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KC STUDIO

COVERING KANSAS CITY'S PERFORMING, VISUAL, CINEMATIC AND LITERARY ARTS



RAMONA DAVIS:

Cultivator, Creator, Advocate for the Arts

By Alexia Lang

Cultivating and creating art come as natural instincts for Kansas City-based artist and arts advocate Ramona Davis.

“It’s important to me for art to be good and look good,” she explains. “Art is important to society because art is where you see the real telling of what has happened or what is happening in society.”

Essentially, her philosophy is that art documents humankind.

“Artists don’t lie — for the most part,” she said. “It’s their perspective. It tells the story of what’s going on. As an artist, I feel that need to express myself through photography, through visual arts and through advocacy.”

Davis began developing her craft as a young child when her parents noticed her affinity for color and expression. They bought her supplies and fostered her creativity.

While Davis’ parents appreciated her creativity, they were practical. When it came time to go to college, they nudged her toward a business degree. She graduated from the University of Kansas with a degree in Business and an emphasis in Marketing (that she notes as her opportunity in college to be creative).

“Graduating with the business degree, I never gave up the Arts. I just figured that I’m going to have to figure out how to read that into my life in another way.”

That she did.

COLLECTING . . .

Her art collecting began in her 20s with a serigraph by William Tolliver titled “Final Rinse” and a glass paperweight by Vernon Brejcha.

“Today, I own over 60 pieces of original art from both local and international artists. I collect because I enjoy having art around me. My collection includes two-dimensional as well as three-dimensional works. I buy what I like and what I can afford.”

But collecting alone wouldn’t satisfy her artist’s heart.

CREATING AND COLLABORATING . . .

Over the years, she worked in the arts (The Central Park Gallery and MidAmerica Arts Alliance), participated in arts organizations



COURTESY RAMONA DAVIS

Ramona Davis

STORY CONTINUES >



The Black Artists Network, founded by Ramona Davis, has hosted a number of exhibitions and events featuring artists of color — including *Reflecting the Times*, a 2016 exhibition at the Box Gallery that showcased three perspectives in the areas of music, society, culture and landscape.

COURTESY RAMONA DAVIS



FROM THE ARTIST

“Japanese Cherry Blossom,” captured by Ramona Davis in spring 2021 on her Nikon camera, features the cherry blossoms in full bloom in Washington, D.C.

(KC Museum, One Percent for the Arts, Art In the Loop, Arts & Aging, Women Who Lead In the Arts at UMKC, InterUrban ArtHouse, African American Artist Collective, Friends of Art Council at The Nelson Atkins Museum of Art and others) and eventually made her way to Kansas City Arts Institute to develop her own skills.

As an artist, her go-to mediums are acrylics first, then photography, followed by graphic design and interior design.

Brush in hand, Davis creates abstract works, blending African and contemporary styles.

Camera in hand — whether it be her 35 millimeter or digital Nikon — Davis uses natural light to capture glimpses of the world through her eyes.

In June 2021, Davis’ work was featured as part of The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art’s exhibition, “Testimony: African American Artists Collective.”

ADVOCATING . . .

In 2015, entrenched in the Kansas City art scene, Davis couldn’t shake the reality that it was hard to find information about what artists of color were up to.

“I kept asking myself why do people not know about what’s happening?”

So, she founded the KC Black Arts Network as an advocate for local artists of color.

“Cultivating experiences, building relationships” is the mission.

Davis uses her background in marketing to help bring attention to artists and their events through the KC Black Arts Network. The Network has also organized events to feature artists.

“There are really good, I mean top-notch, artists here in Kansas City, and I want people to know about it.”

Being well-travelled herself, Davis said she pushes back when people talk about travelling to other cities like Chicago or New York to experience the Arts.

“You don’t need to leave Kansas City to experience the Arts. In fact, some of those same people you are raving about in other cities are performing here, too. We just need to help people see what we have.”

Davis also champions education on what it means to be a “friend of the arts.”

“Most folks have not thought of themselves as art supporters or friends. So, you have to teach them what that means . . . You know, saying, ‘Let me show you how to become a friend or supporter of an art institution and why it’s important.’”

WHAT’S NEXT . . .

Up next for the KC Black Arts Network, Davis is working on a new website where she wants to host an artist directory and a calendar for Arts events featuring KC artists of color.

In her personal journey with the Arts, Davis is always working on her next project. She’s spending some time in Washington, D.C., where her husband, IT Architect and musician Eugene Davis is currently working. There she’s creating new pieces in eager expectation of traveling back to their home in KC, when COVID restrictions allow, to share her work.

Follow Ramona Davis’ work at redavis-art.com

Follow the KC Black Arts Network at facebook.com/KC.Bk.ArtNtwk



COURTESY RAMONA DAVIS

Since its founding, The Black Artists Network has supported the arts community with advocacy, social media promotion, artist talks and curated exhibitions.