

FORT GANSEVOORT

SHOUTOUT ATLANTA

Meet Dawn Williams Boyd | Visual Artist

Shoutout Atlanta, September 15, 2020



Hi Dawn, we'd love for you to start things off by telling us something about your industry that we and others not in the industry might be unaware of?

How much hard work is involved. Many people think that artists go around with our heads in a cloud, daydreaming and staring into space or mumbling to ourselves. What you don't realize is that this is the first and most important part of the creative process. Most likely the artist is composing, overcoming obstacles, allocating time, putting together supply lists, etc. The hardest part of creating is figuring out how to materialize a vision, how to move an idea into the real world so that others can see what we see in our minds. Creating artwork can also be physically demanding depending on materials, dimensions and time. My own work requires hours of standing on a ladder, crawling on a hardwood floor, leaning over a table, pushing hundreds of pins through layers of fabric then pulling them out again, pushing (for example) 25 square feet of fabric that is full of pins through a 6 x 8 inch hole so that I can take one stitch at a time around a tight curve. On average each large piece take 6 – 8 weeks to complete. Then there is the time and money we have to spend in order to get the completed artwork out of the studio and onto someone else's wall. Finding or creating opportunities to exhibit our work requires hours online searching for solo or group shows, putting the applications together, checking to see if you have been accepted and filing your rejection letters! We have to stay in contact with our collectors and keep our names and work in front of arts professionals and potential buyers. Being a professional artist cost a lot of money. Application fees – though they wax and wane with the economy – average \$35 per exhibition. The price for a yard of cotton fabric has increased by 50% in the last 10 years. Trumps embargoes on Chinese goods and the advent of Covid 19 has made some fabrics impossible to obtain. Then there is shipping (both ways), business cards, website management, classes to improve your technique or increase your visibility. So the next time you see an artist apparently doing nothing, give us some space and please don't interrupt because we are working really hard!

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Alright, so let's move onto what keeps you busy professionally?

I approach my 'cloth paintings' in the same way as I do my work in the other mediums (acrylic paints and bas-relief sculpture in polymer clay) I have employed over my 46 year art career, using line, color, contrast, size, placement,etc – the basic elements of design. What sets my work apart from other artists working in fabric is the use of simple embroidery stitches in the faces of my figures to portray emotions in order to enliven the story I'm telling. I am most excited when the viewer, seeing my work from a distance, assumes that it is painted, but when they come closer to it exclaims "OMG, this is made of fabric!" I have gotten where I am today by working very hard at creating my work, by taking advantage of the opportunities that have been presented to me and by being able to take rejection while continuing to push forward. There is nothing easy about being a professional artist, especially in a society that thinks of art as a luxury item only available to the rich. Art, in all its forms, is what separates us from the "animals". It teaches us to problem solve, to escape the limitations of our bodies and our situations, to interact with others. Over the years I have surrounded myself with other artists with whom I have shared inspiration, techniques, knowledge and opportunities to exhibit our work. I have been involved with several groups of Black visual artists in Denver, CO. I am currently President of AAFTA – African Americans for the Arts – in Atlanta. It is important to me to encourage other artists to do better work, to reflect in that work more than their personal stories and to exhibit it outside of their own communities. Not to brag too much but I consider myself to be a triple threat – talented, Black and female! My current artistic goal is to be mentioned in future art history books as an artist who successfully captured her times – political, racial, cultural – by combining the standards of visual fine art with techniques often relegated to a medium denigrated as "women's work".

Any places to eat or things to do that you can share with our readers? If they have a friend visiting town, what are some spots they could take them to?

LOL! I'm laughing because frankly, I'm not a very social person. When my friends have come to visit we usually take long walks near the woods in my community. Food, drink and other ways you might show a person a good time in Atlanta don't interest me. Most of my friends are in the arts community, so pre-Covid I would have taken my friend to Spelman College's Museum of Fine Art, Zucot Gallery, Hammonds House Museum, September Gray gallery or other local venues where Black artists work is being shown. If they insisted on going out to eat I would probably take them to Pascal's on Northside Drive or the pancake place in the Old Fourth Ward. We might take in a new play at Kenny Leon's True Colors Theater Company. A fun day for me is haunting the Goodwill for whitesheets or Habitat for Humanity's ReStore for old pieces of furniture. All the great things to see, taste and do in Atlanta are wasted on me. I am almost always working.

Shoutout is all about shouting out others who you feel deserve additional recognition and exposure. Who would you like to shoutout?

My husband, artist Irvin Wheeler, for all the doors he has opened and walked through with me and my children for understanding and respecting the words "mommy's working".