

Alumni Spotlight: ALICIA BROWN

Originally published April 2, 2021 through the Academy Bulletin, the AANYAA is delighted to re-publish this spotlight on the AANYAA's website. **Tim Buckley** (MFA 2014) chats with **Alicia Brown** (MFA 2014).





Alicia is the recipient of an Elizabeth Greenshields Grant (2019), The Jamaica Biennial Dawn Scott Memorial Award (2017), is currently part of the exhibition One World: International Women of Florida at The Crealde School of Art, Wynter Park, Florida, and has recently exhibited in Painting the Figure Now at the Wausau Museum of Contemporary Art (2020). Alicia lives and works in Sarasota, Florida.

Tim Buckley: "We inhabit an illusive space where there is an ongoing struggle to find the missing pieces of self." I really love this first line from the statement on your website. There is a James Baldwin quote that I often think of "When you're writing, you're trying to find out something which you don't know..." I find that this applies not just to writing, but to anything that I make. Do you find that making art helps to fill in the missing pieces?

Alicia Brown: I agree that trying to find missing pieces of self applies to all areas of creating.

It's an obsession — trying to organize thoughts and images from your imagination that is constantly at work, gripping new experiences and forming ideas that fit the puzzle together.

During the process of creating art, I think there are moments when I experience a thrill of unearthing something that is hidden within myself. Yet I keep making works surrounding this concept of finding missing pieces of self, so I'm not sure if making art helps to fill the pieces on a personal note. However, I believe that through my art, the viewer is provided with various experiences presented in the narratives that can provide them with something of themselves that is recognizable and acceptable.



TB: The ideas that drive your paintings are seamlessly woven into the way that they are made. Historical painting language, the genre of portraiture, and the objects depicted — all of that is composed in service of the narrative. There is a great back and forth. Or it's like a circle. What is the process of creating one of your paintings? Is there a similar back and forth when you are developing an idea?

AB: The process involved in making my works is normally not the same. My work is content-based and is influenced a lot by the history of the Caribbean and the cultural dynamics of the region. Also, as a female artist, it is very important to insert myself in the history of art. With this in mind, there is quite a lot to the process of making my work. To create a rich narrative I pull ideas from the history of the Caribbean, as well as art history and

western trends. Because I utilize various sources for inspiration, sometimes there is a back and forth with how I am going to create a piece, and there are other times when I don't have that struggle. I do have a lot of ideas in my mind that I think I should create but most of them get pushed aside.

TB: We were in Leipzig together in 2014. Between Leipzig, New York, and Sarasota, has the place where you live and work changed the artwork that you make?

AB: My works are definitely influenced by the places where I live or visit. My time in Leipzig has been one of the biggest influences on my work outside of my country, Jamaica. It was my first time traveling to Europe. Getting the chance to learn about the history and to experience the culture in Leipzig and Berlin did impact the work I was making before I went. Since living here in Sarasota, my work has changed a bit — I have incorporated elements, especially from nature, that are similar to what I knew in Jamaica, or things that are different, such as animals or plants. Now that I am a mother, raising my son in America has also influenced the way I create my works.

TB: Which artists influence you the most?

AB: I am influenced by so many artists for different reasons, and as a result, the list is constantly changing. But if I think back to my earliest influences, they would be Michelangelo, Barrington Watson, Colin Garland, David Boxer, Wilfredo Lam, and Salvador Dali.





