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Southfield-based Marcus Glenn is an artist on the move. He is a featured artist at Park West Gallery, and the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History has acquired one of his works to be part of its permanent collection.

Glenn, 43, said his mother, herself a landscape artist, was the primary inspiration for his becoming an artist. Other inspirations include Picasso, Romare Bearden, and Jacob Lawrence.

He also said his mother always knew

he was interested in art, because one of his favorite pastimes was doodling. She encouraged that by keeping pencils and paper in his hands.

His kindergarten teacher also tapped into his interest in art when he spearheaded a project in which the students made representations of themselves for a parent-teacher conference.

"As the parents would walk into the room, they would see a replica of their kids sitting in the chair," he said. "We had to bring in our shirts, and we actually made them (the replicas) out of bags."

Glenn recalled that a lot of the other kids came to him for help.

"It was kind of cute," he said, adding that his teacher raved about how he took control of the event, and helped his classmates.

The teacher also encouraged Glenn's parents to nurture his artistic talents.

Asked if he had a preferred medium, Glenn said he took sculpture classes, and loves to sculpture. He added that part of his art is "Flat Life," which derives from him taking a flat surface and bringing it to life through dimension.

He started out in oil paints, a medium in which his mother had dabbled. He found, however, that oils took too long to dry. Instead, he went to the speedier medium of acrylics.

"You can achieve the same effect with acrylics," he said. "So at this point in my career, I like working in the acrylic

medium with the collage technique. Which, again, I label Flat Life.”

A Flat Life work might have a portion of an otherwise flat surface raised to create a three-dimensional look.

When Glenn first dabbled in the Flat Life technique, he frequented a lot of museums and galleries and studied collage imagery. He also studied the technique of Bas Relief.

That particular style intrigued him, so he initially used Styrofoam when he started doing the Flat Life style.

“I would carve that, and then I would prime it with a texture, and then I would lay fabrics on to of it and glue it to a wood surface,” he said. “At the time, no other artist was doing that particular style of art to that degree. I mean I’ve seen dimensional art in a collage, even to the point where most artists would glue known objects to the surface of the canvas, but for me, I was creating my surfaces.”

“It was different,” he added. “everything was technical in the aspect of not just taking objects and throwing them and gluing them, but actually having an effect on everything that went into the composition.”

A lot of his work features jazz in some way. Glenn said his father was an avid jazz listener.

He also has three older sisters, and said he found women to be an inspiring subject matter in his paintings.

Some painting feature multicolored floorboards. Glenn said they reflect the variety of God’s creations, at that they’re like a spiritual foundation of his art.

Regarding the piece chosen for permanent display in the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History, Glenn said because of repairs the museum was undergoing, it’s still in his possession.

“I’m going to have to deliver it to them,” he said, speaking of the Flat Life piece called “Any Man’s Pain.”

A few years ago, Glenn was one of the featured artists at a Park West Gallery Event curated by the museum. Officials there subsequently decided it would be a good idea to have one of his pieces in their collection.

Despite Michigan’s uncertain economy, Glenn said he tries to keep a positive outlook. He added that being with Park West Gallery, which sets up venues in different states and cities, and also has a presence on cruise ships, has helped.

“You don’t necessarily target your market locally,” he said.

Glenn and his wife, Yolanda, travel a lot in order to promote his art. He is not a big lover of travel but she is.

His long-term goals are to continue to explore his creativity as an artist. He also said that what he does in the art community is a great responsibility.

“I feel that I can be a positive role model for up-and-coming artists of all nationalities,” he said. “This is a tough business to crack into, to be able to say that you live, eat and pay your bills solely on your art.”

Glenn has been working as full-time artist for 12 years. Prior to that, he worked at Chrysler, and for a period of about five years he juggled working at Chrysler and selling his art before he made the decision to focus on being a full-time artist.

A permanent collection of Marcus Glenn’s work is at Park West Gallery, which is open, free of charge, six days a week. Visit <http://www.parkwest-glenn.com/default.asp> for more information.

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