THIS ARTIST IS PAINTING HUGE MURALS OF BLACK WOMEN AROUND LONDON

LATEEFAH JEAN-BAPTISTE • 12TH NOVEMBER 2017

ARTS & CULTURE 1 COMMENT 1752 VIEWS

Neequaye 'Dreph' Dsane is a British Ghanaian artist based in London, and popularly known for his large-scale portrait paintings and oil portraits.

Dreph describes his work as a mixture of many elements and claims his work draws inspiration from 1980s British underground comics such as *2000 AD*, the dramatic lighting of old masters such as Caravaggio and the energy and scale of 1970s New York subway graffiti. If you have never heard of the artist, you'll probably have seen his murals, either in person plastered around London, or floating around your social media feeds. I talked to Dreph about the influences behind his 'You Are Enough' series, and why he decided to use his art to empower black women.

'You Are Enough' is a series of portraits painted across London paying tribute your friends, who are doing amazing things for their communities and society at large. These portraits have received attention worldwide and have featured in *The Guardian*, *HuffPost* and *The FADER* just to name a few. What we loved the most about these portraits is the fact that you took into account the stories of black women whose smaller scale achievements are often overlooked. What inspired the 'You Are Enough' series?

'You Are Enough' is primarily about empowerment of women. I wanted to celebrate and show appreciation to the women in my life. The series evolved organically after the first painting, which was a thank you to my friend Mary for her hospitality during my recent visit to Ghana. During my stay, we conversed at length about political issues affecting women living in Africa and the diaspora. We also talked about body image issues and how colonialism has negatively impacted our perceptions of beauty.

What experiences shaped your decision to empower women in this series?

I am an uncle to two teenage girls and my time as a secondary school teacher has made me acutely aware of the unrealistic expectations and pressures young women deal with on a daily basis. I have seen first hand how this can have an affect on our young people's self worth and mental health, lasting all the way into adulthood.

The series simply serves as a reminder to us, young and old, that striving to be our authentic self is sufficient.

The women featured in your series have some both amazing and equally inspiring stories. What made you choose the women you chose to feature in your murals?

All of the women in the series are a family member or a friend. They represent everyday women who in my eyes do extraordinary things for their communities and society. These women are a constant source of inspiration for myself, and the many lives that they touch. They are unsung heroines, and I just wanted to say thank you. I wanted to present women who go unnoticed but are committed to making change, by highlighting their stories to a wider audience. Visibility underpins all of my work and I use this platform to present an alternative narrative, one in which I celebrate my subjects' beauty, confident, strength, intelligence, humanity and resolve.

> *"I wanted to present women who go unnoticed but are committed to making change"*

As artists, we're always looking to provide the next generation with the correct tools to excel in their chosen creative industries. Do you have any advice for aspiring artists who are trying to make their mark in the arts industry?

Look inside and you will find the leader within, opportunity favours those who think differently and not fitting in is an asset. With a global marketplace I believe excellence should be the aim regardless of where you are, or who your artwork is being presented to.

Any book recommendations for emerging artists?

I recommend *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* by Stephen R. Covey, which had an immense impact on my working habits and outlook.

What upcoming projects are you working on now?

I am currently working on two limited edition print releases for December that will be available at www.dreph.co.uk. New studio work and a series of national street paintings are also in development which with culminate in my first solo exhibition next year.

Any last words of inspiration for our readers?

Work hard, smart, and make work with integrity and authenticity.

*More information on Dreph's work can be found here www.dreph.co.uk and you can follow Dreph on Twitter @Dreph and Instagram @dreph_*

TWEETS

Tweets by @galdemzine

gal-dem @galdemzine
Nearly 20 years after Zahid Mubarek was murdered, what has changed? bit.ly/2wyj9mh
4h

gal-dem @galdemzine
Why I created OOM: the Jamaican plant-based dining experience gal-dem.com/oom-jamaican-p...
Why I created OOM: the Jama...
After travelling back to Jamaica ...
gal-dem.com
4h

gal-dem @galdemzine
Xiao, love and losing three grandparents bit.ly/2yWWnbs
Xiao, also known as filial piety, is about family ties and responsibility.
Its closest cousin in the West is love but it isn't the same. Unlike love, xiao can be cruel
5h

gal-dem @galdemzine
My hair is dark and strong, and I am proud bit.ly/2tzOAqB
6h

gal-dem @galdemzine
Vitamin D and me bit.ly/2vJpKEy
7h

gal-dem @galdemzine
Zing Tsjeng is making sure women's stories are never forgotten again bit.ly/2wLnEdb
9h

gal-dem @galdemzine
Race Review: All the news from this week that wasn't about the royals gal-dem.com/race-review-al...
Race Review: All the news fro...
The phrase "bread and circuses...
gal-dem.com
10h

Embed View on Twitter

LATEST

WHY I CREATED OOM: THE JAMAICAN PLANT-BASED DINING EXPERIENCE
19TH MAY 2018

RACE REVIEW: ALL THE NEWS FROM THIS WEEK THAT WASN'T ABOUT THE ROYALS
19TH MAY 2018

YOU CAN KEEP YOUR COLONIAL ZEAL FOR ROYAL WEDDINGS
19TH MAY 2018

LOG KI KAHENGE AND RECLAIMING MY BODY
17TH MAY 2018

SONDRA PERRY'S NEW SHOW IS AN OVERWHELMING