

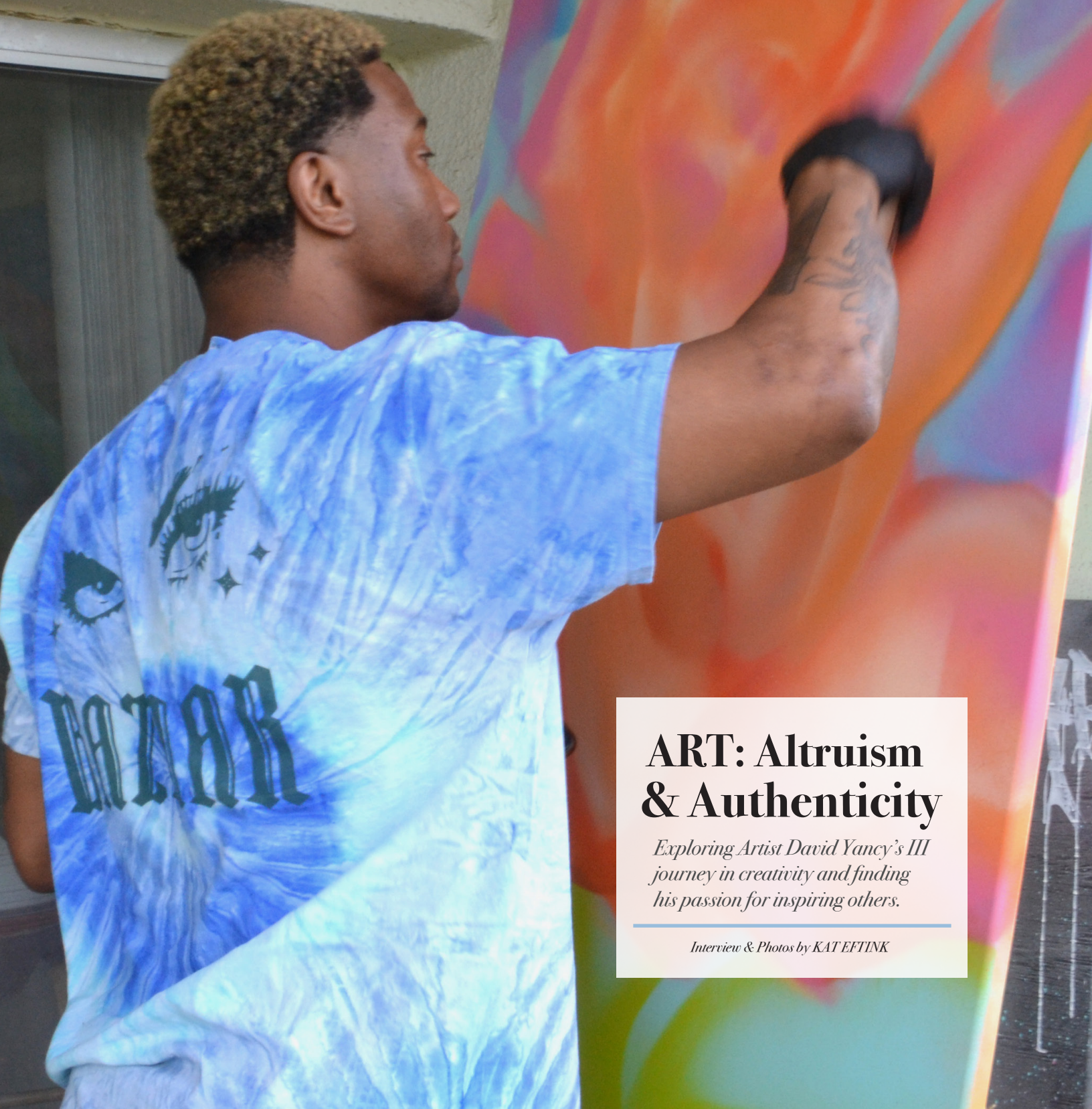
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