

Audio Transcript: Who Is Maxwell Alexandre?

(light music)

Alessandra Gómez:

Born in Rio de Janeiro in 1990, Maxwell Alexandre is an artist who creates large-scale paintings celebrating the empowerment, self-esteem, and prosperity of Black people. He incorporates art historical, religious, and pop cultural references and takes inspiration from Brazilian rap music.

Maxwell Alexandre:

When I started painting on brown paper, it was not only a conceptual issue, but a political and social issue as well. And some years later, I had an idea of painting a self-portrait, much for the sake of wanting to represent a character that was Black and blond, with dyed hair.

Alessandra Gómez:

Since 2017, he's painted images of Black people on brown craft paper called *pardo* in Portuguese. The word has a dual meaning. It refers to the paper and is also used as an ambiguous racial category in the Brazilian census.

Many Brazilians argue that the category was designed to reduce the percentage of citizens who identify as Black. At The Shed, Maxwell will be presenting the first period of his "Pardo é Papel" series called "The Glorious Victory" as well as a subseries called "New Power."

Maxwell Alexandre:

"Pardo é Papel" is a series that talks specifically about empowerment, self-esteem, and the speculation of the future of glory and prosperity for Black people. So it starts pointing to these various directions and these paintings for me are very representative because they speak of this moment of ascension, of my ascension as an artist. That I have my integrity as a Black Brazilian favelado, and as an individual, as an artist.