SOUL OF A NATION

ART IN THE AGE OF BLACK POWER

12 JUL – 22 OCT 2017

LARGE PRINT GUIDE

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INTRODUCTION

This exhibition celebrates the work of Black artists working in the United States in the two decades after 1963. During this turbulent time, these artists asked and answered many questions. How should an artist respond to political and cultural changes? Was there a 'Black art' or a 'Black aesthetic'? Should an artist create legible images or make abstract work? Was there a choice to be made between addressing a specifically Black audience or a 'universal' one? The exhibition looks at responses to such questions, with each room devoted to groups of artists in cities nationwide, or to different kinds of art. While showing strong communities and robust artistic dialogues, it also reveals necessary disagreements about what it meant to be a Black artist at this time.

In 1963, when the exhibition begins, the American Civil Rights Movement was at its height. At the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom in Washington D.C., Dr Martin Luther King, Jr dreamed that his children would live in 'a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character'. King referred to himself proudly as 'Negro', but by this time, many who were on the March were beginning to

call themselves Black. Taking issue with King's non-violent position, especially after appalling racist violence later in 1963, many joined in calls for 'Black Power'. Others rejected the idea of an integrated America, and began to speak of a separate, autonomous Black Nation. Looking at newly independent African nations, and understanding an ancestral connection to the continent, the terms 'Afro-American' and 'African American' also began to take root. The artists in *Soul of a Nation* were profoundly aware of these political visions and different senses of self, and each took an aesthetic position in relation to them.

ROOM 1
SPIRAL

The exhibition starts with the Spiral group that formed in New York in 1963. As they wrote, 'During the summer of 1963 at a time of crucial metamorphosis just before the now historic March on Washington, a group of Negro artists met to discuss their position in American society'. Many of the 15 members were established artists and they worked in wide-ranging styles. While they asked the question 'Is there a Negro image?', they gave no single answer. They mounted one joint exhibition in 1965, agreeing to show only 'works in black and white'. The exhibition included one of Norman Lewis's abstract paintings, Romare Bearden's Photostat of one of his collages, and Reginald Gammon's forceful painting of the March. Younger Black artists would look back to Spiral later, impressed both by the group's determination to exhibit together in an artist-run space, and by the range of artistic viewpoints of its members.

Clockwise from left

Romare Bearden 1911–1988

The Conjur Woman

1964
Printed papers and goauche on cardboard

The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Blanchette Hooker Rockefeller Fund, 1971
X61862

Romare Bearden 1911–1988

The Prevalence of Ritual: Baptism

1964
Printed paper, acrylic paint, ink and graphite on cardboard

Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. Gift of Joseph H. Hirshhorn, 1966
X29993

Romare Bearden 1911–1988

Mysteries

1964
Printed papers and acrylic paint on cardboard

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Ellen Kelleran Gardner Fund
X61455

Romare Bearden 1911–1988

Pittsburgh Memory

1964
Printed papers and acrylic paint on cardboard

Collection of halley k harrisburg & Michael Rosenfeld,
New York
X64720

Romare Bearden 1911–1988

The Street

1964
Printed papers on cardboard

Milwaukee Art Museum, Milwaukee. Gift of Friends of Art and African American Art Acquisition Fund
X61456

Romare Bearden 1911–1988

The Conjur Woman

1964
Photostat on breboard

Courtesy of Michael Rosenfeld Gallery LLC,
New York
X65457

Romare Bearden 1911–1988

The Dove

1964
Photostat on breboard

The Romare Bearden Foundation, courtesy of DC Moore Gallery, New York
X61598

Norman Lewis 1909–1979

America the Beautiful

1960
Oil paint on canvas

Although starting out as a realist painter, Norman Lewis worked with abstraction from the mid-1940s. He was a key gure of abstract expressionism, despite having fewer opportunities to exhibit his work than other colleagues. In a small series of works, he set aside his air for colour to concentrate on black and white, in order to reflect on race relations in America. Here, Lewis evokes a gathering of the Ku Klux Klan, while titling the work to suggest the difference between America's vision of itself and its realities.

From the Collection of Tonya Lewis Lee and Spike Lee
X61451

Norman Lewis 1909–1979

Processional

1965
Oil paint on canvas

Norman Lewis painted Processional for the Spiral group exhibition of May 1965. He had attended the March on Washington in 1963, and Processional is an abstract evocation of the Selma Marches that took place in March 1965. These were a series of three marches led by Martin Luther King, Jr. from Selma, Alabama, to the state capital, Montgomery, aimed at registering Black voters. Despite violent and repressive opposition from state troopers, the marchers grew in number and, on their third attempt, completed the 54-mile journey, now 25,000 strong.
In Processional, Lewis sets a series of white brush strokes in a widening shape, like a light beam against darkness..

Private collection, courtesy Michael Rosenfeld Gallery LLC, New York
X61549

ROOM 2
ART ON THE STREET

‘The Ghetto itself is the Gallery for the Revolutionary Artist.’ – Emory Douglas

For many Black artists in this period, a key question was: where to present their art? Their work was excluded from nearly all mainstream museums. Linked to this was another question: which viewers should they address? This room looks at ways artists positioned their work beyond conventional gallery and museum spaces. It reveals how they inspired and mobilised speci cally Black and local audiences. OBAC (pronounced ob-bah-see; The Organization of Black American Culture) formed in Chicago in 1967. This group of artists and writers created The Wall of Respect, an outdoor mural in the city’s South Side. The Wall featured images of ‘Black Heroes’ – civic leaders, writers, musicians, sports stars and dancers – and became a gathering place for poetry readings, music, and performances.It sparked a wave of murals in African American neighbourhoods nationwide.

In 1966 The Black Panther Party (BPP) for Self-Defense formed in Oakland, California. The ten-point party platform set out demands for improved housing and education, and an end to police brutality. Their statement began, ‘We want power to determine the destiny of our Black Community’. Panthers carried guns to protect Black residents, and launched a free breakfast programme for working-class children and health clinics for locals. Soon after its founding,

the BPP created The Black Panther newspaper. Young artist Emory Douglas was appointed the party's Minister of Culture and designed the newspaper. In his back- page illustrations, photomontages, posters and flyers, Douglas depicted the party's demands, its leaders and recognisable scenes of both struggle and triumph. Research on the mural movement was carried out by Julia Bailey.

