

THE ART *of* VANITY

About the Exhibition

Welcome to “The Art of Vanity”, an inaugural solo art exhibition by visual artist and illustrator Brian Tolbert.

This exhibition, held over two-days features a collection of 19 original artworks completed over the last decade (2014-2024). Each piece is a self-portrait of Tolbert that reflects his journey of personal growth, identity, and the stories that shaped him.

“The work in this show tackles topics people aren’t always comfortable talking about—whether it’s grief, insecurities or something else. We all have our addiction, and we share similar lived experiences that many of us suffer through in silence,” says Tolbert.

“The Art of Vanity” offers an intimate and surrealist exploration of self-discovery through a series of self-portraits. Tolbert delves into the complexities of who he is, who he’s been, and who he is becoming.

This deeply introspective exhibition examines identity and transformation, with each portrait encapsulating moments in Tolbert’s life, reflecting his battles with escapism, depression, and his ongoing relationship with death. Rendered through a surrealist lens, the artworks explore the subconscious and abstract facets of his emotional landscape.

“I hope my own vulnerability encourages the audience to tap into and express some of their own struggles,” Tolbert shares. ***“I also hope people can develop a better sense of who I am and some of the reasons why I create art.”***

“The Art of Vanity” is dedicated to the memories of Tolbert’s late mother Pamela Brown, late father Russell Tolbert, and late grandmother Sylvia Brown.

About Purchasing the Work

All of the artwork in the exhibition is available to purchase, with prices ranging from $500 to $3,000 USD. Each piece is professionally framed and includes a certificate of authenticity.

You may either pay for the artwork in full at the time of purchase, or you can take advantage of a flexible installment payment plan, with a 25% down payment.

To purchase artwork talk to Brian, or the **show** curator Audra Lee directly about the works youre interested in. You can also visit **foreverincompleteart.com/collections/the-art-of-vanity** to purchase directly from the website.

Enhance Your Experience with the Artivive App

Artivive is an intuitive app that uses augmented reality to tap into new dimensions, allowing you to connect with art on a deeper level.

Several works in the exhibition make use of augmented reality, which enhances the viewer experience and builds on the narratives of the art.

To enjoy this enhanced experience, scan the QR code below to download the Artivive app. Once you download the app, simply hold the app up to artworks that have the Artivive logo on the label.

Download on the App Store

GET IT ON Google Play

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AN INAUGURAL SOLO EXHIBITION BY BRIAN TOLBERT

EXPERIENCE CURATED BY AUDRA LEE

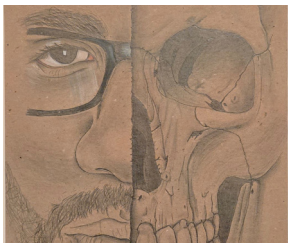
Exhibition Artworks



‘Hear no, See no, Speak no bullshit’
2014
8.5”x11.5”
$500.00



‘Sick & Tired of the Photoshop’
2017
10”x11”
$550.00



‘Halloween SZN’

2017
11”x10”
$550.00



‘Head Above The Clouds’
2018
11”x10”
$550.00



‘A Way Out of My Head’

2018
11”x10”
$550.00



‘Live from our current dystopian future’
2020
11”x10”
$550.00



‘A Prisoner in my own mind’
2021
12”x9”
$550.00



‘I Owe It To Myself’
2024
11”x10”
$550.00



‘Schoolboy B’
2024
12”x12”
$650.00



‘XOXO From Heaven 1’
2024
9.5”x11”
$525.00



‘XOXO From Heaven 2’
2024
9.5”x10.75”
$525.00



‘XOXO From Heaven 3’
2024
9.5”x10.75”
$525.00

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‘Life had me like’

2024
12”x12”
$650.00



‘I Saved Myself’

2024
12”x12”
$650.00



‘A Rose that Grew from Concrete’

2024
12”x12”
$650.00



‘Who’s in control?’

2024
12”x12”
$650.00



‘Come Back To Earth’

2024
40”x30”
$3,000.00



‘The Light was Dim’

2024
30”x20”
$1,500.00



‘This life of sin’

2024
40”x30”
$2,500.00

Artist Statement

"I started creating on cardboard because it's harder to tell Black stories on white paper."

