

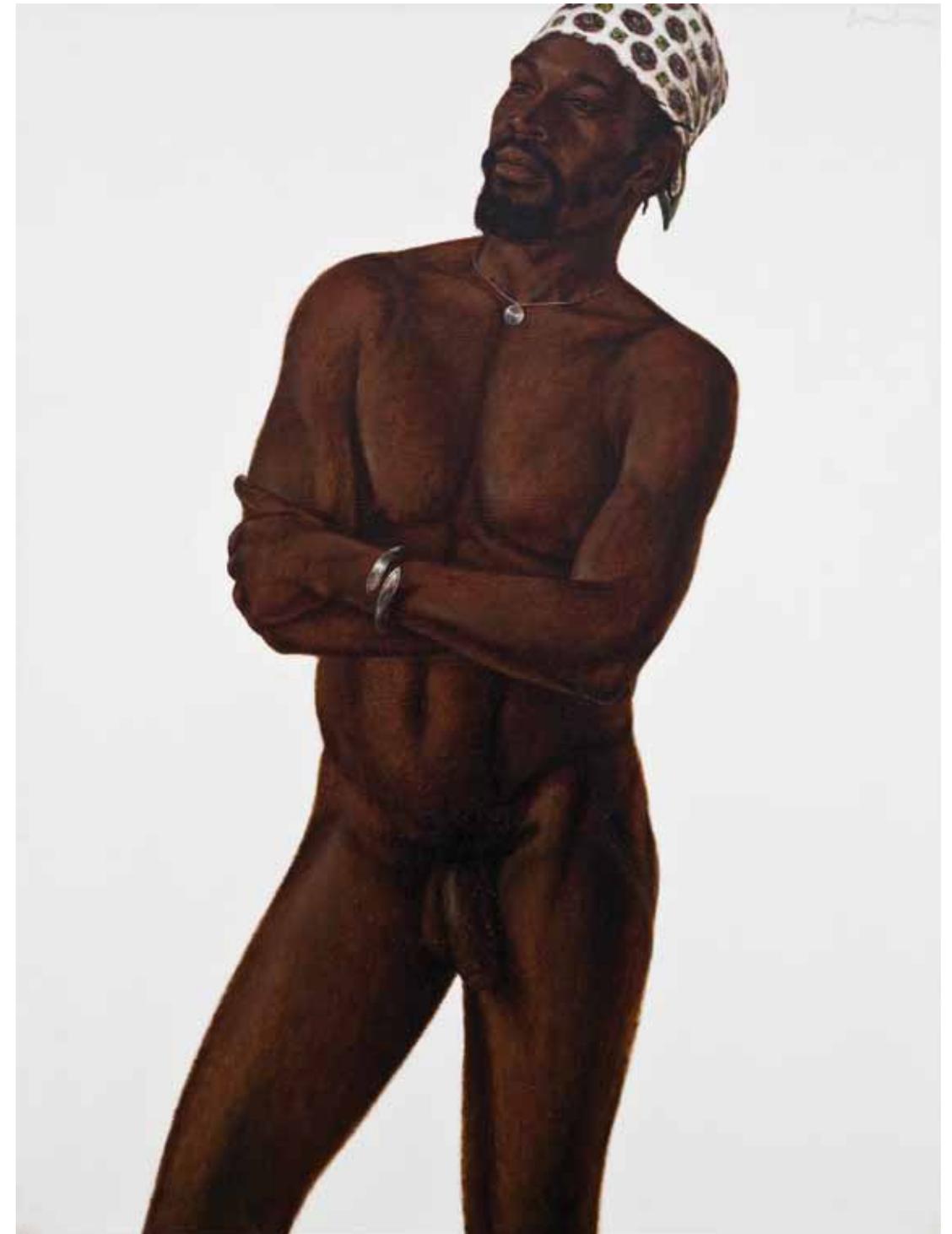
When I first met Eddie, he was a model for local art classes and arts organizations. Upon hiring him, I learned he was a jack-of-all-trades in addition to being a Connecticut state relay champion. I'm not sure this fact was known by the group of young men he was drinking and smoking with one Saturday evening. They challenged him to a race after their testosterone and booze made them push Eddie's buttons. The summer sun was giving off its last light of the day when they squared off at the starting line in the valley of the long dirt drive. When "Go!" was shouted, the four racers could be heard making their way up the dusty road. One of the racers fell midway through the sprint and was left in a cloud of dust as the remaining three made their way to the finish line at the top of the hill. Eddie was well out in front and very much over the finish line when James and Bobbie finally crossed the line. Eddie was there waiting and laughing at them when they staggered to the end. Bobbie didn't take losing well, whereupon, calling Eddie a "jive niggah," Eddie's retort was "I may be a jive niggah but I can beat you slow motherfuckers any day of the week and twice on Sundays!"

Thee Big Guy, meaning the Lord, is chock full of symbolic objects, some obvious, some personal—for instance, the red rubber Christ mold and the self-portrait in the blade of the straight razor. The hands and majorette boots are connections to past ill-fated romances. Still lifes allowed me to scatter objects about for the desired visual inside jokes inspired by where my head was at the time of its construction. To say one painting could lead to another would be an understatement. The final statement could be "read 'em or weep, or laugh," depending on the story I want to tell. So, go figure – I'm not telling...

When I was in Paris, France, in 1978, there was a bevy of long, lean-suited French- African men on the streets of Pigalle wearing graceful, tailored, high-vented "vines" (a colloquial name for suits from my Philadelphia neighborhood).

Noir was the one of two portraits I crafted from photographs I took. The other painting is in the collection of the Yale University Art Gallery. It is a double portrait titled *APB's (Afro-Parisian Brothers)*. *APB's* featured one of the male subjects (also the solo subject of *Noir*) in a plain fabric garment. This work, *Noir*, shows that same suited man in a blue pinstripe suit. All I can say is that the pinstriped pattern took a lot out of me. I avoided painting pinstripes for many years after.

Barkley Hendricks





Thee Big Guy, 1983, oil, acrylic and gold leaf on canvas, 43 1/2 x 43 1/2 in. (110.5 x 110.5 cm), acquired in 2008
Noir, 1978, oil and acrylic on canvas, 72 x 48 in. (182.9 x 121.9 cm), acquired in 2008