Clockwise on wall from left

Faith Ringgold born 1930

Design for poster, ‘All Power to the People‘

1970
Paper on paper

Private collection
X61852

Emory Douglas born 1943

Prime Minister of Colonized Afro-America

1968
Lithograph on paper

Courtesy of the Center for the Study of Political Graphics,
Los Angeles
x65454

Emory Douglas born 1943

Wherever Death May Surprise Us

1967
Lithograph on paper

Courtesy of the Center for the Study of Political Graphics, Los Angeles
x65453

Emory Douglas born 1943

Emory "67"

1967
Lithograph on paper

Courtesy of the Center for the Study of Political Graphics, Los Angeles
x65456

Emory Douglas born 1943

We are Soldiers in the Army

c. 1970
Lithograph on paper

Courtesy of the Center for the Study of Political Graphics, Los Angeles
x65902

Emory Douglas born 1943

You Can Jail a Revolutionary

1969
Lithograph on paper

Courtesy of the Center for the Study of Political Graphics, Los Angeles
X65900

Emory Douglas born 1943

Revolutionary Student

1970
Lithograph on paper

Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Gift of the American Friends of the V&A; Gift to the American Friends by Leslie, Judith and Gabri Schreyer and Alice Schreyer Batkos
X64207

Emory Douglas born 1943

Revolutionary Black Student Conference

Lithograph on paper

Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Gift of the American Friends of the V&A; Gift to the American Friends by Leslie, Judith and Gabri Schreyer and Alice Schreyer Batko
X64201

Emory Douglas born 1943

All Power to the People

1970
Lithograph on paper

Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Gift of the American Friends of the V&A; Gift to the American Friends by Leslie, Judith and Gabri Schreyer and Alice Schreyer Batkos
X64204

Emory Douglas born 1943

Black Panther Manifesto

ca.1970
Lithograph on paper

Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Gift of the American Friends of the V&A; Gift to the American Friends by Leslie, Judith and Gabri Schreyer and Alice Schreyer Batkos
X64198

Emory Douglas born 1943

Get Out of the Ghetto...

1970
Lithograph on paper

Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Gift of the American Friends of the V&A; Gift to the American Friends by Leslie, Judith and Gabri Schreyer and Alice Schreyer Batkos
X64203

Emory Douglas born 1943

The Racist Dog Policeman...

ca.1970
Lithograph on paper

Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Gift of the American Friends of the V&A; Gift to the American Friends by Leslie, Judith and Gabri Schreyer and Alice Schreyer Batkos
X64200

Emory Douglas born 1943

Free Huey

ca.1970
Lithograph on paper

Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Gift of the American Friends of the V&A; Gift to the American Friends by Leslie, Judith and Gabri Schreyer and Alice Schreyer Batkos
X64199

Clockwise in Vitrine from left

Emory Douglas born 1943

Selections from the newspaper ‘The Black Panther’

1967–71
Lithograph on paper

Courtesy of the Center for the Study of Political Graphics, Los Angeles X65447-9, X65451-2, X65892-3, X65895-7

Ruth-Marion Barugh 1922–1997
Pirkle Jones 1914–2009

The Vanguard: A photographic essay on the Black Panthers Featuring a photograph of a man holding an order form to buy Emory Douglas posters on the back page of The Black Panther, 1970.

Private collection
X68164

Emory Douglas born 1943

Book cover illustration for 'Home Coming, Poems' by Sonia Sanchez 1969

Collection of David Lusenhop
Z06995

Emory Douglas born 1943

Album cover illustration for Elaine Brown, 'Seize the Time, Black Panther Party' 1969

Tate
Z07024

This image of Huey P. Newton, a founder of the Black Panther Party, appeared in the first official issue of *The Black Panther - Black Community News Service*. Fellow Panther Eldridge Cleaver selected props such as the zebra skin rug and Zulu shields to evoke the fearless leadership of a warrior king. Newton was even seated in a throne-like rattan 'peacock' chair, spear in one hand, shot gun in the other. The image of an African American man armed defensively was a powerful statement of intent in marked contrast to the nonviolent campaigns for integration. Elaine Brown, who led the Black Panther Party from 1974-1977, said the photographic poster of Newton had been her 'introduction to revolutionary art'.

Clockwise from left to right on wall

Faith Ringgold born 1930

United States of Attica

1971–2
Lithograph on paper

At the height of its popularity, this print by Faith Ringgold was circulated as 2,000 small format posters. Ringgold first studied printmaking at Amiri Baraka's Black Arts Repertory Theater/School. Here, Ringgold documents the uprising at Attica Prison that left 43 dead following unmet demands for inmate rights. The image presents the Attica prison riot not as an isolated event but as an American tragedy to be understood within an ongoing, nationwide context. The artist captioned the image: 'This map of American violence is incomplete/ Please write in whatever you find lacking.'

ACA Galleries, New York
X61854

THE BLACK EMERGENCY CULTURAL COALITION

Benny Andrews and Cliff Joseph, whose painting *Blackboard* is in Room 2, were the first co-chairs of the Black Emergency Cultural Coalition (BECC). The group formed in response to *Harlem on My Mind*, an exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum in New York in 1969 that represented the neighbourhood without inviting any African American artists living there to show their work. The BECC campaigned for representation of Black artists in American museum collections and exhibition programmes. Following the Attica Prison Rebellion, the BECC developed a programme of 'cultural relevance and freedom' that would support the development of prisoners' creative skills.

Cliff Joseph born 1922

Blackboard

1967–71
Oil paint on canvas

Aaron Galleries, Glenview, Illinois
X61939

Cleveland Bellow 1946—2009

Cleveland Bellow Shown with His Billboard

1970, printed 2017
Photograph, digital print on paper

Oakland Post Photograph Collection, MS 169. African American Museum & Library at Oakland, Oakland.
X62366

From left to right in vitrine

Smokehouse Associates 1968–1970

Williams, Melvin Edwards, Guy Ciarcia and Billy Rose Smokehouse mural and sculptures

Photographs by Robert Colton

1970, printed 2017
11 photographs, digital print on paper

Courtesy Michael Rosenfeld Gallery LLC, New York

Smokehouse Associates statement

1970
Facsimile

Courtesy of the William T. Williams archive and Michael Rosenfeld Gallery LLC, New York, NY

SMOKEHOUSE ASSOCIATES

The Smokehouse Associates was a group of four artists: the sculptor Melvin Edwards (whose work can be seen in Rooms 4 and 10); and the painters William T. Williams (whose work is in Rooms 7 and 10), Guy Ciarcia and Billy Rose. For two years, while working on their own art, the four artists collaborated on abstract wall paintings and sculptures in Harlem. Their aim was to alter the appearance of this New York neighbourhood, and as a consequence, the experience of life within it. Rather than presenting narrative images about change, they felt that abstract art was 'actual change', and could empower 'people to realize they could change also'.

