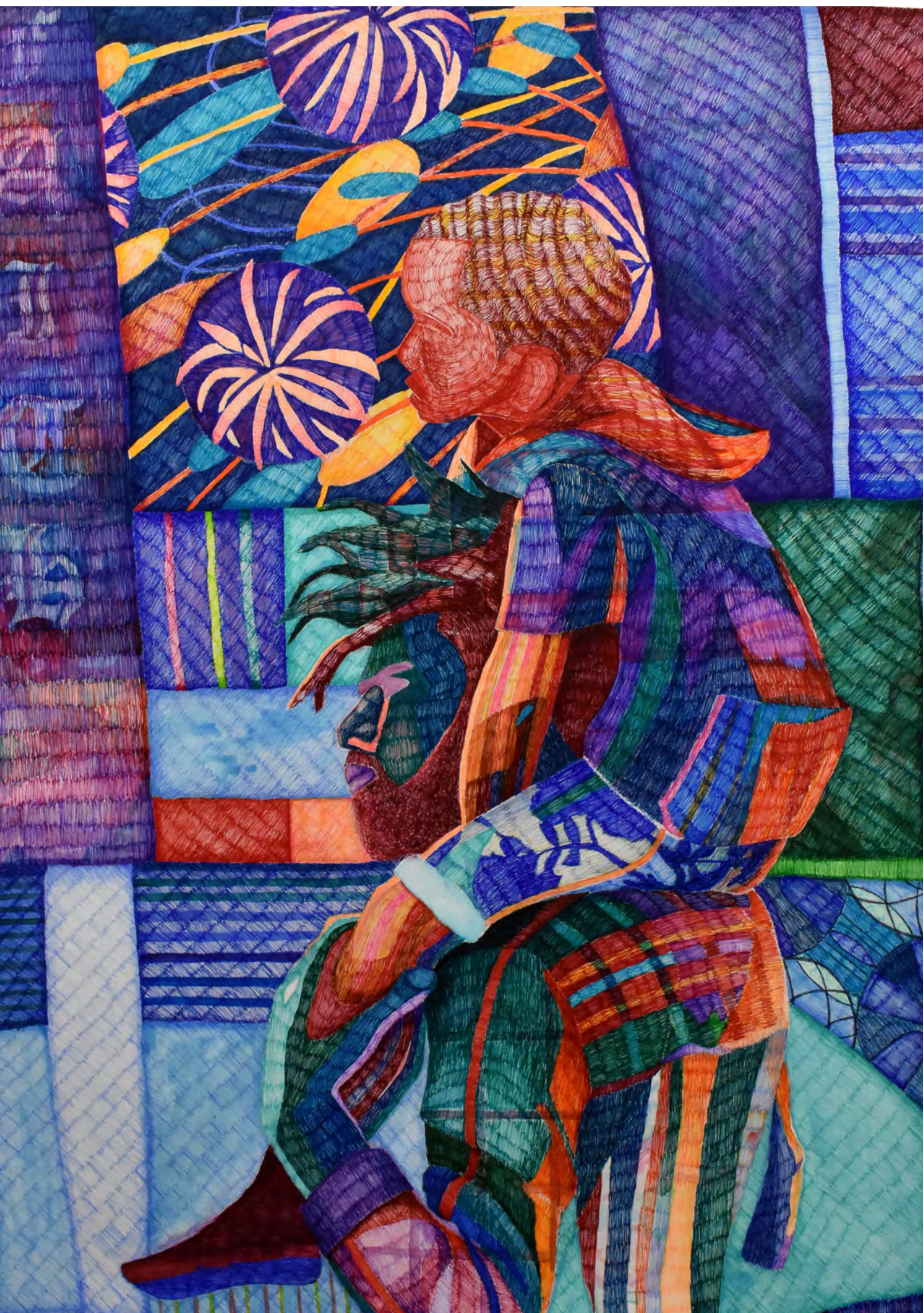




ART IN
EMBASSIES
EXHIBITION
UNITED
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NEW YORK
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Art in Embassies

Established in 1963, the U.S. Department of State's Office of Art in Embassies (AIE) plays a vital role in our nation's public diplomacy through a culturally expansive mission, creating temporary and permanent exhibitions, artist programming, and publications.

