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## **The Magnificent Seven: The Art Faculty of Prairie View A&M University**

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Historically Black Colleges and Universities possess an abundance of talent among the student body and their illustrious faculty. Prairie View A&M University is an elite school taunting a host of dynamic degree programs. Among them of note is the excellent visual and digital media arts program. Such magnificent talent on HBCU campuses must be exploited and exposed.

Keywords: HBCU, HBCUs, artwork, Trayvon Martin, Black Art, Visual Arts, Digital Arts

## **INTRODUCTION**

Historically Black Colleges and Universities celebrate the achievements of black life and culture in many ways: literarily, musically, theatrically, and visually. Celebrating these and other genres unveils the wealth of talent among the student population. And even more importantly, it reveals the exceptional talent among the faculty of historically black institutions. Faculty members, many of whom also were trained at predominantly black institutions, practice their craft alongside their students, each growing and sharing and blossoming together.

These skillful craftsmen/women, though sometimes unsung, prepare students for their chosen discipline while simultaneously polishing their skills; they do so in recital halls, art studios, and sound rooms. These craftsmen serve as mentors, motivators, and master teachers who guide their pupils through a maze of feelings, thoughts, and ideas to create masterful works of art. Working closely together, they create masterful works of art.

As in times past, master-student relationships played significant roles in artistic development. Leonardo da Vinci had Andre Verrocchio, Beethoven had Gottlob Neefe, and Michelangelo worked closely with Bertoldo di Giovanni, these creative partnerships are fine examples of iron sharpening iron. And, as a result, bringing out the best in both teacher and learner.

Prairie View A&M University has seven such artists/craftsmen, each sharpening young minds and sharing their creative expertise with the many students under their tutelage. These seven artists are faculty members in the distinguished Nathelyn Kennedy School of Architecture. From their diverse backgrounds come distinct bodies of work. Seven uniquely different voices are expressed through a variety of media and styles. From acrylics and oils on canvas, abstractions on skateboards, a 3D model, experimental prints, stitchery, and elegantly painted watercolors to decorative bead compositions, their creative efforts reach far and wide.

Labeled the *Magnificent Seven*, Prairie A&M art faculty recently exhibited artwork that paid homage to Black History Month and the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Trayvon Martin. The seven artists are Jess Coleman, Ann Johnson, Mitchell Johnson, Tracey Moore, Hira Roberts, Renee Smith, and Dr. Clarence Talley, Sr., Each artist reveals their interest in, and their technical approach to, subjects and ideas by employing tools and materials that help them speak boldly about what is visually important to them.

They are skilled at interpreting the world around them, reimagining it, telling stories, and challenging audiences to look below the surface to discover what is not apparent. A targeted synoptical view of these artist will serve to introduce this distinct group.

*Beginning with Jess Coleman*, he's a realist in that his works are true to nature. He is a no-nonsense artist who demands that his students master technical skills foundational to a successful painting. Watercolors and oils are his primary medium of choice. His ability to see and interpret form demonstrates his formal training in drawing and design—the foundation of most, if not all, traditional arts. Coleman sharpened his observation of nature and the human figure by studying the works of Henry O'Tanner and other figurative European painters. Coleman states: "I always want my technique to be immediately observed to capture viewers and hold their interest while simultaneously being true to nature." The state of Texas recently commissioned Coleman to complete a portrait of Opal Lee. Ms. Opal Lee was the driving force behind Juneteenth becoming a national holiday.

*In Ann Johnson's work*, she uses traditional and experimental methods of printmaking. Printing on traditional and non-traditional surfaces and objects, Johnson's prints take on their own life. Having received training in printmaking at the Academy of Art University in San Francisco, Ann's earlier prints found their way onto feathers, leaves, and other delicate yet inconspicuous objects. Her response to the world and the injustices many African Americans have endured has caused her to examine and explore the nature of "truth." Several works also confront viewers to explore the many prejudices, untruths, and stereotypes that we all face regardless of color or national origin. Recently, Ann was cited by Black Art In America (BAIA) as one of the 10 Most Transformational Artists of the Year (2022). She was also named the 2023 artist resident for the Houston Freedman's Town Conservatory and the Contemporary Art Museum.

