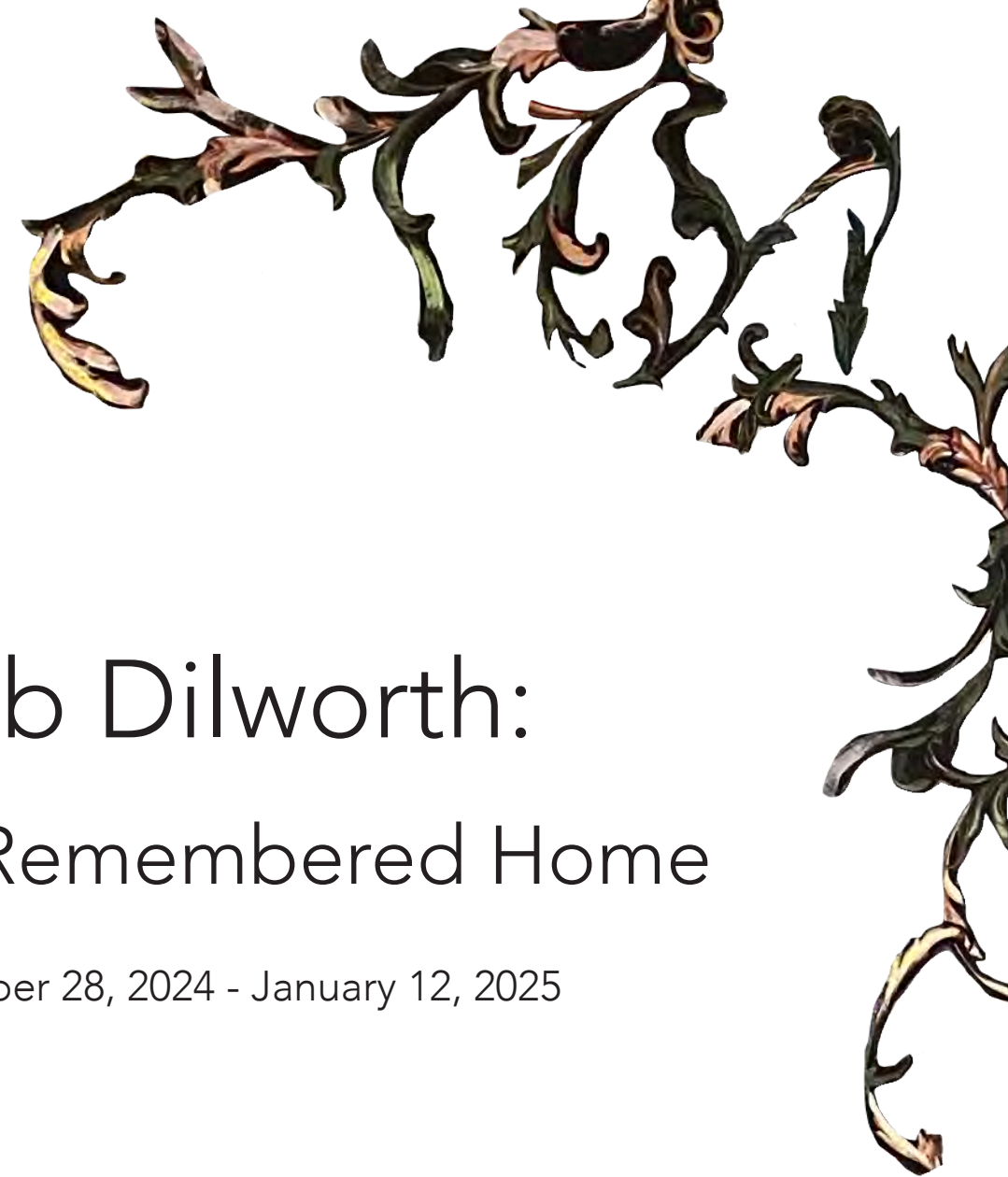




Bob Dilworth:
When I Remembered Home



Bob Dilworth: When I Remembered Home

September 28, 2024 - January 12, 2025



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Director's Forward

The Fitchburg Art Museum is proud and privileged to present this large exhibition of recent, monumental paintings by one of New England's most extraordinary artists, Bob Dilworth. Dilworth, based in Providence, has long been one of Rhode Island's and New England's most significant artists. His beautiful and joyous paintings examine race, culture, and community through a lens of memory focused on his hometown in rural Virginia. His complex images of friends and family combine aspects of portraiture, allegory, history, and spirituality and are celebrations of our shared humanity.

I would like to thank Bob Dilworth, and his gallerist, Cade Thompkins of Cade Thompkins Projects, for making Bob's work available, and for working with our staff towards the successful realization of this exhibition. Many thanks also to former FAM Curator Lauren Szumita for introducing Bob to FAM, and for executing the earliest phases of this project. The exhibition was brought to a stunning full fruition by current FAM Curator, Emily Mazzola, and Terry and Eva Herndon Assistant Curator Sarah Harper.

Thanks to FAM's staff who worked on the exhibition's installation: Collection Manager Aminadab (Charlie) Cruz, Jr., Lead Preparator Jesse Kenas-Collins, Preparator Dylan Safford, Interim Facilities Manager Eugene Finney, and his assistant Mel Bailey. Thanks also to our Education Staff who designed and coordinated in-gallery programs and interpretation: Director of Education Susan Diachisin, Program Manager Suzanne Hauerstein, and Clementi Family Education Assistant Boy Nahabedian.

Thanks also to Professor Rob Carr's Fall 2024 class, Client Project Production, at Fitchburg State University for designing this striking exhibition catalogue. The student design team included: Zachary Amidon, Kate Jajliardo, Emily Russo, and Tyson Yang.

Nick Capasso
Director
Fitchburg Art Museum

Curator's Acknowledgments

It has been an honor and a joy to present the work of Bob Dilworth at the Fitchburg Art Museum. I am immensely grateful for Bob's boundless generosity in sharing his time, talent, home, and ideas with us. Dilworth's paintings are extraordinary in their storytelling and stunning in their materiality. It has been a privilege to share them with our community.

FAM's Terry and Eva Herndon Assistant Curator Sarah Harper dove into this project without hesitation and I am so proud of all her hard work. Her insights into Dilworth's work are present throughout this exhibition and it was a pleasure to create this exhibition alongside her.

Dilworth's gallerist, Cade Tompkins of Cade Tompkins Projects, and her assistant Allison Bianco were instrumental in the realization of this exhibition and we are grateful for their assistance. I am also indebted to FAM's former curator Lauren Szumita for initiating this project.

Our Education Director Susan Diachin, our Clementi Family Assistant Educator Boy Nahanedian, and our Manager of Education Programs Suzanne Hauerstein transformed Dilworth's complicated creative process into a tangible experience for our visitors in their

brilliant Learning Lounge. I am so appreciative of Susan's collaborative spirit and the conversations we have shared about Dilworth's work over the last few months.

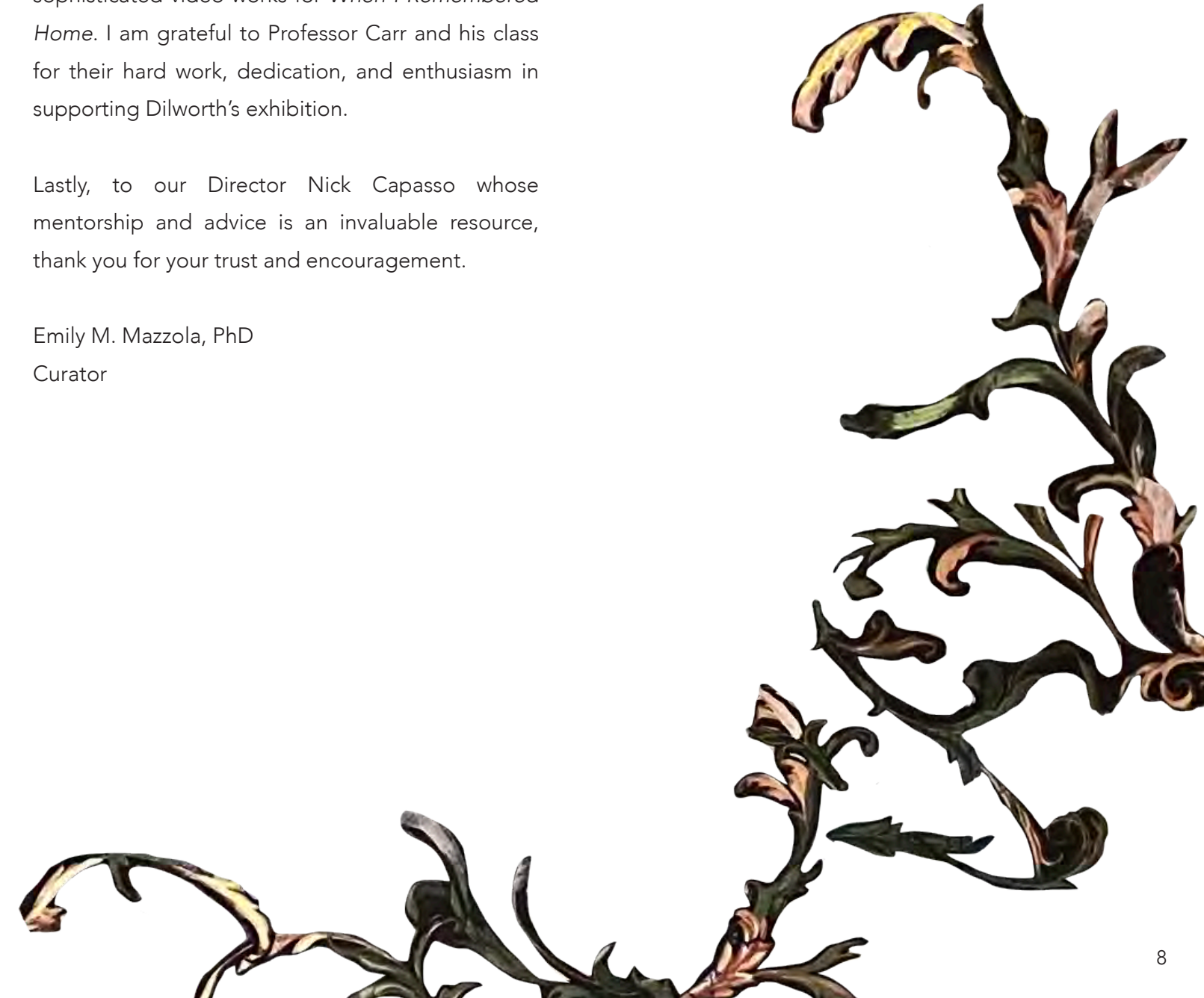
Thank you to our talented installation team led by Aminadab "Charlie" Cruz Jr. Charlie's incredible eye for exhibition design helped shape our presentation of *Bob Dilworth: When I Remembered Home*, and I am always grateful for his aesthetic input. Our preparators Jesse Kenas-Collins and Dylan Safford were calm and collected under pressure. I am so thankful for all their help in caring for Dilworth's monumental paintings. Eugene Finney led our facilities team and generously created beautiful frames for the exhibition, allowing us to present Dilworth's works on paper. Mel Bailey's ever dependable hard work supports us all and Dilworth's exhibition was no exception.

This beautiful catalog is the work of Fitchburg State Students students Zachary Amidon, Kate Jajliardo, Emily Russo, and Tyson Yang of Rob Carr's Fall 2024 class, Client Project Production. Their ambitious project pays tribute to Dilworth's paintings, honoring and celebrating the complexities of his work. Their classmates, Owen Bonney, Benjamin Ford, Esther

Maia, Sophia Moore, Kayo Rosse, and Samantha Rozum, created innovative social media content and sophisticated video works for *When I Remembered Home*. I am grateful to Professor Carr and his class for their hard work, dedication, and enthusiasm in supporting Dilworth's exhibition.

Lastly, to our Director Nick Capasso whose mentorship and advice is an invaluable resource, thank you for your trust and encouragement.

Emily M. Mazzola, PhD
Curator





Introduction

For Bob Dilworth, the phrase “When I Remembered Home” speaks to home as not only a physical place or people, but as a locus of memory and how those memories shape who we are and how we see the world. As a storyteller, Dilworth shares who he is and how he sees the world with viewers, and by exploring his memories and the people who have shaped his life, he also invites viewers to do the same.