The Museum of Modern Art first envisioned this global visual arts program a decade earlier. In the early 1960s, President John F. Kennedy formalized it, naming the program's first director. Now with over 200 venues, AIE curates temporary and permanent exhibitions for the representational spaces of all U.S. chanceries, consulates, and embassy residences worldwide, selecting and commissioning contemporary art from the U.S. and the host countries. These exhibitions provide international audiences with a sense of the quality, scope, and diversity of both countries' art and culture, establishing AIE's presence in more countries than any other U.S. foundation or arts organization.

AIE's exhibitions allow citizens, many of whom might never travel to the United States, to personally experience the depth and breadth of our artistic heritage and values, making what has been called a: "footprint that can be left where people have no opportunity to see American art."

www.art.state.gov

Welcome

Welcome to the U.S. Mission to the United Nations

Residence in New York, New York. It is an honor and a joy to showcase an exhibition of works by American artists curated by Art in Embassies.

Art transcends borders and inspires empathy and creativity. It leaps over cultural barriers and goes straight to the soul. These powers are particularly meaningful in the context of the United Nations, where we have to work through our different nationalities, ethnicities, cultures, and values to find points of agreement and forge new opportunities. In this challenging environment, art offers a language we all share.

That shared language is visible as soon as visitors enter the high-rise Residence, which overlooks the United Nations and the East River. The artwork is stunning.

It starts immediately with the shocking blues, pinks, and splashes of white found in the work of Joyce Owens, as in *Life Support*, *Dream Big*, *Birds of a Feather*, *Dove*, *A Love Puzzle*, and *Pillars: Queens of York Street*. I met Joyce when she was a young artist decades ago, and her work spoke to me just as much then as it does now. When I was the United States Ambassador to Liberia, we featured several of her paintings in my Residence there. Her work embodies womanhood and Black self-

“Art transcends borders and inspires empathy and creativity. **It leaps over cultural barriers and goes straight to the soul.**”

determination, which spark a complex mix of longing and joy. Also featured prominently are the works of Peggy Blood: *Panjim*, *Tongli Town*, *Sunrise on Wilmington Island*, *African Roots*, and *Delilah*. I visited her bed and breakfast, the Breezeway Studio Manor in Savannah, Georgia. There, everything around you is a work of art. You see that same fullness in her works here, with her bright hues, enticing scenes, and range of yellows. Every time I look at her paintings, I see something different. For example, it took months before I saw a face peer out in *Delilah*. And in

Panjim, which guests will particularly notice when they leave the residence, the women's feet are kicking up dirt through their hustle and toil, which stands in stark contrast to their vibrant clothing. It reminds me of the marketplaces and villages I spent a great deal of time in across Africa.

“African American art **is** American art.”

Balancing out these potent women is Otis Kwame Kye Quicoe's *First Look*, a large-scale portrait of a striking young man. His quiet, contemplative, knowing look pairs well with Michael Booker's *In Due Time*, a quilt-like portrayal of a boy on his father's shoulders that speaks powerfully to our modern moment.

Unified throughout the exhibition is a theme of African American artists. That is no coincidence. To me, African American art *is* American art. It reflects an important component not just of our culture and values but our history as well. That is a history I hope guests reflect on as they gaze at this startling array of art and all the pain, joy, and beauty it reflects. Most of all, I hope this exhibition makes you think—and smile.

Finally, I want to express my sincere appreciation to the lenders and artists who contributed to this exhibition, making it possible to share a slice of America with the representatives and peoples of the world. I am also so grateful to Art in Embassies for their time, support, and goodwill in helping us put this exhibition together and creating this publication.

Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield

U.S Mission to the United Nations

New York, New York

June 2023

Michael Booker

Born 1985 Mixed-media artist Michael Booker creates works encompassing African American history and culture. The subjects and forms of his paintings reference hip hop music, African wax fabrics, and Gee's Bend quilts, named for a remote community in Alabama where enslaved women created abstract patterned quilts from clothing and fabric scraps and passed their techniques down to future generations.¹ *In Due Time* is part of Booker's *Godspeed* series, influenced by quilts used to send hidden messages and signs to enslaved persons traveling the Underground Railroad. Set against a weft-woven patchwork of multicolored and textured squares, a young boy sits on top of his father's shoulders as they look toward the word faith on the left, rendered in the Gothic alphabet. The painting represents an escape for travelers in search of a better life.²

Originally from Jackson, Mississippi, Booker received his Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in painting from Mississippi State University, Starkville, and a Master of Fine Arts degree in studio art from the University of Maryland, College Park. He currently lives in Maryland and is an assistant professor of art at Montgomery College, Takoma Park. Booker exhibited at the Arlington Arts Center, Virginia; Prince George's African American Museum and Cultural Center, Brentwood, Maryland; and Morton Fine Art, Washington, D.C.³

In Due Time 2020

Fineliner pen and
watercolor on paper
46 × 36 in.

*Courtesy of the artist
and Morton Fine Art
Washington, D.C.*



Peggy Blood

Born 1947 Composed of vibrant bright hues and muted dark colors, Peggy Blood's oil and mixed-media paintings depict her life and travels in the United States and abroad. Each painting features rhythmic motion and multiple perspectives in one composition, as the viewer is led from one area to various related shapes.⁴ Utilizing a creative process that lets the paint and canvas take charge, Blood creates works that are meant to inspire curiosity and astonishment, oftentimes finding the results as new and surprising as a first-time viewer would. At first glance the paintings seem simple, but with enough time, viewers will note the "multitude of happenings."⁵

Blood first studied painting under John Miller Howard, a protégé of Harlem Renaissance painter Hale Woodruff. She was the first African American woman to earn a Master of Fine Arts degree from the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville. Blood served as department chair of the arts program at Savannah State University, Georgia, where she holds the title of distinguished professor, and was executive director and art professor at Chapman University, Orange, California. She exhibited at the National Center for the Study of Civil Rights and African-American Culture at Alabama State University, Montgomery, and the Ralph Gilbert Civil Rights Museum, Savannah, Georgia.

African Roots 2007

Oil on canvas
45 × 66 in.
Courtesy of the artist
Savannah, Georgia

Panjim 2014

Oil on canvas
32 × 72 in.
Courtesy of the artist
Savannah, Georgia

Tongli Town 2014

Oil on canvas
32 × 72 in.
Courtesy of the artist
Savannah, Georgia

Sunrise on Wilmington Island 2021

Oil and mixed media on canvas
72 × 60 in.
Courtesy of the artist
Savannah, Georgia

Delilah 2020

Oil and mixed media on canvas
72 × 60 in.
Courtesy of the artist
Savannah, Georgia

