

## Episode 08: Michael C Thorpe



As we begin our conversation we learn about Michael's early years and his realization that, for him, quilting isn't about following a prescribed pattern, but rather about envisioning unlimited possibilities - the same possibilities he sees in life.

Having received his degree in photo journalism from Emerson University, Michael started using photography as reference materials for his creations, and later moved onto figurative works, which led him to create quilts that were quite different from the mainstream. In Michael's words, "Photography taught me how to see the world." (3:45-5:20)

Romare Bearden and Jacob Lawrence are two artists Michael identifies with aesthetically. It was their abstract depictions of African American life that inspired him to continue to create abstracts of his daily life. He talks about how portraying everyday mundane scenes in an abstract way can capture the feeling and beauty of the moment.

Michael goes on to explain how the freedom of not saying no guides him in his life and his art. He doesn't want his creations to be stalled by questioning whether he should do *x* or *y* or *z*. Instead, he wants to go with the flow of the moment. Looking down the road, he wants to be able to look back and say, "Wow, I tried it all, I did it all." (7:20-8:34)

Everything in his life up to this moment has impacted him in some way and he takes that into every part of his quilting. That includes all the pieces of fabric fans send to him for his art.

According to Michael, "Each fabric I get, I can think of the person who gave it to me and how without that fabric the work wouldn't have come together."

One of Michael's favorite techniques is meandering quilting, where the stitching never overlaps. As he quilts he thinks about the word meandering and how it applies to traveling and exploring with no pre-determined destination. He quilts in broad "brush strokes, with the fabric being the paint and the stitching the paint brush that creates very fine detail work. He calls it painting with fabric and thread, which for him is a meditative and therapeutic process.

As he approaches his first solo gallery show, Michael still can't wrap his head around the fact that he can make a living off his art and fully support himself doing what he loves. "I can't lie," he says, "it's super fun." (13:53-14:32) As he started preparing for his upcoming show, he stepped back and thought about how being a working artist living in NYC was something that was beyond his wildest dreams. Each piece in his new show will speak to theme of wildest dreams.

At the precipice of his career, Michael knows that his love of quilting will always be with him. He's also ready to expand his art practice into other mediums. Like Picasso, he wants to excel in them all. His goal is to create a show that represents all different disciplines, and that feels like there are fifteen artists represented with in reality, it's all him. We've no doubt he'll accomplish it. If you want to be inspired, you won't want to miss this podcast.

To learn more about Michael or to reach out to him personally, simply stop by [michaelcThorpe.com](http://michaelcThorpe.com)