

JERRELL GIBBS: NO SOLACE IN THE SHADE

Baltimore artist Jerrell Gibbs (b. 1988) mines the core of his history and personal experience to assess the power and limitations of identity. Challenging what has been until recently the near invisibility of Black life in American art, Gibbs turns to the long tradition of figurative painting to portray intimate, everyday scenes of family, community, and masculinity. Gibbs's subjects enjoy the safe respite of their homes and the camaraderie of their communities; they celebrate together and experience

reveries in nature. His paintings show Black people *being*. Often working from inherited and found photo albums, Gibbs evokes fading memories and the passage of time in monumental scenes that are a testament to the mystery and miracle of contemporary life.

Soon after beginning to paint in 2015, Gibbs studied at the Maryland Institute College of Art, earning his MFA in 2020. *Jerrell Gibbs: No Solace in the Shade*, the artist's first solo museum exhibition, surveys his career from 2018 to the present, a period of marked creative growth. The show takes its title from the

award-winning novel *Open Water* by British writer Caleb Azumah Nelson, which inspired many of the artworks on view.

Curated by Angela N. Carroll

To access the audio guide for this exhibition, featuring insights from the artist and curator, scan the QR code.

The Senses, 2021

Oil and oil stick on canvas

Private Collection



To learn more about this artwork from
the curator, scan the QR code.

Quiero Amor, 2019

Oil on canvas

Private Collection of Everette Taylor



Quiero Amor exalts Black joy and familial celebrations, a frequent theme in the artist's work. The characters in the foreground are featured in the later work *The Electric Slide*, also on view in this gallery. Both paintings exemplify how memory and culture inform his depictions of everyday life.

Boys Planting, 2021

Oil on canvas

Collection of Suzanne McFayden



Delicately affirming the innocence and humanity of Black children, Gibbs depicts two boys planting flowers in a flourishing field. His attention to color and decorative ornamentation heightens this study of intimate gestures and highlights the respite found in friendship.

*For you have been called to live in
freedom, my brothers and sisters.*

Galatians 5:13, 2024

Oil on canvas

Collection of the Artist



Still the same, 2020

Oil on canvas

Collection of Michael Sherman and Carrie
Tivador



End of Summa, 2023

Oil on canvas

Collection of the Artist



Untitled, 2018, 2018

Oil on canvas

Collection of Marysia Woroniecka



In 2021, Gibbs premiered the series *Sounds of Color: Recorded Memories*.

Each painting features a singular figure he named Salvador against a backdrop of vaporous veils of monochromatic color.

The subject is inspired by a color photograph of an anonymous boy the artist found in a scrapbook gifted to him by artist Jeffrey Kent. The only descriptor for the image was the location it was taken in: Salvador, Bahia, Brazil. In these works, Gibbs explores the relationship between color and music, revealing his deep connection to Black sonic traditions, including jazz, gospel, blues, rock, and hip-hop, and their potential to invoke

transcendent emotional and psychological states. By placing the boy in indistinct settings and in different attire, the artist uses Salvador as a poetic avatar, a figure not bound by time and place. To date, the Salvador figure has recurred in more than 30 paintings.

While observing these four works from the series, you are invited to listen to the epic poem composed by Baltimore-based writer and filmmaker NIA JUNE chronicling Salvador's journey. To access the poem, scan the QR code.

Vive y Aprende, 2019

Oil on canvas

Collection of Henry L. Thaggert,
Washington, DC



To learn more about this artwork from
the artist and curator, scan the QR code.

The Electric Slide, 2024

Oil on canvas

Collection of the Artist



Poetic Justice, 2023

Oil on canvas

Collection of Matthew Sherman, New
York, New York



To learn more about this artwork from
the artist and curator, scan the QR code.

For Thomas, 2021

Oil and oil stick on canvas

The Baltimore Museum of Art: Purchase
with exchange funds from the Pearlstone
Family Fund and partial gift of the Andy
Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts,
Inc.; BMA 2021.159



For Thomas is a contemplative engagement with figuration and landscape. The sitter is Baltimore-based poet and writer Kondwani Fidel, who gazes directly out at the viewer. Gibbs depicts him earnestly, resting in a field amid colorful flowers, pen and notepad in his hands. This painting and many others from this era in Gibbs's practice nod to the work of French artist Henri Matisse, who employed decorative accents in his portraits, including ornate interiors, floral motifs, and patterned clothing.

