

# Creations Of Visual Energy

## An Interview with Darnell “Solo the Artist” Kirkwood

**EDITORS' NOTE** Darnell “Solo the Artist” Kirkwood ([solothearartist.com](http://solothearartist.com)) is a Los Angeles-based artist and actor from Kansas City. He has appeared in films and TV shows like *Top Gun: Maverick*, *The Young and the Restless*, *Hawaii Five-0*, and *Bosch*. He has also done national commercials and print ads with brands like Nike, Lexus, T-Mobile, and HomeGoods. Solo's art has been exhibited in galleries and spaces across the U.S., including at Art Basel Miami. He is also collaborating with the hospitality industry, creating art and travel experiences with hotel groups like the OPAL Collection and the Ette Hotel, through his *Discoveries Along the Way* tours. SunChips commissioned Solo to create art that was featured on their snack bags.



Darnell Kirkwood

Solo uses storytelling as a superpower— he combines his acting experience with his art to bring stories to life through layers of color, movement, materials, and his unique “Solo Symbols.” These symbols are part of his interactive messaging, meant to tell personal and collective stories. For him, his art is more than just visuals; it's a way to channel divine energies, bless the spaces they occupy, and engage with those spaces.

He describes his creative process as “F.E.E.L.,” which stands for Faith, Energy, Empowerment, and Love. For Solo, creating art while being a vessel of (F)aith to possess the (E)nergy of (E)mpowerment through (L)ove is essential to his practice. His work seeks to foster connection - bringing communities together and promoting harmony through art, energy, and love. An important aspect of his mission is to inspire us all to keep spreading positive vibrations and blessings that empower ourselves and those around us through the energy embodied in his art and storytelling. This includes encouraging us to connect with and send love to our inner child, fostering inner healing, authenticity, and joy in our journey.

### Will you discuss your career journey?

My unconventional journey has been an exploration of my experiences growing up in Kansas City. I often say that I am grateful my foundation was built growing up in Kansas City, Missouri. My mother, grandmother, and family blessed me in so many ways that helped me become the man I am today. My mother instilled in my brother and me the importance

of working hard, not letting excuses get in the way of doing your best, and nurturing and valuing your relationships. I am so grateful for this because I knew very early that the level of exploration required to nurture the dreams I had planted inside me – particularly in the arts and entertainment – would necessitate having the courage to explore beyond my current environment and connect with different parts of the world, but I wouldn't have been able to do this without her example.

evolution, and forging meaningful connections and communities through energy. These experiences continue to inspire me to think outside the box, innovate, and connect with audiences across the globe – serving as a divine vessel of energy. I hope to inspire others to embrace their superpowers and take chances on their dreams as well.

### When did you develop your interest in being an artist?

My interest in becoming an artist developed organically over time. Growing up in Kansas City, my first love was music – my father was a trombone player, my brothers and I were musicians, and my great-uncle was part of Kansas City's legendary jazz scene. As a child, I loved exploring homes filled with vintage photos, paintings, and unique furniture, and being intrigued by the energy in their stories. This sparked my curiosity and love for storytelling through visual art, but I didn't know it at the time.

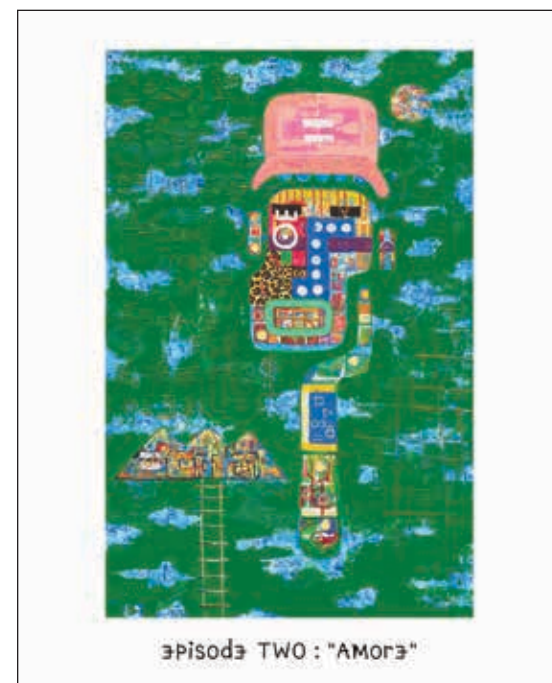
In college, I discovered my natural talent for drawing after creating a portrait of a friend's grandmother which deeply moved her, so much so that she insisted on showing my art professor – which then encouraged me to pursue art – but my focus was on my basketball scholarship and graduating at the top of my class to make my mother proud.

