



Ruth Owens
American, born in Germany, born 1959
Vietnam Opa, 2020
acrylic on archival heavy watercolor paper
Gift of Schwanda Rountree, 2020.28

About the Art

- This painting depicts the artist's father, Arnold Owens, a United States serviceman who was posted at many different military bases during her childhood.
- Many of Owens's works, like *Vietnam Opa*, are drawn from images found in archival family photographs and home movies. Owens has commented, "I realized how rare it was to have film of a Black family during the 1960s-70s. Not only was film expensive, the camera was expensive, and you also needed to have our own projector to watch it."
- Owens has replaced the interior tent background from the original family photograph, seen to the right, with lush, tropical greenery. Not only does this allow her to create vivid pools of blue, peach, and pink acrylics, but it lets the figure inhabit an outdoor natural environment, a place that she describes as "historically an uninviting or dangerous space for people of color."



About the Artist

1959: Born in Augsburg, Germany

1986: Received her Doctor of Medicine degree from Northwestern Medical School

2016: Performed her last surgery before switching careers and enrolling in a Master of Fine Arts program

2018: Graduated with her Master of Fine Arts from the University of New Orleans

2020: Painted *Vietnam Opa*

2021: Completed an artist residency at the Joan Mitchell Center