

KNOW THE ARTIST • KNOW THE ART SERIES #1

Krishna Reddy

**Master
Printmaker
Sculptor
Artist**

Dennis L. Forbes



MARSHALL
WINCHESTER VA



Interview with
Viscosity Printmaker
Joyce Wellman



PLEASE! ON LEAVING! LOCK BACK AND FRONT DOOR. TURN OFF LIGHTS AND FANS, SHUT OFF THE HOTPLATE



The iconic Washington Monument in Washington, DC.

I also interviewed Joyce Wellman, a visual artist based in Washington, DC, and a former student who attended several of Krishna's viscosity printmaking workshops taught in the late 1970's at New York University (NYU). During my interview with Wellman at her studio, just blocks away from Catholic University, she told me that her first introduction to intaglio printmaking occurred at the age of 22 when she enrolled for the first time ever in an artmaking class taught by Valerie Maynard on printmaking at the historic Studio Museum of Harlem.

Wellman, at the time, was a junior high school arts and crafts teacher who decided to take a printmaking workshop on her own to learn printmaking techniques and processes to challenge and inspire her students. After taking the printmaking workshop, Wellman, I discovered, became so deeply inspired by her experience that after school she routinely went to printmaking workshops and facilities located all around New York City—often out past midnight—passionately seeking knowledge on making limited edition prints. Ultimately, Wellman ended up at the historic Bob Blackburn Printmaking Workshop in New York City, a favorite spot where local artists, as well as visiting artists from

across America and from around the world, gathered to make prints, to assist others in making prints, to watch others making prints, and to discuss traditional and innovative ways to make all types of fine art prints. It was Bob Blackburn who, after noticing Wellman's sense of color usage and graphic skills, recommended to Wellman that she take one of Krishna's popular Color Print Atelier Workshops for Printmakers, offered at NYU.

In 1981, the native New Yorker and City College of New York graduate migrated to Washington, DC. The following year, after becoming familiar with the local art community, Wellman helped organize a viscosity printmaking workshop taught by Krishna at the W.D. Printmaking Workshop in Washington, DC. Upon learning that Krishna taught a workshop at W.D. Printmaking, I contacted Percy Martin, the owner and an art teacher at the prestigious Sidwell Friends School, to find out if he had any memorabilia from the workshop. He did. Since I live in a suburb of Washington, DC, I made an appointment with Martin to stop by to see the memorabilia.

