

ON THE COVER

A Grand Welcome for the Outsider by Grace Lynne Haynes

Portions of the following are based on an interview with the artist on February 18, 2022.

The *American Psychologist's* cover image, this month, was created by an early career African American painter, originally from Los Angeles, now living in New Jersey and completing graduate studies in visual art at Rutgers. She has already achieved national and international success with solo exhibitions in the U.S. and Europe.

A Grand Welcome for the Outsider is a recent work and one of the artist's favorites because it introduces novelty while preserving and extending her focus on the inner lives of Black women. The picture includes several hallmarks of her style past and present as well as innovation. Haynes likes to work on printmaking paper with flashe and gouache paints because they yield intense, opaque colors. She attributes her love of glowing oranges, pinks, greens, and even purples partly to the sun and light of California. But there are also pieces of wallpaper and fabric here, adding nuance and relief to the image surface. The new element is apparent in a more complex composition, with multiple figures and an energy and movement that has replaced the stillness and solitude of earlier work. Hints of a narrative are present as well and provoke interpretation. The painting shows two dark-skinned women, one dressed in black, the other brilliant in blue with winged shoulders, and a green fairy-like figure riding her calf. They are spirit characters, born of Haynes's imagination but also conjuring other mythologies. The women are dancing, their right arms entwined, moving against a graduated pastel background, framed by a purple arch. Haynes sees dance as an expression of relationship, women to their bodies and to each other, skin to skin, and intimacy that heals and celebrates. These are the clues and cues the picture provides and the rest is up to us. Who is the outsider and why the need for a grand welcome? Haynes encourages us to look around and inside ourselves to find the answer.

Grace Lynne Haynes was attracted to art as well as writing in childhood and imagined a career illustrating children's books. However, the field of commercial illustration was considered a wiser occupational choice, especially in terms of

potential income. Hence, she followed the more practical route in her undergraduate education at the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena. An illustrator aims to depict or explain something to an audience. The text of a magazine article, a book cover, or a website may all be enhanced through visual illustration. But in each case, there is a message to be conveyed and a client to be served and satisfied. In marked contrast, fine art painting is art for its own sake. There is no client and messages are optional. What a painting conveys, if anything, is completely up to the artist. The image may have meanings that are universal and obvious, cryptic and obscure, arbitrary, known only to the artist, or not known at all.

Haynes made the creative transition from illustrator to fine art painter in her early 20s. It meant changing the spotlight from what others wished to say, to what she wished to say. She valued and carried forward the skills acquired in illustration to her new orientation. These skills include the ability to simplify composition to essentials, to place and contrast color effectively, to draw forms and texture surfaces that capture attention while bending an image to purpose. And in fine art painting that purpose is chosen freely, not dictated. A desire to communicate was also retained but now allied to a visual language that mixes highly personal elements with one of the most durable motifs in art history: the human figure. Haynes cites Elizabeth Catlett and Jacob Lawrence, artists of the Harlem Renaissance, and Betye Saar, a fellow Californian, as influences on her artistic vision. The common thread among them, expressed in different ways, is the African American experience. Imagery is used to upend stereotypes about race and femininity and to contradict what is public with what is private. European influences include Francesco Goya and Francis Bacon, artists working in very different cultural traditions but sharing Haynes's interest in storytelling and the human condition. This month the journal is delighted to provide a grand welcome to Grace Lynne Haynes and her art.

 R. Walter Heinrichs
Art Co-Editor