



Black History Month Featured Artist

Christian Robinson



Christian Robinson is an illustrator, author, animator, and designer based in Oakland, California. He was born in Los Angeles and grew up in a small one-bedroom apartment with his brother, two cousins, aunt and grandmother. Drawing became a way to make space for himself and to create the kind of world he wanted to see. He studied animation at the California Institute of the Arts and would later work with the Sesame Workshop and Pixar Animation Studios before becoming an illustrator of books for children. The Christian Robinson for Target collection, released in August 2021, includes more than 70 items across home and apparel for kids and baby. His books include the #1 New York Times bestseller *Last Stop on Market Street*, written by Matt de la Peña, which was awarded a Caldecott Honor, a Coretta Scott King Illustrator Honor, and the Newbery Medal, and the #1 New York Times bestseller *The Bench*, written by Meghan, The Duchess of Sussex. His solo projects include *Another*, which was named a New York Times Best Illustrated Book of 2019, and the New York Times bestseller *You Matter*. His latest collaboration with Matt de la Peña, *Milo Imagines The World*, received six starred reviews and was a #1 Indie Bestseller and a New York Times bestseller. His collaboration with poet Amanda Gorman, *Something, Someday*, was a #1 New York Times bestseller. His illustrations for *Nina: A Story of Nina Simone*, written by Traci Todd, were recognized with a Coretta Scott King Illustrator Honor in 2022.



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Jean Michel Basquiat



Jean-Michel Basquiat (1960-1988) was an American artist associated with the Neo-expressionism movement. In the late 1970s, Basquiat rose to fame as part of the graffiti duo SAMO with Al Diaz in the Lower East Side of Manhattan, where he painted short poetic phrases or statements tagged "SAMO©". A few years later, Basquiat's work was being shown in museums and galleries worldwide. Basquiat—only 21 at the time—became the youngest artist to exhibit at documenta, an exhibition of contemporary art taking place every five years in Kassel, Germany. In 1983, he was one of the youngest artists to have work exhibited at the Whitney Biennial in New York—when he was 22 years old. Before his tragic death at the age of only 27, Basquiat completed thousands of paintings and drawings, which explore important themes surrounding wealth, race, and identity.



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Laura Obuobi



Laura was born and raised in Accra, Ghana, but has been living in the United States since 2003. She has loved books ever since her daddy taught her to read. Libraries, bookstores, in fact any 'bookish space' is Laura's happy place

She is fascinated by pre-colonial West African history and how it connects with the Black diaspora and Black history. Laura loves to explore these themes, elements, and cultural connections in her stories.

Laura received an MA in Early Childhood Education from Teachers College, Columbia University, and taught for 8 years as a preschool teacher. Her time in the classroom with preschoolers set the stage for her transition into writing for children.

Laura is a graduate of the Writing for Children and Young Adults program at Vermont College of Fine Arts. Besides creative writing, Laura also finds joy in drawing and collaging.



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Glenyse Thompson



Glenyse Thompson is a Florida-based artist whose work spans contemporary original art and design. Inspired by people and conversations, her artwork combines vibrant use of colors and textures, conveying the exuberant connections we have with each other and our environments. Glenyse' paintings and hand-drawings have everything to do with how we interact daily. "Conversation is something we would miss if not happening, yet we rarely stop to think how much value we should place on it. We are nothing without each other, we are nothing without conversation.

"My goal is to inspire those who see my work to listen more carefully to the people around them and find beauty in the simplicity of hearing others."

Her artwork is in the collection of Boston Children's Hospital, and private collections. Exhibition history includes Black Futures, University of Wisconsin-Parkside and Mahogany Gallery; Many Americas: Art Meets History, Southern Vermont Arts Center; Satellite Art Show, Miami Art Week; Show Me The Signs #sayhername, Blum & Poe Gallery, The Other Art Show-Saatchi Art; Beyond the Mask: Storytelling in Black Art + Design, Plant Seven, High Point Market; Hyatt Regency Orlando Exhibition; Bombay Sapphire Artisan Series; PaperWest-National Works on Paper, Gittens Gallery.

