

# WOMEN OF VISIONS

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Celebrating 40 Years



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## WOMEN OF VISIONS: CELEBRATING 40 YEARS

A collaboration between Women of Visions and the University Art Gallery.  
Featuring the work of students from HAA1019 Curatorial Development (Spring 2021)  
and HAA1022 Exhibition Presentation (Fall 2021).



**Pitt**  
**UAG**  
University Art Gallery

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# FOREWORD



In the time I have been a member of Women of Visions, Inc.—nearly half of its forty-year history—our organization has not strayed from its most important mission: highlighting the African American woman and her visual art. This singular feat alone makes the group extraordinary, as does the fact that we have had to do this for decades while navigating the tides of both racism and ridicule. To be Black, an artist, and a woman is to invite a trifecta of the harshest criticism. This fact is not easily borne, but it can be overcome with commitment, persistence, and a deep need to communicate—even to the unsupportive and unlistening. I have learned that a Black woman artist is driven not by praise but by passion.

It was in 1981 that a group of enterprising creatives gathered to forge an arts organization that would fulfill the need of lending both visibility and credibility to art created by Black women. Art by Black men was at the very least recognized and respected on some level, but work by Black women? We were virtually invisible inside the world of art. Against the odds, a Black women's collective, initially called "Visions," was conceived. Born with "an eye to the future," as one early document puts it, the group was nurtured by organizational pioneers, many named in this publication. International sculptor Selma Burke, one of the few Black women recognized in the arts, was named the organization's honorary chairwoman. In the mid-1990s, as the group sought to solidify its non-profit status, it was discovered that the name "Visions" was already taken by another organization. Adopting the name Women of Visions for the practical reason of the incorporation process, the group also gained an identity that even more forcefully proclaimed its unique focus.

And so here we are—forty years in the making—and the importance of our mission is still squarely before us. Over time, Women of Visions has used different words to capture fundamentally similar goals: to provide the support to exhibit professionally, to provide members access to resources, to provide arts education within the Western Pennsylvania community, to bring the full richness of our heritage to the general public, and to promote with the intention of becoming a national force for equity. None of these commitments have changed. Nor has the need for them diminished. Now, as at our inception, the value of bolstering and promoting women artists of color is as important to the arts ecosystem as it was four decades ago. Inclusion, which has recently moved to the



forefront of the American arts agenda, continues to be one of the best hopes for the future success of a country constantly tested to live up to its own noble standards.

As part of our fortieth anniversary program, we have presented or will present at least five exhibitions, two of them touring outside of the City of Pittsburgh and each featuring thirty or more pieces of art. This is a greater number of works by local Black women showcased than at any time during the organization's history. Some of these exhibitions, which will ultimately span between 2020 and 2022, were rescheduled during the pandemic. But such setbacks also provided new opportunities to invest in deeper collaborations, including our partnership with the University of Pittsburgh. During the worldwide shutdown, our informal discussions ultimately led to a historic academic experiment between Women of Visions and the University of Pittsburgh. Building on our first anniversary show of 2021 with Contemporary Craft, the idea was that the group would become the focus for a university course culminating in an exhibition at the University Art Gallery coordinated by students in the Museum Studies program of Pitt's Department of History of Art and Architecture.

As this publication attests, this project would result in new research on our non-profit and its membership, and in-depth documentation of Women of Visions itself, Pennsylvania's—and perhaps the country's—oldest visual arts organization of African American women. The organization, which has given flight to several internationally known artists, has long taken the importance of preserving its own history seriously. We have been pleased to work with the University of Pittsburgh, its educators, and partners to help record this history for future generations. Safeguarding our stories is important not only for the cultural history of Pittsburgh, but for the arts ecosystem at large as it expands its efforts to highlight new voices and embrace a holistic approach to inclusion.

The Women of Visions—established and new members alike—represent the full spectrum of African American history, culture, and diaspora. Nearly all of us have had full careers in addition to making art. More than half of us have credentials as teaching artists. We represent every medium in the visual arts, including painting, collage, ceramics, fiber, and film. We now look forward to passing the proverbial torch to an emerging generation of young artists, who we know have the tenacity to see new visions and set goals we have yet to imagine. And, while each woman has taken differing steps in her artistic journey, in Women of Visions she has found a home. Here, there is a place where her spirit can soar and her artwork can shine. For in the words of the young poet laureate Amanda Gorman: "Where can we find light in this never-ending shade? ... When the day comes we step out of the shade aflame and unafraid, the new dawn blooms as we free it, for there is always light if only we're brave enough to see it; if only we're brave enough to be it."

CHRISTINE MCCRAY-BETHEA  
President, Women of Visions, Inc.  
2021

# INTRODUCTION

- To our knowledge, Women of Visions is the longest running collective of Black women artists in the United States and perhaps anywhere in the world. Founded in 1981, the group has brought together more than fifty artists to present almost one hundred exhibitions and programs over the past four decades. To celebrate this milestone achievement, the Department of History of Art and Architecture is delighted to collaborate with the group and mobilize our students to help mark this anniversary year with this publication and a major exhibition at the University Art Gallery. We hope that this volume helps capture the vitality and spirit of the group and brings to light materials that reveal Women of Visions' rich history and vibrant creative energy for the future.
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In the wake of the Black Lives Matter protests and amid a pandemic that transformed the possibilities of the classroom, this project unfolded as the key focus for students fulfilling the practice-based requirements of our Museum Studies program. In spring 2021, students in Alex Taylor's Curatorial Development class began researching the artists in Women of Visions. They explored the group's history and the practice of its artists, locating these narratives through art historical readings and hands-on curatorial research. Women of Visions artists joined class meetings to discuss their work and answer student questions. Others agreed to be interviewed outside of class time. Through this work, our students not only learned about these artists' lives and creative practices, but developed valuable skills in artist research, oral history, and curatorial planning.

In fall 2021, the students in Janet McCall's Exhibition Presentation class took the project forward. Building on the extensive curatorial development and research done the previous spring and working in concert with UAG Director Sylvia Rhor Samaniego, they completed and presented the collaborative exhibition development and programming for the Women of Visions exhibition. Student participation included assistance with display coordination and installation, the development and implementation of marketing and communications strategies, and evaluation tools. A highlight was the chance to work in partnership with Women of Visions artists creating programming and interpretative resources. The class also developed a complementary archival display that drew on the group's historical records.





From its founding, Women of Visions has long been defined by a desire to mobilize collective energy and achieve visibility that would have been more difficult to secure working alone. This sense of common purpose is a driving force for the group. As co-founder Juanita Miller put it, “If one of us makes it, we all make it.” The act of making is, of course, the binding interest for the group, and artists in the group have often helped teach and mentor each other to develop their practices. Another unifying thread that emerged for students in the class was the importance of “making do.” As the student essays herein repeatedly observe, the inspiration from found and discarded objects is essential for many of these artists. Reclaiming objects is, however, about more than emphasizing thrift, recycling, or even the symbolic resonance of objects imbued with the aura of the past; it is also an act that grasps something that might otherwise be denied. This is what the collective energy of Women of Visions achieves: drawing on the power of the collective to carve out the space to be seen and heard.

Another insight that emerged from the work of the student curators in these classes is that this project contributes to a much longer engagement between the University of Pittsburgh and the artists of Women of Visions, one built over decades of collaborative projects. The first dedicated Women of Visions exhibition occurred at Pitt in 1989 and was followed up by displays in 2001, 2003, and 2010. Thanks to the pioneering efforts of the late Conney M. Kimbo, the work of many past and present Women of Visions members was seen in the series of *Images* exhibitions (1987-1992) at the William Pitt Union. Some Women of Visions members have studied at the University of Pittsburgh, and we are especially proud that this project can highlight the work of Elizabeth Asche Douglas, the first Black woman to receive a graduate degree from what was then the Department of Fine Arts. Pitt has not always been the most welcoming place for Black students, but we are as committed to celebrating Black achievement as we are to advancing an anti-racist agenda in our classrooms and galleries.

In the last few decades, the artists of Women of Visions have been a steady presence on the walls of the University Art Gallery. *Lifestyles: An Exhibition of 18 African American Artists* (1991), curated by Women of Visions co-founder Emma Slaughter, featured ten of the

organization's members. The exhibitions *A Sense of Place* (2005) and *Spaces of Memory* (2006) included a rich programming slate of lectures and performances from key Women of Visions members. More recently, Janet McCall worked with Museum Studies students to co-curate *Exposure: Black Voices in the Arts* (2015), a group exhibition that included nine members of Women of Visions. Even as the pandemic forced the University Art Gallery to move to virtual programs, the work of Tina Williams Brewer was on the gallery walls in the exhibition *Three Artists (Three Women)* (2020). We are delighted that this University Art Gallery exhibition continues this history of engagement and collaboration with Women of Visions.

Through the partnership with Women of Visions, the University Art Gallery has advanced many of its key commitments and its mission as an academic gallery. In recent years, the University Art Gallery has placed increasing emphasis on producing exhibitions and programs that highlight underrepresented and emerging artists, as well as engaging with issues of critical importance. As a training ground for emerging museum professionals, the University Art Gallery promotes new approaches to museum practice, with an emphasis on diversity, equity, and inclusion. Through our collaboration with the artists of Women of Visions, the University Art Gallery not only celebrates the impact of the collective in Pittsburgh, but also the diversity of artistic expression within the group. This exhibition model—collaborative, student-centered and focused on the voices of Black women—provides a new template for museum practice, one that we hope will shape both the emerging professionals in our program and the future work of the University Art Gallery.

The major grant received from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to support collaborative teaching and research with the local cultural sector has continued to make projects like this possible. This project received vital assistance from the University of Pittsburgh's Year of Engagement Initiative and the funds received from the Dietrich School's Undergraduate Teaching Initiative Funds. We are grateful to the Humanities Engage initiative for supporting an Immersive Summer Fellow to join the project team, and we thank Amanda Awanjo for her vital contribution to the project and her essay in this volume. We would also like to acknowledge the editorial and research assistance of Ellen McCullough, who has played a critical role in engaging with new archival sources that have helped us tell the story of Women of Visions. A full list of project acknowledgements appears in the back of this volume, but we would also particularly like to thank Christine Bethea, President of Women of Visions, for her support for the project. We also thank all of the group's artists for collaborating with our students. This publication and exhibition result from our work together.

JANET MCCALL

Visiting Lecturer  
Department of History of Art and Architecture

SYLVIA RHOR SAMANIEGO

Director  
University Art Gallery

ALEX TAYLOR

Assistant Professor and Academic Curator  
Department of History of Art and Architecture



# LOOKING BACK

Retrospective views on  
Women of Visions



# THE VISION OF SEERS

AMANDA AWANJO

- To write, paint, or otherwise create oneself into a world that seeks to limit and erase you is a radical and future-making act. In Pittsburgh—a place deemed most unlivable for Black women by the city's own Gender Equity Commission in 2019, and a city wherein Alisha B. Wormley's 2018 billboard declaring "There Are Black People in the Future" over the rapidly gentrifying neighborhood of East Liberty was taken down by an uneasy landlord—Black women artists have had to pave a way for themselves and for future generations in a place hostile to them.<sup>1</sup> As W.E.B Du Bois says in "The Talented Tenth," the all-important training of new generations requires "the vision of seers."<sup>2</sup> Indeed, imagining new worlds and new futures was paramount to the freedom march of the twentieth century and its ambitions that remain to be fulfilled. The women that make up Women of Visions, the oldest collective of African American women artists, are our modern-day seers building a world for themselves and for us.

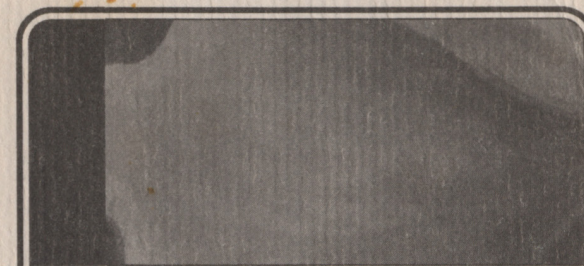
In 1981 Women of Visions, then called Visions, had the prophetic sight to imagine a new way of going about things. They understood, as all Black scholars, artists, activists, and community leaders do, that much grows in the spaces that white supremacy chooses to ignore. A call and response forty years in the making, Women of Visions has used art and community to tend to the all-important relationships between artistry and futurity—art and the world. Based in Pittsburgh, Women of Visions—somewhat like the city itself—sits within the heart of change and innovation. In 2021, like in 1981, the centering of Black women's voices is a paradigm shifting act. Like in 1981, in 2021, their voices and art are needed more than ever. When Black women artists were excluded from most conversations surrounding art, Women of Visions used their community to—as one of the group's mission statements promises—"nurture and support professional and emerging women artists of color, and to bring to the African American community and the general public the richness of our culture and

heritage."<sup>3</sup> In so doing, Women of Visions has shined a bright spotlight on the rich culture of the Black art within Pittsburgh and the region.

Culturally, our world likes to speak for and over Black women through racist libel and stereotypes, erasure, and structural racism. As Hortense Spillers says, "'Peaches,' 'Brown Sugar,' 'Sapphire,' and 'Earth Mother,' ... a locus of confounded identities;" these identities and their limitations are each/all constructed to muffle.<sup>4</sup> But "Black woman artist" and "Black woman free" are iterations of Black womanhood that our mainstream culture doesn't have language or a place for. Through the continued presence of Women of Visions—who under the guidance of ten presidents have put on almost one hundred shows in forty years—Black women have spoken truth to power and asserted themselves as artists with a new vision for the future. Within the group's membership, we see the multiplicity of Black womanhood, the power of a collective to change each other's lives and the lives of their community.

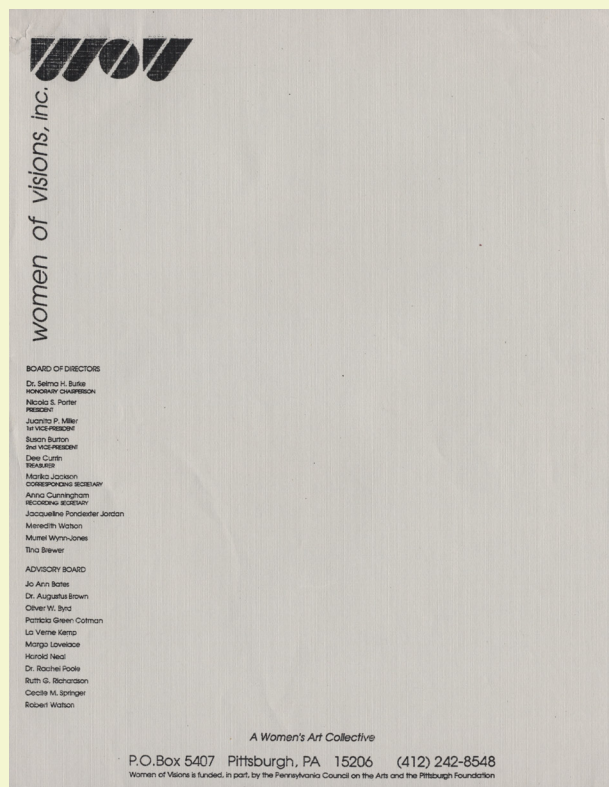
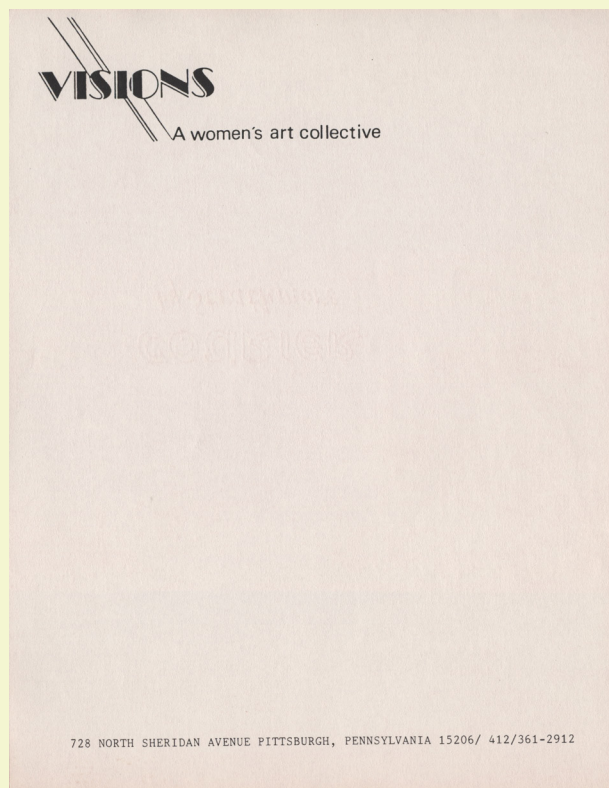
This method, which is filled with love, talent, and artistic curiosity, creates space for a new understanding of artistic institutions and for who an artist can be. In her 1987 novel, *Beloved*, Toni Morrison writes that "the only future they could have is the future they could imagine ... if they could not see it then they could not have it."<sup>5</sup> Women of Visions embodies this philosophy through their own lineage of exhibitions, collaborations, and programming. They saw, they imagined, and they created. Within their archives, their practice, and their art lie the methods of a Black feminist practice that has deep roots within Black women's own spirituality and richness, a deep well of wisdom and creativity that now goes by the popular catchphrase of "Black Girl Magic."

While working on this project, I had the pleasure of going through the Women of Visions' archive. Brimming with delight, I saw four decades of Black women painting, weaving, and sculpting the world in their own image and the images of their sisters—of Black women



Ruth Richardson





guiding future generations to walk proudly as themselves through artistic mediums. After the toll of a global Covid-19 pandemic that disproportionately affected African Americans and a summer of civil unrest following the brutal slayings of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd, I was tired and heavy with grief. Our fight for recognition of these horrors that were threatening to become quotidian felt too constant. This summer, as we passed the anniversary of the murders of both Breonna Taylor and George Floyd, I found solace within the art, the persistence, and the joy found within the photos, the meeting minutes, the sketches, the changing letterhead. This ephemera speaks to members' daily practice of dedication to their craft and to the group's mission. As the letterheads shift through the decades, you see the group's changing face throughout the years, you see the future they dreamed shifting into reality.

In 1927, Du Bois summed this feeling into a question: "Suppose the only Negro who survived some centuries hence was the Negro painted by white Americans in the novels and essays they have written," he wrote. "What would people in a hundred years say of black Americans?" In this articulation of Black futurity, Du Bois importantly chooses to center Black art. The power of Black artistic creation was, he explained, at the center of "gaining the right of black folk to love and enjoy."<sup>6</sup> In a world built on white supremacist erasure, only sixty-four years after the end of enslavement, Du Bois sees Black artistic creation emerge as a fog light into a hazy and uncertain twentieth century. Women of Visions sits within this glorious lineage of Black artists that are the seers and dreamers moving us all toward a more imaginative and freer future.

I honor Women of Visions because I understand them as my teachers, just as I understand Ida B. Wells, Alice Walker, Octavia Butler, and Toni Morrison as my teachers. These Black women, all seers, have lit the way for me and those who will come after me. Their mission statement, "To promote the arts, culture, and history of Black women of African descent while inspiring each other to excel as artists," rings as a clarion call to Black women artists throughout time.<sup>7</sup> I am so happy we are here to bear witness.

"Within the group's membership, we see the multiplicity of Black womanhood, the power of a collective to change each other's lives and the lives of their community."

AMANDA AWANJO is a PhD Candidate in English at the University of Pittsburgh and a 2021 Humanities Engage Fellow with Women of Visions and the University Art Gallery.



# A PAEAN TO ODE TO ETHIOPIA

ALEX TAYLOR

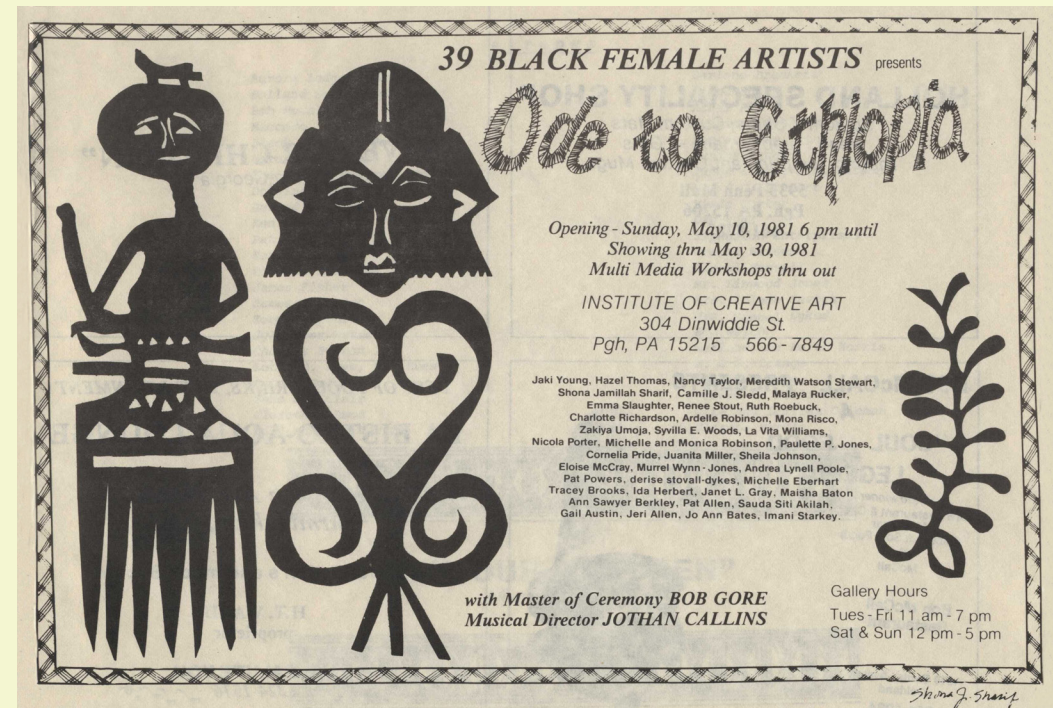
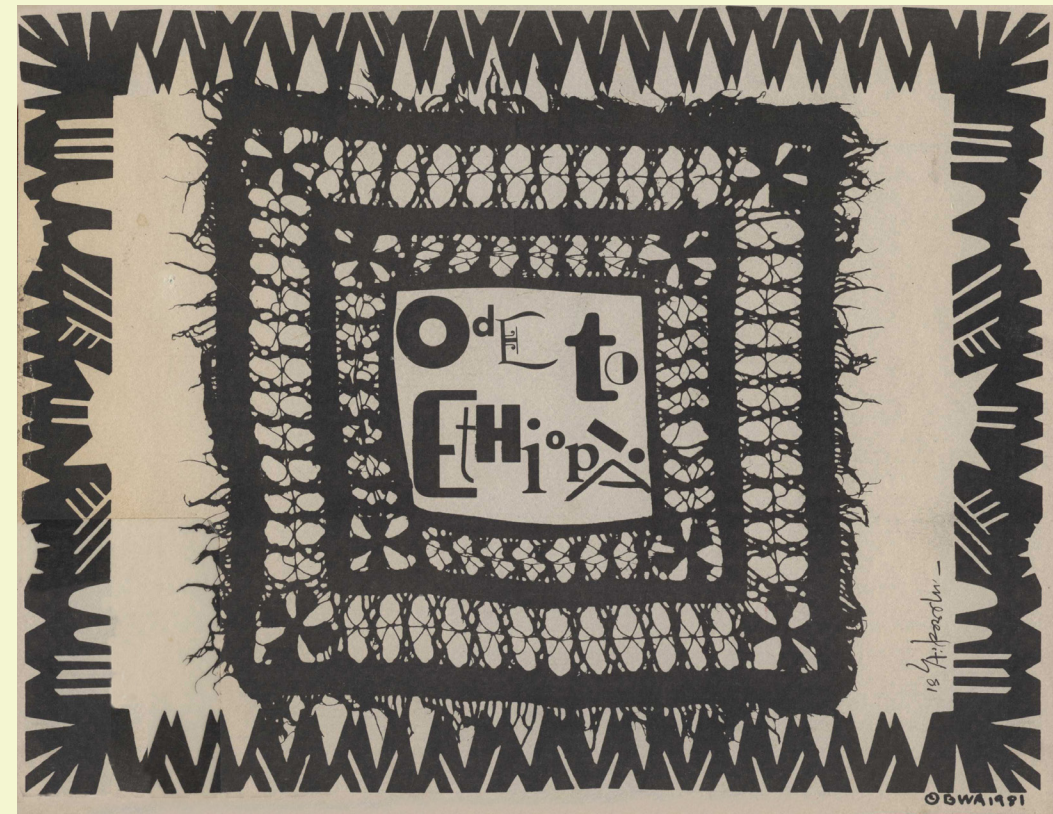
- “A lyrically artistic salute by Black women (of exalted tones) to Ethiopia”  
—MELVIN CAMPBELL on *Ode to Ethiopia* (1981)
- One of the most important precursors to the formation of Women of Visions was the exhibition *Ode to Ethiopia: 39 Black Female Artists*, presented in May 1981 at the Institute of Creative Art on Dinwiddie Street in Pittsburgh’s Hill District. This ambitious project left behind a rich catalog that captures the spirit of the project—a catalog too little known perhaps because the only publicly available copy of this rare volume is held in the collection of the University of Pittsburgh Library System.

