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## Black Artist, White World

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### **Abstract**

A homogeneous environment such as the art academy (and greater art world) limits non-white fine artists' abilities to innovate, to challenge, to subvert the status quo, to push society forward, and to do the social and political work that has been done historically. In addition, the art academy and art world have used the function of an implied white audience to create a status quo for the consumption and critique of fine arts. To deconstruct and work against this limitation in my own art, I use an intersectional approach to research and making: challenging dominant logics (such as the implied white audience), using personal narrative (such as memory) as a primary source, and contesting distortions (such as exclusion, stereotypes, and the devaluing and tokenization of minoritized experience).

BLACK ARTIST, WHITE WORLD  
by  
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B.F.A., University of North Carolina At Asheville, 2015

Thesis  
Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Fine Arts in Studio Arts.

Syracuse University  
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## **I. Excavating Identity & Holding “the white man’s bible”**

I was born in Orange, California, and spent six sunny years of my childhood in that region before being hauled across the United States to New York city and then to North Carolina. The differences between the South West, the North East, and the South East prompted my curiosity about history, and I began to read. After moving to North Carolina around the age of 13, I began to experience the tension of my assigned racial identity: a “light-skinned” African American (whose mother was an immigrant from North Africa and whose father was Black and Native American). It seemed the histories of my identities couldn’t be reconciled and that I would forever straddle incompatible narratives. It would take many years of reading, reflection, and mentoring others until I could be comfortable with my own skin-- being that it was simultaneously too brown and not brown enough.

For most of high school, my family lived in a very small town in Harnett County, North Carolina. It’s a small agricultural community of about nine-thousand people located about forty miles from NC’s capital, Raleigh. Notably, we were also about fifteen minutes away from a Ku Klux Klan office previously located in Benson. When my family moved to Dunn in 2003, it was like entering a history channel documentary. I remember the bizarre realization that the white and black populations of the town were literally divided by the railroad tracks (and interstate) that intersect the city. It was even more disconcerting to learn many of my teachers had attended and taught at the segregated schools in the area until Triton High opened in the 1980’s and finally desegregated (at least in claim) the education system of the surrounding rural communities. Living, learning, and working in North Carolina (after living in California and New York) made me hyper-aware of the history of racism and slavery in the Americas. Because of this shift in geographic location, I realized how much work, in terms of learning from this history, there is left to be done.

During these formative years in North Carolina, spanning the years 2003-2016, I absorbed a multitude of images and experiences that ensconced the fragmented narrative of race within a modern societal dialogue. These images and experiences include (but are not limited to): the abandoned Cotton Gin factory I saw during the bus ride to school; the romanticized historical plantation houses (in some of which my peers and teachers lived) with the slave shacks and narratives being forgotten--claimed by kudzu, ivy, swamp, and time; the police violence (both in school against black students, and on the streets against black citizens); the racist political pamphlets, illustrated with lynched black men and women, left in mailboxes by the KKK; the confederate flags on cars, trucks, shirts, government buildings, and in stores; the civil war battle grounds and memorials thanking the brave soldiers who died to preserve “a way of life;” the landmarks, such as the market square in Fayetteville where slaves were sold, and statues commemorating civil war heroes such as Robert E. Lee.

The most memorable and culminating experience took place in 2015 while working for artist Clarissa Sligh. She’d received a box of hate literature collected by the Montana Human Rights Network. It was Clarissa’s intention to turn the pages of the material into paper crane, effectively transforming the hate into hope. In the process of assisting her with her practice I ended up holding a copy of “The White Man’s Bible”



written by Ben Klassen in 1981 and reprinted in 2005 (three years before Barak Obama's presidency) by the Creativity Movement, a white supremacist group.

