

Robinson College Art Workshop

celebrating Diversity & Black History Month

25th October 2022

**INTERACTIVE
CREATIVE**

**ART
WORKSHOP**

**BLACK
HI[STORY]**

**MY STORY
YOUR STORY
OUR STORY**

25 OCT 11AM-7PM

**DROP-IN ANYTIME
UMNEY FOYER**

**LED BY ARTIST & CAMBRIDGE
GRADUATE
JOSHUA OBICHERE**

ABOUT THE ARTIST

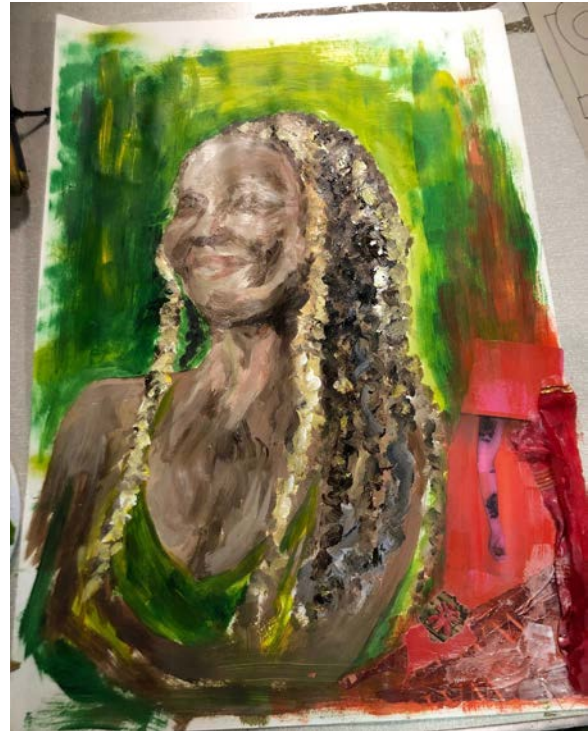
Joshua Obichere, 25, recently completed his Masters in Education at Downing College, 2022. During that time, he had his first solo exhibition called 'Blackness in Portraiture' and founded BIPAC, the Blackness in Portraiture Arts Group in Cambridge. The group meets every week to run workshops around blackness and race, as well as organising exhibitions for the community. He is currently studying an MA in Fine Art at Central Saint Martins (UAL).

**STUDENT-LED
ALL WELCOME
NO MATTER YOUR
BACKGROUND OR
CREATIVE ABILITY**

On 25 October this year, Robinson College hosted an interactive art workshop. This was developed in collaboration with artist and Cambridge University graduate Joshua Obichere in celebration of Black History Month (October). The aim was to celebrate diversity and different voices through art. This report summarises the workshop content and aims, experiences of the workshop, some of the work produced and how we might build on this going forward.

Workshop content and aims

The workshop was entitled “*My Story, Your story, Our Story*”. Participants were invited to engage in creative practices such as mark making, block printing and typography, and connecting these to narratives of diversity. “*My Story*” looked at depicting personal experiences related to one’s own diversity, “*Your Story*” dealt with how we can creatively respond to the archives of black people whose stories were never told. “*Our Story*” reflects the conversations across experiences generated during and following this workshop, helping to build a positive diverse community here at Robinson College. This related to mental health, representation, perfectionism and the beauty of just joining in, of letting your voice be heard through being creative, whatever your skills, background or experiences.



Summary

We had over 23 participants across the day, from Robinson and beyond, and many more who just stopped by to observe and have a chat. Our Artist Joshua Obichere was fantastic at encouraging people to come and take part. His enthusiasm helped to drive the event, helping people to transform their ideas and narratives of their story into some really creative and powerful artwork, using different techniques. It was lovely to witness some of the conversations about student life, diversity, culture, race, mental health, while having fun as people took some time to create and to discuss art, history and their personal experiences. The Umney Foyer worked really well as a creative space for such an event. A lot of interest in the event was generated across the College and beyond. Many students asked that we run something like this again and have already come forward with great ideas for future events.

This workshop represented a different way to reach people regarding creative ways to look after your mental health and wellbeing. It also proved that, for a small outlay in terms of resources, an interactive event such as this can make a big impact on students (and staff). Following is some feedback from participants about their experience of the workshop and, finally, from the artist’s own perspective. I also attach some images generated during this workshop.

Experiences of the Workshop

"I really enjoyed the workshop! I was a little apprehensive at first because I hadn't done art work since secondary school (many, many years ago!) but once I arrived, it was a really chill atmosphere. Josh was really inviting, friendly and approachable and made the workshop such a nice place to participate! I learned a new skill – how to block print and once I had finished one art piece I was keen to start another so I ended up with 3 pieces by the end of it! I found the workshop to be really therapeutic in a way; I felt really relaxed after a busy day of reading and meetings as engaging in the art was a very mindful activity. The Umney Foyer was a great location to hold it...as it felt open and inviting rather than closed off in a room for example where it feels more restrictive and not many people may have seen what was happening".



"The workshop successfully brought a range of people, not only in Robinson, but from across colleges together in a non-demanding, non-judgemental space which I really appreciated! I spoke to a lot of new people and was a nice way to socialise without feeling drained. Josh's display of his previous art across the room was incredible and very inspiring – so much talent there! Displaying all of our work across the wall at the end of the session was really rewarding too as we had the opportunity to admire all of our work displayed together. There was some amazing artwork done by others and you just don't realise until you take a step back and look! I would definitely attend another if it was held again".

"Thanks for reaching out! It absolutely lit up my day when I ran into this art workshop located right in Umney Foyer where I walked past every day. It was almost amazing to think how arts and creations could turn a seemingly ordinary space into somewhere magical, where real connections between people took place".

"My biggest take-away from that day for having met some new interesting people with similar interests like me. Josh was absolutely enthusiastic, and I was lucky enough to be the first one that day who actually sat down and started to create something!"

"Most surprisingly, I found my piece of "artwork" created under Josh's instruction a great metaphoric demonstration of what I've been thinking and doing lately. My thoughts in different aspects got connected and combined in a funny and imaginary way, which brought out something I didn't expect

before. Since then, this small piece of work was hung on the wall in front of my desk, and every time when I looked up and saw it, it would constantly remind me of this beautiful encounter in Umney Foyer that afternoon, as well as the courage to speak up”.

“Thank you for arranging the workshop with Joshua, it was a great experience!”

Joshua Obichere gave his own feedback following the workshop.

"The workshop held at Robinson was a fantastic opportunity that I had the pleasure of leading artistically. The students involved carried so much excitement and this was clear through the pieces that were made. For me, witnessing students engaging in the workshops reminded me about the importance of Art for good mental well-being. Karen Tate had a wonderful approach with the students and this made my role as the artist a joy and pleasure! The workshop at Robinson for Black History Month inspired me even more to continue the good work that has started, and to continue the conversation about wellbeing, art, race, equality and so much more. There is no other workshop like this happening in any of the Cambridge colleges and it's definitely the right time to plug into this!"

After the workshop, we had the pleasure of hosting Joshua at High Table, as a guest of the Warden.

Looking forward

We plan to develop the display of these artworks for wider viewing. Listening to these voices, seeing the powerful imagery and building on the success of this event, we plan develop more such initiatives, with the primary aim of supporting health and wellbeing and celebrating our diverse student community here at Robinson College.