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Vanessa Bradley-Newton



Vanessa Brantley Newton was born during the Civil Rights movement, and attended school in Newark, NJ. Being part of a diverse, tight-knit community during such turbulent times, Vanessa learned the importance of acceptance and empowerment in shaping a young person's life. When she read *Snowy Day* by Ezra Jack Keats, it was the first time she saw herself in a children's book. It was a defining moment in her life, and has made her into the artist she is today. As an illustrator, she includes children of all ethnic backgrounds in her stories and artwork. She wants all children to see their unique experiences reflected in the books they read, so they can feel the same sense of empowerment and recognition she experienced as a young reader.

Vanessa celebrates self-love and acceptance of all cultures through her work, and hopes to inspire young readers to find their own voices. She first learned to express herself as a little girl through song. Growing up in a musical family, Vanessa's parents taught her how to sing to help overcome her stuttering. Each night the family would gather to make music together, with her mom on piano, her dad on guitar, and Vanessa and her sister, Coy, singing the blues, gospel, spirituals, and jazz. Now whenever she illustrates, music fills the air and finds its way into her art. The children she draws can be seen dancing, wiggling, and moving freely across the page in an expression of happiness. Music is a constant celebration, no matter the occasion, and Vanessa hopes her illustrations bring joy to others, with the same magic of a beautiful melody.--



Black History Month Featured Artist Jacqueline Woodson



Jacqueline Woodson is an American writer of books for adults, children, and adolescents. She is best known for her National Book Award-Winning memoir *Brown Girl Dreaming*, and her Newbery Honor-winning titles *After Tupac and D Foster*, *Feathers*, and *Show Way*. Her picture books *The Day You Begin* and *The Year We Learned to Fly* were NY Times Bestsellers. After serving as the Young People's Poet Laureate from 2015 to 2017, she was named the National Ambassador for Young People's Literature by the Library of Congress for 2018–19. She was awarded the Hans Christian Andersen Medal in 2020. Later that same year, she was named a MacArthur Fellow.

Jacqueline Woodson is a writer redefining children's and young adult literature in works that reflect the complexity and diversity of the world we live in while stretching young readers' intellectual abilities and capacity for empathy. In nearly thirty publications that span picture books, young adult novels, and poetry, Woodson crafts stories about Black children, teenagers, and families that evoke the hopefulness and power of human connection even as they tackle difficult issues such as the history of slavery and segregation, incarceration, interracial relationships, social class, gender, and sexual identity.



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Alma Thomas



Thomas was born in Columbus, Georgia, the oldest of four girls. In 1907, her family moved to Washington, D.C., seeking relief from the racial violence in the South. Though segregated, the nation's capital still offered more opportunities for African Americans than most cities in those years. As a girl, Thomas dreamed of being an architect and building bridges, but there were few women architects a century ago. Instead, she attended Howard University, becoming its first fine arts graduate in 1924. In 1924, Thomas began a 35-year career teaching art at a D.C. junior high school. She was devoted to her students and organized art clubs, lectures, and student exhibitions for them. Teaching allowed her to support herself while pursuing her own painting part time. Thomas's early art was realistic, though her Howard professor James V. Herring and peer Loïs Mailou Jones challenged her to experiment with abstraction. When she retired from teaching and was able to concentrate on art full time, Thomas finally developed her signature style. She debuted her abstract work in an exhibition at Howard in 1966, at the age of 75. Thomas' abstractions have been compared with Byzantine mosaics, the Pointillist technique of Georges Seurat, and the paintings of the Washington Color School, yet her work is quite distinctive. Thomas became an important role model for women, African Americans, and older artists. She was the first African American woman to have a solo exhibition at New York's Whitney Museum of American Art, and she exhibited her paintings at the White House three times.