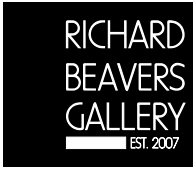


FRANK MORRISON ARTIST STATEMENT

When thumbing through comic books or watching cartoons as a child, Frank Morrison rarely saw faces that looked like his own. Little to no Black superheroes or icons made their way into popular culture. So he decided to make his own. His paintings showcase African American life in the city — what they see, feel, and do in their everyday lives. With oils, acrylics, watercolors, spray paint, and illustration all at his disposal, he allows his subjects to dictate the medium he employs to add vibrancy and dynamism to the stories he shares. From the hopeful depictions of children in his current exhibition “I Believe it’s Wonderland” to his concurrent presentation of his “Foundations” series in his show “Brilliance Behind the Line”, Morrison’s work emanates a spirit of resilience.

His style developed over years of fusing together his inspirations. Growing up in the 1980s, the hip-hop counterculture of dance and graffiti art offered a newfound sense of control over the story and culture within the African American community. Morrison could experiment with color and form. The fluidity of his approach carried over into his figurative work. Deeply inspired by the greats throughout art history, he became enamored with the artistic genius he encountered as a young man visiting the Louvre, he added to his artistic foundations with the techniques of the masters that came before him. The Renaissance and Raphaelites introduced him to the drama of oil painting. Goya and El Greco taught him to manipulate his scenes to encapsulate expressive forms with social critiques.

He found himself inspired by the work of the African American Neo-Mannerist painters. Pioneering artists like Ernie Barnes subverted realism with the unseen daily life of being Black in America in the mid-20th century. Morrison was captivated by the way they created otherworldly, elongated human forms and color palettes that evoked a resonating sense of culture and community. He incorporated elements of the Pop Artists, such as cultural commodities, large scale, and intense colors, to add to the conversations of modernity he evoked. He combined the documentary approach of the early 20th century Ashcan School, examining his surroundings, and adding in components from his favorite illustrators, such as Al Hirschfeld and Miguel Covarrubias. He built upon these artists, translating this aesthetic through a modern lens, looking at his own childhood memories, the advances of Black culture, and his version of the everyday.



The result was a fluid style where the real and the animated blend together. Abstractions intertwine with the human body in playful scenes infused with a critique of the racialized and societal structures that persist through the ages. His work is an archive. Pulling together autobiographical memories and the ordinary experiences of those he encountered with his imaginative spirit, he captures the changes of the eras. Despite the dialogues his work initiates on issues such as the perpetuation of wealth disparity and strained familial relationships, his work offers a sense of hope. His paintings reclaim the thriving culture that stemmed from Black ingenuity but was appropriated by the mainstream. It is a celebration as Frank Morrison chronicles the unheard stories, the forgotten histories, and the stifled brilliance of the Black community in America.