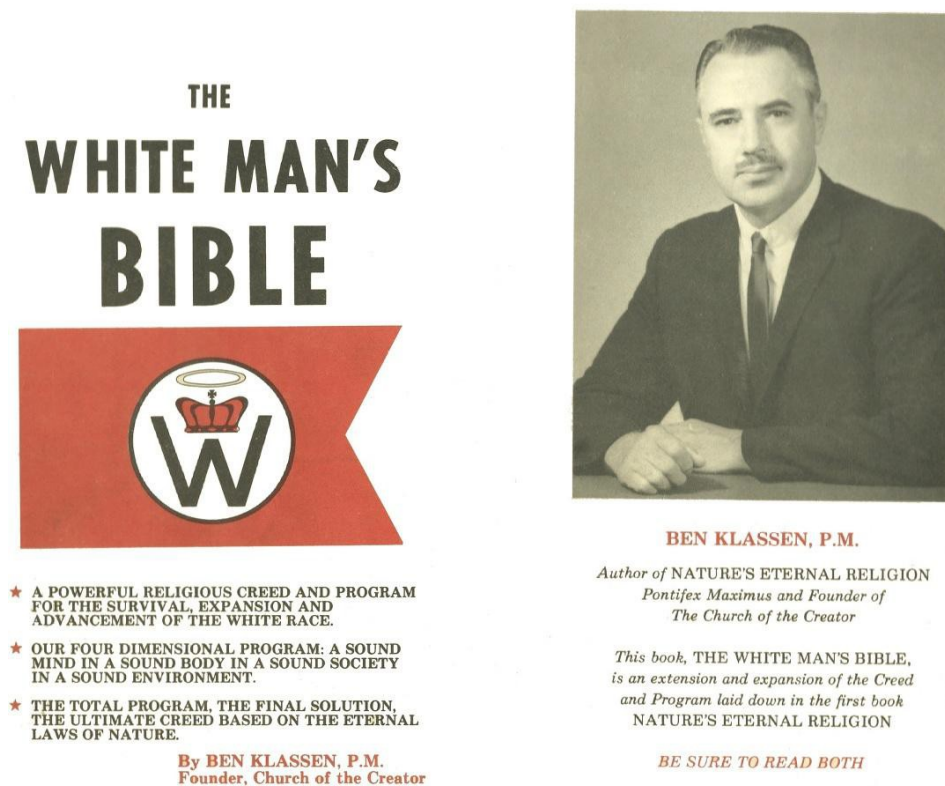


Figure 1. *The White Man's Bible*. Klassen. 1981. Creativityalliance.com. Web. 2018.

Here was all the proof anyone needed. How could anyone deny its existence? In my hand I'd held a paperback book, the only book in my many years of avid reading to ever have caused a visceral reaction. I wanted to vomit. I was scared, I felt unsafe--hunted. The cover was smooth, the black text of the title "the white man's bible," perfectly flat against the pristine whiteness of the cover's background. The red flag of an emblem depicted a crowned and haloed capital 'w.' Beneath the flag were 3 red stars marking topics of interest (such as "the final solution," and "the survival, expansion and advancement of the white race") included in the text within. Until that moment, I had always had a friendly relationship with books-- they imparted knowledge, freely and (mostly) without judgement or hostility. But this book was a living thing in my hands. It seemed to squirm and burn and bleed infection. I'd had the thought, and perhaps the need, to destroy it. However, this recognition and confrontation would become part of a larger process within my own experience. And, on some level I realized that even as I felt attacked. The comments from white friends, peers, and professors buzzed in my mind: "we're in a post racial society," "black people aren't targeted by police," "you're too sensitive," "that's just the way it used to be," "what is violence against black bodies?"

This book, this physical proof of racism and hate justified my years of doubting a system that, from the outside, appeared equitable and democratic.

It was a strange and important moment for me in which I finally held tangible evidence of the hate that seemed so elusive, and denied so often and expertly, that it was easy to think of myself as overreacting. That book solidified the archive of image and experience I'd built up for years relating to race and made me realize how important image, story, and scholarship is in the reclamation of minoritized narratives.

## **II. Fragmented Narrative/ Controlling Images/ Taught and Bought Image Histories**

As a student in the academy where Black women are too few—and an artist of color inserted into an art world comprised of predominantly white institutions, studios, galleries, and museums—I am unavoidably affected by the legacy of controlling images and other lingering preconceptions about who art is *by*, *of*, and *for*, along with residual constraints on the way peers/(and professors) interact with our work. My experiences in Art and Art History classes left me with the idea that there are two strands of Art History: Western art, and Other art.