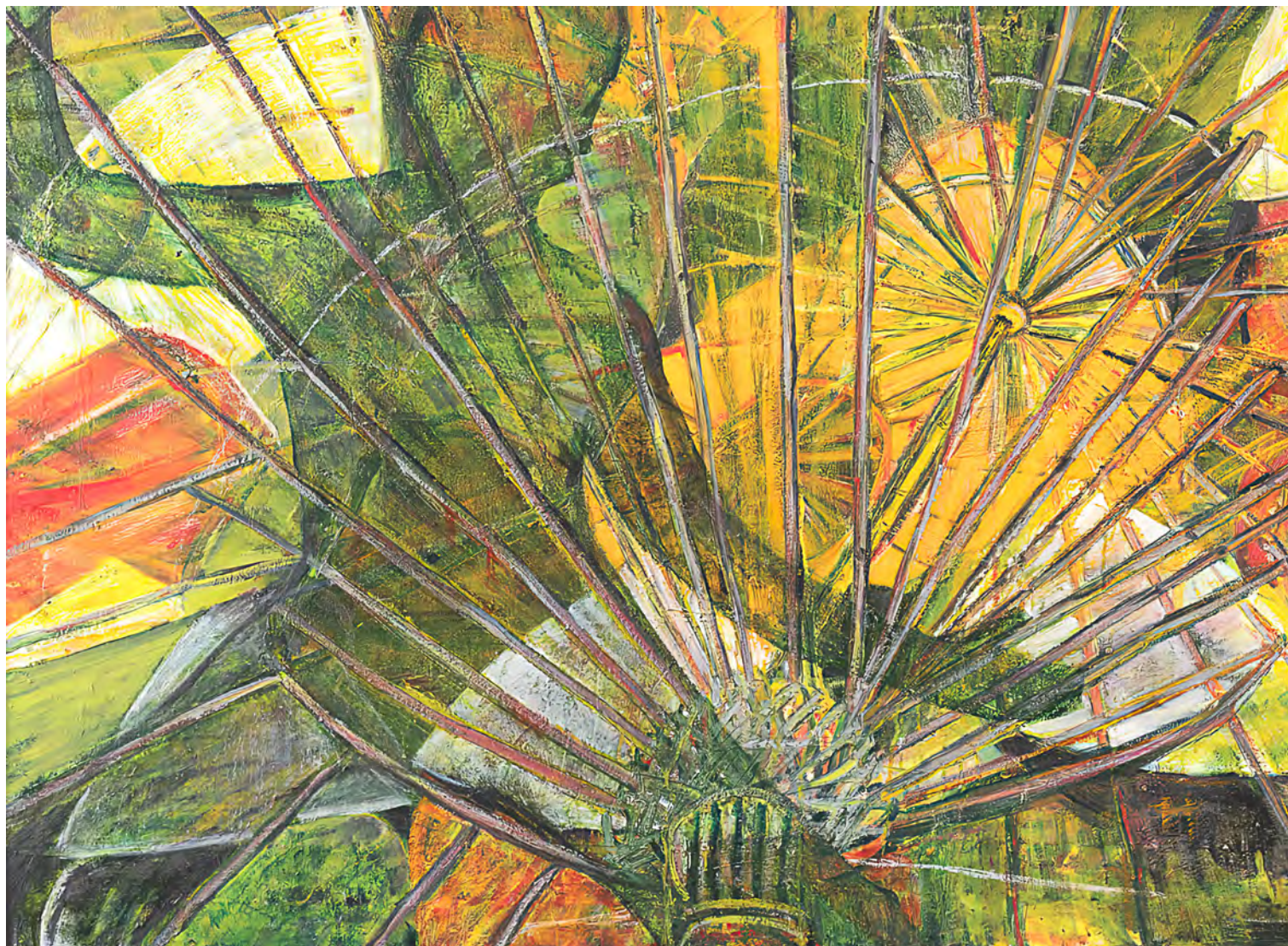




Delilah 2020

Sunrise on Wilmington Island 2021







“Each painting features rhythmic motion and multiple perspectives **in one composition**”

“Utilizing a creative process that lets the paint and canvas take charge, Blood creates works that are meant to inspire curiosity and astonishment, oftentimes finding the results as new and surprising as a first-time viewer would. **At first glance the paintings seem simple, but with enough time, viewers will note the ‘multitude of happenings.’**”



Joyce Owens

Born 1947 Through her paintings, sculptural masks, and installations, Joyce Owens addresses racism and “Black self-determination.” She primarily uses acrylic paints on canvas and paper, but she also includes found objects in her two- and three-dimensional works.⁶ Whether modern or from the past, her subjects are strong, often outwardly standing against racism with drive and hope. “I made the decision to do work that was positive,” she says. “I decided not to do angry black men and angry black women. I painted what I saw. I want people to see positive examples, and I saw many.”⁷

Born in Philadelphia, Owens received a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Howard University, Washington, D.C., and a Master of Fine Arts degree at Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut. She taught studio art at Chicago State University and has juried fine art exhibitions, namely at the DuSable Museum of African American History and the Woman Made Gallery, both in Chicago. Owens is an associate editor for the *Journal of African American History* and advisory committee member for the Department of Cultural Affairs’ Chicago Artists Month.