I'm Brian Tolbert, a multidisciplinary visual artist in Washington, DC. I'm best known for portraiture of pop culture figures, self-portraits, and surrealist illustrations on cardboard. I emphasize the face and eyes in my work, capturing the essence of subjects even in pensive stares and moments of observation.

My works begin as small-scale, black-and-white graphite illustrations on cardboard with minimal color. I create a tangible texture through strokes and shading to give each piece volume and dimension. While my portraiture work is based in realism, my self-portraits and other works are presented through a lens of surrealism. I often scan and rework larger digital reproductions on canvas using various mediums to tell a completely different story or enhance the narrative of the original artwork.

My art centers my experiences as a Black man, incorporating the historical, cultural, and social nuances that shaped my life. At times these are the rap superheroes who soundtracked my childhood or community leaders who influenced my understanding of Black identity in America. I use the rich texture and imperfections of cardboard to enhance the Black stories I tell through my art.

My artistic journey began as a way to document the world around me. I grew up in project housing on Wilner Drive, a dilapidated and forgotten street at the very edge of Pittsburgh, PA. My childhood was marked by emotional, financial, and physical instability. Numerous violent, traumatic, and racist situations left me emotionally stunted and overwhelmed by the world around me, leading me to isolate myself for safety. As a child, art offered a safe space for me to explore creativity and escape the harsh realities of my life. Art provided me with a language to communicate how those events impacted and shaped my experience in the world.

As an adult, art is still a safe space and tool to communicate what I don't always have the language to convey. My work has evolved into a means for others to experience the world through my perspective. Instead of an escape, art has become a way to document my journey of healing from a violent and traumatic upbringing, unlearning toxic behaviors, shedding a survival mindset, and embracing self-discovery—all through the lens of a Black man trying to figure this life thing out. It provides me with an outlet to express grief and find understanding after the deaths of my parents. For over a decade, my 'Art of Vanity' series of self-portraits has served as time capsules. I've documented various moments of my life through surrealist portraits covering issues of escapism, depression, and my ongoing relationship with death.

I utilize my creative practice to share my firsthand experiences exploring themes of grief, love, pain, self-worth, shame, trauma, vulnerability, morality, and mortality. In doing so, I invite viewers to reflect on their own relationship with the themes in my work, connect with me more deeply, and find themselves in our shared human experience.

Artist Bio



Brian Tolbert *(b. 1985)* is a visual artist and illustrator from Pittsburgh, PA, celebrated for his evocative portraiture and surrealist illustrations on cardboard.

Tolbert's artistic journey began early, with a five-year scholarship from The Carnegie Museum of Art & Natural History's Art Connection program in fourth grade, where he honed his skills in illustration, painting, sculpting, printmaking, and etching.

In high school, Tolbert expanded his creative horizons at the Manchester Craftsmen's Guild Youth & Arts initiative, incorporating digital mediums into his work and earning accolades at the Pittsburgh Public High Schools All City Arts Showcase. His talents garnered multiple scholarships, including the Eleanor Friedberg Scholarship Award and recognition from the Pittsburgh Center for the Arts in Drawing & Printmaking.

Tolbert earned a B.S. in Graphic Design from The Art Institute of Pittsburgh. He then built a diverse professional career in commercial graphic design, consulting, fashion design, and corporate training. Today, he is dedicated to pursuing his passion for fine art full-time. In March 2024, Tolbert was one of seven artists accepted into the Vika Visual Arts 'Mind Your Art Business' Artist Development Program.

He will be showcasing brand-new work on December 7th at HOMME Gallery as part of the "Journey to Self" group exhibition, alongside fellow members of the Mind Your Art Business Program.





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To view “The Art of Vanity” exhibition online, as well as see more of Brian Tolbert’s work, visit **www.foreverincompleteart.com**

Follow **@foreverincompleteart** on all platforms

Questions **brian@foreverincompleteart.com**

Please share with other artists, art collectors, or art enthusiasts.

Thank you,

- Brian

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