

**#MuseumFromHome with
the Elmhurst Art Museum**



**CONSTRUCTING
A HERO**



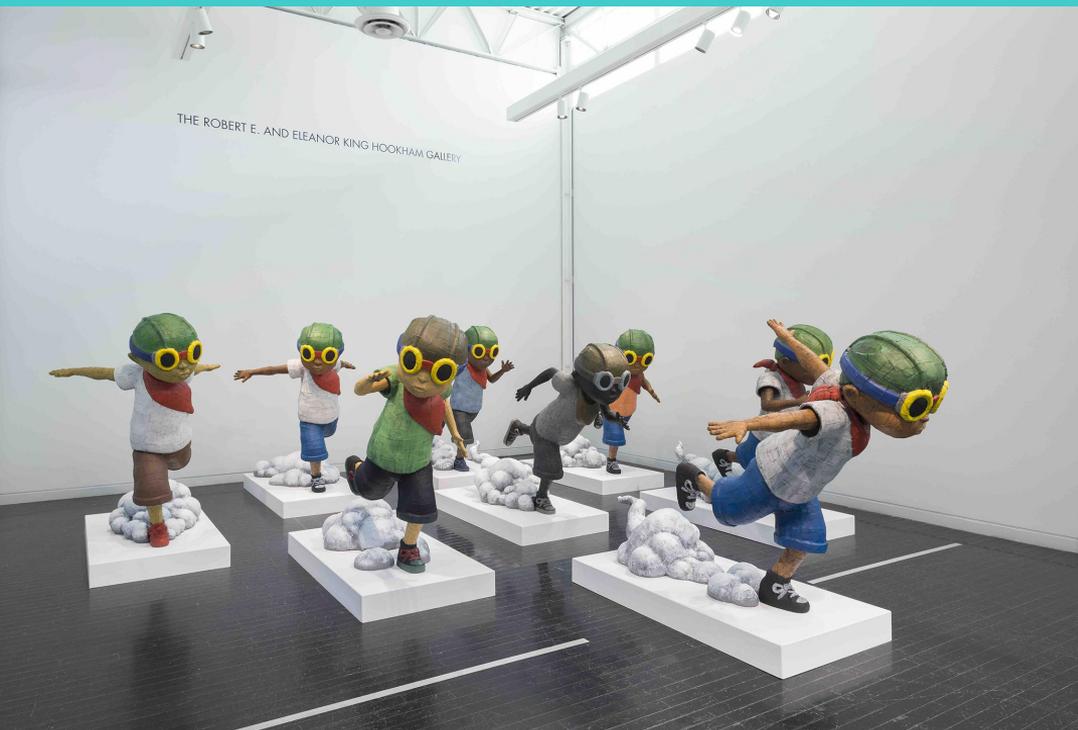


WELCOME

Inspired by Hebru Brantley's 2017 solo show at the museum, our newest online guide explores the meaning of the word hero during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Top: Hebru Brantley, *Natural Alchemy*, 2017, Mixed media on canvas.
Previous page: Installation, Hebru Brantley: *Forced Field*, Elmhurst Art Museum, Fall 2017.
Photograph by James Prinz