Time Magazine Special Issue, Black America 1970

1970

Private collection
X66248

Darryl Cowherd

Full Support for Black Liberation

1967, printed 2017
Photograph, digital print on paper

Courtesy and © Darryl Cowherd
X66248

Bob Crawford 1939–2015

Peace and Salvation (People at the Wall of Respect)

1967, printed 2017
Photograph, digital print on paper

Courtesy Romi Crawford © Bob Crawford Estate

Bob Crawford 1939–2015

Gwendolyn Brooks at the Wall of Respect

1967, printed 2017
Photograph, digital print on paper

Courtesy Romi Crawford © Bob Crawford Estate

Bob Crawford 1939–2015

Calling Black People (the Wall of Respect)

1967, printed 2017
Photograph, digital print on paper

Courtesy Romi Crawford © Bob Crawford Estate

Continued on wall from left to right

Darryl Cowherd

Portrait of Amiri Baraka

1967
Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper on board
Collection of Timothy Knowles
x65837

AMIRI BARAKA

Amiri Baraka (1934–2014) was a poet, playwright, and cultural commentator, and one of the founders of The Black Arts Movement. Darryl Cowherd's photograph of Baraka, displayed nearby, featured on The Wall of Respect. Baraka had changed his name from LeRoi Jones in 1965, following the assassination of Malcolm X. In the same year he founded the Black Arts Repertory Theater/School in Harlem. Writer Larry Neal and Baraka outlined the aims of The Black Arts Movement, declaring that Black writers, musicians and visual artists should make art that 'speaks directly to the needs and aspirations of Black America'. Baraka wrote, 'The purpose of our writing is to create the nation'. The Wall of Respect is the clearest example of the Black Arts Movement in the visual arts because of its situation in a Black neighbourhood, the direct way in which its images communicated positive messages about Black America, and because it became a place where poets and performers could work alongside painters. Baraka's poem 'SOS' was painted on its surface.

Continued in vitrine from left to right

Ebony Magazine 1 December 1967
Courtesy Johnson Publishing Company, LLC
X66210

Bob Crawford 1939–2015

Sports Section (Children guarding materials at the Wall of Respect) 1967, printed 2017
Photograph, digital print on paper
Courtesy Romi Crawford © Bob Crawford Estate

Robert Sengstacke 1943–2017

Wall of Respect 1967
Facsimile

Courtesy of Images of Black Chicago: The Robert Sengstacke Photography Archive, University of Chicago Visual Resources Center LUNA collection © Robert Abbott Sengstacke Collection

Bob Crawford 1939–2015

Bill Walker Painting Nation of Islam Section of the Wall of Respect

1967, printed 2017
Photograph, digital print on paper

Robert Sengstacke 1943–2017

Darryl Cowherd on scaffolding, nailing photo of Amiri Baraka to wall

1967, printed 2017
Photograph, digital print on paper

Courtesy of Images of Black Chicago: The Robert Sengstacke Photography Archive, University of Chicago Visual Resources Center LUNA collection © Robert Abbott Sengstacke Collection

Robert Sengstacke 1943–2017

Jeff Donaldson on scaffolding, painting 'Jazz' mural

1967, printed 2017
Photograph, digital print on paper

Courtesy of Images of Black Chicago: The Robert Sengstacke Photography Archive, University of Chicago Visual Resources Center LUNA collection © Robert Abbott Sengstacke Collection

Robert Sengstacke 1943–2017

Tracing paper attached to wall for Barbara Hogu-Jones 'Theater' mural

1967, printed 2017
Photograph, digital print on paper

Courtesy of Images of Black Chicago: The Robert Sengstacke Photography Archive, University of Chicago Visual Resources Center LUNA collection © Robert Abbott Sengstacke Collection

Robert Sengstacke 1943–2017

OBAC planning meeting

1967, printed 2017
Photograph, digital print on paper

Courtesy of Images of Black Chicago: The Robert Sengstacke Photography Archive, University of Chicago Visual Resources Center LUNA collection © Robert Abbott Sengstacke Collection

Robert Sengstacke 1943–2017

William Walker looking at cardboard model of the Wall of Respect

1967, printed 2017

Photograph, digital print on paper

Courtesy of Images of Black Chicago: The Robert Sengstacke Photography Archive, University of Chicago Visual Resources Center LUNA collection © Robert Abbott Sengstacke Collection

OBAC manifesto c.1967 Facsimile
Jeff Donaldson papers

circa 1960-2005,

ROOM 3
FIGURING BLACK POWER

‘Art for me now must develop from a necessity within my people. It must answer a question, or wake somebody up, or give a shove in the right direction – our liberation.’ – Elizabeth Catlett

‘Black Power!’ Activist Stokely Carmichael made the rallying cry for nationwide solidarity in a speech at the Mississippi March Against Fear in 1966. It was a refusal to be cowed by acts of racist violence that sought to suppress demands for equality. Soon, the saying was not only heard but shown in the de ant act of the raised st: the Black Power salute. Painting and sculpture likewise became powerful vehicles for protesting against this violence and communicating the urgent message of Black liberation. Boston-based artist Dana Chandler referred to himself as a ‘Black Expressionist’, noting ‘Black art is a tremendous force for education and political development… I mean to tell it like it is. I ain’t subtle and I don’t intend to become subtle so long as America remains the great white destroyer’. In a painting which is now missing, Phillip Lindsay Mason referenced the 1965 assassination of American leader Malcolm X to make visible the life-and- death seriousness of the struggle. The older generation of artists like Elizabeth Catlett and Archibald Motley also expressed their commitment to social justice and survival. Faith Ringgold, having been denied membership to Spiral’s group of artists, developed her own unique style she called ‘Super Realism’: ‘the idea was to make a statement in

my art about the Civil Rights Movement and what was happening to Black people at that time, to make it super-real.' Kay Brown was part of an outspoken and pioneering group of Black women artists whose art expressed the interrelated struggles against political oppression, racial discrimination and sexism.

Clockwise on wall from left to right

Photographic image where Stokely Carmichael speaks to a crowd at the Mississippi March Against Fear in 1966.
Photo by © Flip Schulke/CORBIS/Corbis via Getty Images.
The Black Power salute was broadcast worldwide from the medal podium of the 1968 Olympics. 200 metre sprinters Tommie Smith, John Carlos and Peter Norman each in his own way took a stand against the injustice of racial segregation in America through the Olympic Project for Human Rights. Photo John Dominis.
LIFE Picture Collection/Getty Images

Stokely Carmichael 1941–1998

"Stokely Carmichael is known for his rallying cry of 'Black Power'. He became an activist while studying at university in Washington D.C. In 1964 he joined the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), playing an active role in challenging segregation in the southern United States, and becoming chairman in 1966. Carmichael grew disillusioned with civil rights policies of nonviolence after experiencing brutality in the face of peaceful protest. In 1966, he declared, ''We been saying 'Freedom' for six years… What we are going to start saying now is 'Black Power!'" Many leaders of the Civil Rights Movement spoke out against the phrase and

cries of 'reverse racism' were made in the press. The SNCC severed all ties with Carmichael. Soon after he became involved with the Black Panther Party, but resigned when the party decided to seek support among whites. After moving to Guinea in 1969, Carmichael developed a Pan-African vision, changing his name to Kwame Ture. Until he died in 1998 he answered the phone by announcing, 'Ready for the revolution!'.

