



Courtesy of Jammie Holmes.

Meet Up-and-Coming Dallas Painter Jammie Holmes

By: Natalie Gempel
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*The Louisiana transplant counts Retna and Rick Ross as fans,
but he's still making a name for himself in Dallas.*

About a month ago, 35-year-old Jammie Holmes finally decided to take the plunge. He quit his day job, moved his entire life into his Deep Ellum studio, and started painting full time. He says he's sold a fair share of work since then (though, curiously, his collectors have all been outside of Dallas so far), but it hasn't been an easy transition. The Thibodaux, Louisiana native tackles dark subjects in his work, hashing out current events in earth tones on his canvas. Much of his inspiration comes from his upbringing in Thibodaux, where he lived in a small, poor neighborhood that now feels a whole world away, though he's only been in Texas since 2016.

"I was looking for work at the time, cause in Louisiana the oil field had dried up," says Holmes. "It was either sink or find work, so I came here, tried something new, and I've been here ever since. It was hard moving out here though."

He got a job in quality inspection and moved to Irving. Only a few months ago, after he'd proven to himself he could make a living doing art, was he ready to quit the 9-to-5 lifestyle. It also helped that his girlfriend Abi Salami, a fellow artist, had recently quit her corporate job to chase the dream.

"I got enough courage to actually quit. It's different because now you fully focus on art 100 percent. If I don't create nothing new, if I can't sell these paintings, I'm not gonna eat tonight. I'm not gonna put gas in my car. So it's a different way of thinking whenever you do that."

Despite the pressure that comes with turning a passion into a profession, Holmes says he also feels more freedom in creating now that it's his job. "I've been able to take my time and perfect my style," he says.



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There's something childlike but also sophisticated about the messy compositions that define Holmes's style. It's influenced by Basquiat but more so by Holmes's own life, the town of Thibodaux, and contemporary social issues.

"Most of it is about my childhood. I grew up in a neighborhood where it was really, really rough, so I like to speak for them because they can't really tell the story. They don't have a platform to tell the story of our neighborhood," says Holmes. He also paints about child soldiers quite a bit, a subject that weighs on him because of his rough childhood and his father's native country of Sierra Leone.

"My dad's from there, that's my blood. I pay attention to it a lot, and I want to use my art to tell that story and hopefully people see it more," he says. One day, he'd like to go to Africa and help rehabilitate child soldiers through art. For now, he's trying to use his own art to shed light on the subject in many forms. "Back to my neighborhood, we were taught how to fight at an early age. It was like you gotta learn how to fight or not come home."

He's come a long way from Thibodaux, and he says that the fine art world is a different, darker place than what he expected. He explains that there's a lot of politics involved, which is one of the reasons he's held off on finding management or a gallery to represent him. Seasoned artists like Retna have reached out and helped him learn the ropes. He's slowly finding his community in Dallas, too, mainly in his own backyard.

“Deep Ellum is cool. If it wasn’t for Deep Ellum, to be honest, I don’t think I could be as creative as I am right now. From my window I can see downtown, I can see everything, so I study everything. I study the buildings, I look at the dirt on the side of the walls, I look at everything,” he says. “I draw a lot of inspiration from that.”

Jammie doesn’t have any works on view in Dallas at the moment (he is currently showing at LA Artcore and at Pocket Art Studio in Rome), but he’ll be in The Other Art Fair this September, and he’s currently working on the cover art for some new music from Bobby Sessions. You can check out more of his work on Instagram or his website.



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