



14 Years Old

I didn't start engaging in the arts until late in college. I got exposed to art through photography and began making pictures. However for some strange reason I limited myself to just the pure art of photography. My crazy ass wouldn't even let myself do video. Then one day I said fuck it I am an artist and began exploring and experimenting with anything and everything.

Then I stumbled upon quilting and that took off and brought me to galleries and museums. Things I never ever imagined happening. But I never wanted to limit myself.

While studying the likes of Martin Kippenberger, David Hammons, Lubaina Himid, Alvaro Barrington, Robert Rauschenberg, Bruce Nauman, Black Mountain College, and the Dada movement, I began to understand my lineage in the arts. I was so attracted to their ability to explore and experiment, and I knew that's what I wanted to do. My whole life I've been hard to categorize and now I want that same feeling about my work.

A major component of my practice is having different starting points in creating art. Pieces that are printed on canvas start from a found photograph or my own photography that I was attracted to. Printing the photo out on canvas and then quilting on top of it plays with the idea of what a quilt can be. Adding different material and different images to work with allows myself to deepen the meaning of the work. I blend an old tradition of quilting with the new age technology of sophisticated digital printing.

This show is titled *14 Years Old* because that's how old I feel in my art career. 14 years old is right when most kids are transitioning from middle school to high school. I remember I found a couple things that I was good at (i.e. sports) but I was still open to exploring other things. That's exactly how I see my practice. I learned I can draw fairly well, quilt a little better and I know how to collage. With those tools I've been pushing myself to explore and experiment with different styles and materials to depict the world around me.

–Michael C. Thorpe





Michael C. Thorpe
on *14 Years Old*

Atlanta House Party

This piece goes back to expanding and challenging myself to what a human can look like. I was inspired by my time in Atlanta where I went to a couple of parties where I didn't know a lot of people but there were amazingly interesting characters that would later be depicted here.

Austy sluggin' one

Drawing of one my best friends Austin.

Big Baller Bentley

This work is centered around my continuing exploration of what humans can look like. (For) this piece I focused on abstraction and color. Giving myself the boundary of working within the idea of what a human can be allows me to push my creativity and imagination and create amazing imaginary friends in the process.

Big Fish Little Man

Once there was a little man
and that little man
caught a great big ole fish

Birdman finger painting @ 46 in kindergarten class

This piece was created from an iPhone drawing. I drew it with only my finger. Working with just lines is incredibly fun and demanding (and) really narrows your focus on what's most important for the image. I also am very attracted to bringing the old world and the new world together. This piece does that by combining iPhone technology to make the drawing with quilting to bring it to life.

British Iron Man

I found this cardboard cut-out in a thrift store and instantly thought how sick it would be to do something to it. I choose not to paint but use paper collage as my own paint. Trying to use paper in lieu of paint is challenging but exhilarating.

Corner

The corner of my mother's living room.

Da Boat

A soft whistle caresses the surface of the water. Hours don't exist while on the boat.

Flower Gal @ Bar

This is a depiction of my lovely partner Cecilia but shhhh don't tell anyone.

Gunther Place

This is the first apartment Cecilia and I lived in together.

Hopeless Romantic

"I brought you flowers."

If the rapper Blu had dreads

Realize there's a heaven whether you think it's inside or in the sky

Reach for it (Yeah) before it's gone eternally (Gone)

And you stuck here below the heavens for eternity (Uh)

LOT

This piece I wanted to explore abstraction and highlighting black success. The image (for *LOT*) came from an old Ebony magazine. I love how they celebrated black excellence. I want to highlight that by putting that on a gallery wall and talking about it. The approach to mark making was based on automatism. I allowed my subconscious to take over and create shapes all over the piece.

Mikey's Secret Hideout

Man this piece does a lot for me. This is the first piece that I've made that exposed me to the importance of collaboration in my practice. The age old saying that it takes a village is so true. I came up with the idea of this piece a while ago and worked with a good friend named Brooks who can literally fabricate anything. Inside the hideout are soft sculptures that I also had fabricated. To me the most important component of art is the idea. Once you have the idea the problem becomes how you are going to bring that idea to life. I always felt uncomfortable about working with other people to bring my ideas to life until I learned about Martin Kippenberger and how he pushed the idea of what art and an art practice can be. Now I'm unafraid to bring any of my ideas to life.

Morning Joe

Morning conversations over coffee have been the most enriching and inspiring times of my life. I love sharing ideas and taking part in the traditions of oral history.

Nigga from Alien

With my foundation of art centered around quilting I began to realize that quilting is just working with found objects and collaging them together. This opened up dialogue with masters like Duchamp and Rauschenberg. With that understanding, I am always on the lookout for interesting materials that I can work with. This piece excited me by the beautiful typeface and marks that add depth. Being that the cardboard had a presence of science fiction I thought it would be a perfect background for Bolaji Badejo the seven-foot Nigerian artist that was behind the iconic Alien.

North Haven

Drawing of an island off the coast of Maine.

Philipp and Bailey

This piece explores my roots of photography. I studied photography in college and it was actually my introduction into art. I put down the camera shortly after college and wasn't sure how it would impact my practice again. Recently I picked the camera back up to explore how I can incorporate photography into my practice. These pieces depict my good friend and fellow artist Philipp J. Hoffmann, and my good friend Bailey Wenzler.

Poo in the Library

The gift of reading is the most dangerous weapon we have.

Prospect Park

Colored pencil drawing of summer time in Prospect Park.

Scarface (Self-Portrait)

This piece has a lot of history. Not entirely good. One late night in the studio I had a few too many beers and biked home. Unfortunately, I had a bike accident. Luckily, I am okay. I made this piece of the aftermath of that accident. I banged up my face pretty good. It's presented upside down because I fell on my head. Not my finest hour.

Someone who would def whoop yo ass

Boxing legend Pernell Whitaker.

Stolen from a Henry Taylor Painting

I remember seeing an amazing painting by Henry Taylor of two people and just had to try my hand at creating it.

Studio Window

This piece has taken two years to make. When I moved into my studio this gate was in the alleyway of my building. The instant I saw it I was mystified. It was one of the coolest objects I've ever witnessed and knew I had to do something with it. Part of me wanted to just take it as is and present it. However right now in my practice I like to visually leave my mark. So, I just passed it every day and thought about it.

Then one day it dawned on me. By weaving fabric through the open squares, it would transform into a pixelated image. My world shook.

Tony

For this piece, I was exploring the possibility of stitching through paper. By doing so, questioning what can be called a quilt or work on paper.

Untitled #1, Untitled #2

These pieces are inspired by just creating forms that again expand my definition of what a human can look like.

Viva

I attended the St. Peter's Fiesta in Gloucester and was inspired by all the sights and sounds. The main event was the greasy pole. Where brave individuals try their luck at walking all the way out to capture the flag and more importantly the respect of all.

Whole Family

This piece adds to the complexity of the black experience. Before I had ever opened *Ebony*, I thought it was all about celebration of black life however it was far greater than that. It really shed a light on the black experience and talked about topics that are deeply connected to the human experience. While thinking about the idea of family and how it pertains to me, I was in Massachusetts visiting my own family and at the time of drawing I was with six family members including me and everyone just became a shape in my mind. It just fit so beautifully on top of this page, obstructing part of the article, leaving just enough to investigate.