Archibald Motley 1891–1981

The First One Hundred Years: He Amongst You Who is Without Sin Shall Cast the First Stone; Forgive Them Father For They Know Not What They Do

c.1963–72
Oil paint on canvas

Mara Motley, M.D. and Valerie Gerrard Browne
X61711

Motley's final painting was created over ten years.
The nightmarish vision is a scene of the nation at its symbolic best and worst. The terror of the Klansman's burning cross shares space with the sacri ce of the Crucifixion. The Devil fraternises with the dove of peace. Spectres of assassinated leaders Martin Luther King, Jr. and former presidents John F.

Kennedy and Abraham Lincoln hover above a lynched body. The painting suggests the intractable divisions of Black and white in the United States, yet its formal drama is created by the contrast of red highlights against eerie blues. Once completed, the artist never painted again.

Kay Brown 1932–2012

The Devil and His Game

1970
Paper and acrylic paint on canvas

Kay Brown was for a time the sole woman member of Weusi artist collective, named after the Swahili word for 'blackness', and would go on to be an influential member of Where We At! Black Women Artists Inc. collective. Brown felt collage was the most persuasive means to communicate visually. In The Devil and His Game, Brown comments on then-US President Richard Nixon's foreign and domestic policies. Nixon wears the devil's red attire, using Black children - both African American and Nigerian victims of the Biafran War - as pawns. Malcolm X's face hovers on the left and Nixon's shrouded opponent is Martin Luther King, Jr.

Collection of Tina and Larry Jones
X61897

Faith Ringgold born 1930

American People Series #20: Die 1967
Oil paint on canvas

Faith Ringgold had personal experience of how civil unrest affected her community. The artist felt media reports in black and white (in print or on the evening news), made painful events perversely bloodless. The aftermath of riots such as the 1964 Harlem race riot or the 1967 Newark riots often focused on damage to property rather than human beings in pain. Ringgold developed her American People series from 1963 to 1967. She had previously studied Josef Albers and Ad Reinhardt, in particular how Reinhardt's black paintings were influenced by non-western traditions in painting.

The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Purchase; and gift of the Modern Women's Fund, 2016

X61849

Works in vitrine from left to right

Exhibition leaflet 'Secret of the Golden Flower: Paintings by Phillip Lindsay Mason'

1976
Tate X68243

Samella Lewis born 1924
Ruth G. Waddy 1909-2003

Black Artists on Art, vol. 1

1976
This publication includes a reproduction of Woman as Body Spirit 1969 by Phillip Lindsay Mason.

Tate
X68242

Exhibition catalogue
'Dimensions of Black', La Jolla Museum of Art

15 February – 29 March 1970

Private collection
X67726

Phillip Lindsay Mason born 1939

The Deathmakers 1976
Acrylic paint on canvas

Location unknown

Phillip Lindsay Mason's *The Deathmakers* is based on an image published on the 22 February 1965 cover of the New York Daily News showing policemen carrying Malcolm X's body following his assassination. Mason makes the corpse point accusingly, suggesting that white supremacy was the underlying cause of his death. Mason's painting was included in Dimensions in Black, an exhibition staged at the La Jolla Museum of Art, San Diego, in 1970 and published in Samella Lewis's book Art: African American in 1978. However, despite Mason's renown in those years, its location is currently unknown.

Samella Lewis born 1924

Art: African American

1978
Tate
X67727

Continued on wall from left to right

Benny Andrews 1930–2006

Did the Bear Sit Under the Tree?

1969
Oil paint, fabric and zipper on canvas

Benny Andrews saw himself as a collagist and associated his approach to materials with his childhood growing up in rural Georgia. 'I started working in collage because I found oil paint so sophisticated and I didn't want to lose my sense of rawness. Where I am from, the people are very austere … We wear rough fabrics. We actually used the burlap bagging sacks that seed came in to make our shirts. These are my textures.' The flag here is a sheet of rolled-up fabric, while the figure's mouth is made of a zipper. He later said of this work: 'it is a Black person who is shaking his fist at the very thing that is supposed to be protecting him and that he's operating under.'

Emanuel Collection
X61547

Dana C. Chandler born 1941

Fred Hampton's Door 2

1975
Acrylic paint on wood

In 1967, Dana Chandler witnessed Boston police using violence to stop a peaceful civil rights protest, an event which triggered his commitment to the Black Power movement to effect social change. Fred Hampton's Door 2 is a statement against Chicago police who had murdered a young Black Panther, Fred Hampton, in his bed, by first shooting through his door. The first Fred Hampton's Door was a small, square trompe l'oeil painting of a bullet hole-ridden door. When it was stolen from a Boston exhibition, Chandler reconceived the work using an actual door for greater emotional impact. In 1970, Chandler also used the original composition for an edition of black and white prints.

Professor Dana Chandler
X61664

FRED HAMPTON

Fred Hampton (1949–1969) was a charismatic young revolutionary leader and community activist in Chicago. Despite his young age, he served as the Deputy Chairman of the Black Panther Party and was recognised within the Party to be the future of a united Black movement.
In 1969, a murderous Chicago police raid ended his life. Hampton's death sparked national outcry and 5,000 mourners attended his funeral. Dana Chandler painted a memorial to Hampton, a blistered door standing as a testament.

Time Magazine Special Issue, Black America 1970

April 6 1970

Tate
X66248

Work in centre of room

Elizabeth Catlett 1915–2012

Black Unity

1968
Mahogany wood

Elizabeth Catlett was awarded the first Master of Fine Arts in sculpture in the U.S. in 1940. By 1968, Elizabeth Catlett had moved to Mexico yet the sculpture Black Unity, carved from mahogany, reads as Black skin, a raised fist hewn in solidarity. Catlett remarked: 'No other field is closed to those who are not white and male as is the visual arts. After I decided to be an artist, the first thing I had to believe was that I, a black woman, could penetrate the art scene, and that, further, I could do so without sacrificing one iota of my blackness or my femaleness or my humanity.'
X62244

ROOM 4
LA ASSEMBLAGE

‘West coast Black art stands in direct opposition to art for art’s sake. It insists that if art is not for the sake of something it is not art.’ – Noah Purifoy

This room brings together work by four artists based in Los Angeles. They created art by recycling and bringing together objects in different formations, known as assemblage.