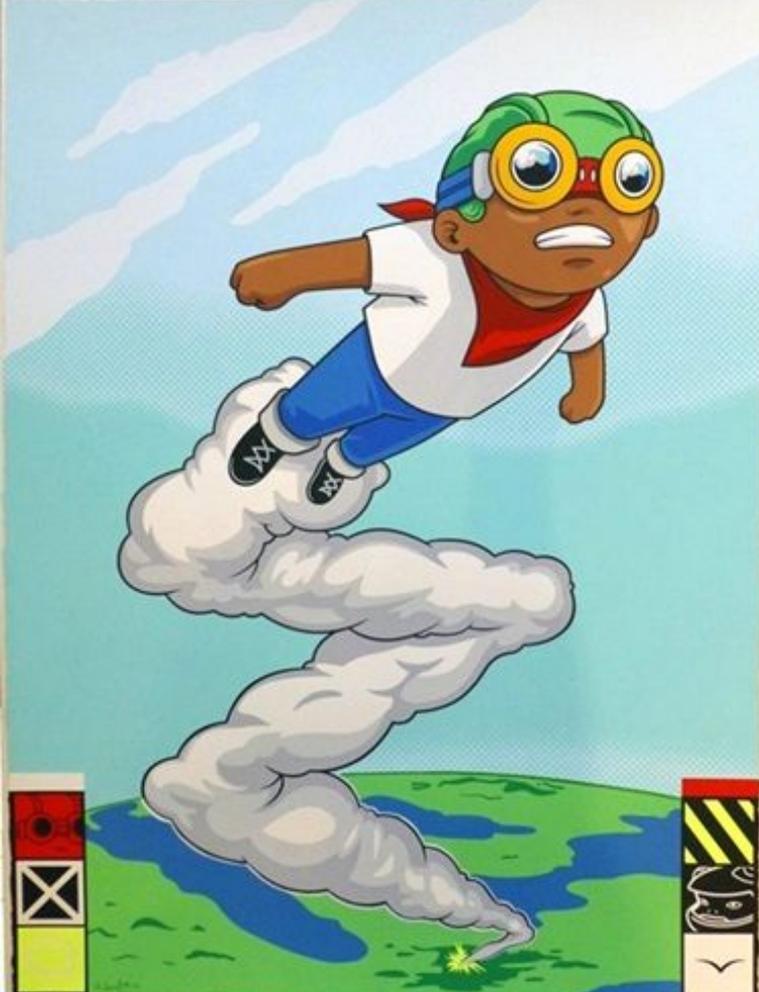
HEBRU BRANTLEY: FORCED FIELD



The 2017 exhibition by Brantley featured paintings and sculptures revolving around his iconic characters, most notably, *Fly Boy* and *Lil Mama*. The exhibition explored topics and themes that on the surface appear naive and playful but upon deeper examination they have a more cautionary subtext.

EXHIBITION PAGE

Installation, Hebru Brantley: Forced Field, Fall 2017, Elmhurst Art Museum. *Boy, Run (Extension)*, 2017, canvas wrapped fiberglass, resin & acrylic. Photograph by James Prinz



BEHIND THE EXHIBITION

Growing up in Chicago, Brantley enjoyed coloring books, watching cartoons, and reading comics. Inspired by his heroes like Captain America or the Tuskegee Airmen, Brantley created his own cast of heroic characters. They have a fluid ethnicity, possess real or imaginary powers, childlike qualities with their goggles and aviator hat. While they look like children, whimsical and approachable, Brantley wants the characters to be taken seriously. By creating heroes, he reminds audiences there are individuals out there who are protecting and watching over us.

STORY THROUGH SYMBOLS



The Other Side, 2017, Mixed media on canvas.

In addition to a familiar cast of characters, Brantley uses visual symbolism to communicate the complexities of his narrative. A fence is frequently used, as the title *Forced Field* suggests, to refer to a feeling of containment or some sort of barrier.

In the image to the left we can see a concerned figure peering over the fence. Smoke and a flash of light in the background gives clues to what is on the other side. Although small, a cloud in the shape of Flyboy can be seen in the top right corner, potentially to come to the rescue.



Hebru Brantley, *To And Fro (New Users)*, 2017, canvas wrapped fiberglass, resin and acrylic

TO THE RESCUE

In contrast, in the work *To and From (New Users)*, we are presented with a large group of figures dressed up as *Flyboy*, running in a Japanese anime-inspired style. Could these be the heroes on their way to children in some of his other paintings? Has a hero given them the strength to overcome their obstacles?

His depiction of these heroic *Fly Boys* are in a grand scale, as you can see smaller figures on the ground, watching as they run by. It reflects on our idolization of our heroes, literally making them seem 'larger than life'.

