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ART

## ARTIST SPOTLIGHT: KHALIF TAHIR THOMPSON



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*Published*

APRIL 3, 2020

*Author*

MELISSA HUNTER DAVIS

Melissa Hunter Davis is a creative entrepreneur and the master mind behind Sugarcane . Sugarcane Magazine is an online journal about art of Africa and the African Diaspora. She has an affinity for African arts, African culture, African performers and African literature. Follow her at @sugarcanemag

A nudge from a high-school teacher got Queens, New York-based artist Khalif Tahir Thompson started in painting, and that encouragement helped open him to new experiences. A graduate of Purchase College, Khalif not only has participated in residencies such as the Studio Immersion Project Fellowship at the Robert Blackburn Printmaking Workshop Program, but self study, and classes at LaGuardia High School for the Arts and the Brooklyn Museum.

Mr. Thompson's work explores interpretation of stories and real life using paper and collage. His fondness for texture leads to work that has the feel of skin, a way of bringing his work to life. He also pays attention to detail, with many of his works encompassing a world that is both real and imagined, summoning the spirits of the subjects no matter where they reside. Mr. Thompson's work is active: an active scene where emotion and story are created with hand made pieces of paper, ephemera from loved ones. Khalif's attention to telling stories is apparent in the images. As you watch the progression of his work, the story telling is more pronounced, focused on creating real environments, nuanced and quite simply, interesting.



Above: "Norma Jean" by Khalif Thompson

60 x 62 inches, mixed media, oil, leather, paper on canvas (2020) — unframed

Mr. Thompson's piece, *Granny Norma Jean* is a depiction of artist Adreinne Whaheed's grandmother. Khalif created this work from stories about Ms. Jean, including her love of casinos (notice the playing cards).

Above: "Baubles, Bangles and Beads" by Khalif Thompson 68 x 68 inches handmade paper, beads, lithography, oil on canvas (2019) — unframed

Above is an original work from Mr. Thompson's Home series, depicting Ms. Thompson, Khalif's mother and her grandchild. It contains handmade paper and details such as the artist's past lithographs. You can immediately see the story, a tired matriarch, taking to time to care for herself and regain strength as she moves from job to another.



**If you knew...How I loved you, 2018**

*Above: If you knew...How I loved you, 2018 by Khalif Tahir Thompson 6ft x 6 ft oil, collage, Japanese paper, oil stick on canvas (2018) — unframed*

This last piece is an exploration of the artist's love for, and new direction in his work. Using collage with a variety of paper, Khalif moves toward fantasy and using imagination to push strong narratives. Angelic cherubs, iconic vocalists abound to open the view to what moves khalif artistically.

Lean more about Khalif (<https://www.instagram.com/khaliftahir/>) here or purchase his work from Black Art in America. (<https://shopbaiaonline.com/collections/khalif-thompson-collection>)