Los Angeles was a city experiencing great racial tension. In 1962, police had entered a mosque and shot dead an unarmed member of the Nation of Islam. Two years later, another instance of police violence in a predominantly African American neighbourhood triggered the Watts Rebellion, which left 34 dead, and properties and shops in ruins.

Melvin Edwards began his *Lynch Fragments* in 1963. He used metal machine parts as well as chains, his title referring to the history of lynching. Two years later, after the Watts Rebellion, Noah Purifoy began collecting materials from the streets, using them to create constructions. By turning former consumer items into imaginative artworks, he hoped to inspire viewers to be creative and reject materialism. John Outterbridge reflected on racial oppression in his Containment series.

Later, drawing on his memories of rituals in the American South, he began his Ethnic Heritage series, small doll-like figures made with found materials. Purifoy and Outterbridge both had exhibitions at the Black-run Brockman Gallery, one of a small number of spaces whose programmes featured Black artists. Another was Gallery 32 where Betye Saar exhibited her work. Saar made assemblages from racist material she'd gathered, scrutinising historical and present-day racism and fashioning images of proud defiance.

Clockwise on wall from left to right

The Lynch Fragments were begun a year after the murder of Nation of Islam member Ronald Stokes by the Los Angeles Police Department. Melvin Edwards had also read a report about the history of lynching in the Civil Rights publication Freedomways. Though Edwards recycled some materials evoking shackles, these small works also embody a vision of resistance. *Afro-Phoenix* draws from the myth of a bird reborn from the flames; Mamba connects phallic power to an African snake. Despite allusive titles and shapes, Edwards kept the works abstract and did not disguise the industrial origins of the metal parts that he fused together.

Melvin Edwards born 1937

Some Bright morning 1963
Welded steel

Lynch Fragments: Mamba 1965
Welded steel

Lynch Fragments: Afro-Phoenix #2 1963
Welded steel

Courtesy the artist and Alexander Gray Associates, New York/Stephen Friedman Gallery, London X62339-41

John Outterbridge born 1933

from left to right

Traditional Hang-up (Containment Series) 1969
Mixed media
Private collection, courtesy Tilton Gallery, New York
X62284

Time for a New Direction (Containment Series) 1969
Welded metal
Collection of Mitzi and Warren Eisenberg
X61843

Strange Fruit (Containment Series) 1969
Welded metal
Mark McDonald, Hudson, New York
X61548

John Outterbridge showed his Containment series at the Brockman Gallery in 1970. The sculptor Mark Di Suvero had lent him tools to cut the metal for these works. Containment was formally conveyed by the compression of elements and by the use of belt straps. Outterbridge indicated that containment linked to the experience of Black life in America: 'To contain is to hamper investigation and growth, resulting in the creation of strange ideas fragmenting into even

stranger concepts, cold and distant. Containment of even the least human worth is to smother the existence of new horizons.' Some titles harked back to a history of oppression, like Strange Fruit, the name of a song about lynching made famous by Billie Holiday; others looked forward: Time for a new direction.

John Outterbridge born 1933

About Martin 1975 Mixed media

John Outterbridge made About Martin for an exhibition titled 'A Tribute to Martin Luther King Jr.' held in Los Angeles in 1976. The cabinet brings together a suit reminiscent of those King wore in public, and banners naming the sites of the most famous marches he led. The coal truck may refer to the young King's enjoyment of stoking coal in the family fire. Framed within the cabinet is a cropped reproduction of Moneta Sleet Jr.'s Pulitzer Prize-winning photograph of his widow, Coretta Scott King at his funeral.

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Private collection, courtesy Tilton Gallery, New York
X64736

Noah Purifoy 1917–2004

Untitled 1970
Wood, leather, brass and copper

In creating his assemblages, Noah Purifoy wanted to suggest an alternative to the way objects were made, marketed and consumed in American capitalist society. He was drawn to the way objects function in traditional African and Native American societies. In several of his assemblages from this period, Purifoy referenced ritual objects. This work, which includes everyday wooden spoons, resembles Ghanaian fertility dolls that Asante women carry on their backs.
It was first shown in the 1970 exhibition Contemporary Black Artists in America at the Whitney Museum.

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. Purchase.
X61646

Noah Purifoy 1917–2004

Untitled

1966
Mixed media, Beth Rudin DeWoody
X61694

Watts Riot

1966 Mixed media, The California African American Museum, Los Angeles. Bequest of Alfred C. Darby
X61698

Watts Riot was first shown in 66 Signs of Neon, an exhibition Noah Purifoy organised with artist Judson Powell shortly after the Watts Rebellion. Purifoy created objects from three tonnes of debris he had collected from the streets. The exhibition took place in the Watts neighbourhood as part of a Summer Festival. In the catalogue Purifoy wrote that 'the ultimate purpose of this effort was to demonstrate to the community of Watts, to Los Angeles, and to the world at large, that education through creativity is the only way left for a person to find himself through this materialistic world'.

Betye Saar born 1926

The Liberation of Aunt Jemima

1972
Wood, cotton, plastic, metal, acrylic paint, printed paper and fabric, X61538

Arguably Betye Saar's best known work, radical Black nationalist imagery of weapons, raised fist and striped African Kente cloth contrasts with the presumed docility of servitude, in particular the nation's most recognised Southern 'mammy', Aunt Jemima smiling from the bestselling pancake mix. Saar was appalled by everyday racist depictions she found at fleamarkets and in curio shops. Inspired in part by Joseph Cornell's surrealist assemblages and moved by the strength and determination of fellow Black women, the work features the sculpted body of a Black woman that previously was used as a kitchen notepad holder. Saar sought to re-present a painfully enduring image of Black female subservience instead as a symbol of empowerment, not to be underestimated.

University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley. Purchased with the aid of funds from the National Endowment for the Arts (selected by The Committee for the Acquisition of Afro-American Art)

Betye Saar born 1926

I've Got Rhythm

1972
Mechanical metronome with wood case, plastic toy, American flag pin, acrylic paint, and printed paper

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. Purchase, with funds from the Painting and Sculpture Committee

X61829

Betye Saar born 1926

Sambo's Banjo

1971–2
Wood, fabric, acrylic paint, mirror and plastic objects

On the exterior of an old banjo case, Betye Saar presents the smiling face of Sambo, the racist caricature of a Black entertainer. Inside, a violent double-lynching unfolds above a marionette. The calm white onlookers in the background reference photographs and postcards that circulated as sinister lynching mementos. The watermelon is a stereotypical symbol of indolence. However above the murderous scene, the artist has left Sambo a tiny ri e with which the character can free himself. In re-appropriating the hurtful imagery, the artist wants us to imagine the minstrel not as a victim but recast as his own saviour, using the means at his disposal to survive.

