

PATRICK QUARM uses depth and space to create tension across different mediums. This 3D work teases you with a narrative, but calls on the viewer to come to their own conclusions and use *their* imagination to explore greater ideas. His work investigates the various complexities that compose the modern history of social evolution as a continuous process influenced by political, social, historical and immediate cultural expression. His pieces attempt to unravel and merge these layers as a way of initiating a conversation around the expanded notion of cultural hybridity; one that merges histories and experiences and develops a unique third personality or character. Quarm is on a quest to understand the human condition. And with that, pick apart his contemporary society continuing to be shaped by post-colonial Ghana and the world at large.

Gray, Austen. "Patrick Quarm Brings Together a Hybridized Society." *Art of Choice*, 5 Jan. 2020, www.artofchoice.co/patrick-quarm-brings-together-a-hybridized-society/.

albertz benda

515 w 26th st | new york, ny | 10001
tel 212.244.2579 | www.albertzbenda.com

Tell us a little about yourself. Where are you from originally and when did art first enter your life?

I was born in Ghana, specifically in Takoradi, a city located in the western region of Ghana. I completed most of my formal education in Ghana. I attended elementary school in Takoradi and moved to the Kumasi region to attend high school at Prempeh College. I would say this was the formative stage of my passion and love for art; this is when art was introduced into my life. As a child, I loved to draw and paint. I loved art but was never given the opportunity to thoroughly explore it. In high school, I was able to focus my attention on drawing and painting; I majored in visual arts. The Ghanaian education system is fashioned after the British system; as a result, I had the ability to enroll in art courses early in my academic career while at Prempeh College High school. Completing this program in high school only spurred my passion for art even more. I majored in Fine Arts in college at the Kwame Nkrumah University Science and Technology where I graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree.



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Has your work always taken on the style it currently embodies?

My work has certainly evolved overtime. As an artist, when it comes to the style of my work, I allow it to grow and develop. As a result, my practice often takes on a different form depending on the idea or concept I seek to communicate or the dialogue I want to establish.



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What is your process like? How do you begin a work?

When I begin working, I do not predetermine the outcome of a piece; I allow its visual tensions to instruct me and enable its transformation. In this material exploration of the hybrid, key words such as globalization, trans-culturalism, universalism and cultural conflict come into play. My process begins with an idea, then I translate those ideas into sketches. Sometimes I look at old photographs from colonial and post-colonial Ghana as inspiration points. To begin, I mount the African fabrics on the wall. I base my selection on the design and meaning of the patterns within the fabric, its color, and texture. I then collage the African print fabric onto a prime canvas as background and sections of the body to be painted. Erasing and diminishing sections of the painted figure represent the interplay and merging of two entities. The translucent layering exposes the fabric and its patterns which represents the figure's core makeup. This, to me, is a constant rethinking of the past and present to construct the future. It is not in my sole interest to give the whole narration of a story happening within a work, but instead to leave trail marks. This allows the viewer to develop his or her own understanding and relationship to hybridity. In my painting, a hint of narration is enough to connect a universal audience, thereby activating their experience.



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What's a day in the studio like for you?

A day in the studio is a day of mixed feelings. My studio can be my escape; my studio can also be a place I have meltdowns just to be real and authentic with my work. My studio is not limited to the room or physical space I work in. My studio is everything I see around me. When I walk down the street, I look at people, their lifestyles, and their culture. I use all these human observations to expand on the dialogue that is ultimately translated into my work. I often travel with a diary where I record key moments or take mental snapshots of interests that synchronize with the conceptual discourse I seek to convey through my paintings; i.e. the idea of social evolution, cultural hybridity, the evolution of the "other" within a cultural third space. My studio experience continues when I am in the physical studio. There, I can reflect on the ideas and ruminate on ideas. I try to recreate the mental images by either sketching them or recreating certain scenes using models. I am very selective about the people I use as subjects in my paintings. Individuals, mainly Africans or individuals of African American descent, whose history is aligned with the narrative of cultural hybridity or who are a living experience of cultural hybridity or social evolution, often serve as subjects for my work. After the individual ideas come together to my satisfaction, I then begin to translate them onto the canvas. The process continues by determining the type of fabric that best communicates the concepts within the painting.