*A recent addition to the faculty, Mitchell Johnson*, is the new kid on the block. Quiet, unassuming, and yet a thoughtful young artist. Mitchell's expertise lies in the Digital Arts. Yet his paintings express his interest in reimagining memories, strengthening life's inner core. He explores popular communities in the 4<sup>th</sup> largest city in our nation—Houston. Rising out of a Houston community himself, his vision is sharp when it comes to shared experiences and the black family. He searches societies and finds inspiration others fail to see. Home is the central theme in Mitchell's art: a theme he says he will continue exploring.

*Tracey Moore* is a Digital Media artist and Director of Texas's top HBCU art program. Her talents lie in using various media to express her creations. Tracey manipulates fabric in multiple ways allowing her to produce a wide range of magical and thought-provoking products. Tracey recognizes the connectedness of embroidery, stitchery, and quilting to strong women who often produce such items, women who are often undervalued and overlooked. Tracey sets out to tell stories, record history, and make cultural connections through her selected media. She is wisely matching the medium with the method and message.

*Hira Roberts* is a multi-talented designer whose digital background has led her to the possibilities of 3D printing. With an experience in architecture and the digital arts, Hira has also been experimenting with virtual reality. Her work merges the world of virtual reality with 3D modeling. This concept is seen in Hira's new work, which focuses on heightening drama, emotions, and symbolism.

*Renee Smith* colorful abstractions on skateboards evolved out of her love for nature. A skating park and the beach gave birth to her Skateboard Series. Rhythmic flowing lines and colorful patterns applied to skateboards harken back to Smith's background as a printmaker. The dynamism of her designs invites viewers to ride the waves of her creations.

*Finally, Dr. Clarence Talley, Sr.*, is the elder statesman of the seven. A Louisiana native who transplanted to the Lone Star state. He holds four earned degrees in Art and Theology. Much of Dr. Talley's recent artwork has been mixed media/collages. They draw upon African American cultural themes and are created using decorative beads and acrylic paint. Seed beads, Mardi Gras beads, and other craft beads are employed to produce tactile and visually stimulating surfaces. Dr. Talley's recent series *We Came with Creativity* highlights the wealth of talent and potential in African American culture. Genius that fought through prejudices and injustices that have made us—as a people—stronger.

Holding to family and God enables the oppressed to persevere against all odds, and such themes have found their way into Dr. Talley's art. As his philosophy, "Art is Everything, and Everything is Art." It has allowed him to draw upon various genres, through the years, to express and produce diverse bodies of realistic and abstract work.

*Altogether*, the artworks created by the *Magnificent Seven* are only a microcosm of the talented professors that practice their craft in Historically Black Colleges and Universities in this country. These educators labor to be faithful to their art while grooming and motivating their student clientele to be their best. The *Magnificent Seven* tirelessly prepare Digital Media Arts majors and Fine Arts minors as well as teach core courses that reach students from all disciplines. In addition, they continue to hone their skills so that they may remain current, relative, and magnificent.

With their efforts, the *Magnificent Seven* has raised the visibility of Prairie View A&M University by being named the number one Historically Black College and University Art Program in Texas.

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As stated, in honor of our culture during African American History Month and to spotlight the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Trayvon Martin, the following essay combined with thought provoking artworks commemorates his short life and inspiring story. The essay was prepared by Michael Hurd, former director of the Texas Institute for the Presentation of History and Cultural, Prairie View A&M University.

## **HOMAGE to TRAYVON**

By Michael Hurd, former director of the Texas Institute for the Presentation of History and Cultural, PVAMU

On a drizzly February evening in Sanford, Fla., Trayvon Martin, a hooded baby-faced Black teenager, became the embodiment of growing anti-racist and pro-social justice campaigns, and the focal point for a national reckoning about race. Martin's death at the hands of law enforcement poser George Zimmerman prompted the birth of the Black Lives Matter movement and fostered new rounds of uncomfortable conversations about race in the U.S.