Dilworth paints the people and places he loves on a monumental scale and in vivid color, and over the last eight years his style has evolved to include intricate layers of paint, paper, and fabric. The fabric and paper in many of Dilworth’s paintings originated from the homes and closets of his family and friends, and their inclusion acts as a material manifestation of memory, honoring and memorializing loved ones from his hometown of Lawrenceville, Virginia.

Dilworth describes his work as a labor of love and in his canvases both are present in equal parts. Not only does Dilworth portray his loved ones—family and chosen family—but he repeats their figures to capture different facets of their personalities. He also paints loved ones resplendent in their old age. Dilworth’s figures are marked by tenderness and vulnerability, which is particularly important in his depictions of Black men. Dilworth’s portraits offer an

intimate view of his subjects and their internal lives. These representations are a powerful corrective to how Black people have been historically represented in fine art and popular culture.

At the core of Dilworth’s practice is a dedication to the recycling and reusing of his materials—nothing goes to waste in the artist’s studio. Tracing paper remnants become the bases for new stencils and even the smallest fragments of cloth are integrated into an ongoing landscape abstraction. This ethos comes in part from his parents, who were raised during the Great Depression, and partly from his personal belief that it is the obligation of artists, creators, and inventors to create from the standpoint that all things can and should be reused.

After decades as a painter and a professor of studio art at the University of Rhode Island, Dilworth has a profound understanding of how paint reacts, transforms, and moves. This, predictably, has driven his interest in cloth. Fabric, and the challenges posed by learning to use and manipulate a sewing machine, have become sources of deep creative inspiration for Dilworth in recent years. The works in this exhibition trace this evolution, presenting for the first time a collection of compositions made entirely of fabric. Despite this material shift Dilworth

has retained his use of painterly gestures, including mark making and lines—they have become cut outs of fabric and sewn thread.

Floral cut-outs and painted flowers serve as representations of both the natural world and the domestic interiors of his childhood. Dilworth’s floral patterns, while inspired by verdant gardens, are not accurate representations of specific flowers. Instead, Dilworth’s flowers are floral abstractions, which maintain their botanical essence, just as human memories alter with time, and yet retain the power of the feelings they invoke in us. In the organic contours of Dilworth’s work, it is possible to see connections to the delicate nerve networks that enable the profoundly human ability to remember, misremember, and dream.

This exhibition was created by FAM’s Curator Emily Mazzola and FAM’s Terry and Eva Herndon Assistant Curator Sarah Harper.

Funding for Bob Dilworth’s current work is provided in part by a grant from the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts, through an appropriation by the Rhode Island General Assembly, and a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts and private funders.



Labor of Love: Bob Dilworth's Process and the Creative Reuse of Materials

According to Dilworth, "patience is part of the process, it is a labor of love." For some artists, their processes are rigid and defined—not Dilworth. His creativity is never linear, and many of the elements outlined below are combined and revisited repeatedly as he builds a canvas. For Dilworth, each painting is its own journey and experience, and while he diligently plans many elements, each work still undergoes a process of revision and reaction as it develops. In Dilworth's studio, nothing is sacred and if something is not working it is redone, removed, or repainted. This iterative experimental approach is visible on the surface of Dilworth's work. Dilworth also works on paintings for years at a time, reworking them over and over again, adding new elements as his interest in materials and process evolves and shifts. For example, a number of paintings here have fabric added years after he last worked on them. The paintings develop with Dilworth, transforming as he continues to learn new techniques, master new materials, and find new sources of creative joy. Most of Dilworth's work starts with photography. When amongst family and friends, Dilworth asks for permission to photograph and then waits, looking for moments when he can capture loved ones unguarded and uninhibited by the presence of a camera. In other

instances, subjects are invited to pose, often in his studio, where he can control the lighting. In posed sessions Dilworth is often looking to capture a specific detail, like facial expression or hand gesture that can aid his storytelling. Once Dilworth has documented his subject photographically, he begins sketching figure studies on tracing paper. Working in pencil allows Dilworth to focus on lines, contours, and shadows. When his sketches are complete, he enlarges them using a large format printer. These enlarged drawings are cut out, and traced, allowing him to prepare for the compositions of his large canvases. Depending on the project, Dilworth sometimes produces a smaller scale preparatory painting or multiple preparatory paintings in the case of the Bannister portrait, as his ideas for pose, composition, and emotional tone evolve. Dilworth's richly colored canvases derive their depth and vibrancy from underpainting, a technique of layering paint so that the final coat achieves the desired color value and tone. While some artists may use a single color for underpainting, Dilworth uses many, for him, "what color goes on first really matters. I paint a lot of undertones and a lot of layers on top of that. There will still be bits of colors that peak through. Every color influences the color that goes over it."

Dilworth works in primarily acrylic paint, but over the years has begun incorporating other types of paint and a variety of application modes, including spray paint and paint markers. Dilworth uses spray paint in tandem with stencils that he creates by hand. He begins by drawing on plastic sheeting with thick permanent markers, he then cuts the lines out by hand. Dilworth often layers spray painted lines and patterns, moving his stencil ever so slightly so figures and forms appear to echo or reverberate across his canvases. Paint, however, is not the only material that Dilworth layers. He also incorporates fabric and paper to create surface textures. Dilworth uses a variety of floral patterned fabrics collected from family and friends or purchased from fabric stores. He cuts floral designs out of fabric and applies them directly to his canvases; he traces fabric floral patterns and applies those cutout tracings to his canvases as well. He also creates stencils based on textile floral patterns, and paints his own textile inspired patterns. All of the textile and paper flowers in Dilworth's work were cut by hand, using only an X-Acto knife. The verdant compositions throughout *When I Remembered Home* represent hundreds of hours spent cutting—painstakingly following the curving contours of each abstracted petal and leaf. Before cutting his fabric, Dilworth adheres it to Duo-Tac, which is double-sided adhesive film. The film comes with protective paper to preserve the adhesive, much like the paper on band-aid tabs. Therefore, when Dilworth cuts out his floral shapes, they have protective paper on the back of the

fabric. The protective film mirrors the floral design in shape, in essence a ghostly double, which Dilworth saves, using them as aesthetic elements, sometimes years later. In recent years, fabric and the challenge of working with a sewing machine has become a source of inspiration for Dilworth and in this exhibition, there are two works made entirely of fabric on view. Dilworth grew up watching his mother sew but has only recently taught himself to use a sewing machine. With sewing, Dilworth is still learning to navigate the machine and manipulate textiles. There is an element of spontaneity and joyous discovery to sewing that has driven his most recent work. Just as Dilworth is forever finding new ways to reuse the materials in his studio, he is also continuously learning new processes and materials.



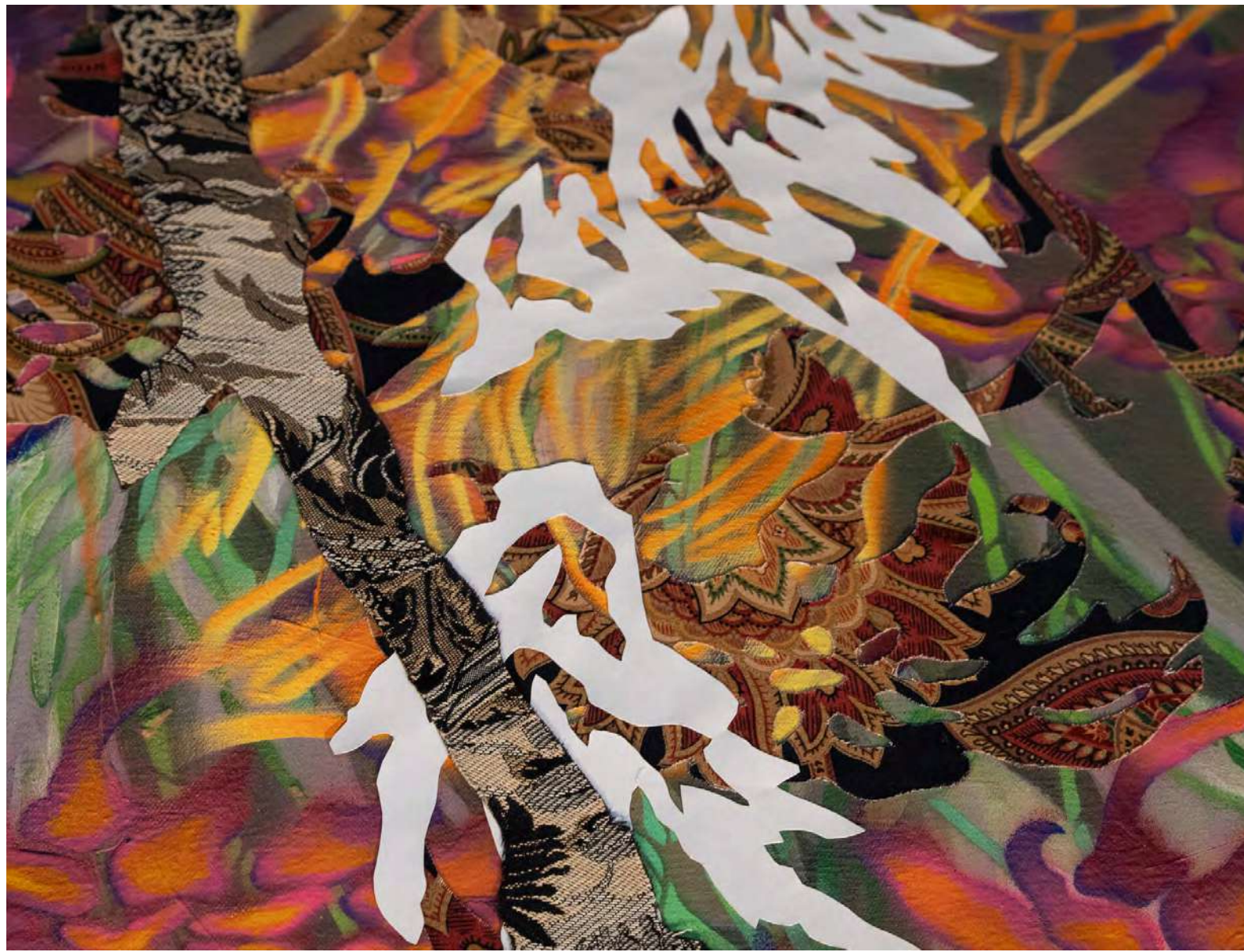
Lawrenceville Landscape Series #1

For Dilworth, Lawrenceville's bucolic landscape offered a picturesque childhood, defined, in part, by time spent outdoors. The forest behind his childhood home, once a place of imaginative play and exploration, has remained a source of inspiration and solace throughout his adult life. It is natural that a place so important to him would also be the subject of a work that marks a pivotal development in Dilworth's aesthetic and creative process.

Begun in 2012 and "completed" in 2020, *Lawrenceville Landscape #1* is emblematic of Dilworth's process wherein a canvas is worked and reworked for years—for Dilworth paintings are never really done, they sometimes are just out of reach and no longer available for additional intervention.

This is one of the earliest works where Dilworth began considering the reuse of Duo-Tac paper as a compositional element and exploring the possibilities of stenciling. It's also one of the first works without a figure, a true landscape. Through layers of color, fabric, and paper Dilworth captures the majesty and magic of nature in fall—tangled, wild, and full of vivid color. *Lawrenceville Landscape #1* pays homage to the emotional and sensory experiences of being amongst the autumnal forest.





