

HUM-100-Q2982: Final Project

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Professor Walker

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I have chosen sunflower dreams of the WAK Collection by artist Kevin A Williams as my final project. One may find the makings of Kevin through his virtual art gallery and web store WAK or Blackartexpo. Growing up, the WAK collection was well-known and loved by African Americans who found empowerment, joy, and solace in his admirable work. I have seen countless Williams paintings in various households, shops, community centers, and churches within the Black American community. In the '90s and early 2000s, his work could be considered a staple in Black culture. As for potential buyers, I would suggest using the above sites listed to purchase his art because many people have attempted stealing his creations for credit and selling them for a lesser value.

This picturization is a painting on a canvas that is 30 by 40 inches. Although Williams has produced a lot of art/paintings, this particular painting of a woman staring at a sunflower was alluring. The elements that stand out to me the most in this objet d'art are the colors of the dress, flower, sofa, and the woman seen within the painting. Though the piece itself is moderately simple, representation of femininity, deeply melanated skin tones, and the colors Black, Green, Yellow, and Red all hold significant meanings to African Americans and the African Diaspora as a whole.

For Sunflower Dreams, I imagine Williams intended to express a cultural vision of peace in stillness. I speculate that Black culture has always had its ennobled worth historically measured based upon Eurocentric productivity standards. An example; During the Atlantic Slave Trade, Africans had befallen enslavement. In these auctions, individuals were dehumanized and sold for the sake of their appearance and the skills they possessed. When examining our current

economic affairs and employment structure, this belief system has created a generation of toxic productivity and unrest. Kevin was successful in his efforts to captivate the delightful appeal of tranquility by embodying the woman enjoying her time in the present moment. It gives a sense of peace and calmness, essential for today's busybodies. The creative expression of this artwork, in my opinion, was impacted by Black women's determination and perseverance in finding peace in constant chaos. Sunflower Dreams is impactful because it encourages discursing dialogue regarding the previously misunderstood relevance of mental health, relaxation, and peace, within the African American culture. According to (Williams, n.d.) "Kevin A. Williams is an artist on a mission,...He wants to take you on the journey,...a place where more African-Americans...create fine art that honors their rich heritage...". Inspired by cultural situations and historical events, these experiences have been critical to his creative process. The artist can express a wide array of emotions, thoughts, and visions, no matter the chosen method. Such works can depict joy, pain, excitement, sorrow, or tell a story, which is how Art is impactful. By conveying a deep connection with its surroundings and interpretation of a person, society or culture's lived and shared experiences. For example, Sunflower Dreams can draw attention through curiosity, although, it is simplistic in style, the piece can be culturally significant.

When analyzing art and culture, I often wonder how culture influences expression? I am curious to know what value expression brings to culture.

How is culture relevant to one's expression? How can expression have an impact on culture?

Can expression create conflict within a culture? I have learned through artistic work and

literature, which have helped me to understand the values I hold dear. I often consider how expression has helped develop my values, which have been shaped by others tremendously. I have learned to value my queer femininity, peace, time, mental wellness, culture, and history, all from influential thinkers and artists within the Black culture. My passion for expression was ignited by phenomenal visual artists, musicians, dancers, and literature scholars. Culturally, who's self-expression was influential? What does the person's expression mean culturally? The cultural expression in the WAK collection leads me to believe the intention of Williams Sunflower Dream was a message precisely designed for Black women and Feminists. By presenting a darkly complected African-American woman elegantly, enjoying her presence and flower, it is symbolic of the true nature of women within this culture. Time after time, African-American women can be perceived as mentally/physically strong, aggressive, and rambunctious individuals. For these reasons, this particular subculture is often omitted socially and sometimes culturally, a claim substantiated through analytical data. "African American women and girls have been left out of the social science research. Most of the social science research focuses on the plight of young African American males", according to Eboni M. Zamani-Gallaher, & Vernon C. Polite. (2013). His intention and my interpretation are in sync given the negative stereotyping and social outcasting of women in this community culturally, a softer depiction is necessary. Sunflower Dreams serves as a token of serenity for Black women to feel and know they are appreciated and deserve to have such pleasure, even if for just an instant.

To find answers to the questions, I would use reliable sources such as Shapiro library at snhu.edu, google docs, Smithsonian library website, Biography.com, and Archives.gov just to

mention a few. To better support my claims and opinions, I would search for evidence by using the following keywords; artifacts, culture, art, African-American art, African-American artifacts, influential artists in the black community, symbolic colors of African American culture, the Black feminist movement, African American women, Mental health for African Americans, James Baldwin literature, Kevin Williams artifacts, poetry by James Baldwin, paintings by Kevin Williams, and value in art. In other words, to further understand the cultural relevance of expression, I would begin by researching the culture, using keywords like "African American History", and "Influential African-American Artists." Once understood, I would research a significant figure of expression from within the culture, for example, James Baldwin and Kevin A. Williams. By narrowing down the people who inspire the culture, I would research the significant events for the culture which may have inspired their motivation behind the expression. Research if the persons' work is still culturally relevant and how their work made an impactful influence on their culture.

In conclusion, I believe humans have a need to express themselves through created works of cultural and historical significance. For example, I presume that Kevin's need for artistic expression may have been catapulted by the African American's cultural shift from unity into despair. From the 1950s to the 1970s, the African American community was undivided in their fight against racial injustices and the horrible infringement of their constitutional rights. From politically-charged movements such as the Civil Rights Movement, Black Power / Black Panther parties, and even the education social reformist college students in the Free Speech Movement. In the 1980s, crack cocaine shook the African American culture to its core as all sense of hope,

peace, and unity, was almost forgotten entirely. Through the research I have conducted during my time in the course, I have learned that creative expressions for African Americans are considerably innate to the progression and wellbeing of the culture. Whether it's the significant inspiration of the pre-colonial African culture brought to the modern art world, the powerful artistry of the Harlem Renaissance, I have learned how all these eras contributed to the African American culture. Many brilliant minds and artists were birthed from within the oppression of these historical times and events.

Sunflower Dreams has the unearthed potential to speak to many cultural issues of our current society, just as the previous generations that inspired us. Currently, Black women in America are faced with a multitude of strife and animosity. When thinking of modern examples, consider the maternal death rates, discrimination of women's naturally coarse hair, colorism, and domestic/sexual/physical violence. The learning material for Cultural Power and The Humanities, helped me to cement my thoughts and claims by truly defining the value that stems from creative expression. For example, in my module 6.1 assignment, I discussed James Baldwin's literary arts. If James Baldwin did not reflect on his individuality, the world would not understand how intersectionality and culture are inseparable. By being himself and simply reflecting upon his race, sexuality, and social standing in society, the divides within the African American culture between genders, sexual orientations, political ideologies and the cultures religious/spiritual uncertainty would not have been witnessed so clearly. Through his understanding, the power of media influence sheds light on the intricate nature of creativity and the African American culture.

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