

ON THE FLY: THE STUDIO

FLORIDA ARTIST PROFILES

By Nila Simon

IN CERTAIN CIRCLES

ARTIST DUSTIN HAREWOOD SHAPES HIS OWN ECLECTIC COURSE WITH JAPANESE-INSPIRED WORKS THAT CHALLENGE ACCEPTED NORMS.



Above from left: *Small Reef* and *Desert Rose* by Jacksonville-based artist Dustin Harewood

How do you change an entire city's perspective of art? If you're Dustin Harewood, you use spray paint, acrylic and resin.

The Jacksonville artist and educator is part of an emerging group of contemporary artists pushing boundaries with abstract and visually intricate compositions. In a city where watercolor beach scenes take on the role of Goliath, it's Harewood and his colleagues who are making a David out of rawer, more esoteric works of art.

"It's a pretty exciting time to be an artist in Jacksonville," says Harewood,

who also teaches design and painting at Florida State College at Jacksonville. "You can feel the energy being lifted here."

Born in Brooklyn to Barbadian parents, Harewood was exposed to art at an early age. His parents frequently took him and his sister to the nearby Brooklyn Museum, where he began attending Saturday morning art classes at the age of 7. After the family moved back to Barbados when Harewood was in high school, he began delving deeper into his art, finding influence in the work of legendary Barbadian artist Ras Akyem Ramsay. Harewood went on to earn a master's degree in painting and drawing at the University of North Carolina-

Greensboro before settling in Florida, where he met his Japan-born wife, Yuki.

His frequent travels from Japan to Barbados and back to the United States manifest themselves in his work. Pieces

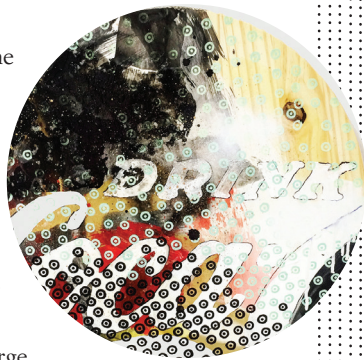
such as *Coral Beauty 3*, 2016, showcase a Japanese portrait against coral patterns seen in the Caribbean. His *36 Views of a Dying Coral Reef* series,



DUSTIN HAREWOOD

which illustrates his deep love of the ocean, was inspired by Japanese artist Katsushika Hokusai's series *36 Views of Mount Fuji*.

Thoughtful and introspective, 39-year-old Harewood says he pushes himself and his art every day, whether it's by using a circular canvas rather than the traditional rectangular form, or working on large 3-D surfaces that project off the wall.



"This is part of constantly reassessing what I do and why I do it," says Harewood, who has shown at the Cummer Museum of Art & Gardens three times since 2011. "I think about why we always have to do pieces on a rectangular space. We as artists are supposed to be so profound and so forward-thinking, so why do things in such a traditional way? Whether it's paper or wood, those mediums access the paint in a different way. So it changes your approach. It keeps me entertained and challenges me."

As a member of an unofficial core of creatives who are introducing innovative paintings, murals and street art at surprising venues—he recently showcased his work at APB, a men's sneaker boutique in Jacksonville's Five Points neighborhood—Harewood wants to present art that's a departure from the safe and normal. In essence, he wants to rock the boat.



"There's still an underground feeling to what we're doing, especially by not being in these big-muscle galleries yet," he says. "Even though I have shown at beautiful venues like the Cummer Museum, that little one-night sneaker shop exhibit is so much the core of what I do."

And it's not just a subset of residents who are noticing the artist. In May, the Cultural Council of Greater Jacksonville honored Harewood for his educational endeavors at its 41st Annual Arts Awards, a recognition he still blushes about.

"You don't do this job to get awards," says Harewood, who has been teaching at FSCJ since 2004. "Teaching is a privilege. The idea that I get to stand there and lead a class with all these talented minds, it's a great privilege."

For Harewood, there's never been a better time to be an independent artist in Jacksonville. "It's not an oversaturated place, like New York or London, where you have tens of thousands of artists roaming the streets," he says. "You can still make an impact because there is so much potential and opportunity and people who are hungry for what you're offering."

Above from top: Harewood's works on round canvases *Americana* and *Hungry Oni*



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