

Familiar Faces: Davariz Broaden

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Wes and Chukwuma Ezeanya

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In a sunlit studio in Little Village, Davaris Broaden, a self-taught, Detroit-born and based artist, stands before a canvas, brush in hand. Known for his muted color approach, Davariz's paintings beautifully distill the profound love and nuanced beauty within the Black community. When I first encountered Davariz's paintings, I was stunned by the emotion that was poured onto each canvas. It almost seemed to whisper stories—stories that many of us have with family or from our childhood. A sense of joy emerges from being surrounded by works that emphasize shared experiences. To this day, I still get emotional when I look at one of his pieces entitled *Every Step of the Way* from the series *By Any Means* (2023). The bib numbers in the piece hit home—my grandmother still has my Junior Olympics bibs, tucked away like precious memories from my days running AAU track for Motor City Track Club. This editorial, *Familiar Faces*, amplifies the voice of the man behind this visual storytelling centered around togetherness.

Here, Davariz Broaden shares his take on re-imagining how we see and understand the Black experience.

Wes: Are there specific cultural traditions or stories that have influenced your work?

Davariz Broaden: The traditional practice of “tough-love” for young Black males is a central focus in my work. I am constantly trying to challenge those who believe that this is the only way to raise young Black men. There is a heavy representation of love and intimacy amongst males in my practice.

W: How has your education in fashion at Kent State influenced your approach to visual art? Are there particular techniques or perspectives from fashion that carry over?

DB: Design school has helped me immensely. I feel as though I “design paintings”. My approach is very design driven, from the muted color palette I used in school to the way I build the works. Starting out as a designer helped me create a method that felt seamless to my previous process.





W: What role do you believe artists and the broader creative community can play in promoting more open and healthier conversations around men's mental health?

DB: The role that artists & other creatives play in this conversation is just to continue to create authentically. With that, we continue to push the message of confidence in who we are. Comfort comes with frequency, the more we see and talk about authenticity, the easier it will become to embrace our feelings and emotions.

W: How has your partnership with Louis Buhl & Co. impacted your artistic journey?

DB: My partnership with Louis Buhl & Co. has impacted me tremendously. They are the greatest, most caring team I could ask for. I've been able to grow with so much peace of mind knowing that I have such a great family behind me. The community we have built, and are continuing to build in Detroit, has been one of the most special things I have ever witnessed and I am extremely grateful to be a part of it.

W: Your paintings celebrate Black joy and everyday experiences. How do you see this contributing to broader conversations about representation in art?

DB: The frequency in which conversation about Black representation in art comes up is something that I am very thankful for. I just want to continue to be a driving force in making our voices even more accepted. The ultimate goal is just to eliminate the word "accepted" when having this conversation.

W: How has growing up in Detroit influenced your artistic perspective and the themes in your work?

DB: Growing up in Detroit has influenced my perspective so much. Sports and community are focal points in my practice. My experiences growing up are directly reflected in my work. Every moment of my childhood has driven me to become this super intentional artist, from being an athlete my entire childhood to being a kid who loved outdoor experiences with friends. I take these moments that are stored mentally and spill them onto the canvas.



By Any Means by Davariz Broaden. Courtesy of the artist.



W: Your connection with Stone Island came about through your friend and mentor Tyrell Winston, another acclaimed artist represented by Library Street Collective. What has it meant to you to be associated with a brand that holds such iconic status in the streetwear and gorpcore scenes? Can you share any insights into how this connection has shaped your artistic perspective or opened new avenues for your creativity?

DV: The DTW scholarship with Tyrrell & Stone Island has been such an amazing opportunity for me. There have been so many firsts with this experience: first art scholarship, first actual studio & first billboard. It has given me the opportunity to get more institutions, artists & collectors to the studio, which is so important for my growth as an artist. I have had so many conversations with individuals from many backgrounds and I have also had the opportunity to work alongside amazing artists like Paul Verdell & Akea Brionne. Being able to watch the processes of these two artists & talk to them everyday has made me a more well rounded and knowledgeable artist.

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**Portraits of Davariz Broaden taken by Chukwuma Ezeanya*