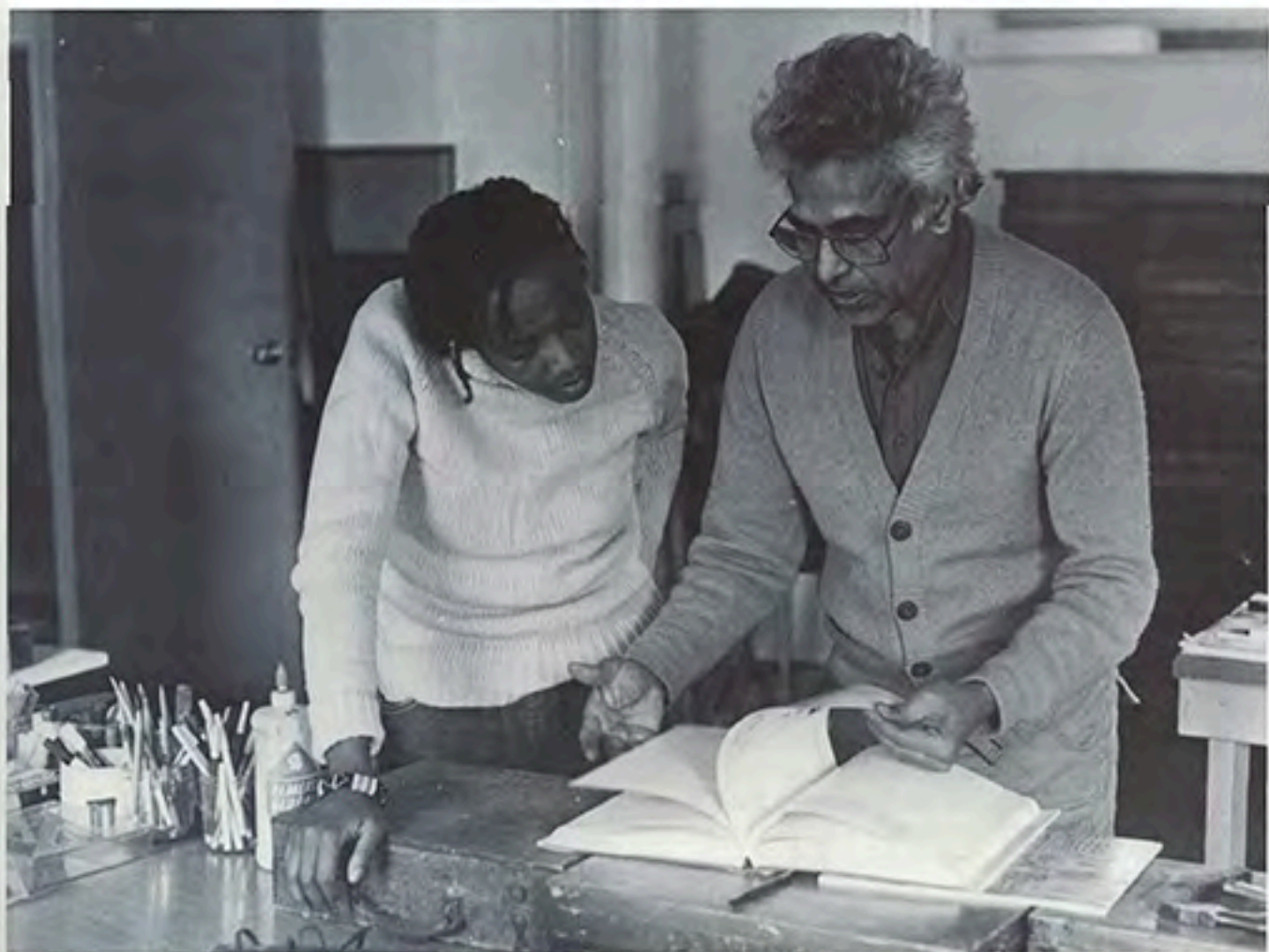
On February 8, 2009, my photographer, Jason Miccolo Johnson, and I went to Martin's workshop and photographed Wellman demonstrating the viscosity printmaking process that Krishna had taught to a group of





Viscosity prints by Joyce Wellman.





Krishna Reddy and Joyce Wellman. Photographed by Sharon Farmer.

interested artists nearly 30 years earlier.

Below is an interview session with Joyce Wellman that took place on March 18, 2009, at Wellman's studio.

Forbes: When did you study under Krishna and how did you become interested in viscosity printmaking?

Wellman: Well, I began working at Bob Blackburn's printmaking workshop in 1974-75; and so it was there that I met Krishna somewhere after late 1975. And because I was interested in color, Bob Blackburn recommended that I meet Krishna and take a class in color viscosity printmaking. And so that's what I did.

Forbes: What is your most memorable moment with Krishna?

Wellman: All of them. Let me just say, you know, it's not every day that you get a chance to work and learn from the real deal. I think of him as an artisan who is totally interested in furthering the work of printmaking, the work of printmakers, and experimentation, which

is what you can say viscosity printmaking can be to an extent. When I think about Krishna, I think about him in his apron at the color pallet with printmaking tools around him and learning about viscosity. His showing us the chemistry of viscosity, letting us know that you had to have the formula correct, you had to have the right tools, and you had to understand how to create a plate that would work with color viscosity. I would say those are my greatest moments with him, learning about those things.

Forbes: As a printmaker, how do you integrate the viscosity printmaking technique into your personal art-making?

Wellman: I don't know if I can separate it. Do you mean, do I use viscosity when I'm painting? Is that what you mean?

Forbes: Yes.

Wellman: I think it transfers, because if you could take a look at my paintings, you'll see they're full of transparency. And, whenever I can, they are layered.

That's what viscosity is. I think printmaking is a real physical kind of art. And so, yes, I think that it all interchanges itself.

