



# KUAF Arts Beat: Embracing the Superpowers of Painting

By KATY HENRIKSEN • FEB 14, 2019

*An interview with artist Fahamu Pecou for the KUAF Arts Beat*



*Fahamu Pecou stands in front of his painting "Nunna My Heroes: After Barkley Hendricks' 'Icon For My Man Superman'" on display now at Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art.*

CREDIT COURTESY CRYSTAL BRIDGES MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

Interdisciplinary artist [Fahamu Pecou](#) grew up in Atlanta wanting to be an animator, a trajectory that aligns well with [Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art's](#) new exhibit "Men of Steel, Women of Wonder," which explores comics and superheroes in the context of contemporary fine art.

In his striking self-portrait "Nunna My Heroes" a confident Fahamu Pecou

adorned in black Kanye West sunglasses rips open a suit jacket and unbuttons a white dress shirt to expose a Superman-like emblem emblazoned with an F instead of an S. It's an homage to a 1969 painting by Barkley Hendricks titled "Icon For My Man Superman."

---

---

"As black people we often have to be our own heroes," he explains of the painting. "There isn't really a savior that's going to come from the sky and rescue us. When we take on the role of hero, when we step into the space of hero, when we activate our own powers we can actually become heroes and do the work that needs to get done."

Pecou gets personal as he recounts listening to the Goody Mob tune "Guess Who" as a junior in college, a song that documents the group's love for their mothers and the impact they have. It resonated with Pecou, who lost his own mother at age 4. The single inspired him to create his first body of work, a very personal show that recounted the night his mother died.

"When the show opened, I saw all these people in the gallery reacting to the work — very powerfully and very emotionally," he says. "I realized then what art was and the power of what art could do."

Hear the full interview in the on-demand streaming link. "Men of Steel, Women of Wonder" is on display at Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art now through April 22.

Tune in at 8 p.m. Monday through Thursday for the KUAF Arts Beat and connect online by sharing with #artsbeatkuaf.

---