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## JAMMIE HOLMES COMES FULL CIRCLE

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Seats filled quickly inside the auditorium at the Modern Art Museum, forcing patrons to sit in the aisles or stand at the back of the room — a slight discomfort that didn't deter any audience members. The massive crowd was awaiting the arrival of artist Jammie Holmes, who was tapped to give a lecture and discuss his current exhibition, "Jammie Holmes: Make the Revolution Irresistible," which is currently on display at the Modern through Nov. 26.

As Holmes began to speak about his early life in small-town Louisiana (the bayou town of Thibodaux, to be exact), his charming and open personality matched the intimate work within the exhibit. Holmes' paintings, eye-catching in their composition, are deeply personal and brutally honest depictions of contemporary life for Black families in the Deep South, incontrovertibly tackling race, religion, poverty, and politics.

Coming full circle, it was a visit to the very museum hosting his lecture, our Fort Worth's Modern, that led to a life-changing epiphany that inspired Holmes to pick up a paintbrush. "I thought a museum was just a place with old coins, dinosaur bones, and things like that," Holmes says. "Because growing up in Thibodaux, the only time you've seen a painting of anything was an alligator or bird, and it was always at a restaurant. So, I never thought that being a painter was even a thing to do or care about."

As a child, Holmes began sketching as he watched cartoons and fancied himself working for Nickelodeon. After his visit to the Modern, he connected the cartoon imagery created by Kaws, whose "CLEAN SLATE" sculpture sits adjacent to the museum's pond, with the cartoons he had sketched since childhood. "[I realized], man, I think I can do this ... I could feel how much I really liked [painting]. I felt like I was actually doing something that I loved for the first time in my life."

Six years later, the artist is now exhibiting his work in the very museum that ignited his interest in the art — where past exhibits have included such world-renowned artists as Kaws himself, Mark Bradford, and Takashi Murakami. Despite his meteoric rise, Holmes remains humble.

"I'm a real grateful person," Holmes says. "You could give me a piece of bubblegum, and I want to thank you for the rest of your life. I'm super grateful because things don't have to happen like this. But I also understand things are just written, and it's just part of your destiny."

In the 15 paintings on display, one can see how Holmes' work has evolved. Older paintings utilize wider brushstrokes and representative imagery. His more recent work portrays subjects in more detail, especially his striking self-portraits. Apparently, his transition to self-portraiture occurred during an exhibit that focused on his latent feelings about losing family members.

"At the time, I never really painted myself," Holmes says. "So that solo show was the first time, and I kind of started forgiving myself. Early on [my self-portraiture] was me trying to heal and to forgive myself and understand, like, 'Dude, a lot of stuff wasn't your problem or your fault.' And [the act of painting a self-portrait] was me appreciating myself. You don't really appreciate yourself until you really have to recreate yourself."

Nowhere is this gentle portrayal of himself and his family life more evident than in his piece "Endurance," which depicts Holmes shaving his brother's head. An intimate moment that purposefully depicts his day-to-day life. To this day, Holmes still cuts his little brother's hair, who, like Holmes, has moved to Dallas — and he admits to still calling his mom to settle fights between the two of them.

While his work is personal and tends to relate to his life and memories, Holmes sometimes uses the canvas as a way to recognize others. When asked about his piece, "Fred Hampton" (a portrait of the American activist and Black Panther Party leader within an analog television set), Holmes says, "I feel like everybody deserves their roses."

"When it came down to Black Panthers, I'm, like, 'Man, these people are people who fought hard to help clean up their community. They combatted the gangs that were selling drugs. They combatted starvation, like kids not having food. They started their own education programs. I just thought that was an amazing thing.'"

Despite now residing in Dallas, Holmes has become a bit of a local celebrity within the bayou town he once called home, with many people sending him their children's drawings. He also recently returned home to teach a summer camp for kids. So, thanks to Holmes, a whole generation of youngsters in Thibodaux now have an expanded view of art from beyond the screen.