

**DIAPHA
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EDREYS WAJED

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Diaphanous

September 13
October 25
2024





Young Soul Brother, 2015-17, micron pen

Within the varied works of Buffalo artist Edreys Wajed, it is impossible to escape the line. Everything emerges from that deceptively simple formal iteration. Paul Klee famously described to the line as a dot that goes for a walk. That sense of movement and forward momentum is present and persistent in Wajed's work. His lines have an unusually non-static quality, they always feel as though they are part of a dynamic flow. There is a clear rhythmic repetition within their expression and the ongoing sensation that, as we follow them, we are going somewhere.

Where we are going is a big question. How we get there is a big question. It is, in its widest parameter, a question about fulfilling possibility. Can we do so? Are we equipped to move ourselves in a positive direction and land in a realm filled with equity, inclusion, and no small share of wonder? As an African American contemporary artist, these are questions that lay implicitly within Wajed's work. Without explicitly telegraphing an answer, the formal qualities of his work constantly express—energetically and emphatically so—that the positive outcomes we question lay within our grasp. He is not literally rendering road maps, but there is in his line work a directional sense to implore us to follow the signposts created by the line.

Wajed's various expressions of the line reflect diverse qualities—there are big, fat, aggressively-enthused lines like billboards vying for our attention. There are choppy sections of lines that express the erratic reality of our forward path. There are moments when we—and our history and culture—barrel forward like a freight train in undeniable fashion toward obvious destinations along fat, noisy, chonky lines. There are also parts of the path that are delicate and require patience alongside persistence. In his drawing work, in particular, it is somewhat uncanny how precisely and unerringly considered the line becomes. There is an acutely thoughtful intention behind these finest of lines. The specificity of their rendering imparts the delicacy of thought behind them.

And to overstate what ought to be obvious, a vast majority of Wajed's line work follows the rhythms, cadence, and emphasis of the music the artist may be listening to during the creation of these works (frequently noted on the backs of pieces). They are graphic scores in the most literal sense, with some of the inked works reading specifically like sheet music. Graphic scores are the outer edge of musical notation which a player is free to interpret in any number of ways, however indecipherable they may appear. As Anthony Braxton once replied to a musician who did not quite understand where his part was on the page, "Play as written."

Wajed's painted works enthusiastically play with abstraction and messaging through text fragments and haikus, though the latter tend to be oblique and poetic, sometimes written in mirrored and backwards form. None of his text ever reads

as slogans or agitprop, they tend to be blunt and direct in expression. But their formally tweaked appearance veils their clarity just enough that the viewer must spend some portion of time deciphering, just enough time for the sentiment to land a little harder when finally "read."

