

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 work *Das Boot* (shown on left), comprised of twenty individual elements, 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* and *Lighten Up* (see hereunder) address the erasure of individuals historically and still today within the dominant White narrative.

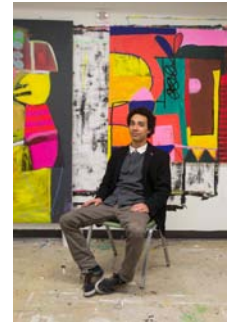


- Taj Matumbi, January 2024



"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."

My identity forces me to live in between place and space where the imaginary and the real collide. In the series *Self Portrait within Parallel Planes*, I paint interlocking and overlapping figures that draw into question the boundaries between individual and collective space. Over the last four years, I have developed a painting vernacular made up of iconography that falls between these two junctions.



In exploring *inbetweenness*, duality of self and the multiple emerged as conceptual parameters for this exhibition. The multiple is a constant change that affects us all, but on a more personal level as a biracial person, I subconsciously and consciously project a version of myself that is fitting to the context of a space. Some refer to this as code-switching or even “passing” which leaves the individual between a space of reality and fiction.



I delve into repetition, motif, and movement through the framework of the multiple to explore narratives surrounding my biography, shadows of myself, and *inbetweenness*. I grew up skateboarding from a young age in Northern California. Skateboarding was one of my first forms of self-expression. It taught me skills and gave me tools that would later transfer to my painting process. As a skater, I learned the importance of commitment, style, and speed. I approach painting the same way I approached skateboarding, but instead of doing a hundred kickflips, I make multiple versions of the same painting, striving for consistency while embracing variation, in the way each landed kickflip looks both different and the same.

I often feel *othered* in any given space due to my background and identity, which often contradict assumptions. While I’ve enjoyed many privileges like studying abroad in India or going to grad school for fine art, I also grew up on welfare, and would sometimes busk by doing skateboard tricks for people at my local farmers’ market so my brothers and I could scrounge up enough money for burritos. These are a few biographical examples that highlight the paradoxical nature of my existence.

These contradictions often make me think about possible versions of myself that I am not aware of, and how feeling in between reality and fiction can give airtime to darker aspects of myself often manifesting in forms of self-doubt and sometimes masochism. Carl Jung speaks of shadows as being an unconscious aspect of yourself that can be harmful when left unchecked or ignored. I titled this series of paintings *Self Portrait within Parallel Planes* to acknowledge my fragmented self and to find healing.

- Taj Matumbi



Passing Me By

2023

acrylic, graphite, and oil stick on canvas
40 by 40 in.
(101,6 by 101,6 cm)

ON HOLD

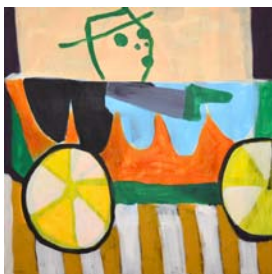


Lighten Up

2023

acrylic, flashe, and oil stick on canvas
48 by 36 in.
(121,9 by 91,4 cm)

\$ 3,000



Late to Skool

2023

acrylic and graphite on canvas
36 by 36 in.
(91,4 by 91,4 cm)

SOLD



Chariot

2023

acrylic, flashe, and oil stick on canvas
48 by 36 in.
(121,9 by 91,4 cm)

SOLD



Pyramid Scheme

2023

acrylic and graphite on canvas

36 by 36 in.

(91,4 by 91,4 cm)

SOLD



Profiteers

2023

acrylic and flashe on canvas

36 by 72 in. (diptych, two individual elements of 36 by 36 in. each)

(91,4 by 182,9 cm - diptych, two indiv. elements, 91,4 by 91,4 cm each)

SOLD



Dirt Rich Prince

2022

acrylic on canvas

42 by 32 in.

(106,7 by 81,3 cm)

\$ 2,000



Prince Uhuru

2022

acrylic and oil stick on canvas

42 by 32 in.

(106,7 by 81,3 cm)

\$ 2,000



Sucker Punch Prince

2022

acrylic, enamel, flashe, and oil stick on canvas

42 by 32 in.

(106,7 by 81,3 cm)

SOLD

available work



Alter-Ego

2023

acrylic, flashe, and graphite on canvas
72 by 48 in.
(182,9 by 121,9 cm)

\$ 4,800



After Hours

2023

acrylic on canvas
32 by 42 in.
(81,3 by 106,7 cm)

\$ 2,000



Dirt Rich Prince and His Royal Court

2022

series of twelve works on paper
alcohol-based and oil-based markers, and ballpoint
pen on paper
each 12 by 9 in. (ca. 30,5 by 22,9 cm)
as installed approx. 42 by 45 in. (ca. 106 by 114 cm)

\$ 450 / each



Das Boot

2022

series of twelve works on paper, acrylic, india ink, and collaged elements on paper
each approx. 5 by 8 in. (ca. 12,7 by 20,3 cm)

\$ 250 / each



Bodacious

2019

acrylic, enamel, collaged canvas, and found denim on canvas
48 by 48 in.
(121,9 by 121,9 cm)

\$ 3,000



Construction Boot

2019

acrylic, ink, oil-base marker, and graphite on canvas
60 by 48 in.
(152,4 by 121,9 cm)

\$ 3,500



The Therapist

2019

acrylic, oil stick, spray paint, and found materials on canvas
60 by 48 in.
(152,4 by 121,9 cm)

\$ 3,500



Florida Swamp

2019

acrylic, oil stick, spray paint, enamel, collaged skirt fragment,
and found materials on canvas
60 by 48 in.
(152,4 by 121,9 cm)

\$ 3,500



Cologne

2018

acrylic on canvas
48 by 48 in.
(121,9 by 121,9 cm)

\$ 3,000