Art history survey is a common class or set of classes required of many Bachelor of Science (and Bachelor of Fine Art) students. Such survey courses are meant to give students an overall view of art history and to aid students' construction and understanding of their own historical context within the timeline of art. Western art history survey courses have a habit of spanning centuries in an accelerated overview, therefore making a nuanced look at art history difficult. Because of this broad approach and the relatively short amount of time per classes, faculty must decide on the most important works and art movements to cover during a semester. A survey class may start anywhere from prehistoric cave paintings to the early Christian art of Europe. In any case, most Western art history survey classes start with European artworks more often than not. Sometimes, during the semester there is a visual representation of a Black person in a painting. However, the history and implications of such rare glimpses are typically left undiscussed and the class moves on. It's important to understand why this kind of glossing over can act as a form of social violence within an art academy.

By ignoring the way in which art classes are set up to favor histories which uphold the status quo, educational institutions perpetuate the canonical "universal white audience." This is the implied idea that all fine art in the Western world is created by, of, and for white people, wherein racialized creators, subjects, and viewers can participate as extant occurrences and where their artworks are categorized by their hegemonic racial description (i.e. African-American Art, Latinx Art, Pacific Island Art). This brief illustration of survey art history courses is an example in microcosm of the art world as a system that, in its past, relied heavily upon controlling images of minoritized groups. The art academy both influences and is influenced by the history of images it chooses to communicate and to support. This is a disservice to both students/artists of color and white students/artists as well. While there are contemporary Black painters who do paint portraits and likenesses of Black women, I believe that meaningful and considerate inclusion of minoritized identities in fine art should be pursued to a greater degree. Kimberlé Crenshaw writes

Tokenistic, objectifying, voyeuristic inclusion is at least as disempowering as complete exclusion. The effort to politicize violence against women will do little to address Black and other minority women if their images are retained simply to magnify the problem rather than to humanize their experience. (Crenshaw 1261)

Specifically, instead of non-black artists creating images of Black women, and possibly furthering the idea of Black women as objects to be acted upon or used for profit, Black women need -- and have thus begun-- to craft a new lexicon of images. Contemporary artists Amy Sherald, Deborah Roberts, Beverly McIver, Mickalene Thomas, and Wangechi Mutu are some who contribute to this new legend.

However, large scale success of this translation of meaning would require that our experience, knowledge, and labor be valued very differently within a world that typically singles out artists of color and cherry-picks from the art spaces reserved for hyphenated artists including African-American and Asian-American artists. These tokenized artists then must create art in service to an implied white audience if they are to be exalted in any respect. Considering the absence of positive representation of Black women within art history has led me to the conclusion that historical and contemporary art is created with the understanding that art is for white people. This seems to be a simple analysis; however, this ideology creates prevalent problems and requires a deeper exploration. By making artwork for Black women, I contest the "implied white audience" by pursuing an aesthetic of anti-subordination which disrupts and even destroys dominant perceptions of Black female existence; and the creation of new images of Black women (including my own experience as such), are the foundation of my creative methodology and studio practice.

When I paint, I am constantly aware of and considering how images have been created historically and how Black people have been traditionally represented. Painting traditionally, in the Western context, has a long history of being created *by* white people, featuring representations *of* white people, and being marketed *for* white people. And the history of controlling images and stereotypes. One of the main reasons I paint is to contend this history, and to make at least a small dent in this legacy. I believe the use of my own experience is critical because it allows me to convey narrative to an audience that would otherwise be locked out. My personal narrative is the avenue I use to approach the history of racial violence and fragmented narrative of family while photography informs my practice. How do I not further this visual violence? How can I pay homage to the sacrifice of my enslaved ancestors using visual language and reclamation of agency and narrative? How can I make art that does all this and still enjoy the process? These are questions I consider while creating works and because of this, the easiest thing is to put a brush to canvas. It's the planning and the aftermath of the art which makes the process exhausting.

Indeed, a fundamental task of black critical thinkers has been the struggle to break with the hegemonic modes of seeing, thinking, and being that block our capacity to see ourselves oppositionally, to imagine, describe, and invent ourselves in ways that are liberatory (bell hooks 2).

Images have the potential to challenge dominating logics, to encourage social change, and to shed light on problematic aspects of social structures and systems of oppression. Conversely, they can and have often worked in strategies like propaganda that work to disseminate racist caricatures influencing and cementing negative social perceptions of minoritized groups. In *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, Patricia Hill Collins expands on the concept of the pathologizing effect of simplified and minoritized imagery. She states that controlling images create racialized logics of minoritized individuals.