Now, ten-plus years after his death, Martin's spirit still resonates in calls for racial and social justice. Still, and rightly so. The manner of Martin's death was another outrageous link in an ever-growing chain of wake-up calls about race in America – specifically, African Americans (Black men!) and the justice system in America. Martin's name is indelibly linked to other Black men in history who suffered similar fates and ignited social unrest and movements – Jesse Washington, Emmett Till, George Floyd, and Breonna Taylor. Of course, hundreds of Black men whose names are unknown or forgotten were summarily murdered by vigilantes or local law officials in the Deep South during slavery and post-emancipation segregation for, in the end, just being Black.

As the tenth anniversary of Martin's death approaches there is no appreciable progress in the struggle for racial and social justice though the conversations have gotten louder and receptive audiences more diverse. Yet, the murders continue, and the number of martyrs increase, all too quickly, like throwing more logs on a roaring fire.

Martin wasn't looking to be a martyr that evening in Sanford, but that status would be confirmed during more than a year of legal missteps for both the prosecution and the defense during Zimmerman's chaotic trial that included debates over Florida's controversial stand your ground law (which Zimmerman's lawyers did not assert as a defense) that allows the use of lethal force if a person feels threatened by another with great bodily harm. However, the trial's jurors admitted discussing the law in their deliberations before finding Zimmerman not guilty of manslaughter and second-degree murder.

History prepares us for these predictable business-as-usual outcomes that remain all too familiar for the Black community where the pattern of black men dying while engaging with police officers or vigilantes like Zimmerman end with no accountability for the perps.

Yet, the 2021 Ahmaud Arbery outcome – finding three white men guilty of murdering a "suspicious black male" jogging in their neighborhood – does provide a ray of hope for future.

In death, Martin was vilified, cast as “a suspicious person” who was looking to commit a crime, a menacing thug, a dope addict, yet in the moment’s reality, he was just a Black kid walking at night, wearing a hooded sweatshirt covering his head from the rain, and heading back to the home where he was staying with his father and friends after buying iced tea and candy (Skittles!) at a nearby convenience store.

Police reports stated there was no indication that Martin was involved in any criminal activity when he encountered Zimmerman. Also, there was no indication that Martin was involved in any criminal activity at the time of the encounter.

Author and historian Aberjhani commented that “Trayvon Martin, at the most, seems only to have been guilty of being himself.”

Martin was a high school honor student in Miami Gardens, Fla where he lived with his mother, Sybrina Fulton. On the night of the shooting, Feb. 26, 2012, Trayvon was visiting his father, Tracy Martin, in Sanford’s Retreat at Twin Lakes gated community. Zimmerman was a 29-year-old part time student at Seminole State College and watch captain for the Twin Lakes complex.

Zimmerman called 911 to report a “suspicious person” walking through the complex. He added that, “This guy looks like he is up to no good or he is on drugs or something.” And then, “these (guys), they always get away.” However, Zimmerman disobeyed police instructions to remain in his car and not confront the person. Witnesses said they heard gunshots, and Zimmerman claimed he had fired his weapon in self-defense as they tussled and fell to the ground. Zimmerman had a bloody nose and wounds on the back of his head. Police, however, said there were no signs that Martin had used a deadly weapon or deadly force during his struggle with Zimmerman.

Tracy Martin filed a missing person report the next day and discovered his son’s death when police showed him photos from the crime scene.

Zimmerman was charged with manslaughter, and later second-degree murder, but was not immediately arrested because Sanford police viewed the shooting as a simple case of self-defense.

The next 17 months would be a frustrating, painfully drawn-out experience for everyone. In March 2012, a petition calling for Zimmerman’s arrest was signed by 1.3 million people. Sanford Police Chief Bill Lee stepped aside temporarily and then was fired amid mounting criticism of his handling of the case. Rallies are held across the country supporting the Martin family and demanding Zimmerman be held accountable, and there would be more rallies and vigils, all peaceful, in dozens of cities nationwide to protest racial profiling, and demand the repeal of Stand Your Ground laws.

Finally, on June 20, 2012, an all-female jury was selected. Five of the six jurors were white.

On July 13, the jury finds Zimmerman not guilty after over 16 hours of deliberation.

On February 24, 2015, the US Justice Department announces it will not pursue federal civil rights charges against Zimmerman.