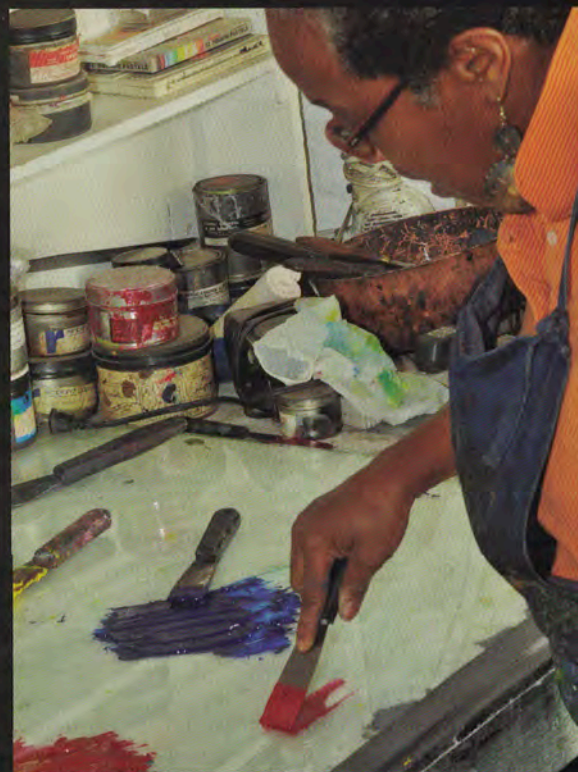
Forbes: What differences do you note between viscosity and intaglio printmaking?

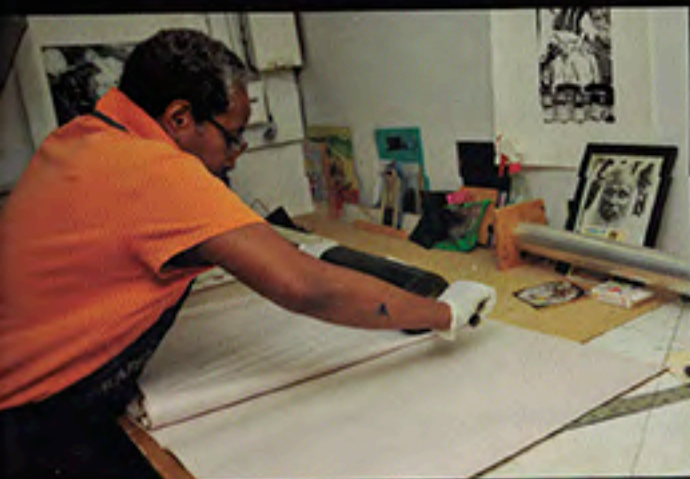
Wellman: Well, what we call viscosity printmaking is a combination of multiple processes, anyway. You know, Krishna would talk about it in terms of multiple relief; color has many steps to it. So, etching is part of the viscosity process; but viscosity with etching, you are not concerned about changing the viscosity of the ink insofar as how it's going to mix with other inks. When you're doing an etching, you're wiping ink on by hand and wiping it off by hand using rags. In terms of aquatint, you can get dark and light areas in a plate. They enhance one another, I can say. The difference is that they are different steps in the process of creating a viscosity etching. Viscosity is an accumulation of techniques, which when combined, create wonderful effects of color separation and color mixing. Without the etching process, I couldn't say you wouldn't have viscosity; but it precedes it and is a part of it. So viscosity is a culmination of processes; it's a multi-kind of process anyway, because you're both rolling and you're inking in a couple of different kind of ways; and it's almost like painting, with the various colors and the inks.

Forbes: Many years have passed since the historical introduction of viscosity printmaking. What are your thoughts about the evolution of viscosity printmaking as a mainstream printmaking process?