Dream Big 2008

Acrylic and collage
on canvas
36 × 60 in.

Courtesy of the artist
Chicago, Illinois

A Love Puzzle 2008

Acrylic on canvas
40 × 30 in.

Courtesy of the artist
Chicago, Illinois

Birds of a Feather 2010

Acrylic and collage
on canvas
40 × 30 in.

Courtesy of the artist
Chicago, Illinois

Life Support 2010

Acrylic on canvas
40 × 30 in.

Courtesy of the artist
Chicago, Illinois

Dove 2010

Acrylic and collage
40 × 30 in.

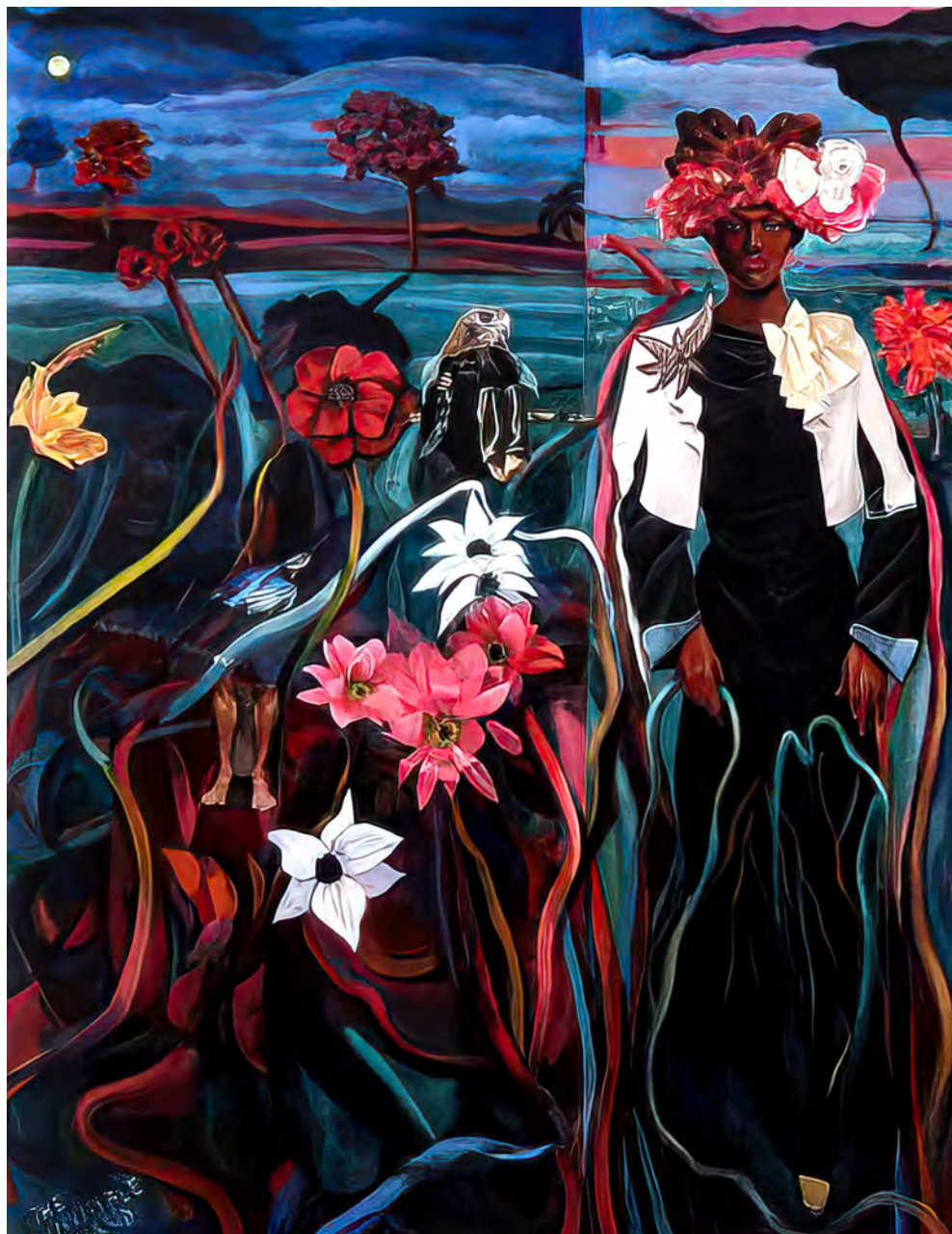
Courtesy of the artist
Chicago, Illinois

