



DELITA
MARTIN

A CONVERSATION WITH DELITA MARTIN

BAM director Les Christensen talks with Delita Martin about her process and ideas

Summer 2016

LC: Your work incorporates a variety of techniques such as drawing, painting, printmaking, collage, stitching and now installation. Within these options, your choice of themes is very singular and personal. Please expand on this.



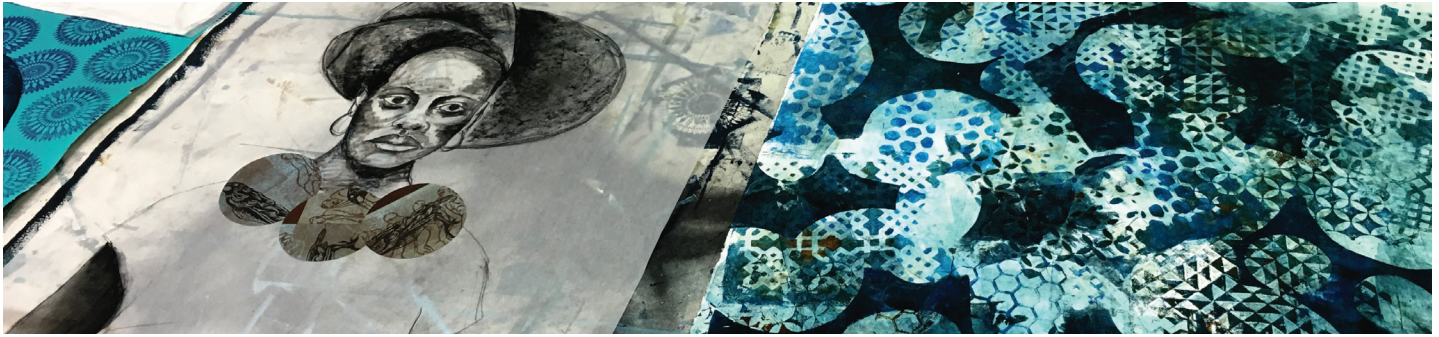
DM: My choice of medium does not influence the work. It's quite the opposite as the medium is responsive to and driven by the work. When I step inside the studio, it is not about being a printmaker, painter, or draftsman; it's telling a story as an artist utilizing a visual language that conveys the honesty of the work. Like a writer or poet using various resources and writing styles, I integrate a variety of mediums by weaving and layering them together to complete a story visually. My relationship with each medium is different. I started drawing when I was five years old so it's always been an anchor or centering point. Printmaking feeds my excitement and the sense of discovery, whereas painting is very calming. Collage and stitching is a way of unifying

the stories, transcending them to a tangible place. I think energy created by this push and pull between the mediums has led my interest in installations. I feel the work has reached a point that it wants to come off the page.

LC: It is quite exciting that your work is taking a new direction or as you said, coming off the page. In this exhibition you premiere your installation titled *Dinner Table*. Is this an example of that new direction and can you talk about the genesis of this work?

DM: Yes, *Dinner Table* is most definitely a new direction for me. The project is about the exploration of sisterhood among women of color. Through a series of hand-drawn portraits on plates, I have created a space, a dining room, historically thought of as a domestic space or a woman's domain and changed it to a place of prayer, where women can bond, tell stories, solve problems and lift each other up. I believe installation brings an extra dimension in how people connect to the art. Connection and interaction are at the core of all my artwork. I am fascinated with the idea of the viewer being able to connect to a culture and people that may be unfamiliar to them.





LC: Considering your clear interest in communicating with your audience, what do you feel is the role of the artist?

DM: I believe the role of the artist is varied and sometimes complex. You have to first ask yourself what type of artist you want to be. Is your art politically motivated? Do you see yourself as a visual historian? Do you want to illustrate and document only what you see? Questions like these set the tone of our role as an artist. I grew up with storytellers, quilt makers, furniture makers, and writers. My family used these art forms to document our family and community histories. So I look at my role as that of a visual storyteller. Preservation of history is pivotal and I pass that history on with the visual stories in my work.

LC: Your imagery is very powerful. Each of your subjects seem to be an actual person with a well-defined personality. Are these portraits?

DM: When I look at people I tend to remember subtle but specific details about them. This may be a simple hand gesture, the way they tilt their head when their name is called, or even the lines around their eyes when they smile. These details make their way into my work and are the foundation for the portraits I create. With this in mind, each portrait depicts various women in my community collectively. In the more recent bodies of work I

wanted to tell a more personal story so I used actual photographs of my family and friends. These direct references enable me to tell a more personal and specific story.

LC: You mentioned earlier how each medium invokes a different emotional response in you. Has that always been the case and were you aware of it or is it something you have come to realize over time?

DM: In the beginning I did not correlate my emotional responses with use of mediums. As my work evolved my use of mediums became more varied and intense and as a result I became more conscious of myself as an artist. In time, as I develop and integrate new processes and techniques into my work, I feel the work itself as well as my responses will become more complex.

LC: Your work seems to be at a pivotal point right now. With the integration of these new processes and techniques what do you see happening next?

DM: To be honest I'm not really sure what's next. I like to work as intuitively as possible. When I go into the studio there are no rules or expectations, only endless possibilities and creative energy. I think not knowing what's next but embracing what does happen is one of the most exciting things to happen in the studio.

BRADBURY ART MUSEUM
AUGUST 25 - OCTOBER 09, 2016

BradburyArtMuseum.org

Museum Hours
Tuesday - Saturday: noon to 5pm
Sunday: 2 to 5pm

Front: *Black Bird*, 2016
gelatin printing, conte, acrylic, relief, lithography,
hand-stitching and decorative papers
50 x 39 inches

Interior left page (left image): Studio shot

Interior left page (right image): *Dinner Table [Plate 12]*
2016, litho crayon and Stabilo pencil ceramic plate
installation

Interior right page: Studio progress shot of *Black Bird*

Back (top image): *Daughter of Night*, 2016
gelatin printing, conte, acrylic, relief, lithography,
hand-stitching and decorative papers
50 x 39 inches

Back (bottom image): Studio progress shot of
Daughter of Night



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