The exhibition’s planning committee was led by Shona Sharif, and the visual arts program was coordinated by Patricia Allen. Both became members of the organization first known as Visions—as did many of the exhibition’s other contributing artists, including Jo-Anne Bates, Ann Sawyer Berkley, Ida Alexander Herbert, Murrel Wynn-Jones, Juanita Miller, Eloise McCray, Andrea Poole (later Tenanche), Nicola Porter, Pat Powers, Charlotte Richardson (later Charlotte Ka), Ruth Roebuck, Emma Slaughter, Meredith Watson Stewart (later Meredith Watson Young), and Renée Stout.

The title of the exhibition references Paul Lawrence Dunbar’s late 19th century poem “Ode to Ethiopia,” which begins, “O Mother Race! to thee I bring / This pledge of faith unwavering, / This tribute to thy glory.” As the opening poem in his first book *Oak and Ivy*, published in 1893, it appears immediately after the volume’s maternal dedication: “To her who has ever been my guide, teacher and inspiration, My Mother, this little volume is Affectionately inscribed.”<sup>1</sup> Almost a century later, such interconnected references between motherhood and Africa—and the global family of the African diaspora to which it gestures—are reinforced in the catalog for

the *Ode to Ethiopia* exhibition, too. Here, for instance, is artist Wynn-Jones: “I am part of all my people—artists, designers, craftsmen, etc.—who have gone before me.”<sup>2</sup> Or, as Powers writes in her artist statement, “What I have offered to thee is only through the strength of my seeds.”<sup>3</sup> Even with limited documentation of the works in the exhibition, this deeply felt emphasis on a shared pan-African history emerges as central to the *Ode to Ethiopia* exhibition.

Illustrations throughout the volume were drawn by Patricia Allen, while Shona Sharif’s signature appears on a graphic promoting the exhibition and a listing of the artists involved. For the program of workshops, Meredith Watson Stewart is listed as providing a “lecture and a visual presentation of items from my private collections that document ‘visuals’ of how the Black race has lived and been portrayed in America.”<sup>4</sup> Further creative workshops were presented by Andrea Poole (on enameling) and Pat Bowers (on paper making). “This may prove to be the greatest collection of female visual and performing artists in the ‘80s,” reads the catalog’s introduction.<sup>5</sup> Through the exhibition’s instrumental role in the founding of what became Women of Visions, the project was indeed an important landmark in the history of Black art in Pittsburgh.





# HONORING SELMA BURKE AND THE SBAC

REBECCA GIORDANO

- Many early members of Women of Visions were connected to the Selma Burke Art Center (SBAC), whose founder would later be recognized as the group's honorary chairperson. From 1971 to 1982, the SBAC provided high-quality, accessible art education serving Pittsburgh's Black community. Located in East Liberty, the SBAC showcased local Black artists alongside renowned Black artists from around the world. Prominent sculptor Selma Burke (1900-1995) founded and guided the SBAC, though she never oversaw its daily operations. Burke had a formal art education, having trained in Paris and earned a degree from Columbia University in New York City. As a member of the Works Project Administration, she taught in a community art center under the famed Harlem Renaissance sculptor Augusta Savage and went on to found a private sculpture school in Greenwich Village in 1946. Burke saw art education as more than just the training of future professional artists; she believed it was a key to human development and democratic society, a vital part of life that needed to be supported in Black communities.

Prior to founding the SBAC, Burke came to Pittsburgh in 1968 at the invitation of the A. W. Mellon Trust to assess the state of Black arts in the city. Burke included future Visions members Virginia Parrish, Jeannette Dobbs, Barbara Peterson, and Juanita Miller in a 1969 compendium of Black artists residing in Pittsburgh commissioned by the Mellon Trust. Burke worked with the Carnegie Institute (now Carnegie Museums of Pittsburgh) and the Mellon Trust to open the center in 1971, hiring the talent she had identified in her research. Many members of what would become Women of Visions taught at the SBAC, including Charlotte Ka, Barbara Peterson, and Jeannette

Dobbs, and even more attended classes and exhibited art. In addition, Burke also taught over fifty thousand students as a guest artist in the Pittsburgh Public Schools from 1970-1975.

While the teaching artists at the SBAC were deeply committed to providing high quality art education to Pittsburgh's Black youth, the later years of the Center were marked by administrative and financial turmoil. The Mellon Trust abruptly withdrew its support of the SBAC in 1978, effectively hobbling its operation. The move drew fierce criticism from across the Black community. Burke—along with then Coordinator of Education Barbara Peterson, among others—spoke out repeatedly about the neglect of the SBAC and the vital role the organization played in Pittsburgh. Despite their efforts, in 1982, the SBAC closed. Pittsburgh's Kingsley Association took over the building, honoring the history of the facility and Burke herself by maintaining their own Selma Burke Gallery.

The impact of the SBAC and Burke's dedication to Black art in Pittsburgh found one powerful legacy through Women of Visions. In addition to creating "a place to grow," as the center's slogan promised, Burke broke barriers for Black women artists. She mentored and led by example. In naming Burke their honorary chairperson, Women of Visions recognized her status as a guiding light and connecting figure between two eras of Pittsburgh's Black arts scene.

REBECCA GIORDANO is a PhD Candidate in History of Art and Architecture at the University of Pittsburgh and a Mellon Fellow in Curation and Education.





# ILLUSTRATING AN IDENTITY

ALEX TAYLOR

- “She is strong, she is powerful”  
—DEE CURRIN, on the Women of Visions logo

- From the late 1980s through the 1990s, artist Dee Currin played a key role in designing the graphics for many Women of Visions flyers and catalogues. In 1996, this work culminated in her creation of the organization’s logo, a design that—with minor modifications—has provided the defining visual identity of the organization ever since. Currin studied commercial art at the Ivy School of Professional Art on Pittsburgh’s North Side and completed her training at the Art Institute of Pittsburgh. After a period in Germany, Currin returned to Pittsburgh, was introduced to Women of Visions by artist and gallerist Harold Neal, and quickly became a key member of the group.

Currin’s work as an artist has often been characterized by an enthusiasm for the imaginative worlds of fantasies and dreams. Some of her early work for the group (such as the illustration for the *Visions of Eve* exhibition) draws on historical styles for inspiration, and she particularly admired the illustration style of Maxfield Parrish. Currin acknowledges the influence of children’s book illustrations she remembered from growing up; however, she also notes that she “didn’t know any Black fairytales.” Many of her illustrations for Women of Visions can be seen to redress that absence, imagining a world in which Black women are at the very center of the story—regal archetypes of Black femininity surrounded by intricate patterns and decorative flourishes. For *Apparitions and Destinations* in 1998, Currin collected an elaborate array of Africanist motifs, drawing on the diverse works in the exhibition to create a multiplicitous but unified image that invites close inspection and patient exploration.

For the Women of Visions logo, Currin imagined a visionary figure in profile, her hair

in the wind. The figure’s locks include a laurel wreath and flowing ribbon, elements that reinforce the design’s sense of stoic calm in the face of turbulent motion. The result is both serene and powerful, a timeless, medallion-like icon that has defined the visual identity of Women of Visions for almost two decades. “I probably did it one hundred times,” Currin remembers of the design. A doodle on a page of meeting minutes from 1994 (a bit of relief, no doubt, from discussions about contracts and bookkeeping!) seems to hint at the illustration that she would eventually develop. The Women of Vision’s archives hold several refined drawings for the final design, which was premiered in the designs for the *Of the Spirit* exhibition at the Pittsburgh Center for the Arts in February 1996.



# FILMING AN ORAL HISTORY STORY

AMANDA AWANJO

- “A vision is something glorious, something that throws light on a situation, something that allows you to see *into* things.”

—ELIZABETH ASCHE DOUGLAS

Building on the research begun during the group’s thirty-fifth anniversary, Women of Visions launched a short documentary film on the history of the group in 2019. Entitled *Women of Visions: An Oral History Story*, the documentary follows Women of Visions members, their allies, collaborators, and families as they provide an oral history of the group’s founding in 1981 and its lasting impact. Directed by Randall Coleman—and resulting from a project led by members Harriette Meriwether and Tina Williams Brewer—the documentary presents an intimate look into the revelatory union of women, imagination, and art that encompass the lasting power of the collective.

In the first of two round table panels featured within the film, Willis “Bing” Davis, Bill Strickland, Ralph Proctor, and Renée Stout talk through the historical frameworks that traditionally limit, silence, and control Black artists. Foregrounding the organization’s first moments with a focus on founding members Emma Slaughter and Juanita Miller, the documentary highlights the significance of Women of Visions’ continued survival in the face of racist bulwarks. The film also underscores how the support of a community ready and willing to make a stage for themselves is embedded within the Pittsburgh-based collective. As former member and artist Renée Stout describes, “[the organization] was full of possibilities. There was a lot of energy at that time... there weren’t many opportunities for African American women to show [their artistic practice] in Pittsburgh, so as a group we became stronger and fed off each other.” Organizing the history of the collective itself becomes a collective experience within the film, as sons, brothers,

spouses, as well as community collaborators and fellow artists share their stories of the women and their creative practice. Keeping with the intimate feel of the film, these recollections are equally close to the heart. As Women of Visions member Constance Bailey states, “it’s like being surrounded by love. Sometimes when the world gets to you, you look at your artwork and it makes [you] feel good because a lot of love goes into art.”

The final section of the documentary points to the future with a roundtable discussion featuring current Women of Visions members Dominique Scaife, Annette Jackson, and Janet Watkins. Turning to the question, “where do Women of Vision go from here?”, the artists once again look to the past, reflecting on the intergenerational support present for new members. During this panel Scaife remarks on the lasting impact of the group saying, “seeing women who look like me, how they operate how they get work out there—they are teachers teaching me the artist I want to be.” In the documentary, we see Women of Visions members as the radical change-makers they were: Black women artists invested in their art, but, more importantly, invested in each other—helping one another to meet the challenges of motherhood, womanhood, and white supremacy. As Willis “Bing” Davis states, “Women of Visions have all the academic skill and artistic knowledge while also reflecting something unique about us as a people.” Indeed, the history of Women of Visions as illustrated by this documentary builds on the original founders’ initial leap of faith and creates more space within the world of art for Black women artists.





# ESSAYS

## Artist Essays & Exhibition Reflections



- Lynne b is a self-taught artist who uses a variety of media to reflect on themes of family and American identity. She grew up in an artistic family and gained recognition for her art early in life at school. Lynne works in a variety of forms and likes to experiment, which is reflected in her mixed-media paintings and collages. Her many creative contributions span traditional visual art forms as well as film and music, but also extend to her experience as a music archivist and curator. She often utilizes found objects collected from thrift stores and city streets. Lynne takes an experimental approach to her practice, including using chemicals and other techniques to treat the wide range of materials and objects that she incorporates into her mixed-media works.

Describing her process, Lynne says that she is focused on engaging audiences. She does not want audiences to just look at the art; she wants them to think about it. Many of the works are allegorical and often draw attention to American hypocrisy that passes as normalcy. One of these pieces is *You People* (2016), a work that highlights the systemic police murders of Black and Brown bodies while referencing the phrase “you people,” a pejorative expression that has been used to typecast Black people. The background of the composition features fragments of the American flag, while the foreground contains silhouettes of four people—a man, woman, boy, and girl—each of whom are covered with images of people murdered by US police officers. The four figures stand on the words “God Bless America,” which recall the lettering on the nation’s founding documents to accentuate the hypocrisies of American history.

Another work, *The Bees Knees* (2014), again features her repeated motif of the American flag. This piece consists of a handmade doll wearing an American flag as a dress and a crown on her head. America’s concept of beauty has traditionally excluded Black women, and the term “bees knees”—slang for something exceptional—emphasizes the strengths and power of Black female beauty. Lynne emphasizes aspects of this beauty by using huge red beads for lips, thick padding on the doll’s hips and behind, and thick treated cotton that has been dyed and baked for hair. She further explains that this work underlines the contributions of Black women to American culture.







(previous page) Lynne b, *You People*, 2016  
(current page) Lynne b, *As*, 2021

One recent work titled *As* (2021) continues the use of collaged elements to enrich figurative paintings. This piece was produced for the Women of Visions exhibition *Magnificent Motown* (2021) at the Kelly Strayhorn Theater. The title of the work comes from Stevie Wonder's joyously upbeat love ballad "As" from *Songs in the Key of Life* (1976). "The work is an homage to some of the people that made Motown and international cultural powerhouse and a legendary contributor to the American musical landscape," the artist explains. Her canvas uses collaged images of notable Motown artists, backup singers, sessional musicians, and label founder Berry Gordy. The fragments of these artists are absorbed into the features of a woman and a man that appear in a close embrace, their profiled faces and collaged hair of green leaves almost appearing to merge two into one. "Until the day that you are me, and I am you," goes one of the lines in the song's chorus— a sentiment powerfully echoed by Lynne's expression of the wondrous power of art and love bringing us together.

Lynne has also experimented with sculptural constructions. *Black Gold* (2016) features framed portraits of Pittsburgh musicians suspended within a ship-shaped conglomeration of purposely rusted wire coat hangers. The portraits are individually framed, hand-colored photos. The ship represents, as Lynne has described, the "wave of culture these gems created, putting Pittsburgh on the map as a musical force." Among the figures represented in the work are George Benson, Betty Davis, Ahmad Jamal, Mary Lou Williams, Art Blakey, and Billy Strayhorn. The gold tokens interspersed among the images represent both African countries and the value that these musicians have brought to American music. Lynne's work is always varied and presents an accessible blend of styles and abstract design to grapple with questions concerning sex and race in the United States.

CHAR PYLE



Lynne b, *A Hundred Lifetimes*, 2021



Lynne b, *Black Gold*, 2016



# JO-ANNE BATES

- The work of Jo-Anne Bates explores the expressive possibilities of form, texture, and color through abstract imagery that engages the lived experiences of the African American community. An art educator at the Pittsburgh School for Creative and Performing Arts (CAPA) for twenty-nine years, Bates's experience as a teacher—as well as a mother and grandmother—has inspired her to use her art to tell stories. Her mixed-media works often use text to enrich their abstract forms with more explicit types of social engagement and, in recent years, have concentrated on experimental printmaking techniques, which produce works defined by their dense and complex texture.
- 

Her most recent exhibition, *Exploration of Color*, featured a collection of what the artist describes as “philosophical road maps.”<sup>1</sup> These dynamic pieces combine the structural elements of both three-dimensional and two-dimensional artworks to challenge the conventions associated with each in unexpected ways. To create the desired texture of these road maps, Bates attached a combination of folded paper and shredded junk mail to the canvas. The distinct shape and color chosen for each work was not planned but rather developed by Bates during the process of completing each composition.

After Bates completed the structure of each road map, she applied text to its surface. These words were inspired by phrases—often in African American Vernacular English—she heard from her students, in hip-hop lyrics, or within her community. Bates explains that when she traveled around her community, “conversations might spark an idea, and I would use those as my titles and subsequently create works.”<sup>2</sup> Bates's description suggests a connection between her physical movement through the city and the geometrical, abstract forms she imagines as maps. Sometimes these phrases were inspired by current events, including police brutality against African Americans. One road map, featuring a striking combination of red, blue, and rusty orange, comments on the killing of Michael Brown with printed all-caps text that echoes the work's title: *Black vs. Blue Don't Shoot* (2018). Other works feature more abstract phrases, often several related words strung together. “Creating these prints,” Bates says, “provides an outlet for creative freedom and continues to be an ongoing necessary challenge for me.”<sup>3</sup>







Bates's approach to her "philosophical road maps" can be described as an intuitive process. She arrived at the exact shape and colors featured in a piece gradually, striving to create the most unique and intriguing combination. "I know that some colors work together, and some don't," Bates explains. "I tried to utilize that while making the work."<sup>8</sup> The phrases featured on her road maps are also often chosen after the fact. When she heard a thought-provoking phrase in her community, she often made a note of it for later use but did not allocate it to a specific work until she decided to assign words to her already-made prints. This intuitive process, fueled by sensitivity to subtle connections between art and text and a desire to find her print's message as she created it, allowed Bates to embed important conversations about experiences in the African American community.

Along with featuring explicit messages about police violence and racial profiling (such as those seen in her work *Colored vs. Black*), other prints in this collection of road maps offer a more ambiguous message. A piece featuring a swirl of pink, purple, blue, and green and words like “hope,” “peace,” and “love” can inspire viewers to think about positive experiences in their community. *The Yellow Avalanche* (2018) presents ambiguous text but draws viewers in with its plethora of pastels and eye-catching circular pattern, encouraging them to find their own meanings in its abstract beauty.

The contours of these prints, which feature jutting outlines with both straight and curved portions, often resemble the outlines of neighborhoods with peculiar boundaries on maps. As Pittsburgh continues to reinforce racial segregation and inequality through a legacy of redlining, these shapes give voice to the sounds of the street but also ask us to reflect upon the ways in which the literal shapes of communities affect the people who live within.<sup>9</sup>

MORGAN MEER



# REFLECTING ON MERGING AT THE CROSSROADS

IMANI WILLIFORD

- A crossroad can be a meeting place where roads merge and people acknowledge how others' respective journeys brought them to the same circumstance. This notion was the
- impetus for *Merging at the Crossroads*, a collaborative exhibition in 1999 between Women of Visions and New York City-based art group Entitled: Black Women Artists. In their respective cities, these groups sought to provide professional and emotional support for each other and to create a network for women visual artists of African descent in the United States. Through this remarkable exhibition presented just months before the end of the last millennium, they were able to accomplish just that.

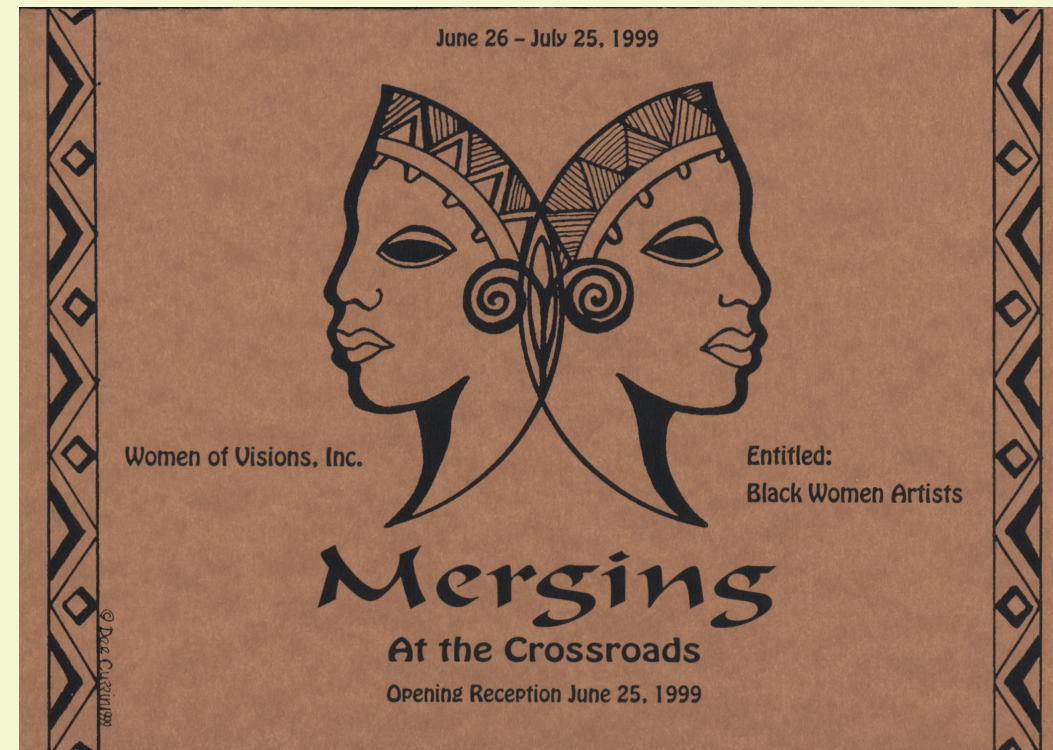
On the first page of the catalog for *Crossroads*, Women of Visions member Lisa L. Currin penned a poem called *Merging* wherein she describes the show as an "elaborate tapestry" of friends coming together to realize hopes and dreams. This concept of an "elaborate tapestry" is upheld by the vast variety of works featured in the show. Entitled Black Women member Grace Williams' contribution, *Lost Soles*, is a mixed-media altarpiece made of "discarded and recycled materials" including sneakers, fabric, and other mementos that document "life in her community." For Marica Jackson, then President of Women of Visions, molding clay dolls and adorning them with beads is a creative process that taught her to let the spirit and wisdom of her "past and present" female ancestors guide her output. Elizabeth Asche Douglas's statement explains that her jabbing wood assemblage, *Gothic*, by contrast, is influenced by philosopher Suzanne K. Langer's notion that art is the "creation of a 'virtual reality'"—decades before it was associated with the escapist technology of computer-generated simulations.

Through their stories, struggles, and traditions, *Crossroads* permitted these women to manifest a new reality of boundless creativity.

The isolation and marginalization that these women faced in the past carried them to this present moment, but the sense that the year 2000 represented a historical turning

*"Crossroads permitted these women to manifest a new reality of boundless creativity."*

point ensured that their visions were firmly fixed on the future. At the end of her poem, Currin boldly declares, "We merge ... And Move on." It is a statement that both commemorates the show and emphasizes its significance as a catalyst for artists to advance their practices in the future. Inspired by a gospel song and Revelations 20:13, Ruth A. Ward's *In the Great Getting Up Morning* exemplified this sentiment. Ward's quilt features women joining hands in a circle and enjoying their moment in the sun. Mirroring *Merging at the Crossroads*, her work envisions Black women together under the promise of a new dawn.



IMANI WILLIFORD is a former student in History of Art and Architecture at the University of Pittsburgh, and a recent MA graduate of the Courtauld Institute of Art.



# RUTH BEDEIAN

- Much like the novels that often inspire her art, Ruth Bedeian's works tell stories that reveal themselves as you spend time with them. Bedeian is an artist who works mostly in the fiber arts while also incorporating a range of other artistic techniques including calligraphy, painting, and design. After a thirty-four-year career as an art teacher for students in kindergarten through fifth grade, Bedeian now has more time to dedicate to her quilt making and other craft practices. Her work draws inspiration from a wide range of artistic and literary sources, including the work of novelists and poets. Bedeian is especially interested in the work of the Harlem Renaissance, which was the focus of her studies at the University of Pittsburgh.
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A multilayered array of patterns, fabrics, and media command your attention before one's eye discovers the more intricate details of each of Bedeian's quilts. According to the artist, sources for these layered effects include the collages of Romare Bearden and paintings by Jacob Lawrence. Other influences are literary figures like Jean Toomer, Langston Hughes, and Zora Neale Hurston. The common thread of storytelling throughout her pieces is as vibrant as the colors that Bedeian brings together in her work.

Bedeian's work *Sankofa* exemplifies many of these properties. Understanding the title of this work is critical in grasping its message: *sankofa* is a word and symbol from the Akan tribe in Ghana that translates to the idea that "it is not taboo to fetch what is at risk of being left behind."<sup>1</sup> The mythical bird depicted in this wall hanging has one of its feet facing forward while its head is turned back. Here, Bedeian draws on the symbolism of the *sankofa* to represent the importance of acknowledging the past as progress occurs. Additionally, by utilizing a traditional Akan symbol, she is essentially reaching back to bring forth these stories and traditions into the art of the present day.

Although many iterations of the *sankofa* symbol have historically included an egg in the bird's mouth, Bedeian has chosen to forgo this imagery. What instead takes prominence in her interpretation are the various textures and colors that make up the fabric of the piece. Before Bedeian began painting on top of fabric, she had mastered the skill of layering through her fiber works. As she puts it, "fabric became my paint."<sup>2</sup> The mythical bird itself is mostly structured







(previous page) Ruth Bedeian, *Queen Mother*  
(current page) Ruth Bedeian, *Visitation*



Ruth Bedeian, *Heritage*  
Ruth Bedeian, *Sankofa*



by two-toned earthy fabrics; while its wing is filled with bright red fabric, the rest of the body is comprised of a combination of black, white, yellow, and brown patterned fabric. The bird is resting on a dark black background featuring a texture of raised lines that swirl around its body. Framing the background, a border repeats the same yellow and brown patterned fabric found within the *sankofa*. The outermost edge features a second border, this time with the same black-and-white patterned fabric found within the bird. Both fabrics are bold and high contrast, matching the intensity of the large, red wing in the center of the piece. Another notable feature is the ornamental beading that has been added as the top layer. The metallic silver and gold beads add yet another degree of depth and texture to the already three-dimensional wall hanging. Each individual layer of Bedeian's *Sankofa* contains the same complexity as the symbol it references.

Bedeian was taught to quilt by her great-grandmother, and the importance of family emerges as a recurring theme of many of Bedeian's works. In 2019, Bedeian's *Heritage* (2019) was featured in an exhibition at the August Wilson African American Cultural Center titled *Seats of Power*. Bedeian's seat is comprised of different parts that each represent a family member, and it is crowned with a hornbill, or *Porpianong*, which symbolizes fertility and continuity to the Senufo people. The bird itself has its wings spread over the chair to protect and heal. Bedeian's chair, inspired by a throne, employs the mask as a conduit to the spirit world. A great grandmother, grandmother, and mother are all represented by the chosen Adinkra symbols. The comb is a symbol of femininity and denotes the ritual of grooming. The large symbol on the seat of the chair, a dwennimmen, denotes strength, courage and humility. Sitting for hair grooming by elders represents a time for learning, laughter and storytelling, a time to "share love," Bedeian explains. This tradition is embedded in African and African American culture. For Bedeian, the women symbolized in this work are the seat of her power.