Edward and Christiana Bannister

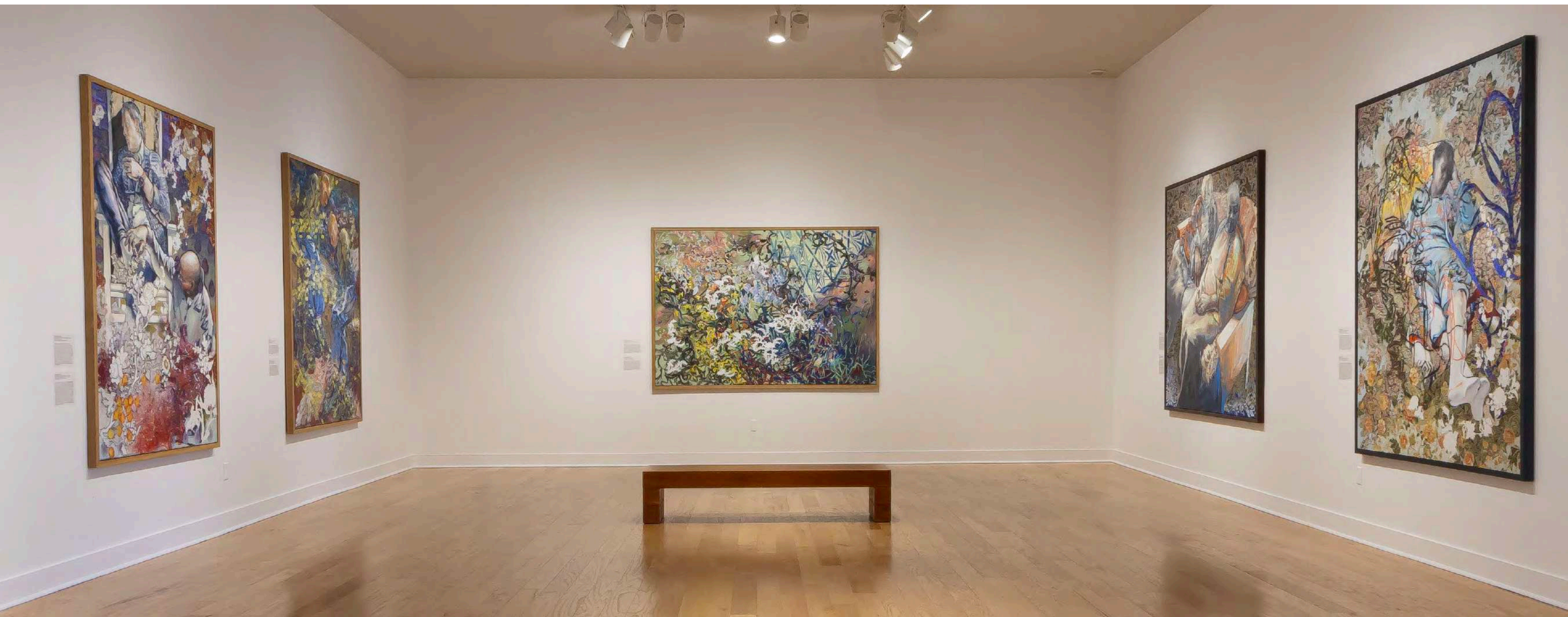
In *Edward and Christiana Bannister*, Dilworth moves away from painting family and friends and turns to the historical figures of Edward Mitchell and Christiana Carteaux Bannister who are important figures to the history of Providence, Rhode Island. Bannister, born in 1828, was a successful landscape painter largely due to the financial and emotional support of his wife. Beginning his career in Boston, Bannister soon met Carteaux, who was a member of a well-known family, and through her connections became connected to the African American elite of New England. Carteaux was of both African American and Narragansett descent and was a successful businesswoman who owned her own hair salon.

Carteaux was instrumental in developing patrons for Bannister and the two married in 1857. When racism began to prevent Bannister's career from flourishing in Boston, the two moved to Providence, where they lived the rest of their lives. Carteaux and Bannister were both abolitionists and active community members. Bannister was one of

the founding members of both the Rhode Island School of Design, where Dilworth worked for many years, as well as the Providence Art Club. Carteaux created the Home for Aged Colored Women which is known today as the Bannister House. Today Rhode Island honors Carteaux's contributions to Providence with a bust of her in the state house.

In 1876, Bannister won the First Prize at the Philadelphia Centennial for the painting, *Under the Oaks* and in doing so became the first African American to win a major art prize. Dilworth, in creating the first known portrait of Bannister and Carteaux together, celebrates the local history of his adoptive home of Providence, Rhode Island. In creating the painting, Dilworth was inspired by 19th century photo studios in which photographers recreated the outdoors inside using painted backgrounds. Dilworth creates his own "never space" in which nature comes indoors and the couple exist in a world that they created together.

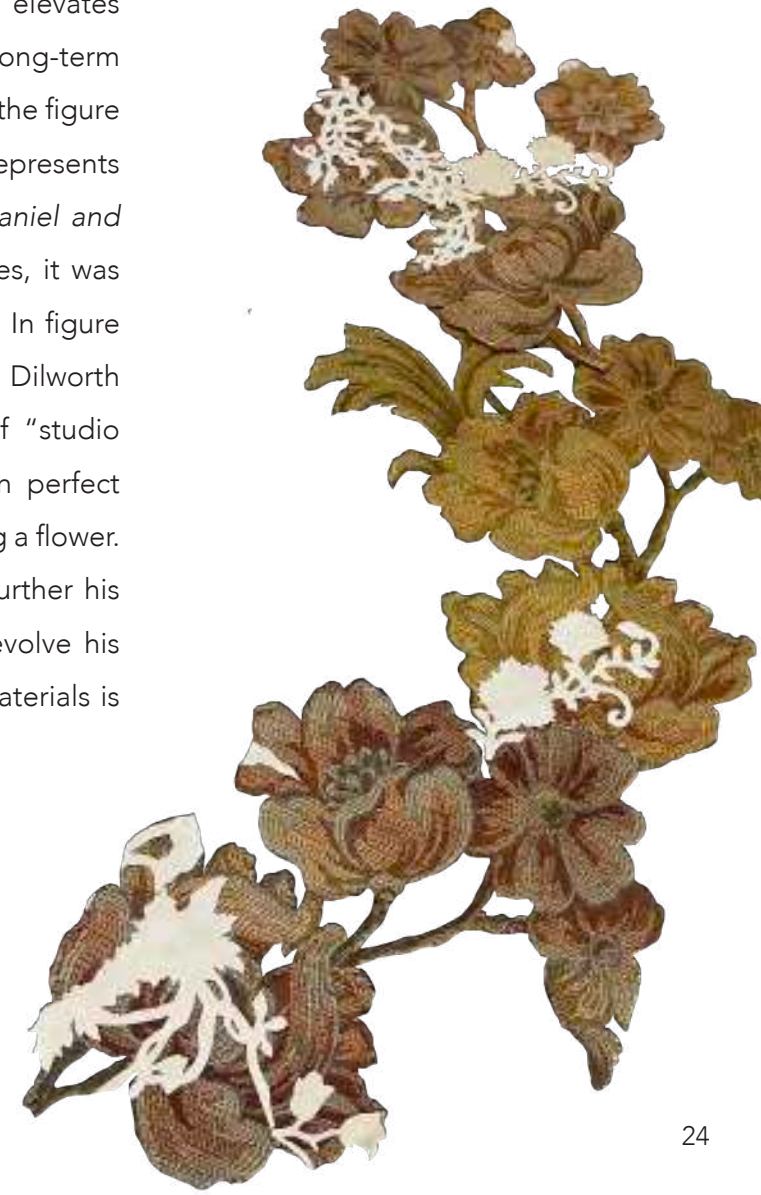






Daniel and James

Daniel and James depicts an intimate gesture between a couple, memorializing a casual touch in a monumental canvas that elevates a passing exchange into a testament to the tenderness of long-term romantic partnership. A sentiment strengthened when Daniel, the figure seated on the ground, passed away in 2019. This canvas also represents a pivotal moment in the development of Dilworth's work. *Daniel and James* is the first work where Dilworth explored using textiles, it was also a work that moved the artist's painting practice forward. In figure painting, hands are notoriously challenging to capture, and Dilworth describes the painting of Daniel's gesture as a moment of "studio alchemy"—when all the colors, values, and lines worked in perfect harmony to capture the delicate articulation of fingers grasping a flower. It's a painting he has returned to many times to study and further his painting practice. Dilworth's commitment to continuing to evolve his creative practice through the exploration of new skills and materials is demonstrated throughout the work in this exhibition.





Blue

This image depicts one of the artist's six brothers, Blue, asleep on the couch, taking a long nap over the holidays. *Blue* presents us with an image largely missing from contemporary visual culture: an image of a Black man sleeping—his vulnerability is striking. His peacefully sleeping forms are surrounded by an explosion of pattern and electric color created by Dilworth's layering of stencils. The patterns appear to envelope the figure like a blanket. This tension between figure and environment can be read in many ways, however, in combination with the title, it's possible to read the image as the experience of being 'blue,' or feeling disconnected from the vibrant world around us.



Lawrenceville Landscape #2

Dilworth was raised in Lawrenceville, Virginia, a small rural town, less than a square mile in size, with a population of just over 1,000 people. Dilworth positions the viewer looking back at his childhood home through the trees. It is in this viewpoint of looking back towards the safety and comfort of home that Dilworth captures the sense of vulnerability that comes with walking through the forest – the feeling of being solitary but not quite alone in an environment brimming with life and animals.



For Dilworth, however, the sense of vulnerability that comes with moving through the forest has always been empowering, making it a space where he has found emotional safety, and a place for release and contemplation. Dilworth combines hand painted florals with fabric vines, paper leaves, and stenciled plants in a range of technicolor hues that suggest perhaps this is a dream of the Lawrenceville landscape.





Venus

Venus features two different poses of the same person, Dilworth's late friend, Venus. In *Venus*, Dilworth explores the possibilities of several new ideas including introducing photo gel transfer, which he used for Venus's faces. He also continues experimenting with textiles as he does in *Daniel and James*. In the background of *Venus*, Dilworth works within the pattern of the fabric, accenting the design with his own painterly gestures. Additionally, he plays with geometry and different visual planes by situating Venus at an angle.

Venus was a creative force in her own right, a dancer and an actress and an important teacher and mentor to many in the New England performing arts community. After her passing, this image, which the artist created as, "a monument to the power of her presence" has taken on a new life, becoming an iconic image for those who knew and loved her. In capturing Venus at a larger than life scale, in vibrant color, accented by glittering elements Dilworth demands our attention in celebration of an aging woman, who in our youth obsessed culture, are often rendered invisible.





Margaret

This tender portrait depicts the artist's mother asleep and incorporates a rich variety of materials from her home in Lawrenceville, Virginia including a doily, shower curtain, and a bedspread—material memories of his hometown. Begun in 2015, Dilworth worked and reworked this painting for years before arriving at this current composition in 2019. Dilworth combines florals cut out of fabric and paper, blue brocade branches, and painted flowers to create a floral dreamscape that cradles and envelopes his mother. Dilworth uses a stencil to create echoes of his mother's figure and the lines bridge the foreground and background in a ghostly manner. Like in *Venus and Maria*, *Margaret's* face is also rendered in photo gel transfer, however, the treatment here reads like a faded photograph, an aesthetic choice particularly poignant for an image so closely connected to Dilworth's family and memories of home.







ARTIST'S STATEMENT
The artist's statement is a short paragraph of text located to the left of the painting. It provides context for the work, discussing the artist's inspiration and the themes explored in the painting.



