

JOE MINTER: *UNDER THE STARS, UNDER THE SUN*  
August 24–October 14, 2023

“Everything you see has been made under the stars and under the sun.  
That’s the canvas of God.”

–Joe Minter

Joe Minter is a busy man. Like a *Butterfly at Work*, the artist spends time tending to his garden: maintaining, updating, repairing, and constructing the multi-media installations that adorn his yard and magnum opus: *The African Village in America*. Or maybe he’s more akin to the *Yellow Jacket*, both pollinator and defender of the site and its commensurate histories, bedecked in one of his yellow homemade t-shirts that bears a rendering of his hands accompanied by the words: *The Lord is My Shepard*. Perhaps he’s more like a *Zebra*, whose stripes evolved to deter bloodsucking flies but appear as a beguiling and harmonious union of Black and white to the human eye.

Joe Minter is a reluctant traveler. He has never visited the African continent but possesses a guiding belief in the *African Way*, a simple phrase denoting the connectedness of millions of Black people across time and space and their collectively possessed strength and decency. *African Drum*, *African Mask*, and *Zulu Bull Horn African Warriors* are thus born of his imagination, yet are surely tapped into the *Mother Ship*, a cradle of civilization, home to the pyramids and other symbols of potentially divine origin. Despite the dominating presence of African symbols, Joe Minter and his work are decidedly American, born from *Lost Freedom* but also of resilience. American flags and P.O.W. monuments intermingle with condemnations of racial stereotypes and violence across his life’s work and sprawling garden.

Over time, 931 Nassau Ave SW, Birmingham, Alabama—the address of Minter’s home and studio—has evolved into a personalized cultural hypocenter situated between a dead-end street and the Shadow Lawn Memorial Gardens, an historically Black cemetery which the artist can see *From My Back Deck*. Despite the overwhelming view, Joe Minter does not purely dwell on the past. He has a keen interest in both current events and the future trajectory of the American experiment. The *50/50 House Divide* that characterizes our nation and the consequences of both literal and metaphorical *Virus(es) in the Blood System*, *1 Million Deaths in U.S.A. (Tears Drops of Blood)* and *COVID-19 Shots, Mask Feared By People* remain topics of creative expression—terrifying, beautiful, and true.

Joe Minter’s paintings are made, quite literally, under the stars and sun. He prefers to paint outdoors under the auto shed attached to his home, a shaded spot with a light breeze and a direct view of the front gate to his property, the point of arrival for guests wanting to visit *The African Village in America*. Like his sculptures, the paintings are didactic and narrative-driven, intended both to puzzle and educate. Minter has been sporadically painting since the 1960s, only beginning to do so in earnest in 2021. This return to painting at nearly 80 years old can most simply be explained by every great artist’s desire to innovate and explore. At the height of his powers, Joe Minter is doing all he can to leave a brave and humble trace—not unlike *Insects’ Footprints in the Snow*.

Joe Minter has recently exhibited at the Royal Academy of Arts in London and the Minneapolis Institute of Art. His work has been the subject of solo exhibitions at MARCH, Mana Contemporary, Alabama Contemporary, Atlanta Contemporary, James Fuentes Gallery, and Tops Gallery. Minter’s work is in the permanent collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C., the Ackland Art Museum at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, CA, the High Museum of Art, Atlanta, GA, the New Orleans Museum of Art, New Orleans, LA, the Birmingham Museum of Art, Birmingham, AL, and the Minneapolis Museum of Art, Minneapolis, MN, among others. He was featured in the 2019 Whitney Biennial, curated by Rujeko Hockley and Jane Panetta.