In the aftermath, the country’s racial divide was on full display and the polling numbers were highly predictable. A nationwide survey conducted for *The Washington Post* and ABC News revealed that 90% of African Americans called the shooting unjustified, compared to 33% of whites; and 62% of Democrats disapproved of the verdict, compared to 20% of Republicans. Gallup reported that the reaction was “almost exactly the opposite” of that following the O. J. Simpson murder case, when 89% of African Americans agreed with the jury decision, compared to 36% of whites.

Following Zimmerman’s acquittal, Facebook users Patrisse Cullors, Alicia Garza, and Opal Tometi began exchanging posts and debating what they could do to affect change.

“We were carrying this burden around with us every day, of racism and white supremacy,” Garza would say. “It was a verdict that said: black people are not safe in America.” She posted on

Facebook: "I continue to be surprised at how little black lives matter...Black people. I love you. I love us. Our lives matter."

Cullors, an artist, teacher and prison reform activist from Los Angeles, reposted Garza's message, adding the hashtag "#blacklivesmatter."

A movement was born, and hoodies became a fashion statement. Black athletes, especially those in the National Basketball Association, took the lead. Ironically, the 2012 NBA all-Star game was played in Orlando, Fla. on the same night as Martin's death, and only 30 miles from Sanford.

To honor Martin and recognize the BLM movement, NBA players began wearing warm-up t-shirts with Martin's image, and LeBron James, then playing for the Miami Heat, wrote on his game shoes, "R.I.P. Trayvon Martin."

Black players for the Heat, led by James and Dwyane Wade, took a team photo with the players wearing hooded sweatshirts emblazoned with the team logo, their heads solemnly bowed. Nationwide, protestors wearing hoodies loudly repeated the phrase, "I am Trayvon Martin."

Sybrina Fulton was all aboard, explaining:

"Trayvon's spirit compelled me to fight, and I needed the world to fight alongside me. That's what Black Lives Matter did – BLM took to the streets, raised my son's name and demanded justice in his honor. As the whole world marched in hoodies, I felt like I was being held and supported, like my family and I weren't alone.

"(BLM) is not taking away from anybody else's life, it's just putting emphasis on Black lives because Black lives seem so ... disposable."

Almost 60 years before Martin, in 1955, the vicious murder of 14-year-old Emmett Till, who was beaten, mutilated, shot in the head, and thrown into the Tallahatchie River near Money, Miss., brought the country's attention to the atrocities committed against Black people in the Deep South. Till's mother, Mamie, presented the body of her son in an open casket so the world could see his horribly disfigured body. His killers were acquitted. Till's murder and the shocking casket images kicked the Civil Rights Movement into high gear.

So would be Martin's effect be on social movements, especially BLM, whose work would be compounded by several other high-profile deaths of Black men by police.

Included were:

Eric Garner, 43, who died on July 17, 2014, in Staten Island, New York as police tried to arrest him for allegedly selling cigarettes.

Officer Daniel Pantaleo grabbed the 350-pound Garner in a chokehold, pulling him to the sidewalk and rolling him onto his stomach. The New York Police Department prohibits the use of chokeholds.

Garner, who had asthma, repeatedly said, "I can't breathe! I can't breathe!" as he was restrained on the ground.

Police said he suffered a heart attack and died en route to a hospital. Garner's death was ruled a homicide, but Pantaleo was not indicted. Protests and demonstrations ensued and Garner's plea, "I can't breathe" became a rallying cry.

The city never admitted liability but settled with Garner's family for \$5.9 million.

Michael Brown, 18, was killed on Aug. 9, 2014, in Ferguson, Missouri though accounts of his death varied. Brown was unarmed, walking with a friend in the middle of the street when he was approached by Officer Darren Wilson and ordered to walk on the sidewalk.

Brown either attacked Wilson and attempted to take his gun or Brown was surrendering with his hands in the air to indicate he was unarmed when Wilson shot him. Wilson fired his gun 12 times and three months later a grand jury decided not to indict him, sparking the first of three rounds of protests and riots in Ferguson.

Wilson resigned from the force and a Department of Justice investigation declared that Wilson did not violate Brown's civil rights, but there was no corroboration on Wilson's claim that Brown had reached for his gun, but there was also no evidence to disprove the claim. The DOJ did find that Ferguson Police excessively stopped and ticketed black residents, often citing them multiple times in a single stop, and that "many officers" apparently viewed some of the city's black residents "less as constituents to be protected than as potential offenders and sources of revenue."

