

## Bob Dilworth

By: Loren King



**Bob Dilworth** in his Providence studio with work from his series *Black Love Matters*, 2018, acrylic, spray paint, color markers on canvas. Behind him is *Tiffany*, 96 x 83". Partially seen on the right is *Tony*, 109 x 83". To the left is a work in progress. **Photo:** The University of Rhode Island/Nora Lewis.

Past and present collide and coalesce in Bob Dilworth's large-scale abstract paintings. His stencil and collage technique gives his images the texture and layer of memory. His swirls and streaks of bright spray paint imbue them with a popping, contemporary style. Although the paintings begin with an image—Dilworth invites friends and colleagues into his studio to be digitally photographed—he doesn't think of the works as portraits. Instead, he tries to capture the force of a personality, using the spray paint on stencils to convey movement and a sense of drama.

The day we met, Dilworth was working on the life-size figure of Providence, RI, actress and frequent model Sylvia Ann Soares. Standing back from his canvas, one hand on his greying goatee and peering through professional-but-stylish eyeglasses, he surveys his work in progress. He's not sure about the gold background he's experimenting with. Gold seemed to suit Soares's stature, but now he's not so sure.

Each painting "calls for what it wants and needs," says Dilworth. "I don't try to force anything. Sometimes I just sit and look. That's part of the process, too." Layering color and shapes over the initial image is the fun for him. Before he gets to that stage, the process is more technical. He creates a large scan of the photograph, then draws the outline of his subject's full body by hand in black marker onto transparent film draped over the canvas. He cuts along the lines to make a stencil. Then the spraying begins and bright color fills and blurs in the lines. When the film is pulled away, the image is awash in vibrant color that seems to move energetically all over the canvas.