Wellman: Well, I think it is very big because every time I am someplace where there are a bunch of artists and someone mentions viscosity, they all know about it. It is totally part of the foundation of printmaking. And printmaking is one of those kind of processes where the changes are almost like at a snail's pace, because for a long time, it was just engraving, lithography and working with inks in a certain kind of way. That's color printmaking, but with using multiple plates. With viscosity, you're using one plate to get color separation and color added to your image in a regular kind of way. So everything moves slowly. So I wouldn't say that change comes quickly or easily to the variety of printmaking processes. I think, as we left viscosity 20 years ago, viscosity is still as viscosity was. You can't use plate oils because that's too oily. You have to use raw uncooked linseed oil to change the viscosity. You should be using offset inks.

The viscosity printmaking process demonstrated by Joyce Wellman.





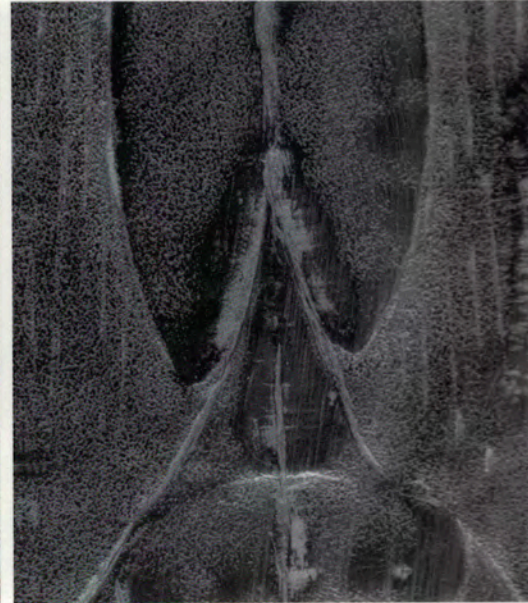
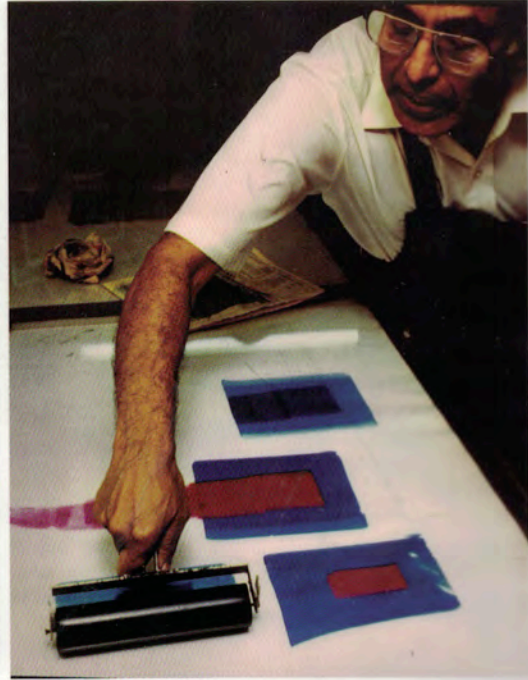
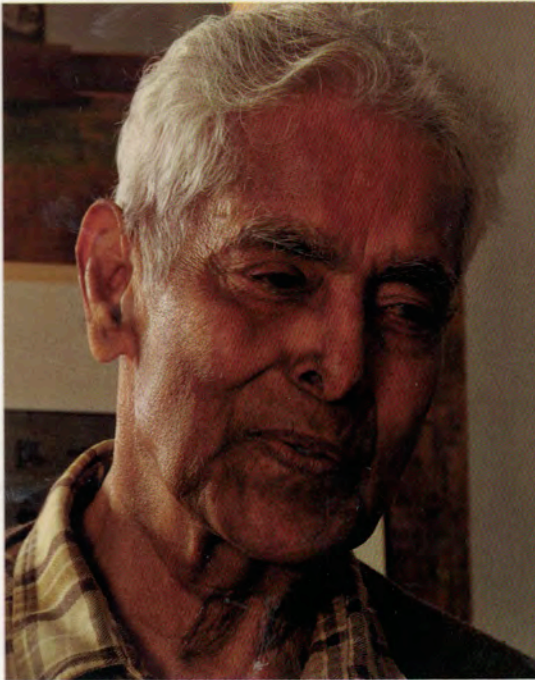


Viscosity prints by Joyce Wellman.



“The creative potential is innate in each of us, and we should struggle to make it function in our lives.”

Krishna Reddy



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