

**Project Statement: *Capoeira (2009-2011)***  
**Statement date: 7-24-15**

I began my paintings and sculptures depicting various aspects of the Afro-Brazilian form of martial arts, capoeira, while on a Fulbright fellowship in Florence, Italy. The paintings are a result of my experiences studying and training in the sport during my stay in Italy, and later in Brazil and Chicago.

The first thing I was told by my instructor was that no matter what movement you're doing, whether you're upside down or in the air or doing back flips, always look opponents in the eyes to anticipate their movements. This immediately struck me as a beautiful metaphor for painting. Both capoeira and painting rely on sight above all else and the acute observation of one's surroundings. The physicality of capoeira also appealed very much to me, and it was very important to me that I actually trained in order to understand the physical rigor and to gain access to the culture. I wanted to transfer the fluidity, energy, and strength that I used in capoeira to my paintings. I was attracted to the ritualistic, spiritual, and primitive qualities of capoeira, and I was drawn to the "conversations" and different dynamics that happened between the two people in the middle of the roda. A year after returning from Italy, I traveled to Brazil to document specific movements and gestures, and to further experience the roots and culture involved in capoeira.