



UNC

THE SONJA HAYNES STONE
CENTER FOR BLACK CULTURE
AND HISTORY



La Sombra y el Espíritu IV

FIGURATIVE VISIONS & COLLECTIVE HISTORIES
THE WORK OF STEFANIE JACKSON

FEBRUARY 11 - MAY 13, 2016

THE ROBERT & SALLIE BROWN GALLERY AND MUSEUM



(left) **Save the Children** | 4ft x 6ft

ABOUT THE EXHIBIT

From February 11 – May 13, 2016 the Stone Center's Robert and Sallie Brown Gallery and Museum will host noted artist Stefanie Jackson for an exhibition entitled *La Sombra y el Espiritu IV: Figurative Visions and Collective Histories - The Work of Stefanie Jackson*. Jackson is one of the most important African-American contemporary figurative artists exploring contemporary social and political events. She has used her oil paintings, lithographs, drawings and etchings to re-examine important historical moments in African-American and U.S. history such as the Atlanta race riots, and the Katrina disaster in New Orleans.

Jackson is noted for the figurative social expressionism that shapes the complex visual narratives often found in her work. Her work directly challenges viewers to engage the sometimes transgressive approach by repositioning everyday elements of life that are viewed as static. In many instances, Jackson has used these techniques to unbalance and then resituate the viewer's visual center of balance.

With this kind of work it could become easy to simply seek to shock the audience for the sake of invoking a reaction. Therefore, Jackson has always grounded her explorations in the real, lived experiences of the landscapes and individuals she depicts, often referencing cities where she's resided in the past. While exploring 'problem' cities or events she has been able to highlight the plight of public housing in New Orleans, the decaying urban communities of Detroit, and the troubled French colonial history of New Orleans. With this kind of focus she is better able to interrogate another key element of contemporary urban life: people's relationships with the environment.

As expected, the unvarnished and often harsh truths expressed through her work have sometimes unsettled audiences that are used to more hopeful ideas or at least hopeful futures in art. She has responded that, "I just paint life, and sometimes life is difficult."

She has been featured widely in exhibitions and galleries around the country, including the African American Museum in Dallas, The Harriet Tubman Museum, and the Afro-American Historical and Cultural Museum in Philadelphia. Selected group and solo exhibitions include, *Groundstory: Tales From the Shade of the South*, *Tradition Redefined: The Larry and Brenda Thompson Collection of African American Art*, and *The Black Family at the Haggerty Museum*.

"Her paintings are visually complex and often based on compositions borrowed and re-invented from artists as diverse as Beckman, Picasso, or Goya."

– Scott Belville, blackartinamerica.com

Stefanie Jackson is an Associate Professor of Art at the Lamar Dodd School of Art at the University of Georgia. Jackson received her BFA from Parsons School of Design in 1979 and her MFA from Cornell University in 1988. Jackson has been the recipient of several individual grants from Georgia Council for the Arts and a Special Projects Grant from the National Endowment of the Arts. In 2002 Jackson became a recipient of the Adolph and Esther Gottlieb Foundation Award in recognition of her life's dedication developing artistic goals, regardless of other personal or financial responsibilities.





1. Joy Inside My Tears
Dimensions: 4ft x 6ft
2. Chocolat Plantation Sapelo Island
Dimensions : 4ft x 5ft
3. Love In Need Of Love Today
Dimensions: 4ft x 6ft
4. If It's Magic
Dimensions: 4ft x 6ft
5. Quadroom Ball
Dimensions: 4ft x 6ft
6. Ordinary Pain
Dimensions: 6ft x 4ft
7. Have a Talk with God
Dimensions: 5ft x 4ft
8. Love for Sale
Dimensions: 4ft x 6ft



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ARTIST'S STATEMENT

“Albert Camus once wrote that a person’s creative work is nothing but a slow trek to rediscover, through the detours of art, those two or three images in whose presence his or her art first opened...In the face of both external and internal destruction, we are still trying to create as dangerously as they, as though each piece of art were a stand-in for a life, a soul, a future.” – Create Dangerously by Edwidge Danticat.

My artwork is figurative/expressive with narrative aspects that allude to love, loss, and tragedy. The story of Orpheus reinterpreted in a Detroit setting with contemporary ghosts from my past allows me to explore the visual elements of a landscape that remains paradise lost.

Many years ago, I made a painting of Icarus as a drug addict, jumping off a New York fire escape. The theme appealed to me in the contemporary setting. I was drawn to Orpheus after having seen the movie *Black Orpheus* set in Brazil in the 50s during carnival time. The music and cinematography is lush and vibrant, and left a lasting impression with me about how art can transcend cultural boundaries. Reframing this Greek tragedy within another context enables me to express a personal vision of loss and tragedy in my paintings. I had originally planned to set the paintings in Trinidad where my grandmother was born and where I spent time as a child. The carnival metaphor from the movie was so appropriate. I changed my mind after visiting Detroit and seeing so many images of devastation, abandoned neighborhoods, and ultimately the loss of my childhood.

I have lost several close relatives to violence and I use them as characters in my paintings. In *Little Girl Blue*, the painting has biographical elements of a beautiful cousin lost to violence. The title is taken from a song by Nina Simone. In *Flying High* my brother takes center stage in the painting inspired by Marvin Gaye’s *What’s Going On* album. I see them cast as Orpheus and Euridice. I mention these two paintings because I felt a sense of affirmation when I read Edwidge Danticat’s thoughts on the creative process — “as though each piece of art was a stand-in for a life, a soul, a future.” I look back at many of my painting series about the people of Sapelo Island, about Hurricane Katrina, Detroit and New Orleans, the Slave Exchange, and I realized that I am acknowledging and affirming their very existence in my paintings.

NPR aired a story on famous and not-so-famous photographers from all over the world that come to Detroit to document the decay and publish these images as what has been called “slum porn”. One book is entitled *Lost Detroit*. What does he know about Detroit’s loss? Was he there to see the city burn? Can he go back to this block, school, street, church, or anywhere and imagine it as it used to be, filled with hope and promise? Motown? I know loss, I feel it every day and I know redemption because I have been blessed with the tools to express myself. These are the things I paint about — I create dangerously. I paint as though my life depended on it.

I traveled to Detroit to amass a visual database of photographs and figurative sketches of Detroit citizens. The visual images of battered Detroit are the backdrops for scenes of the underworld. I used this material and my imagination to create a series that loosely interprets the Orpheus and Euridice love story, using the visual metaphors of amore and contemporary nature.



About the Robert and Sallie Brown Gallery and Museum

The Robert and Sallie Brown Gallery and Museum at the Sonja Haynes Stone Center for Black Culture and History is dedicated to the enrichment of visual culture on campus and in the community. The Brown Gallery supports the Stone Center’s commitment to the critical examination of African-American and African diaspora cultures through formal exhibitions of works of art, artifacts and material culture.

History and Overview of the Stone Center

The Sonja Haynes Stone Center for Black Culture and History at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill is a campus-wide Center situated under the Provost’s Office. We play a central role in defining and supporting the academic mission of the University. We have a commitment to broaden the range of intellectual discourse about African Americans and to encourage a better understanding of the peoples of Africa and the African diaspora and their perspectives on important social and cultural issues.

Special Thanks To:

Black Art In America and The Friends of the
Robert and Sallie Brown Gallery and Museum.

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Gallery Hours:

Monday – Friday, 9:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m.
Other times by appointment; closed University holidays.

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