The *Seats of Power* exhibition also included Bedeian's quilt titled *Queen Mother*. The work is displayed with three panels. The center panel is the quilt, which is flanked by two mirroring panels in metallic gold lace. The gold connotes royalty and is infused in the quilt as well. It is this royal blood that Bedeian believes provided the strength to survive the trials of the Middle Passage and generations of bondage in America. The central quilt features a female mask image surrounded by birds, flowers and abstract shapes of varying bright hues. This work displays Bedeian's inclination to combine her various crafts practices into one complete work of art.

Birds are a recurring motif in Bedeian's practice. In *Heritage*, the bird was the central focus, whereas *Queen Mother* has birds that seemingly fly upwards. Birds historically conjure freedom and protection, and in this quilt their placement over the head of the subject may again suggest their guardianship over the figure, while their upward trajectory evokes the idea of freedom. In this work, the mask represents the "queen mother" in her native land, surrounded by the lushness and vitality of her culture. The drums communicate important information to the people of the village, and the seed pods represent fertility and continuity. The use of gold symbolizes the royal blood she believes has been passed on to strengthen all of those who survived the middle passage.

In a way, the experience of looking at Bedeian's work is itself an exhilarating journey into the unknown, as her dense and colorful imagery invites us into the space of her imagination. Ruth Bedeian has a way of creating art that invites the viewer to read deeper and deeper into its meaning. Scholar Cynthia Davis describes how Zora Neale Hurston's work was distinguished by her "ability to build layered meanings from symbol," and Bedeian's works achieve similarly dense and varied forms of symbolism.<sup>4</sup> These meanings are woven into every quilt, found in each brush stroke, and felt in every juxtaposed pattern.

ANGELA KOONTZ



# CHRISTINE BETHEA

- “Some people look at things and ask, ‘Why?’ I look at things and ask, ‘Why not?’” explains artist Christine Bethea, paraphrasing Robert Kennedy, one of her childhood heroes.<sup>1</sup> This approach resonates throughout her artistic practice and the wide array of media, techniques, and subjects that Bethea explores. In her words, she does not “like to do something more than once.” The diversity of Bethea’s work is further spurred by the inherently unique found objects central to her assemblages. Focusing mostly on mixed-media and fiber arts like quilting, Bethea is especially attracted to objects that have “history,” inviting us to engage with their real and imagined past lives. Her work gives voice to these histories, allowing the objects to speak as though the materials are alive.
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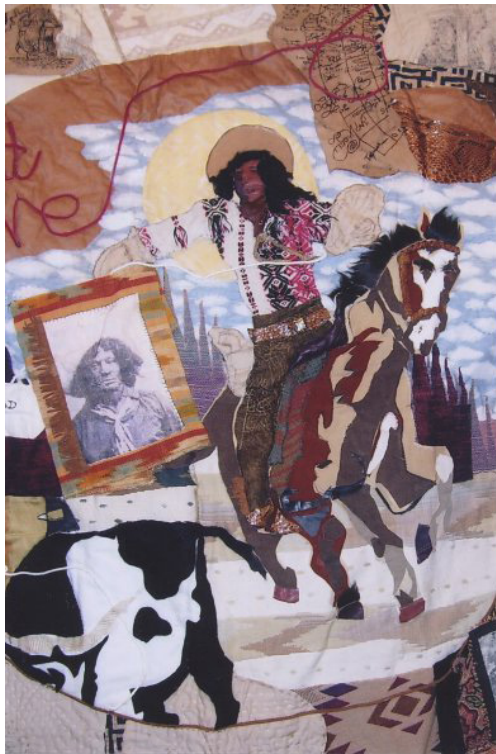
Bethea’s work often responds to her environment and the opportunity to learn from those around her. While an artist-in-residence in Gee’s Bend, a town that has become famous in the art world for its abstract quilts, she was inspired by the majority Black community that grew out of oppression and slavery. In this slice of Alabama, Bethea honed her traditional quilting techniques and found peace in the town’s quirkiness. She recalls the sight of houses on stilts and wires strung out of windows connecting electricity from house to house. Ice was still delivered from a truck, and kids under age fifteen could drive cars around this small community where everyone knew each other.<sup>2</sup> Bethea was drawn to both the people and the community’s dynamic, abstract quilts. She embraced the traditions of her surroundings and made them her own, combining her encounter with the Gee’s Bend quilters, her interest in Amish quilts, and, closer to home, the skills acquired from her family, especially her grandmother. Like so much of Bethea’s practice, her quilts use vintage and found fabric to create expressive assemblages that hint at the lives of former owners.

In *Deadwood Nick/Nat Love*, one can see the energetic combination of traditional and modern quilting techniques. Bethea’s focus on Black cowboys is evident through the text printed on the fabric and incorporated into her quilt, a technique that connects the representational content of the quilt to the historic nature of its materiality. The quilt further exhibits the cowboy aesthetic through sun-bleached tones and traditional southwestern materials like leather and





(previous page) Christine Bethea, *Adam and Eve*  
(current page) Christine Bethea, *Wild, Wild, West*



Christine Bethea, *In Celebration of Black Cowboys*

snakeskin. Despite its flatness, the quilt's abstracted landscape creates a sense of vast distance. Bethea's material choices, such as her use of blue and white printed fabric to suggest the sky, are crucial in achieving such effects. Patterns, shapes, textures, and colors are all deployed to capture contours and build forms using both vintage and new fabrics. The quilted portrait of two historical Black cowboys, Deadwood Dick—a freed slave turned cowboy—and Pullman Porter, celebrates the will of former slaves to make full lives for themselves after the Civil War while also acknowledging the overlooked diversity of the Wild West.<sup>3</sup>

Another of Bethea's works, the sculpture *In Celebration of Cowboys* (2016), has a similar history and meaning. Like *Deadwood Nick/Nat Love* and the images of Barack Obama donning a Stetson, *Celebration* hails a figure underrepresented by mainstream culture: "Limited by the mythologies of the American West and later the Jim Crow laws, African American cowboys have been and continue to be marginalized," explain historians Tracy Owens Patton and Sally Schedlock, who also note that the "absence of oral histories, written accounts, and images [leave Black cowboys] storied experiences only to the imagination."<sup>4</sup> In *Celebration*, Bethea highlights this oversight by placing images of Black cowboys in silver-tone sweetheart's lockets that hang from belts below a bull's head constructed from an assemblage of found objects. The jowl is an antique shoe last, and its horns are a hunting bow. Bethea mimics a bull's long skeletal cheekbones while using items with natural curves to create the visual effect of soft animal hair. Reminiscent of a hunter's wall trophy, *Celebration* is a wall-mounted sculpture that seems to look back at the viewer with its metal, window-latch eyes.

Bethea's love of finding, using, and displaying found objects ties her art practice to a longer family tradition of discovering new uses for old things, exemplified by the collection habits of both her grandfather and father. The former collected all kinds of odds and ends after his retirement as a church janitor—so much so that he was able to furnish the entirety of Bethea's first apartment with objects stored in his garage. Her father, meanwhile, was a military man by day but an inventor by night. He would create ingenious contraptions out of things around the house before making full presentations to the family on weekends. These family traits were exhibited in Bethea's gallery and store ARTica, which operated for ten years in Pittsburgh's east end.

In addition to her artistic practice, Bethea is widely recognized for her work as an arts administrator creating opportunities for other creative practitioners. In creating the Geek Art/Green Innovators festival, Bethea connected the "techies with the greenies" through an event that celebrated artists, technology, and environmentalists.<sup>5</sup> More recently, Bethea's work on a film documenting the Bhutanese Community Association of Pittsburgh was highlighted at the 101st Folklore Symposium in Boston.

Assemblage, recycling, and accessibility are all vital to Bethea's work as an artist, administrator, and community leader. Bethea thrives on creating movements, changing minds, and opening new doors. As the current president of Women of Visions, she and her fellow members encourage people of all ages to explore their creative talents by making the visual arts more attainable to generations of people who may not otherwise have had the confidence or opportunity to create.

HEATHER HERSHBERGER



# REFLECTING ON SANKOFA SOUL

MARQUES REDD

- A popular proverb from the West African Akan people states: *Se wo were fin a wo sankofa a yenkyi*—it is not a taboo to return and fetch that which you have forgotten. *Sankofa* is a word of tremendous cultural importance that is often translated as “go back and fetch it,” “return to your past,” and “retrieve what you have lost.” In the *Adinkra* symbolic system, this concept is represented as a bird that has its head rotated backward while in a forward motion. This ideogram speaks to the process of retrieving the past in order to constitute a knowledge base in tune with the needs of the present so a way can be opened for the emergence of robust futures.

“One might say that *sankofa*, engaging with history to create new work, describes the process of artmaking itself.”

These symbols of return provided the inspiration for *Sankofa Soul: Past Present Future*, an exhibition presented by Women of Visions at the Pittsburgh Center for the Arts in 2017–18. The show featured a diverse stylistic range of work from fifteen Black women engaging with the idea of *sankofa* in a variety of complex ways. Exemplified by Mary Martin’s statue *Sankofa Bird*, which is made of clay and cowrie shells,

many artists here directly represent the *sankofa* bird as a gesture of both reanimating African symbolic languages and returning to the African source as this symbol commands. Charlotte Ka’s powerful etching *Fly My Sister*, with its central black figure that has no distinguishing features outside of hair blowing fiercely in the wind, emblemizes the pieces here that evoke the feeling of being airborne and of birds more generally, pointing toward the transcendence achieved through *sankofa*. Work that explores connections between past, present, and future is of tremendous importance to this exhibition. Njaimeh Njie’s photography, in images like *Once Upon a Time, Still*, documents four generations of Black men living in the Pittsburgh historically Black neighborhood of the Hill District and thereby moves toward reconstituting a fragmented cultural past. The supreme achievement of this *sankofa* practice is the reconstitution of African spiritual sciences, seen in works like Celeta Hickman’s *Fan of 5 Rivers: Abebe Oshun*, which uses fabric, beads, sequins, and shells to pay tribute to the Yoruba goddess of fertility, rivers, and sensuality.

One might say that *sankofa*, engaging with history to create new work, describes the process of artmaking itself, and that Women of Visions’ use of the *sankofa* concept makes a strong case about the relevance of African conceptual frameworks for guiding the aesthetic and spiritual aspirations of Black women in the contemporary era. At this moment of their fortieth anniversary, we celebrate their past so that this powerful work continues to nurture expressions of richness and depth for generations to come.



MARQUES REDD is Senior Director of Graduate Advising and Engagement for the Humanities at the University of Pittsburgh.



# REFLECTING ON MIGRATIONS OF THE AFRICAN DIASPORA

TIFFANY SIMS

- As a term and a phenomenon, migration encompasses a diverse range of experiences. The migration of people across lands and oceans can last generations. Migrating from familiar to unknown territory is itself a journey. Historically, migration is not always a path toward freedom, and there is a stark difference between a chosen relocation and a forced exodus. The Middle Passage brought on horrors of slavery to those displaced from Africa, while the Great Migration provided opportunities for African Americans to escape the trenches of the rural South. The Women of Visions exhibition *Migrations of the African Diaspora* (2006) touches on all these experiences and more as artists within the exhibition illustrate ideas and propose questions relating to the many migrations of the African diaspora.

As Women of Visions' twenty-fifth anniversary exhibition, the show called for artworks in various mediums to explore the theme of migration from the viewpoint of people of African descent. The artists take a deep look through a diasporic lens that extends from Africa to America. Generations of families throughout the African diaspora have migrated from and to nations that were not their own. Stories and memories passed down from ancestors to grandbabies have kept the family history intact.

The interpretation of migration seen in the exhibition's artworks is, however, more than a history of the movement of people. Drawing from beyond the Women of Visions membership, twenty-seven artists from across the United States bring their own histories to the subject: "The artists in this exhibition were impacted by their ancestors' migration," explained exhibit juror Lydia C. Thompson. These artworks convey

the idea that home can be multiple locations in the world, depending on connections between individuals and families. The pieces also reflect the sacrifice many ancestors made to get future generations out of bondage. Across the exhibition, the personal becomes public as the artists express their own unique experiences of the Black diaspora.

A little over a year before the exhibit, Hurricane Katrina brought devastating destruction to New Orleans, forcing thousands from their homes and leaving their lives in disarray—effects which are still felt today. The horrific event renewed questions around migration: When can we feel settled? Do we stay and rebuild, or do we leave to start anew? Acknowledging these questions, *Migrations of the African Diaspora* explores the relationship between the struggles and celebrations that the movement of people exposes.

In the exhibition's catalogue, essayist Ervin Dyer describes the experience of his own trip to Ghana: "I had crossed the water to discover my brothers, and, in the process, I discovered myself," he writes. Through going back to the motherland, Dyer was changed by the intimate grounding that felt so close to home.

The individual effect of migration hits home for me, too, as I migrate from South Florida to Pittsburgh. How will my time in Pittsburgh be a memory and inspiration for the generations after me? In considering who I am and the elements that define me, Pittsburgh represents a chance to continue to assemble the pieces of my own self-discovery.

TIFFANY SIMS is a 2021-22 Hot Metal Bridge Fellow in the History of Art and Architecture at the University of Pittsburgh.





# TINA WILLIAMS BREWER

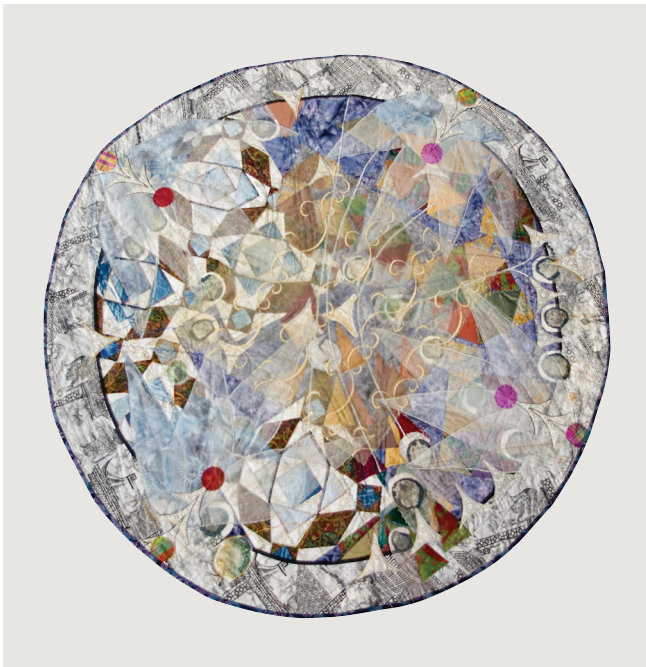
- Internationally renowned fiber artist Tina Williams Brewer has spent her career making works that strengthen the cultural and historical threads of African and African American history. Brewer repurposes the techniques of traditional quilting with a lyrical layering of fabric that compels viewers to explore her rhythmic, intricately wrought compositions. By using fabric to assemble theatrical pictorial tableaux that dramatize the stories of Black history and evoke the dense layers of human memory, Brewer incorporates multiple stories into each quilt. Her works seek to reframe discussions surrounding the enslavement of African and African American people into broader narratives of diasporic migration. By combining traditional folklore, symbolism, and spirituality, Brewer uses her works to materialize multiple interpretations of the African and African American cultural experience.
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Brewer progressed her practice soon after the creation of her first widely recognized quilt, *The Harvest* (1989), the work that also led her to become a member of Women of Visions. Brewer was first introduced to the group in 1988 when she met Juanita Miller while displaying her art at the Harambee Festival. After their encounter, Miller began to mentor Brewer informally and encouraged her to further develop her practice. Since then, Brewer has been able to participate in many of the Woman of Visions shows, which provide a platform for her to exhibit works that seek to expose and educate audiences to Black history and, above all, uplift the achievements of African and African American culture. Brewer applies a research-based artistic process to many of her works. For a 2010 exhibition at the Heinz History Center, for example, Brewer made a series of quilts that engaged with community history through the pages of Pittsburgh Black newspaper the *New Pittsburgh Courier*, incorporating “photographs within each quilt... to create a window into that era to visually lead the viewer back in time.”<sup>1</sup>

This research-based approach is also informed by personal experience. When she initially began to quilt, Brewer’s great-grandparents’ stories of their family’s origins often influenced her work. Growing up, she was intrigued by these stories as well as the difficult aspects left out of their shared history.<sup>2</sup> As she developed this historical focus, Brewer extended and explored her own history along with a broader African and African American history within her work.







(previous page) Tina Williams Brewer, *The Harvest*, 1989  
(current page) Tina Williams Brewer, *Crossing Over*, 2005



Tina Williams Brewer, *Achievement*, 2010

Personalizing her craft, Brewer incorporates elements from her family into her artworks. In *The Harvest*, for example, not only is the work dedicated to her daughter, but she included fabric from neckties belonging to her father-in-law. She also included a piece of fabric representing her mother within the quilt tucked into *There Are No Mistakes* (1997). Brewer uses such material links to family to tie her objects to longer traditions that connect quilting to family legacies passed from one generation to another.<sup>3</sup>

Although her work has since expanded to broader aspects of Black history, several of Brewer's early works specifically grapple with the history of transatlantic slavery. In *The Harvest*, she explores stories of the Middle Passage, the trade route in which millions of Africans were forcibly transported to the new world. This work uses a research-based artistic process to record the horrific realities of slavery while also celebrating the will of African peoples who survived and subverted bondage. One key element of this story quilt is the vertical chain that extends to the middle of the composition. Fabric figures lying on a level plane surround the chain to portray the gridded formation of bodies aboard the slave ship. Brewer's depiction reimagines the infamous illustrations of the Brookes slave ship, which diagram the cruel mechanisms of slave trading upon the English slave ship.<sup>4</sup> Above the fabric figures of the enslaved Africans, Brewer depicts birds who ponder at the harvest underneath. This artwork reckons with the racial abuse that Africans faced during enslavement and the brutal racial hierarchy that spaces like those in the diagrams tried to concretize.

Brewer utilizes old or used pieces of fabric across her works, and she has even described herself as a "scrap quilter." She believes that fabric has its own DNA, and that once a fabric is used it only acquires further individuality. "If you think about fabric ... we wear it close to our bodies," Brewer explains. "We wash it, then we toss it, and then it's reclaimed, and the energy is passed on to a new life. Energy never ceases to exist. If you take the fabric and integrate it into a piece of art, that becomes a part of a collective energy."<sup>5</sup> This is why Brewer considers her use of old scraps so crucial to her creative process. "I'm not a snob about fabrics,"<sup>6</sup> she tells an interviewer in 2003, noting that she uses all kinds of materials from many countries, even old clothing and upholstery fabrics. For Brewer, the type of fabric she uses on her quilts usually reflects the essential stories she wants to emanate from the completed work. Once Brewer finishes her quilt, she returns to it and adds symbols that contain additional information for the artwork through embroidery. Brewer describes this part of her process as something "like a blessing on the piece."<sup>7</sup>

With her use of African symbols, Brewer's imagery frequently achieves a cross-cultural, even ethereal, effect. In her artwork *Crossing Over*, she focuses on the idea of transition: from life to death; from slavery to freedom; from ignorance to enlightenment. The symbolism she uses for this quilt, called *Adinkra*, consists of concentric circles that represent greatness, charisma, and authority, and they are primarily used in Ghanaian fabrics to depict Ghanaian cultural and ethnic beliefs. The circle design in Ghanaian culture implies the continuation of the life cycle. The concentric circle is utilized in social and cultural imagery and architectural styles.<sup>8</sup> Through such symbols, Brewer draws on ancient imagery to address present-day issues and audiences. "I want people to understand their own history ... and understand that what is today was shaped by the layers and colors of the past," she explains.<sup>9</sup> Brewer's quilts are both an expression of her own internal journeys and a reckoning with spirit, soul, and shared histories through rich and multilayered imagery.

REBECCA FITZHARRIS

# ELIZABETH ASCHE DOUGLAS

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- Elizabeth Asche Douglas has been called the “First Lady of the Arts,” and she absolutely lives up to this title.<sup>1</sup> She has made an impact on several fields within the art world, including as a visual artist and jazz musician, but also as a teacher, editor, and curator. Raised in a household that nurtured her love of learning, she developed her creative interests at a young age. She recalls first receiving a set of oil paints at the age of ten and writing an essay for school titled “Rembrandt: Soul Painter” at about the same time.<sup>2</sup> As a child she wrote her own books and drew movies on the blank underside of wallpaper rolls, using a long format to create handmade moving pictures.<sup>3</sup> From a young age, Douglas blended the visual and performing arts. Across her career, she has pursued a powerful vision of the integration of the arts and, indeed, their integration into everyday life.
- 

Douglas graduated high school at fifteen and enrolled at the Carnegie Institute of Technology, now Carnegie Mellon University. She was the first Black student and also the youngest to be accepted into the art department, where she received her Bachelor of Fine Arts specializing in painting and design in 1951.<sup>4</sup> She enjoyed the wide-ranging curriculum, utilizing whichever medium or style best suited each of her pieces. As an artist, Douglas still compares herself to a chameleon and explains that no singular voice or vision identifies her body of work.<sup>5</sup> She practices across a wide variety of media and techniques. Much of her work is characterized by bright colors and bold shapes in paintings, prints, and digital media. Yet, she has also used ink to create many black-and-white drawings, works that are less vibrant but still achieve strong graphic effects through texture and shading. Alongside her two-dimensional works, Douglas has also created assemblage sculptures out of mixed-media and found materials.

As a college student, Douglas continued to broaden her scope outside the classroom by getting involved in various organizations and working with artists such as Balcomb Greene and Samuel Rosenberg.<sup>6</sup> One work from this period is seen in a photograph by Teenie Harris, which records her prize winning watercolor for the Associated Artists of Pittsburgh at their forty-second annual exhibition.<sup>7</sup> Douglas acquired her Master of Fine Arts from the University



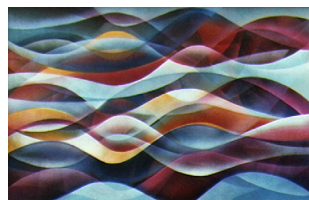




(previous page) Elizabeth Asche Douglas, *Flame*  
(current page) Elizabeth Asche Douglas, *XX Veil*



(left) Elizabeth Asche Douglas, *Destitute*  
(right) Elizabeth Asche Douglas, *Water and Spirit*



of Pittsburgh in 1956, for which she wrote a thesis on Abstract Expressionism at a time when the movement was new and relatively little had been written about it.

Douglas's engagement with key figures in the history of modern American art shaped her career as a professor at Geneva College as much as it informed her experimental approach to artmaking. One specific artistic influence Douglas cites is the work of philosopher and aesthetician Susanne K. Langer.<sup>8</sup> Langer's writing focused on the intuitive nature of art and explored the role of "feeling" as the basis for all aspects of human creation. Like the abstract expressionist movement, Langer was interested in how the visual arts could express emotions and sensations that were difficult to capture in other forms of communication.<sup>9</sup> Douglas's approach displays some of Langer's influence wherein the physical aspects of a subject are expressed realistically, while the conceptual aspects of a subject translate to more abstract forms of expression.

Another influence on Douglas's art practice is her faith. She explains that her "Christian worldview is a central part of ... [her] whole philosophical approach to life."<sup>10</sup> The church was particularly essential to Douglas's love of music. At the age of five she began taking piano lessons with the church organist. The connection between music and faith has been integral throughout Douglas's life, including in much of her work, such as *Water and Spirit*. This airbrushed acrylic features colorful waves that overlap on the canvas, creating a sense of transparency and depth. The artwork was inspired by Bach's *Fugue in G Minor*, a musical composition written for the organ. In the song there are multiple melodic lines constantly changing pitch in different ranges, moving to the quick tempo of the music. Bach's composition revolves around polyphony, musical texture, and utilizing the technique of counterpoint. Multiple independent melodic lines can be followed throughout the fugue, but they also come together to create pleasing harmonies. This is mirrored in Douglas's painting wherein crests and troughs of waves seem to parallel the high and low pitches of the melodies. The composition captures the fluidity of the music and the emotions it evokes—the sense of the transcendent, otherworldly beauty of Bach's musical composition.

In her digital portrait *Yes Indeed*—featured in Women of Visions' 2014 exhibition *Storytellers: Truth Be Told!*—Douglas is once again inspired by music, but the result could not be more different. This work depicts an African American woman with her eyes closed. The subject is a woman who attended one of Douglas's jazz concerts. After the show Douglas talked with her and ended up taking her photograph. Struck by her hair and clothes and captivated by her countenance, Douglas ultimately painted the photograph. She may have chosen to record this subject in a more realistic style, but the figure's closed eyes and the tactile appearance of her fur collar also capture sensations of the musical performance that exceed the world of figurative representation. In this print—and, indeed, in all her art—Douglas conveys what she describes as "the essence of an experience" to her audience.<sup>11</sup> Drawing on an extraordinary lifetime of experiences with art and music, Douglas reveals beauty in the world around her—and she shares her incisive vision with us all.

SAMANTHA BONAWITZ

# REFLECTING ON PATTERNS OF INJUSTICE

CECILE SHELLMAN

## PATTERNS OF INJUSTICE

Addressing past and present disparities, injustices and societal ills, that continue to impact communities locally, nationally, and globally.

The artworks question and respond to conflicts, but also find ways to create healing through art.

