



William E. Johnson

Painter
Printmaker
Educator



Artist Statement

My work reflects the experiences of African Americans. As an artist, I am driven by needs that are both aesthetic, spiritual, and social.

I am in search of cultural identity, self-discovery, and understanding. It is very important that my work becomes a vital community resource. I want to establish a direct relationship with people of all socioeconomic and educational levels. I want my work to reflect a continuum of aesthetic principles derived from Africa and America.

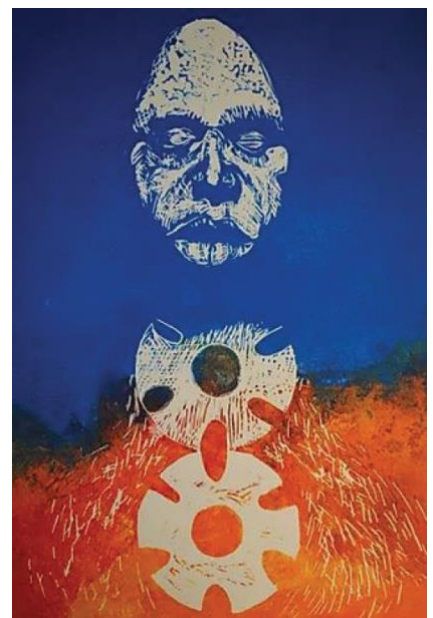
My challenge, as an artist, is to find ways to use both the spiritual and material powers of art in such a way that my expressions become a vehicle for the understanding of people.



Artist Biography

William E. Johnson, a native of Albemarle County, started his creative journey at a very early age. At the age of nine William discovered that he had a special ability. Growing up in the country, William had many resources to create from. He would collect bugs, shells, rocks, and dried plants, and draw from observation. He taught himself how to use shading to make his drawings have a sense of volume and life. He also was inspired to create from his grandmother, mother, classmates, and the village where he grew up. Art making was a strong part of his village. The civil rights movement, integration, cultural identity, self-discovery, and understanding have been the main sources of his work.

William earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Virginia Commonwealth University where he majored in Painting and Printmaking. Prior to graduation, William had already connected to the Richmond Arts community. His work was being shown in both white and black galleries. During his time at VCU, William connected with one of his idols in the Black Art world – Dr. Murray P. Depillars, Dr. D, as he was called by many on and off campus, who became a mentor and a teacher for many of the students. William had the honor of participating in several shows with Dr. Depillars.



He is presently an adjunct professor at both Virginia State University and Virginia Commonwealth University's Art Education Department. He was a secondary art teacher for Richmond Public Schools for twenty-nine years. He retired in June 2019. He is one of the co-founding members of BAAAR (Black American Artists Alliance - Richmond). Art making, working with different materials, is a big part of William's life.