... by meshing smoothly with systems of race, class, and gender oppression, they provide effective ideological justifications for racial oppression, the politics of gender subordination, and the economic exploitation inherent in capitalist economics. (Collins 84)

Controlling images are like stereotypes in that they exaggerate and oversimplify characteristics. However, unlike stereotypes which are obvious and may appear to some as humorous or even harmless, controlling images work far more covertly. Their



Figure 2. *Aunt Jemima Advertisement*. c 1940. Mentalfloss.com. Web. 2018.



Figure 3. Unknown. *Aunt Jemima Product*. Illustration. *auntjemima.com*. Web. 2018.

persistence in society through the consistent use and recycling by social institutions creates harmful expectations of minoritized peoples while further justifying oppression. I specifically look at two examples of controlling images of Black women—the Mammy caricature and the Jezebel caricature—by comparing both historical and modern examples.

The Mammy is a controlling image that works to “influence Black maternal behavior” (Collins 73). She is most often viewed as dark-skinned, rotund, and jolly—happy to care for the white family to whom she is “employed.” She is a remnant image from slavery projected onto the modern Black female domestic worker especially during the early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. The Mammy character is a fiction, an economic asset of

the state perpetuating the idea of Blacks as source of cheap, exploitable labor that invokes the social imaginary of the “good ole’ days” of slavery.

In the 1940s Aunt Jemima advertisement pictured in Figure 2, we see Aunt Jemima, the Mammy mascot of this pancake brand, gleaming with joy that she has successfully fulfilled her role in providing a service to further convenience the lives of her employers or masters. Aunt Jemima is a caricatured stand-in for the house slave and, subsequently, the domestic worker. The white woman in the advertisement exclaims that the ready-made mix is akin to having Aunt Jemima cooking for her. This slave-in-a-box idea creates an image that is working double time. For the white audience, represented by the white woman who interacts with Aunt Jemima, the comfort evoked by the domestic, subservient, and sexless Aunt Jemima further cements the racial hierarchy of a white supremacist patriarchy. In the year 2019, you can still see the remnants of this image at a local grocery store. If the image persists, then it can be inferred that the dominant group logics from which this image was birthed must also persist.

The Jezebel caricature is another example of a controlling image. It is one that hypersexualizes Black women and therefore reinforces a facet of the Black female as object. Under this image, Black women’s sexuality is pathologized, further justifying sexual exploitation and objectification (Collins). Sarah Baartman, known in nineteenth-century Europe as the “Hottentot Venus,” was a South African woman shown around Europe as a curio spectacle. European’s found her curvaceous form simultaneously grotesque and erotic. This contradictory lust is captured in the ethnographic art and



Figure 4. Charon, Louis François. *Les Curieux en extase, ou les cordons de souliers*, 1815. Lithograph. 8"x11"

The British Museum.



Figure 5. Wally Léon de, pinx. *Histoire naturelle des mammifères avec des figures originales, coloriées, dessinées d'après des animaux vivants*. 1824. Lithograph. 20" x 12.5" Artstor.



illustrations created of her during that time. In both nineteenth-century renditions, Baartman's butt is the focus.

The caricature of Baartman in Figure 5 depicts a sexually available Sarah Baartman as her rear is directly in the middle of the drawing. *La Belle Hottentot*, a French print, shows her bottom "centered" by the directing gaze of the figures surrounding Baartman's likeness. In each image, Baartman is the object of curiosity, desire, and disgust. Her nakedness is a vulnerability which leaves her open to the gaze of any passerby, as in Figure 4. The Jezebel controlling image invokes Black women as sexually available and promiscuous.

Although the exploitation and visual representation of Sarah Baartman as the Hottentot Venus—another form of the Jezebel caricature—is deeply fetishizing and insulting, modern images and fine art evoking this controlling image nevertheless persist. For example, in Jean Paul Goude's *Jungle Fever* collection, the fetishized bodies of Black women are praised as fine art, even as they invoke the cartoonish ethnographic characters of the nineteenth and twentieth century. In "Carolina Beaumont," a Black woman arches her back and sticks out her butt to imitate the posture and form of Sarah Baartman. She is framed by the white foam eruption of the wine bottle and perfectly balances a wine glass on her rear showing that she can be domestically useful in a variety of ways.