### Women of Visions 35th Anniversary Celebration

In conjunction with 2016 Mavuno Festival of African American Art & Culture

Sweetwater Center for the Arts : Sept 23 - Nov 4, 2016

OPENING RECEPTION: SEPTEMBER 23 • 5-9 PM



- In September 2016, I had the privilege of curating a standalone Women of Visions exhibition for the second time. As an arts administrator, artist, and longtime museum practitioner who
- had just celebrated my eleventh year living in Pittsburgh, this honor resonated profoundly. I had worked with several of these infinitely talented women in various capacities—as a mentor, manager, and avid fan. Many had become personal friends. Their love for Afrocentric expression and unabashed desire to create in a way that gives voice to our shared, often unheralded, heritage is admirable.

At the time, I was working with the Carnegie Museums of Pittsburgh as the Diversity Catalyst. In this new executive-level role, I championed the principles of diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion throughout the museum system. It was an uncommon role even five years ago; most arts organizations were still seeking to build diversity without necessarily thinking about social justice as a shared value. BIPOC artists and community members had seen the museum's earnest attempts to focus on social justice: from a standing-room-only talk about police brutality during the months following Michael Brown's killing and the subsequent uprisings in Ferguson, Missouri to hosting the Stand Against Racism Day, the public's consciousness was becoming aroused and alert to the art world's social responsibility.

Within this context, it was easy for me to accept Mary Martin's invitation to curate this Women of Visions exhibit. I knew that as an organization—and as individuals—the artists had spent their lives both championing their rights to be seen and included as well as bringing visibility to those whom the art world had under-represented. No matter the subject, it was a given that their work would throb with the heart-beat of purposeful dialogue. As I spent the day with the submissions for *Patterns of Injustice*, making the difficult decisions regarding whose pieces met the theme in the most salient manner, I thought of all the ways in which injustice had touched the artists' lives, both in answer to the exhibit's call and in the context of Women of Visions' existence. That this organization was not more fully developed, recognized, and known in the city of Pittsburgh was disconcerting. Certainly these artists had paid their dues. Inspired by their lived experience, these works embodied a powerful sense of authority around stories of civic unrest.

In my remarks to the group and my written exhibit text, I attempted to express the courage and power required to speak nobly of injustice

“We cannot afford to hide messages of hope and resilience as we shore up the spirits of those who are told their lives don't matter.”

when equity is far from sight. Although I thought those words made an impact, five years later they seem wan, lacking the boldness these artists themselves exemplify. Post-George Floyd, there is—and will continue to be—no excuse not to speak with increasing power and perspicacity about the need for justice and pro-Blackness in our artistic landscape. We cannot afford to hide messages of hope and resilience as we shore up the spirits of those who are told their lives don't matter. We must cherish the cultural voices and legacies of those who are exemplars to communities that depend on continuity for survival. Such is Women of Visions.

CECILE SHELLMAN is an independent curator and leading consultant in diversity, equity, inclusion and anti-racism services for museums.



# ANNETTE JACKSON

- Annette Jackson is a lifelong creator and mixed-media artist whose practice is illuminated by her unique vision of the physical and spiritual world. For Jackson, the ability to create art is a God-given gift, and her love of colors, shapes, forms, and life fundamentally drives her practice. Her watercolor paintings range from realist images of nature to expressive abstractions infused with color and light. Beyond watercolors, her other work combines painting with textiles and found objects to create pieces that express her personal and spiritual journey. Jackson's mother and sister were both practicing seamstresses, so she cultivated a respect for creativity from a young age. The creative journey is what Jackson appreciates most about being an artist. Her process of experimenting with shape and color to express herself seeks to inspire a similar journey within the viewer, as Jackson poses the questions, "What do you see? What do you feel? Where did you go?"
- 

Jackson's mentorship with the late Ruth Richardson, a renowned watercolorist and prominent member of the Pittsburgh community, was crucial to her work in this medium. Richardson and Jackson shared a bond not only over their mutual love of watercolor and art, but over their shared interest in community ties as well. More than a mentor, Richardson was a friend, introducing Jackson to the art world of Pittsburgh. Together they attended shows and meetings with various arts groups and organizations and eventually collaborated on artwork. It was also Richardson who, in 2011, suggested that Jackson present her artwork to Women of Visions. Both artists use watercolor in their own way, but their practices are bound together by their expressive and compassionate visions about the world and the people around them. "I believe beauty is appreciating and respecting other human beings and their contributions to the world," Jackson explains in a statement for a 2013 exhibition that showed her work alongside Richardson's. "The gift of life is a beautiful thing, and to understand and appreciate this gift is even more beautiful."

Jackson's work *Deep Thought* displays her command of the possibilities of watercolor as a medium. This piece emulates a water scene, taking a twist on the more traditional landscapes she focused on in her early works. The liquid forms of this work provide the perfect context





(previous page) Annette Jackson, *Black Gold*  
(current page) Annette Jackson, *Buried*



Annette Jackson, *Censored*

for Jackson to play with her favorite components of watercolor, as she uses blending, fluidity, translucence, and variety of color to build a resolved composition. Her use of shape and pattern within the work incorporates multiple elements of water into one image: the circles at the bottom left and top right corners seem to depict the water through a porthole or telescope, while a crosshatched pattern and flowing lines incorporate fish scales and seaweed. Jackson explains that the ocean in this piece holds personal significance as a spiritual place of meditation as well as an untamed natural phenomenon. Making this work further served as a personal form of meditation, a way to escape to the ocean through the art of watercolor.<sup>2</sup> Jackson's abstract approach turns the concept of a water landscape into an entire realm for viewers to explore.

Jackson's mixed-media piece *Infectious Influence* (2020), produced for a private commission, illustrates how she often incorporates lived experience into her art while also using the creative process as a therapeutic outlet. Produced over the course of six months during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, the piece captures the impacts of the pandemic on all spheres of life. *Infectious Influence* incorporates a wide array of material including beads, metal, feathers, and paint to create an image that invites the viewer to take a closer look. Blue and gold components seem to pop out from the warm background, yet there is still an element of collage which unifies the piece into one extravagant assemblage. Throughout the pandemic, Jackson found herself grappling with the constant anxieties that the health crisis posed. She worried about the safety of her family and community while feeling a sense of helplessness and dealing with the isolation of being homebound. At the same time, the experience gave her the opportunity to reflect and appreciate life regardless of the circumstances.<sup>3</sup> The detail incorporated from hours of precise work shows the viewer what can be done with this unprecedented home time, while also displaying that quarantine was not free time in any traditional sense. *Infectious Influence* speaks to this theme by collaging many types of materials in a pattern that seems to spiral into greater detail; it is a visual analogy for the mental strain of the pandemic, a vortex of things to worry about when there is ample time.

Jackson has extended her creative practice into three dimensions as well. Her work *Black Gold* (2019) is a mixed-media sculpture which she explains in a Facebook post as a celebration of the "strength, resourcefulness, wisdom, grace, and beauty of a Black woman." In creating this work, Jackson was inspired by the experiences of African American women. The center-piece of the sculpture consists of a head with two faces posed in a regal manner. Foil accents reflect the light and contrast with the obsidian tone of the mask-like faces. This central component is displayed on a podium with sheer fabric draped across where shoulders would be, falling from the neck like a gold-accented cape. This piece also functions as a lamp and is topped with a shade adorned with hanging crystals, which takes on the appearance of an elaborate headpiece. The lightbulb within illuminates a crown that sits atop the construction. This creates an effect reminiscent of religious iconography's use of glowing halos to signify holiness—fitting considering spirituality is a fundamental part of Jackson's life and art practice. Jackson's use of light in this piece also reflects and highlights the gold accents to emphasize the beauty of African American women while also expressing their bright intellect. In this way, *Black Gold* explores and celebrates many facets of African American women. Like much of Jackson's art, this piece represents her inner and outer world, reflecting her lived experiences while inspiring her viewers to take their own journeys.

JAMIE RONCINSKE





Ashley A. Jones, *The Brown Paper Bag Test*, 2016-2018.

- Best known for her illustrations and portraits, Ashley A. Jones is a mixed-media artist and educator whose practice speaks to the histories and contemporary challenges of Black identity. Jones is a lifelong student and educator; she received her Bachelor of Arts in studio art from Central State University in Ohio and her Master of Fine Arts from Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP), served as an Assistant Professor of Art and director of the IUP's Kipp Gallery from 2019-2020, and currently works as the lower and upper school art teacher at St. Edmund's Academy in Pittsburgh's East End. Teaching is fundamental to Jones's practice. As she explains, "you need to make art that you can speak to in a way that is teaching not only yourself, but the people who are seeing it."<sup>1</sup>
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Jones uses her work to speak to personal experiences of discrimination related to skin color and hair while also teaching audiences how these issues effect African American communities at large. She explains, "I never make anything that doesn't have a history behind it." As she sees it, there are often many histories behind any given piece, and her voice is just one in the chorus.<sup>2</sup> Jones's thesis show at IUP, titled *The Colorism Project*, comprises multiple works that exemplify her ability to incorporate personal experiences with those of other African Americans while also demonstrating the intersection of art and education.

Two of these works, the *Hair Identity* series and *The Brown Paper Bag Test*, reveal these aspects of Jones's practice. Made from 2016-2018, the *Hair Identity* series is a collection of eleven charcoal and chalk portraits on wooden panels, each depicting the back of a person's head and a different—presumably Black—hairstyle, such as Bantu knots or cornrow braids. With these faceless portraits, slightly smaller than life-size, Jones literally turns the perspective of a traditional portrait 180 degrees, instead compelling the audience to make judgements about the person's identity based only on their hair and the color the wood plank gives their skin. In these works, Jones grapples with Black discrimination based not solely on skin color but also hair style and texture, expressing how such experiences shape a person's identity. Jones is no stranger to judgements based on her hair; growing up as the youngest of three daughters, she was the one with "hair that was harder to tame," while her sisters were lucky enough to

have "good" hair.<sup>3</sup> Experiences with prejudices like these motivated Jones to make these portraits in a way that provokes viewers to make the similar judgements about identity based almost entirely on a subject's hair, forcing viewers to confront their own prejudice.

Jones has noted that one panel in the series particularly tests the assumptions of her viewers. *Hair Identity* #1, which depicts a woman with two loose cornrow braids on both sides of her head, has inspired conversations around how certain hair styles can make people assume they know about a person's lifestyle, age, or demographics. When Jones shows this piece, she asks the audience to tell her who they think this woman is. "I always hear, 'She's probably in her 30s or 40s, Black woman,'" Jones comments. "You know, I hear all these different things, and I said, I got news for you. She's actually a Jewish woman, from Johnstown, PA, and has that texture hair."<sup>4</sup>

Jones chose to draw on wooden slabs for this piece as an homage to the history of Black representation in the photography industry as well as to provide an opportunity for education. At first, Jones planned to draw on wood because of the associations she makes between wood and racism, specifically how trees were used in lynching. However, during the process of making the portraits, Jones learned about the history of Kodak film incorrectly depicting dark skin; the errors in the formula were corrected only when wood and chocolate companies complained to Kodak about difficulties photographing their darker products for sale, not in regard to how the film portrayed people of color.<sup>5</sup> Jones used the wood's natural tones to manipulate her subjects' skin color in a similar fashion. Her intentional use of materials and perspective create a series of portraits that address how hair influences Black identity while also serving as an impetus for conversations about the history of discrimination.

Also produced between 2016 and 2018, *The Brown Paper Bag Test*, another work in *The Colorism Project* thesis exhibition, addresses discrimination and its history similarly to the *Hair Identity* portraits but with a more explicit focus on skin color. This piece consists of over three hundred charcoal and chalk pastel portraits of Black women done on standard brown paper lunch bags. When displayed, the portraits are arranged in a large grid pattern on a wall,





Ashley A. Jones, *Hair Identity* #9, *Hair Identity* #2, *Hair Identity* #6, 2016-2018

with other labeled bags interspersed that show, according to Jones, “every single word...[Black people] were called” from the arrival of the first enslaved Africans in America to the opening of the show in 2018.<sup>6</sup> The name of this work is taken from the discriminatory “brown paper bag test,” which historically compares one’s skin tone to the shade of a common brown paper bag in order to create a “color caste system in which one’s social mobility and communal value is recognized, based on phenotypically approximating, or certainly not being darker than, the light-to-middle brown tone one sees in kraft pulp shopping bags.”<sup>7</sup>

Across these works, Jones weaves together her personal experiences with discrimination, stories from other African Americans, and broader Black history to create art that is equal parts dramatic and informative. This form of colorism is something Jones has encountered directly. While attending college, she sought to join a sorority at her historically Black university, only to be turned away when her skin was determined to be the same color as the brown bag, and the group was seeking darker girls. As she talked to the women portrayed in her drawings, Jones occasionally asked if it was ok to render their unidentified portraits with a skin tone that was lighter or darker than their actual skin tone. Women that took her up on this change, according to Jones, made remarks about how they always wanted to have a slightly different skin tone.<sup>8</sup> *With The Brown Paper Bag Test*, Jones shines a spotlight on discrimination within the African American community—one that also highlights the injustices experienced at the hands of a white supremacist culture at large. Across her works, Jones celebrates Black identity while at the same time providing difficult lessons on the history of prejudice and its persistent cultural impacts.

ELIJAH Z. CORDREY



Ashley A. Jones, *Our Color Theory* #1, *Our Color Theory* #4, 2017

# REFLECTING ON MAGNIFICENT MOTOWN

AARON J. JOHNSON

## WOMEN OF VISIONS MAGNIFICENT MOTOWN! ART INSPIRED BY THE MUSIC

Saturday, June 19 - Saturday, September 25  
Saturdays, 12:00pm - 4:00pm  
Wednesdays, 5:00pm - 9:00pm

Opening Reception  
Saturday, June 19, 12:00pm - 8:00pm  
Kelly Strayhorn Theater

Pay What Makes You Happy!  
Buy Tickets Now



- Classic Motown retains its power to express Black aspiration and hope. For all its zeitgeistial profundity, Motown also directly speaks to the heart, underscoring the passion and pain of loves won and lost. Both aspects of Motown resonate deeply with the artists of Women of Visions. Their artists spoke to each domain, sometimes simultaneously. “Ain’t No Mountain High Enough,” “Tracks of My Tears,” and “Just

“Magnificent Motown evidences the ability of these distantly produced sounds to persist in three-dimensional space.”

My Imagination” connect with the artists’ own struggles with love, self-discovery, and illusion/delusion. So many of these songs speak especially well to women, not just through the voices of Martha Reeves or the Supremes or India Arie, but also through Smokey’s falsetto, Marvin’s vulnerability, Stevie’s sugary infatuations, and the lyrics of Ashford & Simpson and Robinson that told their stories.

Berry Gordy’s vision was to sell Black music to all of America by sidestepping politics. No matter. Fun fluff like “Dancing in the Street,” “Get Ready,” and even “Where Did Our Love Go” were coded anthems of coming change. With “What’s Going On”, Marvin Gaye dragged Gordy’s Motown unwillingly into the revolution that would not be televised. These works of resistance have a hold on the artists of Women of Visions. Several reflect not just the continuing relevance of “Living for the City” and “Mercy, Mercy Me,” but demonstrate how we have all returned to these classics over the years to make sense of our “Ball of Confusion.” The never-ending stream of state-sanctioned killings that took George Floyd (46), Breonna Taylor (26), Ahmaud Arbery (25), Tamir Rice (12), and Antwon Rose II (17) has validated Marvin Gaye

and Stevie Wonder as prophets in their own land. *Magnificent Motown* (2021) evidences the ability of these distantly produced sounds to persist in three-dimensional space. One astonishing thing about the works assembled here by Women of Visions is their sense of movement. For example, Pamela Cooper’s *Nowhere to Run* refuses to be frozen in time nor be confined by frame or canvas. The enduring persistence of Motown that swirls around these physical objects, keyed to the rhythmic and exuberant motion produced by the label’s superb musicians, The Funk Brothers, is reflected in these works that refuse to respect the boundaries of their frames or the confines of their pedestals. Motown may have done more than anything to show White America the human face of Black folks rejoicing in falling in love, despairing the end of the affair, and determined to make their world a better place. These artists affirm that.

AARON JOHNSON is an Assistant Professor of Music at the University of Pittsburgh

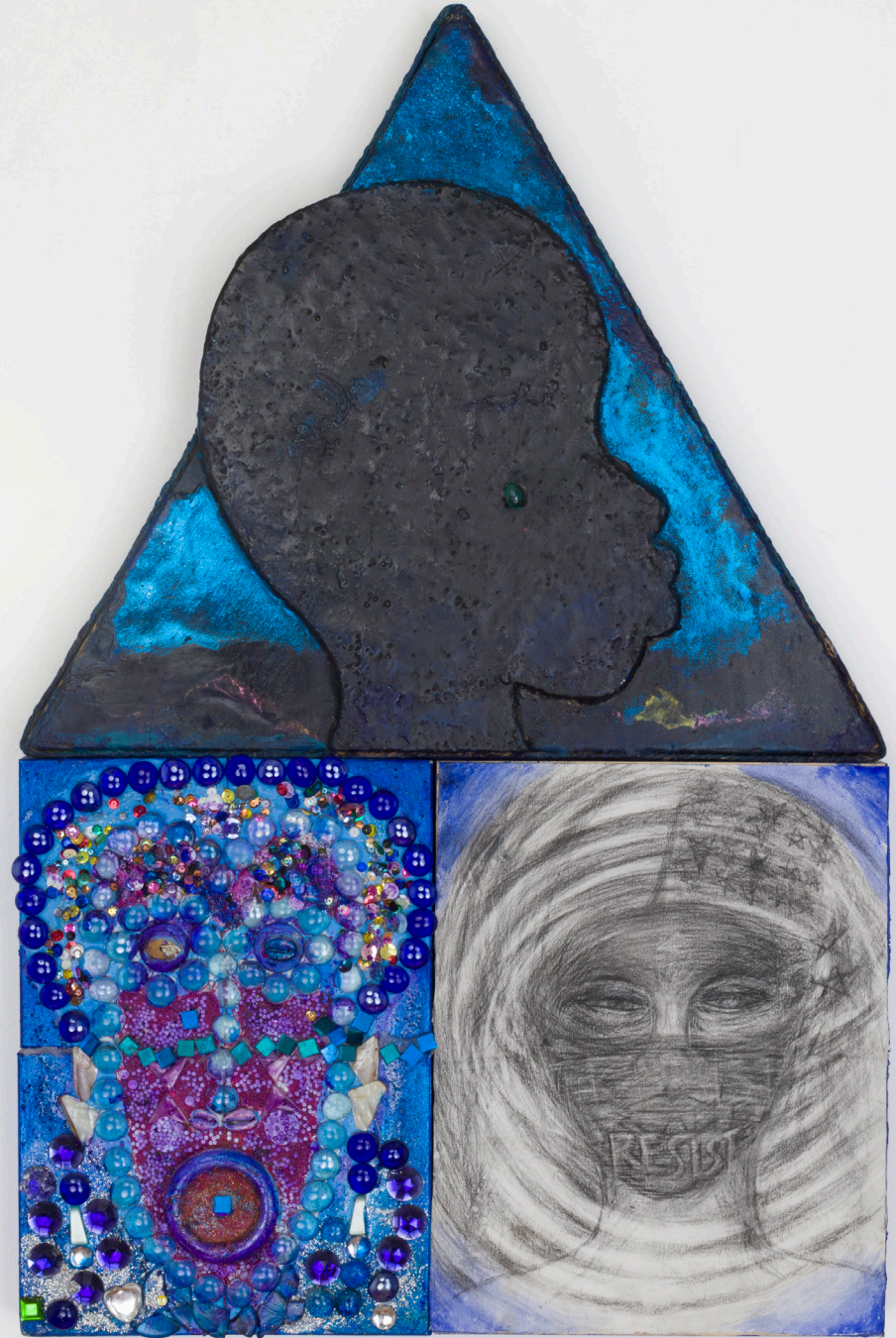


# CHARLOTTE KA

- With her complex installations and abstract paintings that channel the diversity of the Black experience, Charlotte Ka uses her art to express her free creative spirit. Ka's paintings, mosaics, and installations are often inspired by family memories, personal adventures, and historic events. She draws on these influences to demonstrate "the power of the spirit to overcome obstacles." Ka refers to her past as a rich tapestry of art, memory, and collaboration. While her early work focuses on the personal and the historical, Ka's more recent practice achieves more transcendent effects. Through "improvisation, rhythmic energy, and color fields," Ka's work emphasizes her passion for music, especially genres which originate in African and African American communities and with Black and African diasporic artistic practices.
- 

Growing up in Crestas Terrace, a small community just south of Braddock, Pennsylvania, Ka aspired to become an artist at a young age. She joined Group One—a progressive Pittsburgh group that included founding member of Women of Visions Juanita Miller—as its youngest member. Ka moved to New York City in the mid-1960s and began to connect with the city's rich artistic scene as a student at Cooper Union. In 1971, she became a member of Where We At, the influential New York collective of Black women artists, which began as the Where We At: Black Women Artists exhibition at the Acts of Art Gallery in Greenwich Village. Many of Ka's prints were made at Bob Blackburn's Printmaking Workshop, where Ka would also later teach. Ka's paintings from this period extend her engagement with the works of socially-engaged artists such as Blackburn and Robert Gwathmey, both of whom she studied with at Cooper Union.

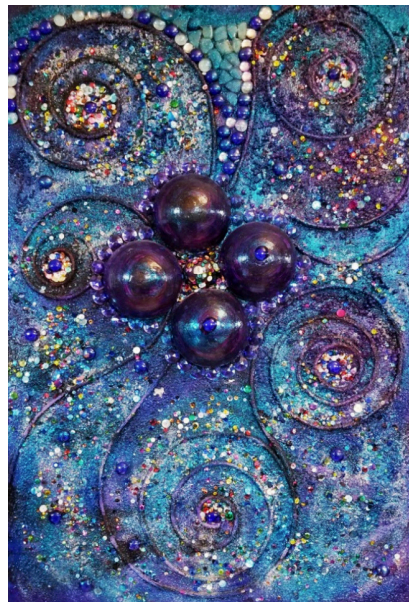
Ka returned to Pittsburgh in 1972 to begin her Bachelor of Fine Arts at Carnegie Institute of Technology. After graduating, she opened the Jade Gallery in 1976, a contemporary art space just across from Pittsburgh's Carnegie Museum of Art. She exhibited many artists including Women of Visions members Jo-Anne Bates and Juanita Miller. Alongside dancer Shona Sharif, another Women of Visions member, Ka also contributed to the innovative and interactive activities associated with the Carnegie Museum's "Imaginarium" education program, the hands-on program for diverse audiences founded by Betty Malezi-Hollingsworth in 1975. Such activities built on her contributions to Black art in Pittsburgh, commitments that persist to this day.







(previous page) Charlotte Ka, *Me Too Resist*  
 (current page, left) Charlotte Ka, *Grandma's Hands*  
 (current page, right) Charlotte Ka, *Passion Flower*



After moving back to New York City in 1980, Ka worked as an art teacher, an artist, and milliner. A 1986 photograph of Ka with artist Lorenzo Pace—taken by Black photographer Coreen Simpson for the exhibition *1 + 1 = 3*, curated by Charles Abramson and Senga Negudi—captures the sense of dynamic energy of the Where We At group. At this time, Ka was also producing sculpted leather hats, designs that were highlighted by several fashion columnists. Her small wearable art business has had a lasting impact on her practice, with her more recent figurative sculptures including elaborate hats and lavish garments made from feathers and tulle.

In the 1990s, Ka produced a series of important installations depicting Black history past and present. In *You Can Burn Down the Churches but You Cannot Burn Down The Church* (1997), she protests the mass arsons that demolished Southern Black churches. The installation included a seven-foot encaustic diptych embedded with hymns and rope intersected by a cross and the names of more than three hundred destroyed churches. In the center of the gallery, Ka created an intricate “everlasting circle” of dried flowers, religious artifacts, and other detritus. The sound for the work was provided by a sculpture of a Church lady sitting on a church pew, from whose purse a video of Ka singing ‘I’ve Been Buked and I’ve Been Scorned’ could be heard. (Ironically, this figure was later destroyed due to a fire in Ka’s Brooklyn studio.) This work served to process the ongoing mistreatment of her community and reinforces Ka’s belief that our spirits are stronger than hate.

Another of Ka’s installations from this period, *Grandma's Hands*, presents an installation which alludes to the forced labor endured by her enslaved ancestors. Washboards surround a distressed off-white altar showing the pictures of matriarchs who made an impact on the artist’s life. As she explains of other works from this period that depict the immorality of slavery, Ka returned to this subject to “symbolize our ability to transcend, change, and rise above transgressions” and to “denounce racism, sexism, and classism.” The forms of tableau, relief, and assemblage in these works led directly to her more recent experimentations with the material of encaustic works, in which Ka was able to embed photographic imagery and small objects. Ka recalls that she grew up opposite a rootworker—or practitioner of Black folk magic—by the name of Mother Diggs, and many of her early encaustic paintings look like mysterious reliquaries for secret knowledge.

Ka’s most recent work animates vibrant fields of abstract color with surface details in rope and glass beads but even these expressive works relate to real-world experiences. *Passion Flower* (2018–21), for instance, was created as a way to pay homage to the renowned jazz composer Billy Strayhorn. As a gay man, Strayhorn’s vibrant energy sparkles on the canvas as the scintillating artwork imitates his performance of a passionate piano solo. These works also seek more expansive aesthetic effects, or, as Ka has explained, they “illuminate through color and brilliance the healing and loving power of the spirit and reflect my search for universal truth and beauty.” Such goals have been furthered through Ka’s cofounding, with her partner Mobutu, the MOKA (Mecca of Kulture and Art) in Pittsburgh’s storied Black neighborhood, the Hill District. Helping to rebuild the Hill District’s cultural life, the gallery invites visitors to reflect on the artworks it presents. Among the powerful works on view are, of course, Ka’s own creations: colorful, expressive, and filled with life, they capture the same exploratory freedom that has defined her entire career.