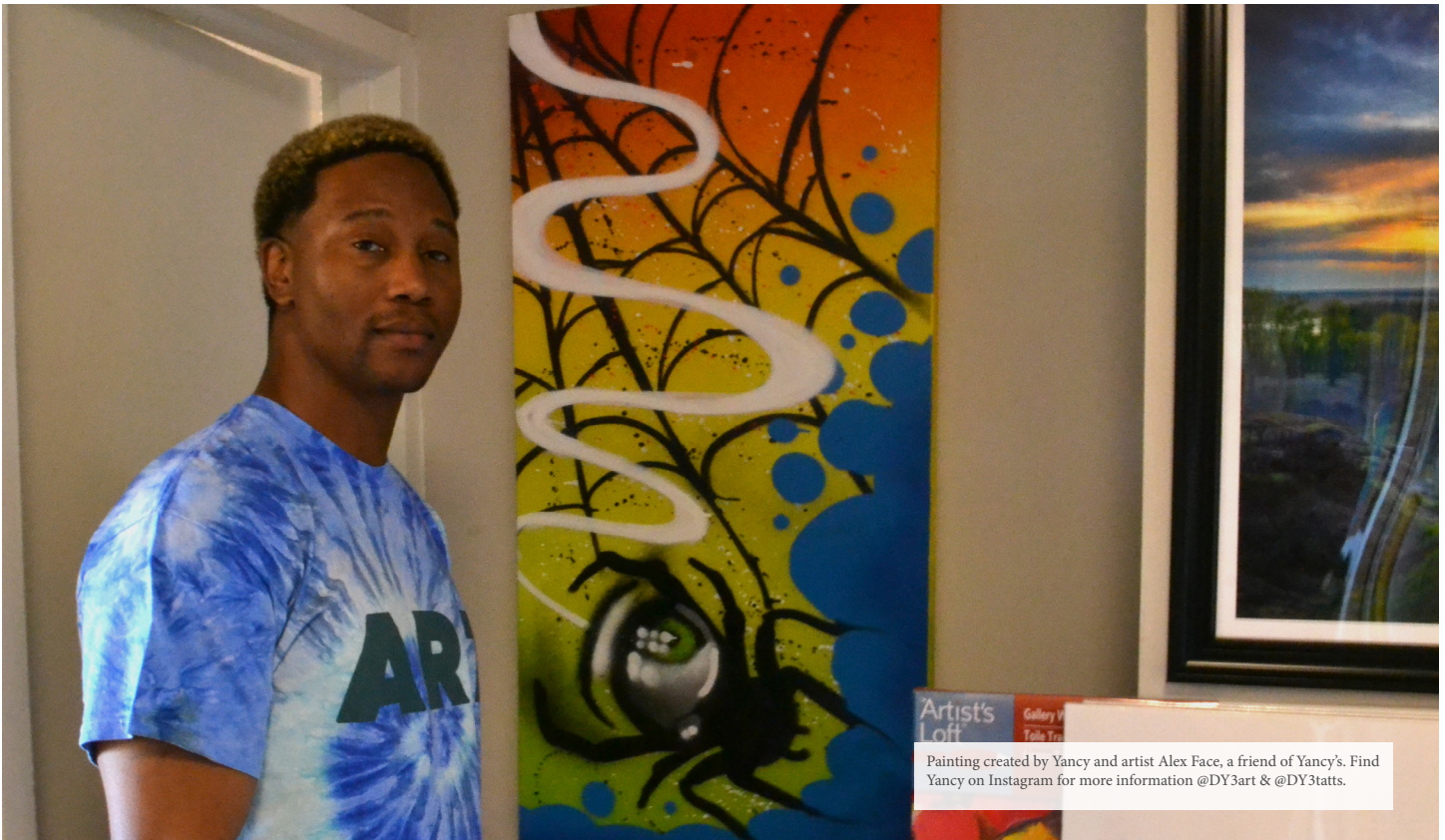
2023



