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## Reginald Baylor, Milwaukee Artist

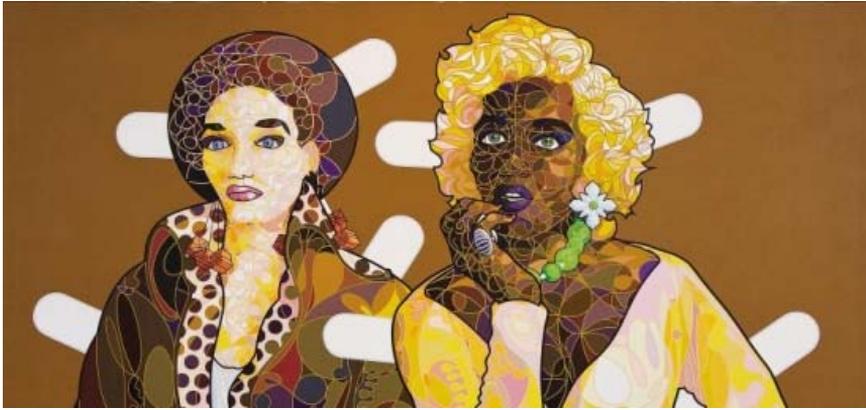
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# Reginald Baylor, Milwaukee Artist

By [Curtis L. Carter \(by-author-146-1.html\)](#)



By the age of 10 years, Reginald Baylor had realized that he must be an artist. What did this mean? It meant that he would pursue this idea unrelentingly throughout his developing years. Art school gave him skills and the opportunity to test his potential. And some years on the road with a beautiful semi-truck provided time for reflection and observation of a wide range of American life, as well as support for his family and his painting.

My first encounter with Reginald Baylor took place during the planning for an exhibition at the Haggerty Museum in Milwaukee, in 2004, where his paintings were shown along with sculptures by his brother, Trenton. I was impressed with the freshness of the paintings, and the clear focus of the artist. At that time, his art had received little attention in the city. It seemed to me that it would be only a matter of time before his talent blossomed.

In the few years since our first meeting, Baylor has become one of the most promising of mid-career artists working and living in Milwaukee. In 2009 he was the first artist to be chosen for a one-year residency in the Pfister Hotel artists' residency project. The Pfister offers a stipend plus 24-hour access to studio space located in the public area between the Mason Street Grill and the Café at the Pfister, where visitors may observe the artist at work and discuss the work in process. Currently, Baylor is artistic director at the Mandel Group Creative Studio in the Third Ward. The Mandel Group project is an alternative network for independent artists to gain experience.

With the support of his studio manager of the past six years, Heidi Witz, Baylor's productivity has increased steadily, resulting in a consistent, recognizable style that grows more and more vibrant. His paintings are the result of a carefully conceived, visually complex pictorial architecture that is first worked out in the artist's mind.

After conception, the painting is laid on the canvas as a drawing. (He rightly knows that the

foundation of a good painting is grounded in drawing.) The drawing takes on new life as it benefits from a clearly formed, straight-edged linear structure. Ruler-edged lines are secured on the canvases with taped applications executed with precision, and filled with vibrant acrylic coloration. Careful manipulation of the lines allows for a wide variety of shapes, allowing for both abstraction and representation.

Each painting, whether an exterior landscape, a still life, or the interior of a dwelling, has a story to tell. And the stories are taken from the artist's life experiences. However, the stories are never didactic. Instead, they allow the pictorial qualities of color, line and shape to direct the flow of the composition.

Stylistically, Baylor's paintings recall elements of familiar 20th-century art, especially the strong linear qualities of American precisionism (Charles Sheeler) and minimalism (Dan Flavin). Like the pop artists James Rosenquist and Keith Haring, who are his heroes, Baylor reaches into the world outside of art in search of his images. But his art does not dissolve into any of these possible influences. His voice is his own.

The range of his subjects is increasingly wide. Landscapes such as *Ovular Foliage* (2004); neighborhood scenes as in *Second Next Door Neighbor* (2006); and social themes including race, as in *Black and Blonde, Blonde and Black Paper Dolls* (2009), all fit well into a coherent visual vocabulary. So do interior scenes such as *Optional Accessories* (2007) and the whimsical *The Story of Adam and Eve to the Melody of a 1970s Apple Jacks Cereal Box* (2009). Through all of these explorations, Baylor continues his artistic journey with the promise of more to come.

Reginald Baylor's studio in the Marshall Building (207 E. Buffalo St.) is open to the public 9 a.m.-5 p.m Monday through Friday. His art is also accessible on the Baylor Studio website ([www.reginaldbaylor.com](http://www.reginaldbaylor.com) (<http://www.reginaldbaylor.com>)).

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