

# Dirk Joseph

Visual artist, Performing Artist, Art teacher  
Graphic Designer, Film Maker

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## Statement

“I make art to record dreams and experiences. I make art to create dreams and experiences.”

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## Career Summary

For over 30 years Dirk has been involved in the arts in almost equal parts as an exhibiting visual artist and as an arts teacher and community art facilitator. In 2016 he added storytelling and theatrical presentations to his artistic practice using the fine art of puppetry.

- **VISUAL ART** - Dirk's visual art consists mainly of paintings and sculptures. Other mediums include digital art, animation, illustration, tile mosaics, murals, and recently augmented reality art. The themes of Dirk's artwork range widely but his leanings are towards nature, spirituality, and the use of traditional African iconography as well as other global indigenous visual references to inspire authentic relationships with self, community, and nature. His artwork has been exhibited in galleries, libraries, schools, restaurants, etc. While living in NY in the 1990's Dirk was the president of the Long Island Black Artist Assn. He enjoys public festivals where he can engage directly with the community while presenting his art. He has done an extensive amount of graphic design including web design for numerous clients.
- **ART TEACHING/COMMUNITY ARTS** - Dirk has been teaching art since 1993 when he first started volunteering in his local elementary schools. This led to him working for several "teaching artist" agencies in NY and MD, slide lecturing at several universities in NY. Dirk has worked as a middle-high school art teacher in Baltimore. As a community arts facilitator Dirk frequently partners with some Baltimore based community organizations.
- **PERFORMANCE** - In 2014 Dirk co-founded a two person puppetry performing team called The Drapetomaniacs with artist Pierre Bennu. In 2016 Dirk founded String Theory Theater, a traveling puppetry troupe consisting of Dirk and his daughters Koi and Azaria. STT creates and conducts puppet shows for adults and children and performs at venues throughout Maryland such as the Baltimore Center Stage, Creative Alliance, BMA, Black Cherry Puppet Theater. They have traveled beyond MD to perform at the Detroit Institute of Art, UCONN, and multiple locations in DC. STT have contracted with the Board of Education and the Enoch Pratt Free Library for public performances and have received several grants and awards. In 2021 Dirk wrote a screenplay for a theatrical film titled *Underground* that was performed by the Baltimore Rock Opera Society. In 2023 Dirk was awarded a grant by the Jim Henson Foundation to develop a production titled *Defrag*. In October 2023 Dirk made his curatorial debut as he curated, hosted, and performed in a puppet slam in the Locally Grown Festival at Baltimore Center Center

## Education and training

- Primarily self-taught visual artist
- Foundation art classes - School of Visual Arts, NY 1989
- Technical drawing/drafting classes at College of Aeronautics, NY 1987
- Computer science courses at State University of New York at Old Westbury, NY 1985
- Hempstead High School, NY 1985

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## Professional Affiliations

### Current

- String Theory Theater, founder, director, principal artist - 2016-
- Urban Earth Synopsis, Art director for AudaCITY and Garden Art Party initiatives, 2021-
- Youth Resiliency Institute, Lead Family Engagement Art Facilitator, 2013-2023 (on hiatus since 3/2023)
- Free-Up Community HomeSchool Cooperative, art instructor, 2018-2020

### Former

- Futuremakers, Instructor/t Coach, 2021-2022
- Art teacher for Child First Authority via Concepts by Cash, 2012-2019
- Baltimore Leadership School for Young Women, Middle-High School Art-Teacher, 2009-2011
- Baltimore Office of Promotion, Artist in Residency program teaching artist, 2005-2007
- Artist assistant to artist Jean-Pierre Weil (framing, touch up, representative, sales), 2006-2009

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## Art Instruction

Instruction, community arts, and workshop facilitation (partial list)

### Current positions:

Prop and scenery fabrication Instructor for Moving History, MD  
Lead Community Arts facilitator for Youth Resiliency Institute, MD  
Instructor/coordinator for Community Art Lab, MD