On April 19, 2015 in Baltimore, Freddie Gray, 25 died seven days after he suffered a fatal spinal cord injury.

Gray was arrested on a weapons charge after making eye contact with a policeman and running away. A knife was found in his pocket. Placed for transportation in a police van, Gray suffered the injury and was in distress when the van reached the police station. He later died at the Cowley Shock Trauma Center. Supposedly, Gray had not been properly secured by police in the van, though some witnesses claimed officers had used unnecessary force, which the officers denied. For many, the circumstances of his death typified black communities' distrust in police and set off several days of protests and riots in downtown Baltimore.

Six police officers were charged in connection with Gray's death.

That month, the DOJ announced it had opened an investigation into whether the Baltimore Police Department engaged in a pattern or practice of discriminatory policing.

Between December 2015 and January 2016, the officers' cases were heard in court. The jury deadlocked in the case against one officer, and three others – including the van driver – were acquitted. Charges against the three other officers were dropped in July 2016.

Months later, the DOJ found Baltimore police disproportionately stopped, searched, and arrested Black residents, and used excessive force against juveniles and those with mental disabilities, over at least a six-year period.

On May 25, 2020, 46-year-old George Floyd, a Houston native, was murdered in Minneapolis by police officer Derek Chauvin, 44. Floyd had been arrested on suspicion of using a counterfeit \$20 bill. Chauvin knelt on Floyd's neck for over nine minutes while Floyd was handcuffed and lying face-down in a street. Two other police officers, J. Alexander Kueng and Thomas Lane, assisted Chauvin in restraining Floyd.

A bystander captured the disturbing scene on his cell phone video.

Prior to being placed on the ground, Floyd had exhibited signs of anxiety, complaining about having claustrophobia and repeatedly telling the officers, "I can't breathe", just as Eric Garner had pleaded with his final breaths to the NYPD officers.

Restrained, Floyd became more distressed, complaining of breathing difficulties and the knee on his neck, and expressing fear that he was about to die. For the last couple of minutes, he lay motionless, and Officer Kueng found no pulse when urged to check. Despite this, Chauvin ignored pleas from bystanders to lift his knee from Floyd's neck.

The following day, after videos made by witnesses and security cameras became public, all four officers were fired. Two autopsies, and one autopsy review, found Floyd's death to be a homicide.

On March 12, 2021, Minneapolis agreed to pay \$27 million to settle a wrongful death suit brought by Floyd's family. On April 20, Chauvin was convicted of second-degree unintentional murder, third-degree murder, and second-degree manslaughter and sentenced to 22.5 years in prison. In December 2021, Chauvin

pled guilty to federal charges of violating Floyd's civil rights by using unreasonable force and ignoring Floyd's serious medical needs.

Floyd's murder drew international protests against police – their brutality, racism, and lack of accountability.  
No justice.  
No peace.

Trayvon's father, Tracy, would have this to say about his son's death and the country's racial climate: "I think moving forward we need to educate ourselves as a community on the gun laws, on the laws, on the statutes. We need to come together more as a whole, not individual people, not individual races, and religions. We need to come together as God's people. We need to start learning each other, understanding each other.

"You can't just judge a book by its cover. Something is wrong in so many ways to say that someone is suspicious just because you don't know them."

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**THE ARTISTS SPEAKS** are the voices of the seven artists whose works make up the Magnificent Seven Exhibition. In their own words, each artist shares their creative thinking, the why of their art, and sometimes the how. These insights are helpful particularly as you view the works in this collection. Each artist speaks in their own way allowing viewers into the studio of their minds.

*Jess Coleman:* I consider myself a figurative humanist. While my work will sometimes address social issues and the human condition, my main concern is almost always with the painting process. I focus primarily on how the paint is applied to the painting surface. I explore the interaction of light and color on the human figure. I generally have the same concerns about working with oil paints or watercolors. I always want the technique to show in the finished painting. The paintings of Henry O. Tanner and Edgar Degas influence my work. I find the human figure to be intriguing. Everyone is different and presents a unique set of problems to be resolved with paint and brush.

