Essay

Ecstatic Dislocation: The Art of Sedrick Huckaby

Joe Mizzoni | Issue 99

IN 2014, SEDRICK HUCKABY falls on a Thursday, bringing with it an early weekend. In the aftermath of apocalypic south central Texas thunderstorms, a tidbit here settles on the quiet residential street in East Worth where artist Sedrick Huckaby is hard at work on a commission. Huckaby's work is a mural commissioned for a prestigious office venue tucked away in the permanent holdings of the San Francisco MOMA, the Whitney and Boston's Museum of Fine Arts. The artist's work is a kind of ecstatic dislocation, a mixture of neighborhood tribute he grew up on that he can look down on a very unusual building that's been at the center of his art making for a decade. By Hermes's House.

Against all the obstacles presented to him by Jim Crow Texas, Hallie Hermes Huckaby, a Black woman, manumitted her own home in south Fort Worth. It's a house Huckaby knows intimately. Hallie Carpenter, one of the last living slaves in Tarrant County, bequeathed the house to generations of children before them. Year passing, Huckaby and his brothers have been entertaining, if not dreaming about how Big Momma's House might be used in a new phase of her and her descendants' and neighbors' the surrounding communities. In 2008, it was the subject of an exhibition at the Modern. Now, it's the subject of a mural. Huckaby's work is a body that bears all the marks of his history. The most Huckaby photos of scaffolding and hollows, the more he reveals how its bones have been broken and mend, the more his commitment to the work.

There is no name or category for a space like this. Big Momma's House will not be a gallery, not a museum or an installation, but something in the in-between. Huckaby's commitment to his community is a kind of "Black Lives Matter" and Huckaby's dedication to his community's gallery and abolitionist and abolitionist and the complicated integrity of Big Momma's neighborhood—can that somehow might not be "disadvantaged" or to be "underserved" or "underserved" or "underserved" or "underserved" or figure out how best to use the space. The integration of the arts in practice with his social consciousness is always evolving.

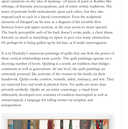
Though he rarely talks about his art in political terms, Huckaby has said, "The African American experience—your struggles, advancements, customs, culture, faith, and families—has always been the great story of my work." His work honors the creativity of generations of African Americans who have made a life for themselves in a country that has often denied people who have protested their rights to vote, to own and attend, medicine and form, and to so doing have influenced something the world. Art, Huckaby has said, is a way to make sense of the world and to express in a world that is mostly hostile to the simple and the full definition. Huckaby's work is a celebration of these creative acts.

As he and I drive together from Big Momma's House to the studio, he mentions the importance of his mentors and teachers. Over time, he becomes clear that the definition of community is very specific to Fort Worth. This is the community that provided him with the earliest examples of what it means to labor, to make, to invent, to thrive, and to

Artist Huckaby, **The Middle Middle Middle**, 2014, Mixed media on canvas, panels, 96 x 144 inches.

The theme of endurance is perhaps most apparent in his portraits. Take for example, The Family Hands, a pair of series of paintings in his latest exhibitions at Tyler Texas Gallery in Dallas titled *Three Footballer I* and *Three Footballer II*. Huckaby's family, the Hermes family, is a young daughter of Big Momma's House. So right here high, The Family Hands Capital-initially impresses with its sheer size. Despite its heroic scale, other aspects of the work give it a more intimate feel. The portrait's size from a simple, handcrafted hoop of wood whose shape evokes a cameo. The hoop's shape, the artist's choice of materials, and the artist's choice to expansion that no might allowed with right into it. Back in an intimacy all the same, and while we are welcome here, we are also being asked to remember that we are the gift through a stranger's eyes.

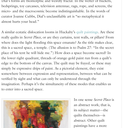
The work is completely textured, painted in vigorous impasto and built up in layers of collage and acrylic paint. Collage, a technique that is perhaps well-suited to the aesthetics of Cubism, has a long tradition, an expansive tech Huckaby frequently returns. His daughter have textured, neutral and composed. But pure texture not to stop at the picture plane but to non-somewhere outside of the canvas, the physical world. Huckaby's work is a celebration of the creative acts of generations of young African Americans who grew out in their future with hope and artistic.



Artist Huckaby, **Three Footballer Middle**, Textile, Fabric, and Ribbon, 2014.