Years later, after moving to Los Angeles to pursue acting, I discovered abstract art while researching a character I was developing – an



My first journey was as a basketball player. I worked hard in high school to earn a basketball scholarship that took me to La Junta, Colorado, and Boca Raton, Florida. I ended my career as a professional basketball player in Denmark. While overseas, I was discovered as a model, which ultimately led me to Los Angeles to pursue commercial, television, and film acting. Playing basketball and being in entertainment has blessed me with the opportunity to travel around the world and immerse myself in various environments. These experiences led me to channel my passion for telling stories creatively through art. In 2022, I opened my multidisciplinary art business, Solo Art.

Like the early lessons from my mother, every step I've taken has been centered around people,





emerging contemporary artist. This revelation unlocked a new creative passion: layering energy, imagination, and holistic expression, which transformed my life and inspired me to embrace art authentically. Today, I see creativity as a spiritual practice. I aim to use my superpowers to serve as a conduit of high vibrations and joy to the energy of the world through my practice – inspiring others to listen to their inner voice and reconnect with the limitless imagination of their inner child.

Looking back, my childhood fascination of the stories embedded in vintage photos and art sparked emotion that continues to fuel my creative journey today. I still have no clue what I'm doing, but processing this question reminds me that the roots of my passion were always grounded in exploring the energy and perspective of the narrative that surrounds us.

#### How do you describe your work?

A blessing of energy. I create abstract narrative art from a collection of notes that I call "Discoveries Along the Way" – inspired by the vivid imagination of a "Grown Kid." I embed these notes – discovered through my process – using color, movement, and mixed materials into creations of visual energy. I exhibit them through curations of short stories and narrative series experiences. My art is engaging, energetic, and positively thought provoking. It seeks to bridge worlds of culture, identity, and energy – through the power of imagination. Even if you don't end up acquiring the piece, I hope it gives you something meaningful to take with you.

#### Where do you get your ideas and inspiration for your art?

My inspiration comes from collecting "discoveries" from this amazing planet we live on – including people, nature, my life, my wife, my dog, my family, my emotions, and my faith. We used to have Sunday dinners after church at my grandmother's house because my family was full of a range of entertainment to pull from. I also draw heavily from everyday conversations – exploring the evolving perspectives on life and cultural dialogues – to reflect the diversity and complexity of contemporary existence.

One of my favorite activities is visiting the park and grounding myself for at least ten minutes. This practice fosters a connection and communication that goes beyond words. Even when I travel, I seek out parks, beaches, or trees to meditate and reconnect. Travel deeply influences



Episode TR3 : "Instant Connection."

many of my ideas and insights – like my "Discoveries Along the Way" tours. They allow me to connect with people from around the world and share art that might not otherwise be exposed to them.

I also have to give credit to my beautiful wife, Danielle. She's a fashion stylist who inspires me tremendously with her superpowers of style and taste, but she also has a huge heart. I'm grateful for all my years in basketball because her blunt and honest delivery is similar to that of a teammate trying to bring out the best in you.

There exists a spectrum of energy in the world, and I am continually fueled by intentionally creating high vibrations that contribute to the energy of global culture. At the same time, I aim to reflect the importance of staying connected to our inner child – a recurring theme in my work.

my art business, Solo Art Inc., and establishing my foundation to align with my background in art, entertainment, and basketball. My foremost priority is to keep creating safe spaces to push boundaries – exploring new mediums and concepts that welcome you and send you off into the world inspired and energized. This includes expanding public art projects through commissioned activations, media productions, sculptures, and paintings that reach audiences worldwide. Collaborating with museums, cultural institutions, collectors, production companies, and brands is at the core of this effort – creating immersive experiences, traveling exhibitions, and documentary series that showcase "Discoveries Along the Way."

My hope is that my art will spark meaningful conversations around holistic, social, and cultural issues while also bringing joy and energy into people's lives. I see galleries and public spaces transforming into platforms for dialogue and engagement – spaces that inspire thought and foster genuine connection.

Ultimately, I want to leave a lasting legacy through my art and foundation – something that elevates cultural conversations and encourages future artists and collectors to think outside the box and create real value. Building bridges within the art world is especially important to me, particularly for those whose journeys are as abstract as mine.

Like the legacies of perseverance symbolized in the vintage photos I mentioned earlier, if my legacy can reflect how I've used my "superpowers" – to be blessed and to be a blessing to others, just like my mother – then what a blessing that would truly be. ●



Episode 7OR : "First Date."

#### Will you highlight some of your pieces?

My latest exhibition, "Our Journey Together," is a story about Ama and Amore – two young, yet old souls falling in love and facing life's twists and turns. It's told through six paintings, each showing a different chapter of their story, along with an audiobook that walks you through their journey. The story reaches a turning point when Ama and Amore have to make a really tough choice – a moment that makes you think about love, resilience, and the choices we all face. It's a little glimpse into young love and everything that comes with it.

#### What are your priorities for your art as you look to the future?

I believe in the power of making art accessible, so I'm dedicated to building momentum around creative initiatives through