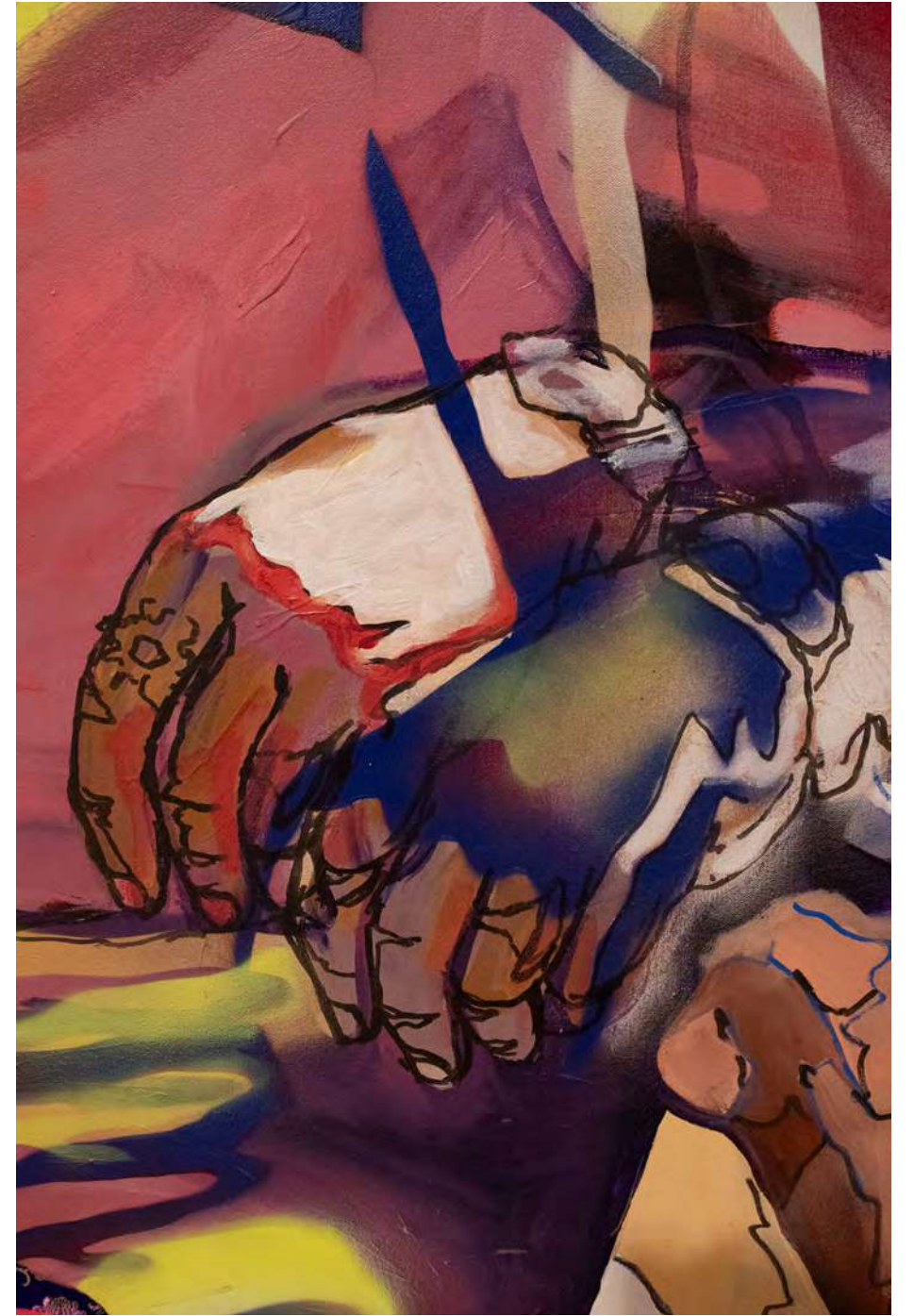
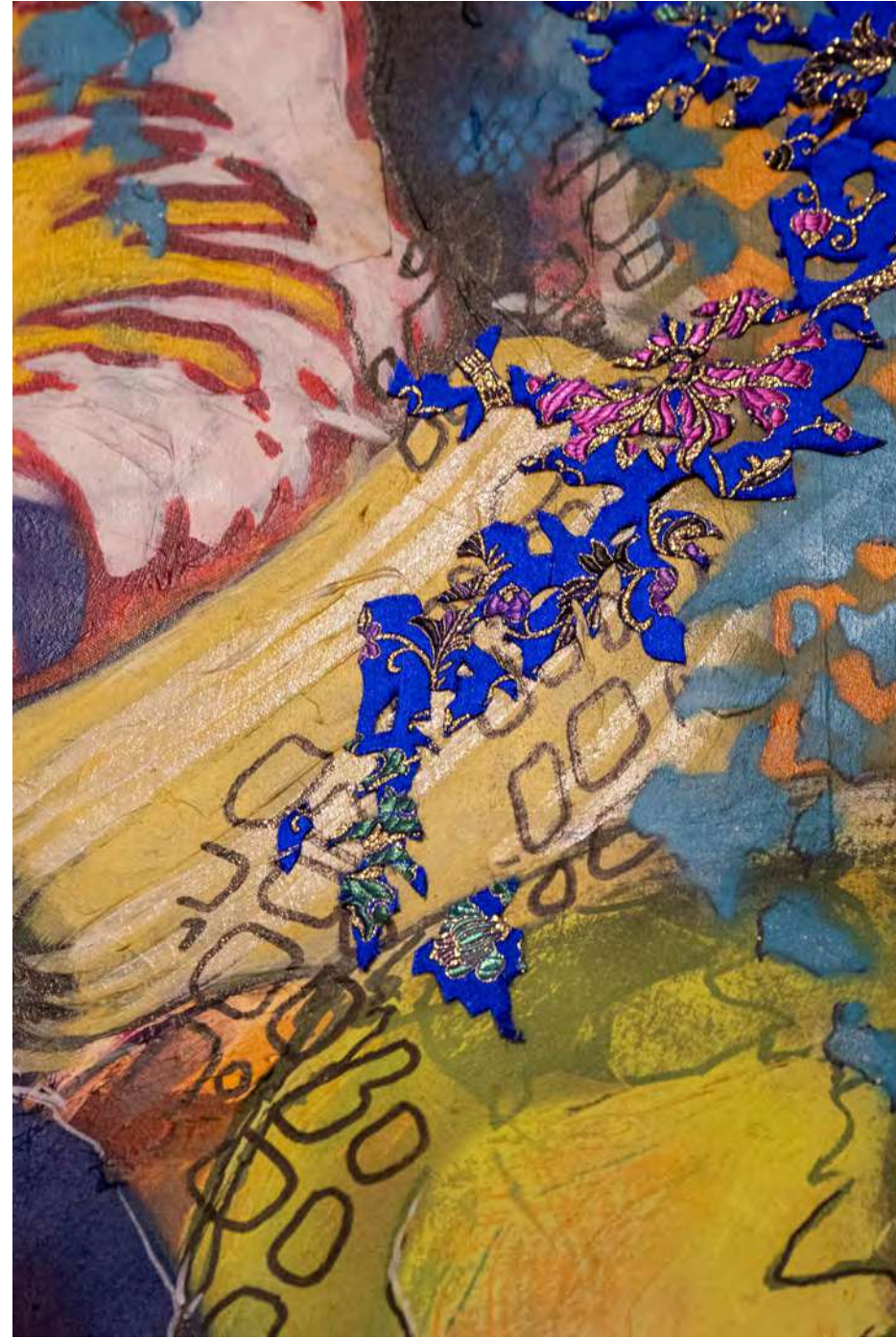
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Elizabeth

Elizabeth marks the first time Dilworth experimented with alternative painting materials such as spray paint with stencils, markers, printed paper, and even 3D materials in the form of costume jewelry gemstones. In this early work, Dilworth plays with the idea of multiple views of the same person, using stenciling to achieve an echoing effect on Elizabeth and to create a vague sense of place with the grid and diamond patterns covering the background. Depicting Dilworth's late aunt Elizabeth in her favorite jumpsuit, the painting honors the memory of Elizabeth sitting on her porch telling stories. The porch serves as a transitional space between the indoors and outdoors which is suggested by the presence of a striped lounge chair and a vine covered fence.

Dilworth consistently reworks his canvases, sometimes years after he originally deemed them finished. In *Elizabeth* the blue fabric koi fish found at the bottom of the canvas, the pink lily pads, and the blue vines rendered in spray paint and fabric were all added years later.







Aayden

Aayden is Dilworth's young nephew, depicted here at the age of 5. Asked to pose by his uncle for a photograph, this defiant stare was the young boy's response—as it often is when children are faced with a camera. There is a self-assured seriousness to Aayden's gaze, despite his little rubber shoes, that many parents and caretakers of young children will recognize. Dilworth sees a kindred creative spirit in his nephew whose abilities as a sculptor of playdough and clay are notable.

Aayden sits calmly before a field of vibrant color and dynamic lines, a background that gives visual representation to his youthful energy. Unlike *Maria* or *Blue* which also prominently feature stencil work, Aayden is distinctly separate from the background of the painting. Firmly in the foreground, Dilworth uses this tension to communicate the deeper sense of calm Aayden possesses, despite his age and exuberance.



Informational text panel for the artwork on the left.



Informational text panel for the artwork in the center.



Maria

There are moments throughout this exhibition where Dilworth's enthusiasm for a material or process is encapsulated in a single work, and *Maria* represents a period when Dilworth found a deep sense of creative joy in the production and use of stencils. Dilworth's stencils begin with drawings on plastic sheeting made with thick permanent markers, the lines are then cut out by hand to create the stencil. (A stencil from *Maria* can be found in our Learning Lounge).

The figure in this painting is Maria, a friend whose beautiful face and traditional Cape Verdean dress Dilworth captured in a photograph and transformed into a painting. In this canvas we see the evolution of Dilworth's experimentation with the relationship between foreground and background, with the distinction between the two planes almost eliminated here. Interwoven in the swirling layers of painted stenciling are delicate floral forms made of white paper, which resemble lace in their intricacy. These paper elements are a product of Dilworth's laborious process and dedication to material reuse.





Aayden and Jazeeya

In Dilworth's latest work, *Aayden and Jazeeya*, Dilworth works solely with fabric and thread as his medium. Depicting his niece Jazeeya, and his nephew, Aayden, Dilworth captured a moment on a walk in Lawrenceville, VA. In creating the figures of Aayden and Jazeeya, Dilworth thinks like a painter, using black tulle to create shadows and depth. Thread serves to form details including the figures' facial features as well as the landscape in the background. Techniques such as appliqué, which is when cut out shapes of fabric are applied to larger pieces of fabric, and free motion sewing, which is when the sewer is able to freely move fabric through the machine enabling them to create whatever patterns they desire, are borrowed from quilting. The use of multiple borders is another common element in quilts. *Aayden and Jazeeya* exemplifies how Dilworth plays with new techniques as he learns a new medium.



Lawrence G. Ladd, 1971
White and collage on paper,
Collection of the artist and Yale
University Press.

Lawrence G. Ladd, 1971
White and collage on paper,
Collection of the artist and Yale
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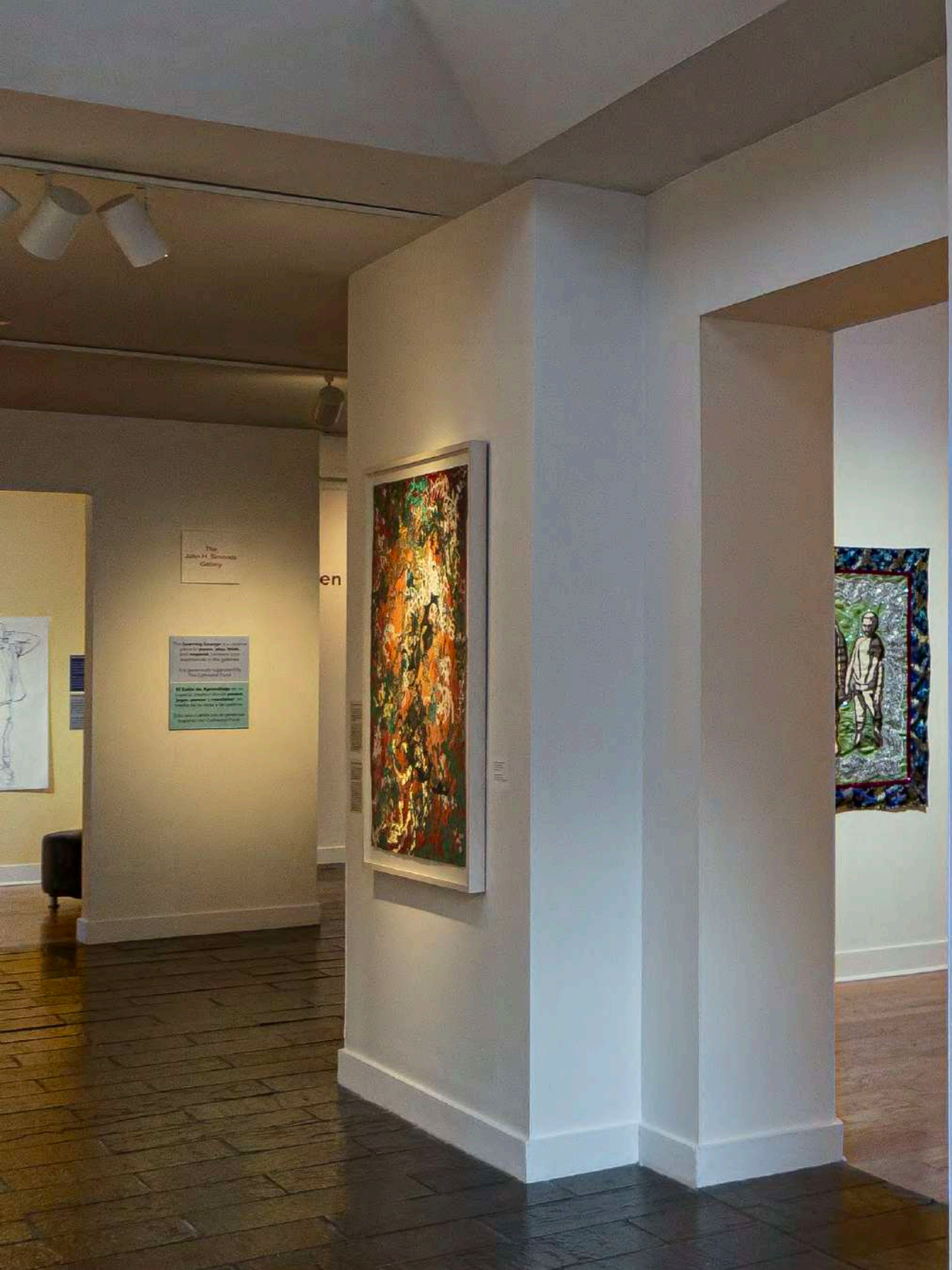


Small informational text label for the second painting.