Collection Friends, the Foundation of the California African American Museum, Los Angeles. CAAM Foundation Purchase, with funds provided by the City of Los Angeles, Cultural Affairs Department

X61827

John Outterbridge born 1933

Tribal Piece (Ethnic Heritage Series)

1978–82
Mixed media

Collection of Joel Wachs
X61624

ROOM 5
AFRICOBRA IN CHICAGO

‘We wanted to create a greater role as Black artists who were not for self but for our kind … Can we as AfriCOBRA artists sacri ce the wants of self and ego to create the needed positive visual images of our people? The answer was yes, we can!’ – Barbara Jones Hogu

How do you represent the ‘expressive awesomeness that one experiences in African art and life in the U.S.A.’? The Chicago artists’ collective AfriCOBRA – the African Commune of Bad Relevant Artists – which formed in 1968, proposed an answer. AfriCOBRA came out of discussions in 1962 between Wadsworth Jarrell and Jeff Donaldson about whether a uniquely ‘Negro’ art movement could be based on a shared sensibility. Many of its members were later involved in painting the mural The Wall of Respect, seen in Room 2.
When the group started out, they began by setting themselves tasks – for instance to paint images of the Black family – meeting every week to discuss each other’s work. Soon they decided to choose their own subjects. Some created uplifting images of everyday people; Jarrell painted portraits of leaders like Malcolm X and Angela Davis whose revolutionary politics AfriCOBRA admired.
In the AfriCOBRA manifesto of 1970, Donaldson summed up their collective aesthetic, and showed how AfriCOBRA departed from American and European models of pop art, realism and abstraction. The new aesthetic was based on ‘rhythm’, ‘shine… the rich lustre of a just-washed ‘fro…’ and

‘Colour colour Colour colour that shines, colour that is free of rules and regulations’. Text would often be incorporated into pictures, anchoring messages. The artists made prints based on their most popular paintings. They wanted their work to be distributed widely and pinned proudly on their audiences’ walls.

Clockwise from left to right

Poster for the first AfriCOBRA exhibition,
1970

Private collection of David Lusenhop

Group portrait of AfriCOBRA artists, on the front cover of the catalogue for the AfriCOBRA III exhibition,
1973

Private collection of David Lusenhop

Clockwise from left to right

Wadsworth Jarrell born 1929

Liberation Soldiers

1972
Acrylic paint and foil on canvas

This painting, shown in the second AfriCOBRA exhibition, depicts Black Panther members, including, Huey Newton (front left) and Bobby Seale (front right).

The John and Susan Horseman Collection of American Art
X61866

Wadsworth Jarrell born 1929

Black Prince

1971
Acrylic paint on canvas

Black Prince is a portrait of Malcolm X, made for the second AfriCOBRA exhibition in 1971 held, like their first, at the Studio Museum in Harlem. It is based on a May 1963 photograph of Malcolm X in Harlem, speaking against segregation and 'Uncle Tom Negro preachers' - in ammatory language that the audience would have known referred to figures like Martin Luther King, Jr. Jarrell used excerpts of Malcolm X's speeches at the bottom of the painting, and repeated the letter B (for Black, Bad and Beautiful) to create the face. Jarrell's palette is typical of AfriCOBRA's use of colours from Kool-Aid drinks.

Private collection
X61648

Carolyn Lawrence born 1940

Black Children Keep Your Spirits Free

1972
Acrylic paint on canvas

Carolyn Mims Lawrence
X61649

Gerald Williams born 1941

Nation Time

1970
Acrylic paint on canvas

Gerald Williams was one of the five founding members of AfriCOBRA. For Williams, 'Nation' referred not to America but to a separate Black nation. Amiri Baraka used the word in the same way in his 1970 poem 'It's Nation Time', and Jeff Donaldson used the phrase too in the landmark AfriCOBRA text, '10 in Search of a Nation' from 1970 : 'It's NATION TIME and we are now searching. Our guidelines are our people – the whole family of African people, the African family tree.' In the painting, Williams relates the building of a nation to the construction of a wall.

Courtesy Johnson Publishing Company, LLC
X61713

Jeff Donaldson 1932–2004

Wives of Sango

1971
Acrylic paint, gold foil and silver foil on cardboard

The Smithsonian National Museum of African American History & Culture, Washington, DC
X67709

Carolyn Lawrence born 1940

Uphold Your Men

1971
Screenprint on paper

Courtesy Lusenhop Fine Art
X62368

Jeff Donaldson 1932–2004

Victory in the Valley of Eshu

1971
Screenprint on paper

The David and Alfred Smart Museum of Art, The University of Chicago, Chicago. Gift of Melissa Azzi in honor of the artist
X61864

Barbara Jones-Hogu born 1938

Unite

1971
Screenprint on paper

Collection of David Lusenhop and Stacie Anderson
X62248

Gerald Williams born 1941

Wake Up

1971
Screenprint on paper

Collection of David Lusenhop and Stacie Anderson
X62249

Nelson Stevens born 1938

Uhuru

1971 Screenprint on paper

Collection of David Lusenhop and Stacie Anderson
X64742

Wadsworth Jarrell born 1929

Revolutionary

1972
Screenprint on paper

Courtesy Lusenhop Fine Art
X64692

Revolutionary is a print based on Wadsworth Jarrell's painting of the same title. Revolutionary is based on a photograph of Angela Davis speaking at a rally in Spring 1970, published in Life magazine on 11 September 1970 in an article titled 'The Making of a Fugitive'. Jarrell changed the source image by clothing Davis in Jae Jarrell's Revolutionary Suit, exhibited nearby. Words from Davis's speeches form like sun rays from her face. When Jarrell made this work in 1971, Davis was in prison, and the source photograph was being used in widely circulated posters demanding her freedom.

Works in centre of room

Jae Jarrell born 1935

Brothers Surrounding Sis

1970
Acrylic paint on suede

Courtesy of Jae Jarrell

Jae Jarrell born 1935

Revolutionary Suit

1969, remade 2010
Wool, suede, silk, wood and pigment

Brooklyn Museum, New York. William K. Jacobs, Jr. Fund
X61869

ROOM 6
THREE GRAPHIC ARTISTS LA

‘I feel it my moral obligation as a Black artist, to try to graphically document what I feel socially.’ – David Hammons

This room brings together three artists based in Los Angeles in the late 1960s, who took different approaches to the graphic image. Charles White was a respected painter, printmaker and esteemed art college professor. David Hammons had been one of White’s drawing students. In 1968, Hammons started making body prints, coating himself in vegetable fat and pressing his body onto printing paper before applying pigment to reveal the image saturated into the surface. Los Angeles native Timothy Washington, who was also a recent art school graduate, developed a technique of etching into enamel paint applied to sheets of metal. Both Hammons and Washington had exhibited at the Brockman Gallery alongside the Los Angeles-based artists shown in Room 4.

