



Lavett Ballard The People Who Could Fly

In her work, Ballard offers a visual narrative that draws deeply from African folklore, history, and cultural traditions. This exhibition explores the stories and experiences of people of African descent, with a particular focus on their resilience, strength, and legacy.

Ballard's art seeks to amplify tribal stories and African American history, presenting these to honor the rich and diverse cultural heritage of African diasporic communities. Drawing from themes of flight, freedom, and ancestral connection, *The People Who Could Fly* references the African American folklore of the same name, which tells the story of enslaved individuals who were believed to have the ability to fly,

symbolizing a deep spiritual connection to freedom and transcendence.

Through her work, Ballard re-imagines these powerful narratives, creating a visual language that honors both the past and the ongoing struggles for liberation.

This exhibition also digs into the importance of storytelling in African cultures, where oral traditions and art have long played an essential role in preserving heritage and communicating across generations. Ballard's works invite viewers to consider the ways in which these stories and symbols shape identity, resistance, and belonging in both historical and contemporary contexts.

ROWAN UNIVERSITY
ART GALLERY & MUSEUM

March 31 - May 24

“This body of work is inspired by cherished Storytime moments with my granddaughter, particularly our shared love for *The People Could Fly* by Virginia Hamilton. This powerful tale, rooted in an African American folktale, has also influenced one of my favorite authors, Toni Morrison, in *Song of Solomon*. These works serve as the foundation for my exploration of resilience, hope, and freedom throughout African American history.

The visual narrative I seek to convey traces a journey from Africa, through the harrowing Middle Passage, to enslavement, and ultimately to liberation and resilience. My goal is to guide viewers through this story, forging connections between the past and the present.

To bring this vision to life, I am creating art that intertwines folktale, history, and culture, incorporating reclaimed wood fencing and wooden substrates to craft wall-hung pieces and sculptural works. My techniques will include mixed-media approaches and immersive installations designed to engage viewers in a dynamic interpretation of this bittersweet folktale—extending its meaning beyond enslavement to celebrate resilience and identity by blending both the past and the present day.

Through this exhibition, I hope to honor the enduring spirit of the African American experience and inspire reflection on the collective journey from oppression to empowerment.”



Lavett Ballard is a Mixed Media Visual Artist, Art historian, Curator, and Author. She holds a dual Bachelor’s in Studio Art and Art History with a minor in Museum Studies from Rutgers University, and an MFA in Studio Art from the University of the Arts in Philadelphia.

Ballard’s art has been commissioned as a cover twice for Time Magazine first in March 2020 for their special multi cover edition for the 100th anniversary of Women’s Suffrage and in February 2023 for a cover and interior art for Pulitzer Prize winner Isabel Wilkerson’s essay about her book *CASTE: Origins of our Discontent*. In 2024 her art was featured in the NAACP Image Award winning Non-Fiction book ‘The New Brownies’ Book: A Love Letter to Black Families by Karida L. Brown & Charly Palmer.’

Her work has been included in both literary & film productions and collected both nationally and internationally. Acquisitions include the Petrucci Family Foundation, Abena Busia the Ghanian Ambassador to Brazil’s private Collection, Grant & Tamia Hill collection, the Francis M. Maguire Museum, the African American Museum of Philadelphia, the U.S. Art in the Embassies, St Joseph’s University, Syracuse Universities- Community Folk Arts Center, & Jule Collins Smith Fine Art Museum at Auburn University Collections among many others.



Jumping at the Sun,
2025
Mixed Media/Collage on
reclaimed wood fencing
71 x 14 inches



*Beautiful & the
Damned,* 2022
Mixed Media/Collage on
reclaimed wood fencing
68 x 48 inches



HomeLand, 2025
Collage/Mixed Media on
Birchwood Panel
48 x 72 x 3 inches



*The Wind beneath
Our Wings,* 2025
Mixed Media/Collage on
reclaimed wood fencing
6 x 8 inches



Promises, 2025
Mixed Media/Collage
on reclaimed wood
fencing
32 x 46 inches



Great Migrations,
2025
Collage/Mixed Media
on Birchwood Panel
36 x 72 inches



Precious Beings,
2022
Mixed Media/Collage on
reclaimed wood
69 x 29 inches



Wade in the Water,
2023
Mixed Media/Collage on
reclaimed wood fencing
70 x 25 inches



Steal Away, 2025
Mixed Media Wall
Installation
1 x 17.75 inch circumference



The Middle Passage,
2025
Mixed Media Wall
Installation
1 x 23.75 inch circumference



Building America,
2025
Mixed Media Wall
Installation
1 x 17.75 inch circumference



The Griot, 2021
Mixed Media/Collage on reclaimed
wood/sculpture
71 x 32 inches



92%, 2025
Mixed Media Wall
Installation
1 x 23.75 inch circumference



Who we Are, 2025
Mixed Media Wall
Installation
1 x 23.75 inch circumference



Gated Communities, 2023
Mixed Media/Collage on reclaimed
wooden Gate
68 x 48 x 2.5 inches
Framed: 70 x 48 x 3 inches



*Stronger than we
Look,* 2025
Mixed Media Wall
Installation
1 x 17.75 inch circumference

no image

I'll Fly Away, 2025
Mixed Media Wall
Installation
6 x 16 inches

ROWAN UNIVERSITY ART GALLERY & MUSEUM

Rowan University Art Gallery & Museum serves as a vibrant cultural destination for South Jersey, the Rowan community, and surrounding region. We are committed to cultivating an inclusive, accessible, and just environment that encourages dialogue and collaboration between exhibiting artists, students, faculty, and the general public through the presentation of interdisciplinary art exhibitions, artist talks and other public programming. Our mission is to present diverse forms of contemporary art by professional artists with content that is thought provoking, relevant, and timely. With our exhibitions and programming, we seek to engender curiosity and a passion for contemporary art, enrich the quality of life for area residents, and create a welcoming and inclusive cultural destination at Rowan University.

301 High Street Gallery
301 High Street West
Glassboro, NJ 08028

Information
rowan.edu/artgallery
artgallery@rowan.edu

Gallery Hours
Mon-Fri, 10:00 - 5:00 PM
Sat, 11:00 - 5:00 PM

OPEN TO ALL
FREE ADMISSION



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