

Galerie Myrtis

Between Spirits and Sisters Series Statement

Statement

<http://galeriemyrtis.net/delita-martin-statement/>

“Wherever two or three woman are gathered together, there is the spirit and authority of Sande.”

Mende belief

“-Women create Sande on the spot where they group together, sharing with one another, excluding men. This space is defined by privacy and secrecy- Women together in their womanhood, in a free exchange of words and actions among sisters -This is Sande.”

Sylvia Ardyn Boone – Radiance From The Waters: Ideals of Feminine Beauty in Mende Art

The duality of women in this body of work project the spirit and its connection to the physical world, which reinforces the bond amongst women and how they co- exist in the physical and spiritual realms. The mask seen in the work are my interpretation of the Mende mask, specifically created for young girls being initiated into Sande. These masks are created as a reminder that human beings have a dual existence viewed as one body.

In this work, I am also exploring the different signs and symbols that help define the space the women reside in. In my previous works, the backgrounds communicated a specific sign, symbol, or icon to assist the viewer in their conversation with the work. Those signs and symbols helped define the perspective of the image. This body of work transitions the women and their place of residence into a spiritual realm, where the symbolism is less defined, the shapes are more organic, and the icons are left for the viewer to ponder and creating a space for the women to be birthed into.

Delita Martin Bio

<http://galeriemyrtis.net/delita-martin-bio/>

Delita Martin is an artist currently based in Huffman, Texas. She received a BFA in drawing from Texas Southern University and an MFA in printmaking from Perdue University. Formerly a member of the Fine Arts faculty at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, Martin currently works as a full-time artist in her studio, Black Box Press.

Working from oral traditions, vintage and family photographs as a source of inspiration, Martin's work explores the power of the narrative impulse. Her process of layering various printmaking, drawing, sewing collaging and painting techniques allow her to create portrait that fuse the real and the fantastic. In her work, she combines signs and symbols to create visual language. By fusing this visual language with oral storytelling, she offers other identities and other narratives for women of color.

Martin's work has been exhibited both nationally and internationally. Most recently, Martin's work was included in State of the Arts: Discovering American Art Now, an exhibition that included 101 artists from around the United States. She was also included in the International Review of African American Art as one of 16 African American artists to watch, as they are gaining national and international attention in 2015.

Artist Statement

<http://www.blackboxpressstudio.com/Asset.asp?AssetID=46754&AKey=5XCHL8AH>

Throughout history, the marginalization of Black women has led to problematic representations of their roles within community and family structures, as well as problematic visual and textual representations; thus making it difficult to document their positive contributions within collective systems. Martin's current work deals with reconstructing the identity of Black women by piecing together the signs, symbols, and language found in what could be called everyday life from slavery through modern times. Martin's goal is to create images as a visual language to tell the story of women that have often been marginalized, offering a different perspective of the lives of Black women.

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See interviews from Delita Martin here:

<https://stateoftheheart.crystalbridges.org/blog/project/delita-martin/>

<https://blackartinamerica.com/index.php/2017/09/26/baia-talks-substance-and-spirit-with-delita-martin/>

<http://galeriemyrtis.net/delita-martin-video/>

Contagious Creativity: Delita Martin's Work of Art and Heart

by [Heather Bennett](#) on 1/1/2015 12:00am

<https://www.littlerockfamily.com/post/102517/contagious-creativity-delita-martins-work-of-art-and-heart>



Delita shows off her latest untitled mixed media piece.

Folks often say dynamite comes in small packages when they're cautioning others of underestimating someone or something because of size. In artist Delita Martin's case it is an understatement. Her petite frame packs a powerful charge of personality. She's a creative powder keg with an infectious spirit. "I love visual arts. I'm a closet painter. I love drawing, printmaking and throwing pots. I love literature and to read. I love acting—all types of art forms. I just love the whole creative process," she muses. Her passion for art, her work and her life draw you in and make you want to hitch along for the ride.

Delita was born in Conroe, Texas. She grew up with five older sisters and three older brothers. They were a close-knit family with cousins living nearby. She shares, "We were out of the house by 8:00 in the morning, going on adventures and getting lost in the woods on purpose. We had impromptu parties—fun adventures, outdoor things."