In 1971, White, Hammons and Washington were the featured artists in the exhibition Three Graphic Artists at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA). Three years earlier, Claude Booker and Cecil Fergerson, two art handlers at the museum, had founded the Black Arts Council (BAC) in order to show the work of African American artists and to engage Black visitors. The BAC quickly grew to around 3,000 members. Three Graphic Artists was the first exhibition resulting from their efforts.

The exhibition was met with some resistance. Booker and Fergerson picketed the opening reception, incensed by the exhibition's relegation to a minor gallery within the museum and to White having been denied a prominent solo exhibition. Still, the BAC persisted in advocating for subsequent shows, culminating in Two Centuries of Black American Art in 1976.

Clockwise from left to right

Three Graphic Artists: Charles White, David Hammons, Timothy Washington Exhibition catalogue

1971

Balch Art Research Library, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles
X67721

Charles White 1918–1979

Mississippi

1972
Oil paint on board

The Charles White Archives and C. Ian White
X61644

Four compass points surround the figure in this work, but 'S' for 'South' is replaced by a bloody handprint. Charles White's maternal family came from Mississippi and the artist felt acutely the effects of the Southern struggle for civil rights: 'we've had ve lynchings in my family, two uncles and three cousins over a long span of years. I've lived in the South, have had unpleasant personal experiences… and yet, at the same time I still maintain in spite of my experiences, my family's experience, tragedies, I still feel that man is basically good.'

Timothy Washington born 1946

One Nation Under God

1970
Automotive primer paint on engraved aluminum

Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles. Museum Purchase with Museum Associates Funds
X62205

Los Angeles native Timothy Washington experimented with etching onto sheets of metal, insisting that the metal retained the intensity of his compositions instead of transferring the images onto paper. In One Nation under God the artist explores reparations and proposed (but unrealised) land redistribution for newly freed slaves in the South, at the end of the Civil War in 1865. '40 acres and a mule' became popular shorthand, paraphrasing a radical Civil War field order that was later overturned, powerfully conveying a double meaning of both literal promised land and broken contract.

David Hammons born 1943

Injustice Case

1970
Body print and screenprint on paper, frame wrapped with American Flag
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles. Museum Acquisition Fund
X61532

Injustice Case refers to Black Panther Party co-founder Bobby Seale's trial for conspiracy to incite violence, during which Seale was bound and gagged in the courtroom. Hammons cut an American flag to frame the image (itself a punishable offence), effectively making this shocking scene from the halls of justice an x-ray of America. The work was first show at the Black-run Brockman Gallery in 1970 where it was displayed in a large glass case lined with black velvet, with a judge's gavel in front of the print. In 1971 it was included in *Three Graphic Artists*.

THE TRIAL OF BOBBY SEALE

Bobby Seale (born 1936) co-founded the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense in Oakland, California, in 1966. In 1969, he was one of the 'Chicago 8', a group of activists including Abbie Hoffman who were tried by the federal government for conspiracy following violent protests at the 1968 Chicago Democratic Convention. Seale was prevented from having a lawyer of his choice and then was barred from defending himself. Following successive vocal outbursts, Judge Julius Hoffman ordered Seale to be bound and gagged in the courtroom. The shocking courtroom sketches presented the repressive face of the American justice system.

David Hammons born 1943

Black First, America Second

1970
Body print and screenprint on paper
Tilton Family Collection
X62207

Three Spades

1971
Body print and screen print on paper
Glenstone Museum, Potomac, Maryland
X62280

David Hammons is known for clever word play and manipulating the multiple meanings of symbols. The spade is an example. In the 1970s 'spade' was used as a racial slur against Black people. Hammons recalled the term made little sense and removed its sting by subverting it: 'I was trying to figure out why Black people were called spades, as opposed to clubs. Because I remember being called a spade once, and I didn't know what it meant… So I took the shape, and started painting it.'

ROOM 7
EAST COAST ABSTRACTION

'Figurative art doesn't represent blackness any more than a non-narrative media-oriented kind of painting, like what I do.' – Sam Gilliam

Based in New York and Washington D.C., the artists in this room knew each other and exhibited together several times in the late 1960s and early 1970s. During their studies in major art schools such as Yale, they had become aware of the innovations in abstract painting on the East Coast after the generation of abstract expressionists that included Jackson Pollock and Mark Rothko. They were interested in recent innovations in abstract art, such as hard-edged painting and staining the canvas, as well as using unusually-shaped canvases instead of rectangles and squares.

In addition, they were profoundly concerned with what it meant to be Black. Although they did not make figurative images, their personal experiences and interests came into their art in different ways. For some, this meant making abstract homages to assassinated political leaders such as Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr; for others, it meant connecting their compositions and processes to the radical improvisatory jazz of musicians such as John Coltrane.

Jack Whitten used an Afro-comb instead of a paintbrush – an implement connected with then-current Black hairstyles.

However, many artists in this room encountered severe criticism from other Black artists and critics, who felt that abstract painting could not connect to the lives of Black Americans. A strong argument in favour of the work shown here was provided by Frank Bowling, who was born in British Guiana and studied in London, before coming to New York in 1966. He got to know many of the artists and included several in an exhibition he organised in 1969 called *5+1*. In his series of essays on 'Black art', he argued that artists such as William T. Williams and Jack Whitten were able to 're-route fashion and current art convention to 'signify' something different' to Black viewers than to white ones.

Clockwise from left to right

Front cover of the exhibition catalogue for 5+1 1969

Frank Bowling, Jack Whitten and Al Loving at 5+1, Stony Brook University, New York 1969 © Adger Cowans

William T. Williams born 1942

Trane

1969 , Acrylic paint on canvas

The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York. Gift of Charles Cowles, New York, X61454

William T. Williams began making 'hard-edged' abstract paintings at Yale, where he studied with artist Al Held. When fellow Black artists questioned him on his interest in abstraction, Williams pointed to improvisation in jazz, which he saw as abstract music. This painting was named after John Coltrane and may conjure the cascades of sound in his performances. Trane was made in New York in the same year that Williams – as a member of the Smokehouse Associates –created a number of abstract wall paintings in Harlem, as seen in Room 2. That year he also set up the artists-in-residence programme at the Studio Museum in Harlem.

