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In Recognition: Ebony G. Patterson's Multifaceted Practice Taps Beauty of Botanical World to Start Conversations About Visibility, Violence, and Survival

by VICTORIA L. VALENTINE on May 16, 2023 • 11:58 am

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Artist Ebony G. Patterson. | Photo by Frank Ishaman

ATTENDING ART SCHOOL in Jamaica, **Ebony G. Patterson** made a “classically inclined” painting that she didn’t love. Her undergraduate professor recognized that she was struggling and asked her why she was pursuing the medium in that style. “Ebony, is this really what you want to do?” he asked. “This is torture.” She knew he was right and agreed it was indeed torture. After he was gone, the artist said to herself, “I don’t want to do this” anymore.

Patterson shifted gears and hasn’t looked back. Studying in the United States, she earned an MFA in printing and drawing from Washington University in St. Louis, Mo. (2006). In the nearly two decades since, she has steadily built a highly regarded, multidisciplinary practice grounded in botanical beauty and substantive social issues. Now

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her “paintings” are three-dimensional, mixed-media collage works and her garden installations are complex spaces carpeted in flora, fauna, and brilliant color.

Her work has been showcased in numerous solo exhibitions at an international slate of galleries and museums, including Hales Gallery in New York; Monique Meloche Gallery in Chicago; Museum of the African Diaspora in San Francisco; Institute of Contemporary Art, San Jose; Contemporary Art Museum, St. Louis; Kunsthal Aarhus in Denmark; Pérez Art Museum Miami in Florida; Speed Art Museum in Louisville, Ky.; and Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University in Durham, N.C.

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In Recognition: Ebony G. Patterson's Multifaceted Practice Taps Beauty of Botanical World to Start Conversations About Visibility, Violence, and Survival

May 16, 2023

2023 Driskell Prize Winner: Ebony G. Patterson



[3:52 minutes] Ebony G. Patterson received the 2023 David C. Driskell Prize. She is the 18th recipient of the award, which recognizes “field-defining contributions to African American art.” | Video by High Museum of Art

On April 28, Patterson received the 2023 David C. Driskell Prize. The High Museum of Art in Atlanta, announced the distinguished prize and in a statement said Patterson was being recognized “for her multilayered works in a variety of media that contrast beautiful, lush imagery, color and texture with darker underlying themes addressing societal and political injustices.

The statement continued: “Her complex compositions, which at first may appear celebratory, draw the viewer in to discover deeper truths relating to race-based class issues, social division and political violence. These interrogations explore the legacies inherent in postcolonial spaces, often memorializing and honoring the lives of those who have been deemed socially invisible or ‘invisible.’”

“Ebony G. Patterson’s “complex compositions, which at first may appear celebratory, draw the viewer in to discover deeper truths relating to race-based class issues, social division and political violence.”

Patterson joins an impressive group of artists, curators, and scholars celebrated for their “field-defining contributions to African American art.” Previous recipients of the \$50,000 Driskell Prize include Huey Copeland,



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Amy Sherald, Naima Keith, Mark Bradford, Rashid Johnson, Valerie Cassel Oliver, and Kellie Jones. Patterson was honored in Atlanta at the High Museum's 18th annual Driskell Prize Gala.

In a video produced to accompany the prize, Patterson talked about how she found her artistic footing and left the "torture" behind.

"As much as there is all of this weight in the conversations that I am having when making the work, for me, there are even greater acts of pleasure. It is the joy in doing, in making, in discovering. That's the place that I sit when I'm making," the artist said. "I find that the trappings of beauty that I'm employing in the work become the moment to lure the person in—if they spend a little bit more time in the looking, that the work begins to reveal itself in complicated ways."