Small informational text label for the third painting.





Informational text panels on the wall, likely providing details about the artwork or the artist.

Works on paper: Lawrenceville Landscape Series

In 2019, Dilworth began exploring the Lawrenceville landscape in a series of smaller works on paper which the artist describes as being a project driven almost entirely by a desire for aesthetic experimentation. The series contains all the primary elements of his larger works: paint, fabric, and paper are all layered and manipulated to create rich surface textures and verdant abstractions.

In the Landscape Series however, the Duo-Tac paper elements are prominently situated in each composition, which allows for a greater appreciation of the intricate forms and the painstaking labor required to cut out these elaborate organic shapes. Mark making is also paramount to all of Dilworth's work, but here cascades of small dots can be seen and appreciated as individual gestures. Clusters of small cuttings of paper and fabric also suggest that even the smallest of material fragments have been kept and repurposed, an ethos that is essential to the artist. Raised by parents who experienced the Great Depression, the impetus that nothing goes to waste was deeply instilled in him. And a commitment to imaginative reuse can be found throughout his work, because for Dilworth it is the moral obligation of artists, designers, and innovators to plan for the life cycles of the things we create.





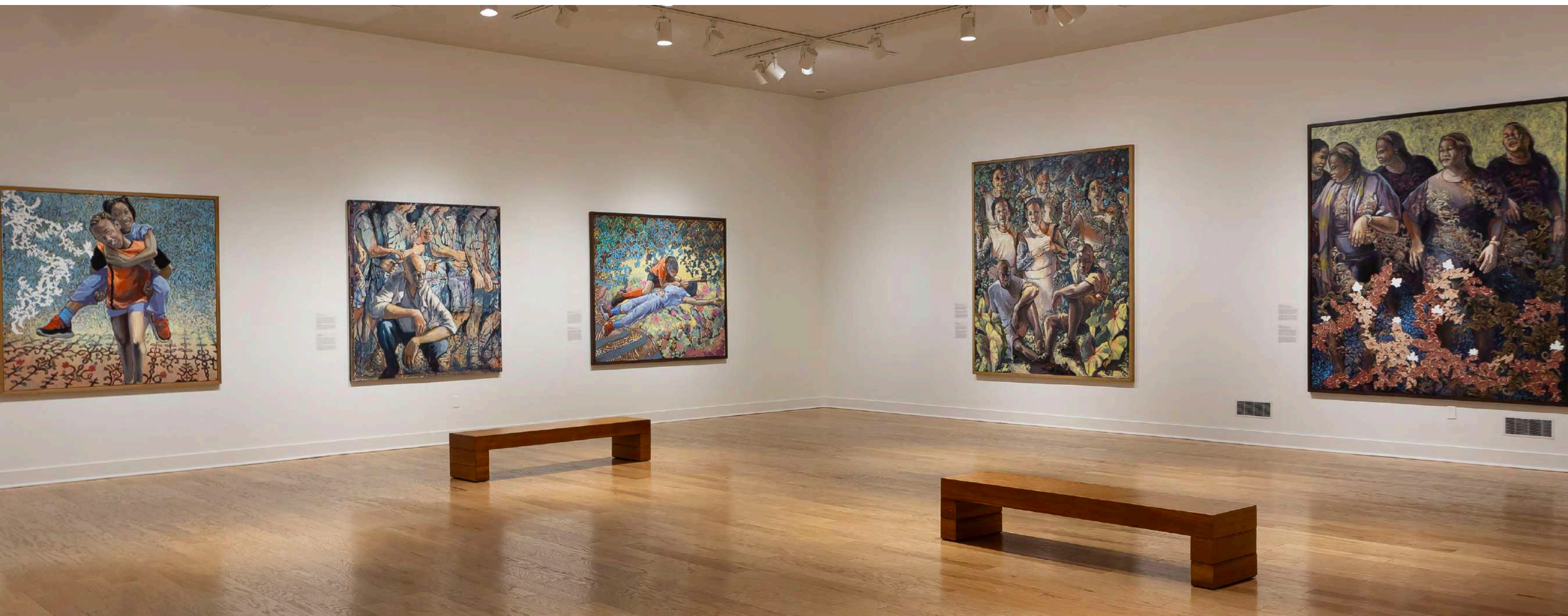


Gary Sitting

Gary of *Gary Sitting*, is a friend that Dilworth met after moving to Providence. Like many of Dilworth's works, *Gary Sitting* went through many iterations. While the work was started in 2016, it wasn't completed until 2024. The figure was repainted a few years ago, and the major addition of black lace overlaid with embroidered silver tulle occurred in 2024. Interestingly, the black lace is the same material used as the background for *Tie*. *Gary Sitting* is an example of how Dilworth's vision of a composition was transformed after accepting fabric as a new medium that can be added to paintings.

Gary's gaze is piercing and direct, which is unusual amongst Dilworth's figures, comparable only to the confrontational gaze of *Aayden*, who similarly, is situated along the surface of the pictorial plane. Here, however, the relationship between foreground and background is slightly different. Dilworth's delicate silver fabric features floral designs that just barely overlap the contours of Gary's figure, playfully encroaching upon him.





Camouflage

Dilworth began this work, which features a Black male figure assuming the positions the police demand during a stop or arrest, before the beginning of the Black Lives Matter movement. The national conversation around the policing of Black spaces and Black bodies that occurred after the death of George Floyd, however, crystallized for Dilworth what he wanted to say with this work.

Dilworth posed his friend dressed in one of his own plaid shirts for a series of photographs. The choice of a plaid shirt, as an unthreatening form of dress, suggests the ways in which clothing acts as a signal of how people aim to be perceived. However, even when a Black man attempts to wear something as innocuous as plaid, they are still at risk of unjustified police searches. In the final composition the plaid patterns bled into one another, a reference to the ways black men in the United States are often invisible until they are rendered visible in ways that can have deadly consequences.

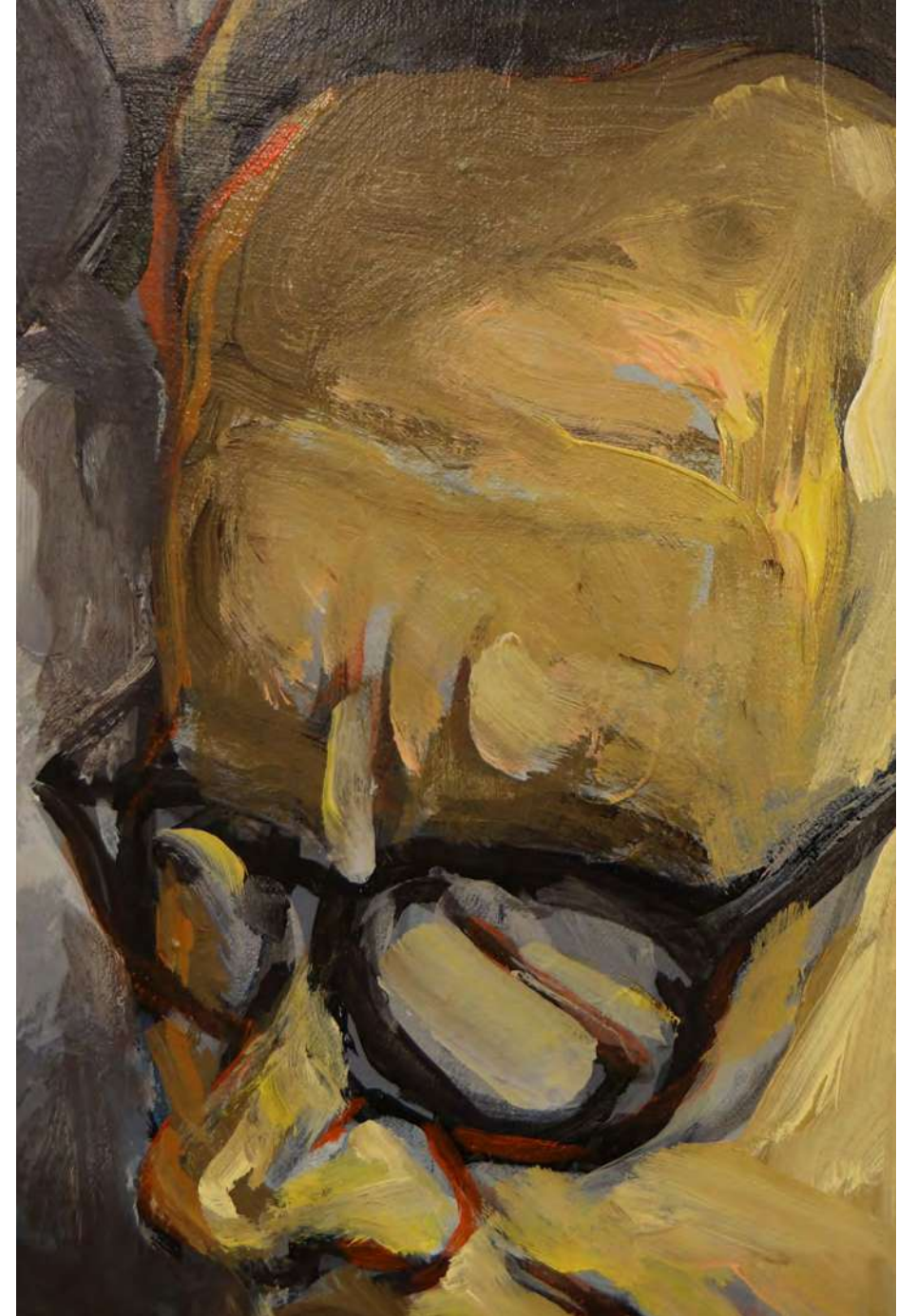
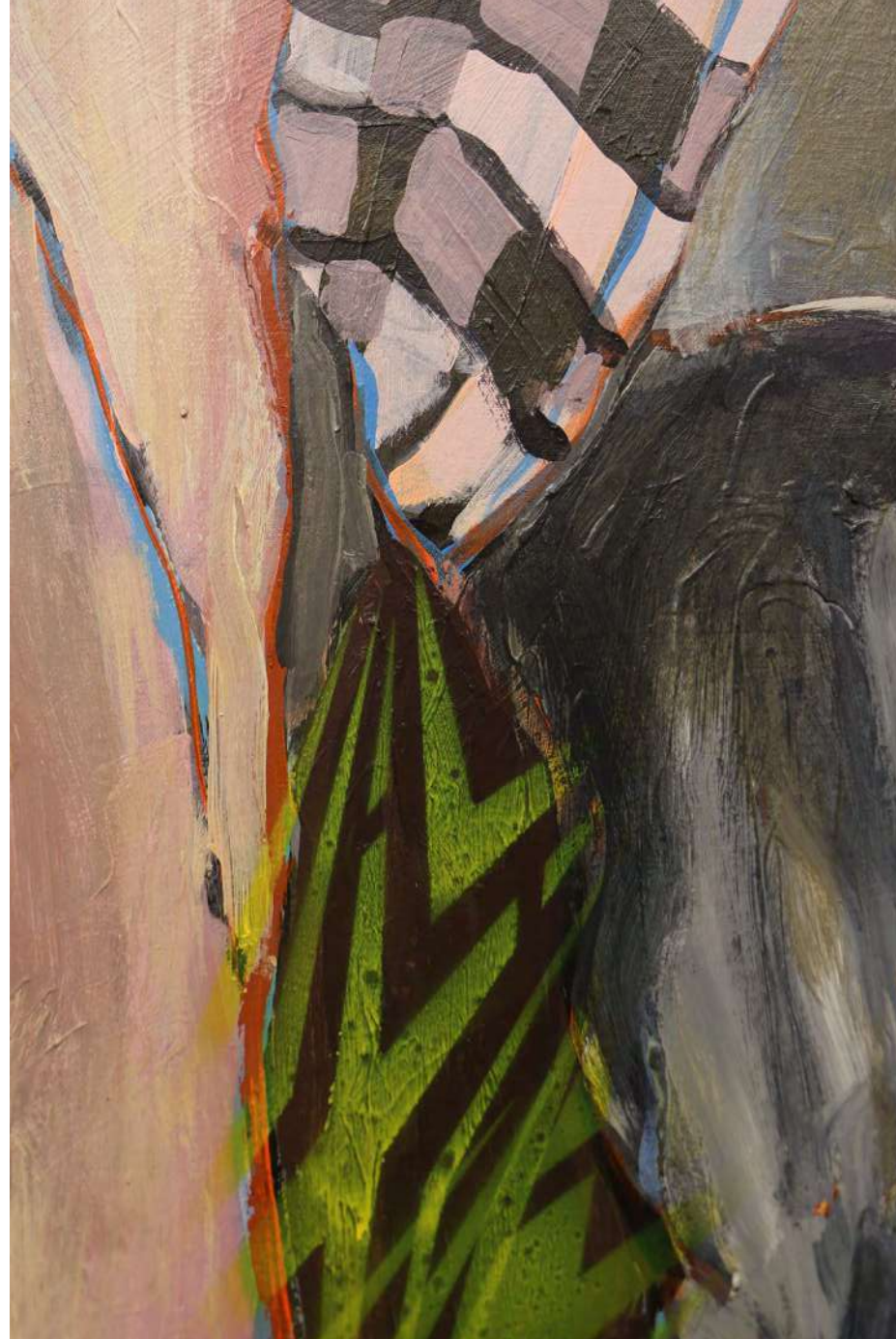
The composition is punctuated with a neon green pattern meant to symbolize the built environment,

a structured verdant element that stands in stark contrast to the organic forms of his other florals. At the center of the canvas, one figure stands contemplative, arms crossed in active resistance.

Like the floral fabric elements of many of Bob's works which originated from the homes of family and friends, the silk ties in this work once belonged to the artist's father, but Dilworth has deconstructed them, transforming them in the process. And like the domestic interior patterns that are combined into lush gardens the bold geometric patterns of vintage ties here operate together as abstractions.

Dilworth set out to create an entirely fabric work with a direct connection to one of his earlier paintings, and decided to re-use his figure studies from *Camouflage*. Throughout the exhibition the importance of line drawing, mark making, and contours to Dilworth is visible, and with the development of his newest fabric works, the drawn, painted, and sprayed lines have become threads.







Piggy Back

In *Piggy Back*, Dilworth depicts two of his nieces at age seven and nine. Dilworth was visiting his family in Virginia, when he took photos of his nieces playing. He chose this particular image because he liked the symbolism of the pose—one niece physically supporting the other—as cousins support and look out for each other in life. The girl who is providing the piggy back is wearing a soccer uniform which highlights other aspects that are common to childhood such as playing sports. The spirals in the background are formed from short brushstrokes, they draw their inspiration from the African American artist Alma Thomas who developed a unique abstract painting style based on small dabs of paint. This technique is also used in *Tiffany*, displayed nearby.

March

Made in response to the 2020 Black Lives Matter Movement, *March*, a self-portrait, reflects Dilworth's personal relationship with issues surrounding the African American community and attests to his desires to participate in the 2020 protests. *March* also serves as an ode to the 1960's Civil Rights Movement when events such as the 1963 March on Washington paved the way for African Americans to gain greater rights and legal protections. Growing up in the 1960's, Dilworth's parents instilled in him and his siblings the importance of the Civil Rights Movement and political awareness.

March depicts a man who has pulled himself out of the demonstration to allow for a moment of rest and reflection. While Dilworth was regularly applying fabric onto his canvases at the time of the creation of this work, there is no use of fabric here. This demonstrates how Dilworth sees every work as a unique set of challenges and only adds additional elements if he believes they will enhance the composition.

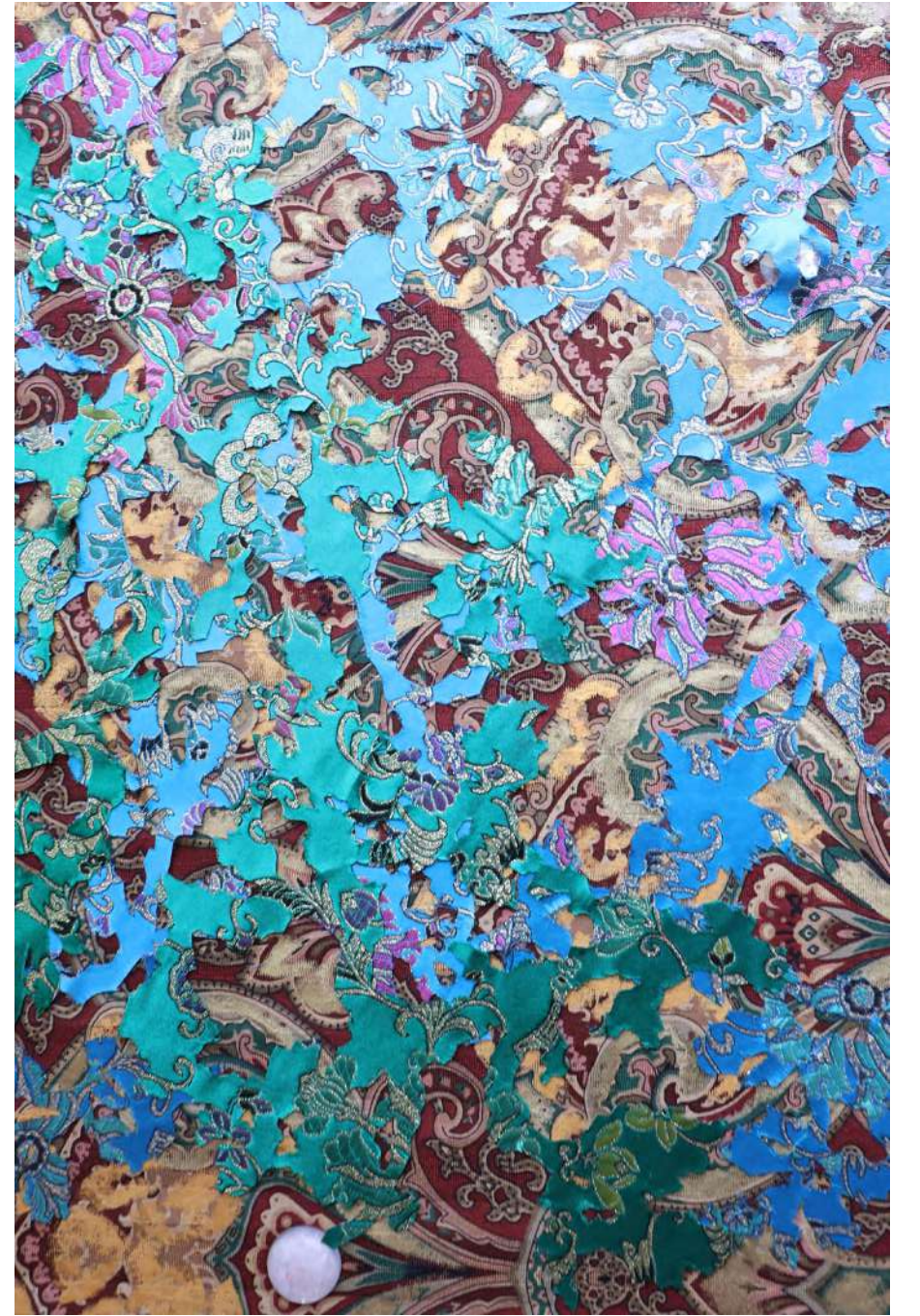
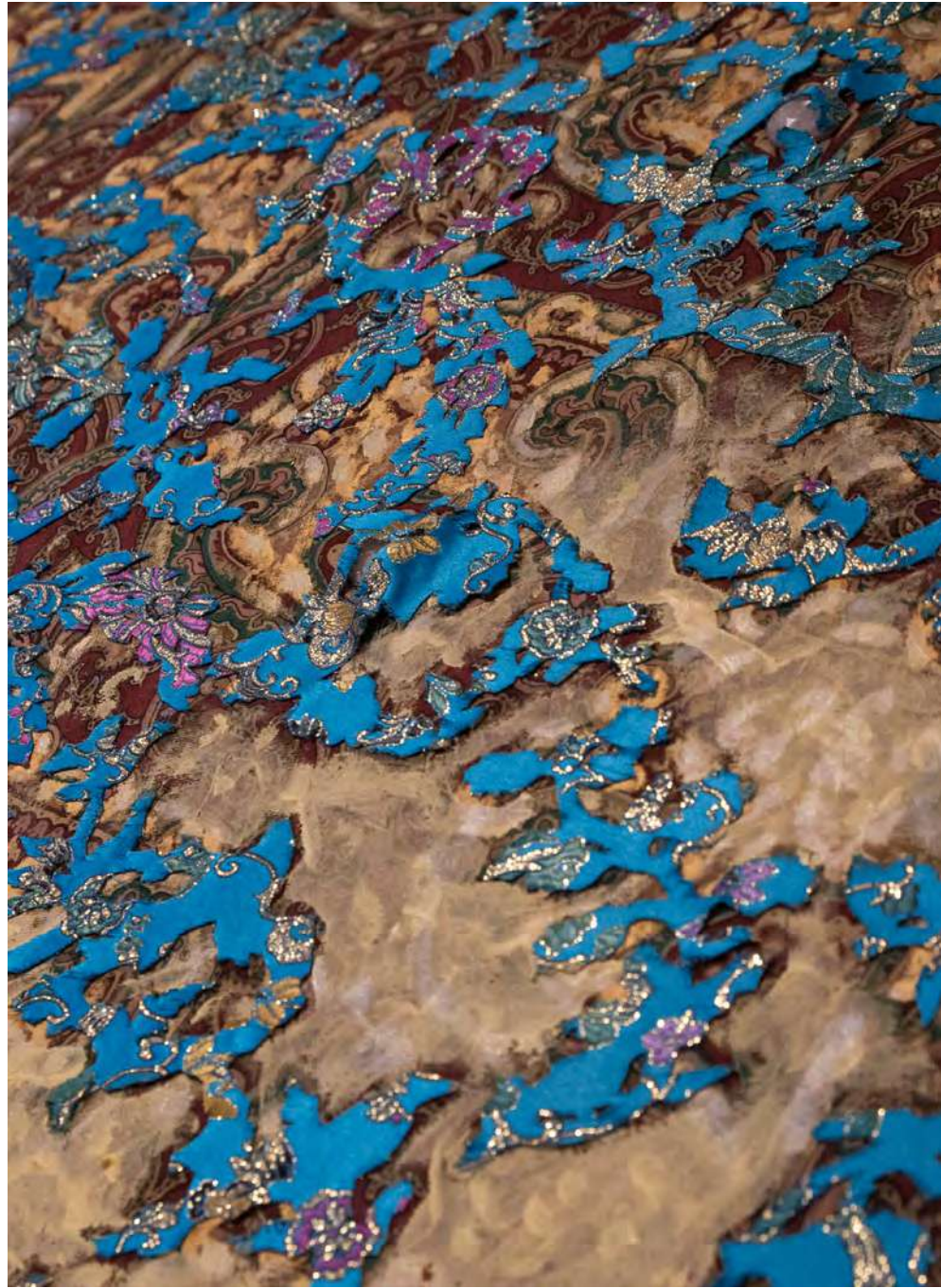


Play

When Dilworth was spending time with family in Virginia, he witnessed his nieces, who were both in Elementary school at the time, reenacting an Active Shooter Drill they learned in school. Shocked to learn that it was necessary for elementary school students to prepare for an active shooter, Dilworth decided to capture photos of the moment which he later used as a model for *Play*. The elements surrounding the cousins such as the blue brocade and the roses serve to frame the moment and create a window into another realm.

For Dilworth, the fantastical nature of the surrounding elements argue that the need for shooter drills in schools should be considered out of this world—rather than an unfortunate reality. In the painting, Dilworth also emphasizes the use of markers and mimics the effect of crayons in his strokes in order to add an additional playful element that connects the artwork more firmly to childhood, and more starkly emphasizes the troubled reality of school shootings.