### Recent/past:

Theater teacher at Road to Freedom Summer Camp, Northeast Towson Improvement Association (NeTIA) 2023  
Workshop facilitator and performer at EPFL Imagination Celebration Govans 2023  
Instructor/coach for FutureMakers, MD 2022  
Instructor at Free Up Village Community Homeschool Co-op, MD 2021  
Virtual workshop presenter for The Ballard Institute of Puppetry, UCONN 2020  
After-school arts instructor in Baltimore City Public Schools (BCPS) through Concepts By Cash, MD  
After-school arts instructor in BCPS through Child First Authority, MD  
Art instructor at Ravens Adult Medical Day Care, MD  
Baltimore Leadership School for Young Women (middle/HS school art teacher), MD  
School 33 Art Center, Bright Starts Artist Residencies, MD  
Artist in Residence for BCPS through Baltimore Office of Promotion and the Arts, MD  
Savvy Seniors Art Classes – BCCC, MD  
Reginald E. Lewis Museum; artistic consultant for genealogy project, MD  
Art Mentorship Program – Rush Arts Philanthropic Arts Foundation, NY  
Reginald E. Lewis Museum; artistic consultant for genealogy project, MD  
Africa Art Exchange Program, Red Clay Arts, NY  
"Dreamers Program" Art Instruction and Vocational Training - Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration, NY  
Teaching Artist Residency, Open Classroom Collaborative, NY  
Cultural Crafts Workshop, Ancestor Theater, NY  
Creative Workshops at Afrikan Poetry Theatre, NY  
Earth Art, The Nature Place, NJ  
Lectures at: Adelphi College, NYIT, SUNY at Stony Brook, and several NY public schools.

## Awards, Grants, Commissions

2024 Urban Field Station Artist in Residence awarded by The Nature of Cities / USDA  
2023 Commission by The Peale Museum to create a historical crankie  
2023 Jim Henson Foundation grant to produce a theatrical puppet show titled "DEFRAG"  
2023 Arts in Action Grant from BOPA to develop and implement an experimental art education curriculum  
2023 Grant from Maryland Historical Society to create large scale puppets for Artscape 2023  
2022 Free Fall Baltimore Grant recipient for STT  
2021 Commission by University of Maryland for puppet film titled "Material Witness"  
2021 2nd place award in 48 hr Puppet Film Project for puppet film titled "Inflorescence"  
2021 Awarded film commission from Ibex Puppetry, Handmade Puppet Dreams for "Not By The Hairs"  
2020 #Reflect Baltimore Award from Black Arts District  
2019 Recipient of the a Grit Fund for String Theory Theater Baltimore Tour  
2019 Free Fall grant recipient for STT  
2018 Recipient of BOPA grant to conduct large scale puppetry performances at 2018 Artscape

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## Exhibit History

Dirk's Artwork has been shown at numerous galleries, libraries, community centers, and restaurants. A partial list of exhibit sites/events are listed below.

Gallery 1448, MD	Corridor Gallery, NY
MICA, MD	Rush Arts, NY
The Whole Gallery, MD	Skylight Gallery, NY
Station North Arts Cafe Gallery, MD	Magill House International Art Gallery, NY
BHO Gallery, Canada	African American Museum of L.I., NY
George Washington Carver Gallery, NY	

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## Freelance Clients

Graphic design, data visualization, Illustration, film, animation (partial list)

DewMore Baltimore, MD	Urban Earth Synapsis, MD
Ingleside Press, MD	11 West Café - MD
UConn, CT	NYC Public Schools – NY
Youth Resiliency Institute, MD	NYC Housing Administration- NY
Enoch Pratt Free Library	Gabriel Toys Inc. - NY
Wadigidigi Publications - MD	Brooklyn Perinatal Network - NY
Tumba Productions -Senegal	CSEA Labor Union - NY
Woman's Work Birthing - MD	Talon Security - NY
African Ancestors Living Theater - MD	Office of Black Ministries - NY
NowChild Soundstage- MD	ALIBI Clothing Co. - NY
Femmes Africa Solidarite – Senegal,	Basilias Music - NY

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