



Joseph Diggs with his painting, “Chalk Line Baller,” from his current BMAC exhibit “Proud 2 Be American.”

THE ARTS

BMAC exhibit celebrates artist’s African American heritage and his family’s Cape Cod history

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BRATTLEBORO—The paintings that make up “Joseph Diggs: Proud 2 Be American” celebrate and memorialize several generations of the artist’s African American and Cape Verdean family.

The exhibit is on view at the Brattleboro Museum & Art Center through June 16.

“‘Proud 2 Be American’ was inspired by an article about my uncle Mitchell, a Tuskegee Airman,” Diggs said in a news release. “After the war, he wanted to fly commercial jets but was denied the opportunity because of his race. I wanted to make a piece of artwork that would depict his accomplishments without negativity about his situation.”

Diggs was born in France as an Army brat; his father was in the military before settling down on the family’s property in Osterville, Mass. Diggs’ ancestors were originally crop workers in the cranberry bogs, but they were entrepreneurial and bought the land that Diggs continues to live on today.

Baseball, service to country, and Joe’s Twin Villa, the family’s once-celebrated bar and jazz club, feature prominently in Diggs’ paintings.

“I asked myself, What does it really mean to be proud, especially when you grow up in a racially suppressed and divided country?” Diggs said. “Pride comes from a place that reminds us of the positive changes we have made, through even our hardest times, as the people who helped build this great nation.

“In this fragile time, when it seems easy to take a side and speak negatively about what we feel is wrong with our country, it is more important than ever to appreciate the basic good in us all.”

Diggs has had solo shows at the Guyer Art Barn, Cotuit Center for the Arts, and the Cape Cod Museum of Art. He is an art instructor for Cotuit Center for the Arts and for the Brewster, Mass., Department of Youth Services, where he teaches painting to incarcerated young men.

He is represented by Berta Walker Gallery in Provincetown and Wellfleet.