Figure 6. Jean Paul Goude. *Carolina Beaumont*, 1976. Photo, 11" x 9"

By analyzing early examples of controlling images, I hope to establish a brief history of foundational imagery crafted of Black women in the United States. Analysis of this lexicon has also given name to the pockets of existence prepared for me as a Black

woman in the United States. I've included this sociological art background to further contextualize my thought process and creative methods. Although there are many more examples, I must recognize the limit of this paper's scope. Image history is vast and there are many avenues through which search. With further time and research, I hope to widen the scope of my artistic practice to critically analyze controlling images of both Black women and men in image history. The creation and control of imagery is "central to the maintenance of any system of domination" (hooks 2), and so the creation of new imagery that reimagines the experience of Black women and men, particularly in Western society, is crucial. Further, it is important that Black artists and viewers and collectors be the central participants in this re-creation so that continued simplification and stereotyping may be eschewed.

### III. Practicing Studio

My studio practice focuses on the cultural power of images and my social responsibility as a Black female artist and student. Intersectionality-based inquiry asks us to use a matrix approach to thinking and knowing, rather than solely adhering to one form of intellectual labor over another. My way of approaching the problem of representation within art and the art academy is to have a studio practice that involves both making and research (including visual, observational, reading, writing, and experiential). The two processes influence each other and make it possible for me to connect and articulate (visually and orally) abstract ideas. The three series I discuss next demonstrate my artistic practice and how it connects narrative with a visual process.

The series, *Dear Sister* began as a way to break my habits of painting (such as using the figure, using a limited and dark color palette, and working objectively), to incorporate experiments with medium, and to explore my own feelings about politics and identity. Because dominant logics can be and are sometimes internalized, I abandoned figure painting in order to deal with any colonized habits of thinking. Within the art academy, the reminder to non-white students that abstract expressionism is the realm of white men is often given by the canons of recognized art history. However, it is also a style of painting celebrated for being an interpretation of identity or emotion. In this series of paintings, figurative language gives form to abstract expressionist compositions as I cope with frustration within the art institution's dominating logics. Logics such as the "add and stir" approach to the "diversity problem," where Black students are added without any regards to the structural dynamics contributing to an academically and (sometimes) socially inhospitable environment. One contributing factor is a predominantly white faculty and the inability of white professors to conceptually critique Black identity work in a way that doesn't reinforce hegemonic epistemologies of creation and value. Another problem further considers the lack of diversity represented by faculty and student populations. Institutions taking the additive approach to diversity promote the logic of tokenization where Black students are added to augment the experience of the white students. Rather than seeking to add students, art programs should critically review the system they utilize for ways in which it harbors and reinforces racialized oppression.

*Dear Sister* reflects on the institutional barriers of art academies as well as the

overwhelming task of situating myself- as a non-white artist-within an image of history that excludes and degrades Black women and Black womanhood. On each canvas, texture combines with color and form to convey a sense of violence, sadness, joy, and confusion. “How do I navigate a space that wasn’t created for people like me?” It’s a question that I’ve often revisited-- during class when a white professor reads the word “nigger” from a Black theory text; when academic retaliation is taken because I refuse to be tokenized in a creative writing class; and when I see “art,” which blatantly objectifies Black women, created by a white man and exhibited in a prestigious gallery. The constant reminders of otherness within the self-congratulatory “radical” system of the art institution are something I must reconcile with my desire to be a maker. This process of continual self-adjustment and self-preservation in a space that is meant to promote growth simultaneously fuels and stifles my work. I frequently reflect on the possible work I would make in an institution which provided an equitable environment for both white and non-white students.

My attempt to live this fantasy in my studio resulted in colorful abstract expressionist paintings. Frustration takes the form of scraping as color tries to make its way into the tight spaces of texture. Gestures are a language of their own, a slash



*Figure 7. Student, Louise Bahia Thompson Fly, 2017. Oil on canvas. 30"x30".*



*Figure 8. Student, Louise Bahia Thompson. Don't Touch My Hair. Oil on canvas. 2017. 30"x40".*

references both anger and the acknowledgment of erasure. Stretch and distortion pointing to the daily challenge of trying to fit into an inappropriate space. Colors begin to covet meaning: Pale greens next to the inky purples communicate bordered and stunted growth where resources or pigment begin to break apart as they stretch and try to find a clear path to unfurl (Figure 8). Flat spaces, which break up the highly textured surface, remind me of holding the “white man’s bible.” A moment where my experiences, thoughts, and knowledge, fragmented but real, became a fabric joined and expansive. The turbulence is a venting session, it’s the “meeting after the meeting,” where I rant, cry, and yell about the micro and macro aggression experienced while living in a white world.