## ART: Altruism & Authenticity

*Exploring Artist David Yancy's III  
journey in creativity and finding  
his passion for inspiring others.*

*Interview & Photos by KAT EFTINK*



Muralist, painter, designer, tattoo artist, DJ and creative David Yancy III found himself in a hole. In 2010, Yancy spent a year homeless in California, battling with addiction. He sent himself to rehab and rekindled his love for art. He then moved to Memphis, earned eight years of sobriety, and learned to use artistic expression to motivate and inspire others.

Yancy wears many hats. During the day he works on pipes as a welder, and after he clocks out, he creates. In 2020, Yancy put together Art Bazaar, a Memphis event that showcases local artists, on his own. Each year, the event has grown, and more connections have been made. On May 7th, Yancy is hosting his event at Black Lodge. Music, vendors, food and a fashion show will take place from 12 p.m.- 4 p.m. Admission is \$10 at the door.

**KE** So you moved here from California in 2010, what brought you to Memphis?

**DY3** So all my family's originally from Memphis. My mom and dad are both from Memphis. My mom's from, like south Memphis, westward area, and my dad is from Boxtown. That's kind of close to the bottom. So, I got out the military and was living abroad in Thailand. Studying university there, studying communication arts. I was doing music as well, and I was doing art and selling clothes. But then some things happened. I got in trouble and had to come back home. So yeah, that is the gist of that. In 2010, I had to do a major life change and came back. And, yeah, I've been in Memphis since then.

**KE** Since you've been in Memphis, what's the biggest change you've seen in the art community?

**DY3** I think it's definitely flourishing and growing. I think people are being more creative and using, you know, what is available for them, and making things that aren't available, available for other people to be creative. And that's what I am trying my best to do with Art Bazaar, you know, kind of entice people to be more creative and put themselves out there. Give them that outlet to be creative, and also provide a space for people to come see people being creative, doing things that aren't expected here in Memphis or that they wouldn't expect to see in Memphis.

**KE** Why do you think it's important for people to go to Art Bazaar?

**DY3** It's for the vendors or the artists that are apart of Art Bazaar to broaden their network and to actually work on their communication skills and sales. Because it's like, okay, you create art, but are you putting yourself out there as an artist? You can get what I'm saying. I really encourage people to promote, promote, promote. And if you never experience it, then you don't get to know how great it is, or if you don't experience it, you would never get a chance to meet somebody that you've never met before.

**KE** You're a tattoo and street artist, a painter and a DJ. Which is your favorite art form that you do?

**DY3** I really enjoy all of them. I feel like I'm more of a chameleon because I like to dabble. Now today, I want to create music, and then that scratches that itch. And then another day I want to create art. I want to paint, or I want to do a wall or something, and that scratches that itch. Being in different groups as well. So, like I don't know if you've ever noticed this, but certain people only hang out with what they do. If they're a DJ, they only hang out with DJs. If they're a rapper, they mostly only hang out with rappers. And muralists only hangout with other muralists or painters. So, like, I said, I feel like a chameleon sometimes. I like to be able to brush shoulders with everybody and learn different things from other groups and other types of people.

**KE** Which art piece are you most proud of?

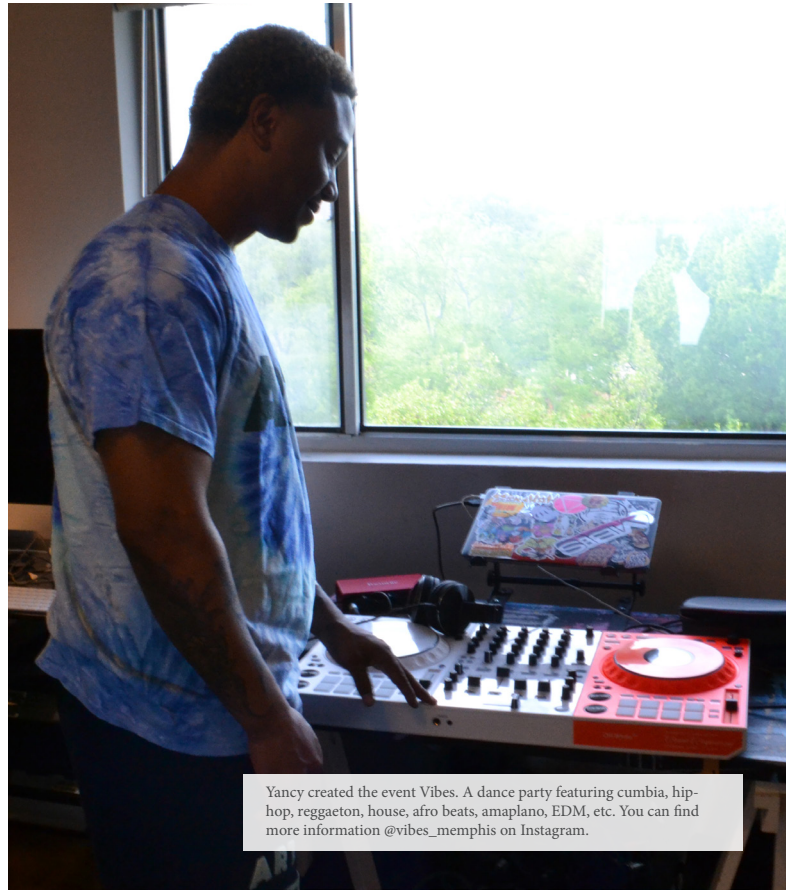
**DY3** I feel like there are always moments where I impress myself. And I honestly felt that way with the Tyre Nichols mural. I really stepped outside of myself. I believe that is one of the biggest walls that I've done, and the biggest portrait I've ever done. And it wasn't about me. It was about really giving back to his family. That was the main sole purpose for that. I believe that's why it worked out so well, because it was, like carelessness, it was really just that I'm here giving this for you, and for people to realize that things in the world need to be fixed.

