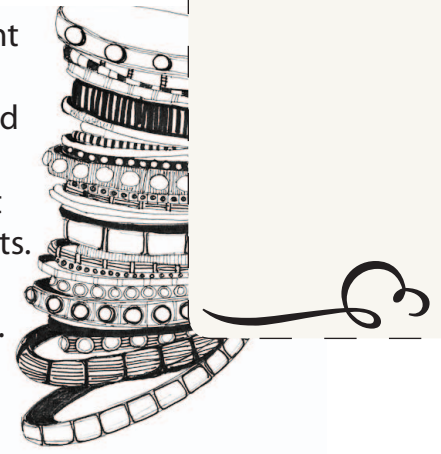


# 24h avec Brianna McCarthy



What I'm interested in at this point is not what things should be or ought to be but what they are and what can be done with them. I have no judgements - or at least I try not to - of the past - no regrets. I could say "I wonder" but not "I wish" - Here, now, is a good place.



**8 a.m.** It's not always easy to believe in myself but everyday I wake up with the anticipation of making something today, working on something today - knowing I have this freedom and being challenged to not waste it.



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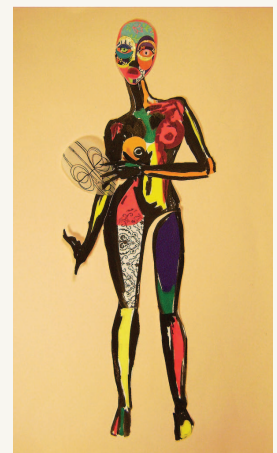


**9 a.m.** What I would like to portray is a different face to what is usually presented of the black and more specifically Afro-Caribbean female. I would like to add something that is not exoticized and that is not representative of struggling or long-suffering. It's just to give something that is lighter and brighter. And to share a little bit of love. Essentially to state the obvious and that is, black is beautiful."



**10 a.m.** It's incredible what life is - how much like and experiment - change one variable and the outcomes is different. Thing is, even if we knew each variable, we still couldn't predict an outcome. It's not science - there are no absolutes. No definites. No laws that can't be defied - everything is fluid. Mobile. Mutating.

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**12 a.m.**





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4  
p.m.

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5  
p.m.

I'm not a typical doll lover, but some of my favourite childhood memories have to be of making doll's clothes. I used to get scrap cloth from the neighbourhood seamstress, inspiration and practical knowledge from my sisters and free reign from my imagination. It was where my hands learnt what they were good at...



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7  
p.m.

If you don't like something, change it. If you can't change it, change the way you think about it.

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## BETWEEN THE HANDS...

**Can you tell me more about your training ? Are you self-taught ? Did you go to a art school ?** I'm essentially self taught. I did basic high school art to some extent but I didn't pursue it as I wasn't encouraged to do so. I studied, instead, more mainstream subjects which promised a better career path. I couldn't deny the compulsion to make though - I would find a way to fulfill that need in whatever I did. With each new stage of my life I would find myself having some avenue to engage that. I learn through experimentation - through wanting to find a way to physically construct what I see. I am always looking for ways to do things that I haven't yet tried.

**When did you begun to draw ? Did it come from a family influence ? A meeting ? A change in your life ?** It's easy to say in my childhood - but every child is an artist - so it doesn't factor into the present unless I can say I have tried to keep that spark that children have so naturally - ever present curiosity, fearlessness, confidence and self belief and most of all love for the thing

itself. For the process and the end. Genuine excitement. I wish I could say I still have that - but I want to reclaim it. For that reason, I'd say I started drawing about four years ago - and yes, due to changes in my life - it was a purging process of sorts - an exorcism. After existing in, what seems now, like a paralytic fear - not of anything real - just like a fear of darkness - and the way it makes one immobile. I was stuck - things were fine but I could see a path ahead and I thought - "Is that me?". I refused it and it's been a constant battle to keep refusing it. I think I remembered then, what it was like to throw myself into something and to understand that the beauty was in that - worry about the rest later.

