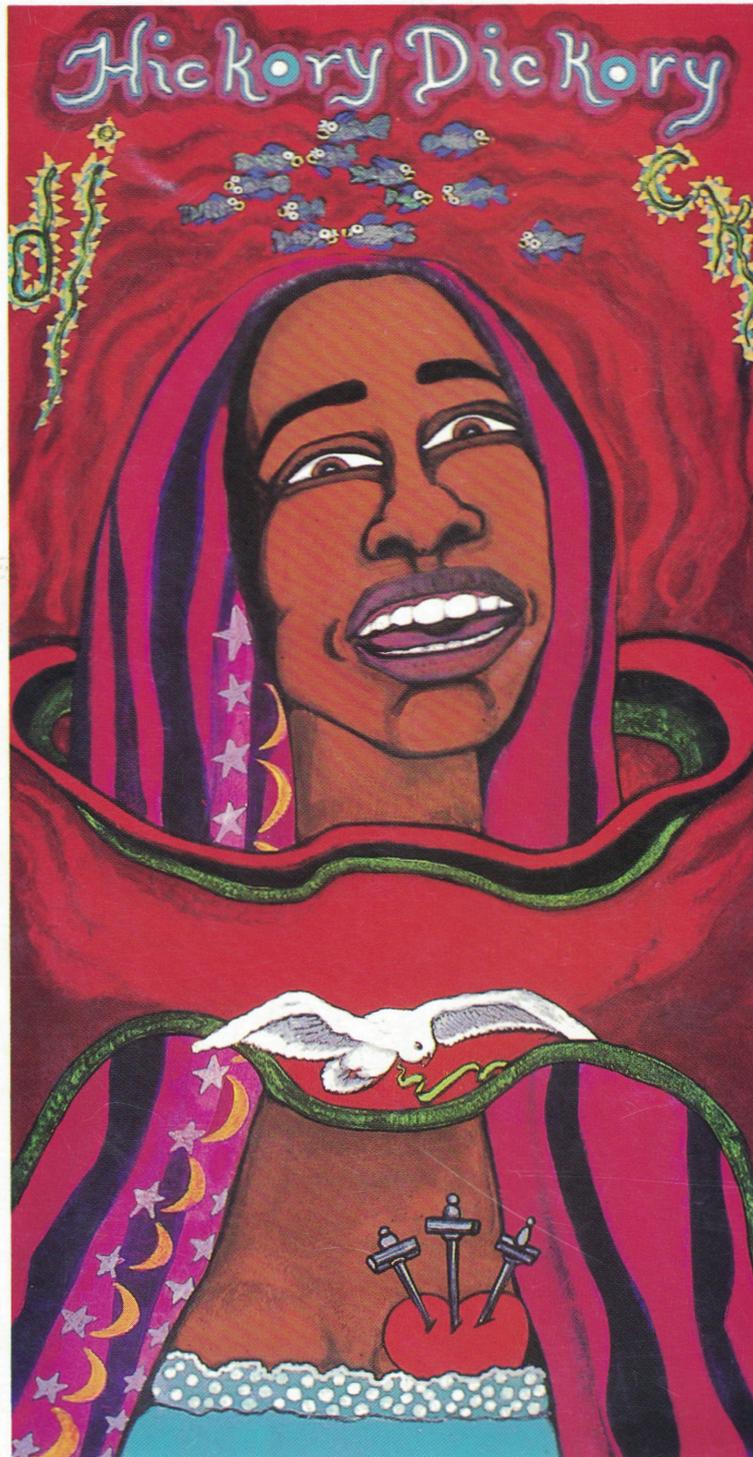


THE INTERNATIONAL REVIEW OF
AFRICAN AMERICAN ART



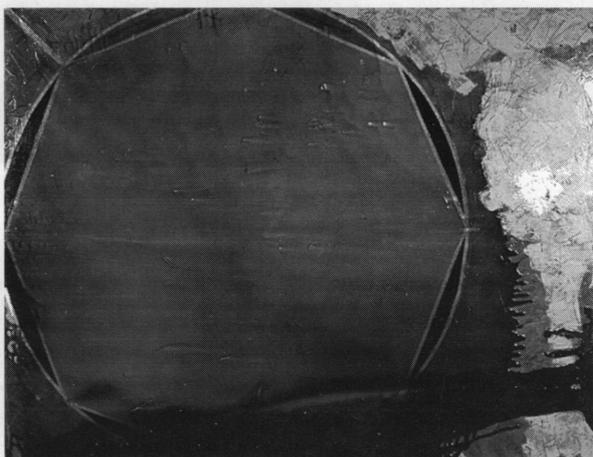
GRIEF RECYCLED

VOLUME 15 NUMBER 2 \$10.00

JOYCE WELLMAN

You have to see Wellman's paintings in person on gallery walls to properly appreciate them. Sorry, that's the only way. Shimmering, slick as Jello surfaces are protective sheaths for subplots, chords of memory, longing, and at times, furious energy. Pain and beauty, chaos and desire, and cerebral inquisitions reside beneath the gloss which Wellman achieves through Golden's GAC, a marvelous medium although some artists might find its harsh chemical odor the equivalent of standing in a puddle of gasoline.

Wellman condenses abstractions into emotive hymns of form and space — one senses an underlying structure of musical rhythms. For example, shrouded in a mathematical connotation, the calm aesthetics of *Sine Wave* seem to undulate hypnotically to Native American flutes. My favorite, *Gray Matters* — both dark and bright, tribal and universal — simmers to the dark, insistent rhythms of the digeridou.



JOYCE WELLMAN
Gray Matters

1997, acrylic on canvas, 60" x 72"

Joyce points to a place in the canvas in *Gray Matters* which memorializes her mother's death. And it is in this piece, that the viewer feels that the artist is merely a vehicle to manifest an approximation of the stern yet compassionate voice that calls forth all creation from the void. At the epicenter, light breaks forth at the speaking of the word and cracks the black egg of creation. This ability to transmit the sacred is the genius undergirding Wellman's creations.

Wellman says her purpose is to "abstractly transform universal intuitive forces, random chance and the essentials of visual language into feeling, visions, rhythms and thought to become a meaningful poetic art which informs us about both our world and the world around us."

BARBARA THOMAS

