

Otis Quaicoe: (s)kin deep

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Since Otis Quaicoe's move from Accra, Ghana, to Portland in 2017, his figural paintings have adjusted and shifted in congruence with a heightened cultural awareness of his relocated body. As he looked at Blackness and race in American society from the perspective of an African immigrant, Quaicoe became more interested in depicting the nuances of skin tone that emerge in velvety grayscale.

In common with artists like Robert Pruitt and Amy Sherald, Quaicoe's models are real people with whom he finds connections. This small body of work reflects Quaicoe's interest in these individuals through portraits, studying not only the skin but the colors and expressions of identity through clothing. Quaicoe's paintings offer rich, impasto textures in backgrounds and skies that reflect the stucco walls of traditional Ghanaian homes.

Man in Red Beret and *Invisible* both reflect the ease of the subjects and the playful fashion expressions while the different contours of the skin provide a sculptural presence. In the untitled drawings of the two women, expression and individuality are illustrated through their dramatic hairstyles. For Quaicoe, *Ouncie Mitchell* is the artist's representation of a real and imagined Black cowboy, set against the vast blue where the crown of the cowboy hat nearly fades into the bright sky.

Quaicoe's portraits do not just invoke identity of the painful bonds tying two continents together, but they simultaneously break down these layers of history and draw us into a more intimate conversation that transcends nationalities and brightens the discourse of the African diaspora experience.

Quaicoe attended the Ghanatta College of Art and Design for Fine Art in Accra, Ghana, with a focus on painting. In his earliest influences, Quaicoe referred to the compositions and styles of hand painted film posters and later developed a stronger interest in photography with an emphasis on portraiture. Quaicoe's first solo exhibition in the U.S. was presented by Roberts Projects in Los Angeles in 2020. The following year, Quaicoe held an artist residency at the Rubell Museum in Miami followed by a solo exhibition and has continued to exhibit nationally and internationally.