The paintings of *Dear Sister* are accompanied by small, handwritten notes including anecdotal comments specific to the experience of my sisters, my friends, and myself--and to Black women. The writing becomes just as important as the image, as I further reference propaganda and advertisement art. The notes are letters of loving reminders and affirmation where “dear sister” references both my literal sisters and the Black women with whom I have close relationships (where we refer to each other as ‘sister’ or ‘sistah’). The loving notes stand in juxtaposition to the turbulent abstract as catharsis made visual-- the few moments of relief when we Black women lean on one another, vent, and say “i feel you, sistah.”



Figure 9. Student, Louise Bahia Thompson  
Notes, 2017. Ink on paper. 3"x5".

My most recent series, *Mythos* can be summarized as an archaeology of memory, story, and social history. I utilize family photos, personal reference images, and historical images to create visual narratives of the people I know and of those who have affected my life. These works take the form of oil paintings in varying scale. I create all scenes in the series using three elements: 1. figures (people I know etc.); 2. A historical visual element of how Black Americans have been portrayed in art history (mainly lynched/hanged figures; and, 3. Landscape and its elements' (desert, sky, and tree) relationship to time and experience.

Against the backdrop of desert, an inhospitable place where anything can happen, scenes of people (aware of but unbothered by their environment) are arranged to create a new version of my personal history. The scenes do not directly correspond to reality, but rather represent possibilities of reality. *Mythos* is an interrogation of my knowledge of my own personal history and of its fragmentation. By letting the finished (represented by painted areas) and unfinished (represented by areas of drawing) exist simultaneously within the work, and combining the past, and possible unknowns, with the present I draw new lanes of memory. My goal is to give the possibility of distinctly different experiences to Black viewers and white viewers by manipulating the combination of personal history with that of Black history. I consider the use of inclusion and exclusion to reflect the structure of the art academy and the broader “art world,” where works can be viewed by anyone but the monetary value, display (and in some cases fee to view or experience), and institutional housing (such as a collection, gallery, museum etc.) delineate a specific socio-economic (and conversely, racial) fencing around art works.

This “separate-but-equal” tactic is symbolized by the lynched figures present in some of the paintings. The lynched figure is intended as a reminder for Black viewers

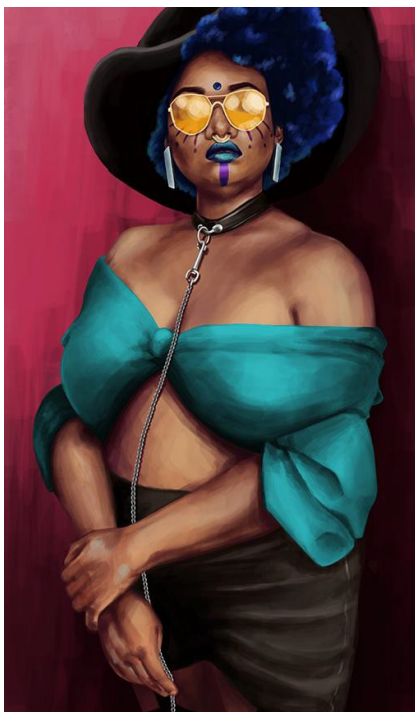


Figure 12. Student, Louise Bahia Thompson *Rushelle*, 2017. Digital. 12"x24".

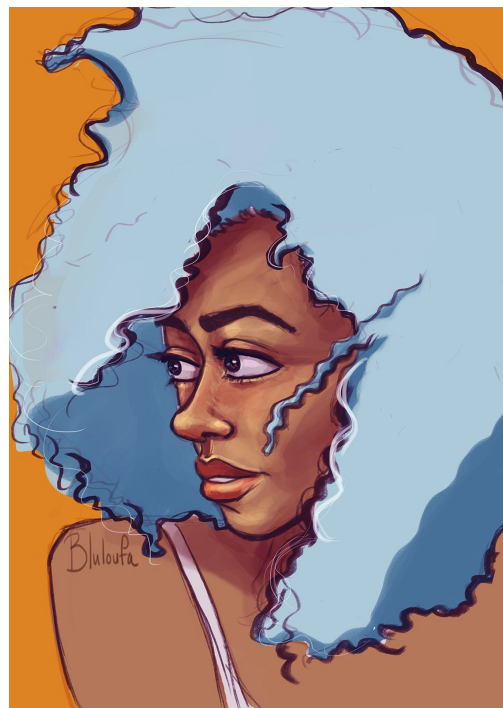


Figure 13. Student, Louise Bahia Thompson *Blue-Haired-Bombshell*, 2018. Digital. 12"x18".