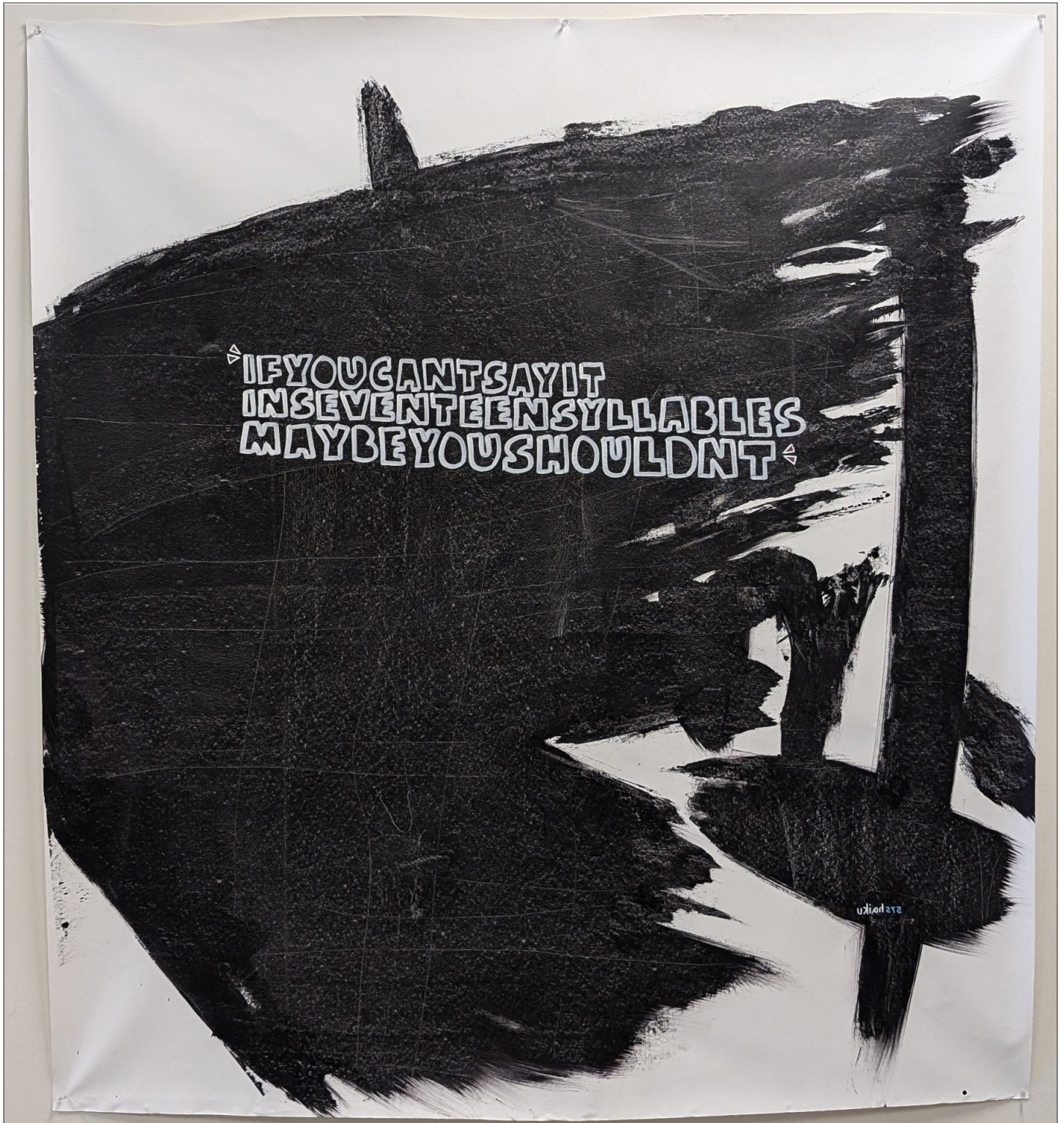
These textual elements range wildly from the biggest emotions to the smallest, most ambiguous sentiments. From DONTREACHYOUIMIGHTNOTGetyourhandback to ITSABLESSING to BGRINGSETC to cheddarwouldbrin-gaplethora. Sometimes earnest and heartfelt, sometimes casually descriptive, sometimes engagingly oblique, they always feel like big emotional swings at the viewer's heart and mind. At one moment, eye-opening and heartfelt; at another moment, funny and weird. There is a pervading sense that play is a more dominant factor than proselytizing. Which is not to say he's not preaching, but he understands that preaching plays better with some dramatic, humorous flair.

But is it preaching or some form of prophecy or a little of both? In a series of 12-inch square works that allude to both vinyl albums and 45 rpm singles with their circular forms, the patterns within are comprised of truncated combinations of lines that evoke the form of the I-Ching and its quality of divination. These quiet, restrained works and their triplet line forms reference the presence of music that is the R&D behind Wajed's works—and specifically his rendering of lines—while also expressing these forms as talismans, magical charms to thwart evil. As we move ever deeper into Wajed's work and its abidingly positive messaging, it grows ever more likely that all his works—singularly and together—are aggressive efforts to keep the worst at bay and appeal to all of our better natures.

And how are all these adventures of line work "diaphanous?" To be diaphanous is to be perhaps vague, immaterial, but also with a fineness of texture that enables one to see through something. What is it that we need to see through? Political division? Personal isolation? Racial disparity? All of the above and more? Without resorting to religious tropes, Wajed is nonetheless cumulatively suggesting a spiritual realm, but one that is within our grasp at every moment. I recall a handmade jacket the artist once wore with LOVE WINS emblazoned across the back.

