply Oils,” JCC (Jewish Community Center) on The Palisades, Tenafly, NJ, Curator: Opera Listokin
- 2003 – “Transitions,” CFAC (Community Folk Art Center), Syracuse, NY, Curator: Lauren Austin
- 2003 – “Jamaican Countryside,” Englewood Public Library, Englewood, NJ, Curator: Dick Burdon
- 2002 – “Mashell Black,” Storch Gallery, Syracuse, NY, Curator: Murphy Servatka
- 2001 – “Mashell Black,” Haworth Public Library, Haworth, NJ, Curator: Penny Dell

Group Exhibitions

- 2020 – “Glimpse,” Gallery Aferro, Newark, NJ, Curators: Evonne M. Davis and Jo-EI Lopez
- 2018 – “Curator Choice,” Casa Columbia, Jersey City, NJ, Curators: Mollie Thonneson & Michael Endy
- 2018 – “Well Hung,” Gallery Aferro, Newark, NJ, Curator: Jo-EI Lopez
- 2018 – “Art in the Atrium,” Novartis, Morristown, NJ, Curator: VC Craig
- 2017 – “Frame of Mind,” Above Art Studio, New Brunswick, NJ
- 2017 – Art All Night, Trenton, NJ
- 2004-2009 – Tritico Fine Art, Piermont, NY, Curator: Deborah Tritico
- 2007 – “Made in Camden,” Walt Whitman Arts Center, Camden, NJ, Curator: Beverly Roberts
- 2004 – The Next Generation of Hudson Valley Artists, Nyack Village Hall, Nyack, NY, Curator: Rina Oh
- 2004 – Art From Africa, Teaneck, NJ, Curator: Freddie Barber

Awards and Honors

- Teaching Assistantship, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ, 2004-2006
- MGSA Scholarship, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ, 2004
- Peter Stroud Scholarship, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ, 2004
- First Prize, Augusta Hazard Award for Outstanding Senior Painter, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY, 2004
- Nancy Shaffer Schallern Scholarship, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY, 2003
- First Prize, Augusta Hazard Award for Outstanding Junior Painter, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY, 2003
- First Prize, Augusta Hazard Award for Outstanding Sophomore Painter, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY, 2002