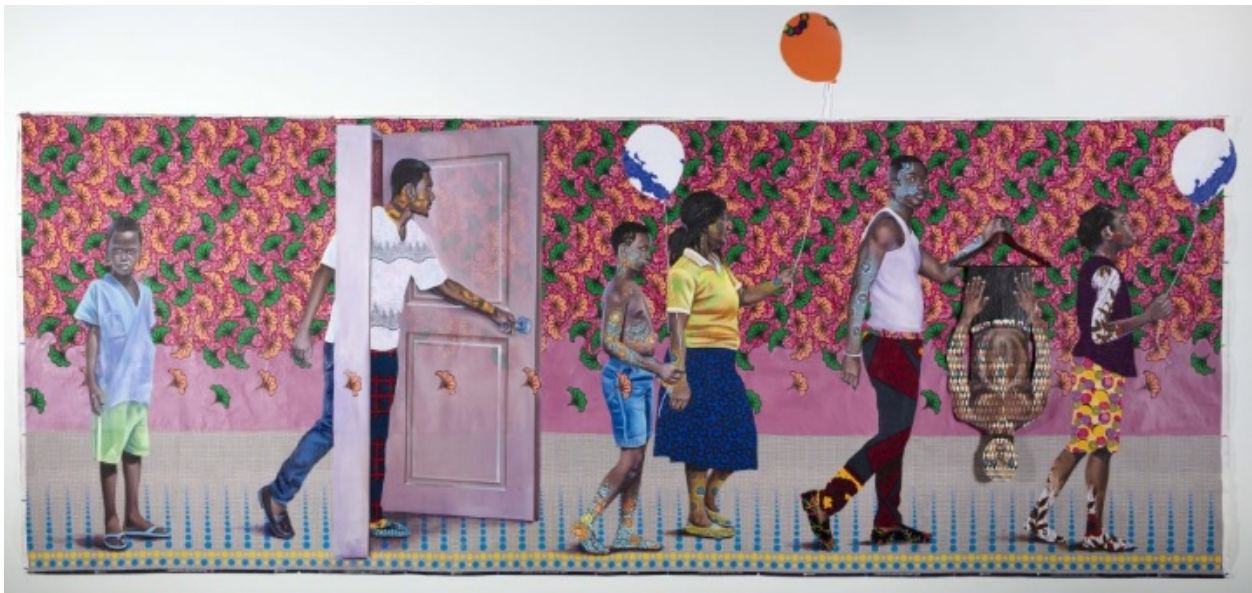
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From where do you draw inspiration?

As I said before, my inspiration is mainly drawn from life -history; life the same as history. My quest has been to understand the human condition, *what defines me as a person?* What defines an African within a given social space and how these definitions determine how the African navigates through social spaces. With this in mind, I always think of history as the sedimentation of events. My task or my duty as an artist is to strip each layer after the other to bring clarity; to understand the past and how the past shapes the present. These ideas are also reflected in my process; how I layer one fabric over the other, one pattern over the other through the process of gluing, which represents the sedimentation of history or the burying of history and the stripping down of history. For me this is an essential process one must go through to gain understanding. I recently traveled to Ghana; my time home was a great phase. I was finally able to put myself within the social space I constantly talk about after being away for such a long time. My experience within the Ghanaian space became new, something refreshing, at the same time something unrecognized. To me, that unrecognized change is where the hybrid exists; that is where the hybrid becomes an author of history.