(not that one is needed), of the victimization and sacrifice of our ancestors. It's the visual representation of historical communal trauma that every non-white, socially aware Western citizen copes with daily. For white viewers, the lynched figure too may be a reminder-- that their history and present is mottled with the violent and inexcusable acts practiced so that white society may continue to profit. The lynched figure is not an arbitrary choice. It is a visual-artifact of the reality of living Brown-skinned in America. It's a combination of tension between the past and present where the past represents "a world that no longer exists" and the present represents "a world which still harbors the habits and practices of a racially violent past" however politically-corrected and power-washed it may be in certain books. The lynched figure represents a stand against society's erasure and synchronized societal amnesia of violence against Brown and Black people at the hands of its white citizens. *Black Woman=Radical Subject* approaches the subjectivity of Black women with mid-scale, digital and oil painted portraits of Black women. This series has the simplest of desires behind it: to re-represent the Black female image. The project is an anti-subordination to dominant perceptions of Black womanhood (as solely strong, sacrificial, and masculine); and is the creation of new, real or imagined, examples of Black women. While most of my work is done on canvas with oil paint, this series is completely digital, and many times live-streamed to a mostly Black audience online. I've been able to cultivate an audience by working with organizations, such as The Cookout and Black Girl Gamers which are aimed at creating spaces for people of color and black women online. Live streaming is a form of research and connection within this series where an online platform allows me to share the process of creation and to interact with audience in real-time.



Figure 10. Student Louise Bahia Thompson  
*Dreamscape #1*, 2019. Oil on panel. 4"x6".



Figure 11. Student, Louise Bahia Thompson  
*Dreamscape #2*, 2019. Oil and charcoal on  
canvas. 12"x14".

The images range from simple sketches to fully realized paintings, the work is more graphic based than my other series, but a painterly flair remains in different ratios. The graphical nature is important for this work in which the use of simple layouts, which can be printed in both small- and large-scale form, can be likened to the form of propaganda and advertisement art. I see this project as an advertisement for diverse representation of real people. My hope and goal for *Black Woman = Radical Subject* is to broaden the portrait range to include different ages, gender expression, and ability so that it contends the exclusionary history of oil painting (regarding women of color) and challenges the Eurocentric and colonized standards of how art should be made, and who counts as appropriate subjects.

The multimedia approach of *Black Woman = Radical Subject* (where live streaming and connection with my audience becomes part of the work) attempts to address the issue of privilege in relation to the production of imagery in a "white-supremacist-capitalist-patriarchy" (hooks) where images of Black women in art (and specifically portraiture) have historically been represented as property, less-than women, overly sexualized, or excluded altogether within certain art histories and timelines (and with very few exceptions). The use of digital media in tandem with the classical connotations of oil painting is my way of stepping toward an inclusive future by using technology.

#### IV. Conclusion

A system such as the art academy, which limits the experience and expression of minoritized identities also limits the system's ability to evolve and to remain contemporary. As a Black woman in a predominantly white art institution, I continually must negotiate historical and contemporary traumas. I must navigate my way through an institution in which I am othered by academic topics, peers, professors, administrative structures etc. Art holds the potential to challenge dominating logics, to encourage social change, and to shed light on problematic aspect of our social structures and environments. In turn, artists have always been the makers of culture in

the forms of text, music, images, objects and various other media. And, images (two-dimensional or otherwise) have always held the power to shape beliefs of a people, a nation, and ways of life. Within the larger context of the art history, the tension between the status quo and the desire to evolve art has fueled my research. My artistic practice combines the need to create, recreate, inspect and challenge a history in which minoritized individuals have had little agency or control over their own image identities.

As of now, there hasn't been enough deconstruction of the basic structure—which has included the simultaneous historical usage of paintings to disparage a people and to spark social change and revolution and an implied white audience for which art has been and is made. In order to break away from the tokenization framework—where artists of color are cherry picked and exemplified as demonstrating diversity and inclusion within the art world—which has stagnated, I paint for a non-white audience.

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