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An American Painter Who Honors His Heritage Shows in Paris

Works by Patrick Eugène, whose family is from Haiti, will be on display at the Mariane Ibrahim Gallery during Art Basel Paris.



Artist Patrick Eugène in his studio in Atlanta, Ga., this month sitting beneath the painting titled *Waiting on the Trumpet*, 2025, oil on canvas. Credit Kendrick Brinson for *The New York Times*

As a child in New York in the '80s and '90s, Patrick Eugène felt like being Haitian wasn't something to be proud of. Growing up, he heard stories of how his mother, who emigrated from the island nation at the age of 12, was bullied for the way she spoke and dressed. Hoping to shield himself from similar experiences, he tried to mask his ancestry.

But in high school, he said, he was drawn to a club for Haitian students. There, he learned about his history and was soon wearing the Haitian flag to school in a show of pride. A few years later, he traveled to Haiti with his now-wife, who had also moved to the United States at 12, and fell in love.

"When you go there and you dive into the culture more and you meet the people, you realize they are the most elegant people," he said. "They are so elegant and so prideful. It doesn't matter what they have and what they don't have. They are going to treat it like it's gold and they're going to walk around with this confidence that's unmatched."

Now, Eugène — whose works will be on display at the Mariane Ibrahim Gallery during Art Basel in Paris this month — highlights the Haitian and Haitian American experience in his paintings. At a moment when immigrants, and Haitians in particular, are a target of President Trump's anti-immigrant rhetoric and policies, his art has taken on a poignant relevance.

(Trump's history of deriding Haitians includes sharing debunked rumors in a 2024 debate with Kamala Harris that Haitians in Springfield, Ohio, were stealing and eating household pets. [In June](#), his administration banned people from Haiti who did not already have existing visas [from entering](#) the United States, despite an ongoing crisis of gang violence, displacement, food shortages and a lack of essential services, which recently [prompted the U.N. Security Council to authorize](#) a new multinational Gang Suppression Force there.)

"Despite what's going on currently in the world, specifically with Haiti, I know the essence of the people is that of resilience and power and strength and love, so that's what I want to show," Eugène said.

The artist, who previously held [an exhibition](#) at Ibrahim's gallery in Chicago focusing on Haitian migration, said that his work intentionally explores the quiet moments in people's lives. His figurative paintings, usually portraits, show Haitians and Haitian Americans in intimate spaces, meditating and enjoying their solitude.

Most of his pieces feature flowers or plants, in honor of his mother, who loved to garden. He often thinks of his grandmother, who used her savings earned as a cleaning lady on Wall Street to buy a house in Haiti and who always wore pearls; she was the embodiment of timeless elegance to him, he said.

"I look at my ancestors, I look at my parents, I look at my grandparents and how they carried themselves through adversity, and that's what I want to shine a light on," he said.

The sense of being let into an intimate moment is part of what drew Riccardo Ortogni, the general manager of the J.K. Place hotel in Paris, to Eugène's work. Earlier this year, Ortogni spotted "[Nonm Chita \(Seated Man\)](#)," Eugène's painting of a man seemingly in deep thought, in a newsletter. He tracked the painting down and discovered that it was in the Ibrahim gallery in Paris, a short walk from his apartment. He got the go-ahead to see it in person on a Saturday morning. He was so excited he went to the gallery in his pajamas, he said.

Ortogni said that the moment he saw the painting, he had to have it. It now hangs in his living room. He said he talks to the seated man in the portrait, asks him for advice, and admires the way his expression feels like it changes depending on how the Parisian light hits it. Ortogni, who is from Italy, said that although he and Eugène are from different corners of the world, he felt connected to the painting.

"In the painting, I see resilience in those eyes," he said. "I see hope. I see a little bit of my grandparents who moved from Italy to Belgium to work in mines."

When Eugène began painting 13 years ago, he was merely searching for a hobby to distract from his day job. Less than a year later, he was painting full time. He has worked across mediums, creating collages, using found materials, building sculptures and even venturing into photography. At every turn, he has remained committed to highlighting Haitian history and culture.

"Regardless of medium, every part of my practice is focused on honoring my people," he said.



Eugène's designs for Dior Lady Art, which are inspired by Haiti's landscape. Credit Heather Sten, courtesy of Dior

The breadth of his practice will be on display when, in addition to paintings, he will also debut three handbags commissioned by Dior. Every year since 2016, the French fashion house has selected [artists](#) to reimagine its beloved Lady Dior bag. Some have painted, others have worked with beads, and others still have used 3-D printers to reimagine the bag.

When Eugène was approached by Dior, he knew he wanted the bag to reflect the beauty of Haiti. He sketched three versions, hoping the company would choose one. The Dior team chose all three, which he collectively calls “the Pearl of the Antilles” in a nod to the island's colonial-era moniker.

The bags are inspired by Haiti's landscape — they share the warm reds, browns and greens often present in Eugène's paintings, textured with raffia, gold and lace. They feature plants and trees that grow on the island and include at least one pearl.