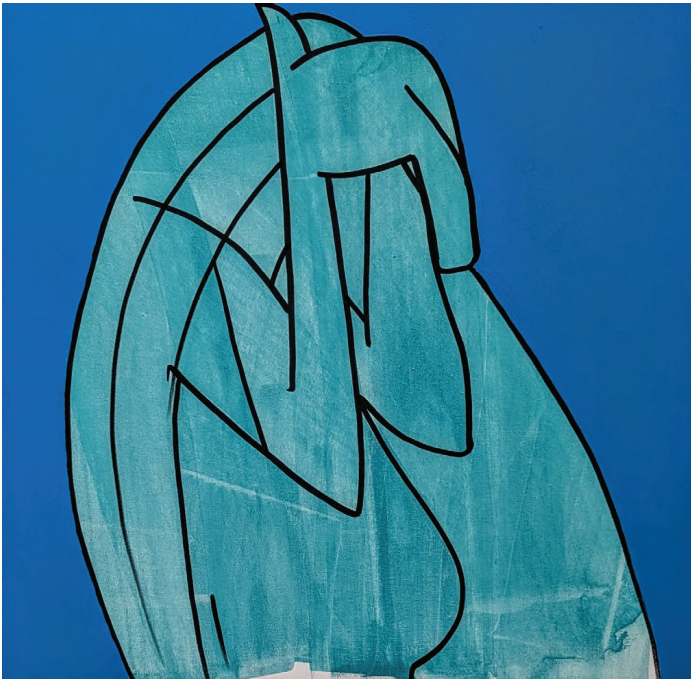
In every aspect and all iterations, Edreys Wajed's lines are about love winning, directing us along a path toward a higher ground.