ABREIHONA LENIHAN



(Above and below) Charlotte Ka, *You Can Burn Down the Churches But You Cannot Burn Down the Church*



# LAVERNE KEMP

- Woven fabrics are made by intertwining different materials together to create something new. The vibrantly colored and patterned works of fiber artist LaVerne Kemp do just that while also embodying a broader interconnectedness that unites her work across media. “Each piece of my work has a spirit of its own,” LaVerne explains. “My work is forever changing, forever growing, forever maturing, just as I am, as a woman, an artist, and a Christian.” In her forty-three years of practice, LaVerne’s work has continually built upon itself, developing from her core weaving techniques to explore the possibilities of felting, quilting, *shibori* dyeing, and making considerable use of found objects in mixed-media constructions and jewelry.
- 

In the wall hanging *Rooted by Blood, The Journey of Ono and Hattie Bell*, for example, LaVerne weaves her own family tree. Made for the Women of Visions exhibition *Migrations*, the work contributed to the broader reflection on family migrations to the city of Pittsburgh.<sup>2</sup> For this work, LaVerne was inspired by a photograph of a family reunion that she stole from her father at just sixteen years old. The piece required extensive research to establish the identity of the relatives in the photograph, most of whom were unfamiliar to LaVerne. Given the history of enslavement within the United States, accessing a recorded familial history is especially difficult for African Americans because the records were often incomplete. This did not deter LaVerne, who was able to uncover the story of her great grandfather, Ono Kemp, who traveled from Virginia to Cecil Township, Pennsylvania in the early 1900s and went on to marry Hattie Bell Perkins. Together, they had 14 children—one of whom was LaVerne’s grandmother Ethel.<sup>3</sup>

*Rooted by Blood, The Journey of Ono and Hattie Bell* is a depiction of the way people and nature can mirror each other. LaVerne uses red and green yarn to connect each photograph of her family tree, with the strings representing each person’s lifeline. LaVerne uses green string for her living relatives and red for those who are deceased, producing a visual representation of the roots of her family at that time. Like real trees, LaVerne’s tree has hidden foundational roots; there is so much underneath that is unknown, and viewers will never see the family’s full connections. By making this large wall hanging a patchwork construction, she also speaks to the idea of bringing family together, that people can be separated and connected again.





(previous page) LaVerne Kemp, *Connected at the Roots*, 2020  
 (current page, left) LaVerne Kemp, *Rooted by Blood, The Journey of Ono and Hattie Bell*, 2012  
 (current page, right) LaVerne Kemp, *Circus Coat*, 2015



LaVerne weaves together golden yellow and forest green squares of fabric and makes her own photographic transfers onto cotton muslin. The labor that it took to make the piece speaks to its name, *Rooted by Blood*. Through this piece, it is clear LaVerne dedicated herself to finding a way to pay tribute to her family with unwavering passion.

LaVerne's artistic practice includes making wearable art, much of which is defined by eye-catching and bold color. She is constantly finding ways to incorporate her style into all that she does. Further, LaVerne is not one to waste—she is constantly integrating found materials such as fabrics, upholstery, and a mix of handwoven garments that she has accumulated from second-hand stores and antique shops. For a 2005 exhibition at the Heinz History Center, *Striving: Contemporary African American Artists of Pittsburgh*, LaVerne titled her fiber-based contribution *Mendin' and Patchin'*. This spirit of creative reuse and making-do continues to run throughout her work.

In her extravagant *Circus Coat*—a title that conjures the fun and whimsy of theater costumes—LaVerne incorporates a patchwork of fabrics in the final piece. First and foremost, LaVerne is a weaver, and she creates fabrics with patterns and colors that are completely her own. The mix-and-match patterns and contrasting colors bring the garment to life. Though each piece of fabric may seem random, LaVerne cohesively combines the elements to make the coat into a work of wearable art. The style of this coat is influenced by traditional African apparel while also embracing a playful, child-like energy—an energy that reflects LaVerne's love for teaching and her appreciation of children's enthusiastic creativity.

LaVerne describes herself as a “lifelong student,” and is constantly trying to build her own skills and techniques to expand her practice.<sup>4</sup> LaVerne's self-taught techniques include her use of *shibori* dyeing, an ancient Japanese technique first done by Emperor Shomu in the eighth century before being adopted by lower class citizens.<sup>5</sup> LaVerne uses this technique in *Indigo Shibori Sashiko Stitched Pillow*, in which upcycled fabrics are arranged in a patchwork pattern upon a *shibori* dyed pillow, each square exhibiting LaVerne's use of a unique pattern. This creation expands the conventionally decorative purposes of a throw pillow while using home decor to pay tribute to family heritage. Each element of this piece carries the theme of family and home. For instance, one of the patches is the pocket from an old pair of denim jeans, providing a personal, timeworn element to the object. The pillow provides a tactile expression of family connection, becoming part of life much like a childhood teddy bear or an heirloom quilt.

As this cushion helps suggest, LaVerne's art is designed to become part of everyday life, but its significance reaches far beyond the ordinary. Her unique combinations of materials create new visual effects and sensations that express a powerful creative vision, one that embraces personal experiences and family connections. Perhaps this is the spirit that LaVerne's work channels—a life force woven into her art, an energy felt by all who encounter her creations.

MEARA ANGELA “YARA” MAKASAKIT



LaVerne Kemp, *If Trees Could Talk*, 2019



# REFLECTING ON STORYTELLERS: TRUTH BE TOLD

SAMUEL W BLACK

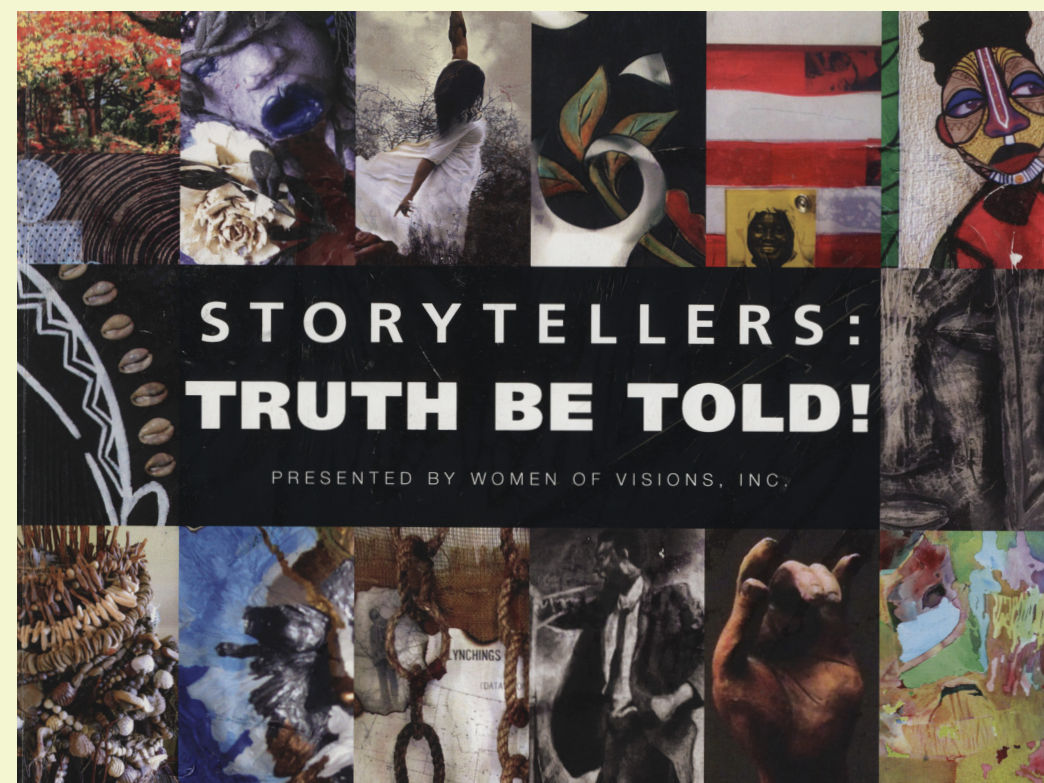
- I first learned of Women of Visions in 2002, when organizing an exhibit of fiber art and quilts for the Heinz History Center. The show was called *Bold Improvisations: 120 Years of African American Quilts* and drew from the collection of Nelson-Atkins Museum curator Scott Heffley. My plan was to add quilts from local quilt-makers and fiber artists. This led me to the African American Heritage Quilters Guild, which held many members of the WOV. It was during this project that I met Tina Williams Brewer, the late Sandra German, Christine Bethea, Ruth Ward, and other artists who claimed membership in various quilting guilds and WOV at the same time. In 2010, I worked with Tina Brewer to mount *It Happened: The Courier Was There*, a collection of ten fiber art pieces reflecting the principles of Kwanzaa and one hundred years of the *Pittsburgh Courier* newspaper. The exhibit was realized at the Heinz History Center in time for the thirty-second annual conference of the Association of African American Museums.

When I was approached by Women of Visions in 2014 to serve as one of two jurors for *Storytellers: Truth Be Told*, I was pleased to continue my professional and personal relationship with many of these artists. I was joined by internationally acclaimed artist and educator Ann Tanksley to judge the show that would be exhibited at the Pittsburgh Center for the Arts. *Storytellers* exceeded my expectations. There were twenty-four artists in the show. The diverse media, style, and composition made it difficult to judge but exciting to see. As usual, Women of Visions would bring together a group of extremely talented artists.

The theme of the show was the “storyteller” or, in West African tradition, the “griot.” Each

artist assumed the role of the griot and used the art to tell a particular story or aspect of cultural aesthetic. In West African tradition, the griot’s story is expressive and helps the listener to visualize the narrative. The griot physically acts out the story to help illustrate the event. In the exhibition, each artist used the griot tradition to help the viewer visualize the message the work of art was expressing. The fact that all artists in the show were women meant that each griot expressed an aspect of the life, culture, and spirit of women of the African Diaspora.

As a juror, one of the awards was given in my name. The Samuel W Black Award went to the work “The Village” by Yvonne Palkowitsh. “The visual depiction of the African proverb, ‘It takes a Village to raise a child,’ speaks in many different ways,” I wrote at the time. “It conjures the spiritual power of village hands, mostly male hands, pulling the female child/woman up from the dry, brown, deadened existence to greater heights.” The work reminded me of one of my favorite artists, Hughey Lee Smith, and the barren landscapes he uses to provide a neutral setting for the subject. “This work speaks so much about the decadent experience of African Americans who have time and time again resurrected their humanity from the dead, decaying oppression of the American experience.” *Storytellers* was indicative of the quality of art and thoughtful exhibitions that WOV has become renowned for. For forty years this group of African American artists has made thought-provoking art that reflects our cultural practices, political consciousness, spiritual reference, and humanity.



SAMUEL W BLACK is the Director of African American Programs at the Senator John Heinz History Center

# REFLECTING ON BEYOND AND BEHIND THE MASK

LESLIE ROSE

- As a conceptual and physical object, the mask possesses immeasurable artistic lineage, inspiration, and potential. For the exhibition *Beyond and Behind the Mask* (2001), Women of Vision invited African American artists from across the country to “revisit the metaphor of the mask.” Rejecting the pure aestheticization of the African mask popularized by modern art, the exhibition centered on the object’s aesthetic, psychological, and spiritual roles within African and African American culture.

“Returning to one’s roots allows one to achieve their full potential in the future.”

Artist Willis “Bing” Davis, the sole juror for the exhibition, looked back to ancestral African heritage as a guide to the exhibition. “We have a great future in our past,” he wrote. His words recall a core tenet of West African cultural practice. Returning to one’s roots allows one to achieve their full potential in the future. In order to address the importance of the mask today, *Beyond and Behind the Mask* began by returning to its significance on the African continent.

For the exhibition, members of Women of Visions studied the masquerade traditions of the Sande Society—a female initiation society in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea, and the Ivory

Coast. Works featured in the exhibition, such as Beatrice LeBreton’s *Passi-Moto Passi-Bongo: Half Being, Half Wood* and L’Merchie Frazier’s *The Vibratory Holler: The Divas Gelede Mask*, reflect on the central role women have across a range of African cosmologies. Further examination also revealed the role that men hold in creating and activating masks within African masquerade practices, a subject that saw male artists invited to revisit the object too.

Other featured artists reworked the iconographic forms of African masks to reflect contemporary African and African American experiences. For example, in Robert E. Peppers’s *Turf Effigy: Rwanda*, winner of the “Best in Show” award, the artist presented an abstracted, gnarled mask-like form over a woman’s face, reflecting the violent state of affairs in a country then torn apart by genocide, civil war, and famine. As a work such as this confirms, *Beyond and Behind the Mask* reclaimed and revived the African mask’s force, richness, and significance not only for its long cultural history, but as a symbol that can powerfully engage the experiences of humanity today.

beyond  
and  
behind  
the  
mask

EXHIBITING ARTISTS

John Martin Bey  
Sharif Bey  
BIKO

Tina Williams Brewer  
Kevin E. Cole  
Larry W. Collins  
Robert H. Cook  
Willis “Bing” Davis  
Jacqui Dorsey  
Elizabeth Asche-Douglas  
L’Merchie Frazier  
Sandra K. German  
Vanessa L. German  
Wendell Gordon  
Earline M. Green  
Charlotte Ka  
Gary J. Kirksey  
Béatrice Lebreton  
Eric Mack  
Mitchell Melson  
Iris Dawn Parker  
Robert E. Peppers  
Carlos F. Peterson  
Teri Richardson  
Theresa Polley Shellcroft  
Ra-Shell Shumate  
TENANCHE  
Tanya Thompson  
Rickey Warren  
Jack White



Béatrice Lebreton  
2001  
*Passi-motto Passi-bongo: Ancestral Song (Half Being, Half Wood)*  
Mixed media on canvas  
24" x 36"

LESLIE ROSE is an alumna of the Department of History of Art and Architecture at the University of Pittsburgh and a recent MA graduate from African Studies at Yale University



# MARY MARTIN



Mary Martin, *Severed Ties III/Reciprocity*, from 'Soul Claps' series, 2020

- Mary Martin's artistic practice focuses on the concept of reciprocity as an essential mechanism. Ceramic objects act as vessels for the artist to share her story and foster the inclusion of others' voices that are too often ignored in society. The Pittsburgh native has spent the past twenty years as an arts educator sharing the fruits of her inspiring work with the community that raised her and cultivating the next generation of thoughtful and impassioned creators. Often using West African-inspired patterns and motifs, Martin focuses many of her art pieces on the journey that encompasses embracing one's identity as it relates to community, heritage, and family life. "There are just so many lessons about life that have happened through the making of things, the making of objects," she explains. "There's so much gratification in bringing beauty into people's lives, reminding people of things we easily overlook."<sup>1</sup>
- 

Martin's use of understated symbols, like hands and circles, indicates this appreciation for things often overlooked and the nuances of daily life. The power of these universal symbols is well represented in an art piece from her *Round Dream* series. The shallow ceramic bowl pictures the *hamsa* symbol, which denotes a divine hand in many religious cultures around the world.<sup>2</sup> This symbol rests against a vivid yellow background. Martin's use of color and pattern signifies divine light, while the intricate lines, patterns, and flower placed at the center of the palm allude to interdimensional divine power. This effect is achieved by using a wax resist technique, a process similar to those which traditional artisans use in making traditional African *adire* textiles. As a devout Muslim, Martin integrates prayer and religious traditions into many of her artworks and considers creation a natural part of spiritual life. The meditative process of molding and throwing clay, as well as the tedious etching process, serves as a reminder that great things take time and consideration.

In work from Martin's *Severed Ties* series, two molded hands are positioned at opposite ends of an intertwined rope. As usual in her work, the hands are open and in a receiving position, never closed. Martin considers hands "spiritual containers."<sup>3</sup> This piece is a manifestation of the physical strain between her and her son after he left for college. The medallions placed at the palms of the hands represent her son's responsibility to maintain the cultural and



Mary Martin, *Hair Ties I*, 2017



Mary Martin, *Hamsa*, from 'Round Dreams' series, 2019



Mary Martin, *A Seat at the Table*, from 'Shattered Dreams' series, 2018

religious values she's impressed upon him. The duality of the deep red clay and the brassy but somewhat muted medallions represents the high-strung emotions involved in her son's departure, yet also the values that ground their relationship.

Many of Martin's ceramics are meant to be functional as well as beautiful. The utility of her art acts as a bridge bringing people together and drawing a connection to ceremonial gathering. In the teapot titled *Hair Ties I*, Martin draws on African cultural tradition to explore her heritage and the Black experience. This is one piece in a series of teapots that depict the profiles of women with different braided hairstyles and headpieces. The stark black lines that pattern the crown of the woman's head are created by the process of etching into the pot's surface before firing. The figure looks calm and reflective with her eyes closed, possibly in prayer. The contemplative attitude is portrayed through delicate lines and a glazed surface finish. Without being too overt in her message, Martin portrays a deep sense of reverence for her ancestry and the rituals of that culture. The teapot's form is meant to be something passed around and shared, a ceremonial practice that echoes ancestral traditions.

The preservation of Black heritage is crucial to Martin's work. Martin's incorporation of the Ghanaian *sankofa* symbol into her art exemplifies her retrieval of traditional practices. The *sankofa* figure is a favorite of Martin's, and its significance lies in its reflective meaning: looking to the past to develop a deeper knowledge for the future. Martin's artistic identity depends on such references to African symbolism to express her experience as a Black creator. As she explains, "I see my work as a continuum. It excites me to have a connectivity to an unbroken chain of artists with a common language. I know that some things that I make are subconscious decisions. It is exciting to discover an artist that connects with my work through the medium, process, content, or imagery. It's that common language that runs deep as the rivers that Langston [Hughes] spoke about."<sup>4</sup>

In exploring her identity as an African American woman, Martin acknowledges the profound loss of Black lives and stories that have stricken her community locally and internationally. To heal through her art and rewrite the narrative thrust on the Black community, Martin created a series of ceramic plates for the *Patterns of Injustice* (2016) exhibition featuring portraits of Black individuals who have lost their lives to police and gun violence. One such portrait pictures Michael Brown of Ferguson, Missouri. The image is printed in black and features two hands held up behind him, referencing the "hands up, don't shoot" phrase to commemorate Brown's tragic death. Drawing on Judy Chicago's famous *Dinner Party* installation (1974-9), this work brought together an array of table settings to give voices to the Black individuals who lost their lives due to senseless violence. Martin's inspiration for this table setting was to imagine what these people would say if they were still alive, how they would interact with one another and share their messages.

Through confronting such social contexts, Martin's art provides a space for viewers to contemplate their own identities, spirituality, and place in their world. Describing a past project, Martin explains that she wanted to create "a space where people came and saw reflections of themselves."<sup>5</sup> This sentiment characterizes her practice more generally. Martin's art creates a sense of safety and tranquility for all of those who interact with it. Fostering opportunity for growth and deeper understanding of life are defining factors of her approach to artistic practice. As she memorably put it in a 2005 artist statement, "Art is a candid conversation connecting the soul of the artist to the art audience ... These mediums of expression allow me to piece together my past, weave it into the present that manifests itself into visions of the future."<sup>6</sup>

CELIA KAINE





- Altha Pittrell works with a variety of materials to create compositions filled with overlapping layers of color, patterns, and meanings. Her use of poems to supplement her works creates further opportunities to spark the viewer's imagination. Across these visual and textual elements, Pittrell produces interactive stories that invite exploration and reflection. Her engagement with
- both visual art and the written word correlates with her involvement in classes for children of all ages at Carnegie Library's Bathhouse Ceramic Studios in Braddock, Pennsylvania. Pittrell also draws inspiration for her ceramics from her childhood. She recalls, for example, her father digging clay from the ground in a forest near her childhood home, a material she could then turn into anything her hands could create.<sup>1</sup> This early exposure to the natural origins of clay is present in the persistence of organic themes, textures, and shapes, carrying a small piece of her childhood into her work with clay.

Pittrell combines her creative process and her engagement with natural imagery to show the physical and material connections she has with the act of making. She explains that for her, "Sculpting with clay and wheel throwing—it's a hands-on experience, it's a very personal thing." The overlapping textures and organic forms in Pittrell's work extend to her process as much as they do to her history. Her studio space is filled with music and the expressive atmosphere it helps create. In Pittrell's words: "I play jazz and music really loud in the studio. It's like a big party, and you learn how to block the world out and listen to the music and play with the clay."<sup>2</sup> Pittrell is also interested in the sensory dimensions of her work. In her piece *The Wind Mask* (2011), for instance, she utilizes text to enhance the experience of the work and its reference to an embodied experience of nature. A mixture of textures creates a space for the impression of a face hidden within the mask's swirling forms and organic relief.

Works such as *Mother* and *Crisés Visagé* engage with Pittrell's experiences grappling with personal stories and the ways they can serve as a form of healing. Pittrell's practice, though not initially intended to be a form of therapeutic release, has become healing for both herself and for those who engage with her work. Her pieces are often deeply personal. "A lot of those pieces kept me going through college because of all my emotions," she says of her early



Altha Pittrell, *Crisés Visagé*, 2021



Altha Pittrell, *Mother*, 2009/2015



Altha Pittrell, *Gold Nugget*, 2006/2021

works. “Real tears are in the clay.” Art became a way for Pittrell to express herself during times of struggle. “I think God directs my hand,” she explains. “It’s not something I plan to make. I just go in with the clay and learn about the properties of clay. Clay really talks to you—it tells you what to do. If you’re that focused, then it will tell you where to move it, and how to frame it, and how to make it.” For Pittrell, the material voice she channels through the clay is intimately connected to her writing process: “In making it, the poetry comes along ... When you are doing one in one hand and writing in the other hand, it comes along that way.”<sup>3</sup> The intuitive journey Pittrell describes as essential to her art-making process is evident in the sense of exploration her works provoke within the viewer.

Pittrell describes her sculptural bowl *Mother* as a “signature piece,” filled with the kind of profound emotion that characterizes her practice. She created this piece at a time of loss during her college years, when her mother’s time left with her family grew short. In this object, Pittrell creates an open and warped bowl-like form with sharp edges, collapsing in on itself on the sides. The work’s interior is painted bright red with vivid colors and metallics in geometric shapes that contrast with its mostly black exterior. Calling back to her early experiences with clay, the texture of the ceramic form is naturalistic, characterized by crevices, bumps, and ridges on a warped path and patterns that suggest insects. Pittrell connects the physical process of making this work to its subject. “I used my elbow where you can see the part of the vase that dips down, elbow and hands, and the centipedes are all the people that came in and out of her life... she was a mother to everybody,” she says. “If you were my friend, you would be her child.”<sup>4</sup> Such personal symbolism is paired with expressive poetry. On her website, the poem accompanying *Mother* reads:

She is like no other... I loved and Adored her... my Mother, A Rose of a Woman who  
Birthed Eight children but Mothered all she came in contact with. She Loved and  
cared for mankind and would give her Last. She helped those that Needed and  
Asked and those that didn’t....<sup>5</sup>

Another important work is *Crisés Visagé*, a vase-like sculpture comprised of overlapping faces. This sculpture was inspired by Pittrell’s son and his battle with epilepsy. “I could look at you and you could look at me, and you would never know that I have a seizure disorder ... and the words come from exactly what the situation is.” Pittrell describes this as her reason for using “misshapen” profiles to sculpt “the faces of different people that have seizures ... I was artistic in designing them because you never know until somebody tells you.”<sup>6</sup> Pittrell enhances the storytelling element of this sculpture through its corresponding poem:

Seizures Faces are many Places  
My Veneer is so Clear  
CRISES VISAGE  
Perhaps !! Maybe Born this way I longed to say  
Ready, Being me  
My Cerveau, My Brain Changed  
Forever.. Endeavors...<sup>7</sup>

Pittrell’s resonant language and evocative suggestion of multilayered, multiple identities complements the harlequin jigsaw of her ceramic portrait.

Pittrell is as passionate about the creation of her art as she is about its influence on those around her. She aims for her art to strengthen these connections. “I talk to them about the way I feel so that they could feel it also,” Pittrell explains.<sup>8</sup> This focus on feeling is further emphasized by her approach to her materials, with which she creates forms and textures that seem to invite us to connect with the hands of their maker. Pittrell’s unique and multilayered work brings together image and text to draw from and reflect on her own experiences and to reach out and connect with others.

ELIZABETH DRAGUS



# REFLECTING ON FEMININE AESTHETICS

MARA HASSAN

- How can we understand the diverse manifestations of beauty that surround us? For *Feminine Aesthetics* (2013), artist and exhibit curator Elizabeth “Betty” Asche Douglas argues that
- beauty is not subjective, instead conceptualizing the idea as an objective reality. Everything truthful has beauty, and such truth can be uncovered through aesthetic production, Douglas suggests. All of the artists in this exhibition engage with the discursive possibilities of bodies, people, places, things, and feelings to highlight the essential diversity of beauty in the aesthetic sphere. A through line among these works is that *beauty*—as an aesthetic dimension of life, as a deep sense of self, as a visceral feeling—can be located in the most quotidian places. Beauty is in the face of a mother, the materiality of discarded matter, decaying concrete, and our family’s possessions. Beauty is right in front of our faces, under our noses, and around us at all times—all the while being found in ourselves as well.