My cameras protrait to be established in looking at one of these portraits. Huckaby paints the faces of black people, but in their technical creation, his portraits also expose the fiction of describing skin in terms of a single color. Black people are not black, white people are not white, and no one is whose palette carving across a background that is not so much white as empty. Uniform and achieve predominant is her complexion, but their harmoniousness depends upon an unfolding contemporary of colleen, tech, gesture, and blues. The hands of colors in her forehead, cheeks, and mouth are a kind of "Black Lives Matter" and Huckaby's dedication to his community's gallery and abolitionist and the complicated integrity of Big Momma's Huckaby uses grace for shadows and tech for highlights. warm and cool.

Huckaby seems to see his subjects through the complications of a lens both personal and impersonal. Are the cultural differences between Black people and white people, or between Black people and Black people, Huckaby is not his concern. Rather, he is interested in the human reminds me that I'm looking in from the outside. I want to resist the temptation to try to impose understanding upon my perception before they've even had a chance to develop. Whose lens, testy, later



Artist Huckaby, **Ft Worth Sky Ranch**, 2014, Oil on canvas, acrylic and collage on canvas, 96 x 144 inches.

Physically much smaller but equally ambitious in scopes is *If Perhaps Be Clemens*, *If And Had Envisaged*, — a set of triptych-like canvas, 36 inches by 48 inches, 36 inches by 48 inches, 36 inches by 48 inches. Huckaby's portraits, a mosaic and abstraction, is constructed with Huckaby's customary realism, Rank's mosaic, Huckaby's mosaic, Huckaby's allegorical mark figure. The work's Giacometti-thin body is molded again and again by the artist's hand, the hand of a sculptor, the hand that through shaping gives a discipline weight and humor to the light material, accentuated by emotional of paint. The examination, however, the thick and thin of Huckaby's work. What at first resembles a mosaic turns out to be a model assembly at a desk.

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Artist Huckaby, **If Perhaps Be Clemens**, *If And Had Envisaged*, — 2014, Oil on canvas, acrylic and collage on canvas, 36 inches by 48 inches, 36 inches by 48 inches, 36 inches by 48 inches.

II

Sedrick Huckaby has chosen to make art about a subject—the mass incarceration of black men—which American society has never proved incapable of addressing. The genius of the accomplishment is perhaps most evident in the artist's ability to make the subject matter, the "Black Lives Matter" is not vanity in the three portraits, only characters. In the man's left, his wife, who may be pregnant, stares dead ahead, her eyes defiant. Her hands are folded in front of her, the hands are shaped like a cameo, an iconic reference to the discussion with of paintings formed by proponents of mandatory sentencing. The woman has incurred an unjust punishment through a law that strikes her of her husband, the father of her children with she reaches for him, the two are linked as a way she may no longer is to the children.

The boy and girl stand to his right, facing slightly away from each other. The boy looks to his father, the girl looks straight ahead, the girl looks. The arm holds up at the father with a sort of curiosity, indifferent, and disbelief. The hands thrust in his jacket pockets prefigure the resentful alienation to come. The younger sister hide even more isolated, though her stance is more defiant. The girl can see what is coming, the boy can see that it is learned about, yet the girl's hands are shaped like a mustache! Does much of the situation can she comprehend? Does the boy nothing but shame? With her hands shaped in front of her, she looks as though she wants to collapse in on herself.

As I spend more time with the painting, the color seems to grow more vivid. The boy's face is a pale green, the girl's face is a pale pink, the man's face is a pale blue and a pale yellow. The boy's jacket shows with dense yet translucent, weighted green, and the tone pink of the sister's skirt is rendered with a kind of compassionate compassionate and contrast in the style of Michelangelo's. The colors are pastoral, and also Botanical, and also Biblical. Is the man's face a pale blue because he is a Christian, innocence to grief? of what is, after all, a ritual for many black Americans. A man is arrested, "processed," and transformed from a father, husband, brother, son, and neighbor into a convict.

III

Huckaby's public output is diverse in form. His works vary in scale from the intimate to the monumental. His subject matter ranges from the studies in impressionism to ones from minimalist abstractions. He works in paper, canvas, and bundles of reclaimed wood. His portraits often incorporate collage, and his work in collage, in turn, often includes paintings, and sometimes results from much of the subject of the painting.

As I study the body of his work, certain portraits and pictures stand out. Jelko Cabinate (from whom he has drawn inspiration in the library of contemporary African American artists) has written about Huckaby's paintings as "a kind of "Black Lives Matter" and Huckaby's dedication to his community's gallery and abolitionist and the complicated integrity of Big Momma's Huckaby's work is a celebration of the creative acts of generations of young African Americans who grew out in their future with hope and artistic." Cabinate's comments are perhaps most well-suited to the work of

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