

HOHCHV Featured Artist - August 2019

Shanina Diona of Coatesville, PA / Youth - Arts - Advocacy

How long have you been painting?/How did you start making art?/Why do you make art?

I've been creating since childhood. I first realized I had a gift for artistry when I was 9yrs old. My teacher asked me to share my short story project with the other 3rd grade classes as an example of how it could be done. I've always been attracted to the arts, whether it be visual or performing arts. I was always active and doing something. Growing up I was on dance squads, step teams, participating in some kind of art fair or excelling in the literary arts. I still make art today because I am most myself when I do. I dance & come back to myself. I paint & I feel brave, fearless, courageous and full of ambition. I write, sing operatic notes or build safe space installations to help encourage expression and exploration of radical self acceptance.

Is there an element of art you enjoy working with most? Why?

I get this question often and I always answer that I enjoy them all the same. They are all influenced by the other in some way, shape or form. Individually or collectively, they help get the message across.

How do you know when a work is finished?

I don't to be honest. There are several works now in my bedroom studio that have much for to say even though they've gone on to exhibit across the tristate.

What inspires you to keep going?

Understanding that I am not alone in my quest through mental health discord. More of us are breaking the silence for the sake of healing. I am empowered, motivated and encouraged by that.

What's the message you wish your journey to convey?

The goal is, when people experience my art, that it helps ignite a revolutionary perspective on what it truly means to practice radical self acceptance. Free up & *be*.

Do you have a message for the African American Community?

It should not be taboo to speak up and expose ourselves of any psychological hardships we may be secretly dealing with. Our boys and our girls need to know they are seen and they are heard. Relieving the stigma could start with three simple words, "I need help." Speaking from experience, that was one of the most terrifying and brave things I have ever done. It helped save my life. I want us to pay that energy forward.

How does living in Coatesville, PA impact your art?

I'm inspired by the farmlands of the 'Ville and surrounding areas going west. I'm a grass kid and water baby so nature, in its lush glory, is incredibly stimulating for me. In my works as of late, you'll see the influence of plants and flowers as a way of expressing self love and care. The spirit of Coatesville as a town is strong and full of tradition and pride. I can appreciate that as well.

What advice would you give your younger self?

This is such a loaded question for me. haha In this moment I feel lead to say, "speak your truth always, and respect others when they do the same."

How important are titles to your paintings?

Titles usually come just before a piece is set to exhibit at a venue. I try to keep them simple and honest. It's often a challenge to capsule the message of piece in a simple title, but it gets done.

Love & Light,

Shanina Dionna

Founder, Embryo LLC

Arts. Education. Advocacy.

@shaninadionna

@embryo.expos

Swizz Beatz & Alicia Keys Launch New Art Grant, Giving 20 Artists \$5000 Each:

<https://hyperallergic.com/447480/swizz-beatz-art-grants-winners/>