John Massier
Visual Arts Curator



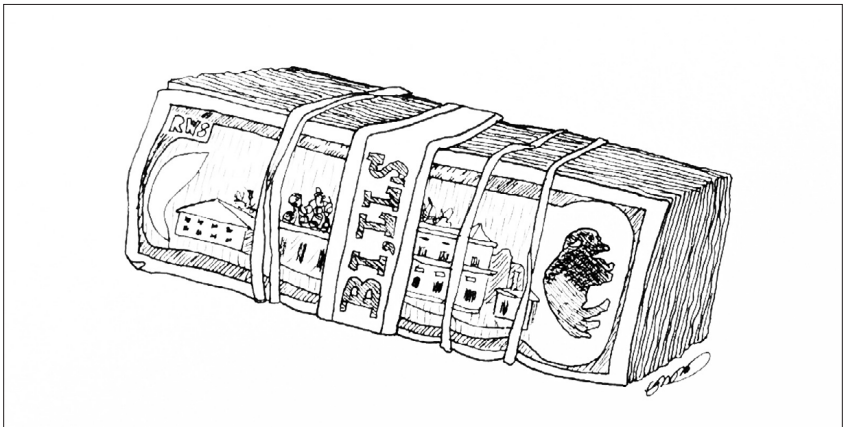
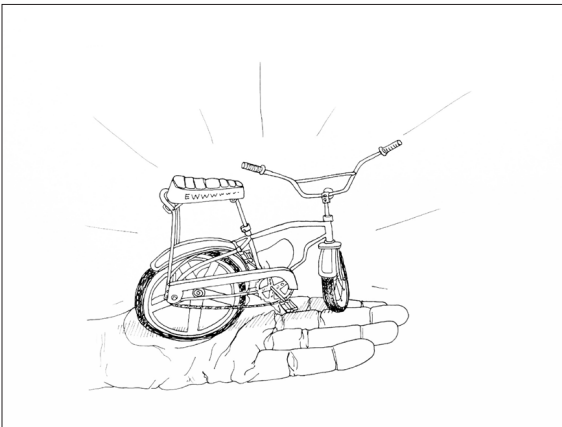
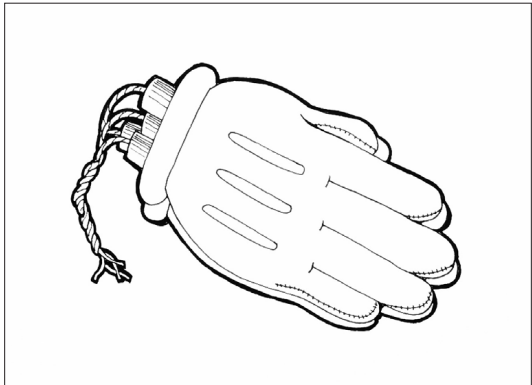
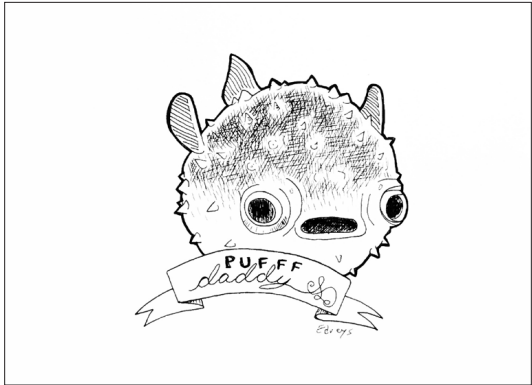
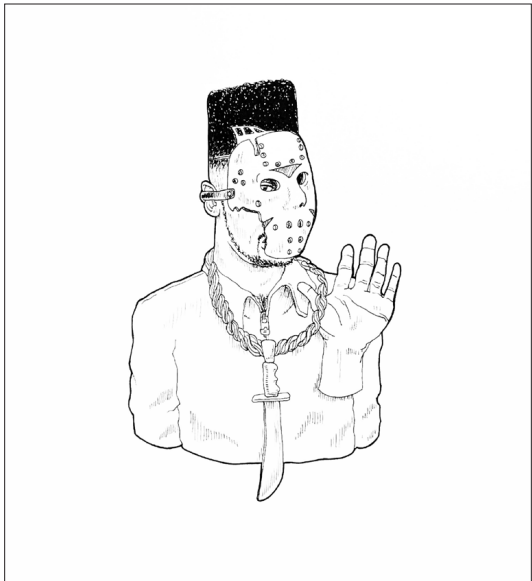
▷ IF YOU CANT SAY IT
IN SEVENTEEN SYLLABLES
MAYBE YOU SHOULDNT ◁