*Ann Johnson:* Reflection is a powerful word; and a visual reflection reveals the truth. My work explores truths. Hard truths. My work explores Black womanhood from Mammy to Breonna. Like most folks, I have been affected by current events such as the #blacklivesmatter movement. I am not yet a mother, but I am haunted by the thought that my son could be shot down while walking home in the rain wearing a hoodie—as in the case of Trayvon Martin. The piece "It Just Keeps Happening" is a transfer print on mirrored aviator glasses commonly worn by police officers. The image depicts a grieving mother and a solemn and grave image of a young man. It just keeps happening. Unarmed. Gunned down. I fear that I could lose my life based on how I look through the lenses of others. A reflection of my ancestry, a reflection of prejudices, a reflection of stereotypes. The matter that I am Black is not a movement. It is my life. And I matter.

*Mitchell Johnson:* Reimagining memories as a means of infrastructure and life experiences, I use painting and collage to explore the histories of Acres Homes, one of the first thriving communities developed for Black Americans post Reconstruction and Independence Heights, the first incorporated area of Houston, Texas for Black Americans (affectionately named Studewood).

Contemplating these shared experiences of the Black Family, I started developing a series examining the household of my maternal grandmother. the essence of our Matrimony - romance, architecture, spirituality, working class, and superstition.

Through methods of painting and collaging, I'm thinking about communicating the interior and texture of many homes throughout my neighborhood. Even as an adolescent, I tried to develop a visual language relative to my intimate pastimes experience. Now my works promote the notion that our experiences embody building a home with wood, planks, and doors.

*Tracey Moore:* For as long as I can remember, I have always wanted to learn about my history as an African American woman. I marveled at the stories my grandparents talked about their families, where they came from, and the things that happened that shaped who they were. I am a bit of an amateur genealogist. For the last 15 years, I have worked on adding to my family tree and gathering stories and documents that tell the stories of the men and women in my family who have come before me. Through the assistance of distant

relatives and other genealogists, I can trace many branches back to Africa and Europe for 200+ years. I tend to use the stories I have collected over the years from my family and distant relatives and at times, interwoven with American history as a running theme to my work.

Much of my artwork is mixed media. I primarily use stitched and embroidered fabric, image transfers, found objects, and other materials that are reflective of women, traditional women's work, and fiber arts, including quilt blocks, dryer sheets, and crocheted/knitted fabric. The use of this media helps to connect women, especially black women, to history when we are often overlooked, undervalued, and in many instances, questioned regarding our femininity. In addition, I aim to tell and retell these stories and histories so that we will not forget where we have been and be reminded that our history is often repeated. As an anchor for retelling these histories, references to flags aid in revealing the mysteries of genealogical research. Inherent in the flags are associations with culture, the African Diaspora, national and local beliefs, value systems, and identity. Although some of these cultural connections seem to have been lost, there are delicate strings that exist to connect us to our past.

*Hira Roberts: "Empathy - the ability to share someone else's feelings or experiences by imagining what it would be like to be in that person's situation"* As someone surrounded by strenuous circumstances growing up, I have faced challenges to be where I am today. My artwork has always been about sharing those personal experiences and how they shaped who I am. The objective is that I may be able to give strength to those who might be going through something similar or help others empathize. better with the struggles of those around them. To do so, my artwork is not just to be experienced visually but is intended to be an embodying experience.

Mindscape visualizes the state of my mind as I learn to navigate through the role of a new mother amidst the added anxiety, fear, depression, and loss resulting from the pandemic starting in 2020. The environment that is meant to be experienced through a virtual reality headset, contains abstract weblike architectural forms with a monochromatic color palette reminiscent of the robotic life devoid of a work/life balance due to the monumental increase in domestic and work-related tasks.

*Renee Smith:* My influence came about after my residency in Rockport, Texas. I went to the beach almost daily and lived near the local skate park. I loved how the transparent colors splashed against the animated waves in the ocean as the sun lit the ocean scape and aquatic creatures. By applying abstraction, I investigate the dynamics of colors, shapes, and patterns using gradient color layers that form entangled abstract glossy images.

