

# ELMHURST ART MUSEUM

## ART, EDUCATION & ARCHITECTURE

### Hebru Brantley



Hebru Brantley, *To And Fro (New Users)*, 2017, Mixed media on canvas, 84 ½ x 134 ¼ in.

In 2017, the Elmhurst Art Museum hosted a solo show of new work by the Chicago artist Hebru Brantley. A native of the city's Bronzeville neighborhood, Brantley is known for his public art commissions such as Chi Boy on S. Wabash and an eight-panel mural at the McCormick Place CTA Green Line station. His work is influenced by an array of pop culture icons, comic book heroes, Japanese anime, and street art pioneers Jean-Michel Basquiat, KAWS and Keith Haring. His signature characters, Flyboy and Lil Mama, began as references to the Tuskegee Airmen from World War II but now soar through a wide array of their own narratives.

Hebru Brantley creates narrative driven work revolving around his conceptualized iconic characters. Brantley utilizes these iconic characters to address complex ideas around nostalgia, the mental psyche, power and hope. The color palettes, pop-art motifs and characters themselves create accessibility around Brantley's layered and multifaceted ideas. Majorly influenced by the South Side of Chicago's Afro Cobra movement in the 1960s and 70s, Brantley uses the lineage of mural and graffiti work as a frame to explore his inquiries. Brantley's work challenges the traditional view of the hero or protagonist. His work insists on a contemporary and distinct narrative that shapes and impacts the viewer's gaze.

In this activity, participants will contemplate what makes someone a hero and use text and image to create a character embodying their personal interpretation of heroism. Check out our website for more information and images of ephemeral art that has been at the Elmhurst Art Museum. Share your creations and tag us on social media! #MuseumFromHome

Sincerely,

Joseph Hladik, Director of Education & Grants Administrator



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In the activity you will:

- Study the work of Hebru Brantley
- Construct your own heroic character
- Challenge your creativity
- Analyze the use of characters in Hebru Brantley's artwork.
- Create and illustrate an original cartoon character.
- Consider the meaning of heroism, how it applies to times of need, and who can be a hero.
- Develop a personal interpretation of what makes a hero and express it via a picture and text.



You will need:

- Character development worksheet
- Pencils
- Ink pens or Sharpies
- Your choice of coloring tools
  - Crayons
  - Colored Pencils
  - Markers



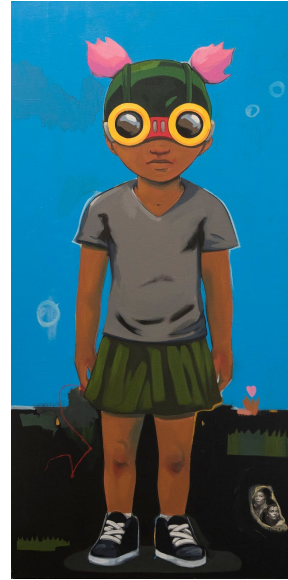
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### INSTRUCTIONS

Activity: Design a Hero!

Take a moment to familiarize yourself with Hebru Brantley's artwork by browsing images on our website or reading through the online guide located on our Museum From Home page.



Hebru Brantley, *La Tesha Walker Dressed Lil Mama Before It Became Fashionable*, 2017, Mixed media on canvas, 48 x 24 in.

Who are some examples of "heroes"?

- What are some real-life examples, and what are some fictional heroes?
- How is Flyboy similar to our example heroes?
- What about Flyboy looks heroic?

Hebru Brantley created Flyboy and Lil Mama to reflect the power and strength that exists in young people living and thriving through adversities he experienced in his own life.

- How can a superhero's strengths help address our own insecurities and fears?



Hebru Brantley, *Free From Personal Restraint*, 2017, Mixed media and diamond dust on canvas, 54 x 59 1/4 in



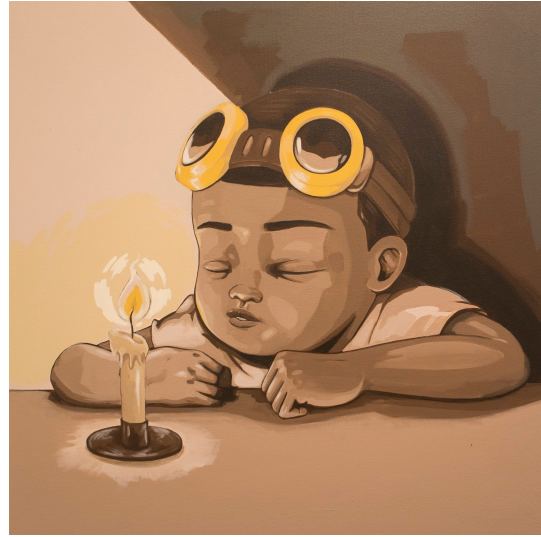


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Using the “Design A Hero!” worksheet at the end of this guide, start to brainstorm what superpowers or strengths your superhero might have to combat how you are feeling during COVID-19.

- Do they have a utility belt fully stocked with hand sanitizer?
- Are they on a mission to find a vaccine against covid?
- Do they have a laser beam that makes your least favorite food taste like candy?
- What is their back story of how they became a superhero?



Hebru Brantley, *Source*, 2017, Oil on canvas, 36 x 36 in.

Who would your hero help, and what adjectives would you use to describe their hero?

- Is this a hero for yourself?
- Is there someone you think needs a hero
- Is there someone that you already think of as a hero?



Hebru Brantley, *Natural Alchemy*, 2017, Mixed media on canvas, 63 x 90 ½ in.



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After using the worksheet brainstorm your hero's traits, use the large blank box provided on the worksheet to draw your unique character!

Using coloring tools, customize your original character and give them a name!

### DESIGN A HERO!

HEROES HELP AND PROTECT. THEY CAN BE REAL OR IMAGINARY. WE SEE THEM IN COMICS, MOVIES, STORIES AND THE NEWS. BUT WHAT MAKES SOMEONE A HERO?

USE THE BOXES AND QUESTIONS BELOW TO HELP YOU CREATE YOUR OWN HEROIC CHARACTER!

HERO'S NAME:  
The Essential PPE



WHAT POWERS AND/OR SKILLS DOES YOUR HERO HAVE?  
• Defends against bad germs and viruses.  
• Doctorate in Epidemiology.

WHO DOES YOUR HERO HELP?  
• Healthcare workers.  
• First Responders.  
• Anyone who needs protection from sickness.

WHAT ARE WORDS THAT WOULD DESCRIBE MY HERO?  
• Powerful.  
• Protective.  
• Necessary.



Hebru Brantley, *Bon Voyage* (Fresh From The Dealership To Parts Unknown), 2017, Mixed media on canvas, 84 3/4 x 134 3/4 in.



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USE THE BOXES AND QUESTIONS BELOW TO HELP YOU CREATE YOUR OWN HEROIC CHARACTER!

HERO'S NAME:

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WHAT POWERS AND/OR SKILLS DOES YOUR HERO HAVE?

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WHO DOES YOUR HERO HELP?

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WHAT ARE WORDS THAT WOULD DESCRIBE MY HERO?

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