Much like Brantley's work, we can find heroes in all walks of life. However, today, COVID-19 has redefined what a hero is and brought new ones to the forefront.

Let's take a look at what a hero is...

(detail) *To And Fro (New Users)*, 2017, canvas wrapped fiberglass, resin and acrylic



WHAT IS A HERO?

When you think of a **HERO**, our first thought is a superhero. They possess superpowers and abilities that are thrust upon them or they are incredibly wealthy and clever, using their money and smarts for good .

However, we also understand the word **HERO** to be an individual or group of individuals that are genuinely good people; Who are selfless, courageous, noble and put the needs of others before themselves for the greater good of society.



WHO DO WE CALL HEROES?

- Teachers
- Doctors
- Nurses
- Firefighters
- Police Officers
- Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs)
- Political activists
- Armed Forces
- Charity workers
- Non-profit organizers
- Professional athletes
- Family members
- and more



Hebru Brantley, *Suspects*, 2017, mixed media on canvas

HEROES TODAY

Today, in a world of COVID-19, society has highlighted heroes who are working on the front lines of this pandemic. Whether they are working 20 hour shifts at a hospital or picking up groceries for an elderly neighbor. Their dedication and selflessness has redefined what it means to be a hero. They are helping the sick, keeping us safe, and comforting those who have lost loved ones during these uncertain times.

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



HEROES WE NEED



- Nurses
- Doctors
- Health care workers
- First Responders
- Teachers
- Scientists
- Blood drive employees
- Grocery store employees
- Delivery services and drivers
- Volunteers
- and more!

Unknown Artist, originally shared by @ComicsBarcelona twitter account, April 22, 2020



**WHAT DOES A HERO
LOOK LIKE TO YOU?**

HOW CAN YOU BE A HERO?

**HOW HAVE YOU BEEN
HELPING OTHERS?**



**FROM HOME
HERO ACTIVITY
[CLICK HERE](#)**

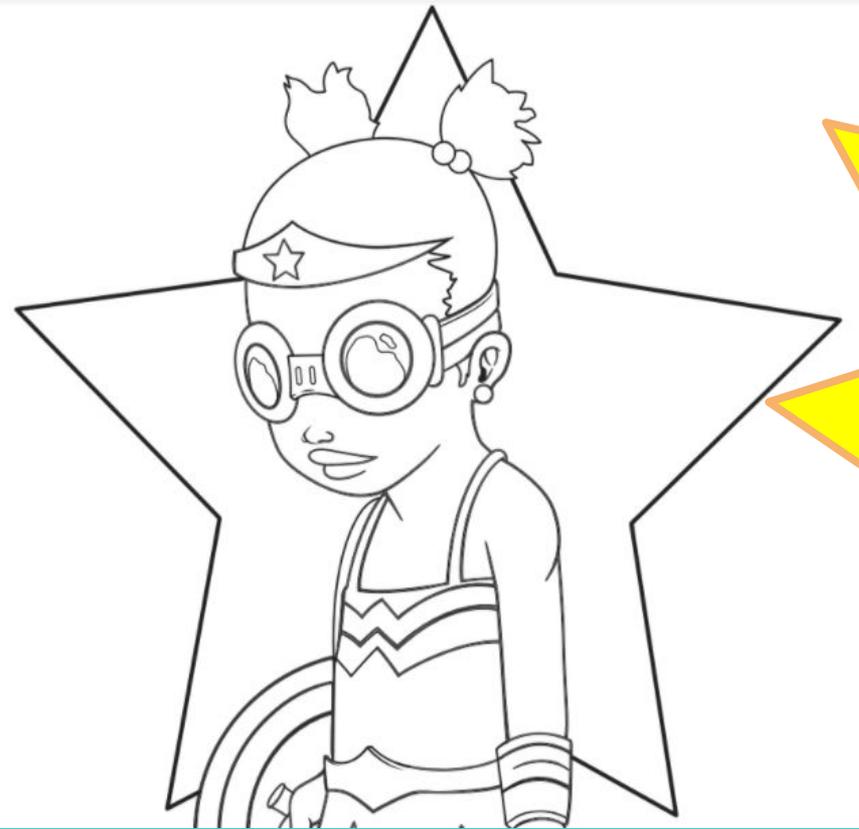
ART IN THE POST

You are invited to contribute to a collaborative mail art project by sharing something about your life during the COVID-19 pandemic. Tell us how you are passing the time, write a poem, or even share a recipe. We'll exhibit these at the museum after reopening.