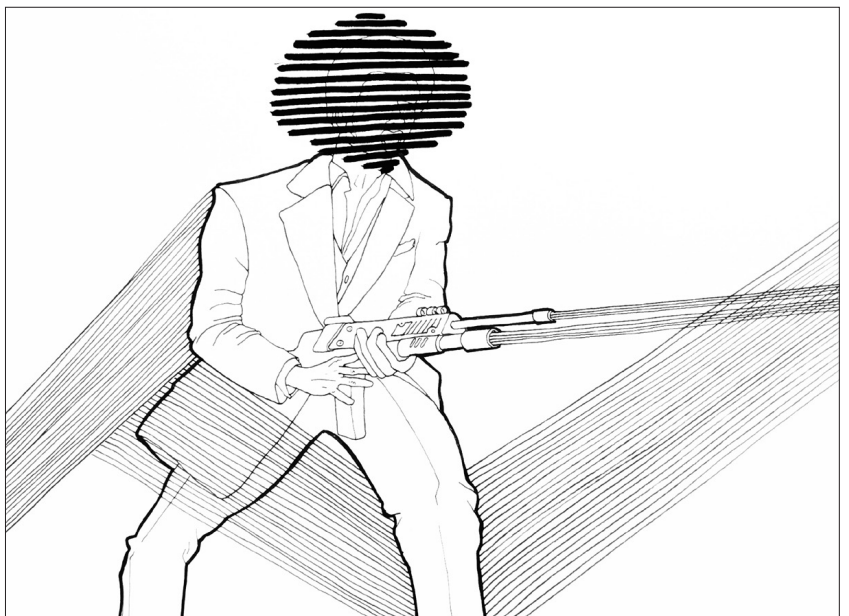
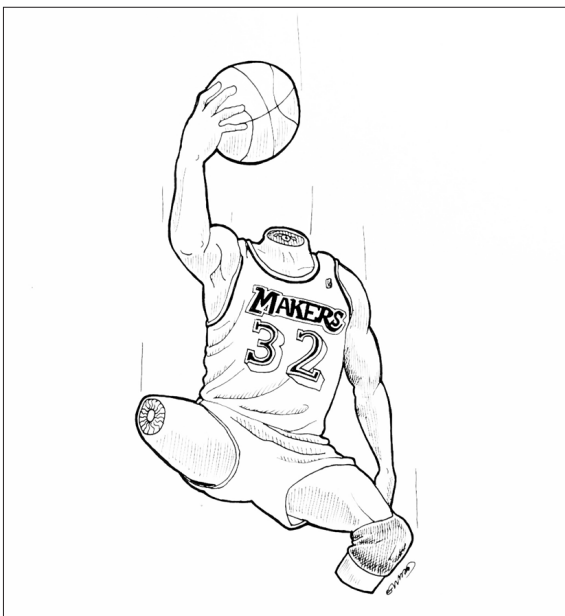
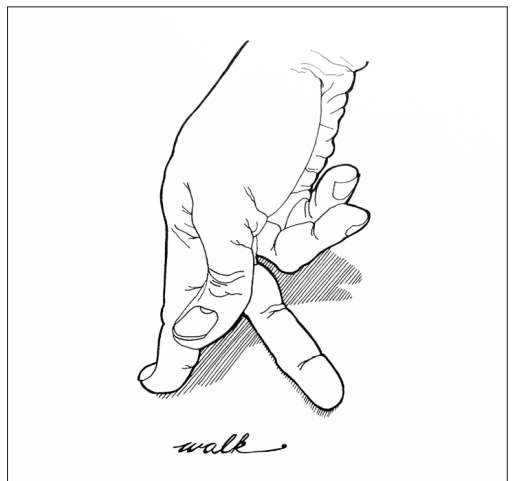
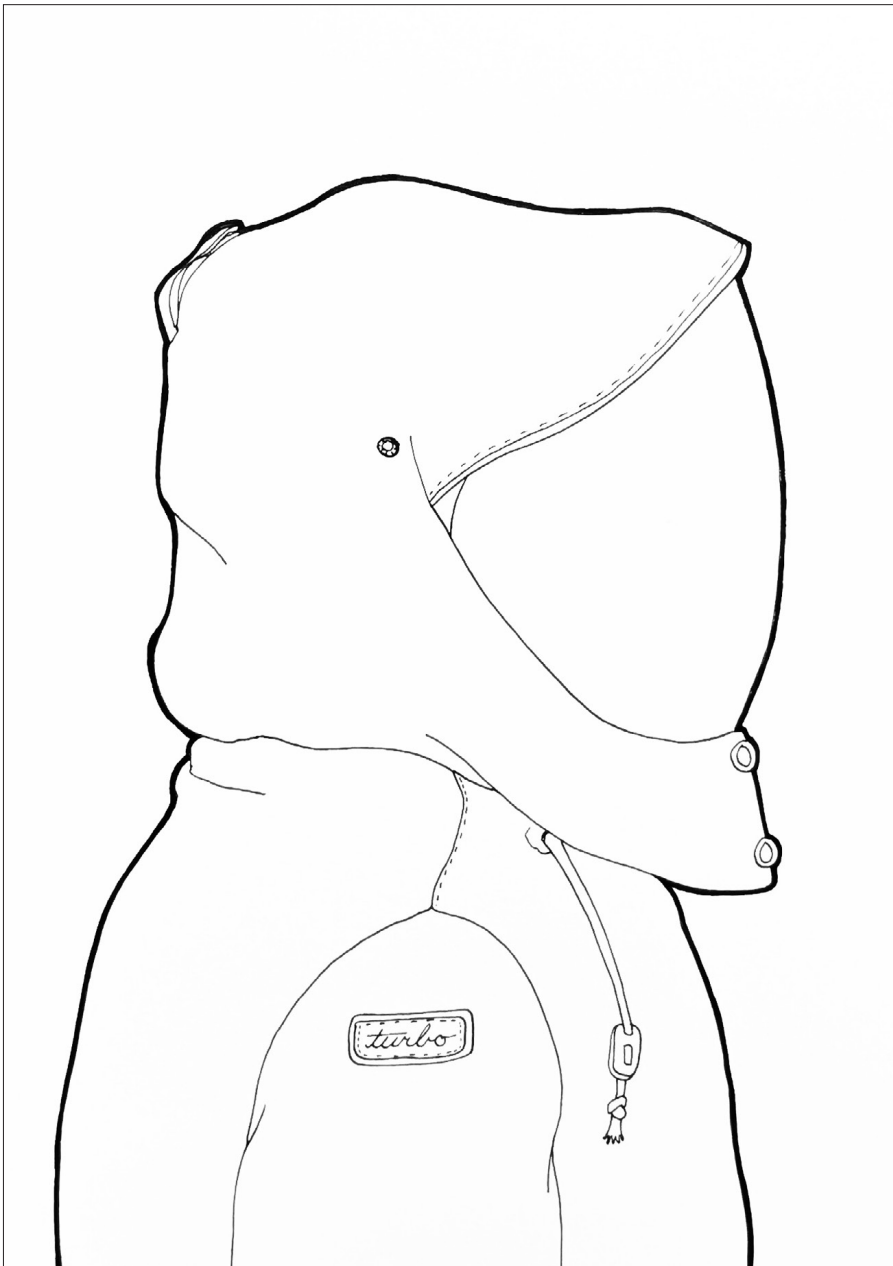
Title for Book of Haikus, 2024, acrylic on canvas



