

## April Fitzpatrick

My current project “**The Pineapple Metaphor: *Expanding the Narrative***” is a collection of hopeful, transformative, cultured, spiritual, and symbolic paintings that encompass the emotions, thoughts, and beliefs that arise while navigating the world as a black woman, researcher, artist, healer and art therapist. My art is my way of advocating for social justice and culturally competent practices for marginalized communities.

Using the pineapple’s own growth and journey as a guiding metaphor, I dissect the fruit into three components—the cradle, core, and crown; to consider the impact of cultural history, personal narratives, and community on sustaining mental and emotional wellness.

My work welcomes a critical view of one’s *Lebenswelt* (life-world) impacted by direct and indirect societal ills of trauma, poverty, and racism. By deepening the meaning of symbolism, through an artistic lens, I can take a closer look at the history of the pineapple and its parallel to Black aesthetics. I incorporate symbols of African heritage within the African- American experience. In responding to the lack of cultural considerations when addressing trauma within the black community, I repurpose the pineapple, and use its origin and journey to tell a different story, one of the black experiences as it relates to the mental health crises and survival in America. Through imaginative colors palettes, I show how mentally overwhelming being “other” in America can be.

Overall, the art I create incorporates the pineapple across themes found within the black culture using vibrant colors, found objects, patterns, texture, and hidden symbolism. Particularly, the color yellow, is symbolic, as it establishes a vibration for mental activity. I expect my audience to see my use of abstract surrealism as a way to capture a snapshot of their own individual trauma and marry it with healing. Using the color yellow, within a cubism design, I challenge old perspectives by creating positive memories to buffer and redefine narratives bound by trauma. My repeated use of yellow and the pineapple is intentional to evoke change, progress, clarity, communication, and hope. Through my vision and use of the pineapple, I imagine getting to the “core” of trauma. The pineapple, in its entirety, is striking from its exterior pluckiness, yet sweet interior to its mere growth from the direct crown of another. The mystifying fruit demands a particular environment for its growth; when the demand is met, the pineapple flourishes and sustains itself. The fruit’s mere existence exemplifies the need for spiritual, mental, emotional, and social support.

However; before the healing, one must confront and resolve trauma. As an *artistic healer*, my artwork is the bridge that leads to change.