*Clarence Talley, Sr.:* The inspiration behind my work has always taken me down various artistic avenues. This inspiration and adventure are seen in the entries for this exhibition. Recently, mixed media has been my choice of expression. The works here have been created mainly with Mardi Gras beads, decorative beads, seed beads, and my favorite paint, medium acrylics. The tactile quality of each insight the urge to touch and become more intimately acquainted with the work. Texture has a way of drawing that out of most viewers. 'Sophia: I Loves Harpo' is a beaded piece completed with a book project dedicated to Oprah Winfrey. Her tour de force performance in *The Color Purple* has had a major impact on the American female psyche. Like many, I was drawn to her powerful performance and wild hat worn in the movie. 'We Came with Creativity' is one in a series of new works highlighting the creative genius of our fore parents, irrespective of the hardships they had to endure aboard slave ships and after they arrived in the Americas. Notice the hull of the slave ship, it is centrally located in the composition and filled with human cargo. Cargo, though dejected and abused en route and in history, our forefather's creative genius could not be denied. They came with creativity.

*The Youngest Ever* is taken from a shocking image circulating on the internet. The youth is said to be the youngest ever to be executed in the United States. The image is shocking, humbling, and a stark reminder of injustice in America.

The ghastly silhouettes denote that this could be any one of our black youths unjustly executed. Addressing injustice, Dr. Martin L. King, Jr. said it well: "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." We must be vigilant. The threat still lives.



Lastly, as with every artist in this exhibit, we were encouraged to dedicate a work to the life and memory of Trayvon Martin. A young 17-year-old black male whose life was needlessly taken at the cruel hands of another. February 26, 2022, marks the 11<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death. *Homage to Trayvon #1* and *Homage to Trayvon #2* honors his memory. The circular compositions signify that Blacks are still targeted in America. The hoodie and the nationalistic colors of the civil rights movement are meant to remind us that the struggle is not over. Have you been watching the News lately?

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The Magnificent Seven exhibition was meant to inspire and inform. Like Art Departments at most Historically Black Colleges and University, Prairie View A&M blends the teaching of art with culture issues which lead to conversations that demonstrates the relevance of the visual arts in shaping well-rounded students. Hopefully, The Magnificent Seven exhibition truly exposes Prairie View A&M University faculty, honors Trayvon Martin, and encourages conversations that broaden students' worldview and open discussions about many issues facing the world. But most importantly, The Magnificent Seven exhibition reveals the wealth of talent found on HBCU campuses; talent that must be exploited and shared.

#### LIST OF SLIDES (Magnificent Seven)

##### JESS COLEMAN

1. My Time Oils 24 x 30
2. Let's Do This Watercolor Collage 14 x 20
3. First Sunday At Mercy Seat Watercolor 22 x 30
4. Am I Not A Man And A Brother Oils 24 x 32

##### ANN JOHNSON

5. Chattel\_ Injurious George Intaglio on raw cotton, found objects 8 x 10 x 10
6. Her Transfer print Gilding on a vintage ironing board 17 x 54 x 3
7. It Just Keeps Happening Transfer print on sunglasses 8 x 6 x 5
8. Stop Erasing Our Existence Transfer print, gilding 10 x 10 x 4

##### MITCHELL JOHNSON

9. Care & Precarious Oil and Acrylic 10 x 10
10. John Lewis - March on Washington Oil and Acrylic 40 x 40
11. West Little York Oil and Acrylic 60 x 72

##### TRACEY MOORE

12. The Forgotten Mixed Media 41 x 23
13. Were You There Mixed Media 12 x 16
14. Tete Rouge Mixed Media 32 x 26
15. There Was Healing in His Breath Mixed Media 35 x 27

##### HIRA ROBERTS

16. Abstract Space 1 Virtual Reality Houdini FX, Unreal Engine.
17. Abstract Space 2 Virtual Reality Houdini FX, Unreal Engine

##### RENEE SMITH

18. OctoWaves Pens on Skateboard Deck 8 x 32
19. Sunset Waves Pens on Skateboard Deck 8 x 32
20. Revision Linocut 18 x 24

##### CLARENCE TALLEY

21. Homage to Trayvon #1 Mix Media 30 inches diameter
22. Homage to Trayvon #2 Mix Media 30 inches diameter
23. Sophia: I Loves Harpo Mix Media 24 x 30
24. We Came with Creativity Mix Media 18 x 24
25. Youngest Ever Mix Media 12 x 15