



## CULLEN BRYANT WASHINGTON, JR.

1970s sitcoms, giant expanses of outer space, and stretches of asphalt appear and then collide in Cullen Bryant Washington, Jr.'s painted collages as thoughtful ruminations on the nature of blackness. Using a mash up of cultural references, from science fiction to his own Southern childhood through mixed-media, Washington channels the polyphonic nature of influence and identity in the content and form of his work.

Washington's underlying interest lies in black masculinity and the conflicting images of toughness and vulnerability of characters in popular culture. To that end we find J.J. Walker from the television show *Good Times*, whose "dyno-MITE" became the catchphrase of a generation and lends itself to the painting's title *Dyno-mite in My Room* (2008). A modified USS Enterprise from *Star Trek* lingers at the base of *Final Frontier* (2009), an almost monochrome painting that is, in fact, a galaxy-turned-roadway. A boy's street playground and fantasy world of outer space merge into a single color field of blackness. Outer space becomes a recurrent theme. "[Black] is the color of our inner and outer universes," explains the artist, "to go where no man or woman has gone before. It is to go into the Blackness."

Washington's work evokes the painting and collage techniques of Romare Bearden and Jean-Michel Basquiat with some of the deep black expanses and minimal forms of Richard Serra's prints and drawings. In doing so, he melds the history of art into a broader discussion of race in popular culture today. Playing with the slippery meanings of both words and images with surprising and clever combinations, Washington underscores the complexities, contradictions, and even humor in the idea of culturally formed blackness. — DD

**BORN** 1972,  
in Alexandria, LA,  
lives and works Roxbury, MA  
and Brooklyn, NY

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41/92  
Artists

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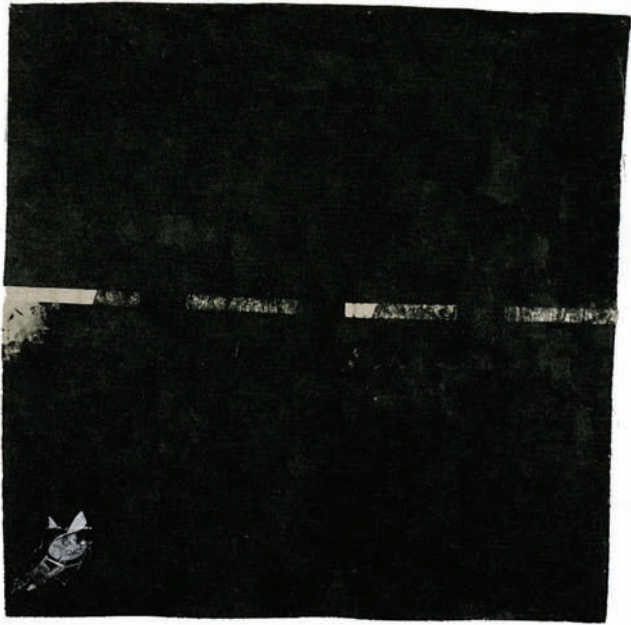
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CULLEN  
BRYANT  
WASHINGTON,  
JR.

The Final Frontier, 2009  
acrylic,  
carbonundrum paper  
83 x 83 inches  
Courtesy of the artist

92/41  
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93/41  
Plates

De Cordova Biennial 2012, De Cordova Museum, Lincoln, MA

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