Squeegee Freestyle 1, 2024, acrylic on canvas • *Squeegee Freestyle 3*, 2024, acrylic on canvas
Squeegee Freestyle 4, 2024, acrylic on canvas • *Squeegee Freestyle 2*, 2024, acrylic on canvas

next page:
from *700 Daily Drawings* series, 2015-17, micron pen





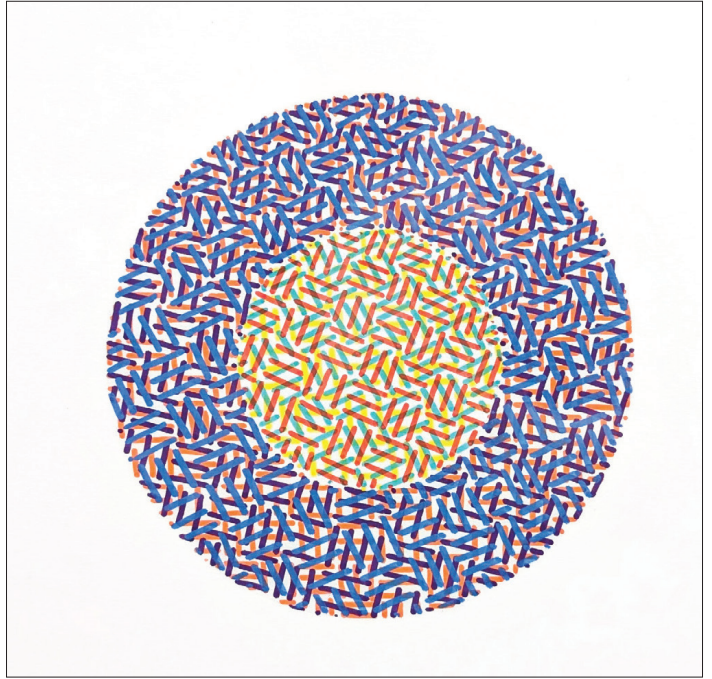
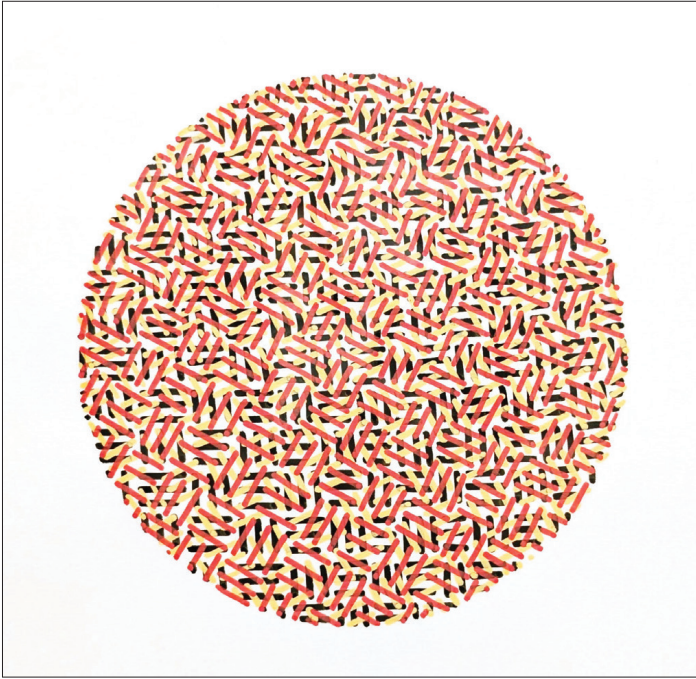


