

Wangari Mathenge

b.1973 Nairobi, Kenya

Wangari Mathenge lives and works in Chicago, IL. She holds degrees from Howard University and Georgetown University Law Center and an MFA in Painting and Drawing from the School of The Art Institute of Chicago.

After a career in international business and law, Wangari Mathenge began pursuing her painting practice professionally in 2019. Mathenge's work is a visual testimony to the black female experience of existing simultaneously within two cultures—traditional African society and the Diaspora. Figurative, patterned, and brightly-hued, her paintings are lively and generative. Her rich compositions, emboldened with gestural strokes and mark-making, often depict close friends and loved ones. Mathenge's portraits are slices of life, offering an intimate view into her subjects' interiority.

The artist's recent solo exhibitions include *Bedimmed Boundaries: Between Wakefulness and Sleep*, Nicola Vassell Gallery, New York (2024); *A Day of Rest*, Pippy Houldsworth Gallery, London (2023); *Tidal Wave of Colour*, Roberts Projects, Los Angeles (2023); *Perspectives*, Monica de Cardenas, Milan (2021) and *The Expat Studies: Impressions on Paper*, The Sacristy Gallery, Chicago (2021). Selected group exhibitions include *When They See Us: Visibility in Contemporary Art/History*, Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, TX (2024); *When We See Us: A Century of Black Figuration in Painting*, Zeitz MOCAA, Cape Town, South Africa and Kunstmuseum Basel, Switzerland (2022-24); *Black American Portraits*, Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, Spelman College Museum of Fine Art, Atlanta, GA and Memphis Brooks Museum of Art, Memphis, TN (2021-2023); *The Power of Portraiture*, Nasher Museum of Art, Durham, NC (2022) and *Rested*, Nicola Vassell, New York (2021). Mathenge's work is held in prominent international collections, including Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.; Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, TX; Nasher Museum of Art, Durham, NC; Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento, CA; Weisman Art Museum, Minneapolis, MN; Kistefos Museum, Oslo, Norway; Rubell Family Collection, Miami; Jorge M. Pérez Collection, Miami; Elie Khouri Art Foundation, Dubai and Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin.