

ART COLLECTION OF THE
UNITED STATES EMBASSY

MONROVIA, LIBERIA

*Just as the past shapes the present and augurs the future,
the art collection serves as both time capsule and beacon.
One artist's voice at a time, one work of art at a time,
the collection builds momentum. Expressing hope and
resilience, a rich cross-cultural exchange emerges and
reminds us of our shared humanity and purpose.*

THE ARTISTS

Norman Akers
Jonathan Anderson
Duke Appleton
Gwendolyn D. Aquí
Doug Beube
Peggy Blood
Bernard W. Brooks
Griffith J. Davis
Lilya P. Dear
The Eatonville Portfolio
Dawoud Bey
Lonnie Graham
Carrie Mae Weems
Deborah Willis
Wilson Fallah
Mary Fisher
Augustine Fokoe

Inga Frick
Geneka B. Gibson
Claudia Aziza Gibson-Hunter
Charly Heavenrich
Sean Hennessey
Randell Henry
Miatta Kawinzi
Jallah Kollie
Leslie Lumeh
Susan Madacsi
Mario Martinez
Fritz Massaquoi
Larry McNeil
Michael Mitchell
Alison Moritsugu
National Quilters Association of Liberia
Michelle Peterson-Albandoz

Michael B. Platt and Carol A. Beane
The Quilts from Gee's Bend
Mary Lee Bendolph
Louisiana Bendolph
Loretta Bennett
Loretta Pettway
Warren Seelig and Sherrie Gibson
Al Smith
Frank Smith
Jaune Quick-to-See Smith
Lisa Tubach
Hawa Ware
Marie Watt
Joyce E. Wellman
Fato A. Wheremongar
David Wolobah
Melanie Yazzie and Sue Melinda Pearson



ART COLLECTION OF THE
UNITED STATES EMBASSY

MONROVIA,
LIBERIA



CURATOR'S NOTE

BY SARAH TANGUY

The art collection at the U.S. Embassy in Monrovia brings together 53 American and Liberian artists and artist teams around the themes of tradition and renewal. Taking their cue from Liberia's rich cultural heritage, 74 artworks create a dynamic call and response with images of agriculture, education, music, environment, and above all, a love of homeland and nature. Ranging from lyrical landscapes and scenes of everyday life to bold abstractions, the collection encompasses paintings, photographs, works on paper, mixed media works, textiles, and sculptures.

Landscapes of Liberia and genre scenes capture a nation in transition, as the oldest republic in Africa emerges from the turmoil of two civil wars. Photographs by Griffith J. Davis—an African-American diplomat who traveled the country in the mid-1950s, offer images of the rubber industry, a railroad, a boat crossing, and a college. Sixty years later, Liberian artist Fato A. Wheremongar's paintings of fishing, a monkey bridge, and palm nuts chronicle traditional means of transportation and livelihood, as do animated market and agricultural tableaux by Geneka B.

Gibson, Jallah Kollie, and Michael Mitchell. David Wolobah hints at the underbelly of economic production by combining figures at work with bright, repetitive patterns. Paintings by Duke Appleton, Augustine Fokoe, and Fritz Massaquoi depict life in coastal and rural towns, while Leslie Lumeh's work favors the hustle and bustle of the city. By contrast, Wilson Fallah employs the language of abstraction to express the catalytic power of peace to move his homeland forward.

Many of the U.S. works elicit comparisons between the history and culture of Liberians with those of African Americans and Native Americans. The Eatonville Portfolio, featuring photographs by Dawoud Bey, Lonnie Graham, Carrie Mae Weems, and Deborah Willis, revisits America's oldest incorporated African-American community with poetry and grace. Prints of eye-dazzling quilts by Mary Lee Bendolph, Louisiana Bendolph, Loretta Bennett, and Loretta Pettway bring to life the now-famous craft tradition of Gee's Bend, a small township in rural Alabama settled by post-U.S. Civil War freed slaves. A suite of prints by Native-American artists Norman

Akers, Mario Martinez, Larry McNeil, Jaune Quick-to-See Smith, and Mary Watt, along with a collaborative, mixed media work by Native American artists Melanie Yazzie and Sue Melinda Pearson, enlist animal symbols and folklore to reflect on identity loss and construction.

Other Liberian and American artists make use of their travel experience as guide. Hawa Ware's tender portrait of a couple contemplating the future conveys displacement and longing, whereas Miatta Kawinzi evokes the struggle inherent in a hybrid identity in her painting of a stylized masked dancer. The trope of a mask reappears in Doug Beube's sculpture of a dictionary reconfigured into a mask to comment on how words can be misused, and by extension, underscore the importance of language and communication. Gwendolyn D. Aquí and Claudia Aziza Gibson-Hunter channel the sounds and peoples of Africa in lively depictions of drummers and masquerade, while Bernard Brooks pays tribute to family origins in a mixed media work full of symbolic references. Lilya P. Dear highlights the anchor that ritual offers in

scenes of a procession and a majestic tree. And Peggy Blood conceives an enveloping image of an African village from the multiple perspectives that have shaped her life.

For several artists, the fragility of our ecosystem is paramount. Jonathan Anderson offers the promise of new growth. In his painting, a central figure bearing a flag of the alphabet is shown planting. Reconstruction is also present in Sean Hennessey's cast glass and concrete sculptures, which spin an allegory of transformation from such common hardware items as a light bulb and clamp. Michelle Peterson-Albandoz's dynamic abstraction recycles discarded wooden planks into a vision of possibility and renewal. By contrast, Charly Heavenrich photographs the land itself—sweeping vistas of the Grand Canyon—to convey the responsibility of caregiving. Alison Moritsugu's cluster of miniature landscapes, tinged with nostalgia and painted on actual logs, alludes to humanity's long history of dominance. Equally cautionary is Lisa Tubach's painting that counterpoints the beauty of the natural world and its endangered existence.

Music as a source of inspiration and imagery enlivens several works, in addition to those by Aqui and Gibson-Hunter. Mixed media collages by Randell Henry improvise with shape, color, and pattern, often bringing hidden imagery

to light. Susan Madacsi's sculpture harnesses the industrial strength of steel into organic forms bursting with energy and color. Joyce E. Wellman's painting reveals the spiritual role that music can play with geometric glyphs and bold palette. Michael B. Platt and Carol A. Beane blend an enraptured figure and poetic verse into an emotionally charged visualization of song. Al Smith's print celebrates communal touch through Washington, D.C.'s very own hand dancing, a variation of swing and jitterbug. And Frank Smith pays homage to Piet Mondrian's love of jazz and improvisation by patching together fragments of cloth into an eye-dizzying composition.

Indeed, textiles provide a vital anchor to the collection. The recently formed National Quilters Association of Liberia empowers women of all ages in collaborative quilt making. The commissioned works range from traditional patterns of a coffee tree and a Whig Rose—brought over from the original, freed African-American settlers—to contemporary scenes of village life. Along with Frank Smith, fellow Americans Mary Fisher, Inga Frick, and pioneers Warren Seelig and Sherrie Gibson engage with alternate methods and approaches. Fisher tackles HIV-AIDS in a moving, mixed media work featuring a monumental female figure and excerpts from speeches. Frick riffs on the concept of Americana in a photo-based, *trompe-*

l'oeil work that contrasts blue ovals and swags of red and white striped fabric. And for their suspended sculptural commission, partners Seelig and Gibson conceived an ethereal, spoke-and-axle construction enhanced with translucent fabric in response to Liberia's tropical landscape and vibrant culture.

Just as the past shapes the present and augurs the future, the art collection serves as both time capsule and beacon. One artist's voice at a time, one work of art at a time, the collection builds momentum. Expressing hope and resilience, a rich, cross-cultural exchange emerges and reminds us of our shared humanity and purpose.

Sarah Tanguy

At press time, two new works are in development, a war memorial by Jallah Kollie and a community responsive sculpture by U.S. Workingman Collective.

(page 6)
Leslie Lumeh (Dambala, Grand Cape Mount, Liberia, 1970)
Detail of *Les Amis*, 2010
Oil on canvas

(page 9)
Loretta Bennett (Gee's Bend, Alabama, 1960)
Detail of *Yellow Jack*, 2007
Aquatint/softground etching



“My art actively seeks to engage people in examining important issues. I address the topics of personal and cultural loss. Instead of speaking out words, I pursue a visual dialog. Through color, line and visual form, I express deeply felt concerns regarding removal, disturbance, and the struggle to reclaim cultural context.”

NORMAN AKERS

BORN 1958, FAIRFAX, OKLAHOMA

The themes in Norman Akers’ paintings and prints refer to his experiences as a member of the Osage Nation, a tribe of Midwestern Native Americans. Using symbols and images drawn from his heritage, Akers addresses issues of identity, place, and personal and cultural transformation in visual narratives that continue the tradition of Native-American storytelling. Akers received a bachelor of fine arts degree from the Kansas City Art Institute and a master of fine arts from the University of Illinois. He has exhibited his work in solo and group exhibitions in states including Kansas, New Mexico, Illinois, and Oklahoma.



<
All Things Connected, 2007
Five-color lithograph printed on white Somerset paper



^
Cultivation (no.4), 2009
Oil on birch panel

JONATHAN ANDERSON

BORN 1977, DENVER, COLORADO

Jonathan Anderson is an associate professor of art at Biola University, La Mirada, California. He has a master of fine arts degree from California State University Long Beach, where he received the Distinguished Achievement Award in Drawing and Painting. He currently lives and works in Long Beach, California.

“I think about painting in construction terms. Paintings are buildings; they are structures designed to provide containment for ways of seeing and thinking, ways of positioning and orienting oneself in relation to the world. And I undertake art-making in these terms: as a structure-maker, transforming oily mud and fibers into visual spaces for the housing of stories, the posing of questions, and the visual organizing of concepts. It’s not only that these paintings are often images of buildings; they are themselves ‘buildings.’”



^
Kings & Queens, Oldest Congo Town, 2011
Acrylic on cardboard

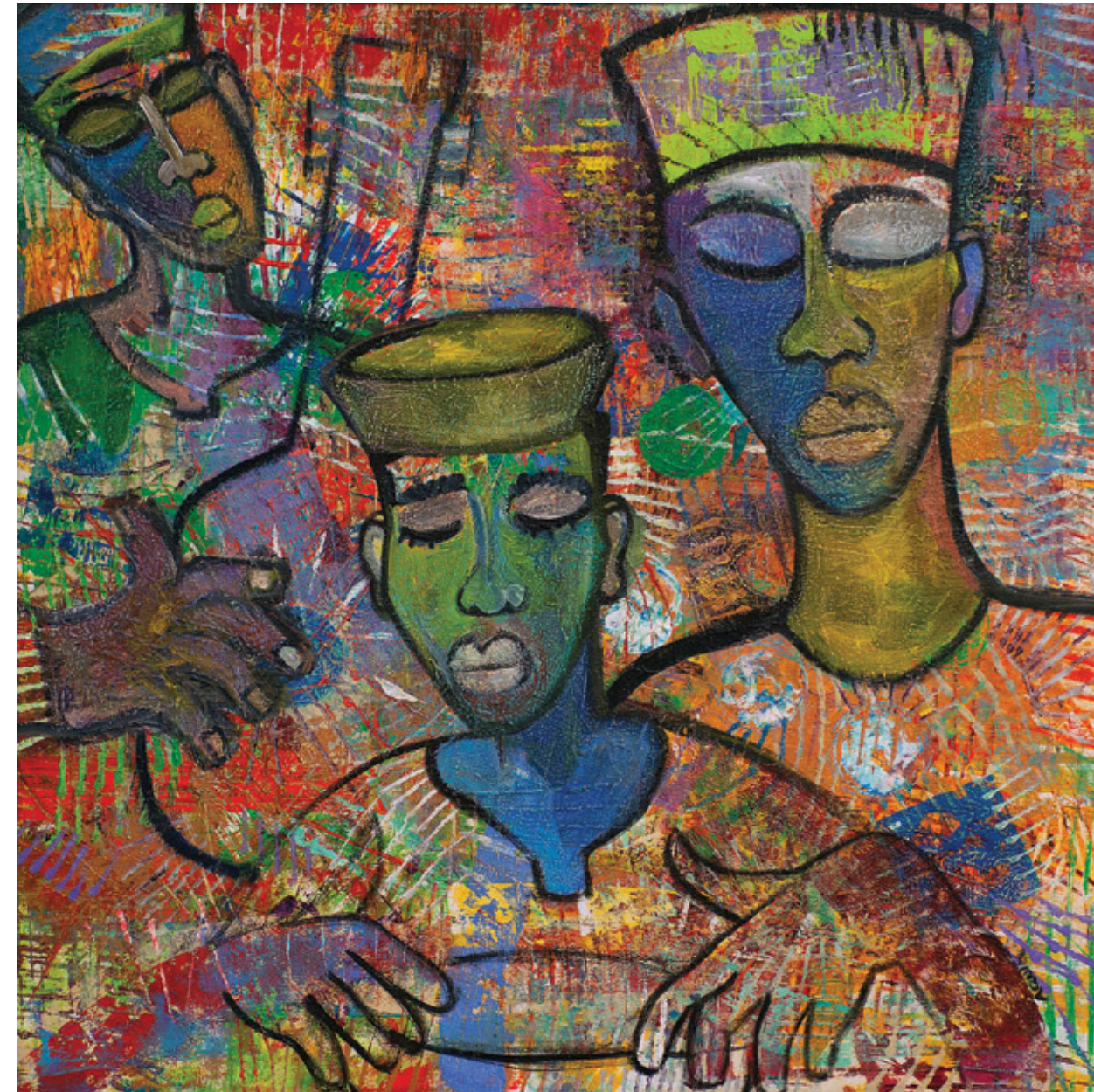
DUKE APPLETON

BORN 1965, MONROVIA, MONTERRADO, LIBERIA



^
Ta-Keh/Rock Town Plebo district, 2011
Acrylic on cardboard

Duke Appleton is a visual artist, as well as an illustrator, writer, poet, musician, actor, and cartoonist. He is also the CEO and founder of Artists Without Borders. In his brightly colored paintings, Appleton interprets scenes of everyday village life, often along waterways or the ocean, as well as genre portraits of traditional Liberians.



GWENDOLYN D. AQUÍ

BORN 1947, WASHINGTON, D.C.

A native of Washington, D.C., Gwendolyn D. Aqui is a painter, contemporary quiltmaker, and doll designer determined to make a difference in the world of art. She has also been an arts educator, in the United States and Africa, the owner/director of an art gallery, and an art therapist and consultant. Travel has been an important influence on her work, especially her trips to Africa, Trinidad, Tobago and Brazil. Aqui received a bachelor of fine arts in art education from Howard University, Washington, D.C., and a master's degree in education/counseling from Trinity College, Hartford, Connecticut. In addition to receiving many awards and grants for her work, Aqui has been in more than 80 solo and group exhibitions in the U.S. and abroad.

“Art is my life! I feel alive when I’m creating, whether it be a painting, a quilt, or a doll.”

<
Jazzy Drummer, 2006
Mixed media on canvas

“Selective parts of an English dictionary are cut away in the shape of an ellipse. Portions of the text block and the spine of the book are removed making it flexible, allowing the pages to be manipulated into different forms. Mounted on the wall, the book is transformed into the shape of a mask. Pulled into a fixed position, the book is reminiscent of performance artists who skillfully contort their bodies into impossible shapes like a children’s toy transformed into a robot. Metaphorically, the form references the misuse of words. Sometimes words get ‘twisted or masked’ either intentionally spoken to deceive or by misunderstanding their meanings.”

DOUG BEUBE

BORN 1950, HAMILTON, ONTARIO

Doug Beube is a mixed media artist working in bookwork, collage, sculpture, and photography. He has a bachelor of fine arts degree from York University in Toronto, Ontario, and a master of fine arts degree in photography from the Visual Studies Workshop in Rochester, New York. A monograph, *Doug Beube: Breaking the Codex*, provides a description of Beube’s work and includes an introduction by David Revere McFadden, chief curator of the Museum of Art and Design in New York City, and essays by several well-known writers and critics. Beube regularly lectures on his work and exhibits both in the U.S. and internationally.

>
Masked Language, 2011
Altered dictionary



^
African Land, 2003
Oil on canvas

“My creative works contrast vibrant, bright hues and muted darks. Each painting tells a story about life observed in the United States or through my travels. Many of my compositions feature multiple views of different experiences, leading the viewer from one area to various related shapes. Most works are mixed media. Natural and tangible objects overlap with rhythmic motion and streams of color for an expressionistic type of genre painting.”

PEGGY BLOOD

BORN 1947, PINE BLUFF, ARKANSAS

Dr. Peggy Blood grew up in the southern U.S. during segregation and is the first African American to receive a master of fine arts degree from the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville. She also holds a master of arts in administrative education and a doctor of philosophy in administration/art education. Since 1971, she has taught art in higher education institutions. In 1974 she moved to California from New York to become the executive director of Chapman University’s campus in Fairfield, California. In 1978, she was given the title of outstanding Bay Area Artist in Oakland, California. Blood moved to Savannah, Georgia, in 1998 to serve as chair and professor of Savannah State University’s Department of Art, where she was elected Distinguished Professor in 2003.

BERNARD W. BROOKS

BORN 1939, ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA

Bernard W. Brooks is a second-generation artist and teacher. Married to Gwendolyn D. Aqui, who is also represented in the embassy collection, Brooks expresses his artistic vision through watercolors, ink sketching and mixed media works. His diverse materials include fabric, hand-made paper, paint, and metallic mediums. Brooks studied art and printmaking at the Philadelphia College of Art, Pennsylvania; the University of Maryland; and Howard University, Washington, D.C., where he earned a bachelor of arts degree and served as chief medical illustrator for more than 25 years. His extensive travel has greatly impacted his art, in particular trips to the Caribbean Islands and France. Brooks' work can be found in many private collections.

>
Family Origin, 2010
Mixed media on canvas



"I'm not a philosopher, nor am I a deep thinker. I'm just an observer of life. An observer of how people act and how people work. I have tried to live a life that would be a positive influence, but influence occurs in trickles, not in downpours."

GRIFFITH J. DAVIS

1923 – 1993, ATLANTA, GEORGIA

Griffith J. Davis was born on the campus of Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia, and grew up on Spelman College's campus in Atlanta. In high school he took up photography, which became his primary means of expression and support through college. He was a photographer for the Atlanta University campuses and the *Atlanta Daily World*, the first Black newspaper in the country. After serving in World War II as a Buffalo Soldier near Genoa, Italy, he resumed study and graduated from Morehouse College. After graduation he was hired as *Ebony* magazine's first roving editor.

After graduating from Columbia University in 1949 as the only African American in his class, Davis worked as a freelance photojournalist and a stringer for *The New York Times*. He photographed and wrote extensively in Africa, Europe, and the United States, and his work appeared in publications including *Modern Photography*, *Negro Digest*, *Time*, and *The Saturday Evening Post*. In 1952, Davis was invited to join the U.S. Foreign Service in Liberia by fellow African Americans who were simultaneously creating the first U.S. Embassy in Liberia and Africa. Davis co-founded what became Liberia's Ministry of Information and produced films documenting important cultural, political and historical events in Liberia's history. During his 33-year career, he served in many capacities in Liberia, as well as newly independent Tunisia and Nigeria.



^
Iron ore train coming down the road from Bomi Hills Mine, 1950
 Archival pigment copy print from original photograph

^
Form of transportation across a river in Liberia, 1950
 Archival pigment copy print from original photograph

^
Cuttington College near Suakoko, 1950
 Archival pigment copy print from original photograph

^
Crude rubber being loaded at the Port of Monrovia for the transshipment to the United States under the Point 4 Program, 1950–1953
 Archival pigment copy print from original photograph

LILYA P. DEAR

BORN 1947, TOPOLA, SERBIA

Lilya P. Dear was born in Topola, Serbia, of American nationality. She received a bachelor of fine arts in painting, frescoes, and mosaics from the Academy of Fine Arts, London, and a master of fine arts, Chelsea College of Arts, London. She has been a professor of fine arts and has lived and worked in London, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Paris. Dear has participated in more than 200 group shows in the United States and Europe, and her work is in private and public collections in Europe and the U.S., including the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris; the Neue Galerie Graz, Austria; the New York Public Library, New York; and the Los Angeles County Museum, Los Angeles, California.

“My whole life was very nomadic, moving from one country to another, and even changing continents. Spontaneously I was exposed to different cultures. By doing that, my life became richer and it reflected in my work.”



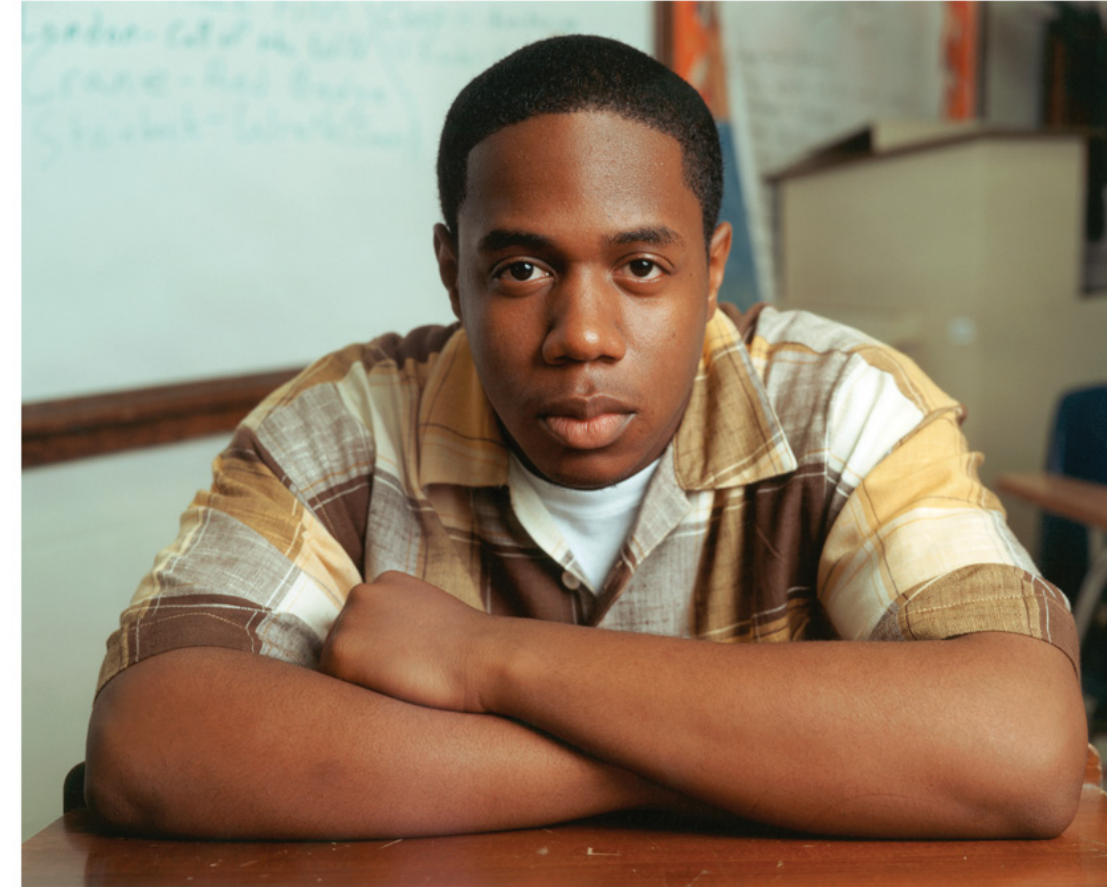
^
Big Tree, 2007
Acrylic on embossed paper



>
Procession II, 2005
Acrylic on embossed paper

THE EATONVILLE PORTFOLIO

The four works in *The Eatonville Portfolio* were produced for *Embracing Eatonville: A Photographic Survey*. Eatonville, Florida, is the oldest Black incorporated town in the United States, and a place where celebrated writer Zora Neale Hurston lived and worked. Beginning in January 2002 and continuing through the middle of 2003, photographers Dawoud Bey, Lonnie Graham, Carrie Mae Weems, and Deborah Willis spent time in Eatonville taking photographs in an effort to provide a meaningful reflection of Eatonville's spirit and character while concentrating on the social, political, and cultural landscape of this historically unique town in Central Florida.



I describe myself as a very nice and respectful young man to all. I'm an encourager to my friends and family, even to my teachers. Often I find it fun to visit the nursing home to keep the old ones company. I love to help and encourage people.

^

Jason, 2003

Pigmented inkjet print with text

DAWOUD BEY

BORN 1953, QUEENS, NEW YORK

Known for his photographic portraits of great psychological penetration, Dawoud Bey began his career as a photographer in 1975 with a series, *Harlem, USA*, that was later exhibited at the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, in 1979. Also noted for his critical writings, Bey has taught at colleges, universities, and other institutions for 30 years, and is currently a distinguished college artist and professor of photography at Columbia College, Chicago. He received his master of fine arts degree from Yale University School of Art, New Haven, Connecticut. The recipient of many awards and fellowships, Bey has completed a number of collaborative projects working with young people, museums, and communities. His work can be found in museum collections, both in the United States and Europe, including the Art Institute of Chicago, Illinois; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, California; the High Museum, Atlanta, Georgia; and the National Portrait Gallery, London, among many others.

“These projects have involved young people, museums, and cultural institutions together in a broad dialogue that seeks to create an engaging space for art-making and institutional interrogation.”

LONNIE GRAHAM

BORN 1953, CLEVELAND, OHIO

An artist, professor, and cultural activist, Lonnie Graham studied graphic design and commercial photography at the Ivy School of Professional Art in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and studied fine art photography and drawing at the Nova Scotia College of Art in Halifax and the San Francisco Art Institute, California. As director of photography at Manchester Craftsmen's Guild, an urban arts organization dedicated to arts and education for at-risk youth, Graham developed innovative pilot projects including the Arts Collaborative, which merges an art and academic curriculum.

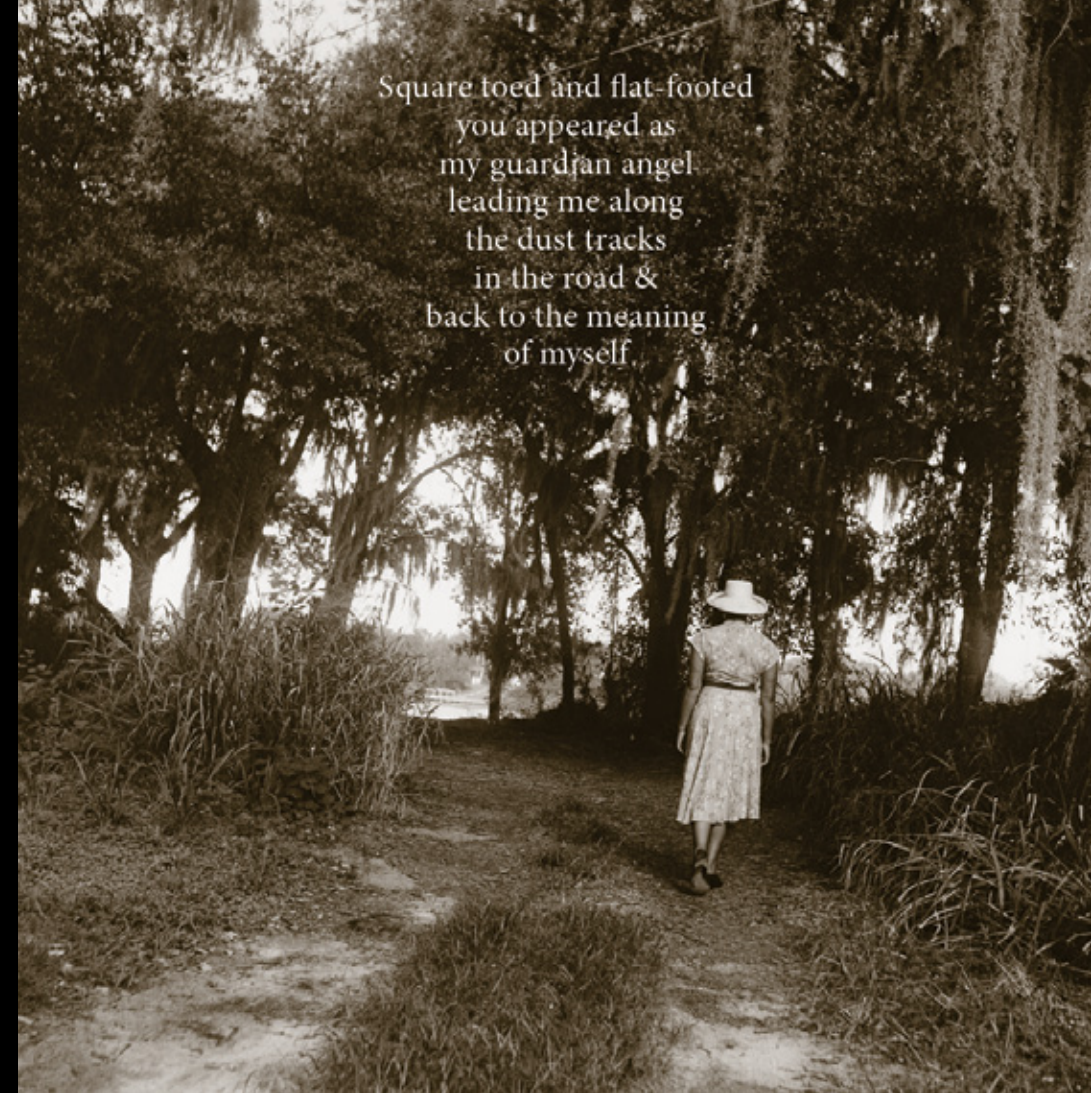
In 2003, Graham began collaborative photographic projects overseas, including projects in India, Ethiopia, Iceland, Nepal, Tibet, and Papua New Guinea, to make art an agent for positive change in people's lives and communities. One of these projects, the African/American Garden project, provided a physical and cultural exchange between farmers from a small farming village in Muguga, Kenya, and urban single mothers from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. From 2000 to 2010, Graham worked in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on Project H.O.M.E., a collaborative project in north Philadelphia. In addition to installations and neighborhood events, the commission included a meditation park, which was dedicated and gifted to the community in 2010. The winner of numerous awards, Graham is presently a professor of fine arts at Pennsylvania State University and formerly an instructor of special programs at the Barnes Foundation in Marion, Pennsylvania. He has received major commissions and his work can be found in collections throughout the U.S.



“The inhabitants of the small enclave (Eatonville) bear the burden of an eventful past with resolute dignity. The questions posed by the present may find resolution not in any political agenda or economic initiative but perhaps in that place from which the community found its origin. The natural landscape surrounding Eatonville provides an individual with the sense of immersion into what seems like an ocean of thriving flora.”

^

Thompson Avenue, Eatonville, FL, June 2003
Pigmented inkjet print



Square toed and flat-footed
you appeared as
my guardian angel
leading me along
the dust tracks
in the road &
back to the meaning
of myself

^

Untitled, from the Eatonville Series, 2003
Pigmented inkjet print with text

CARRIE MAE WEEMS

BORN 1953, PORTLAND, OREGON

Carrie Mae Weems, a native of Portland, Oregon, earned a bachelor of fine arts from the California Institute of the Arts, and a master of fine arts from the University of California. She continued her studies in the folklore graduate program at the University of California. Weems uses colloquial forms—such as jokes and songs—in photography, video, and verse to create social documentaries, tableaux, self-portraits, and oral histories. Among her themes, she has traced the history of the depiction of African Americans in U.S. culture. Weems has received honorary degrees from Colgate University, New York, and the California College of the Arts, Oakland. She's received numerous awards and her work has been in major exhibitions at locations including Harvard University, Boston, Massachusetts; Williams College Museum of Art, Williamstown, Massachusetts; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, New York. Weems lives and works in Syracuse, New York.

“Photography can still be used to champion activism and change. I believe this, even while standing in the cool winds of postmodernism ... Postmodernism looked radical, but it wasn't. As a movement it was profoundly liberal and became a victim of itself. Precisely at this historical moment, when multicultural democracy is the order of the day, photography can be used as a powerful weapon toward instituting political and cultural change. I for one will continue to work toward this end.”

“My photography in Eatonville is about revealing the history through the materiality of the photograph and (creating) a revised reading of the town through the words of Zora Neale Hurston in her book, Dust Tracks on a Road ... In weaving Zora’s narrative and my photographs, I reconstruct an imagined past through text and image depicting its beauty, spirituality and cultural memory.”

DEBORAH WILLIS

BORN 1948, PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

Dr. Deborah Willis is an artist, photographer, author, and educator. She is chair and professor of photography and imaging at Tisch School of the Arts, New York University, where she also has an affiliated appointment with Tisch’s College of Arts and Sciences, Africana studies. A 2005 Guggenheim and Fletcher Fellow, a 2000 MacArthur Fellow, and a 1996 recipient of the Anonymous Was a Woman Foundation award, Willis is one of the nation’s leading historians of African-American photography and curator of African-American culture.

Among her notable curatorial projects are *Reflections in Black: A History of Black Photographers—1840 to the Present*, and *Posing Beauty: African American Images from the 1890’s to the Present*, which traveled with the companion exhibition, *Michelle Obama, The First Lady in Photographs*. She collaborated with her son, Hank Willis Thomas, on the exhibition *Progeny*.

Willis is the author of numerous books including *A Small Nation of People: W.E.B. DuBois and African American Portraits of Progress*; *Let Your Motto be Resistance: African American Portraits*; *Obama: the Historic Campaign in Photographs*, and more recently, *The Black Female Body, a Photographic History*.

>
View from Pulpit, Eatonville, FL, 2003
Pigmented inkjet print



WILSON FALLAH

BORN 1990, VOINJAMA, LOFA COUNTY, LIBERIA

Wilson Fallah, a native of Monrovia, is a self-taught artist with only a small amount of apprenticeship training. His work includes genre scenes of daily life in his country, such as women and children engaged in various activities that he translates into painting. Fallah had his first art exhibition in Monrovia in 2004, and his work has since been collected in Monrovia and other countries.



^
Peace is Good, 2011
Oil on canvas

“I always admire artistic work because I love art.”



“I’ve stood among people with AIDS in American hospices, federal prisons and the brutal heat of Africa. In most of these settings, I am the only one who can afford the drugs that lengthen our lives. Everywhere I look are sunken-eyed, sallow-faced brothers and sisters dying for their poverty, suffering for our inability to provide equal access to drugs. And in each of these settings, I have never once been judged by those who are dying. I may judge myself with guilt I cannot swallow. But they reach out with tenderness and acceptance, despite their nearness to a grave that I still avoid. How else could I memorialize such love but with a quilt? And what else could I call it but Amazing Grace?”

MARY FISHER

BORN 1948, LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY

Mary Fisher is an artist, author, and speaker who travels the world advocating for those who share her HIV-positive status. She previously served as ambassador for the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), and was on the Leadership Council of the Global Coalition on Women and AIDS. She established the Mary Fisher CARE (Clinical AIDS Research and Education) Fund to support long-term, outcomes-based research for the care of people living with HIV, especially women. As part of her commitment to enable HIV-affected women in Africa to support themselves and their families, she taught women in Rwanda and Zambia to make jewelry, which she markets in the United States. Fisher is the recipient of many honorary doctorates and tributes. Her artwork has been featured in one-woman and group shows and is represented in private and public collections worldwide.

<
Amazing Grace, 2003
Cotton and silk fabric, block printing inks; cotton threads, fringe, trims, lace & beads; cotton batting; hand-printed woodcuts and linocuts on cotton, hand coloring machine and hand appliqué and embellishments, words from speeches, machine and hand embroidery, digital printed fabric from original prints, machine quilted

AUGUSTINE FOKOE

BORN 1976, MONROVIA, MONTERRADO COUNTY

The artistic work of Augustine Fokoe features images from everyday life in Liberian towns and villages, traditional hut architecture, market scenes, and the activities of women and children. Fokoe's interest in art started at age 10 when he turned his copybooks, intended for note-taking, into sketchpads. Not knowing the interest of their child, his parents punished him for "spoiling" his copybooks with drawings. At times during his junior and senior secondary education, Fokoe sold his imaginative paintings to pay his school tuition. Fokoe graduated from the Don Bosco School in Liberia and today he is a painter, sculptor, and graphic illustrator. He is also owner of the A. Fokoe Art Center in Monrovia. His work has been exhibited in Monrovia and can be found in collections in England, Germany, Portugal, and the U.S.

"Art for Life"



^
Kissi Town, 2009
Oil on canvas

Taking their cue from Liberia's rich cultural heritage, 74 artworks create a dynamic call and response with images of agriculture, education, music, environment, and above all, a love of homeland and nature. Ranging from lyrical landscapes and scenes of everyday life to bold abstractions, the collection encompasses paintings, photographs, works on paper, mixed media works, textiles, and sculptures.

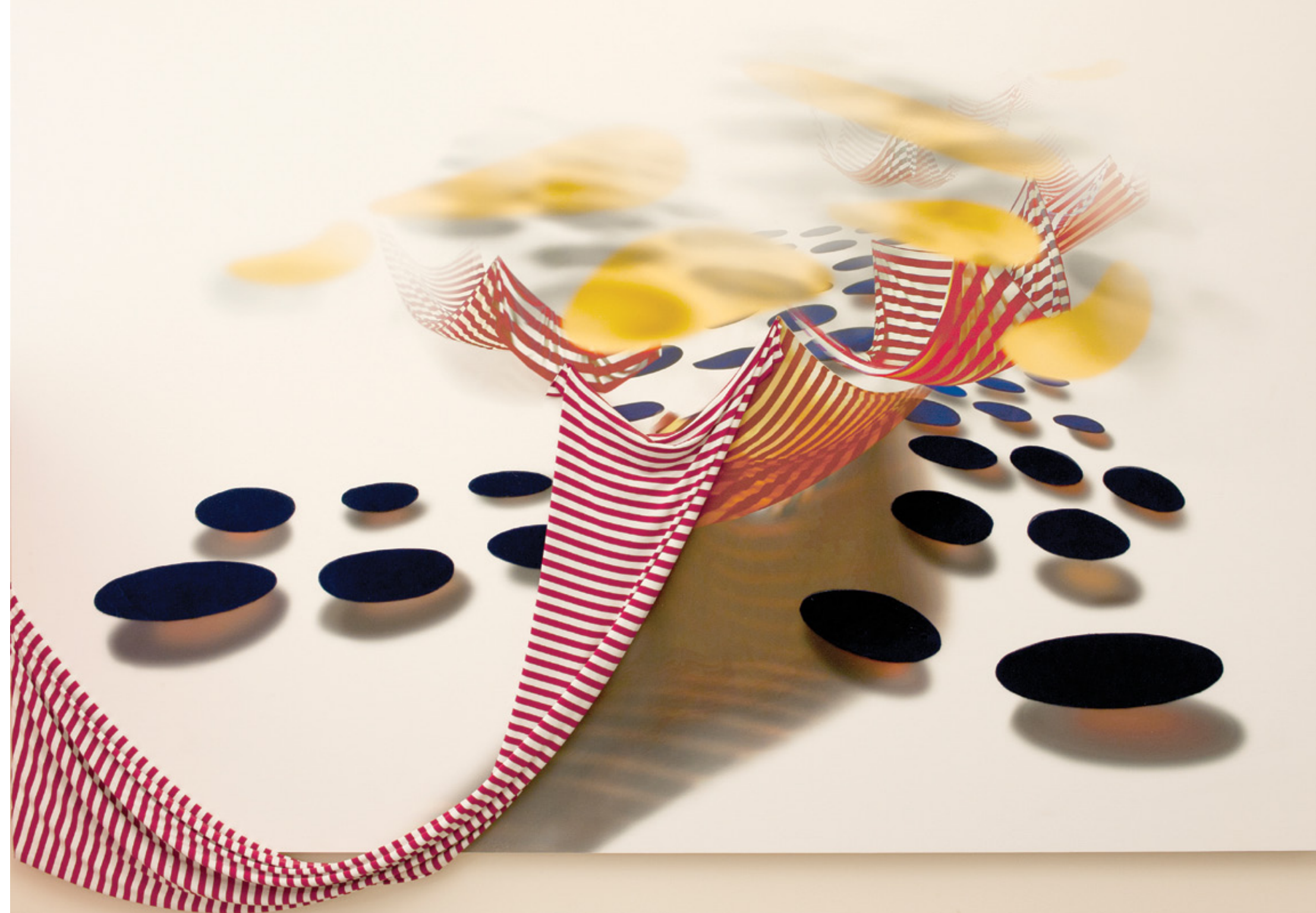
“I see our experience as drenched in illusion at every level: From the subatomic level where a number of physicists begin to suspect that there is, in fact, no there there—that material reality may not, purely speaking, exist; to the more everyday ways that the power of illusion molds our experience of the world. We regularly perceive and believe in things that, like phantom limbs, are generated from within. These powers are important for our survival and allow us to do things we would otherwise not be able to do ... but as jihadists strap bombs on their bodies to get to heaven and ideologues of all stripes increasingly dictate the terms of our reality—it becomes imperative to understand the nature of our illusions ...”

INGA FRICK

BORN 1951, TORRANCE, CALIFORNIA

Inga Frick was an undergraduate at the University of California at Santa Cruz where she majored in physics before turning to art. She went on to receive a master of fine arts in painting from the University of Pennsylvania and a second master of fine arts in electronic media from the University of Maryland in Baltimore. Frick has taught art at the University of Pennsylvania, the University of California at Santa Cruz, the University of Maryland, the Art Institute of Phoenix, and Stetson University where she taught electronic media art. In 1999, she was awarded the year-long Radcliffe Fellowship at Harvard University, together with her longtime collaborator in electronic media, Gillian Brown. The team worked on a technically and conceptually complex interactive video installation with the help of a German software company specializing in face recognition. Frick's work can be found in collections including the San Francisco Museum of Art, the Corcoran Museum, the National Museum of Women in the Arts, the Gap Collection, and the Artery Collection, among others.

>
Americana, 2011
Mixed media on board





GENEKA B. GIBSON

BORN 1951, JUOKPO, BOMI, LIBERIA

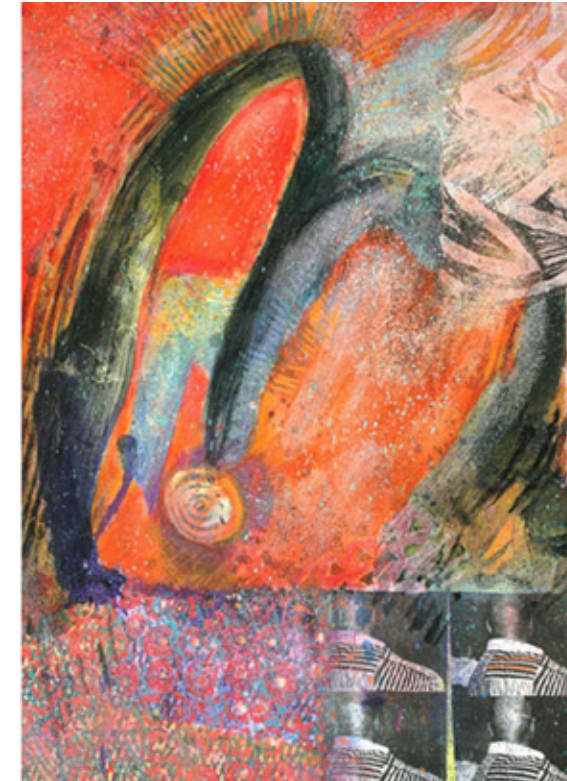
A native Liberian, Geneka B. Gibson is a writer, actor, graphic designer, painter, and composer. In his paintings he explores the cultural heritage and people of Liberia while relating his homeland to neighboring countries. In particular, he explores images of Liberians in rural areas as they pursue agriculture and other economic activities. Gibson was a senior artist and graphic designer for Monrovia's Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism, and he studied portrait painting and graphic design for several years. Prior to the Liberian Civil War, he was asked by the government to paint the portraits of visiting presidents. Gibson is the founder and manager of the General Arts, Craft and Advertising Agency in Monrovia. He has participated in a number of solo and group exhibitions.

<
Market Day in Juokpo, 2011
Oil and enamel on canvas

“Art is creativity, innovation and it is a part of everyday life. It has a message and makes an impact.”



^
Afro Wii 4, 2010
Gum Arabic lithography, stenciling,
linoleum printing, stamping, and acrylic



^
Shango 1, 2010
Gum Arabic lithography, stenciling, linoleum
printing, stamping, and acrylic

CLAUDIA AZIZA GIBSON-HUNTER

BORN 1954, PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

Pennsylvania native Claudia “Aziza” Gibson-Hunter attended Tyler School of Art in Philadelphia and graduated from Philadelphia’s Temple University. She received a master of fine arts in printmaking from Howard University, Washington, D.C., and she later taught printmaking at the university. In New York, Gibson-Hunter joined “Where We At,” a noted Black women artists’ group in Harlem. She later became cofounder of Black Artists of DC. Her work combines printmaking and assemblage with painting, and has moved toward mixed media works. Gibson-Hunter has exhibited in Washington, D.C., Maryland, New York, Illinois, Iowa, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Texas, Florida, Great Britain, Argentina and Poland. Her work is included in Washington, D.C.’s Art Bank and the John A. Wilson Building permanent art collection, among other collections.

“I have moved from figurative to nonfigurative, to conceptual, and to totally abstract. I am on the move ... much of my background is in printmaking, and painting, but I love to incorporate found objects at times. Whatever it takes to express the concept and emotion ... I don’t want to tell people what to think, I do want to encourage people to both think and feel.”



<
Cloud Burst (Grand Canyon), 1998
 Color photograph



<
Kiwi Colors (New Zealand), 2008
 Color photograph



<
River's Journey (Grand Canyon), 2006
 Color photograph

(opposite page)
Travertine Cascade, (Grand Canyon), 1989
 Color photograph

CHARLY HEAVENRICH

BORN 1942, DETROIT, MICHIGAN

In addition to his work as a photographer, Charly Heavenrich has authored two books, and is an adventure speaker and transition guide/life coach. Heavenrich earned a bachelor of arts in U.S. history and a master of business administration in international finance from the University of Michigan. His work has appeared in publications including *Grand Canyon: A Different View*; *Dancing on the Edge: A Veteran River Guide Shares the Life Changing Power of the Grand Canyon*; *Unimagined Gifts*; and in his DVD, *Spirit of the Canyon: A River Journey Through Time*.

“Everybody knows about the Grand Canyon, but few really know this majestic natural wonder as I do. As a raft guide in the Canyon since 1978 with over a hundred river trips, I’ve been privileged to share its grandeur, beauty and ever-changing face with my passengers, readers and audiences.”

“Tattered and stained. Covered and encrusted. Yet the glass, our humanity, and the narratives of our lives still shine through.”

SEAN HENNESSEY

BORN 1972, BOONTON, NEW JERSEY

Sean Hennessey creates sculptures in glass and concrete that are narratives based on mythologies, religions, personal experiences, and whimsy. By using imagery of common and slightly nostalgic items he tells stories of hopes and dreams, and of memories and transformations. His pieces are interpretations and psychological landscapes of the unseen forces in our lives—being judged by others and ourselves, finding inspiration and will, and dealing with obstacles that may hold us back.

Hennessey’s sculptures are kiln-formed, slump cast glass panels that are towed and painted with concrete and stains, then framed in steel. His pieces evoke the feeling of looking at relics, archeological discoveries, revealing something about the past, present and even the future. He likens the presence of glass in his art to the ethereal aspects of our lives, our spirit, and our hopes and dreams. He equates the concrete with the realities of earth, and life, and the shell that we use to protect ourselves from exposing our soul to the world.



(left)
The Measure of Value, 2010
Glass, concrete and steel

(right)
Beacon, 2010
Glass, concrete and steel



^
Man with a Mask, 2006
Mixed media collage on canvas



^
Woman Walking, 2006
Mixed media collage on canvas

RANDELL HENRY

BORN 1958, NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA

With influences from Abstract Expressionism, Cubism and African and Asian art, Randell Henry’s approach to mixed media collage involves improvisational methods of playing with shape, color, and pattern. Henry earned his undergraduate degree in fine arts from Southern University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and a master of fine arts in painting from Louisiana State University. He is a professor of art at Southern University and serves on the boards of Baton Rouge Gallery as well as the DeBose Foundation. Henry’s work has been on view in galleries and museums including Southern University Museum of Art, The West Baton Rouge Museum, Dallas Museum of African-American Art, the Museum of Arts and Science in Daytona Beach, Florida, and the National Museum of Ghana. His work has been shown throughout the U.S. and can be found in several collections.

“I approach each work from an abstract format first, by making pure shapes and forms work together. By working on compositions in this manner, I enjoy surprising myself by finding hidden symbols, figures, faces, and abstract patterns that I can find meanings through. When figurative forms appear, I try to develop those in relationship to the composition to make the work pleasing for one to look at again and again. At times in the creative process, this involves bringing order out of chaos.”

MIATTA KAWINZI

BORN 1987, NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

Of Liberian and Kenyan heritage, Miatta Kawinzi was born and raised in the United States. As a painter and interdisciplinary artist, Kawinzi's hybrid cultural identity informs her work, which includes Abstract Expressionism and visual codes from the African diaspora. She received a bachelor of fine arts in interdisciplinary arts and cultural theory from Hampshire College in Amherst, Massachusetts, and now lives and works in New York City. Kawinzi's work has been exhibited throughout New York in venues including the Art for Change Gallery, Anthology Film Archives, the Clemente Soto Velez Lower East Side Gallery, and the Brecht Forum.

"My work engages themes of cultural hybridity, identity construction, and the sociopolitical landscape. My African diasporic identity ... has enriched the perspectives and experiences that I bring into my practice. I explore the figure and abstracted landscapes in various states of construction and deconstruction to reflect the process and psychology of identity formation in the face of displacement and dislocation. I seek to give validity to fragmented states of existing through visual representation. The aesthetics and organic materials mirror the chaos, cohesion, or layered nature of the ideas that inspire them."

>
Between a Heated Fissure & an Illuminated Rock, 2009
Acrylic on board



^
Meal Preparation, 2011
Fiberglass resin on hardboard



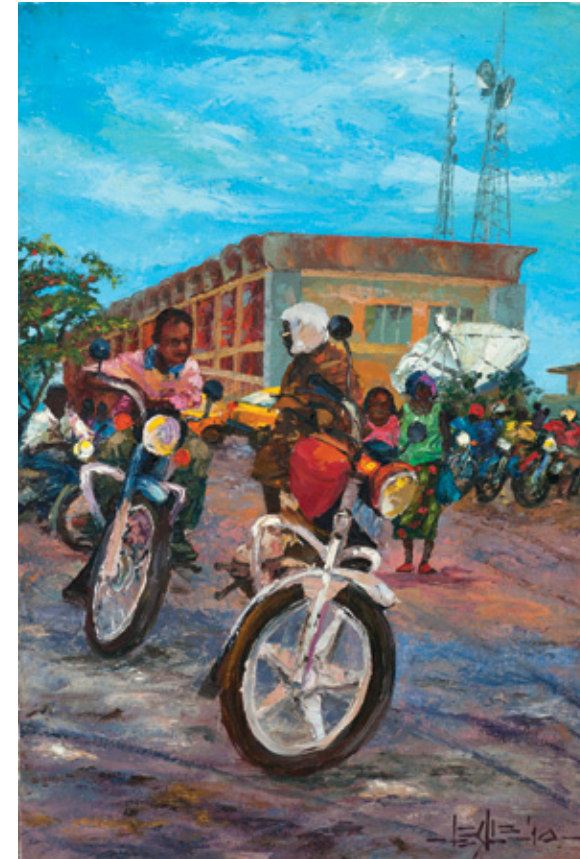
^
Harvest Day, 2011
Fiberglass resin on hardboard

JALLAH KOLLIE

BORN 1980, MONROVIA, MONSERRADO, LIBERIA

The paintings and sculptures of Jallah Kollie portray historical events, contemporary, and cultural practices, and rural living in Liberia and aim to show the reach of African culture through art. Kollie's passion for painting started at the age of nine when his father helped train him and encouraged his love of art. During the Liberian Civil War, Kollie sought refuge in Nigeria, where he earned a certificate in general arts from the Art Master Ltd. Training Center in Lagos. After returning to Monrovia in 2002, he was an art trainer at the ChildArt Training Center and served as an art instructor with the Catholic Educational Secretariat. Though proficient in painting and sculpture, Kollie is perhaps best known for his cast resin relief art, and he has received several commissions. His work is in collections in Liberia, Europe, Asia, and the U.S.

"Artists are born, while others are made."



^
Les Amis, 2010
Oil on canvas



^
Departure Time, 2009
Oil on canvas

LESLIE LUMEH

BORN 1970, DAMBALA, GRAND CAPE MOUNT, LIBERIA

Leslie Lumeh's figurative paintings reflect scenes of daily life in Liberia such as the market, street corners and rural communities. He also paints portraits, illustrates books and creates computer graphics. Lumeh has a diploma in architectural drafting from the Booker Washington Institute in Liberia, though he has no formal training as an artist. For his paintings, Lumeh prefers a palette knife instead of brushes. His knife strokes give his oil and acrylic work the appearance of relief. His art practice includes a daily cartoon in Liberia's *Daily Observer* newspaper. Lumeh also serves as chairman of the Liberia Visual Arts Academy. He is the recipient of several commissions in Liberia, Ivory Coast, and Gabon, and has participated in many solo and group exhibitions.

<
Providence Baptist Church, 2009
Oil on canvas

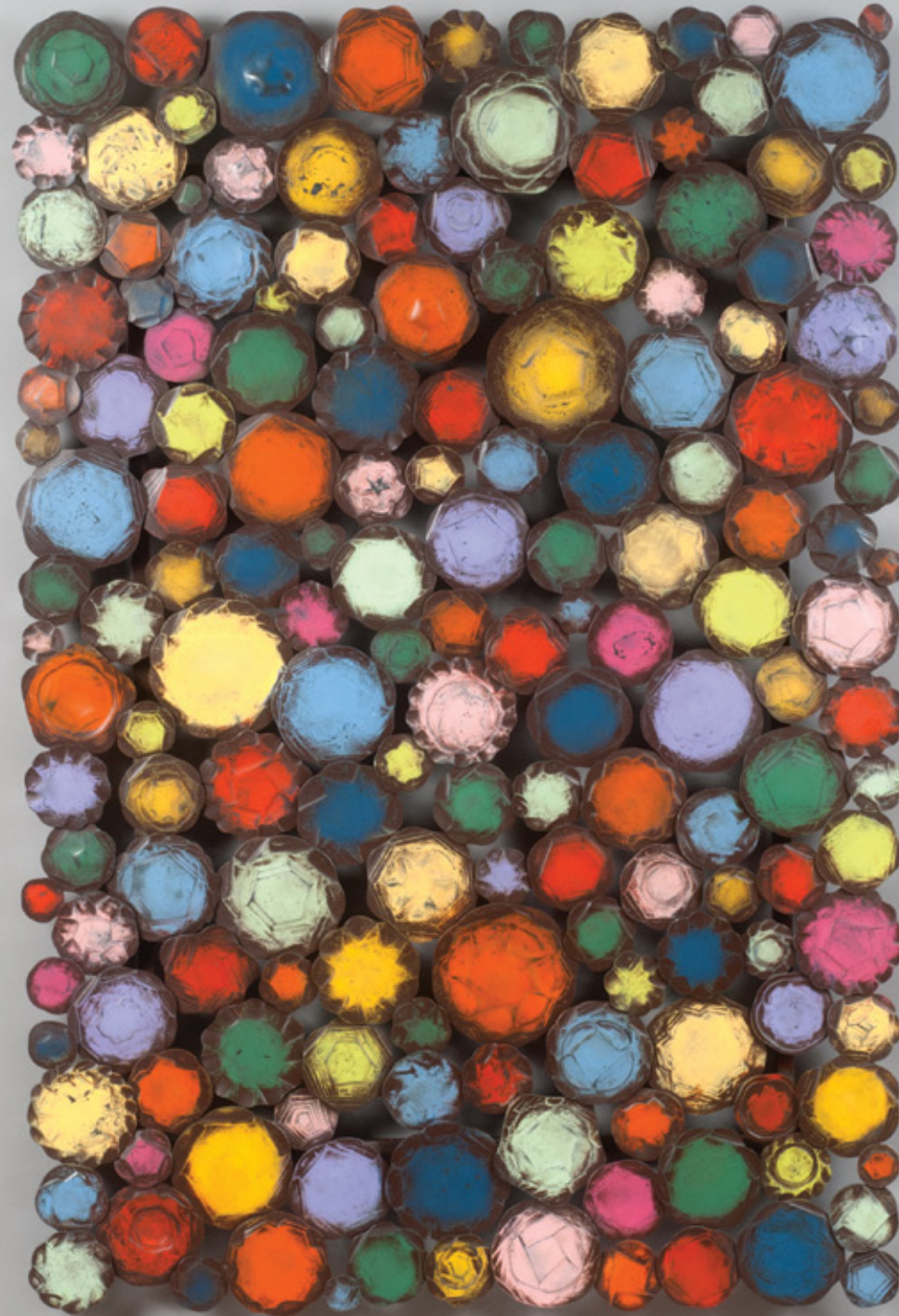
“Texture, color and form contribute greatly when I am developing a piece. My color process involves layers of pigment and wax, which have been gently taken down with various abrasives to reveal layers of color, and steel. Each ‘tile’ or ‘block’ is individually forged on a power hammer using patterns of movement to create complex textures. These techniques help to underline the clay-like qualities of steel as it is transformed during the forging process.”

SUSAN MADACSI

BORN 1965, ST. PETERSBURG, FLORIDA

Although steel is usually first thought of as an industrial material, Susan Madacsi likes to draw attention to our connection with steel on a human level by creating objects that reveal organic forms. Madacsi studied art at l’Ecole de Beaux Arts, France, and the Penland School of Crafts in Penland, North Carolina. She holds a bachelor of fine arts degree from Boise State University, Idaho, and has participated in craft shows and gallery exhibitions throughout the U.S. In addition to teaching, she has been the recipient of a number of commissions.

>
Confectioner’s Flag, 2011
Forged fabricated steel, enamel and wax



MARIO MARTINEZ

BORN 1953, PHOENIX, ARIZONA

Mario Martinez is a Yaqui Indian from the Penjamo settlement in Scottsdale, Arizona. After an early art career in San Francisco, he moved to New York City in 2002. He holds a bachelor of fine arts degree from the School of Art, Arizona State University, Tempe, and a master of fine arts degree from the San Francisco Art Institute, California. In 2000, he was a visiting professor of art at the University of Arizona in Tucson, and in 2001 he received the Native Artist in Residence Fellowship from the National Museum of the American Indian. In 2005, Martinez completed a 22-foot mural commission for the Heard Museum in Phoenix, Arizona. His work has been shown in New York City at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian and in Japan, among other locations.

“My work is a result of an intuitive artistic process. I feel my work combines the great abstract tradition in Western art and a personal sense of ‘Yaquiness.’ When I say ‘Yaquiness,’ I mean ancient and modern Yaqui culture, the Great Sonoran Desert, and diverse American popular culture.”

<
The Desert, the Yaquis and NYC, 2007
Seven-color lithograph printed on soft white Somerset satin paper



^
Seascape, 2010
 Acrylic, foil, and model paste on canvas



^
Untitled, 2011
 Acrylic, ink, and model paste on canvas

FRITZ MASSAQUOI

BORN 1926, HAMBURG, GERMANY

Fritz Massaquoi has been painting since childhood. After graduating from college and returning to his home in Monrovia, he worked at the Liberian-American-Swedish Minerals Company (LAMCO). He was soon transferred to the Stockholm office where he continued in personnel, interviewing applicants for positions in Liberia. He became interested in weaving and enrolled in a class. During this time, he conceived and directed a recreation center for LAMCO. Later, he attended California College of Arts and Crafts in Oakland, California, where he did ceramics, jewelry, silk screening, and weaving. Now a professional artist, Massaquoi returned to Monrovia but returned to the U.S. during the heat of Liberia's unrest.

LARRY McNEIL

BORN 1955, JUNEAU, ALASKA

Larry McNeil was born in 1955 into the Northern Tlingit, an indigenous people of the Pacific Northwest coast of America, and was raised in both Juneau and Anchorage, Alaska. He describes himself as a product of both the traditional Tlingit culture and mainstream North America, with an emphasis on the Tlingit aspect. With influences from both cultures, McNeil's work explores human stories and rituals implicit in everyday objects. He lives in Idaho where he works as an artist and is a professor of photography at Boise State University, Idaho. His has received awards from the Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art, National Geographic, and the Santa Fe Center for Photography, among other organizations. His work has been exhibited at venues including the International Center of Photography in New York City, the San Diego Museum of Art, and the Barbican Gallery in London.

>
First-Light, Winter Solstice, 2007
Six-color lithograph printed on white Somerset satin paper



"I love the idea of making art that is designed to act so specifically as an ambassador for our people. I was thinking of who we really are as Americans, both indigenous and the proverbial 'melting pot' that forms our collective identity. I was thinking of early cowboy and Indian films that formed the world's perception of who we are, especially as a mythical place."

MICHAEL MITCHELL

BORN 1970, MONROVIA, MONTSERRADO

In his trademark impressionistic style, and using artist knives to apply oil to canvas, Michael Mitchell describes the unfolding activities of ordinary people and the issues of everyday life. Mitchell was inspired to become an artist while in elementary school, when he saw the work of Van Gogh and Michelangelo in his school's library. He studied art at New Breed Painters in Liberia and attended the International School of Art in Conakry, Guinea. He has participated in several exhibitions.

<
Market Day, 2011
Oil on canvas



"I see more art when using the knife."

“My ongoing series of log paintings examines contrivances in landscape paintings of the 18th and 19th centuries. These landscapes, by artists such as [Albert] Bierstadt and [Frederic Edwin] Church, were deeply rooted in the political constructs of the time and depicted the land as a bountiful Eden—a limitless frontier, almost beckoning man’s imminent conquest. I take these images out of their familiar context, the framed canvas, and contrast them with real wood and bark, to show that the very idea of landscape implies human dominance.”

ALISON MORITSUGU

BORN 1962, HONOLULU, HAWAII

Tinged with elegiac nostalgia, Alison Moritsugu uses actual trees as her medium to counter a celebration of nature with the memory of their destruction. Her work is an appeal to help restore balance and harmony in an age marked by pollution and climate change. Born in Hawaii and currently living in New York, Moritsugu holds degrees from Washington University, St. Louis, and the School of Visual Arts, New York City. The recipient of several residencies and awards, she has participated in solo and group exhibitions throughout the United States.

>
Upland, 2005
Oil on 53 dogwood and redbud sections





^
Exchange of Gifts, 2011
Popline and batten (sponge)



^
Village Scene, 2011
Popline and batten (sponge)



^
Coffee Tree, 2011
Popline and batten (sponge)



^
Whig Rose, 2011
Popline and batten (sponge)

NATIONAL QUILTERS ASSOCIATION OF LIBERIA

FOUNDED 2010

In 2010, the National Quilters Association of Liberia was formed to help promote and preserve the country's long and rich quilting tradition. In addition to making traditional quilts, Liberian quilmakers explore new subjects and patterns often dealing with daily life and agriculture. Liberian quilting also reflects American influences, in particular sewing and quilting skills brought by former U.S. slaves who immigrated to Liberia in the 19th century. A well-known Liberian quilter, Martha Ann Ricks, was honored to present a Liberian coffee tree quilt to Queen Victoria in 1892. Today, Liberians from all ethnic groups make quilts. As a tribute to the country's quilt-making heritage, quilts are presented as official government gifts.

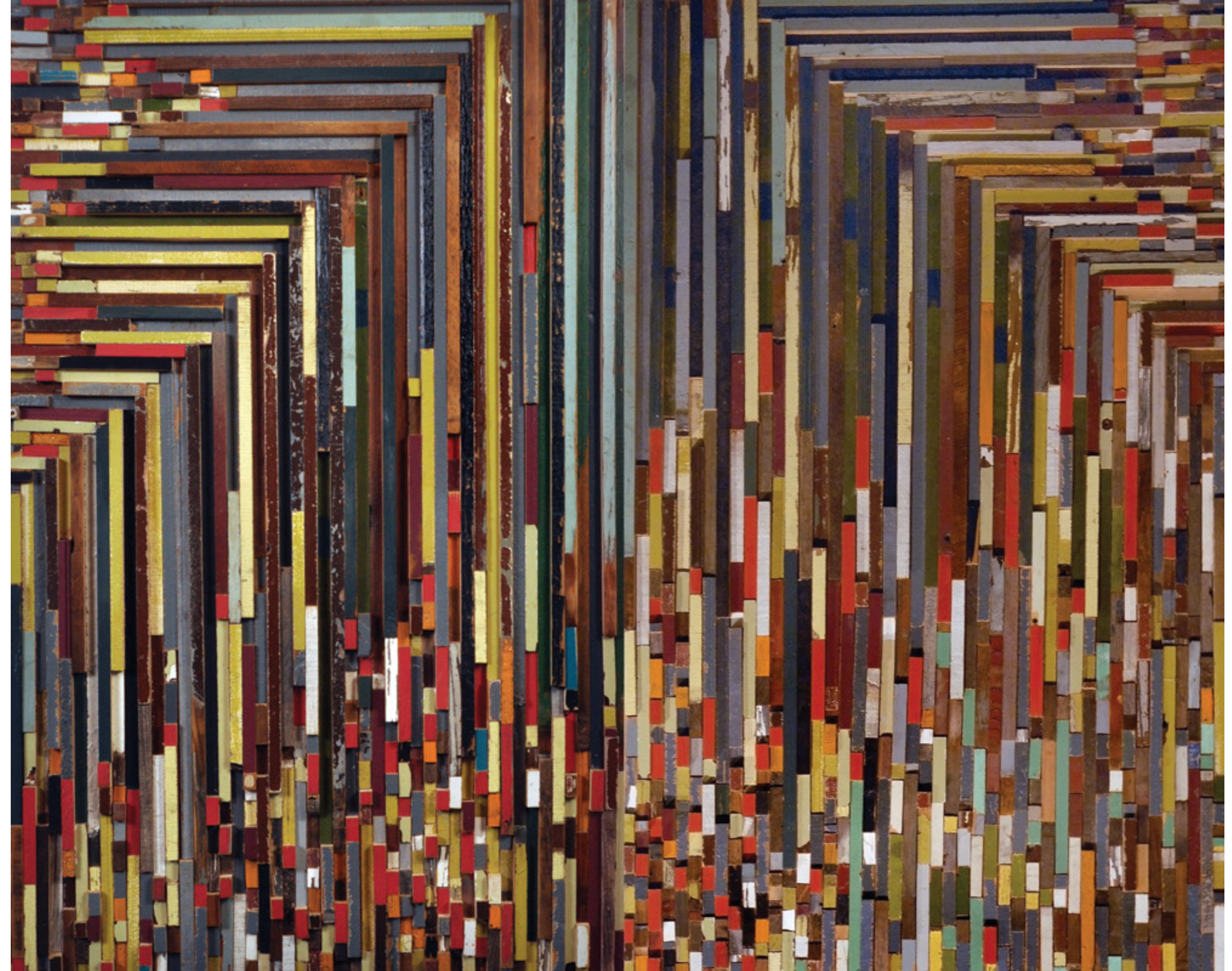
“I deeply believe that nature is the universal connection that binds all of us together. Because this connection has been weakened through a lack of awareness, we are experiencing losses that are impossible to measure. Throughout the globe and across all cultures these losses will only become greater if we do not begin reconnecting to nature in a more conscious and direct way. With a minimalist set of aesthetics, the viewer can meditate on the wood without being distracted by an imposed narrative. This allows the viewers to create their own personal relationship with the materials and at least for a moment, feel a deeper connection to nature. In this way, I hope to help shift the tides of our collective cultural awareness towards a more environmentally sensitive society.”

