

Black Artists through HISTORY

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BLACK ARTISTS THROUGH HISTORY, LESSON 4

Portrait of Dr. Olivia J. Hooker, by Ajamu Kojo, 2017

1- This painting is a portrait of Dr. Olivia J. Hooker, who was an American psychologist and professor. She was one of the last known survivors of the Tulsa race massacre of 1921, and the first African-American woman to enter the U.S. Coast Guard in February 1945, during WWII.

2- Olivia Juliette Hooker was born in Oklahoma 1915, and died in New York's White Plains in 2018, at 103 years old. Notice how Ajamu painted her with a peaceful face, while her head is looking up with a proud smile.

4- On his art methodology, Ajamu says: "Imagine the whitest white or the warmth of the Sun, serving as the glue that binds the underpainting together. Then imagine adding green or blue; the feeling of a cool breeze against a freshly cut lawn. You take these things and envelope them in story, then you allow your audience to receive it however it comes."

Activity:

After studying the portrait of Dr. Olivia Hooker, and understanding the mixed media Ajamu uses, print the B&W outline and color it to match the artist's rendering -or in your own style.

THE BLACK WALL STREET: his most recent work, an exhibit that showcases multiple oil paintings of African-Americans donning attire of an era where the black business community of Tulsa, Oklahoma, once thrived. Here are a few paintings from the exhibit at The Sheen Center in NYC:



Black Blood, No.1: In the spirit of John, Loula & Joanna Williams family, Entrepreneurs. 2017. Mischtechnik on linen canvas. 6'x8'.



Black Blood, No.2: In the spirit of J.B. Stradford, Attorney. 2017. Mischtechnik on linen canvas. 48"x36".



Black Blood, No.3: In the spirit of Mary Elizabeth Jones Parrish, 2017. Mischtechnik on linen canvas. 48"x36".



Black Gold: Premonition. 2017. Pastel, Charcoal & gold leaf work on Stonehenge paper. 45 1/2"x36 1/2"



Black Blood, No.5: In the spirit of Mrs. Dora Wells, Businesswoman. 2017 Mischtechnik on linen canvas. 48"x24"



Black Blood, No.6: In the spirit of Sam & Lucy Mackey, Progressives; Real Estate. 2017. Mischtechnik on linen canvas. 6'x8'



Black Gold: Portrait of Dr. Olivia J. Hooker: first African-American woman to enter the U.S. Coast Guard, February 1945. Mischtechnik on linen canvas, 48"x48"



Facts about Ajamu Kojo Chioke Walker, born in Little Rock, AR.

1- Ajamu grew up in a large family (1 of 5 siblings) and lots of cousins. Ajamu recalls all the activities he did with his siblings and cousins when they

were young, including: martial arts, dance, violin, and participation in a summer laureate program in performing arts.

2- Ajamu's mom is a teacher and his father was an attorney. His father was involved in Black activist organizations as a young person. They both encouraged him in the arts. He moved to New York in 1997.

3- In interviews, he speaks about police brutality and rampant racism in the current election cycle.

4- He always has pride and respect for his heritage. "I understand that I come from people that were brought here, and I also come from people that were already here, before Europeans were here". He comes from "proud Black Americans"

5- "it is going to make society better If you could understand where people are coming from."

6- He often speaks about Black Wall Street in response to racist claims that Black people can never build community and businesses and has an entire gallery show dedicated to its history and people that were killed there, and the ones who survived it, such as Dr. Hooker.

7- Ajamu considers artists as "healers"; "they can teach and prevent. If we are conscious of what is around us, and we are making a proclamation or we are sharing, or holding a mirror onto society.. then it is a good thing!"



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