



Smithsonian
National Portrait Gallery

PORTRAIT OF AN ARTIST
BEVERLY McIVER

Everyone channels their emotions differently when dealing with life's struggles. Beverly McIver does this through the creation of art. "My painting is a way in which to investigate the raw emotion of what it means to be human. I entered the National Portrait Gallery's portrait competition because I believe that portraiture is a great way to express one's inner being. It is a vehicle in which to address the human condition." McIver is now the fifth artist to be featured on the Gallery's innovative "Portrait of an Artist" feature on its competition Web site.

All her life McIver has faced difficulties and questioned her identity as a poor, African-American, female. As a little girl, she grew up in a housing project in Greensboro, N. C. In 1979, five Communist party members were shot dead at her home by the Ku Klux Klan. Beverly's mother was subpoenaed to testify against the KKK who were eventually acquitted. When integration was introduced into schools, McIver was bused to predominantly white schools, where she noticed the difference between her white friends' lifestyles and her own.

Her troubles didn't stop there. McIver also felt invisible in the shadow of her oldest sister Renee, who is mentally disabled. Now, at the age of 42, McIver says, "My work has always called into question the identity of my family and myself. I explore the impact of my life and the events I have witnessed. It is through this process that I hope to better understand who I am."

Beverly's portrait about identity got her noticed by the National Portrait Gallery. The Gallery then invited her to enter the Outwin Boochever Portrait Competition 2006. "My submission was inspired by a photograph; it evoked, in me, all the physical and emotional changes that have occurred after my mother died in March, 2004. I was very close to her and miss her dearly. It was her wish that I take care of Renee, who has the mind-set of a third grader. This painting reflects the range of emotions I experience with my new responsibility of raising Renee. With my eyes closed, I depict or hide the pain one feels when they grieve."

McIver recently finished a one-year residency at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Studies in Cambridge, Mass. She is a recipient of the John Simon Guggenheim fellowship and now teaches at Arizona State University in Tempe, Ariz.

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Media: For more information or to schedule an interview with Beverly McIver, please contact Cheryl Davis at (202) 974-5033 or davisc@ruderfinn.com. For more information on the Outwin Boochever Portrait Competition 2006, please visit www.portraitcompetition.si.edu.