

## VISUAL ARTS - CELEBRATING BLACK HISTORY MONTH

### ART LINK: TAMARA NATALIE MADDEN

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**ACTIVITY #1 & 2 (DAY 1):** Read the brief biography and statement of artist [Tamara Natalie Madden](#) on the following pages. Answer questions below.

**REQUIREMENTS** Answer the following questions:

- What struggle influenced her decision to finally live her dream and become a professional artist?
  - Name at least two of Tamara Natalie Madden's varied artistic influences that helped her with her artwork.
  - Who do the people in Tamara's artwork represent? Dig a little further, why does she represent them?
  - Why did Ms. Madden create birds in her artwork and what do they symbolize?
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**ACTIVITY # 3:** Create an artwork based on the style of Tamara Natalie Madden.  
**REQUIREMENTS:** (Day 2-4) Use this [PATTERN IDEA PACKET](#) to help you.

**Day 2:** Make a couple of **thumbnail/rough sketch ideas**. 2-3 drafts.  
Your drawing should consist of:

- Draw a figure of a person (torso or head and shoulders)
- A set of patterns in place of the hair.
- Another set of patterns for the clothing.
- A symbolic animal of your choice on your person's shoulder or in the background.

**Day 3:** Draw your **final draft** figure of a person (torso or head and shoulders).  
Your drawing should consist of:

- A set of patterns in place of the hair.
- Another set of patterns for the clothing.
- A symbolic animal of your choice on your person's shoulder or in the background.

**DAY 4&5:** Color your image using a medium of your choice:

Neatly colored. Don't forget your background. Your skin tone can be ANY color.

Bold and RICH colors demonstrating contrast and royalty

**Extra credit for adding fabric/mixed media.**

# Examples of work by Tamara Natalie Madden



**Tamara Natalie Madden** (1975 -2017) was a Jamaican-born, Atlanta based mixed-media artist, and professor of art and visual culture at Spelman College in Atlanta. On November 4, 2017, she died at her home in Snellville, Georgia, only two weeks after being diagnosed with Stage 4 ovarian cancer. She was 42.

In 1997, Tamara was diagnosed with a rare genetic kidney disease called IGA Nephropathy. In order to maintain some semblance of normalcy, she began to create again. In 2000, Tamara took a trip home to Jamaica in hopes of reuniting with family. Her goal was simply to say goodbye as she believed that she was dying. She had no idea that the trip would save her life. Her brother offered his kidney to her upon seeing the condition that she was in. That same year she participated in her first art exhibition, making good on the promise that she had made to herself long ago to become a professional fine artist.

Madden's influences were varied, and included [Gustav Klimt](#), Milwaukee artist Ras Ammar Nsoroma, African royalty, Egypt, Asia and the clothing worn by native African and Indian women. She chose to paint imagery that represented the people of the African diaspora.

"Similar to the works of Gustav Klimt, Madden clothes the goddess in a boldly patterned dress with clear ties to the arts and crafts movement and its populist underpinnings of advocating for art made by the people for the people. The unique quilting of the dress distinguishes the wearer while harkening to feelings of home and of natural, honest labor. Additionally, Madden's use of decadent colors and gold gives her subjects a life of indulgence that they never had."





## The Legacy and Words of Artist Tamara Natalie Madden

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"My work deals with the social, spiritual and cultural identity of people of African ancestry. Jamaican people and my memories of living there, served as a catalyst for this body of work.

The intent of my work is for it to function as a voice for those 'every day' folk who are overlooked and shunned because of their station in life. In order to fully represent the intrinsic beauty of many of these individuals, I decided to emphasize society's fascination with materialism and splendor by using bright colors, golden washes, silk fabrics, and bold patterns. I found that the most powerful images of our time were those that demanded attention and admiration, and I wanted these individuals to have their moment to shine, thus many of my paintings feature singular portraits.

Inspired by and images of royalty of the Akan people of Ghana and other parts of West Africa; I decided to turn regular folk into nobility. Each piece of art is an allegory that represents the soul and spirit of the individual. Their regal state embodies all that is often hidden and overlooked. My work is not about egoism; it is about empowerment of the spirit and recognition of the beauty within. The golden headpieces worn by most of the subjects in my paintings represent mystical crowns, halos, armor and weaponry for the spiritual warriors.

The birds in my paintings are symbolic of my personal struggle with illness, and a representation of my survival and freedom from it.

While I enjoy using a variety of mediums to create, my medium of choice is acrylic paint. I also use a variety of mixed media to achieve my goals, including gold leaf and fabric. I am fascinated with the idea of the flat juxtaposed with the volumetric, particularly since most of my work is about emphasis on the individual. I chose to use quilting in my pieces because it denotes a strong historical connection to African ancestry."

These are examples of Gustav Klimt's Artwork, Can you see his influences in Tamara Natalie Madden's work ?