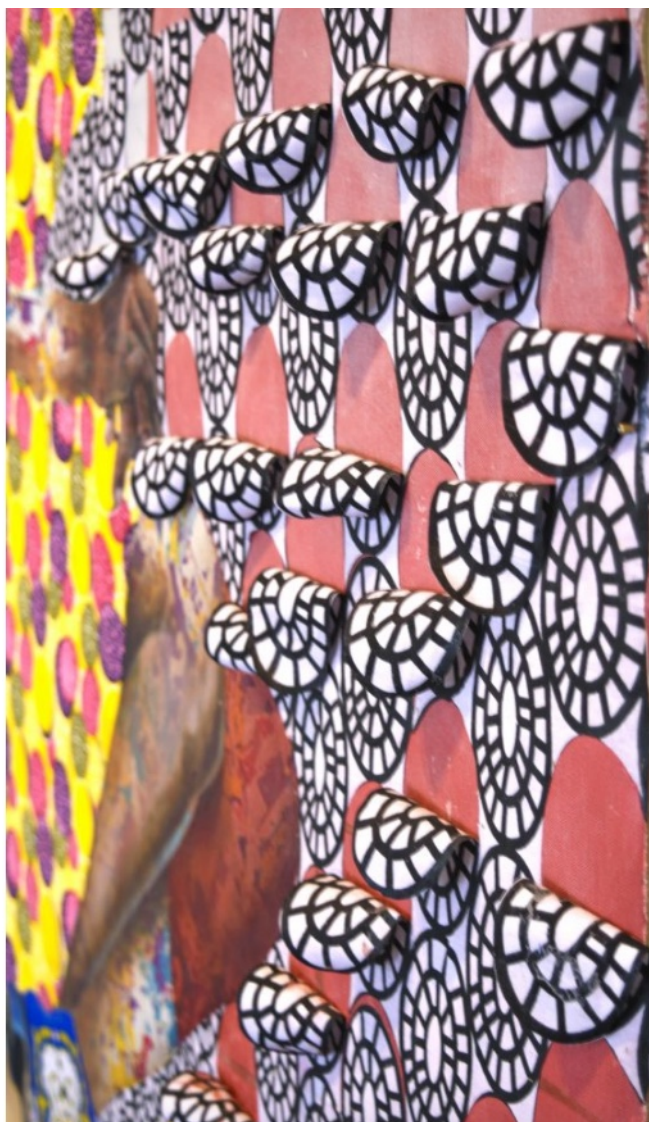
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Have you always painted in the style your work currently inhabits?

No, I haven't. My work has developed overtime. At the early stages, my interest was to understand painting; understand the technique of drawing and the principles involved. At the early stages I focused primarily on the technical aspect of art. As I progressed into my years in college, I began questioning myself; inquiring on how I could refine my understanding. I sought ways to use this understanding to represent the human body. A unique trait about my work is the use of the figure; it has been a significant aspect of my work because I see the figure as a transcending entity that imparts all ideas. At the onset of my career, I worked within the traditional western style of painting; mainly photorealistic.



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How did you come to use African print fabric from there?

My current style of work began when I was pursuing my Master of Fine Arts at the Texas Tech University. It was during this period in my practice that I started examining activities and developments in the broader art world. This piqued my desire to be part of it and formed my aspiration to establish my own personal language. A language that reflects me as an artist, that reveals my evolution as an artist and signifies an experience I could directly and personally be a part of. This triggered my use of African print fabric; that process of experimentation gave rise to the style of work I currently produce. Thus, my current work is a merger of my early design of work and elements of the evolution my work has since taken on.

Why is this fabric important?

My use of the African print is significant because of the history of the fabric. It is known as the *African print fabric*; however, its origin is Indonesia. The fabric is found in Africa as a byproduct of trade. Africans then, incorporate their designs as a way to claim ownership. For me, the question of authenticity comes into play. Both materials help me establish the discourse on social evolution and cultural dialogue and how overtime cultures intermix. Within that intersection, there's an intermediate space created where the hybrid exists.



