

James Nyika

Artist, Maryland

Upper Marlboro, MD
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EXPERIENCE

Self Taught, Watercolor

2013- PRESENT

Entirely self taught watercolor artist working strictly in watermedia. Selling artwork through online galleries :

Saatchi Fine Art: <https://www.saatchiart.com/nyika>

Fine Art America: <https://fineartamerica.com/profiles/james-nyika/shop>

UGallery:

<https://www.ugallery.com/product/SearchProduct?txtSearch=james%20nyika>

Software Engineer, MD/DC/VA — Principal

1998 - Present

Software Architect, Engineer and Software development company founder.

EDUCATION

Boston University, MA — *B.Sc. Computer Engineering*

1997

Magna Cum Laude

American University, DC — *MBA, Global Finance & Strategy*

2005

Summa Cum Laude

PROJECTS

Teaching — *Lower School Art Training*

Contributor and visiting guest artist to St. Andrews Episcopal School, MD

Jurying — *Middle School Art*

Art Jurying — Middle School Art Judging, St Andrews Episcopal School (2022)

Art Jurying Support - Middle School Art Judging Support Staff, St Andrews Episcopal School (2023)

SKILLS

Watercolor Drawing & Painting

Artwork Framing

Software Engineering Skills

LANGUAGES

English, Swahili, Some Japanese

Artist Statement

I have been creating work consistently as a semi professional for the past 7 years in the amazing and frustrating medium that is watercolor. I am completely self trained, and am inspired to deliver artwork that is really ready for display and appreciation in any home, office or space. I feel very strongly that we need a much stronger push of watercolor to support the existing portfolios of oil and mixed media artwork. Watercolor is magical, transparent, glowing and very interactive to perform. Nothing gives me more joy than to create the works I create.

I enjoy picking subjects of the everyday - channeling the original impressionist painters who strongly believed that the everyday was also worthy for portrayal. I sincerely hope that my customers, collectors and viewers view watercolor in a new way. I hope they are inspired to own, display and enjoy works that bring the everyday scenes they have into their own environments. As a child, in my home country of Kenya, I used to create watercolor birthday and holiday cards for friends and family using ordinary student watercolors and paper. Many of these materials I sourced from the student bookshop that had the simplest of art materials. I enjoyed creating those cards immensely (and I still do to this day! - I include a thank you card with every painting I sell). I further buttressed this experience by visiting and borrowing just about every art history volume from the British Council library in Nairobi. I was struck by the incredible realism of Constable's works, the chiaroscuro of Rembrandt and the luminosity of Sargent. I checked out the same books over and over just to stare at the art, to try and understand how it was created, reverse engineer it, and in many cases not understand the sheer scale and sizes of some of these works. How could I understand the Haywain, until I saw it for its true size and nature? However, with little support for the craft and a strong engineering tradition in my family, I immersed myself into my science studies and became a software engineer. For many years after I finished my university studies I travelled to most countries in Western Europe - and many times to France where I visited very many museums. I spent hours looking at artworks in the Musée D'Orsay in particular - with some wonderful African art and sculpture.

In the city of my studies, Boston, I was a frequent visitor to Boston MFA, the Isabella Stewart Gardner museum, where I wanted to see and experience impressionist art, which at that time I was heavily influenced by. But in all those years, I still had not picked up a brush.

Then finally in 2013 as I was doing a general search for watercolor art I came across the watercolor art of Alvaro Castagnet and Joseph Zbukvic. These in turn led me to Herman Pekel, Amanda Hyatt, Greg Allen, John Yardley, ...and they were very interesting. For the first time I truly saw the 'imperfections' in art work that made the art work even more compelling and I wanted to know how to do that too. So I started painting. I promised myself to do at least 1 painting a week, never throwing away any works (if I could help it) and learning in my off hours. I purchased all training videos by these masters and watched them repeatedly, learning something new each time in terms of technique, and looking at many other artworks to understand what gave a painting life rather than leave it an illustration. And this is where the journey has led, to the works that you see and hopefully are enjoying. My source material is primarily

reference photos, many from places I have visited in my past or from my relatives. Many pictures are also imagined from a distinct image that I recall on my travels.

My painting style is mostly representational, a-la prima, rapid, simplified and designed to capture a moment in time. I am interested in mood, atmosphere and exploitation of the medium to deliver a result that is clearly only achievable with watercolor. My paintings are designed to catch the eye, sometimes through color or composition - but always for a single idea - a central thesis that should re-appear every time the viewer looks at the picture. My materials are only the best professional paints and paper. My watercolors are lightfast, and highly pigmented. I use a range of brands, from Mijello, Sennelier and Daniel Smith to Holbein. I use, almost exclusively, 300 GSM rough grain, pure cotton rag paper from Arches, Saunders Waterford, Fabriano, and other custom paper makers. My brushes are mostly mops for the large areas, stiffer brushes from Simmons for more delicate finishings and Neptune brushes for small areas. As the years have gone by, I feel that I have slowly discovered a style I like and love - an approach - continually informed by newer heroes like Andy Evansen, Keiko Tanabe, John Salminen, Schaller and others. I am extremely excited by the new possibilities too that are emerging for African and African American artists like myself, for other minority artists and in particular for the growing gem that is watercolor art.