"As much as there is all of this weight in the conversations that I am having when making the work, for me, there are even greater acts of pleasure. It is the joy in doing, in making, in discovering. That's the place that I sit when I'm making." — Ebony G. Patterson

Teaser: Ebony G. Patterson at NYBG



[31 seconds] Ebony G. Patterson introduces her forthcoming exhibition at the New York Botanical Garden: "A lot of my work is around visibility and invisibility. How do I get people to look beneath the landscape?" | Video by NYBG

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Patterson divides her time between Kingston, Jamaica, where she was born, and Chicago, Ill. Last year, she was named co-artistic director (with Miranda Lash) of Prospect.6, the New Orleans biennial that will be staged over three months beginning in November 2024. She is the first artist ever selected for the role.

On May 27, "Ebony Patterson: ...things come to thrive...in the shedding...in the molting..." opens at the New York Botanical Garden. The exhibition will feature new sculptures, horticultural installations, and interventions with live plants. The site-specific works, "breathtaking and provocative displays of art and nature" are the result of a years-long engagement with the garden.

Patterson has conquered another milestone at the unique 250-acre venue—a National Historic Landmark and the largest garden in any U.S. city. The New York Botanical Garden described her as the "first artist to embed within the institution for an immersive residency." **CT**

Forthcoming, "Ebony Patterson: ...things come to thrive...in the shedding...in the molting..." is on view at New York Botanical Garden in Bronx, N.Y., from May 27-Sept. 17, 2023. The artist will be in conversation at the garden on May 25 with Thelma Golden, director and chief curator of the Studio Museum in Harlem

FIND MORE about Ebony G. Patterson on her website

FIND MORE Patterson presented a site-specific installation at the Studio Museum in 2016



LOU STOVALL'S STUDIO ASSISTANTS SHARE FOND MEMORIES OF WORKING WITH THE MASTER PRINTER: 'WE LOST ONE OF THE BEST SILKSCREEN ARTISTS IN THE WORLD'



CULTURE TYPE: THE MONTH IN BLACK ART, HERE'S WHAT HAPPENED IN MARCH 2023



Exhibition and artist spotlight: Ebony G. Patterson, ... to kiss a flower goodbye..., Hales New York

Hales Gallery

05:23

[5:23 minutes] Last year, Ebony G. Patterson presented "...to kiss a flower goodbye..." at Hales Gallery in New York. She discussed her practice and the solo exhibition featuring new works—large-scale embellished tapestries and mixed media paper collages. | Video by Hales Gallery

BOOKSHELF

"Ebony G. Patterson: ...while the dew is still on the roses..." (2018-2020) accompanied a traveling museum exhibition organized by Pérez Art Museum Miami in Florida. Described as "the most significant presentation of the artist's work to dates," the show made stops at Speed Art Museum in Louisville, Ky., and Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University in Durham, N.C. "Coffee, Rhum, Sugar & Gold: A Postcolonial Paradox" documents a group traveling exhibition that opened at the Museum of the African Diaspora in San Francisco (2020) featuring 10 Caribbean contemporary artists, including Ebony G. Patterson.

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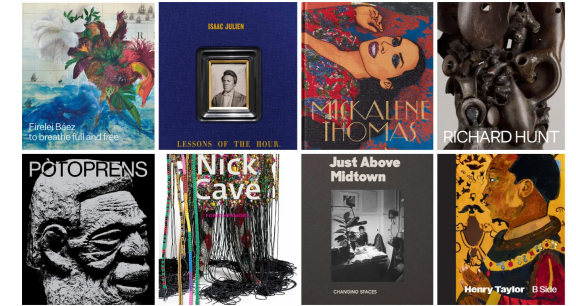


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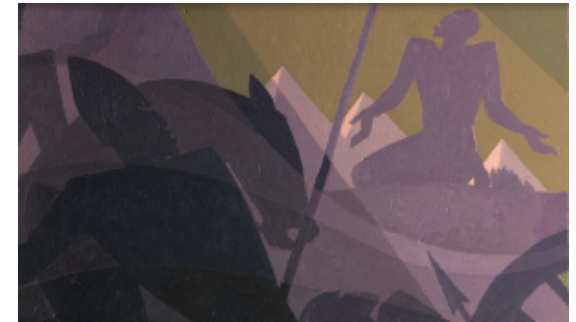
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