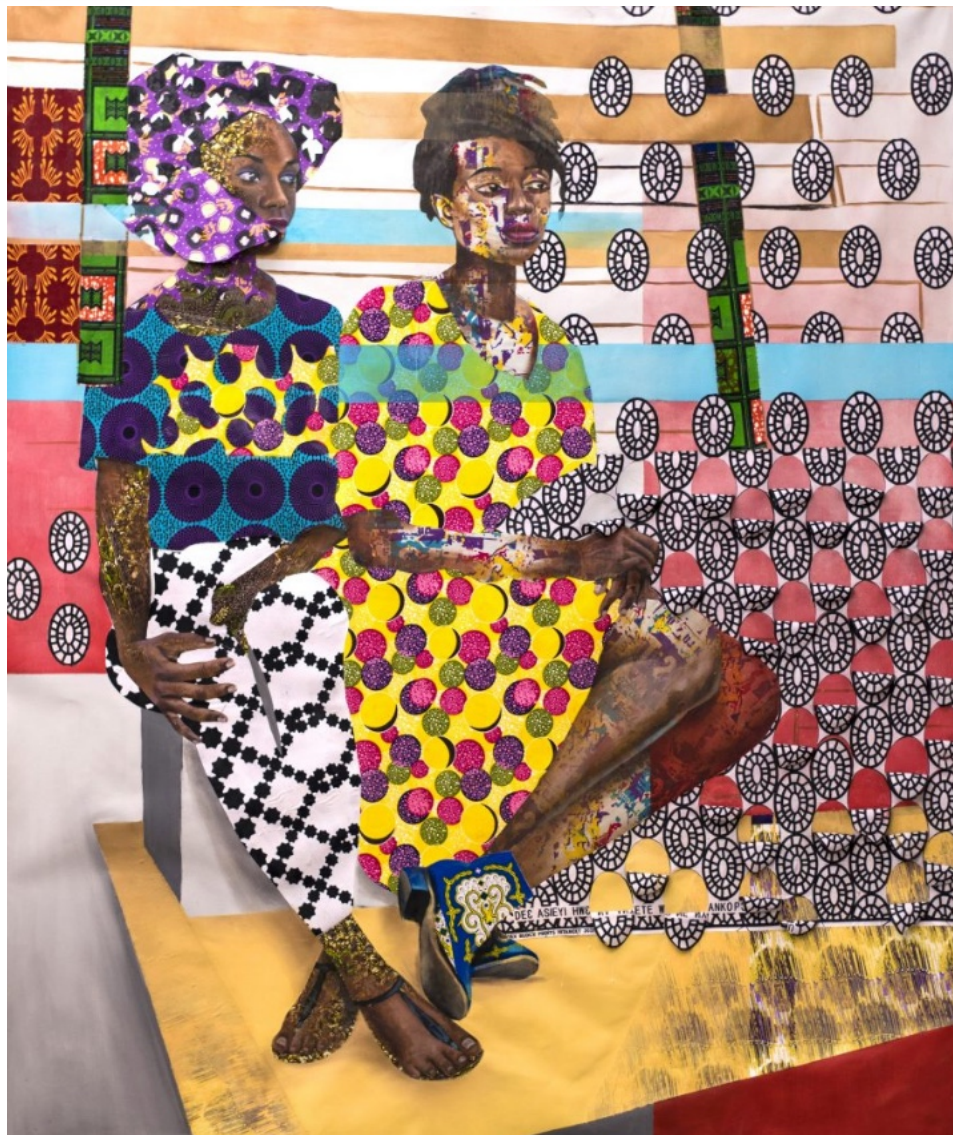
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What source material do you base your work off of?

I refer to my work as multimedia. The two main materials I use are oil paint and African print fabric. During my undergraduate education in Ghana I was trained in the traditional western style of painting. Being in Ghana, one would assume I would be trained with the style of the local area, but our education had western influence. As an African living in Africa, this is one way I became a hybrid; through the education system. I am taking what I have been trained with and merging it with the traditional patterns/design of Africa; weaving both worlds into one entity, that entity is the hybrid or the modern African. This, to me, is synonymous to the conversation of hybridity.



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Does your work reference any Art Historical movements?

I generally don't work having an art movement in mind; however, there are influence points. The western style of paintings draws its inspiration or influence from Renaissance artists. Key things such as the way the body is rendered, how the flesh is defined, posture – posing of figures, and the definition of form, are vital things I focus on. The Renaissance style was also one of the main Western movements I was taught throughout the colonial Ghanaian education system; therefore, it has become a part of my practice. When I merge it with the African print fabric, I begin to look at the representation of the African artist as an influence point.

What larger questions does your work ask?