“Many things are beautiful to me. Living life is beautiful,” says Altha Pittrell, a member of Women of Visions featured in *Feminine*

“A through-line among these works is that beauty... can be located in the most quotidian places.”


*Aesthetics*. Life, and the intimate spirit of loving, envelope the objects on display—threads of care, tenderness, and relationships weave their way into the air of the works. There is a productive tension, however, that pushes and pulls between the theme of the exhibition and those whose works are exhibited. It will forever be human nature to attempt to define beauty, either by assigning a face to it, a name to it, or an aesthetic to it. That is what the artists in *Feminine Aesthetics* attempt, a show whose very *raison d’être* was to demonstrate that beauty is omnipresent in life, found in the truthfulness of existence, and not just in the particularity of faces, places, and aesthetics. Animated by this search for beauty, *Feminine Aesthetics* holds space for the personal, the human, and all that decays and grows—the true locus of care and love.

MARA HASSAN is a 2021–22 Hot Metal Bridge Fellow in History of Art and Architecture at the University of Pittsburgh

*Feminine Aesthetics*



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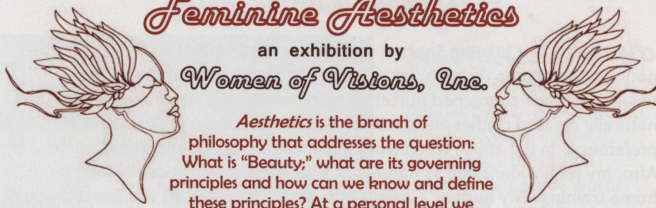


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*Women of Visions, Inc.*

Cathleen Richardson Bailey  
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Vanessa German  
Tenanche Rose Golden  
Annette Jackson  
Denise “Miki” Johnson  
LaVerne Kemp  
Mary Martin  
Altha Pittrell  
Ruth G. Richardson  
Elizabeth Asche Douglas  
(Curator)

709 PENN GALLERY  
22 FEB - 31 MAR 2013

*Feminine Aesthetics*  
an exhibition by  
*Women of Visions, Inc.*



*Aesthetics* is the branch of philosophy that addresses the question: What is “Beauty,” what are its governing principles and how can we know and define these principles? At a personal level we tend to consider beautiful those things that please our senses. These considerations lie at the heart of the arts.

*The Feminine Aesthetic, integral to the universe, flows from grace and aspiration. It is the conflation of sublime opposites, from agonizing birth pangs to the exultation of new life. From the milk of human kindness to a steely determination to endure and overcome all adversity, it embodies the eternal SHE, the being we call “Beauty.”*

*Beauty* lies in much more than the mere eye of the beholder. That notion is the simplistic assertion of a shallow late 19th-Century Romanticism. Unfortunately, it continues to be cited as gospel by far too many. I disavow it and embrace a global view, evident in all cultures, that finds beauty a *moral presence in the universe* that we humans can glimpse only partly. Those who sense it try to show and share it in their lives and works.

I maintain that the process of aesthetic (or artistic) communication involves three essential elements:

- 1) a living experience that reveals an aspect of universal beauty;
- 2) the making of a creative product or performance by an individual or group of persons to express that experience; and
- 3) an emotional and/or intellectual evaluation of the work or performance by one or more respondents.

*Beauty* disdains the merely “pretty” as an accident of superficial appearance, seductive in its amoral appeal. The English Romantic poet John Keats, borrowing from the neo-Classical painter Joshua Reynolds, concluded in his “Ode on a Grecian Urn,” “Beauty is truth, truth, beauty. That is all ye know on earth and all ye need to know.” Less mystifying is the observation of the ancient Chinese philosopher Confucius: “Everything has beauty, but not everyone sees it.” I believe it is the artist’s mission to explore and reveal that beauty, even when it resides in what some may find ugly.

*Though barely scratching the surface, it is my hope that viewers will find glimmers of the feminine aesthetic mystique in the works in this exhibition.*

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# DOMINIQUE SCAIFE

- Dominique Scaife is a self-taught sculptor who works with clay to create figures that embody her heritage and encourage confidence. Before she discovered polymer clay, she found artistic outlets in her everyday life: the way she dressed, braided her hair, or even color-coded documents while working as a medical coder in corporate America. Though Scaife only began to exhibit her art in 2016, she has always been interested in the use of visual imagery to communicate and explore her identity.

Scaife initially turned to clay modeling as a therapeutic outlet and found a spiritual and physical connection to the material. While most sculptors use kiln-fired clays, Scaife prefers polymer clay to create her works. Her use of materials is free and spontaneous, combining three brands of polymer clay to get the colors she wants, skipping the “sketching phase,” and applying a variety of household items as tools to create texture and other surface designs.<sup>1</sup> She connects to the clay through how it feels between her fingers. As she works, she uses this sensory connection to develop a story about the figure, which she reflects in the development of the work. For Scaife, working with clay allows her to communicate in ways that she cannot through words; she considers this an extension of her practice as a “poet at heart.” While poetry is something she creates for herself, she also uses these texts in the descriptions she writes for each sculpture. The two media work in tandem with each other to convey difficult subjects in a more comprehensive manner. Some might find more resonance within the sculpture or the poems, while others may find meaning through the combination of the two.<sup>2</sup>

Scaife’s love of wordplay and poetic storytelling are important elements in her art, often adding ironic and nuanced depth to her pieces. In *Knot Today* (2016), a woman wears Bantu knots, a protective hairstyle within African and African American culture.<sup>3</sup> Scaife’s clever wordplay in the title refers to both the hairstyle and a resistance to conformity. This resistance forwards ideas of cultural pride and free expression, qualities she embraces in all her artworks. In a later sculpture, *We Real Cool* (2017), Scaife further explores poetry by directly referencing Gwendolyn Brooks’s 1959 poem of the same name. Brooks’s iconic poem acknowledges the costs of teenage rebellion while also celebrating the freedom of youth, a sentiment expressed







(previous page) Dominique Scaife, *World Melanation* #10, 2019  
 (current page) Dominique Scaife, *Untitled Clay Baby*, 2015



Dominique Scaife, *We Real Cool*, 2017  
 Dominique Scaife, *Knot Today*, 2016



all within a short second stanza “We real cool. We/ Left school. We/...”<sup>4</sup> Scaife’s poetic description evokes a similar sense of confidence in one’s identity, while her text celebrates freedom not through rebellion but through finding coolness in one’s self:

We real cool  
 That’s what they say  
 . . . . .  
 This is about you  
 This is for you  
 Recognizing the essence of who we are<sup>5</sup>

Through this text, Scaife encourages confidence in Black identity by capturing the “vastness of who we are as a people, our culture, our style, our essence,” in order to, “share that beauty with the world.”<sup>6</sup>

Scaife’s emphasis on Black beauty is exemplified through her work *To Coronate Her* (2018), which shows a woman crowning a young girl. This piece is complemented by a text that conveys the importance of raising young Black girls to be confident in themselves and the person they will grow up to be. Confidence and pride in one’s identity also became a focus of her 2019 exhibition, *World Melanation: A Celebration of Hue*. In this exhibit, her sculptures hold their heads up high, imbuing the portrait busts with an air of regal confidence. Adorned with jewelry, their long necks end at the pedestal, omitting the rest of their human form. Focusing on their faces deters objectification of the female body and, in doing so, highlights women’s identities and celebrates the diversity of their experiences and skin tones.

Though Scaife’s busts represent a variety of Black women, their exact identity remains indeterminate. The artist has explained that she is inspired by women she sees in passing on the street, or even in the array of photographs available on social media. They could be any Black woman, and, in this way, one might interpret them as representing all Black women. This openness is further demonstrated in the titles of each bust; though Scaife is known for wordplay, she instead labeled these pieces with numbers. Like all her sculptures, each of the twenty busts from *World Melanation* have their eyes closed. Scaife envisions that this detail allows the sculptures to speak to their viewer: “I’m allowing you to gaze upon me,” she imagines them saying, thus giving the works agency in addition to a sense of peaceful repose and openness.<sup>7</sup> These elements contrast with classical busts, such as those from Ancient Greece and Rome, which generally depict white, male figures from elite society. In these ancient busts, both the status of these subjects and their direct gaze impose connotations of superiority. This quality calls for respect, even awe, rather than thoughtful contemplation. By allowing for a more open engagement with her figures, Scaife elevates the art of the sculptural bust while simultaneously transforming it into an art form defined by diversity and accessibility.

Accessibility remains a core issue for Scaife. When her daughter and nieces were young, she had difficulty finding dolls that looked like them, so she ordered doll blanks and made custom dolls for them.<sup>8</sup> While creating the dolls took a long time, Scaife enjoyed the process and considered adapting doll blanks that she could sell to kids around the world. In 2020 Scaife was chosen to participate in an incubator program run by a Pittsburgh non-profit co-working space, Prototype PGH, which allowed her to further expand this side project.<sup>9</sup> Now called Kool Image Dolls, Scaife’s business will manufacture dolls that come in a variety of skin tones. Like her sculptures, the dolls have stories of their own. Where her sculptures feature poems, Scaife’s dolls have videos that uplift children, provide adventurous storylines, and educate kids about Black history. As her work powerfully reveals, dolls are both sculptures and a way to bring art and representation into anyone’s home.

Scaife is a sculptor, entrepreneur, storyteller, and poet who is unapologetically herself. Through her practice, she encourages self-expression and pride in identity. These ideas have extended to her new business and will serve as a creative inspiration as she continues her journey in the art world and beyond.

SAMANTHA WERT

# RUTH WARD



Ruth Ward, *Reds and Browns*



Ruth Ward, *A Safe Cabin*

Ruth Ward is a quilter and mixed-media artist living in Pittsburgh. She began working with craft media in the early 1980s and became a member of Women of Visions in the late 1990s. Ward explains that her quilts “generally tell a story or send a message or have some relation to [her] life experience.” Ward’s quilting technique ranges from traditional to more experimental approaches. Whether it connects with her culture or her family traditions, Ward’s work is always purposeful and dense with meaning and symbolism. Her precise stitching and creative eye for color bring to life traditional quilted patterns of triangles and other geometric designs. Her quilt-making practice allows for ample creativity in storytelling, as is true of all the artistic media with which Ward has worked.

A notable example of Ward’s engagement with culture and community is her quilted depiction of Ruby Bridges. In this pictorial quilt, the subject is shown walking down the stairs of her school followed by a federal marshal. Ward created this moving representation of Bridges as a young girl breaking the barrier of segregation in a Mississippi elementary school by using several fabrics sewn on top of and around each other. A cloud of educational motifs and images, such as the cursive alphabet and animals like lizards and cats, floats above the subject’s head. Ward devotes close attention to the portrait of Bridges, which makes her the focus of the scene, rather than the blank-faced federal marshal following in her shining light. As an African American woman who grew up around the same period, Ward is familiar with Ruby Bridges’s experience growing up during a period of social and political unrest. Similarly, Ward describes another quilt, *May Pole Dancers* (2000), as inspired by “a memory of the time when I danced around the maypole with other second-graders of the ‘colored’ school of Lynch, Kentucky.” For all its nostalgia, this description cannot help but suggest the challenges of growing up in the segregated South.

Ward’s recent quilt, *Rhythm of the Drum* (2019), further captures the distinctive aesthetics of her approach. The quilt’s combination of stitched elements and patterns created using pigment illustrates Ward’s experimental blending of different textiles. This quilt depicts the full bodies of four people and portions of two others playing standing drums. Each figure’s hands are almost as large as the drums, while the rest of their bodies remain relatively proportionate.





Ruth Ward, *Playing with Fractals and the Baobab Tree*



Ruth Ward, *Ruby Bridges*

Playing with scale in this way causes the viewer to pay more attention to the subject matter, an internal rhythm that draws us into the scene and causes us to feel the drums driving the beat. The colorful fabric is reminiscent of *kente* cloth, a traditional Ghanaian textile made of interwoven silk and cotton. Such material references speak to Ward's heritage, and the subject of the drum circle itself celebrates this rich Ghanaian musical tradition.

This was not the first time that Ward drew on such references. In her quilt *Gye Nyame* (2000), for instance, Ward extends this cross-cultural interest by referring to the *adinkra* symbol for "only God." When Ward exhibited *Rhythm of The Drum* in a recent exhibition at Contemporary Craft's BNY Mellon Center Satellite Gallery, it was displayed above a second quilt representing the *sankofa* bird. *Sankofa* is a word and symbol from the Akan language of Ghana that literally translates to "to go back and get it."<sup>2</sup> This bird seems to be performing this very action; its feet face towards the left of the quilt while its head faces right, as if beginning to turn around. Though one can interpret the metaphorical meaning behind this symbol in myriad ways, most interpretations boil down to the importance of looking back at the past to prepare for and succeed in the future. In some depictions of the *sankofa* bird, gems or precious stones sit in its mouth, representing the wisdom it has retrieved from the past. In Ward's quilt, these gems are suggested by the green and blue circles below, although these shapes more closely resemble seeds. The creation of a quilted *sankofa* bird using patterned fabric carries great significance in Ward's practice, as her quilting talents make multiple references to her African heritage, synthesizing old and new, past and present.

In response to an earlier quilt titled *Connections* (2000), Ward explains that "the fabric used in this quilt symbolized the spiritual connection and cultural connection with a long-time friend."<sup>3</sup> The potential for quilts to foster connections extends to Ward's broad experience teaching the art of quilting to others. She has been a key member of the Kingsley Association of Quilters and the Nia Adult Quilt Guild, created within the Pittsburgh Young Men & Women's African Heritage Association's Nia Cultural Arts and Education Center.<sup>4</sup> *Nia* is a Swahili word that translates to "reason for living," and the culture and community fostered in this space are certainly captured within this idea.<sup>5</sup> After the Nia Center received a large donation of disaster blankets for the foster children they serve, Ward taught a group of volunteers how to quilt decorated covers to make the blankets more comfortable and fun. Ward's practice draws on her own personal history while also remaining deeply embedded in her community. Quilts record stories from the past, yet, as Ward's work confirms, they can also create new bonds as this laborious, intricate artform brings together new communities and cultivates new connections.

ANNETTE YAUGER



# REFLECTING ON CREATIVES IN THE ERA OF COVID-19

KALE SERRATO DOYEN

- I've spent the past year at the University of Pittsburgh despite having never been to Pittsburgh. The pandemic meant that I spent the duration of my Hot Metal Bridge Post-Baccalaureate Fellowship at home in Michigan, engaging with the program through a variety of remote learning platforms. Like many museum and gallery goers, I also engaged with art and artists virtually, and noticed that many cultural institutions presented exhibitions designed to respond to and reflect on these tumultuous times.

*Creatives in the Era of Covid-19* offered a unique perspective on the pandemic through the lens of the members of Women of Visions, a perspective that—from my own distanced encounter with the exhibition—suggests the critical insights of Black feminism and the intersectional approach to issues of gender, race, and class that it has advanced. While some viewed the pandemic as an “equalizer” for its global scale, its impact on individuals varied profoundly depending on geographical, social, and financial factors, among countless other considerations. In this exhibition, such impacts are refracted through the eyes of a diverse group of Black women who have, for forty years, persistently pushed back against the complex and compound matrix of inequality through their art.

While the works are personal reflections on the experience of the pandemic, they also point to the broader politics of 2020. Consider the trio of works by Lynne b and Charlotte Ka that opened the exhibition. Recurring throughout the exhibition like the virus, the image of the US flag in these works mutates to suggest meanings beyond its nationalistic symbolism. In Lynne b's *I'm OK. You're OK.*, the flag literally umbrellas a figure who is donning dismal news headlines.

Here, the figure is sheltered only by a false sense of security—the damage alluded to by the work's discursive downpour has already occurred, and its impacts remain ongoing. An abstracted background of stripes and a blue sky filled with stars echo the titular self-reassurance, a reference to the famous self-help book of the 1960s, demonstrating a patriotic ignorance performed by many in the United States whose view of the world is fixated on their own country. Ka's contribution, titled *Tears of Blood*, also uses the flag to allude to the violent legacy of slavery, as its red stripes bleed beneath an abstracted, decorated mask. These reminders of anti-Black violence, inherent to Americanism, are more than timely considering not only the disproportionate death toll posed by the virus in Black communities, but also the continued incidence of police brutality witnessed during the pandemic.

If these works confront viewers with the external realities of generational anti-Black violence in the US, other works look inward through imagery of the self and one's immediate surroundings. Altha Pittrell's *Crystal Sculpture*, for example, resonated with my own at-home reflections on the gendered dimensions of historically unpaid domestic labor. The exhibition's introductory text affirms that the works in the exhibition may mirror our own experiences of these current events, and this rings true as each artist brings a nuanced, personal perspective to their subject. The pandemic may have kept us all inside, but it has also prompted reflections with more expansive social ramifications.



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KALE DOYEN is a PhD student in History of Art and Architecture at the University of Pittsburgh and a 2020-21 Hot Metal Bridge Fellow



# JANET WATKINS

- Janet Watkins is a self-taught ceramicist who combines sculptural techniques and salvaged materials to create figurative sculptures animated by the beauty of nature. After her retirement, Watkins began exploring ceramics through a class hosted by the Union Project, a community arts organization in Pittsburgh's East End.<sup>1</sup> Watkins' creative pursuits were encouraged by
- family and friends, whether through making clay dolls with her granddaughters or creating a sculpture inspired by the memory of a friend. Despite only recently referring to herself as an artist, Watkins has quickly shown her work in a range of contexts, including exhibits at the Pittsburgh Center for the Arts, August Wilson African American Cultural Center, Union Project, and Indiana University of Pennsylvania's Kipp Gallery, among others.

Watkins's work is rooted in a personal and intimate connection to human encounters. A Pittsburgh native and retired banker, Watkins comes from a household where, as she explains, "if there was something you wanted, you just made it." This sense of practicality extends to her creative approach through working with both clay and recycled materials. Among her first pieces is a mosaic fence created in her backyard, constructed from recycled wood, bottles, and tile fragments found at a local resale store. A central mosaic panel incorporates a variety of colors but is dominated by vibrant shades of blue and green. The tile fragments are similar shapes and sizes, and the stones create a path to a blue ceramic flower.

An avid gardener, Watkins draws on imagery from her own garden of daffodils, peonies, roses, and more. "If I'm not in the studio, I'm out at my garden," Watkins explains of these interconnected interests. "I love the smell. I love the texture." Her interest in nature also surfaces in the functionality of the head-shaped vessels she calls *Potheads*.<sup>2</sup> Using a variety of colors and glazes, Watkins forms these clay *Potheads* into the shape of human bodies from the waist up, hollowed out to accommodate for plants or flower arrangements. In related works, Watkins has made wall-mounted pockets designed to be used in the same way, featuring simplified faces and closed eyes that recall forms of African masks. In the nine wall-mounted vases in her *Me Too* group, for example, Watkins uses the color of different types of clay to suggest an array of different skin colors. Across these works, Watkins's vessels inspire a future





(previous page) Janet Watkins, *Kissing the Sun*, 2021  
 (current page) Janet Watkins, *See No Evil*, 2019



Janet Watkins, *Victorian Ladies*, 2019

collaboration with the gardener or florist whose own creativity with flowers and plants enhances the pieces, providing endlessly elaborate hairdos that grow and change over time.

Watkins's engagement with the natural world is furthered by her choice of a material derived from the earth. "Clay has a mind of its own; you try to manipulate it, but sometimes clay does what it wants to do," she explains.<sup>3</sup> Watkins understands clay to have its own agency and memory. The *Potheds*' unique facial expressions and personalities achieve the sense of life that Watkins imagines emanating from her material—and foreshadow the living plants and flowers they are designed to eventually hold. Although the *Potheds* are not portraits, Watkins has explained that they are inspired by real people: "I may talk with someone and notice they have unique or unusual eyes, nose, or face. There are often times when I will dream of a sculpture and wake in the morning, wanting to run to the studio and begin a new piece."<sup>4</sup>

Watkins has also begun to use other materials such as wire and wood to extend her figurative ceramic sculptures. In one wall-mounted bust, an almost life-sized figure has hair made from recycled telephone wire, stripped to display its plethora of colors and tied together into a bun. The figure's shoulders and neck are decorated in shades of black, blues, greens, and purples through the stylized floral vine that trails across her shoulders. A fringe made of wire and clay beads, glazed to match the colors on the figure's body, hangs off the sculpture's lower edge. The striking contrast between the colors and materials illustrates the blend of colorful forms, patterns, and salvaged materials that runs throughout Watkins's practice. By giving recycled materials a second life through her art, Watkins's love for nature is alchemized into sustainable and beautiful action.

At the heart of Watkins's work is her love of exploring new ideas and discovering new techniques. "I am constantly learning and experimenting," she explains.<sup>5</sup> Although sculptural ceramics remains the focus of her work, Watkins's recent experiments in two-dimensional media continue to explore pattern and color through the human form. In a painting titled *Friendship*, for instance, Watkins depicts a cluster of three women of varying heights, all standing shoulder to shoulder. Each figure is different; their patterned dresses—in black and white triangles, red and pink dashes, and black and yellow circles—at first seem to clash but merge into a unified whole like flowering shrubs in a dense hedge. Here, the differences between these figures ultimately serve to emphasize their similarities. In Watkins's hands, each face is like a unique flower. Her art gives form to the endlessly variable beauty of nature and the expressive power of the human form.

SIENNA SMITH



● THE VISION OF SEERS

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**RUTH WARD**

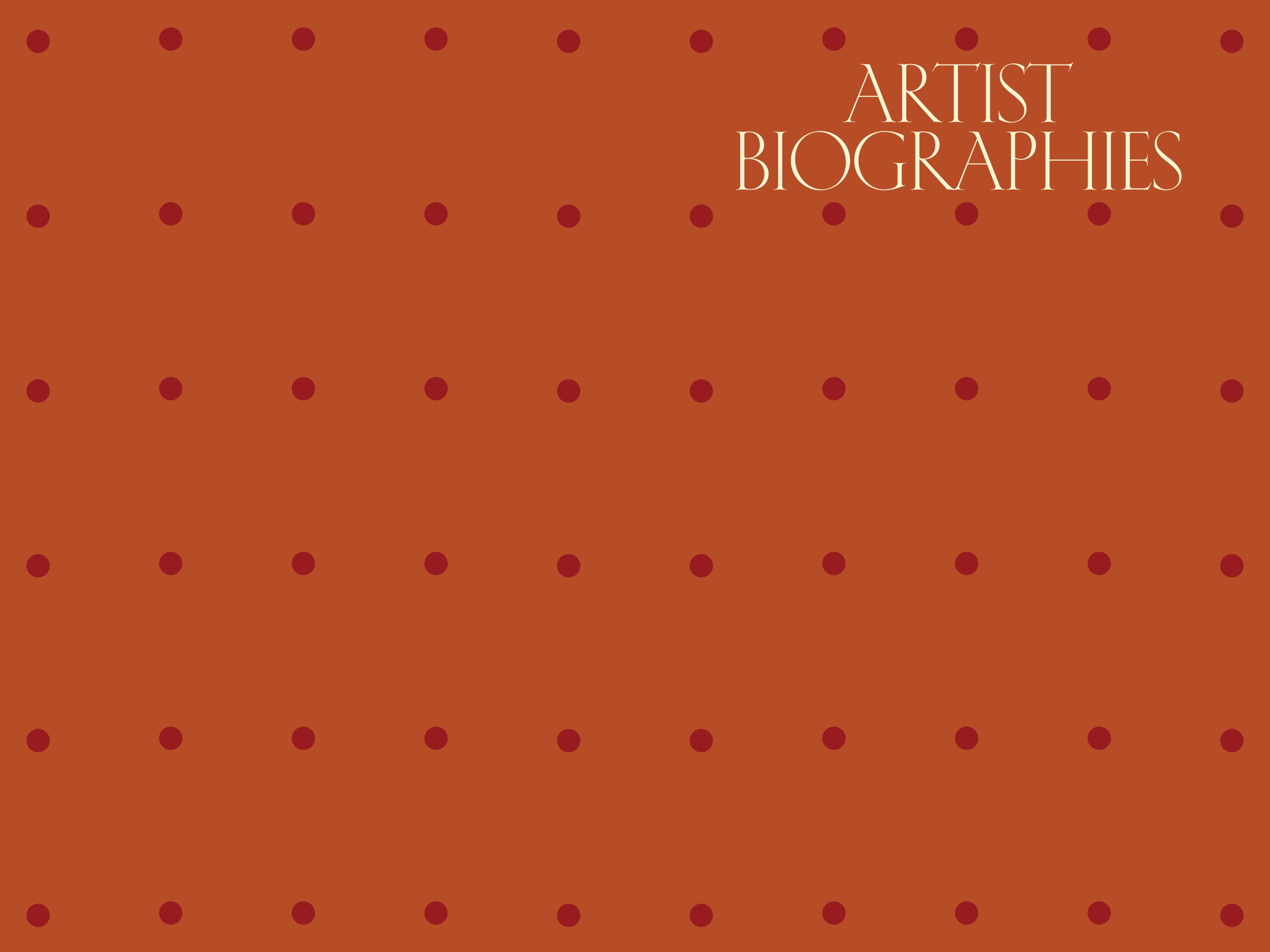
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**JANET WATKINS**

- 1 Janet Watkins. Interview by Sienna Smith. March 16, 2021.
- 2 Watkins, Interview.
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- 4 Janet Watkins, "Heritage Highlights: Women of Visions," interview by Jon Engel, Rivers of Steel, April 16, 2021, <https://riversofsteel.com/heritage-highlights-women-of-visions/>.
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# ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

## PRESIDENTS 1981-2021

Juanita Miller  
Nicola Porter  
Jacqueline Poindexter Jordan  
Susan C. Burton  
Mary Martin  
Marica Jackson  
LaVerne Kemp  
Tina Williams Brewer  
Harriette Meriwether  
Christine Bethea

## CURRENT MEMBERS

**LYNNE b** is a self-taught mixed-media artist, curator, and music archivist. She received her BA from CUNY studying English Literature and Theoretical Studies. Lynne joined Women of Visions in 2015, first exhibiting in the *Storytellers* exhibition. She has organized apartment-as-gallery exhibits in New York and is a frequent contributor to Persad's Art for Change exhibits supporting LGBTQ communities. Her international collaborations have included projects with feminist multimedia artist Maria Kozic, photographer Annette Frick, sound designer Tom Stir, and experimental filmmakers such as Brian Buterbaugh, Wilhelm Hein, and Nick Zedd. Lynne has also worked as a volunteer tutor for Literacy Pittsburgh, teaching English to children through music and art.

