

## Facets of Creativity - The Art of Wayne Rodney

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Artist, music producer Wayne Rodney shares a slice of his life.

How long have you been doing art?"I've been doing art ever since I was able to take a concept and attempt to express it on paper. But ever since I understood what an artist was, I had the desire to be one. I was no savant, I drew stick figures and disproportionate grotesque shapes like everyone else and called it art. I think what separated the 'artists' from those who did not actively pursue art, was wanting those rudimentary pencil marks to transcend what they were. I envisioned a reality greater than I was capable of creating at that elementary stage." Gifted with an aptitude for the diverse art forms of visual art, music and Kung Fu, Wayne Rodney is apparently not about to get selective. Born and raised in Jamaica, he passed through Edna Manley College (EMC), participated in a number of major and not-so-major group exhibits and produced a large body of commissioned works. Having moved to the United States a few years ago, the former Wing Lung instructor has continued to hone his skills and is currently working on a series of paintings based on the tarot deck of cards. Upon completion, the series will become the core of his next solo exhibition.

Talk about the Tarot series?

"The series came at a time when it was necessary in my life. I wanted to move my paintings forward and painting the Tarot made it possible for me to make a progressive journey. It has also afforded me the opportunity to integrate elements of the Caribbean, specifically Jamaica, into the work."

A 16th-century European invention, the Tarot deck has traditionally been used for games as well as the more popular purpose of divination. Rodney's rendition of the Tarot deck shows a spiritual and self-analytical side of the artist using customised, but familiar, icons while exploring themes of spirituality, morality and the experience of being human.

How has moving to the US affected your output?

"Hard to say one way or another. Being away from Jamaica has granted me the opportunity to examine my homeland objectively. Despite all the unfortunate things that are happening, Jamaica still has wondrous things to offer the world. In a sense I feel driven by this, because I want to contribute. I believe our art is one of the gifts we need to bestow on the world."

His move to the US saw Rodney, the music producer, acquiring new equipment and Rodney, the MC, taking to the stage with his own brand of music - hip hop with a heavy lyrical dose of Jamaica. With early musical influences ranging from Mozart to '80s pop to Marley to Run DMC, Rodney's sound is almost as eclectic as his vocabulary.

In August, Wayne Rodney released a double CD titled Vices and Virtues, inspired by a painting, through his MySpace website. The pioneering move comes in the wake of such hip-hop heavies as KRS One and Public Enemy releasing albums of their own available exclusively online.

Which came first, painting or music?

"Both probably got primed in my early childhood. Fascinated by the illustrations in comic books, I would try to emulate them. The radio was also one of my close childhood friends. I had boxes of cassette tapes that provided entertainment and inspiration. It wasn't until I started high school that I gave painting much consideration. Curiously the music also began to emerge at this time."

His early visual influences include Leonardo DaVinci, who Rodney said made a particularly great impression.

The connection might well have been responsible for the origins of Rodney's enigmatic style, which has become a hallmark of his pieces.

His other visual muses include comic artist Todd McFarlane (Hulk, Spiderman) and his dad, George Rodney. His mother, Shirley, is also a painter, so it was nearly impossible for him to avoid the genetic inevitability.

How has it been for you, carving out your own space as an artist with an eminent painter as your dad?

"Carving out a space implies a struggle. I don't think that's been the case. My experience has been layered with learning

experiences, much like a painting. I have a wonderful relationship with my parents and the love within our family is immeasurable. Growing up, my father provided an excellent example of what to aspire towards artistically and otherwise. It always did, and still does, give me a feeling of elation that dad and I are both artists, we're also born on the same day, and share a lot of other things in common.

"During my time at art school (EMC) I occasionally experienced some comparative statements. At times it got to be overwhelming, even annoying, but I've moved past it. It's a reality that people are going to want to compare you. Doesn't matter the line of work.

"In the professional arena, it really has not been an issue. My father has high standards and his art reflects it, I have high standards for myself and for my work as well. Stylistically the works are not alike, so it was a curious situation when a patron of considerable political influence once requested I paint something 'like' my dad. So far, however, I think people have judged me, for the most part, on the basis of my work."

Rodney harbours dreams of one day owning a Kung Fu gym. In the meantime, this husband and father continues to create images with ink, paint, words and music. Marriage and fatherhood, he says, have been blessings of love that fuel his art. For him, creation has been a fundamental aspect of life since his earliest memories. Life, however, has changed for the artist, who has always painted during the wee hours. With a young son dictating his sleep patterns these days, time has become a precious commodity, one which Wayne said he had learned to use wisely.

Where do you see Jamaican art in 25 years?

"I can only hope that in 25 years Jamaican art will continue on its path and be internationally recognised, thriving and full of integrity. I also hope that I'll be a part of it."

Source" Jamaica Gleaner