

# CULTURED

ART HAMPTONS EDITION

## Look Inside the Studios of Three Artists Who've Been Shaped by the East End



Portrait of Cameron Welch by Shark Senesac.

### **Cameron Welch**

*By Amaya McDonald*

Cameron Welch remembers the first time he saw a painting by a person of color. Born in Indianapolis, Welch made many trips to the city's Museum of Art (now Newfields) as a child, but it wasn't until his teenage years that he saw a newly acquired work there titled *Don't Matter How Raggly the Flag, It Still Got to Tie Us Together* by the Black self-taught assemblage artist Thornton Dial. It was only then, Welch says, that "I had seen myself in an artwork, in any sense of the phrase."

Dial's formative influence on Welch remains evident. Based in Brooklyn, Welch, 32, is recognized for his assemblages that marry mythology with the mundane by incorporating found objects like mirrors, CDs, and MIDI keyboards. Throughout his training—first at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, where he received a BFA in 2013, and later at New York's Columbia University, where he earned an MFA in 2016—Welch foregrounded underrepresented Black histories and experiences in his paintings by using commonly found objects.



Photography by Shark Senesac.

His 2018 solo show, “Retrograde” at Rental Gallery in East Hampton, proved pivotal in his practice. Through 10 large-scale mixed-media paintings, Welch reimagined well-known characters from Western folklore and classical literature as people of color. His use of mosaic, a medium often associated with the Roman Empire, is intentionally referential. “[I thought] it would be a really great way to pose new mythologies or new narratives around Blackness,” he says. The exhibition presented him with an opportunity to investigate racial identity through the lens of mythmaking on a large scale, and “having that dialogue take place in what is a predominantly white space provided a really generative conversation around the work.”

Welch continues to create pieces he calls new myths—untold stories of the present that may one day inform the future. Much of his recent work doubles down on his dialogue with the past by incorporating marble. Nonetheless, an optimism for the future shines through the hard stone, showing how people of color “should and could be depicted in a historical sense.”