

I visited the Last Resort Retreat to see their latest exhibition showing in their gallery area, The Outpost. The exhibitor is Heroes and Villains by Noreen Smith, a self-taught multidisciplinary artist born and raised in Baltimore, Maryland.

Noreen creates stories in each piece, utilizing her medium in archival comic books, this tool allows her to develop her narrative within the black experience in a fierce but re-constructional way. Once speaking with Noreen she spoke by demonstrating and detailing how each piece has its own story dedicated to Black women. How we identify, represent, and embody it all through our personal or similar experiences within society. In a way comic books also do that, though the characters are fictional, they come from realistic backgrounds where they have a narrative or a storyline in which they gain or possess their superpower.

The first piece that grabbed my attention is 'Mother Nature Sister Solider' This piece immediately reminds me of the Marvel character Poison Ivy, but to my correction, it was Wonder Woman, Noreen uses the concept of Nature somewhat like Poison Ivy but occupies the space with vines, plants, and flowers representing that of femininity and how the Black woman can represent that of structure and force, but still seen as soft and gentle as we are meant to be.

Noreen uses that same practice in the medium of comic book paper, these 'paper sculptures' she calls them, showing each layer and intricate detail of each cutout, Noreen captures a whole new world of 'meaning and magic' within the sculpture medium, paper can now be transformed not only from collage but upright standing, you can see sorts of detail just from the four angles. This not only allows viewers to see the intricate cutouts but also a new perspective of what they thought they saw from hanging on the wall.

Noreen is creating her universe in which the viewer can create their own story or see the interpretation of what Noreen is exploring. This exhibition will be showing until the end of May 2024 at the Outpost, a gallery space developed at The Last Resort retreat, in Baltimore Maryland.

(Photos courtesy of Nicole Eboni, The Outpost, April 2024.)



The Last Resort

Artist Retreat

A PROGRAM OF CHARM CITY CULTURAL CULTIVATION



“Noreen creates a new world of ‘meaning and magic’ within the collage medium that allows viewers to create their own stories and obtain new perspectives.”

- Nicole Eboni, Independent Curator & Writer





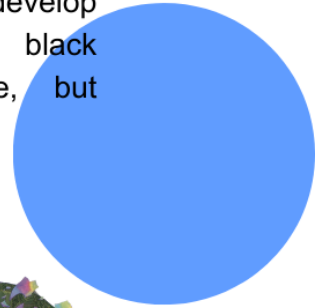
“Speaking with Noreen, she demonstrated and detailed how each piece has its own story inspired by, and dedicated to Black women – how we identify, represent, or embody our womanhood through our experiences within society.

In a way comic books do that also. Though the characters are fictional, they come from realistic backgrounds in which they gain or explore their superpower(s) throughout a storyline.”





"Noreen creates stories in each piece, utilizing her medium in archival comic books. This tool allows her to intentionally develop her narrative within the black experience in a fierce, but reconstructional way."



"[Her] lush landscape[s], represent the duality of femininity in which the Black woman can represent structure and force, but still be seen as soft and gentle."





Viewing for this exhibition is by appointment only. Please email us at hello@tlrar.org if you are interested!