**JO-ANNE BATES** is a mixed-media artist whose works experiment with texture, color, and text to tell stories about the African American community. She studied at West Virginia State College and the University of Pittsburgh and, for twenty-nine years, taught at the Pittsburgh Creative and Performing Arts School. Bates has worked with organizations including the Pittsburgh Print Group, the Associated Artists of Pittsburgh, and the National Conference of Artists, and Contemporary Craft, among others. Bates has received numerous awards for printmaking, and she has held solo exhibitions in Pennsylvania, New York, Massachusetts, and West Virginia. In 2017, she was named the Artist of the Year by the Pittsburgh Center for the Arts.

**RUTH BEDEIAN** is an artist and quilter. Born in Baldwin-Whitehall, Pennsylvania, just south of Pittsburgh, Bedeian received her undergraduate degree in Visual Arts Education and English Literature from Mansfield University. She also pursued further studies in English Literature at the University of Pittsburgh, where she specialized in the Harlem Renaissance. She spent thirty-four years as an elementary art school-teacher in the Pittsburgh Public School District before retirement allowed her more time to develop her own practice. Bedeian's work has been seen in exhibitions at the August Wilson African American Cultural Center, Manchester Craftsmen's Guild, and Contemporary Craft.

**CHRISTINE BETHEA** is a mixed-media artist who works with textiles, sculpture, and assemblage. She studied at Point Park University and overseas through the University of Maryland. Her work has been exhibited widely in Pittsburgh galleries, including the August Wilson African American Cultural Center, Pittsburgh Center for the Arts, Contemporary Craft, the Heinz History Center, and the Miller Gallery at Carnegie Mellon University. Her community projects have included a collaboration with the Bhutanese Community Association of Pittsburgh. She received a DATA Award for her work creating the "Geek Art/Green Innovators Festival" and is a Western Pennsylvania Heritage Quilter.

**TINA WILLIAMS BREWER** is an internationally renowned fiber artist known for her story quilts that explore African American history. Brewer was born in 1949 in Huntington, West Virginia, and earned her BFA from the Columbus College



Women of Visions artists, 1983



Women of Visions artists, 1983

of Art and Design. Brewer has exhibited in more than fifty venues across the United States and is represented in several major museum collections. Her work has also been exhibited in the United States Embassies in Sudan and Ghana. She was awarded a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Pittsburgh Center for the Arts in 2009 and the Pennsylvania Governor's Award for the Arts in 2018.

**ELIZABETH ASCHE DOUGLAS** is an educator, jazz musician, and visual artist who works across a variety of creative forms. She was the first Black student enrolled at Carnegie Mellon University, where she received her BFA in Painting & Design in 1951, later receiving her MA in Fine Arts from the University of Pittsburgh in 1956. Douglas's work has been displayed in numerous exhibitions in Western Pennsylvania and beyond. She is the owner of the Douglas Art Gallery in Rochester, Pennsylvania. In 2003 she was inducted into the Beaver Valley Musicians' Hall of Fame, and in 2017 she received the Albert Nelson Marquis Lifetime Achievement Award.

**ANNETTE JACKSON** is a Pittsburgh-based mixed-media artist who works across abstract and realist styles in a variety of media. She studied information technology and business management at the Community College of Beaver County and Robert Morris University. Her works have been exhibited in Pittsburgh galleries including the Manchester Craftsmen's Guild, Sweetwater Center for the Arts, the August Wilson African American Cultural Center, and the Pittsburgh Center for Arts & Media. Jackson is a member and exhibitor with South Arts Pittsburgh and the Pittsburgh Watercolor Society. She has also led watercolor workshops for the Children's Museum of Pittsburgh.

**ASHLEY A. JONES** is an artist and educator who addresses themes of colorism, discrimination, and Black identity through a variety of media including illustration, portraiture, and collage. Born in Duquesne, Pennsylvania, Jones received her MFA from Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP) and a BA in Studio Art from Central State University. She served as an Assistant Professor of Art and the Director of the University's Kipp Gallery at IUP. Her work has been shown internationally in Canada and Indonesia, and it is represented in the



IUP Museum Foundation Collection and the National Afro-American Museum & Cultural Center in Ohio.

**CHARLOTTE KA** is best known for her installations and mixed-media paintings. Born in Pittsburgh, Ka studied at The Cooper Union, New York, before receiving her BFA from Carnegie Mellon University, her MFA from the Maryland Institute College of Art, and an MS from the Bank Street College of Education. While in New York, Ka was a member of the influential Black artist collective Where We At. Her work has been exhibited nationally in many exhibitions in Pittsburgh and New York, and internationally at the National Museum of Accra in Ghana and the Havana Biennial in Cuba. Ka and her partner, Mobutu, operate the MOKA gallery in Pittsburgh's Hill District.

**LAVERNE KEMP** is a weaver and fiber artist who combines diverse textile techniques to make wall hangings, home decor, and wearable art such as clothing and jewelry. LaVerne began weaving in 1978 and graduated from California University of Pennsylvania in 1980. Her work has been exhibited widely in Pittsburgh and featured in such national exhibitions as *The Carroll Harris Simms National Black Art Competition and Exhibition* in Dallas, *The African American Art Exhibition* at the Actors Theater in Louisville, and *The Smithsonian Craft Show* in Washington, DC. She is also a member of the Fiberarts Guild and the Craftsmen's Guild of Pittsburgh.

**MARY MARTIN** is an artist and educator working in sculpture, ceramics, and collage. She is a graduate of the Rhode Island School of Design, where she received degrees in Architecture and Fine Arts. She also undertook further studies at the Instituto Allende in Mexico. Martin's work has been exhibited widely in Pittsburgh and has been seen in national venues including the Langston Hughes Cultural Center in Rhode Island and the Harvey B. Gantt Center for African-American Arts in Charlotte. As a curator and coordinator, she has contributed to projects at the Heinz History Center, the August Wilson African American Cultural Center, the Andy Warhol Museum, and Contemporary Craft. Martin teaches visual art at the Winchester Thurston School.



Marica Jackson, Christiane Leach and Mary Martin at *Imprints*, 1997



Tina Williams Brewer at *Purple Rhythms*, 1998



Women of Visions artists and guests at *Merging at the Crossroads* symposium, 1999

**ALTHA PITTRELL** works with ceramics, sculpture, and painting across a variety of media. She received a Bachelor of Arts and a Master of Science in Professional Art Leadership (Art Therapy) from Carlow University and worked in art therapy for the Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Pittsburgh. Her work has been shown in exhibitions at the Pittsburgh Center for the Arts, Manchester Craftsmen's Guild, Mattress Factory, Sweetwater Center for the Arts, The Neighbourhood Academy and the University Art Gallery at Pitt. Pittrell is represented in the collection of Carlow University, and she has worked as a teaching artist at the Braddock Carnegie Library, Propel Northside, and the YMCA Homewood-Brushton. She was the first woman of color union welder in Boilermaker's Local 154.

**DOMINIQUE SCAIFE** is a self-taught sculptor who primarily works with polymer clay to celebrate the diversity of experiences and skin tones of African Americans. She has lived in Pittsburgh her whole life and is an active member of the Pittsburgh Society of Artists and the Society of Sculptors. Scaife's art has been shown at venues including the Spinning Plate Gallery, Pittsburgh Center for the Arts, and the August Wilson African American Cultural Center. In 2020, Scaife was chosen for an incubator program run by Pittsburgh non-profit co-working space Prototype PGH, resulting in her new enterprise, Kool Image Dolls.

**RUTH WARD** is a mixed-media artist who focuses on the art of quilting. A member of the Nia Quilter's Guild of the Young Men & Women's African Heritage Association, Ward has educated people of all ages about the history of quilting and the variety of quilting between different cultures. She has led workshops at a variety of venues including the Children's Museum of Pittsburgh, Kingsley Association, and the University of Pittsburgh's Generations Program. Her work has been featured in many Pittsburgh exhibitions, including those held at the Heinz History Center, Bidwell Cultural Center, and several Pittsburgh Public Schools.

**JANET WATKINS** is a self-taught artist making ceramics and jewelry. Watkins began making art in her early retirement after a career in banking, when her interest was sparked by a local organization offering a ceramics class. Her work has been exhibited at Contemporary Craft,

the BNY Mellon Center, the Pittsburgh Center of the Arts, and the Union Project. She was awarded the Jurors' Choice Award for her contribution to the exhibit *Sankofa Soul: The Past, Present, and Future* at the Pittsburgh Center for the Arts.

## NEW MEMBERS

In Fall 2021, Women of Visions welcomed the following new members: Pamela Cooper, Sharrell Rushin, Edie Smith, Colette Funches, Marcè Nixon-Washington, and Emmanuelle Wambach, and welcomed back Richena Brockinson.

## PAST MEMBERS

These biographies of past members have been compiled from Women of Visions archives, historical newspapers, and other online sources. We will maintain a web version of these biographies to add further information as it becomes available. Email [uag@pitt.edu](mailto:uag@pitt.edu) with any updates or corrections.

**JOYCE BAUCUM** is a photographer and fiber artist. Her work was featured in exhibitions including the *Images of Women* exhibition at the Undercroft Gallery, *Striving: Contemporary African American Artists of Pittsburgh* at the Heinz History Center, and *First Fruit V: An Exhibition of African American Visual Art* in the Mavuno Festival. Baucum was a member of the Black Photographers Group and contributed to the public programs for *A Sense of Place* at Pitt's University Art Gallery.

**SUSAN C. BURTON** was a mixed-media artist. She studied at the Art Institute of Pittsburgh, where she graduated in 1978, and pursued further studies at the School of Visual Arts in New York. In the early 1980s, Burton worked in graphic design and layout. She then moved to Pittsburgh in 1983 when she began working for the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. In Pittsburgh, her work has been exhibited at Penn State University, Carlow College, California State College, Campbell Gallery at Sewickley Academy, Undercroft Gallery, and LaFond Galleries. Her work has also been seen internationally in exhibitions in Germany and Canada.



Mary Martin with *Symmetry: Voices and Images* poster, 2003



Women of Visions artists, 2003



Women of Visions artists, 2003

**ANN SAWYER BERKLEY** was an artist, poet, and activist. Born in Johnstown, she studied at the Art Institute of Johnstown, and designed murals and taught classes as part of the Federal Art Project in the 1930s. In Pittsburgh, her work was exhibited at the Selma Burke Art Center in *Ode to Ethiopia* in 1981 and *Passion in Black* in 1983. She was also a member of the Kuntu Writers Workshop, and her books included *The Ghetto* in 1976 and *Litany of Love* in 1988. She received a Governor's Pennsylvania Heritage Award, citing her lifelong work to "convey the African American experience" across an array of artforms.

**RICHENA BROCKINSON** is an artist and educator. She received her Bachelor of Science in Photography from the Art Institute of Pittsburgh. She has worked as an educator for the Pittsburgh Black Media Federation, Manchester Craftsmen's Guild, and the Mattress Factory. Her solo exhibition *Superhero Within Me* was presented at the ToonSeum's *Heroes Block Party*, and her work has been included in exhibitions at Art Basel Miami, Shadow Lounge, and Penn State University.

**BRENDA BROWN** is an artist and educator. She studied at Carlow University and the Indiana University of Pennsylvania, from where she received her Bachelor of Arts in Art and Graphic Design. She was the Project Director of the GAGI Festival (2010-2017). She has worked as a teacher and family development specialist for UPMC, leading collaborations with organizations including the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust and the Andy Warhol Museum.

**DEE CURRIN** is an artist and illustrator whose work includes images of fantasy and the female form. She began painting while in Germany and studied at the Art Institute of Pittsburgh and the Ivy School of Professional Art. Currin also undertook her surgical technician training at the West Penn Hospital and worked as a nurse at the Children's Hospital. Her work was exhibited at the H. M. Neal Gallery, Conney M. Kimbo Art Gallery, Undercroft Gallery, Pittsburgh Center for the Arts, and Chatham College. Dee is an Emeritus Member of Women of Visions.

**LISA CURRIN** is a Pittsburgh-based artist. She studied anthropology at the University of Pittsburgh. Her work was featured in Women of



Visions exhibitions including *Merging at the Crossroads*, *Apparitions and Destinations*, and the *Six Women Photographers* exhibition at the Undercroft Gallery.

**NAOMI CHAMBERS** is a painter, sculptor, and assemblage artist. She graduated from the University of Pittsburgh in 2009 with degrees in Marketing and Studio Arts. After graduating, she continued to practice art and later opened FlowerHouse, an art space in Wilksburg, in 2017. Chambers was awarded the Investing in Professional Artists grant from the Heinz Endowment and Pittsburgh Foundation in 2017. Her first solo exhibition, *Communal Futures*, was held at the August Wilson African American Cultural Center in 2018.

**ANNA V. CUNNINGHAM** is a fiber artist and community worker. She studied social work at Washington University in St. Louis and undertook further training at the University of Illinois. Her work was featured in the Voices exhibition at the Conney M. Kimbo Gallery, and she contributed to the programs for *A Sense of Place* in 2005 at Pitt's University Art Gallery. She was also a board member of South Arts and worked as the Director of Professional Services at the Family and Children's Service of Western Pennsylvania.

**SHEREEN COLLINGTON** is an artist, writer, and cartoonist now based in San Francisco. Her work was presented in exhibitions including the *Culture, Body, Metamorphosis, Dreams* exhibition at the Linda Iannotta Gallery in 1997, and in a collaboration with Christiane Leach on the *Soma Mestizo* performance project in 1998.

**ROBIN CRAWFORD** is a Buffalo-based fiber artist. She studied at the Art Institute of Pittsburgh and Carlow University, where she received her Bachelor of Arts in 2001. Her quilts were featured in exhibitions including *Bold Improvisation: 120 Years of African American Quilts*, *I Can Still Quilt Without My Glasses*, and *African American Quilters and Preservers of Western Pennsylvania*. Crawford worked in community outreach through the Coalition for Christian Outreach and, in 2005, was awarded the annual NAACP Human Rights Award.

**JEANETTE DOBBS** is a Pittsburgh-born artist and illustrator. She attended Fisk University



Dee Currin and Marica Jackson at Women of Visions stand, c. 2003



Women of Visions artists and guests, c. 2001



Women of Visions artists, 2007

and received her BFA from Carnegie Mellon University in 1973. Her work was featured on the cover of Pitt's Department of *Black Studies* journal *Black Lines* and was included in exhibits at Manchester Craftsmen's Guild, the Velar Gallery, and the Selma Burke Art Center. She now lives in Colorado Springs.

**SANDRA GOULD FORD** is a Pittsburgh-born writer, artist, and photographer. She received her BA and MFA in Creative Writing from the University of Pittsburgh. She founded the African American arts and literature magazine *Shooting Star Review* (1987-1994). Ford also founded the Creative Writing Program at the Allegheny County Jail. She has received fellowships from Yaddo, the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, and the Dow Center for Creativity. Her photography and textiles have been exhibited at the Manchester Craftsmen's Guild, the August Wilson African American Cultural Center, the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania, and the American Craft Museum.

**VANESSA GERMAN** is a Pittsburgh-based sculptor, photographer, performer, and writer. She is the founder of Love Front Porch and the ARThouse, a community arts initiative in her neighborhood of Homewood. Her work has been exhibited and acquired by major museum collections including the Crystal Bridges Museum of Art and the Wadsworth Atheneum. In 2017, German was awarded the Jacob Lawrence Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

**SANDRA GERMAN** was a quilting artist and educator. She was featured in the documentary *Pennsylvania Quilts* for her work as a free motion machine quilter. In addition to teaching quilting and art to students, she founded the Grailville Quilters, presently known as the Contemporary Quilt and Fiber Artists group, and the Grailville Quilt Show in 1991. Her fiber art and quilts have been exhibited internationally and as part of Pittsburgh exhibitions at the Heinz History Center, the Selma Burke Gallery, and Spirits Embodied Gallery. Her quilts are featured in the book *Spirits of the Cloth: Contemporary African American Quilts*.

**TENANCHE** is an artist and educator born in Pittsburgh. She received her BFA from Carnegie Mellon University in 1976 and undertook further studies at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma

de Mexico and Centro Artesenal San Gerónimo in Mexico City. She also graduated with an MA in Art History from the University of Pittsburgh in 1989 and has taught at Pitt, Carlow College, Community College of Allegheny County, University of Arizona, and Pittsburgh Public Schools. Her work has been exhibited widely in Pittsburgh and Tuscon, as well as in international exhibitions in Mexico and Costa Rica. She was artist-in-residence for the Tucson Arts District Partnership in 1993.

**BARBARA EVE HAMMOND** was an artist and teacher. She earned her Bachelor of Arts from Ohio Wesleyan University and received a Fulbright Scholarship to study at the Universidad de Santo Tomas in the Philippines. She exhibited with her mother, Murrel Wynn-Jones, at the H. M. Neal Gallery in Wilkinsburg. She worked as an art teacher for the Cleveland Board of Education and Pittsburgh Public Schools, and was a member of Group One and the Sculpture Society of Pittsburgh.

**CELETA HICKMAN** is an artist, dancer, and historian. She was the principal dancer for Nego Gato Capoeira de Angola, Shades of Black Movement, and the Legacy Arts Project. She also worked at the Carnegie Museum of Art as a cataloger and oral historian for the Teenie Harris Archive. In 2008 she founded the Ujamaa Collective, a cooperative wealth building incubator artisan boutique, and she has been a longtime resident dancer at the Hill Dance Academy Theatre in Pittsburgh focusing on Afro-Caribbean techniques.

**CHARLENE HINES** received her Bachelor of Arts in Social Work from the University of Pittsburgh. Hines was active in Democratic Party politics in the 1970s and 1980s. In the 1990s ran the Institute for Black Cultural Studies, a unique after-school program for students at Lincoln Elementary School celebrating Black achievement. In April 2000, the Pitt African Ensemble performed a folk story by Hines at the Bellefield Hall Auditorium.

**IDA ALEXANDER HERBERT** was a Pittsburgh-born artist and writer. She was raised in the Hill District, attended Duff's Business College, and took commercial art courses at the Ad-Art Studio School in Downtown Pittsburgh. She was the chair of the Pittsburgh Art and Music



Women of Visions artists at Mavuno, 2012



Women of Visions artists, 2014

Club in the late 1960s and drew illustrations for her food column for the *Pittsburgh Courier* in the 1970s. She also illustrated David R. Hall's book *How to Beautify the Ghettos* (1974). Her work was included in *Passion in Black* (1983) and exhibited at the Three Rivers Arts Festival, the Selma Burke Art Center, and the H. M. Neal Gallery.

**MAYOTA HILL** was a self-taught artist best known for her fiber-based practice. In her early life, Hill was involved in a variety of Black community organizations, including Club 21 and the Wesley Center, and, in the 1970s, she became a member of Group One. In 2005, Hill returned to her artistic interests and, in 2010, was nominated for the Pittsburgh Center for the Arts' Emerging Artist of the Year. Her work was seen in exhibitions at the Pittsburgh Center for the Arts, Sweetwater Center of the Arts, and State Museum of Pennsylvania, as well as several international venues. One of Hill's quilts is held in the collection of the Michigan State University Museum.

**TERENEH IDIA** is a Pittsburgh-based designer and writer. She is a graduate of Drexel University and received a Rotary International Ambassadorial Scholarship to study fashion design at Kenyatta University in Nairobi, Kenya. She founded the clothing and accessories line India'Dega. She has taught at the Art Institute of Pittsburgh, Parsons School of Design in New York, and Raffles College in Malaysia, and she has exhibited work at the Mattress Factory and Frick Pittsburgh. Her work has received widespread media attention including from publications like *Time*, *the Wall Street Journal*, and *the Guardian*.

**MARICA JACKSON** is a painter and ceramicist. Jackson is a former President of Women of Visions, and her work was included in the *Images IV* exhibition at the University of Pittsburgh in 1989 and contributed to the *A Sense of Place* programs at the University Art Gallery in 2005. She co-curated the *Soulscapes* exhibition at the August Wilson African American Cultural Center in 2008. Her work has also been seen in the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust's *Showcase Noir*, Clay Place Gallery, and the Pittsburgh Center for the Arts. Jackson is an Emeritus Member of Women of Visions.

**EVALEEN JOHNSON** is a nurse, teacher, and fiber artist. She graduated from the Lilliana S. Kaufman School of Nursing in 1955 and received her PhD from the University of Pittsburgh in 1984. As a professor of nursing at the Community College of Allegheny County, she was honored for her achievements in education by the Black League of Afro-American Culture. In 2001, her quilt was included in *The Life and Work of the Fiber Artist* at the Selma Burke Gallery at the Kingsley Association, where it received an Award of Excellence.

**JACQUELINE PONDEXTER JORDON** was a mixed-media artist. She received her BA in Speech and Drama at the Hampton Institute and completed a MA in Art Education at the University of Pittsburgh. After a career as a teacher in New York and Pittsburgh, Jordan focused full-time on her artistic practice. Her work was included in the *Images VII* exhibition at Pitt and the *Of the Spirit* exhibition at the Pittsburgh Center for the Arts.

**CHRISTIANE D. LEACH** is a multi-disciplinary artist, performer, and arts administrator. She studied at Temple University, Carnegie Mellon University, and the Art Institute of Pittsburgh. She has worked as an arts administrator for the Brew House Association, Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council, and the Pittsburgh International Airport. Leach received a Pennsylvania Council for the Arts Fellowship in 2003 and an August Wilson African American Cultural Center Fellowship in 2010.

**ELOISE MCCRAY** was a painter, printmaker, and photographer. She studied at the Art Institute of Pittsburgh, Point Park College, and the Connelly Skill-Learning Center, and graduated with a BA in Art and Communication from Chat-ham College in 1985. Her work was exhibited at the Institute of Creative Arts, H. M. Neal Gallery, and Carlow College. She was an arts instructor at the Ernest T. Williams Jr. Memorial Center.

**HARRIETTE MERIWETHER** is an artist who paints and quilts in addition to a variety of other fiber-based practices. Born in Atlanta, Georgia, Meriwether began making watercolors after a six-week class in 1985. She has worked in youth programs for Pittsburgh Public Schools and the Greater Pittsburgh Camp Fire initiative. Along with Women of Visions, Meriwether has



been a member of the arts group the Pierians and the Fiberarts Guild of Pittsburgh. Her work has been shown in national and international exhibits and was featured in the *Journey of Hope: Quilts Inspired by President Barack Obama* by the Alliance for American Quilts.

**JUANITA P. MILLER** was a painter, printmaker, and ceramicist born in Wilmerding, Pennsylvania. She studied at the Young Men and Women's Hebrew Association and Kingsley House, and she received her BFA from Carnegie Mellon University. Miller's work was featured in exhibitions at Pennsylvania State University, Pittsburgh Center for the Arts, Selma Burke Art Center, William Penn Memorial Museum, Jade Gallery, King Galleries, and Kingsley House. She was a member of Group One and a board member of the Marionette Theater Arts Council. She received prizes for her work at the *Everyman's Art* Exhibition in 1962 and the Expressions of Excellence Festival in 1981.

**GAIL MANKER** is a Pittsburgh-based photographer and veteran of the United States Army. In 2008, she graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Photography from the Art Institute of Pittsburgh. She has worked as a photographer for the *New Pittsburgh Courier* and exhibited her portraits as part of the Umanjaa Collective.

**CATHLEEN MARGERET** is a fiber artist. Her work has been seen in exhibitions at the Pittsburgh Center for the Arts, Foreland Street Studio, Garfield Artworks, and the Campbell Gallery. A solo exhibition of her quilts, dolls, and wearable art was held at the Sweetwater Center for the Arts in 1999. She curated the exhibitions *I Can Still Quilt Without My Glasses* in 2000 and *Transformations* in 2009. In 2003, she served as the costume designer for *Good Morning Revolution, Sankofa* at the Kelly-Strayhorn Theatre.

**BEATRICE MILLIONES** was an artist, nurse, and cosmetologist. She was an award-winning hair stylist and member of the Beauticians Association of Pittsburgh. She began to paint after suffering a stroke in 1976. In 1983, Kingsley House held an exhibition of her work.

**NJAIMEH NJIE** is a photographer, filmmaker, and multimedia producer. She received her Bachelor of Arts in Film and Media Studies



Women of Visions artists, 2016



Women of Visions artists, 2016



Women of Visions artists, 2016



Women of Visions artists at Parts, Patterns and Pieces, 2017



Women of Visions artists at Film Launch, 2019

from Washington University in St. Louis in 2010. Her work has been featured in exhibitions at the Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh Center for the Arts, Future Tenant, Space Gallery, and Boom Concepts. In 2018, she was awarded the Emerging Artist of Year prize by the Pittsburgh Center for the Arts.