- Healthcare workers.
- First Responders.
- Anyone who needs protection from sickness.

CLICK HERE
for more on this
Community
Project



**DOWNLOAD
COLORING PAGES
DESIGNED BY
HEBRU BRANTLEY**

Share your creations on social media
@hebrubrantley and
@elmhurstmuseum

COLORING PAGES: PART 1

COLORING PAGES: PART 2



MUSEUM STORE

Item of the Week

Enjoy this collectable catalog of works featured in the Fall 2017 exhibition, *Hebru Brantley: Forced Field* at the Elmhurst Art Museum. The book features images from the exhibition plus behind the scenes photographs of Hebru Brantley in his studio.

[Online Museum Store](#)



ABOUT



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 applies a plethora of mediums from oil, acrylic, watercolor and spray paint to non-traditional mediums such as coffee and tea. 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.

PRESS



Chicago Magazine - ["Field Guide: Elmhurst"](#)

Chicago Tonight | WTTW Chicago News -
["Hebru Brantley's New Art Show Takes Flight in Elmhurst"](#)

Chicago Tribune - ["Hebru Brantley: Jay Z, Beyonce and Rahm Emanuel collect his art, now he's bringing his biggest show to Elmhurst"](#)

Chicago Tribune - ["15 things to do with the kids Oct. 30 - Nov. 5"](#)

Elmhurst Independent- [Elmhurst Art Museum presents Hebru Brantley](#)

Michigan Avenue Magazine- [Hebru Brantley in Cultural Preview](#)

WDCB - ["The Arts Section,"](#) Hebru Brantley interview by Gary Zidek

WGN Radio, The Download with Justin Kaufmann - ["Chicago artist Hebru Brantley: 'I'm going to keep trying and fail my way to success'"](#)

WATCH



[Hebru Brantley: Artist Talk at Vertical Gallery, Chicago](#)

[The Well: Hebru Brantley](#)

[Bustle: Hebru Brantley: Being from Chicago and Finding His Hero](#)

[Peek into Hebru Brantley: Forced Field exhibition at the Elmhurst Art Museum](#)

ON THE EDGE//HEBRU BRANTLEY



HOW YOU CAN HELP

1. Stay Home
2. Donate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
3. Check on neighbors and friends
4. Donate food
5. Support Your Local Businesses
6. Donate blood
7. Foster or adopt an animal in need
8. Help raise funds for your local health system

EDWARDS-ELMHURST HEALTH- WAYS TO HELP



Stronger Together.
Stronger DuPage.



Today, loving our community
looks like

#ElmhurstStaysHome

@cityofelmhurst



**THANK YOU TO OUR HEROES,
HEALTH CARE WORKERS AND FIRST RESPONDERS,
WHO ARE KEEPING US SAFE WHILE WE STAY HOME!**



Left images: WGN Channel 9, Chicago's Very Own Hero's: Photos from the Front Line, March 24, 2020. AMITA Health, Joliet and Advocate Lutheran General, Pediatrics, Park Ridge.

**THANK YOU TO EXPLORE ELMHURST
FOR SUPPORTING THE EXHIBIT
HEBRU BRANTLEY: FORCED FIELD**



**THANK YOU TO HEBRU AND HIS STUDIO FOR
DESIGNING A COLLECTION OF COLORING PAGES, AND
SHARING THEM AT NO CHARGE TO HIS AUDIENCE.**



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