

## Artist Statement, “Dance Class”

Caleb Levy

*Dance Class* is a textured meditation on Jamaican youth, performance, and power constructed through instinctive mark-making, ancestral guidance, and visual dissonance. Rendered in acrylic and pastel on paper, the piece confronts the political weight borne by children growing up amid violence, colonial residue, and fragmented national identity in postcolonial Jamaica.

Inspired by years of witnessing performances by high school dance troupes in Kingston, Jamaica, the National Dance Theatre Company of Jamaica (NDTC), and a close friend who danced with the NDTC, this work invokes the memory of movement: choreographed gestures that became vessels of story, resistance, and spiritual charge. The figures contort, collapse, and stretch within a compressed pictorial space, invoking both discipline and defiance. One childlike form bows forward as if in reverence or flight, while others loom, distort, or fade into abstraction, echoing the layered experience of Jamaican youth navigating structures of order, respectability, and self-expression. There is tension between containment and release, tradition and rupture. This painting emerged from memories of the coded performances demanded of Jamaican youth under the long shadows of colonial education and moral policing. At the same time, it honors the uncontainable energy of dancehall and the spiritual rhythms that pulse through our communities and bodies. Influenced by Basquiat, Wangechi Mutu, Jean Dubuffet, and Edna Manley, I create layered, symbolic forms that collapse time and space. *Dance Class* stands as both indictment and offering, a call to witness the political force of Jamaican youth performance as a site of survival, creativity, and liberation.

**Caleb Levy** is a visual artist from Kingston, Jamaica based in Massachusetts, USA. Levy is a PhD student in Physics at Harvard University. Levy works with acrylic, charcoal and pastels to illustrate the injustices of colonial violence in the Global South. He layers, obscures, and reworks images to reflect his experiences in Jamaica and his reckoning with the consequences of centuries of oppression throughout the majority world.