**BRENDA PARKER** received a BA in Education at the University of Michigan and an MFA at Carnegie Mellon University, and she studied History of Art at the University of Pittsburgh. Her works were featured in exhibitions at the H. M. Neal Gallery, the Pittsburgh Center for the Arts, and as part of the Associated Artists of Pittsburgh.

**VIRGINIA PARRISH** exhibited her handwoven textiles and garments at The Bird in the Hand Gallery in Sewickley throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Her work was featured in the exhibition of Black Pittsburgh artists at Freedom House in 1970. She also worked as a nurse at the Sewickley Valley Hospital.

**BARBARA PETERSON** was an artist and educator. She graduated with an MFA from Carnegie Mellon University. In Pittsburgh, her work was exhibited at the Baine Petite Art Gallery, Halfway Art Gallery, Jade Gallery, the Selma Burke Art Center, Sewickley Academy, and the Community College of Allegheny County. Her work was also shown at the Smithsonian Institution's *National Negro Exhibition* in 1973. She was the director of the East Liberty Art Festival in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and she was an art teacher at the Selma Burke Art Center and East Hills Elementary School.

**NICOLA S. PORTER** was a painter and ceramicist. She was born in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, and studied Fine Arts at Carnegie Mellon University. Her work was shown at Pennsylvania State University, Chatham College, the H. M. Neal Gallery, the Selma Burke Art Center and La Roche College, and was featured on the cover of the University of Pittsburgh's Department of Black Studies journal *Black Lines*. She was awarded second place in the Expressions of Excellence Festival in 1981.

**PATRICIA C. POWERS** is an artist who studied at the Art Institute of Pittsburgh, Clarissa School of Fashion Design, and Carnegie Mellon

University, where she received a Bachelor of Fine Arts concentrating in fiber arts. She was among the thirty-nine artists featured in the *Ode to Ethiopia* exhibition at the Institute of Creative Art in 1981. She is now based in Houston, Texas.

**RUTH G. RICHARDSON** was a photographer and painter. She grew up in Washington, DC, and studied art at the Hampton Institute in Virginia and St. Louis University, where she received her Bachelor of Arts in psychology. She received her master's degree in Social Work from Washington University in St. Louis. She was the executive director of Three Rivers Youth from 1970 until 1991. She was President of the South Arts, secretary of the Pittsburgh Watercolor Society, and a member of the Associated Artists of Pittsburgh. In 1997, she received the Imperative Award from the YWCA of Greater Pittsburgh for her contributions to racial justice and cultural diversity.

**RUTH ROEBUCK** studied fine art at Carnegie Mellon University and also undertook classes at the Community College of Allegheny County and the Connelly Skill-Learning Center. She later taught children's art classes at the Ernest T. Williams Jr. Center. Her work has been in many Pittsburgh exhibitions, including shows at the Institute of Creative Art, the Selma Burke Art Center, Carlow College, Forbes Street Gallery, and the H. M. Neal Gallery.

**SHONA SHARIF** was a dancer, artist, and teacher. She was born in Rochester, New York, and began dancing at the Carnegie Museum's Imaginarium program in 1977. She received a BFA from Howard University and a MA in Education from the University of Pittsburgh in 1989. She was the artistic director of the African Drum and Dance Ensemble. Her work as a visual artist was exhibited at the Expressions of Excellence Festival, Carlow College, the Selma Burke Art Center, and Jade Gallery. In 1999, she received an award for Excellence in Dance from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts.

**RENÉE STOUT** is a mixed-media artist known for her photographs, paintings, sculptures, and installations. Stout grew up in Pittsburgh, and she received her BFA in painting from Carnegie Mellon University in 1980. Relocating to Washington, DC, in 1985, her work increasingly

explored African spirituality and social issues. She was the first American artist to have a solo exhibition in the Smithsonian's National Museum of African Art, among many other major museum exhibitions and acquisitions. Stout has been the recipient of the Joan Mitchell Award in 2005, the Driskell Prize in 2010, and the Women's Caucus for Art Lifetime Achievement Award in 2018.

**EMMA SLAUGHTER** was an artist, dollmaker, and teacher. She received her BA in Art History from Brooklyn College in 1978 and pursued further studies at the Art Students League in New York, Escuela Nacional de Pintura, Escultura y Grabado in Mexico City and Académie de la Grande Chaumière in Paris. Her work was exhibited at the Riverside Galleries, Three Rivers Art Festival, La Roche College, and the Expressions of Excellence Festival. In 1984, Slaughter founded the Homewood Art Museum to establish a proposed African American Museum on Frankstown Avenue in Homewood.

**TONI THORNE** studied art and music at Thomas Nelson College in Virginia. Her work was featured in exhibitions at the Manchester Craftsmen's Guild, La Roche College, and as part of the Harambee II Black Arts Festival in Homewood. Her work also included in *Images VII* in 1992 at the William Pitt Union at the University of Pittsburgh.

**MEREDITH WATSON YOUNG** was a painter and collagist. She was born in Pittsburgh, where she began art classes at the Carnegie Institute while a student at Schenley High School. She received her BA from Howard University in 1974, where she studied under faculty including Lois Mailou Jones. Back in Pittsburgh, she worked for the Carnegie Museums Imaginarium program and taught art at the Holy Rosary School in Homewood. She undertook community arts projects for the NAACP and the Urban League of Pittsburgh and, alongside her own artistic practice, built a noted collection of Black Americana and folk art.

**SARAH WILLIAMS-DEVERAUX** is a poet, artist, and educator. She received a BFA in painting from Seton Hill College, studied writing at Johns Hopkins University, and now works at Carlow University. She has served as an art educator at the Andy Warhol Museum, the Mattress Factory, and the August Wilson African

American Cultural Center. She worked as an education coordinator for Pitt Arts at the University of Pittsburgh, co-authoring the publication *Our Stories, Our Selves: The African American Arts Project*. Her poetry and interactive art have been seen in a variety of Pittsburgh organizations, including at the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust and in the *Pittsburgh City Paper*.

**MURREL WYNN-JONES** was an artist and designer. She graduated with a BA in English from the University of Pittsburgh in 1931 and was an inaugural member of the Alpha Kappa Delta society. In the 1960s, she was a member of Group One, exhibited her work in the Three Rivers Arts Festival, and founded—with her daughter Barbara Eve Hammond—a fashion importing business. She later exhibited her work at the H. M. Neal Gallery and in the *Seven Black Artists* exhibit at Franklin and Marshall College. In 1990, Wynn-Jones received a Fannie Lou Hammer Award from the Women of Racial and Economic Equality.

Other former members of Women of Visions mentioned in records include Theiss Rosemond, Donna Reed Williams, Beryl Wright, and Charlene Wyatt. The UAG welcomes further information about these artists and any past members that may be missing from this listing at [uag@pitt.edu](mailto:uag@pitt.edu).

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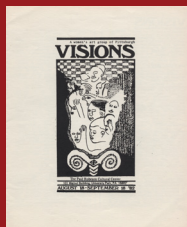
## ADVISORS

The artists of Women of Visions have benefited from innumerable advisors and administrators over the group's history. We wish to acknowledge the following individuals and others for their important contributions in areas such as planning, development, and public relations: Donna Alexander, Constance Bailey, Patricia Green Cottman, Bing Davis, Laura Domenic, Anne L. Edmunds, Elaine Effort, Adam Kenney, Karen R. Price, Janet McCall, Kate McGrady, Patricia P. Mitchell, Cecile Springer, and William Strickland.



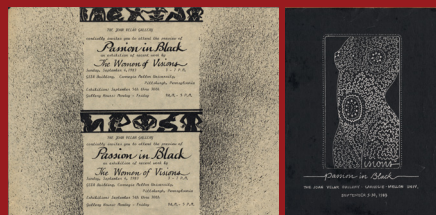


# EXHIBITION CHRONOLOGY



1982

*Visions*, Paul Robeson Cultural Center, Penn State University, University Park, Pennsylvania. August 18–September 18, 1982.



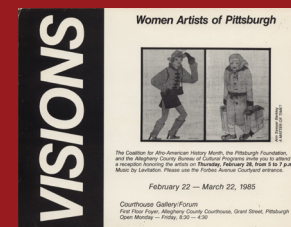
1983

*Passion in Black*, Joan Velar Gallery, Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh. September 5–30, 1983.



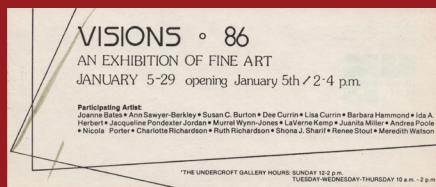
1984

*Gossip*, Undercroft Gallery, First Unitarian Church, Pittsburgh. April 1984.  
Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, Pittsburgh. Dates unknown.



1985

*Visions: Women Artists of Pittsburgh*, Courthouse Gallery/Forum, Pittsburgh. February 22–March 22, 1985.  
Paul Robeson Cultural Center, Penn State University, University Park. Dates unknown.



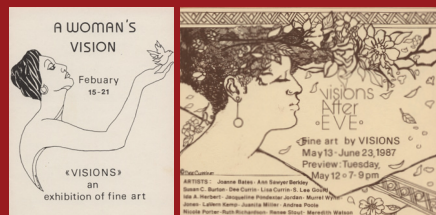
1986

*Visions '86: An Exhibition of Fine Art*, Undercroft Gallery, First Unitarian Church, Pittsburgh. January 5–29, 1986.

*Visions, A Women's Art Collective*, Penn State University Art Gallery, New Kensington, Pennsylvania. February 1986.

*Six Women Photographers*, Undercroft Gallery, First Unitarian Church, Pittsburgh. April 6–April 23, 1986.

California University of Pennsylvania, California, Pennsylvania. Dates unknown.

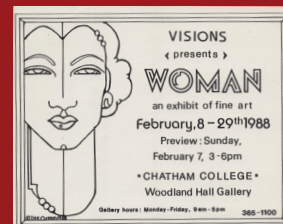


1987

*A Woman's Vision*, Mellon Gallery, Carlow College, Pittsburgh, February 15–February 21, 1987.

*Visions After Eve*, Bloomer's Restaurant and Bar, Pittsburgh, May 13–June 23, 1987.

*Visions presents Holiday Baubles, Special Treasures, and Gifts*, 3459 Shadeland Avenue, Pittsburgh. November 28, 1987.



1988

*Woman*, Woodland Hall Gallery, Chatham College, Pittsburgh. February 8–29, 1988.



1989

*Visions*, Paul Robeson Cultural Center, Penn State University, University Park. July 10–August 4, 1989.

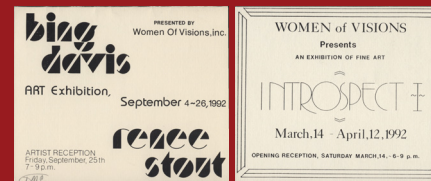
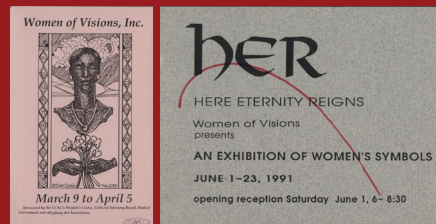
Manchester Craftsmen's Guild, Pittsburgh. December 1989.

Peabody High School Library, Pittsburgh. Dates unknown.

Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, Pittsburgh. Dates unknown.

Barco Law Building, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh. Dates unknown.





1990

Paul Robeson Gallery, Penn State University, University Park. Dates unknown.  
*Visions '90*, La Roche College Art Gallery, Pittsburgh. September 6–October 3, 1990.

1991

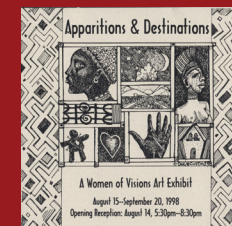
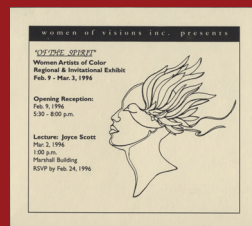
Penn State University Art Gallery, New Kensington. January–February 1991.  
 Visual Arts Center Gallery, Community College of Allegheny County, Boyce Campus, Visual Arts Gallery, Monroeville, Pennsylvania. March 9–April 5, 1991.  
*HER (Here Eternity Reigns)*, Pittsburgh Center for the Arts, Pittsburgh. June 1991.

1992

*Introspect I*, Pittsburgh Center for the Arts, Pittsburgh. March–April 1992.  
*Bing Davis*, Renee Stout, Presented by Women of Visions, Manchester Craftsmen's Guild, Pittsburgh. September 4–26, 1992.

1993

*The Middle Passage*, Ramseys II Restaurant, Homewood, Pennsylvania. February 6–28, 1993.  
*Remembering the Light*, Pittsburgh Center for the Arts, Pittsburgh. June 18–July 18, 1993.



1994

*Spring*, Pittsburgh Center for the Arts, Pittsburgh. April 1–24, 1994.

1996

*Of The Spirit: Women Artists of Color*, Pittsburgh Center for the Arts, Pittsburgh. February 9–March 3, 1996.

1997

*Imprints*, NAACP Conference, A. & B. Smith Building, Pittsburgh. July 17–24, 1997.

1998

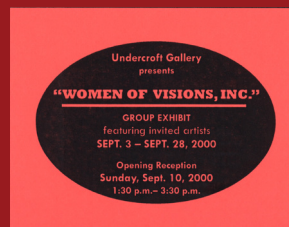
*Purple Rhythms*, Community College of Allegheny County Fine Arts Gallery, Pittsburgh. March 1998.  
*Apparitions & Destinations*, Pittsburgh Center for the Arts, Pittsburgh. August 15–September 20, 1998.



1999

Penn State University Art Gallery, New Kensington. Dates unknown.

*Merging at the Crossroads*, Pittsburgh Center for the Arts, Pittsburgh. June 26-July 25, 1999.



2000

*Women of Visions, Inc. Group Exhibit*, Undercroft Gallery, First Unitarian Church, Pittsburgh. September 3-28, 2000.



2001

*Beyond and Behind the Mask: An Exhibit of African American Artists' Interpretations of the Mask*, Pittsburgh Center for the Arts, Pittsburgh. April 6-May 13, 2001.

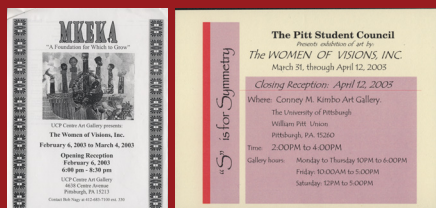
*Voices*, Connelly M. Kimbo Gallery, William Pitt Union, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh. February 12-23, 2001.



2002

*Sepia: She Who is Brown*, The Valley Arts Guild, Sharon, Pennsylvania. February 8-March 1, 2002.

*Sepia II: She Who is Brown*, The Kingsley Association, Pittsburgh. March 11-April 1, 2002.

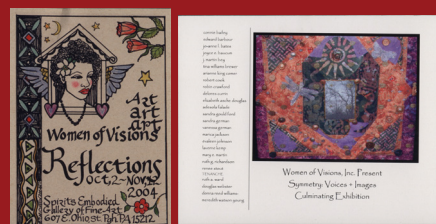


2003

*Symmetry: Voices and Images*, Foreland Street Studio, Pittsburgh. September 6-September 30, 2003.

*S is for Symmetry*, Connelly M. Kimbo Gallery, William Pitt Union, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh. March 31-April 12, 2003.

*Mkeka*, UCP Centre Art Gallery, Pittsburgh. February 6-March 4, 2003.

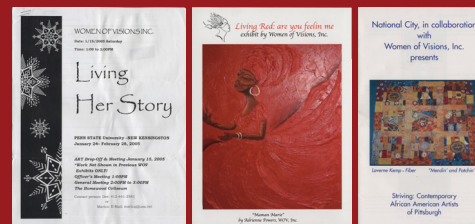


2004

*Symmetry: Voices and Images*, Penn State University Art Gallery, New Kensington. January-February 2004.

*UPMC Black Heritage Exhibit*, UPMC Presbyterian Shadyside, Pittsburgh. February 1-March 1, 2004.

*Reflections*, Spirits Embodied Gallery of Fine Art, Pittsburgh. October 2-November 12, 2004.

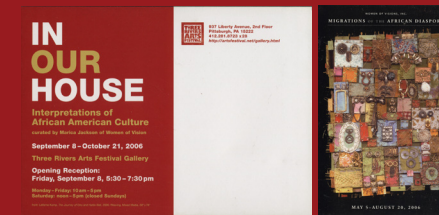


2005

*Living Her Story*, Penn State University Art Gallery, New Kensington. January 24-February 28, 2005.

*Striving: Contemporary African American Artists of Pittsburgh*, Senator John Heinz History Center, Pittsburgh. April 1-May 7, 2005.

*Living Red: Are You Feelin Me?*, One Mellon Center Gallery, Contemporary Craft, Pittsburgh. May 13-August 21, 2005.



2006

*This iz how i breathe*, Penn State University Art Gallery, New Kensington. January 2006.

*Living Red: Are You Feelin Me?*, CCAC Visual Arts Center, Pittsburgh. March 6-24, 2006.

*Migrations of the African Diaspora*, Pittsburgh Center of the Arts, Pittsburgh. May 5-August 20, 2006.

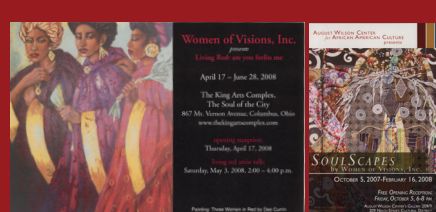
*In Our House: Interpretations of African American Culture*, Three Rivers Arts Festival Gallery, Pittsburgh. September 8-October 21, 2006.





2007

*Visions 26: A Celebration of Our Twenty-Sixth Anniversary*, Penn State University Art Gallery, New Kensington. January 8–February 28, 2007.



2008

*SoulScapes by Women of Visions, Inc.*, August Wilson Center, Pittsburgh. October 5, 2007–February 16, 2008.

*Living Red: Are You Feelin Me?*, King Arts Complex, Columbus, Ohio. April 18–June 28, 2008.

*New Works of Diverse PA Artists*, Penn State University Art Gallery, New Kensington. November 2008.

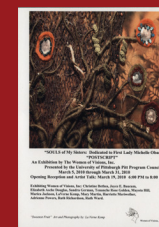


2009

*Celebrating All That Bind Us*, Penn State Art Gallery, New Kensington. January 14–February 28, 2009.

*The Spirit of Women*, Community College of Allegheny County Fine Arts Gallery, Pittsburgh. February 27–March 20, 2009.

*Souls of my Sisters (Dedicated to First Lady, Michelle Obama)*, Sweetwater Center for the Arts, Pittsburgh. Part of the Mavuno Festival of African American Arts and Culture. September 4–October 10, 2009.

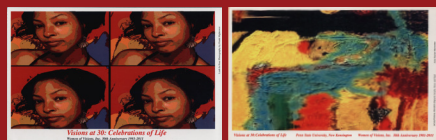


2010

*Souls of My Sisters: Dedicated to First Lady Michelle Obama (Postscript)*, Conney M. Kimbo Gallery, University of Pittsburgh, William Pitt Union, Pittsburgh. March 5–31, 2010.

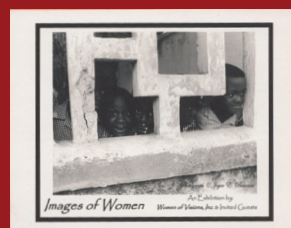
Association of African American Museums Conference, Pittsburgh. August 2010.

*And Still We Rise*, Penn State Art Gallery, New Kensington. June 1–30, 2010.



2011

*Visions at 30: Celebrations of Life*, Penn State University, New Kensington. January 10–February 25, 2011.



2012

*Images of Women*, Undercroft Gallery, First Unitarian Church, Pittsburgh. May 5–May 31, 2012.

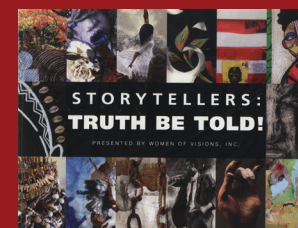
*Unleashed and Unbound*, Penn State University Art Gallery, New Kensington. January 9–February 24, 2012.



2013

*Feminine Aesthetics*, 709 Penn Gallery, Pittsburgh Cultural Trust, Pittsburgh. February 22–March 31, 2013.

*Envisioning a Wonderful World*, Fifth Avenue Place, Pittsburgh. December 31–March 31, 2013.



2014

*Storytellers: Truth Be Told!*, Pittsburgh Center for the Arts, Pittsburgh. November 21, 2014–February 1, 2015.



## 2016

*WOV 35th Anniversary: Celebrating a Legacy*, ArtSmiths of Pittsburgh, Mt Lebanon, Pennsylvania. May 7-June 4, 2016.

*WOV 35th Anniversary: Celebrating a Legacy*, Manchester Craftsmen's Guild, Pittsburgh. July 5-August 5, 2016.

*Patterns of Injustice*, Sweetwater Center for the Arts, Sewickley, Pennsylvania. Part of the Mavuno Festival of African American Arts and Culture. September 23-November 4, 2016.

Pierian's National Conference, Omni William Penn Hotel, Pittsburgh. October 20, 2016.



## 2020

*Sankofa Legacy*, Undercroft Gallery, First Unitarian Church, Pittsburgh. February 2-March 9, 2020.

*Creatives in the Era of COVID-19*, Pittsburgh Center for the Arts, Pittsburgh. October 3-November 14, 2020.

## 2017

*Parts, Patterns and Pieces*, BNY Mellon Satellite Gallery, Contemporary Craft, Pittsburgh. June 16-September 17, 2017.

## 2021

*WOV 40th Anniversary: Celebrating 40 Creative Years*, Contemporary Craft BNY Satellite Gallery, Pittsburgh. March 12-July 25, 2021.

*Magnificent Motown! Art Inspired by the Music*, Kelly-Strayhorn Theater, Pittsburgh. June 19-December 19, 2021.

*WOV 40th Anniversary: Celebrating 40 Creative Years*, Touchstone Center for Crafts, Farmington, PA. July 27-October 2, 2021.



## 2018

*Sankofa Soul: Past Present and Future*, Pittsburgh Center for the Arts, Pittsburgh. November 17, 2017-February 11, 2018.

*Art on the Walls: A Retrospective Moment*, Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council Gallery, Pittsburgh. September 2018-January 2019.



## 2019

*Seats of Power*, August Wilson African American Cultural Center, Pittsburgh. April 27-July 21, 2019.



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Women of Visions would like to thank its 40th anniversary partners: August Wilson African American Cultural Center, Carnegie Museum of Art, Contemporary Craft, Kelly Strayhorn Theater, Kenkeleba House and the Wilmer Jennings Gallery, Pittsburgh Center for Arts and Media, Touchstone Center for Crafts, and the University Art Gallery. Their anniversary program has been supported by the Opportunity Fund, Visual Arts Coalition for Equity (VACE), Arts, Equity & Education Fund, and Heinz Endowments.

## Student Curators

HAA1019 Curatorial Development

Spring 2021, Instructor: Alex Taylor

Samantha Bonawitz, Sydney Christofer, Elijah Cordrey, Elizabeth Dragus, Rebecca Fitzharris, Heather Hershberger, Celia Kaine, Angela Koontz, Abreihona Lenihan, Meara Angela “Yara” Makasakit, Ellen McCullough, Morgan Meer, Pierce Mitchell, Char Pyle, Jamie Roncinske, Sienna Smith, Samantha Wert, Annette Yauger

HAA1022 Fall 2021

Fall 2021, Instructor: Janet McCall

Macy Becker, Jackie Bender, Sydney Christofer, Pauline Deely, Noelle Derksen, Christina Gioia, Mara Hassan, Heather Hershberger, Allison Lamonica, Kathryn Larrimer, Abreihona Lenihan, Gabby Lynch, Morgan Meer, Isabel Meline, Tiffany Sims, Gillian Stewart, Charlie Taylor

## Project Team

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Humanities Engage Fellow and PhD candidate, Department of English

Christine Bethea

President, Women of Visions

Janet McCall

Visiting Instructor, Department of History of Art and Architecture

Sylvia Rhor Samaniego

Director, University Art Gallery

Alex Taylor

Assistant Professor and Academic Curator, Department of History of Art and Architecture

## Installation and Framing

Duncan MacDiarmid, Chelsea Arthur, Framesmith

## Photography

Sean Carroll: pages 33, 34, 38, 39, 40 (above), 43, 44 (above), 52, 55, 56, 61, 62, 66, 71, 75, 76 (below), 83, 87, 88 (below), 93, 94, 97, 98 (above), 103. Emmai Alaquiva: pages 7 and 11. Centa Schumacher: 65. All other images courtesy of the artists of Women of Visions.

## Special Thanks

Donna Alexander, Theresa Baughman, Gretchen Bender, Isaiah Bertagnolli, Audrey Biega, Joshua Bow, Sean Carroll, Dee Currin, Alyssa DiFolco, Gianni Downs, Candice Driver, Ed Galloway, David Grinnell, Jedd Hakimi, Marica Jackson, Kate Joranson, Jennifer Josten, Kate Lydon, Megan Massanelli, Mary Phillips, Marques Redd, Karoline Swiontek, Renée Stout, John Twynning, Sarah Rafson, Mimi Jiao, Jennifer Josten, Clyde Wilson Pickett, Mina Rajagopalan, Emily Witthohn



University of  
Pittsburgh

Department of History of  
Art and Architecture

