

Conrad Egyir: "20 Contemporary artists create masterful tapestry of Black life at new Cranbrook Art Museum exhibit"

By One Detroit

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A piece of artwork on display at Cranbrook Art Museum's exhibit entitled "Skilled Labor: Black Realism in Detroit."

Photo by One Detroit.

In a celebration of Detroit's diverse artistic heritage, the Cranbrook Art Museum has unveiled a new exhibit, "Skilled Labor: Black Realism in Detroit." The exhibit, on display at the museum through March 3, 2024, spotlights a community of 20 contemporary artists who have devoted the past decade to redefining the representation of the Black body in art. Rejecting stereotypical depictions, these artists explore the nuanced spectrum of Black life, capturing moments of joy, intimacy, reverie, danger and tension through their unique approaches and inspirations.

"Skilled labor" also takes on new meaning at the exhibit as it poetically refers to these Detroit artists who engage in the process of artmaking. Reflecting a rigorous intellectual process, the exhibition draws a parallel between the artists' technical prowess and the legacy of generations of skilled Black labor workers who have left an indelible mark on the city of Detroit. Co-curated by Detroit artist Mario Moore, the exhibit not only rethinks art history and culture but also highlights the unique sense of place, community, and networks of support found in Detroit.

One Detroit contributor Sarah Zientarski sat down with artists Ijanía Cortez, Jamea Richmond-Edwards, Mario Moore and Conrad Egyir to talk about how the exhibit explores the portrayal of the Black body in art, what the term "skilled labor" means to them, and why it's important to showcase African American representation in this way. Plus, they share what they each bring to Detroit and delve into the creative process behind their artwork.

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