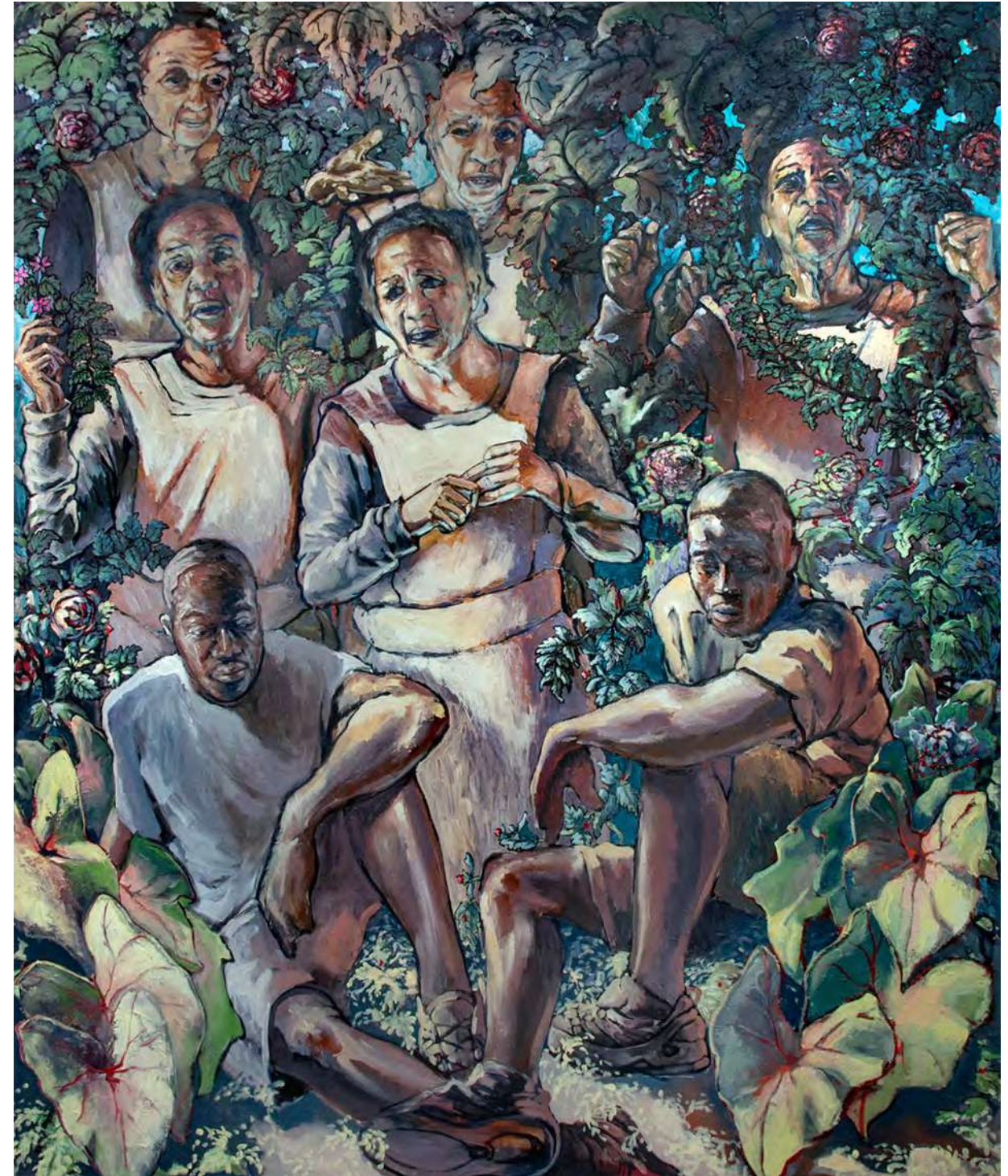


Sylvia

The painting, *Sylvia*, represents two women living in different time periods in Providence, Rhode Island: the contemporary actress, Sylvia Soares as well as the nineteenth century seer, Sylvia, or Sylvy, Torrey. Soares wrote and acted in a play in which she portrays Torrey, recovering her life and memory to the historical record. Dilworth asked Soares to come in character as Torrey to serve as a model for this painting.

Torrey was born in Africa, but was enslaved in Kingston, Rhode Island. She was emancipated in 1795. Known as an accurate predictor of the future, Torrey gained a reputation during her lifetime for being wise and connected to the spiritual world. She died at age 112 in 1849.

Dilworth began this painting during the protests that followed the murder of George Floyd. For Dilworth, Torrey is an ancestral figure whose wisdom can instruct and inspire younger generation during this time of unrest and confusion. He depicts contemporary young men seated listening to Torrey. Together Soares and Dilworth bring Torrey's legacy back to life, prompting viewers to learn from the past and seek the guidance of history, including from those who have come before us.



Tiffany

The five figures all represent different versions of Dilworth's niece, Tiffany. Depicting several incarnations of Tiffany allows the viewer to see the range of her emotions as a strong, independent black woman. While *Tiffany* is a literal depiction of Dilworth's niece, her figures represent, for Dilworth, all Black women who work to make their own mark on the world and empower themselves. Dilworth's use of a gold background underscores the sense of empowerment Tiffany and her peers possess.

Dilworth's photography practice is particularly well represented in *Tiffany*. When spending time with his family and friends, Dilworth often asks permission to photograph them. He aims to capture his subject's natural expressions and poses, so he tries to make his family and friends forget about the camera's presence. In *Tiffany*, Dilworth chose five separate photographs, captured as candid, that worked together in unison while still representing distinct emotions.







Self Portrait

When Dilworth created *Self Portrait*, he found himself at a standstill. He had just retired from teaching, went through open heart surgery, and the COVID-19 Pandemic hit. This led to Dilworth reflecting on time and his life. The figure laying down in the back of the composition facing away represents the past. The figure contemplates the past gazing at the floral pattern that has a cosmic element. The shirtless figure sitting on the bed represents the present and stares off toward the future, reflecting on what is next. The figure in the lower right hand corner represents future possibilities, since nothing about the future is certain.

Dilworth makes use of many fabrics in this composition which he acquired through friends and family from his hometown in Lawrenceville, VA. The fabric brings another intimate layer to this self-portrait as Dilworth's hometown is in a way infused into the canvas through the fabrics and lace. The fabric flowers and vines at the bottom of the composition climb up the bed and intermingle and transform into painted flowers and vines. The presence of the garden indicates an exterior space, however the idea that the fabric flowers are reminiscent of wallpaper and the presence of a bed suggest an interior setting. This mixture of interior and exterior is mirrored in how Dilworth views home as an all-encompassing idea of a sense of place including, physical houses, the natural surrounding area, and the people who inhabit these places.







Small informational text panel on the left wall.



Small informational text panel on the right wall.

Tie

Like the floral fabric elements of many of Bob's works which originated from the homes of family and friends, the silk ties in this work once belonged to the artist's father, but Dilworth has deconstructed them, transforming them in the process. And like the domestic interior patterns that are combined into lush gardens the bold geometric patterns of vintage ties here operate together as abstractions.

Dilworth set out to create an entirely fabric work with a direct connection to one of his earlier paintings, and decided to re-use his figure studies from *Camouflage*. Throughout the exhibition the importance of line drawing, mark making, and contours to Dilworth is visible, and with the development of his newest fabric works, the drawn, painted, and sprayed lines have become threads.