Barbara Thomas' gifts extend from writing to visual art. The prose in her generously illustrated new volume, *Storm Watch*, has the same odd mix of tenderness and desolation that characterizes her painting.

The granddaughter of Southern sharecroppers who migrated to Seattle in the early 1940s, Thomas historicizes her family's experiences in word and image, hollowing out a niche for their Southern idiosyncrasies (e.g., "the complete silence that was required in the face of thunder and lightning") and Northwest victories among tales of other American cross-country migrations. But the visual chronicles of her family's Northwestern odyssey murmur of loss and sorrow under thin layers of egg tempera.

Barbara Thomas' parents drowned in a boating accident. Since the love of fishing was the leitmotif of their existence, fish, rolling waves and vast expanses of sky appear in many of her paintings.

Despite the particularly grievous nature of her loss, Thomas can be a very funny lady, and whenever I call her, she regales me with her rollicking brand of humor which includes indelicate jibes at mass culture and rap music. Her comic persona is counterbalanced by the one that produces melancholic paintings and which creates her self-described penchant for being her own hardest taskmistress.

Beneath the ominous skies of the painting, *Storm Watch* (page 9), a fish also finds protection within the circle of human flesh. Its tailfin appears to be both a clasping hand and a flame of fire. In Thomas' works, waves of fire cresting in waves of water suggest the treachery of the waters which took her parents' lives. Fish, an integral part of her family's life, are also an integral part of the perilous waters: a symbolic dilemma that may ultimately be resolved by the ascendancy of love over doom.



BARBARA THOMAS
Nightcrawlers and Earthworms

1987, tempera on paper, 11 1/2" x 15"

COURTESY FRANCINE SEDERS GALLERY



JOYCE WELLMAN
Parallel Dreams
1997
acrylic on wood
48" x 48"

JOYCE WELLMAN
Trapezoidal Dreams
1997
acrylic-canvas on wood
12" x 12"

