

Virtual Art Encounters “Color”

Q&A with Jamie Robertson

Q: What does the research process look like for you when you’re working on a project?

A: I am a lover of history, so I typically start by looking at archival images and other historical documents. For my self-portrait series, I looked through the Library of Congress for images of Black women throughout the diaspora. I also looked at more modern and contemporary depictions such as album covers and magazines. For the red series of self-portraits, I am really interested in hair magazines like *Sophisticate’s Black Hair Styles and Care Guide*. I remember being a little girl and taking that magazine to the beauty shop asking for the hairstyles I saw in it. I am really interested in exploring the style of portraiture in those magazines further in my work.

Q: Do you have moments where you find yourself spiritually through your art?

A: Yes, definitely! Spirituality is at the core of my practice as an artist. I’m not necessarily interested in recreating spiritual experiences for the audience. Spirituality really serves as the lens by which I see my work. In graduate school, I became very interested in traditional African spirituality after reading *Flash of the Spirit*. That book led me to writings by African philosophers whose work helped me to build an internal framework for art-making.

Q: How do you describe your relationship to geography in your work?

A: A lot of the images I was researching of Black women were taken in a studio environment. My self-portraits are made in a studio space in my home. Studios in photography, by their very nature, are meant to be placeless to the point of becoming a void. Things can be lost in a void or spontaneously pop into existence. A viewer will create geography for a studio portrait based on the body present and the props accompanying it.

Q: How do you feel after completing the artworks that you’ve created for your community?

A: I’m really happy that I was able to create a book documenting some of the Black landscapes of Leon County. My family is originally from that area. I spent all of my free time there. It holds such a special place in my heart and really is a core feature in my identity. I do not feel as if that work is complete. There are so many other places I want to visit in the county and document. I definitely feel that is work I will return to at various points in my artist career.

Q: What about your practice has evolved as you’ve grown as a person?

A: I am currently in a place of transition in my practice. Shifting from the academic environment to working artist is challenging. However, I am enjoying the freedom to create without immediate judgment. It allows me to devote time to the work that is important to me even if no one ever sees it.