We Roll Dirty, 2024, acrylic marker on canvas

MAGNETIC



Ego Trippin', 2024, acrylic on canvas



khaki green, apricot, red, 2024, acrylic marker • Da 'Shinin' x Mic Tyson, 2024, acrylic marker
50 Years of Hip Hop March, 2024, acrylic marker • 1992 Rodney King, 2024, acrylic marker



from the *Blow* series: *Eartha Kitt*, 2019, micron pencil • *James Brown*, 2019, micron pencil

Edreys Wajed

was born and raised in Buffalo, NY, coming from a family of multifaceted artisans. His father was a jeweler and craftsman, and his mother would hand sew the family's clothing. It wasn't long before Wajed began to develop his own creative talents. At a young age he taught himself how to cut hair and quickly built his clientele as a barber. He would soon begin to develop his voice as a musician and writer, creating rhymes, hip-hop beats and spoken word poetry. He would also venture into his other creative pursuits, including customizing hats, clothes and designing logos. He took these skills and further developed them in college, graduating with a Bachelor's in Graphic Design from SUNY Buffalo State.

He has pursued many of his creative endeavors professionally and made himself known as a multitalented force within the Buffalo community. Combining his assorted skills under the company Emani Kemet in the 1990's, his work has included establishing himself as a successful hip hop musician, developing arts education programming initiatives, scripting an original play, working as a visual arts teacher and running Gallery 51 with his wife Alexa for three years, a minority owned art gallery and boutique on Elmwood Avenue. Wajed and his wife continue to share their work and inspire others as they build an empathetic community by using art as a communication tool through their creative consulting agency Eat Off Art. The concept and subsequent naming come from the "starving artist" cliché and attempts to break that trope by inspiring artists to strive and make a living from their creative pursuits.

His work has been exhibited in group shows at the Main Street Gallery, SUNY Buffalo State and the Buffalo Center for Arts and Technology. His solo exhibition, White Lines Matter, was featured at the Western New York Book Arts Center in 2017. As he completed his MFA at the University of Buffalo ('22) his work culminated in his thesis exhibit "The Bridge" which was exhibited at the Burchfield Penney Art Center, then traveled to both Sag Harbor at the Mark Borghi Gallery and the University of PITT at Bradford.

Wajed has also completed many public works projects. In collaboration with the Albright Knox Art Gallery and NFTA Metro, Wajed participated in the completion of the Freedom Wall at the corner of Michigan Ave. and East Ferry St. with fellow artists Julia Bottoms, Chuck Tingley and John Baker in 2017. Most recently through the Public Art initiative at Buffalo AKG Edreys designed and installed a polytab mural on the Jesse Nash Medical Building, which is the first Erie County Building to display public art.

The mightiest of thanks goes to my absolute greatest supporter, friend and creative partner, Alexa Joan Givens-Wajed for always being an encouraging source of light and inspiration in my lifework, whatever that might be. Thank you to my sons Eman and Emeka for continuing the creative Wajed legacy and thank you to my immediate family, extended family and dear friends. Lastly, I extend appreciation and gratitude to my village for well wishes and cheers along the way.

