

VICTOR DAVSON

BIOGRAPHY

Victor Davson is a visual artist and founding director since 1983 of Aljira, a Center for Contemporary Art in Newark, New Jersey.

He was born in Georgetown, Guyana and since immigrating to the United States in 1973 he has received a BFA degree from Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, New York; co-founded Aljira, a Center for Contemporary Art; and established himself in his practice as an artist. His work is heavily influenced by the anti-colonial politics of the Caribbean, and by the intellectual powerhouses of that period. These include extraordinary writers and activists like Martin Carter, Frantz Fanon and Walter Rodney. Since 1996, his series of paintings and drawings, which include the *Limbo/Anansi* drawings, *Bad Cow Comin'* paintings, and his most recent paintings on long playing vinyl record album covers, are his attempt as an artist to negotiate the roots of identity in a terrain of loss and desire. All of these series are a response to his strong memories from his childhood in Guyana of a folk performance in which the participants masqueraded from house to house on Christmas Day. He sees these carnivalesque characters as metaphors for people of the African Diaspora who have survived because of their resiliency.

Notable solo exhibitions include *Victor Davson: Full Circle*, Berrie Center Kresge and Pascal Galleries, Ramapo College of New Jersey, Mahwah, NJ; *Bad Cow Comin': Recollections and Transformation*, Rush Arts Gallery, New York, NY; *Hero and Monster*, The Tomasulo Gallery, Cranford, NJ; *Bad Cow Comin' and Limbo/Anansi*, DHR Gallery One, Newark, NJ; *Bad Cow Comin': Recollections*, Tompkins College Center Gallery at Cedar Crest College, Allentown, PA; and *The Chain Link Series*, Jersey City Museum, Jersey City, NJ.

Notable group exhibitions include *African American Artists & Abstraction*, National Museum of Fine Arts, Havana, Cuba; *Aljira at 30, Dream and Reality*, The New Jersey State Museum, Trenton, NJ; *Timehri Transitions: Expanding Concepts in Guyana Art*, The Wilmer Jennings Gallery at Kenkeleba House, NYC; *Contemporary Expressions: Art from the Guyana Diaspora*, Five Myles Gallery, Brooklyn, NY; *Drawn to New York*, The Bertha V.B. Lederer Gallery, State University of New York, Geneseo; *This Twittering World*, Francis Kyle Gallery, London; *African American Artists from the Permanent Collection*, The New Jersey State Museum, Trenton, NJ; *Present Continuous*, Nathan Cummings Foundation, New York, NY; *La Línea: Dibujos Contemporáneos*, Museo de Art Moderno de la Republica Dominicana, Santo Domingo; *Diverse Representations II*, Morris Museum, Morristown, NJ; *The Act of Drawing: Medium/Method/Meaning*, Tompkins College Center Gallery at Cedar Crest College, Allentown, PA; and *Jonction Internacional*, Nice, France

Davson has received a Pollock-Krasner Foundation grant; a Rutgers Center for Innovative Print and Paper fellowship; and three fellowships from the New Jersey State

Council on the Arts. His work is in the permanent collections of the Newark Museum, The Montclair Art Museum, the New Jersey State Museum, and the National Collection of Fine Arts, Guyana.

As executive director of Aljira, a Center for Contemporary Art, Davson leads a vital hub for creative excellence in Newark New Jersey's downtown arts district. Notable highlights in the organization's history include: the founding of Emerge, a professional development program for visual artists; the founding of Aljira Design, a graphic design studio that for eighteen years earned revenue to support the organization's exhibitions and public programs; an invitation to organize the United States representation at the *IV Biennale International de Pintura* in Ecuador; a major award from the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts—becoming one of only eight institutions nationwide selected to participate in the foundation's second year stabilization initiative for small to midsize organizations; and designation as a Major Arts Institution by The New Jersey State Council on the Arts every year since 2003. He is a past trustee of Art Pride New Jersey and a current member of the Advisory Council of the Brodsky Center for Innovative Editions.

Davson has been honored by the Newark Arts Council as well as the Brodsky Center for Innovative Editions for both his work as a visual artist and his leadership in the arts. He received a leadership award from Prudential Foundation for his contribution to the Newark community. He was one of fifteen non-profit leaders in the arts, nationwide, selected to participate in Leadership 2000, a program of arts and economic development training for outstanding community leaders, sponsored by the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund and Manchester Craftsmen's Guild, and run by faculty from the Harvard Business School. He has served on panels for the National Endowment for the Arts and the New Jersey State Council on the Arts. He is a graduate of The Getty Museum Management Institute and has done graduate work in museum management at New York University Gallatin.