

Discussion Guide for the Online Virtual Tour  
of

**Arvie Smith: Scarecrow**

Hallie Ford Museum of Art at Willamette University



## **ARTIST STATEMENT**

For the entirety of my career, I have sought to transform the African American experience into provocative paintings that depict deep sympathy for the dispossessed and marginalized in search for beauty, meaning, and equality. I draw from my personal experiences, and present day and historical omissions, violations, and contributions of African Americans. My time growing up in the Jim Crow South laid the blueprint for my life as an artist.

The colors of my grandmother's quilts and African rhythms embedded in African music form the palette for my paintings. From my travels in West Africa, I am impressed by the parallels of the sounds, smells, and images of the Black South and Africa. I draw inspiration from artists like Romare Bearden, Michael Rae Charles, Robert Colescott, Grace Hartigan, Thomas Hart Benton, Palmer Hayden, Jacob Lawrence, Kerry James Marshall, Horace Pippin, Diego Rivera, and Charles White.

Through art there is a freedom and my intent is to address ideas and concerns that affect our humanity. I speak unfettered of my perception of the Black experience. By critiquing atrocities and oppression, by creating images that foment dialogue, I hope my work makes the repeat of those atrocities and injustices less likely. These are the reasons I paint.

## **LOOKING AT THE WORK OF ARVIE SMITH**

Focus on a few works in the exhibition – don't try to look at or talk about everything in the exhibition.

Describe what you see here.

How has the artist used the elements of art (lines, color, shape, form, texture, space, etc.) and the principals of art (the way it is organized, i.e., pattern, contrast, balance, proportion, unity, rhythm, variety, emphasis)?

Where does your eye go first? Why?

How does your eye move around the painting –

interpretation of them? Of the meaning of the work as a whole? Explain.

Has the way the artist used the elements of art (lines, color, shape, form, texture, space, etc.) and the principals of art (the way it is organized, i.e., pattern, contrast, balance, proportion, unity, rhythm, variety, emphasis) contributed to your interpretation of the work? Explain.

Does the title influence your interpretation of the work? Explain.

**Further Discussion:**

- What images, figures, and symbols do you see repeated in Arvie Smith's work? How does he address cultural stereotypes, including demeaning representations of Black people?
- What themes do you see repeated?
- Discuss the following artist's quote as it relates to a work, or works, in the exhibition:

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## **LEARN MORE ABOUT ARVIE SMITH**

- [Artist's website](#)