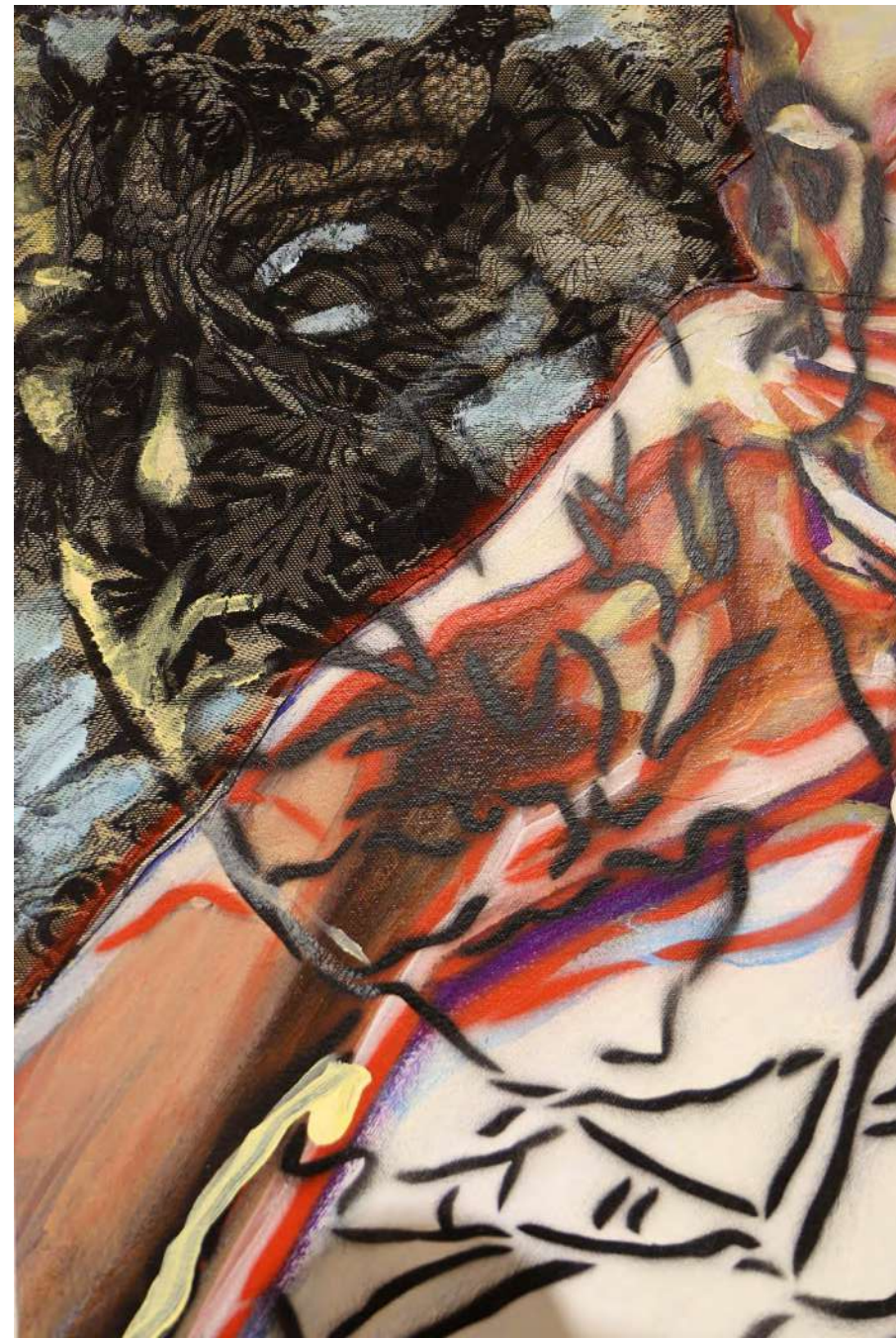
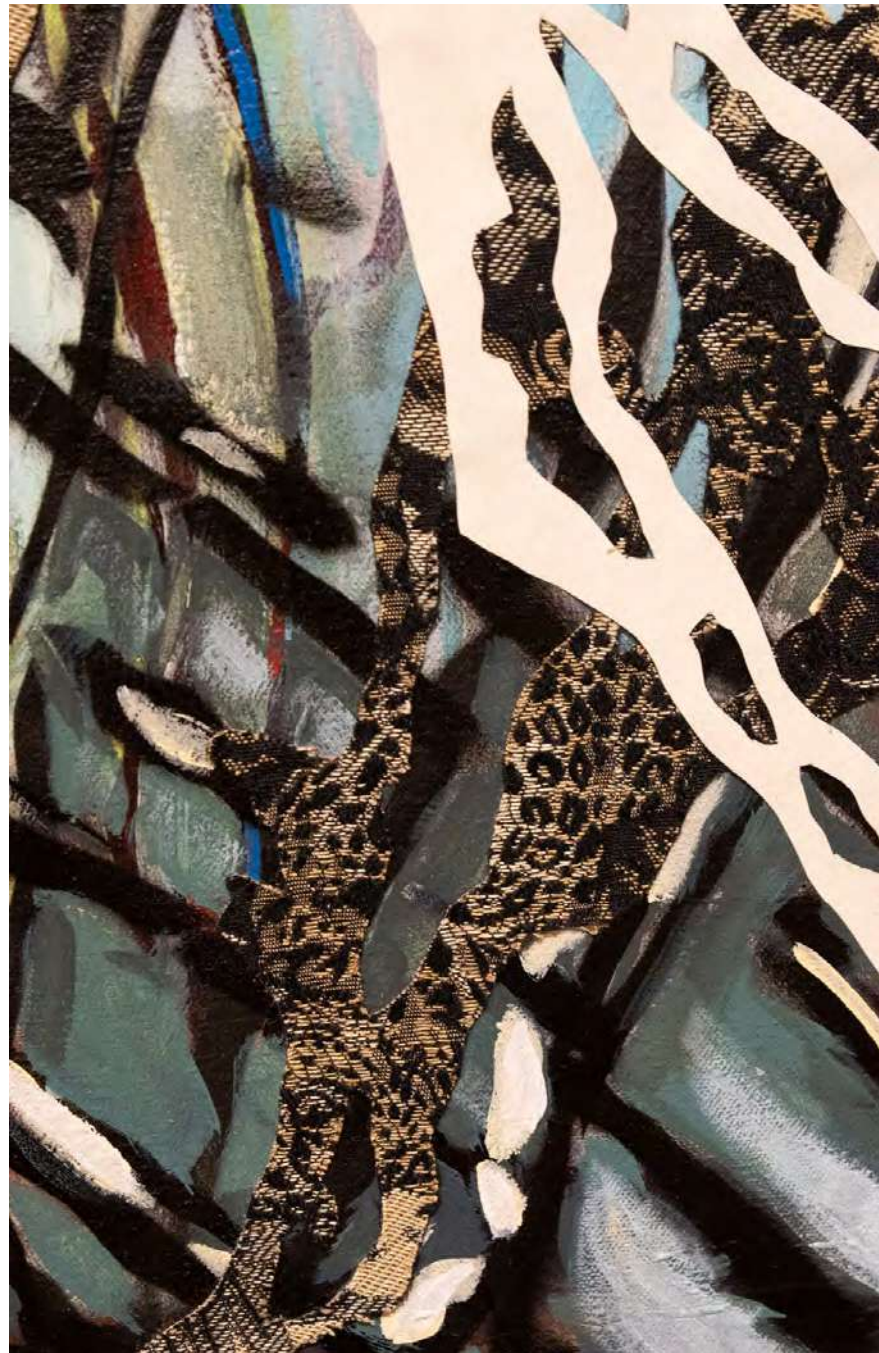
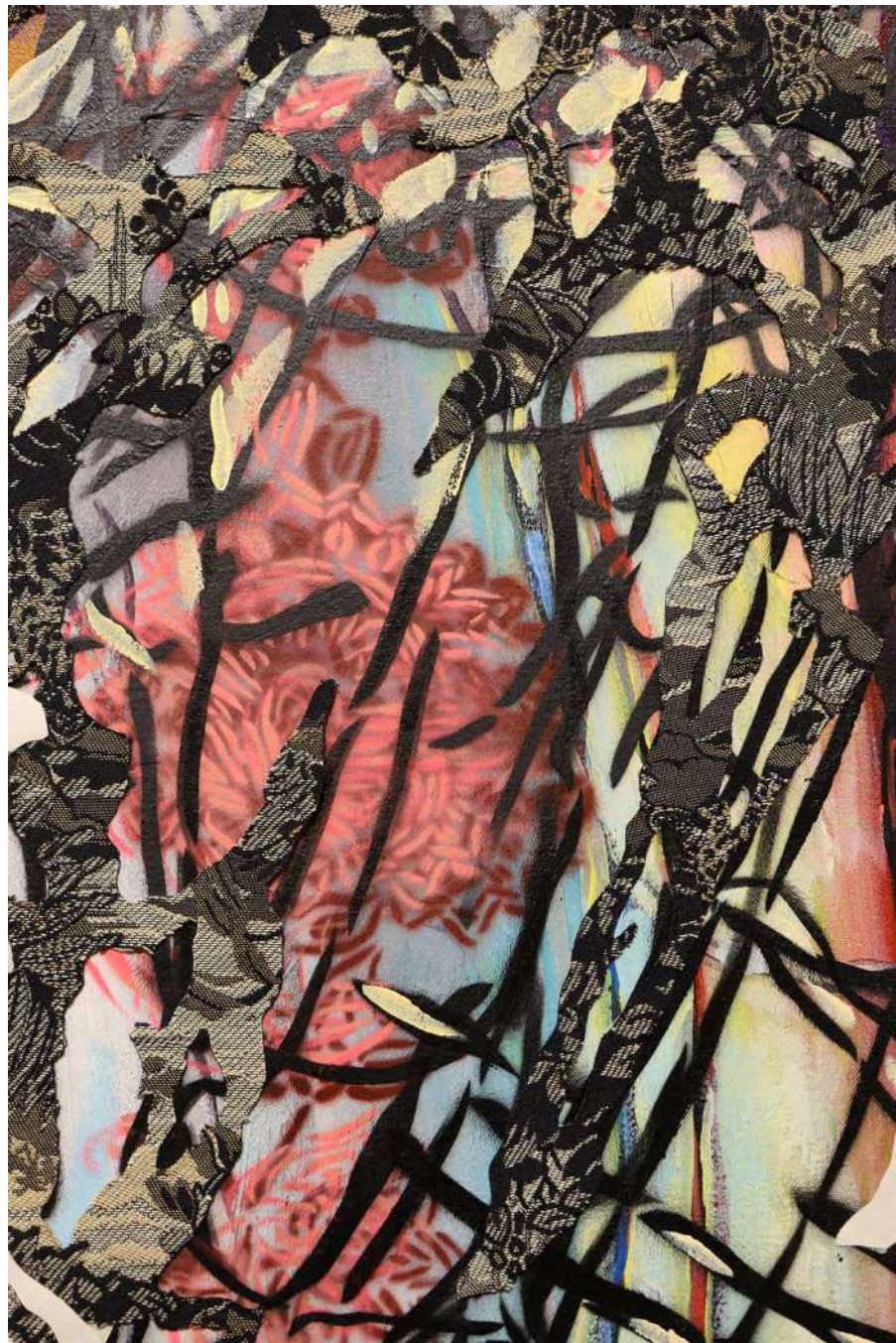


Rest

On close inspection, there are many more figures in *Rest* than the man lounging in the foreground. In fact, the top of the canvas is lined with a series of figures depicted with different levels of abstraction, including ghostly outlines. At first, Dilworth created this painting without the lounging man, making the figures in the background the original subject of the composition. However, Dilworth revisited the canvas after the rise of the Black Lives Matter Movement in 2020 and decided to add the distinct male figure.

Rest represents stepping away from the chaos of the current moment and taking time for yourself. While the painting started off as a portrait of a friend, it transformed into a self-portrait due Dilworth's desire to have a very specific pose and lighting that could only be achieved by himself in his studio.





Exhibition Checklist



Lawrenceville Landscape Series #1, 2012-2021
Acrylic paint, acrylic based spray paint
markers on canvas
95 x 67 inches
Courtesy of the Artist and Cade
Tompkins Projects



Lawrenceville Landscape #2, 2021
Acrylic paint, acrylic based spray paint,
paper, fabric, markers on canvas
67 x 82 inches
Courtesy of the Artist and Cade
Tompkins Projects



Aayden, 2021-2022
Acrylic paint, enamel spray paint, cut
canvas, markers on canvas
60 x 60 inches
Courtesy of the Artist and Cade
Tompkins Projects



Lawrenceville Landscape #4, 2021
Acrylic and collage on paper
19 x 25 inches
Courtesy of the Artist and Cade
Tompkins Projects



Edward and Christiana Bannister, 2024
Acrylic paint, royal blue brocade, gold coated
paper, costume jewelry, cotton fabric print
on canvas
83 x 88 inches
Courtesy of the Artist and Cade
Tompkins Projects



Venus, 2017-2021
Photo gel, acrylic and oil paint, acrylic ink,
paint markers, fabric and rhinestones
on canvas
82 x 84 inches
Courtesy of the Artist and Cade
Tompkins Projects



Maria, 2019-2020
Acrylic paint, spray paint, markers, cut
paper, glitter, photo transfer,
and fabric on canvas
77 x 72 inches
Courtesy of the Artist and Cade
Tompkins Projects



Lawrenceville Landscape #3, 2021
Acrylic and collage on paper
19 x 25 inches
Courtesy of the Artist and Cade
Tompkins Projects



Daniel and James, 2016-2019
Acrylic paint, fabric, paint markers,
acrylic based spray paint on canvas
85 x 60.5 inches
Courtesy of the Artist and Cade
Tompkins Projects



Margaret, 2019
Acrylic paint, blue brocade, photo gel
transfer on canvas
87 x 67 inches
Courtesy of the Artist and Cade
Tompkins Projects



Aayden and Jazeeya, 2024
Cotton cloth, green paisley brocade, blue
glitter-infused mesh, red sequin band, black
tulle, silver embroidery on white mesh, blue print
brocade trim, black, white, and red thread
47 x 52 inches
Courtesy of the Artist and Cade
Tompkins Projects



Lawrenceville Landscape #6, 2021
Acrylic and collage on paper
19 x 25 inches
Courtesy of the Artist and Cade
Tompkins Projects



Blue, 2017-2020
Acrylic and oil paint, acrylic based spray
paint, markers, fabric on canvas
87 x 67 inches
Courtesy of the Artist and Cade
Tompkins Projects



Elizabeth, 2016
Acrylic paint, enamel spray paint, paper,
marker on canvas
87 x 67 inches
Courtesy of the Artist and Cade
Tompkins Projects



Lawrenceville Landscape #8, 2021
Acrylic and collage on paper
19 x 25 inches
Courtesy of the Artist and Cade
Tompkins Projects



Lawrenceville Landscape #2, 2021
Acrylic and collage on paper
19 x 25 inches
Courtesy of the Artist and Cade
Tompkins Projects



Lawrenceville Landscape #5, 2021
Acrylic and collage on paper
19 x 25 inches
Courtesy of the Artist and Cade Tompkins Projects



Tie, 2024,
Cotton cloth on silk and linen
64 x 96 inches
Courtesy of the Artist and Cade Tompkins Projects



Play, 2023
Acrylic paint, enamel paint, fabric,
marker on canvas
68 x 78 inches
Courtesy of the Artist and Cade Tompkins Projects



Rest, 2023
Acrylic paint, enamel paint, printmakers
ink, paper, fabric, markers on canvas
83 x 88 inches
Courtesy of the Artist



Lawrenceville Landscape #7, 2021
Acrylic and collage on paper
25 x 19 inches



Camouflage, 2021
Acrylic paint, enamel paint,
markers on canvas
94 x 83 inches
Courtesy of the Artist and Cade Tompkins Projects



Sylvia, 2023
Acrylic paint, acrylic based spray
paint, markers on canvas
99 x 83 inches
Courtesy of the Artist and Cade Tompkins Projects



Lawrenceville Landscape #4, 2020
Acrylic and collage on paper
50 x 38 inches
Courtesy of the Artist and Cade Tompkins Projects



Piggy-Back, 2023
Acrylic paint, enamel paint, paper
on canvas
66 x 66 inches
Courtesy of the Artist and Cade Tompkins Projects



Tiffany, 2017-2023
Acrylic paint, enamel paint, print
markers ink, paper, markers on canvas
94 x 83 inches
Courtesy of the Artist and Cade Tompkins Projects



Gary Sitting, 2024
Acrylic, black lace, silver embroidery
on canvas
60 x 60 inches
Courtesy of the Artist and Cade Tompkins Projects



March, 2023
Acrylic paint and enamel paint
on wood
72 x 66 inches
Courtesy of the Artist



Self portrait, 2021-2022
Acrylic paint, ink, enamel paint,
markers, and fabric on canvas
76 x 90 inches
Courtesy of the Artist and Cade Tompkins Projects



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Catalog edited by Emily Mazzola and Sarah Harper.

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Sarah Harper: Pages: 9, 10, 14, 21, 22, 45, 46, 51, 52, 55, 56, 63, 64, 67, 68, 70, 77, 87, 88, 89, 93, and 94

Bob Dilworth and Cade Tompkins Projects: Pages: Cover, 1, 2, 4, 5, 8, 12, 16, 20, 23, 25, 30, 32, 33, 40, 43, 48, 49, 58, 61, 66, 69, 72, 74, 78, 80, 84, 90, and 92

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Zachary Amidon: 24, 31, 47, and 71

Emily Russo: 59, 60, and 62

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