"Our family had a lot of artists, makers, storytellers, and the women were quilters. My father was a furniture maker. It was a magical childhood. I grew up in an unofficial art school. It was just how it was," she explains. Now, Delita's work has been exhibited both nationally and internationally in numerous portfolios and collections, including most recently, the State of the Art: Discovering American Art Now exhibit at [Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art](#) in northwest Arkansas.

[Delita shares how it all began and her road to Crystal Bridges](#)

When I was 5 years old in kindergarten, I didn't really know what an artist was. Then I was given a color sheet. It was a farm scene on a hill. I layered different colors of crayons. My

teacher said, 'Look at Delita's work. You can mix colors.' Students lined up to look at my work. After that I said I was going to be an artist.

One of my first drawings was actually on the back of one of my father's paintings. My family really inspired me. We loved creating things. I went through two coloring books a week. I copied my Dad's pictures. There was always something I wanted to do. I was 11 or 12 and finally truly realized my Dad was an artist. I always wanted to go to art classes, growing up creating things all day, every day. We couldn't afford art classes and I thought to myself, "I have them right here."

The first professional artist I met was John T. Biggers, the founder of the Texas Southern University's Art Department. My dad studied under him. One day dad said, "Get all of your drawings together. We're going somewhere." We then drove 44 miles and met Dr. Biggers. I was 12 years old when I received my first art critique. I felt a little star struck. Dr. Biggers said to me, "Young lady, do not ever miss an opportunity to uplift your people through your artwork." My dad was really proud. He had wanted to be an artist, but had to provide for his family. He saw me enamored with Dr. Biggers. It meant the world to him.

I received my undergraduate degree from Texas Southern University and my graduate degree from Purdue University. I met my husband Cedric while I was in Houston. I was at a Mexican Cantina with some friends. He and his friends were at a table next to us. I kept telling him he couldn't buy me a drink, but then we eventually started talking politics and we exchanged business cards. Later on, before the Fourth of July weekend, I called him. We talked for 8 hours. We talked so long my phone wouldn't keep a charge after that. Our first date was a baseball game at Enron Stadium. He brought me a bouquet of tiger lilies. Those are my favorite flowers. We had them in our wedding!

Cedric's work ended up bringing us to Little Rock. (He is now Vice President of Human Resources for PPC Broadband, Inc.) Cedric is my biggest supporter. When you create, you're in your own world and need someone willing to pick up the pieces and understand you're in creative mode. I have a note he wrote me early on that says, "Go effortlessly in the direction of your artist dream." I carry it around with me today.



Fine Arts & Family: Delita, pictured here with husband, Cedric, and son, Caleb, pours her heart into her work and her loved ones.

Cedric is also the baby of his family. We parent a little differently though. He would say my way of parenting is “Vegas: Kids’ Style.” I’m very laid back. I don’t generally get too upset. Our son, Caleb, is a really great kid. He usually talks to me about stuff. I approach it philosophically and discuss why he did something the way he did it.

We love to do things as a family. We like going to the pumpkin patch, riding bikes, walking to the Green Corner Store for ice cream and going to festivals. We also love to cook together. We like to find recipes and experiment with them. I make Jamaican beef patties and Cedric makes roasted tomato pepper crab bisque. We also like to make chocolate chip pancakes!

On juggling being an artist and a mom, I think about people always saying they’re putting off having kids because of what they’re doing at the time, but I’ve found a child doesn’t have to stop anything. It just changes the path you take to it. You can create when and how you can. I find ways to incorporate him into the world and it actually enriches it. Caleb has been going to shows since he was a baby. He really pays attention. I want him to understand you CAN realize your dreams and do the impossible.



In the Studio: Delita Martin carves linoleum for a relief print.

[Delita's Favorite Artists](#)

JOHN BIGGERS

“I love his subject matter. It captures the African American community. You see tradition.”

ELIZABETH CATLETT

“She focuses on women’s and human rights through printmaking, drawing, sculpture, and mark making.”

JIM DINE

“I love his printmaking style, his aggressive mark making. I love that energy in his drawings.”

KIKI SMITH

“I love the way she uses found objects, a lot of 3D installation work. She addresses sexuality in women.”



Cranking it out: Delita turns up the creative heat and demonstrates letter press printing on a Vandercook Letter Press.