MICHELLE PETERSON-ALBANDOZ

BORN 1961, NORWICH, CONNECTICUT

Michelle Peterson-Albandoz grew up surrounded by forests in both Connecticut and Puerto Rico, and found a connection to them that has lasted throughout her creative career. Experiencing first-hand the pristine quality and balance of these ecosystems made her well aware of the effect humans have on the environment. Living in Chicago, Peterson-Albandoz has been surrounded by a constantly changing urban landscape, full of both destruction and construction. Historic, but decrepit wood buildings were pulled down like trees in logging sites; their planks and beams were systematically dumped into landfills, rotting in piles. Peterson-Albandoz sees her creative process as a kind of reversal of time and waste. The backward journey begins with the gathering of discarded wooden planks from lots, alleys, and dumpsters. Layers of old wood still containing their cracked paint and rusty nail holes begin to build up like a living tree once more.

>
Digital Wood Construction, 2011
Reclaimed wood and mixed media



“For the past three years, my imagery has centered on ritual and the transformation of the human spirit that occurs when it confronts imagined or actual events and circumstances. Most recently, using digitally manipulated female figures to manifest such transformations in my prints, I have addressed issues of slavery, Hurricane Katrina, waiting, and searching for home.”—Michael B. Platt

MICHAEL B. PLATT AND CAROL A. BEANE

PLATT: BORN, 1948, WASHINGTON, D. C. • BEANE: BORN 1944, NEW YORK, NEW YORK

Michael B. Platt’s work focuses on figurative studies of survival and marginalization in the context of history and the vicissitudes of the human condition. He also explores digital imagery and book art that combines image and poetry. His collaborations with his wife, noted poet Carol A. Beane, have produced artists’ books and broadsides. Platt earned a bachelor of fine arts from Columbus College of Art and Design, Columbus, Ohio, and a master of fine arts from Howard University, Washington, D.C., where he currently teaches. He is a co-recipient with Renée Stout of a Franz and Virginia Bader Fund grant. Long known for his printmaking, Platt now prefers the more expansive designation of “image maker.”

Carol A. Beane’s work is exhibited nationally and internationally, and she is represented in numerous public and private collections, among them the John Hay Library of Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island; the National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, D.C.; the Rare Books and Special Collections of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; the Smithsonian Museum of American Art, Washington, D.C.; the Schomburg Research Center in Black Culture of the New York Public Library, New York, New York; and the Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Connecticut. Beane is the recipient of the 2009 National Museum of Women in the Arts Library Fellows Book award.

>
Live Singing and with Song, 2010
Oil-based monoprint

live singing and with song;
live dancing with joy with
the clapping of hands and
heartbeats in the night;
drumbeats
tam tam
make the rubble rise up,
uncovering the dead;
the living stand tall
and carry on;

while we wait for water,
give the children music to drink;
while we wait for rice and beans,
feed them laughter;
while we stand in lines for medicine;
while we look see if the secret places
of healing herbs remain,
we bind our wounds with song...

their bodies shall dance
praisesongs for the living
merci jesú
teaching them the lessons always taught:
be strong
survive
dancing with joy;
wear white for your grief
sing farewell to the lost bones
of your lost ones;
dance through the pain and
beyond the white veils of grief,
sing praisesongs for the living
merci jesú



THE QUILTS FROM GEE'S BEND

Gee's Bend is a small rural community nestled into a curve in the Alabama River southwest of Selma, Alabama. It was the site of cotton plantations built on land primarily owned by Joseph Gee and his relative Mark Pettway, who bought the Gee estate in 1850. After the Civil War, the freed slaves took the name Pettway, became tenant farmers for the Pettway family, and founded an all-Black community nearly isolated from the surrounding world. During the Great Depression, the federal government stepped in to purchase land and homes for the community, bringing strange renown—it was known as "Alabama Africa"—to this sleepy hamlet. The women of Gee's Bend developed a distinctive, bold, and sophisticated quilting style based on traditional American (and African-American) quilts, but with a geometric simplicity reminiscent of Amish quilts and modern art. The Gee's Bend quilters have passed their skills and aesthetic down through at least six generations to the present.



^
Loretta Bennett (Gee's Bend, Alabama, 1960)
Yellow Jack, 2007
Aquatint/softground etching



^
Louisiana Bendolph (Gee's Bend, Alabama, 1960)
Still Have Joy/Tears of Pride, 2007
Aquatint/softground etching



^
Loretta Pettway (Gee's Bend, Alabama, 1942)
Bricklayer, 2007
Aquatint/softground etching



^
Mary Lee Bendolph (Gee's Bend, Alabama, 1935)
Down the Road, 2007
Aquatint/softground etching

“For nearly twenty years, we have collaborated on a variety of three dimensional, suspended sculptures utilizing stainless steel spoke and axle construction. The often large-scale, translucent forms are inspired by the desire to create light, airy, and emotionally uplifting sculptures that appear to hover delicately in space. We design these arched and winged geometric forms to come alive when light softly filters through overlapping, open-weave cloth membranes and allows the viewer to experience the ever-changing energy of radiating spokes. When considering the new American Embassy in Monrovia, we chose strong but ethereal color, which would not only reflect the nature of the beautiful tropical landscape of Liberia but also symbolize the energy and optimism of a newly evolving cultural climate.”—Warren Seelig

WARREN SEELIG AND SHERRIE GIBSON

SEELIG: BORN 1946, ABINGTON, PENNSYLVANIA • GIBSON: BORN 1950, BRIDGETON, NEW JERSEY

Warren Seelig, and his partner and wife Sherrie Gibson, have collaborated in the design and development of commission projects and installations throughout the U.S. and abroad. Seelig earned a bachelor of science degree from the Philadelphia College of Textiles & Science and a master of fine arts degree from the Cranbrook Academy of Art, Bloomfield, Michigan. He is the recipient of two individual fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and three fellowships from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts. He is a distinguished visiting professor in the craft/fibers program at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Seelig's work has been included in numerous museum exhibitions, including venues in the U.S., Europe, Japan and Korea, and his work can be found in many museum, college, and corporate collections. He is also a regular visiting critic at the Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, Rhode Island, and is a mentor in the graduate program at Maine College of Art, Portland, Maine. The couple live and work in Rockland, Maine.

(pages 62-63)
Untitled, 2011
Colored, translucent architectural mesh,
and stainless steel frame, spoke and axles



AL SMITH

BORN 1946, WASHINGTON, D.C.

Al Smith's 40 years of scholarly research and creative work has been directed toward "visual music." His current work involves creating 3D animation as a "visual instrument," a means to express time-base animated painting. As professor of art and chair of the art department at Howard University, Washington, D.C., he and theoretical physicist Dr. James Lindesay developed a cross-disciplinary course, Time as the Rhythm of Experience, from which he published an article, "Workdance of a Rhythm Master" in the journal, *The International Review of African American Art*, Vol. 19, #3. His other scholarly work includes teaching the course Visual Music, at the Peabody Conservatory of Music, Baltimore, Maryland; and The Rhythm Technique Workshop, at Howard University and Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore, Maryland. His work has been exhibited at the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Washington, D.C., and the Studio Museum of Harlem, New York, New York, among other venues.



"This monographic digital print, Practice of a DC Hand Dancer #4, celebrates the experiential memory, movement, and motion of the tradition, practice, choreography, and emergent improvisations of the nationally recognized vernacular dance of Washington, D.C., Hand Dancing or Capital Swing."

^
Practice of a DC Hand Dancer #4, 2010
Digital print

FRANK SMITH

BORN 1935, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

Born on the South Side of Chicago, Illinois, Frank Smith was raised in a family of musicians but became interested in art—in particular in paint texture and pattern. Van Gogh, Picasso and Seurat were early influences, but he was especially attracted to Wassily Kandinsky's association of art and music through abstraction. *Square Blues Variation (Amsterdam Pete's Boogie Woogie)* refers to Piet Mondrian's geometric experimentations based on jazz music. Bright zigzag stitching joins colorful patches of painted patterns and found objects in this colorful example of assemblage. Smith holds a bachelor of fine arts degree from the University of Illinois, Chicago, and a master of fine arts degree from Howard University, Washington, D.C. He has participated in numerous exhibitions in the U.S. and abroad, including *Since the Harlem Renaissance: 50 Years of Afro-American Art* and *AfriCobra: The First Twenty Years*.



"The aesthetic philosophy of my work is to seek and explore visual equivalents of jazz. In this regard, I am thoroughly committed to unpredictable outcomes, bizarre associations, complex textures and improvisational working methods. The content of my work is often abstract in form as that allows more room for improvisation, which is at the heart of jazz culture. Wherever possible, the works are improvised, spontaneous, and designed to enhance the spaces in which they will live. Philosophically, spiritually, stylistically and thematically my preference is for positive imagery inspired by the irony and 'Hip-Hop-crazy' inherent in American culture."

^
Square Blues Variation (Amsterdam Pete's Boogie Woogie), 2010–2011
Acrylic and denim appliqued, embroidered, pieced, painted, and sewn on canvas

“Native peoples often reference North America as Turtle Island, which is part of the Iroquois creation story. So I added the turtle as an important American Indian symbol representing survival of the indigenous peoples.”

JAUNE QUICK-TO-SEE SMITH

BORN 1940, CONFEDERATED SALISH AND KOOTENAI INDIAN
RESERVATION, MONTANA

Calling herself a cultural art worker, Jaune Quick-to-See Smith has developed an emotionally charged language to engage tribal politics, human rights, and environmental issues in her densely layered and textured work. In this pictorial collage, she recounts the Native-American belief that plants, animals and humans are all part of the “Great Net of Life.” Smith is an enrolled Flathead Salish member of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai tribes of the Flathead Indian Nation in Montana. She earned a bachelor’s degree in Art Education from Framingham State College, Massachusetts, and a master’s degree from the University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, New Mexico.

>
We Are All Knots in the Great Net of Life, 2007
Five-color lithograph printed on white Somerset satin paper



^
Blended Geographies, 2002
Oil on canvas

“Ultimately, my artistic efforts are born out of a deep empathy for our natural world, and the confusion about how to protect it from complicated forces of harm. They are, simultaneously, lush and celebratory, while acting as subtle cautionary tales.”

LISA TUBACH

BORN 1968, OMAHA, NEBRASKA

Lisa Tubach’s creative work investigates a balance between the beauty of the natural world and veiled threats to our existence. Her recent work reflects her research of critically endangered species, the perils of unchecked chemical use, and includes maps of threatened areas. Originally from Omaha, Nebraska, Tubach received a bachelor of fine arts from Macalester College in Saint Paul, Minnesota, a master of fine arts from Michigan State University, Lansing, Michigan, and a certificate in digital video production from New York University, New York, New York. She holds the position of associate professor/associate director of the School of Art, Design and Art History at James Madison University, Harrisonburg, Virginia. Her work is included in public and private collections worldwide.

“My passion for art started from the time I started using a pencil, around elementary school (during) the civil war ... I was not in school and found myself with so much time on my hands. Instead of thinking about how hungry I was, I would do some watercolor or ask my cousin to model for me to practice my drawing skills.”

