

## Taj Matumbi



Taj Matumbi (\*1994) was born and raised in Chico, California, and now lives and works in Madison, Wisconsin.

*"History, pop culture, urban folklore, and improvisation drive my work as an image maker. I'm interested in how this source material translates to shape, text, and color that coalesce into meaning within abstract fields. In recent paintings, I blend formal abstraction with poorly rendered figures that recall my primary school days - an intentionally naive and self-taught drawing approach that allows my subject matter to more fluidly inhabit both real and imagined worlds."*

*The work in my exhibition titled **Rise and Shine** stems from a curiosity around formal and figurative abstraction, which I use to investigate real and imagined biographies, including my own. My process is driven by a shifting cooperation between intuitive gesture and intentional action, further guided by formal and material restraints that lead me to arrive at unexpected outcomes and conclusions.*

*During the early years of the pandemic, I started sketching figures loosely copied from drawings made in my adolescent years. This practice led to deeper conceptual questioning and motif development on the subject of representation and identity. For example, the series of works on paper titled 'Das Boot' explores American exceptionalism and the common expression, "pull yourself up by your bootstraps." In more recent paintings, I depict characters reminiscent of 18th-century royalty, re-imagining ruling class and court figures. Works such as 'Chariot' (shown above) and 'Lighten Up' address the erasure of individuals historically and still today within the dominant White narrative."*

- Taj Matumbi, 2024

Taj Matumbi's work has been exhibited throughout the US and is included in the permanent collections of the Montgomery Museum of Art in Montgomery, AL; the Paul R. Jones Museum of Art in Tuscaloosa, AL; the Wiregrass Museum in Dothan, AL; and the LSU Museum of Art in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

## Education

- 2018-21 MFA University of Wisconsin-Madison, Wisconsin
- 2018 Post Baccalaureate, Maharishi International University, Fairfield, Iowa
- 2013-18 BFA in Painting and Ceramics Maharishi International University, Fairfield, Iowa

## Solo Exhibitions

- 2024 *Rise and Shine*, Maus Contemporary, Birmingham, Alabama
- 2023 *Thrown*, Art Lit Lab, Bridge Work Program, Madison, Wisconsin  
*Hot House*, Museum of Wisconsin Art, Saint Kate's, Milwaukee, Wisconsin
- 2022 *Westword*, Maus Contemporary, Birmingham, Alabama  
*Camouflage and Cologne*, UW - Madison School of Ed Gallery, Madison, Wisconsin
- 2021 *Self Portrait Within Parallel Planes* - MFA Thesis Exhibition, Madison, Wisconsin
- 2020 *The Fire Next Time* - MA Exhibition, Madison, Wisconsin
- 2018 *Space Cowboy*, Wedge Center of Art Fairfield, Iowa

## Group Exhibitions

- 2024 *Bridge Work*, Allen Priebe Gallery, UW - Oshkosh, Oshkosh, Wisconsin
- 2022 *Change is God-Take Root Among the Stars: Black Abstraction in the Midwest*, SooVAC, Minneapolis, Minnesota  
*Fictive Realities*, Overture Galleries, Madison, Wisconsin  
*Black Expressions: 50 Years of Black Student Artists*, 1925 Gallery, Madison, Wisconsin
- 2021 *Shit Art Show #4*, Shit Art Club, Los Angeles, California  
*Are We There Yet?*, Levee Contemporary, Princeton, Wisconsin  
*Moving Inland*, 100state Gallery, Madison, Wisconsin  
*New Space*, Koplín Del Rio, Seattle, Washington  
*Darker Than Blue*, Maus Contemporary, Birmingham, Alabama  
*A Space of One's Own*, 100state Gallery, Madison, Wisconsin

- 2020 *Steamy Art 4 A Cold Climate*, Stateline Distillery, Madison, Wisconsin  
*Sticks and Stones*, Art Lofts Gallery, Madison, Wisconsin
- 2019 *It's Time For Dinner*, Art Lofts Gallery, Madison, Wisconsin  
*What Now?*, Art Lofts Gallery, Madison, Wisconsin
- 2018 *2-D Group Show*, Art Lofts Gallery, Madison, Wisconsin
- 2017 *BFA Thesis Show*, Unity Gallery, Fairfield Iowa

### Collections

**Paul R. Jones Museum**, Tuscaloosa, Alabama  
**LSU Museum of Art**, Baton Rouge, Louisiana  
**Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts**, Montgomery  
**Wiregrass Museum of Art**, Dothan, Alabama

### Academic Appointments

- 2018 Maharishi International University, Iowa
- 2016 Traditional Japanese Pottery Internship  
with Master Masaaki Nishimura, Awaji Shima, Japan

### Honors & Awards

- 2020-21 Advanced Opportunity Fellow, School of Education, UW-Madison, Wisconsin
- 2019-20 Patterson Art Graduate Student Fellowship, Madison, Wisconsin
- 2018-19 Advanced Opportunity Fellow, School of Education, UW-Madison, Wisconsin

### Bibliography and Press

- 2020 *Art of State Street* <https://vimeo.com/481714772>

## Artist Lectures

2020 *The Art of State Street: Politics, Policing & Protest*, UW- Madison Center for Humanities  
Madison, Wisconsin

## Public Art Projects/ Collaboration

2023 *Madison Utility Box Program*, Madison, Wisconsin  
Artists Talk Mediator, Romano Johnson, Artworking and Art Lit Lab, Madison, Wisconsin

2021 *LA's Inferno*, limited print edition, Tandem Press, Madison, Wisconsin

2020 *Boxcar Bust*, Overture Center Public Mural Project, Madison, Wisconsin