Girl with peppermint dress, 2020

Oil and acrylic on canvas

The Collection of Yasmine and Matt
Johnson



Too Soon, 2019

Oil and acrylic on canvas

Jesse Williams Collection





G Note, 2021

Acrylic on canvas

Ovitz Family Collection, Los Angeles



C Sharp, 2021

Oil and oil stick on canvas

Private Collection



North Ave, 2019

Oil on canvas

Courtesy of Keith E. Timmons, ESQ, from
the "KET Collection"



This early painting depicts Gibbs's hometown of Baltimore as a psychological landscape through the use of underpainting to signify memories and the impermanence of life. This is one of his first paintings that used gestural mark-making to imply contemplation, angst, and meditation in his subjects.

A Sharp, 2021

Oil and oil stick on canvas

The Traci and Mark Lerner Collection



E Note, 2021

Oil on canvas

Robert Shiell Collection



Man at Peace, 2022

Oil, acrylic, and oil stick on canvas

On Loan from Alex and Carol Scott



In *Man at Peace*, Gibbs welcomes the viewer into an intimate moment of Black masculinity, a rebuttal to what is often the visual stereotype of a Black man representing menace. In contrast to his nearby work *A Man Sleeping in a Chair*, here Gibbs's subject regards the viewer with a relaxed gaze. Gibbs frequently portrays men in repose—whether it be in a richly decorated interior with flowers or in the outdoors enveloped by nature. As Gibbs has said, "In my paintings, Black men are synonymous with compassion, empathy, and beauty."

A Man Sleeping in a Chair, 2024

Oil and acrylic on canvas

Collection of the Artist



Top Shelf, 2020

Oil and acrylic on canvas

On Loan from Vinny Dotolo and Sarah
Hendler



Gibb's portraits regularly feature dapper
Black men in intimate, highly decorative

interiors. The artist accentuates the beauty he sees in his subjects, even when the scenes are otherwise mundane. Gibbs drew inspiration from depictions of lower-class and bourgeois subjects in French Impressionist art while developing his own pictorial language of daily life. In this instance, *Top Shelf* was inspired by an archival photograph of Gibbs's cousin and adapts the composition of French artist Édouard Manet's painting *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère* (1882).

To learn more about this artwork from the artist and curator, scan the QR code.

The Last Night, 2020

Oil and acrylic on canvas

On Loan from Vinny Dotolo and Sarah
Hendler



Portrait of Elijah Cummings (first
version), 2021

Oil on canvas

Collection of the Artist



Man with Lilacs, 2021

Oil and oil stick on canvas

The Traci and Mark Lerner Collection



To learn more about this artwork from the artist and curator, scan the QR code.

Like Father, Like Son, 2024

Oil on canvas

Private Collection of Malcolm Jenkins



Gibbs's allegorical and autobiographical interests merge here in an homage to his

late father, Jerry Gibbs, who was killed in the early 1990s when the artist was a child. He frequently references the trauma of this experience through depictions of his father, inspired by archival photographs, as well as through broader allusions to fatherhood and to the effect of a fatherless childhood. Here, Gibbs juxtaposes a scene of himself as a child listening to a cassette tape over an image of his father in a record store, meditating on their shared love of music.

To learn more about this artwork from the artist and curator, scan the QR code.

Gone Fishn', 2023

Oil and acrylic on board

Collection of Michael Sherman and Carrie
Tivador



Nous visited the Seine, but did not swim,
2022

Oil on canvas

Brandywine Museum of Art, Purchased
with funds provided by Mr. and Mrs.
Rodman Moorhead, 2023



Gibbs lived in Paris during the summer of 2022 in preparation for his first major solo exhibition there. Inspired by the city's historical architecture and iconic museums, he created a series of works that reinterpret paintings by French Impressionists. The figure here functions as an avatar for Gibbs, who, in an attempt to address the intimidation of being in Paris—one of the centers of European art—dives into the Seine to escape from the weight and performance of art history.

To learn more about this artwork from the artist and curator, scan the QR code.

Kids at Play, 2024

Oil on canvas

Collection of the Artist



To learn more about this artwork from the curator, scan the QR code.

Double Consciousness, 2023

Acrylic on canvas

Collection of Michael Sherman and Carrie
Tivador



To learn more about this artwork from
the curator, scan the QR code.

Boy meets girl, 2023

Acrylic on board

Private Collection



To learn more about this artwork from the curator, scan the QR code.