HAWA WARE

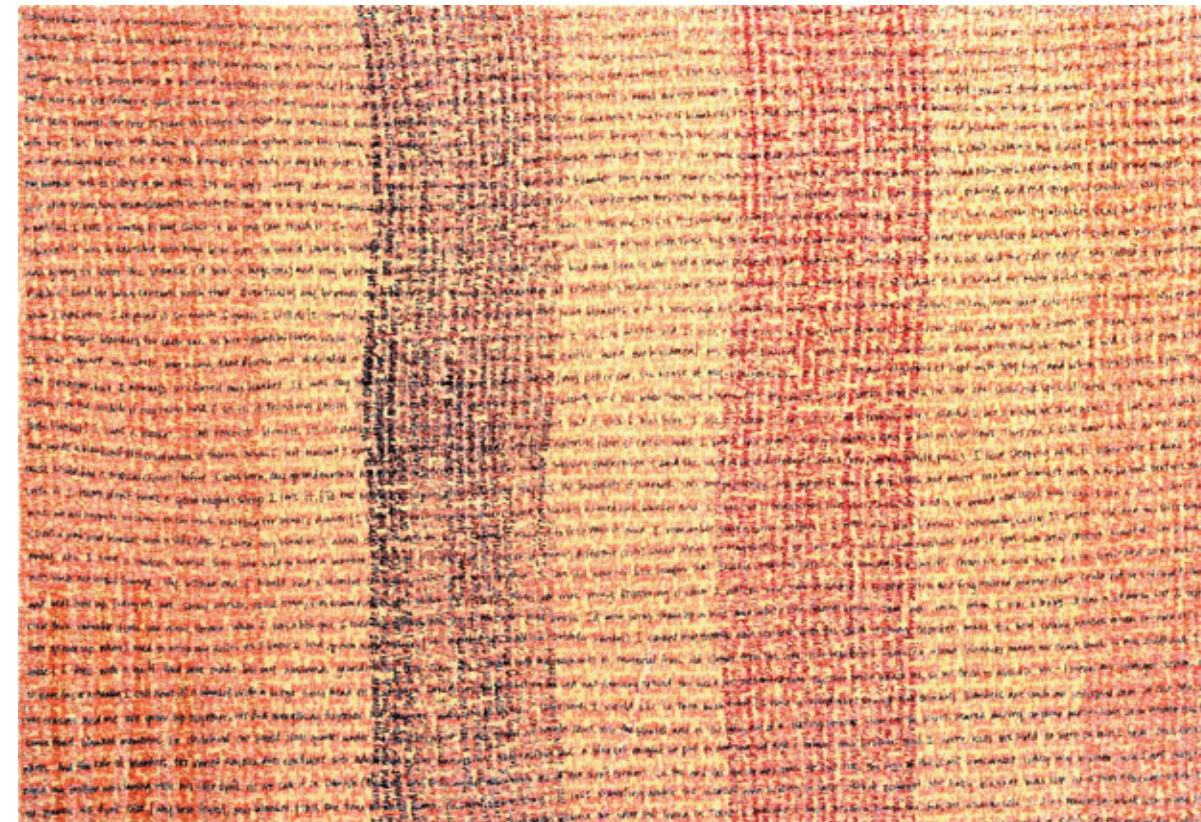
BORN 1978, MONROVIA, MONTERRADO, LIBERIA

A native Liberian, Hawa Ware was forced to flee her country when civil war broke out in 1999. Art was the place of escape for the young artist, who left her home with only a backpack with a few clothes, some food, and a small tray of watercolor paint. In her new life at a refugee camp in Côte d'Ivoire, Ware practiced her drawing skills and occasionally received a small commission that helped buy food. After three years at the camp, Ware's family resettled in the U.S., in Knoxville, Tennessee. In her new school in the U.S., she was blessed with an art teacher who nurtured and encouraged her talent.



^
Love of Liberty, 2011
Oil on canvas

>
Blanket Series: Continuum (Book I / Book III), 2007
Six-color lithograph printed on natural Sekishu on white Arches paper



MARIE WATT

BORN 1967, SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

Marie Watt's work is about personal, social, and cultural histories imbedded in commonplace objects, such as blankets. She draws from indigenous design principles, oral traditions, and personal experience to shape the inner logic of her work. Born in Seattle and raised in Redmond, Washington, Watt holds a bachelor of science degree in speech communications and art from Willamette University, Salem, Oregon, an associate in fine arts degree in museum studies from the Institute of American Indian Arts, Santa Fe, New Mexico, and a master of fine arts degree in painting and printmaking, Yale University School of Art, New Haven, Connecticut. She has participated in numerous exhibitions, including the National Museum of the American Indian, Washington, D.C., and the Tacoma Art Museum, Tacoma, Washington. Her work can be found in collections throughout the U.S.

“My work explores human stories and rituals implicit in everyday objects. Recently I have been exploring the history of common wool blankets. I am attracted to a blanket's two- and three-dimensional qualities. On a wall, a blanket functions as a tapestry, but on a body it functions as a robe and living object. As I fold and stack blankets they begin to form columns that have references to linen closets, architectural braces, memorials (Trajan), sculpture (Brancusi, for one), the great totem poles of the Northwest, and the conifer trees with which I grew up. In the native communities, including my own, the Seneca, we give blankets away to honor people for being witness to important life events—births, coming-of-age, graduations, marriages, namings and honorings. For this reason, it is as much of a privilege to give a blanket away as it is to receive one.”

“Art is the fuel that carries me on an adventure to discover the mysteries of the universal and the individual self. Because art is both seen and felt, it has the power to engage the body, mind, and spirit. Guided by the universal intuition and random chance, the grammar, emotion and passion of my art becomes knowable and meaningful, and informs me, and I hope others, about ourselves and our world.”

—Joyce E. Wellman



^
Melody Passage, 2009
Acrylic on canvas

JOYCE E. WELLMAN

BORN 1949, NEW YORK, NEW YORK

Joyce E. Wellman's prints, drawings, and paintings are process-driven and cryptically symbolic, even emotional. She uses abstract geometry as a means to connect the viewer with simplicity and therefore to the spiritual in art. Wellman's vocabulary explores textures, mark-making, mixed media, and referential symbols, but with a palette that allows her to apply many layers of vibrant, transparent color to the geometric and mathematically inspired content and canvas. She views the layering as symbolic of the multi-faceted nature of human existence. A native New Yorker, Wellman holds a master of fine arts degree from the Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore, and a master of arts degree in education from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Her work has been exhibited throughout the U.S. as well as Kenya, and is represented in several public and private collections.



^
Zoe Fishing Land, 2011
Oil on canvas



^
Old Monkey Bridge, 2011
Oil on canvas



^
Doom Fish Hunter, 2011
Oil on canvas

FATO A. WHEREMONGAR

BORN 1959, BUCHANAN, GRAND BASSE, LIBERIA

Fato A. Wheremongar's paintings and artistic works focus mainly on natural phenomenon, showcasing the inspirational beauty the art finds in nature. He studied art in the U.S. and Liberia, and since 1992 he has participated in many exhibitions in Africa, the U.S. and Europe. Wheremongar is also the founding director of ChildArt Liberia and the Union of Liberian Artists. ChildArt is devoted to teaching children art and bringing the arts to every school in Liberia. The nonprofit organization promotes the positive affect art has on learning and art's ability to heal trauma in youth. Wheremongar teaches art and travels throughout many of the 15 counties of Liberia to lead ChildArt trainings and workshops.

"I love to see artists painting. I love to see them especially in the areas of abstract, life painting as well as color languages."

"Art is the artist's expression of his or her culture in colors."

DAVID WOLOBAH

BORN 1970, MONROVIA, MONSERRADO, LIBERIA

The artistic work of David Wolobah looks at family and women empowerment. He uses his paintings to portray how families exist, sometimes showing women involved in economic pursuits and the capacity of women to undertake tasks that seem almost too difficult to carry out. Transforming a dream into reality, the artist started drawing as a young child, and later this passion spread into painting. Wolobah was a junior artist at the Ministry of Information from 1988 until the outbreak of the First Liberian Civil War in 1989. He resumed his art career in 1996, becoming a member of Studio Graphic and exhibiting his work with other Liberian artists. He has participated in many exhibitions, including events in Liberia, Japan, the U.S., and Taiwan.

>
Agricultural Value, 2011
Oil on canvas



<
Awaiting Customers, 2011
Oil on canvas



<
Firestone on my Mind, 2011
Oil on canvas

“My artwork is culturally based in my heritage of being a Diné (Navajo) person. The artworks stem from the thought and belief that what we create must have beauty and harmony from within ourselves, from above, below, in front, behind, and from our core. We are taught to seek out beauty and create it with our thoughts and prayers. I make prints, ceramic animals, and mixed media pieces. The insects and bugs of the high desert of the Navajo, Dine Nation have also inspired me in past works. I feel that when I am making my art, I begin by centering myself and thinking it all out in a ‘good way,’ which is how I was taught from an early age. My work speaks about travel and transformation.

I met Sue in 1995 in New Zealand at an indigenous gathering hosted by the Maori people. In 1996 I traveled to Norfolk Island (to see Sue) and we strengthened our connection. We are both Indigenous women who were sent away to boarding school far from home. Sue was sent to Australia and I was sent to the East Coast of the United States. We both had very strong connections to our grandmothers and our homelands. We have stayed in touch over the years and stay close by making work together, mostly in New Zealand and in the summer of 2011 in Venice, Italy. The work has a power all its own. It represents who we are, our sense of sisterhood, and a history that must be shared.”
—Melanie Yazzie

“As an artist, my works are a visual expression of the ideas, emotions and stories as I respond to the world around me. The basis of my perception is shaped by the many layers of my being, including my heritage as a Norfolk Islander of Pitcairn descent, my family history and my own personal journey. I grew up where the land and the sea of my ancestors and the weather have immediate impact on day-to-day living. Being surrounded by beauty and interaction with the natural elements has also shaped my aesthetic and the way I see and think about things.

Though we (Melanie Yazzie and I) came from thousands of miles apart, Melanie from the desert and myself from a very small island, we discovered that as much as our worlds were different we had many things in common. Our works from the series The Rain has Come are a collaboration that happened intuitively as we shared stories of our childhoods and particularly our grandmothers. These works mark a connection that stretches over many miles and many years and illustrate the strength of sharing and discovering common experience.”
—Sue Melinda Pearson

MELANIE YAZZIE AND SUE MELINDA PEARSON

YAZZIE: BORN 1966, GANADO, ARIZONA

PEARSON: BORN 1967, NORFOLK ISLAND, SOUTH PACIFIC

Melanie Yazzie grew up on the Navajo Indian reservation in northeastern Arizona and is a member of the Salt and Bitter Water Navajo clans. She is associate professor of art at the University of Colorado in Boulder, Colorado. Yazzie has exhibited nationally and internationally, and her work is in many collections including the Anchorage Museum of History & Art, Alaska; the Art Museum of Missoula, Montana; the Australian National Gallery; the Institute of American Indian Arts, Santa Fe, New Mexico; the Kennedy Museum of Art, Athens, Ohio; and the Rhode Island School of Design Museum.

Sue Melinda Pearson has pursued a professional art and design practice since 1989, and has exhibited her work in Australia, France, Korea, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Norfolk Island, and North and South America. She holds a bachelor of arts degree in visual arts and printmaking from Newcastle University, Australia. Her work can be found in public and private collections worldwide.

>
Our Families, 2010
Acrylic on canvas



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The art collection was curated by **Sarah Tanguy** of the Art in Embassies' NEC team of the United States Department of State's Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operation (OBO). This publication would not have been possible without the ongoing support and dedication of staff at Art in Embassies, OBO Monrovia Project Director **Eric G. Heinrich**, and the United States Embassy, Monrovia. Special thanks to **Penny Kiser** and **Chris Sheppard** for their expert editing, **Michael JN Bowles** for his sensitive photography and video, and **Simon Fong** and **Eric Owusu** of International Arts & Artist's Design Studio for their skilled design.



ART IN EMBASSIES