Pillars I 2003

Acrylic on canvas
48 × 36 in.

Courtesy of the artist
Chicago, Illinois





Life Support 2010
Dream Big 2008

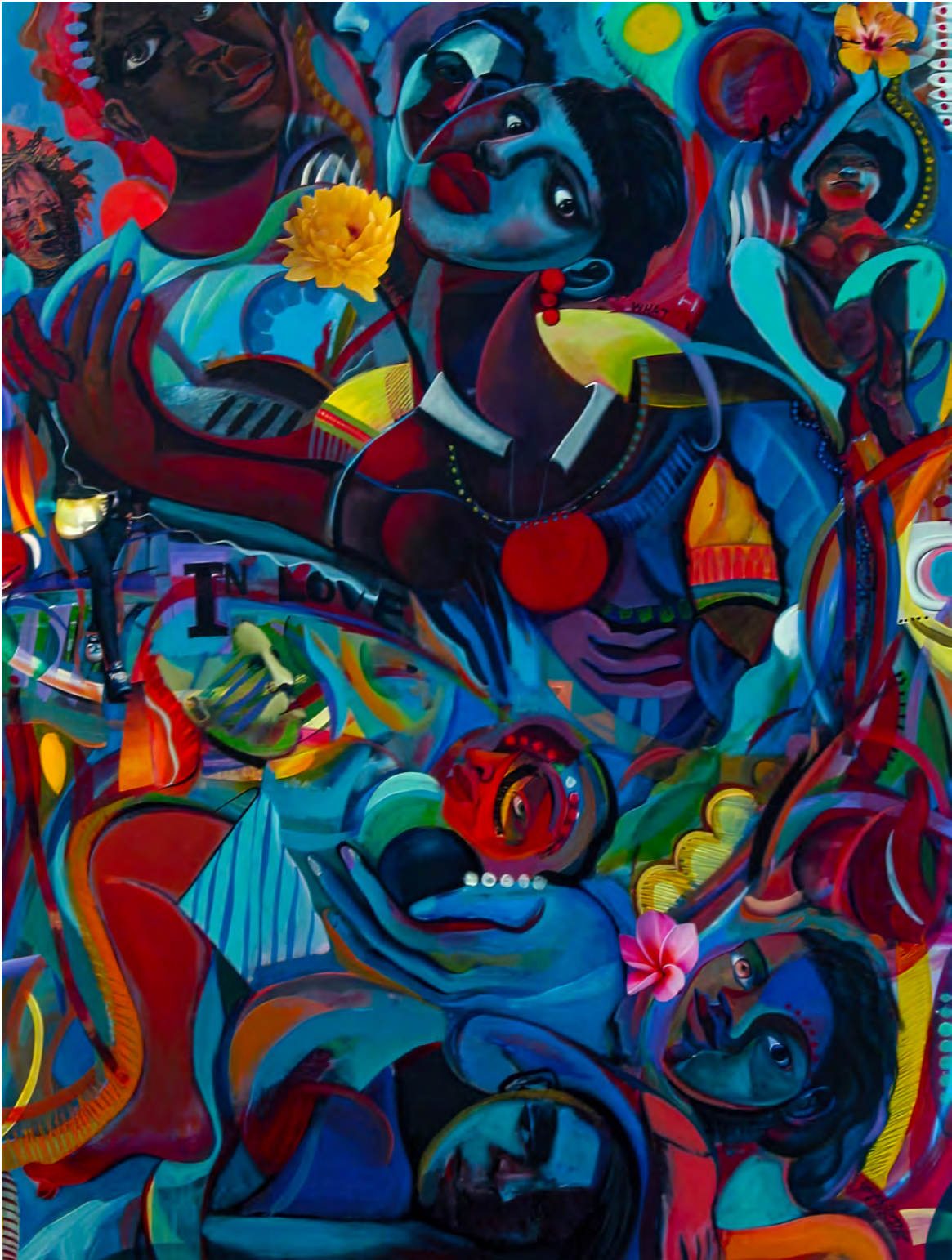




Pillars I 2003

Dove 2010





“Whether modern or from the past, **her subjects are strong, often outwardly standing against racism with drive and hope.** ‘I made the decision to do work that was positive...I decided not to do angry black men and angry black women. I painted what I saw. I want people to see positive examples, and I saw many.’”

Otis Kwame Kye Quaicoe

Born 1988 Otis Kwame Kye Quaicoe's large-scale portraits celebrate the empowerment, strength, and individuality of African culture. His paintings depict men and women of African descent – friends and colleagues as well as strangers he has encountered – and are painted in a straightforward manner, piercing out of the canvas at the viewer. Incorporating their own sense of style and fashion, Quaicoe endeavors to capture the essence of his subjects, as observed from the unidentified man in *First Look*. The bold color palette has become a signature element of his work; Quaicoe has said, “color means a great deal where I come from. It’s a distinguishing quality – the very means of self-expression.”⁸

A native of Ghana residing in Portland, Oregon, Quaicoe attended the Ghanatta College of Art and Design for Fine Art, Accra, Ghana, with a focus on painting. Quaicoe's *Black Like Me* at Roberts Projects, Culver City, California, was his first solo exhibition in the United States.

First Look 2019

Oil on canvas

48 × 36 in.