## Who are the artists you like and why ?

There are a few, like Toyin Odutola - because her work is so fresh, Sheena Rose because she's now and contemporary, Ebony Patterson is powerful. There's also Wendell McShine, who encouraged me to keep the spark and the work genuine. Yinka Shonibare is simply incredible. Rodell Warner is a constant inspiration because he's so disciplined - there's a sanctity in his process.

**What feeds your art ? (literature ? life ? friendship ? emotion like anger or happiness ?)** Everything. Interactions, literature, relationships, humanity, inhumanity, love, body politics and nothingness.

**The mediums you use have a common specification : they are fluid (ink, watercolour, fabric, scrapbooking paper) ? Is it a coincidence ?** I doubt it. I like material I can mould - manipulate - mix. So it's important that watercolour blends well, that fabric and paper can be cut and sewn and that patterns don't need to match to make a cohesive whole.

**How did you passed from ink to watercolour, then to fabrik ? Does the economic fact is important ? (paper is cheaper than canvas, and ink than oil painting)** I was bored to be honest. With myself, which happens often, and I needed to make something new, try something different. I depicted women a particular way - I knew how to do so. I met my self directed challenge and I wanted to quite literally take their beauty apart - deconstruct them.

**What is the cultural context you are working on ? Is it easy to be a female artist in Trinidad and Tobago ?** I don't

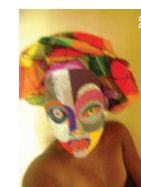
think it's easy to be a female artist anywhere. There are societal norms I think many of us struggle to set ourselves apart from. I for one, want it all, and I know many others who do as well. But we've been made to believe we can't have it all. We must relinquish something - and it will be something we regret or are resentful about later. There's also the idea of masculine art (cerebral) as opposed to female art (intuitive) and which is more valuable. The mere idea that the labels exist and are compared in terms of value means the tension is there, thriving. Like many societies in the Caribbean, Trinidad and Tobago is largely matriarchal. But at the same time there is a superficial appreciation for women - as objects- or as the quintessential "backbone" or as an effigy of the longsuffering beast of burden -- ever in a position of both divine and vile; saint and devil at once.

**In your creation, you are trying to develop a positive image of afro-caribbean woman. It is a very reflective position. What I mean is if you were a man, would you have painted women ?** I associate that idea with a certain freedom from what I know now, being female but I would like to think, that as a man, I would have

the same sensitivity and therefore the same willingness to portray the Afro Caribbean female with a similarly positive message. Of course, the truth is, I couldn't know.

**Sometimes your portraits seem to be like autoportrait as if you could multiply yourselves...** Frida Khalo said "I paint self-portraits because I am so often alone, because I am the person I know best." - it's not so much a physical aloneness but the kind that comes from finding difficulty in connecting with peers in a meaningful way. I think the "autoportraiture" comes out of wanting to connect but remain apart.

**What are the projects you are working on at the moment ?** I'm exploring the ideas of skin colour and value in my space. It's amazing that half the time we don't even notice the complexity of that issue.



Brianna McCarthy

Brianna est une artiste qui travaille à Trinidad et Tobago. En dépit de son jeune âge, elle a déjà plusieurs expositions à son actif. Elle présente

en 2005 dans le cadre du Festival de la jeunesse et des étudiants une partie de son travail au Venezuela. En 2008, elle expose une collection de dessins et de peintures à « Alice Yard » structure d'art contemporain de Trinidad qui organise aussi des résidences d'artistes. En 2009, elle fait partie de l'exposition « Art érotique » se déroulant sur une semaine toujours à Trinidad. Elle y présente ses « 12 filles ». Elle collabore actuellement avec l'artiste Rodell Warner sur un projet nommé « Cc:Everybody ». Ce travail explore la dichotomie et l'interrelation entre les espaces publics et privés. Elle participe aussi à la semaine de la mode en mai 2010.



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