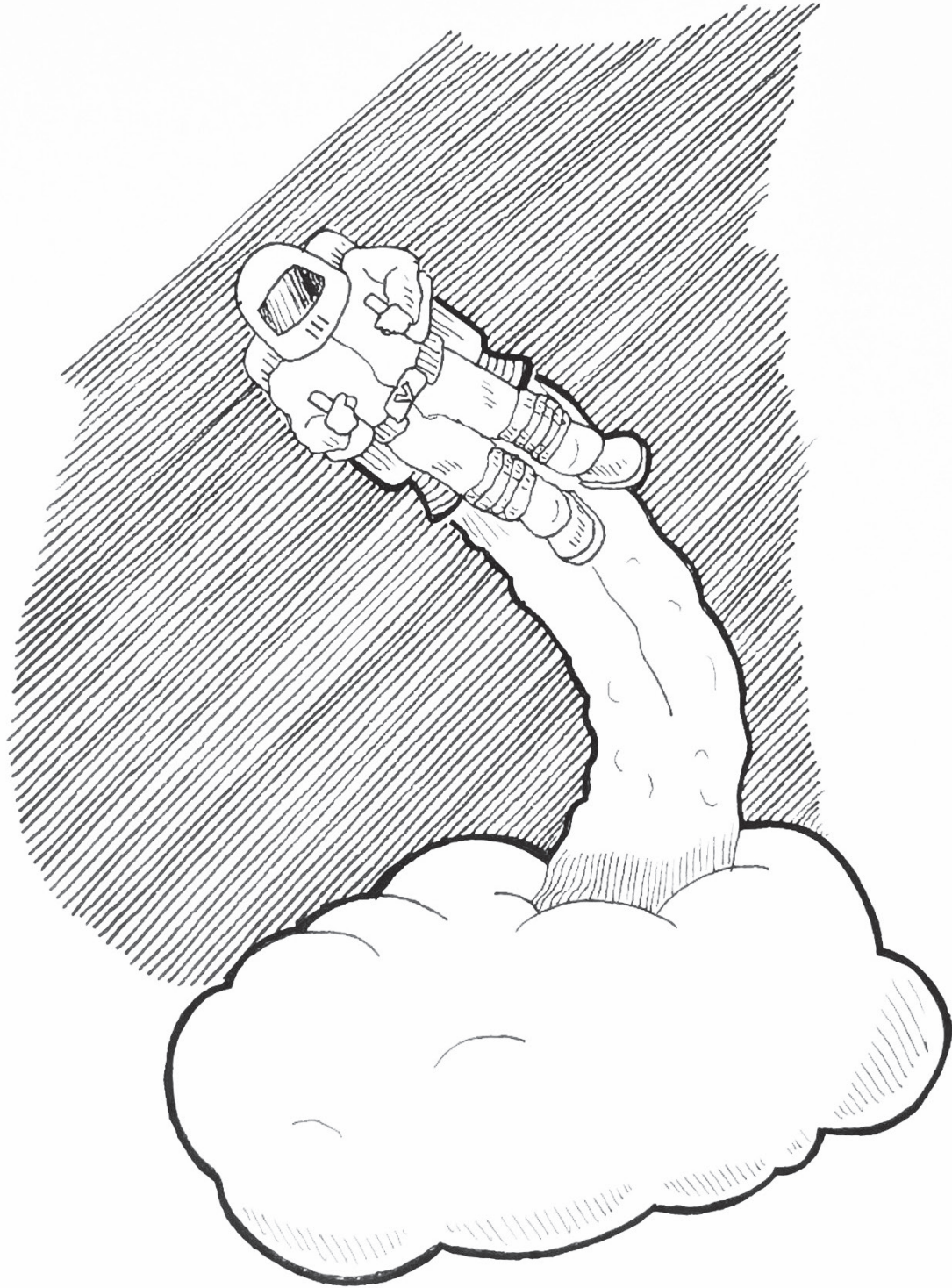


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