*Courtesy of the artist
and Roberts Projects*

Los Angeles, California

Photo by Alan Shaffer



Endnotes

- ¹ Rebecca Gross, “The Quilts of Gee’s Bend: A Slideshow,” National Endowment for the Arts, October 1, 2015, <https://www.arts.gov/stories/blog/2015/quilts-gees-bend-slide-show>.
- ² Michael Booker, email to the author, June 25, 2021.
- ³ “CV,” Michael Andrew Booker, accessed September 1, 2021, <https://michael-booker.com/pdfs.html>.
- ⁴ “About Peggy Blood,” Peggy Blood, accessed September 1, 2021, <https://peggy-blood.pixels.com/>.
- ⁵ “Introducing the Art of Peggy Blood,” Destig, January 2021, https://issuu.com/destig/docs/peggy_blood.
- ⁶ “Biography: Joyce Owens Anderson,” the History Makers, updated November 13, 2006, <https://www.thehistorymakers.org/biography/joyce-owens-anderson>.
- ⁷ Elizabeth Dunlop Richter, “Joyce Owens: Celebrating the American Experience,” Classic Chicago magazine, accessed February 11, 2022, <https://classicchicagomagazine.com/joyce-owens-celebrating-the-american-experience/>.
- ⁸ “Exhibitions: Otis Kwame Kye Quaicoe,” Roberts Projects, accessed February 8, 2021, <https://www.robertsprojects.com/exhibitions/otis-kwame-kye-quaicoe/selected-works?view=slider#:~:text=As%20Quaicoe%20explains%2C%20%E2%80%9Ccolor%20means,to%20the%20world%20around%20them>.

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Cover
First Look
Otis Kwame Kye Quaicoe

Inside Cover
In Due Time
Michael Booker

Rear Inside Cover
Dove
Joyce Owens

Rear Cover
African Roots
Peggy Blood





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