



Leveling the playing field with paid internships

Marvin Espy: Contemporary American Artist



Born in Cincinnati, Ohio, **Marvin Espy** has established a distinguished career in the arts, celebrated for his bold exploration of identity, culture, and human resilience. His work encompasses figurative painting, abstraction, and evocative urban landscapes, earning him acclaim from collectors, curators, and institutions nationwide.

Espy's talent was recognized early when, in 1982, he was voted "Most Talented" by his class at Princeton High School. There, he honed his artistic vision under the mentorship of Franklin McKenzie Shands and later studied with the renowned painter Henry Koerner at the Art Institute of Pittsburgh, earning a degree in Visual Communications in 1985.

In 2013, Espy's career soared with his first solo exhibition, showcasing intricate ballpoint pen sketches. That same year, he won "Best of Show" at the Hart Witzgen Showdown Event, repeating this honor in 2015, cementing his role in Charlotte's vibrant art scene.

Espy was featured three times in the Charlotte Business Journal, including two cover stories highlighting his luminous depictions of the Charlotte skyline. His cityscapes earned him an ArtPop Billboard Award in 2018, broadening his audience across the region.

In 2023, Espy unveiled *Context*, a series that redefined representations of Black culture, earning "Best Solo Exhibition" honors at Charlotte Magazine's Best of the Best Awards. His 2024 solo exhibit, *Up From the Asphalt*, ran for fourteen weeks at the Lyman Allyn Art Museum, where it was praised for its profound reflection on the events of 2020, particularly exploring George Floyd's death through Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.

In recognition of his contributions, Espy was inducted into the Princeton High School Hall of Fame in 2024. His work has been featured in respected venues across New England and the American South, with coverage spanning Connecticut, North Carolina, and as far as San Antonio, Texas.

In 2025, Espy created 60 new works exhibited across four New England venues. **WOKELove** celebrated and reclaimed the power of the word "woke," presenting portraits that honor the strength and humanity within Black culture. This series is a call to resist oppression with grace, fostering unity and compassion in a divided world.

In 2026, Espy joined a lecture series on the intersection of art, democracy, and Black resistance, commemorating the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. Sponsored by the Thames River Heritage Park, the Lyman Allyn Art Museum, and the NAACP, these talks further explore art's power to inspire change.

Today, Espy resides in Connecticut with his wife, Dr. Tracy Espy, President of Mitchell College, and their daughter Sydney, a Licensed Clinical Therapist in New England. Together, the family exemplifies a dedication to excellence in all pursuits.

Visitors to the Marvin Espy Gallery of Fine Art, located at 308 State Street in New London, Connecticut, are welcomed into a vibrant world of color, form, and storytelling—where Espy's mastery invites reflection and inspires the imagination.