My use of patterns design, texture, collaging, representing sections of the body in abstract forms while fusing it with realistic forms are all traits and attributes derived from art styles in Africa. Blending these two movements is my way of presenting a contemporary take on the possibilities of what a painting can be. *Is it defined by region or is art a universal taste?* These are questions I do not answer, but rather pose to my audience or to the viewer.



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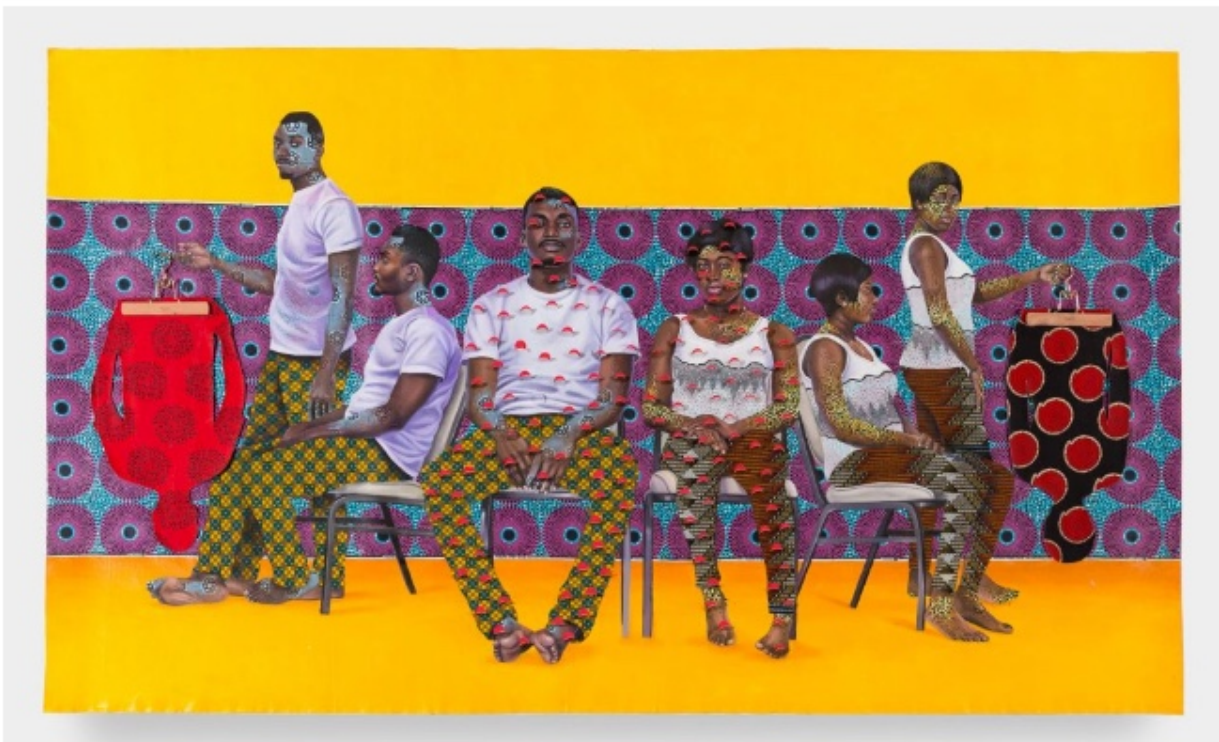
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What's next for you?

Keep making good work! That is one of the things I keep thinking about every day; to keep making good art and not to compromise. At the moment, I have a few shows lined up for the year. I have a solo show in New York with Albertz Benda gallery coming up. I have another solo show currently in the process of being finalized. I also have a few group shows lined up throughout the year. Looking at my career, being young in the game, and looking at the trajectory, I'm very excited about what is happening and how progressive my career has been. As much as the future is unknown, the future is also sometimes determined; which means I'll keep doing my best with every opportunity that comes as they keep coming. A lot of great opportunities are pending; when the time is right, they will be known. For now, I'm working towards these goals.

At the end of every interview, we like to ask the artist to recommend a friend whose work you love for us to interview next. Who would you suggest?

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