

YES WE CAN

New Works by Lavar Munroe

Artist Statement

Of Caribbean descent and heritage, I find it my duty, to use the opportunity given by the King- Tisdell Cottage Foundation, Inc. and the City of Savannah, to expand on and further expose the way of life and hardship of my neighbors: Haitians.

Having lived in the Bahamas, a community inhabited by thousands of Haitian migrants, for the majority of my life, my knowledge and understanding of Haitian people is abundant; their way of life familiar. As an artist, I have an inner urge to help Haitians continue to be heard. I feel that it is especially important now, as the media frenzy has ended, that their stories continue to be inscribed on the hearts of the world for generations to come.

Months before the Haitian catastrophe, I was inspired to produce work based on the Haitian experience and chose the cockfight as my vehicle. This was inspired by a visit to my home in the Bahamas where I witnessed an organized cockfight in progress. The handlers were mostly of Haitian heritage; for them, the fights were a gamble and money was involved. Though fascinated, I quickly realized the cruelty involved. Before then, I had heard about the cockfight epidemic in the Bahamas, but never witnessed it. My intention was to make a statement against cockfighting worldwide; however there was a sudden shift in the earth, which resulted in a shift in my work and the demise of Port au Prince, Haiti, a great 7.0 magnitude earthquake. With the earthquake came the media, skeptics, critics, death, and a demonstration of the resilience and faith of the Haitian people.

'YES WE CAN' will editorially examine and tell a story of the Haitian people, their faith, culture and spiritual beliefs, of both ancient and modern day. In this body of work, I address critics, both Haitian and International, who claim the tragedy is a punishment from God. I find it my duty as an artist, to engage the public in aspects of Haiti, such as faith, religion and culture, areas which have caused controversy due to bad stigma, lack of knowledge, and incorrect perception. Through my body of work, I hope to uplift a nation, rich in beliefs of both ancestral taboo and modern day norm. With its rich history dating back to Haitians in the Revolutionary War, Savannah, GA is the perfect venue to introduce my outlook of the Haitian story to the US.

Process

Influenced by the ever changing technology of making and distributing art in a contemporary society, this body of work is an exploration of today's digital innovations.

Like that of what we have come to know as traditional art, all of my images began as hand rendered graphite drawings, then scanned and colored using computer aided software. My style of drawing, use of line, and sense of composition are the driving forces behind the end product of my work. The computer is secondary, but has its importance; it has enabled me to use color in a complex layering system that I discovered through a thorough, well thought out experimentation process. This layering system mimics that of the layered thoughts, narratives and messages in my work. This has now become signature to the work I produce.

My work is outputted as a one of a kind image (1/1). I chose this approach because I want the work to be viewed outside the realm of "print reproduction". I enjoy the thought of having made an original, from a process invented to do the total opposite. My work should stand alone, like that of a traditional painting or drawing. In my opinion, the thought of multiples has a devaluing notion in both a monetary sense and the literal sense. My decision to explore digital media has more to do with the process of making my art, rather the reproduction of my work. I want my work to remain singular, solitary, and infertile.

With my new approach came new responsibilities as an artist. Authenticity, guaranteed life, sustainability, and archivability have been the most emphasized areas with my new work, second only to the actual creation of the work. The introduction of certificates of authenticity, learning and investment in a giclee printer, print processing, and study of various paper surfaces, have all allowed me to retain total control of how my images are produced and presented.

About the Artist

Educated at The Savannah College of Art and Design, Lavar Munroe (b.1982 Nassau, Bahamas) studied illustration, obtaining a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Summer '07). He has entered many competitions and exhibitions both in illustration and fine art; most of which have proven successful. His illustrations have been included in traveling exhibitions via the annual ASSOCIAZIONE CULTURALE TEATRIO Children's Book Competition hosted in Italy. The Teatrío traveling exhibit began in Chioggia, then traveled to cities in Japan, the United States, Mexico, Ethiopia, Portugal, and Finland.

His work also adorns the pages of publications such as The South Magazine, Creative Quarterly Magazine, How Magazine, Art Calendar Magazine, British American Bank Calendar to name few. He has also executed posters for Ja Jahannes' Plenty Good Room, The Bahamas International Film Festival, Ride for Hope Cancer Fundraiser (Eleuthera, Bahamas) and Christmas cards for the Humane Society (Nassau, Bahamas). He has exhibited his work in fine art galleries in the Bahamas, Atlanta GA, Savannah GA, New York, New Jersey, Raleigh NC, New Orleans, and Chicago, IL. His work are in prominent collections, both cooperate and private in Switzerland, the US and the Bahamas.

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