**KE** Why do you think street art is important for our city?

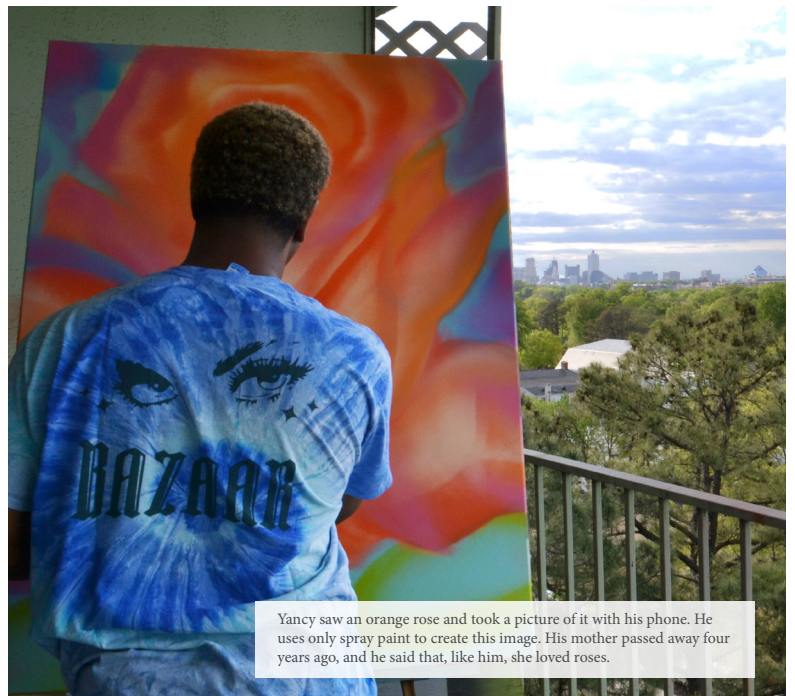
**DY3** Man, street art is so important because most of the artists aim to put out artwork that sparks a conversation. And that conversation deals with society. How can we make society better? Then, you have art that's just beautiful. So, if you're in a bad mood at the time, and you're driving or walking, and see this beautiful work of art that is there for the public, it's going to lighten up your mood. And I think that's what that does, especially in like low poverty situations like here in Memphis. It just makes the community look better and brightens up the area.

**KE** Who is your biggest inspiration?

**DY3** One of my biggest inspirations is my friend Alex Face. He was an artist that I lived with in Thailand. We met on a train; he was just like this street artist. He did a lot of graffiti around Bangkok, and kind of had a name for himself, but no global recognition. He wasn't getting payed, or anything like that. And we were roommates, he fell into this situation, and he needed a place to stay, and we welcomed him in. Fast forward to now. He's done a couple of shows all over the world, but last year he did a show in Chicago, and all of his pieces sold out. He was selling pieces for like \$200,000. He's really made a new for himself globally, and he's able to support his family through his art. It just crazy to see the growth, and the push that he's done for himself to get him where he's at.



Yancy created the event Vibes. A dance party featuring cumbia, hip-hop, reggaeton, house, afro beats, amapiano, EDM, etc. You can find more information @vibes\_memphis on Instagram.



Yancy saw an orange rose and took a picture of it with his phone. He uses only spray paint to create this image. His mother passed away four years ago, and he said that, like him, she loved roses.



**KE** You also work with PaintMemphis, but are you involved in any other organizations?

**DY3** I'm working on starting my own nonprofit. It's still in the works, but it's going to be about providing murals that empower freedom, murals that empower education, empower creativity or anything that's empowering to uplift communities. I want to aim to do it in low progress neighborhoods. The goal is to be able to do murals that are really impactful, like, when you see them, they cause you to feel happy or cause you to be motivated.

**KE** What is your favorite song at the moment?

**DY3** Channel Tre's "All my friends." There's a part of the song that says, "I wanna see all my friends at once." I've just been vibing that, and I think that's really cool to be able to be with all of my friends at once. And I have a lot of friends, and I feel like that's what Art Bazaar is. You know, being able to hang out with everybody, be in the same mind, be able to shape the same space and the positive energy.