Daniel LaRue Johnson born 1938

D9 Flat 5th
1969 Acrylic paint on wood

Courtesy of the artist
X66543

Daniel LaRue Johnson moved to New York from Los Angeles in the late 1960s and began making totemic sculptures painted in high gloss stripes. Frank Bowling wrote that his was a 'head-on clash with certain linear aspects of traditional African sculpture'. Johnson, acknowledging his interest in bebop jazz, felt that his colour combinations visualised musical chords. Here, the colours reflect the notes D, F, A flat, C and E which together make the chord D9 Flat 5. Johnson was included in exhibitions alongside the artists in this room such as *5+1* in 1969 and *The De Luxe Show* in 1971.

Virginia Jaramillo born 1939

Untitled

1971
Acrylic paint on canvas

Brooklyn Musem, New York. Purchased with funds given by Frieze Brooklyn Museum Fund Supported by WME | IMG and LIFEWTR, gift of the Contemporary Art Acquisition Committe, and William K. Jacobs, Jr. Fund
X64959

Virginia Jaramillo's *Untitled* was one of two paintings she included in *The DeLuxe Show* in 1971. She was subsequently selected to show in the 1972 Whitney Annual, in New York. For the artist, abstraction allowed her to explore 'the structure of our physical, spiritual and mental worlds'. Frank Bowling admired Jaramillo's use of colour and line for its commanding physical presence. She mixed paints for hours to achieve the complex tonalities that change depending on the light and the viewer's position.

Sam Gilliam born 1933

Untitled

April 4 1969
Acrylic paint on canvas

Sam Gilliam began staining his canvases in the mid-1960s. He was part of a group of painters based in Washington D.C. using such methods, and he experimented further by folding and tying his canvases before stretching them. Gilliam made this work in homage to Martin Luther King, Jr, on the rst year anniversary of King's 1968 assassination. The purple could be seen as appropriately magisterial, while the red marks might suggest bloodstains.

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC.
Museum purchase
X61529

Ed Clark born 1926

Yenom (#9)
1970
Acrylic paint on canvas

The artist and Tilton Gallery, New York
X61945

Ed Clark was a part of the second generation of abstract expressionists and in 1957 was the first American artist to experiment with irregularly-shaped canvases. He began working with the oval in 1968, using a broom to sweep paint across canvases laid out on the studio floor, and allowing everyday matter to attach itself to the surface. This painting was included in *The DeLuxe Show* in 1971, held at a disused cinema in an African American neighbourhood in Houston, where it was shown alongside abstract works by Sam Gilliam and William T. Williams as well as white artists such as Kenneth Noland.

Jack Whitten born 1939

Homage to Malcolm
1970
Acrylic paint on canvas

Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth
X63352

Alabama-born Jack Whitten studied art in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, where in the late 1950s he participated in Civil Rights marches before relocating to New York. Most of his late 1960s works were very colourful with expressive brushstrokes, however *Homage to Malcolm* is very clearly structured and is the artist's only triangular painting. Whitten used his Afro-comb to manipulate layers of black acrylic paint, revealing reds and greens. Whitten felt that the triangle was an appropriately strong shape to pay homage to Malcolm X, who had visited the pyramids in the early 1960s.

Frank Bowling born 1936

Middle Passage

1970
Oil paint on canvas

The Menil Collection, Houston
X61520

Frank Bowling was born in the former colony of British Guiana. *Middle Passage* refers to the perilous journey across the Atlantic from Africa by those forced into slavery. Bowling populated his painting with stencilled and silkscreened images of resilience: his family, his mother's store, and the new name of independent Guyana. Bowling blends imagery with abstraction, and merges loose bands of colour. These might be understood as colours of the British and Guyanese flags, but also refer to colours used by European abstract painters such as Piet Mondrian.

ROOM 8
BLACK LIGHT

‘You should be able to look at me and see my work. You should be able to look at my work and see me.’
– Roy DeCarava

Roy DeCarava was one of the first Black photographers to establish a successful career as an independent artist rather than as a photojournalist or studio portraitist. He studied painting and drawing under Charles White (whose work is in Room 6) in the 1940s, but soon concentrated on photography.

He collaborated with the poet Langston Hughes on The Sweet Flypaper of Life in the mid-1950s, creating touching pictures of family life in Harlem, and by the early 1960s was recognised by younger Black artists as the outstanding gure working in the medium. DeCarava printed all his images himself, often using very dark blacks and greys, knowing viewers would need to slow down to look closely at his works. For many, his extraordinary handling of a dark tonal range amounted to a Black aesthetic in photography, as did his choice of subject matter. DeCarava sometimes photographed leaders associated with the Civil Rights Movement, but he was equally drawn to jazz musicians and to everyday people in the New York neighbourhoods of Harlem and Bedford-Stuyvesant. His abstract photography and architectural studies were just as important to him.

Clockwise from left to right

Roy DeCarava 1919–2009

Woman with NAACP pin

1962
Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Courtesy Sherry DeCarava and the DeCarava Archives
X65940

Roy DeCarava 1919–2009

Five men 1964

1964
Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Courtesy Sherry DeCarava and the DeCarava Archives
X65391

Roy DeCarava 1919–2009

Malcolm X

1964
Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Courtesy Sherry DeCarava and the DeCarava Archives
X65950

Roy DeCarava 1919–2009

Mississippi freedom marcher, Washington, D.C.

1963
Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Courtesy Sherry DeCarava and the DeCarava Archives
X64278

In August 1963, Roy DeCarava travelled to the capital for the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. As well as hearing King's 'I have a dream' speech, he photographed Mississippi freedom marcher, Washington D.C., 1963. Weeks later, the Ku Klux Klan carried out what King called 'one of the most vicious and tragic crimes ever perpetrated against humanity' – the bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham Alabama, in which four young girls were murdered. Five men, 1964 shows a group of men leaving a memorial service held in New York in early 1964 for the four girls. In these works, DeCarava captures the determined hopes and awful sorrows of his moment by concentrating on expressions of unnamed individuals..

Clockwise from top left

Roy DeCarava 1919–2009

Platform and light 1960

Subway ceiling, New York 1964

Face out of focus 1960

Trash basket, flowers c.1958

Crushed can 1961

5 photographs, gelatin silver print on paper
Courtesy Sherry DeCarava and the DeCarava Archives

X65938, X65396, X65948, X65942, X65935

Clockwise from top left

Roy DeCarava 1919–2009

Late night singer with mike 1958

Coltrane on soprano, New York 1963

Elvin Jones 1961

Ornette Coleman 1960

4 photographs, gelatin silver print on paper
Courtesy Sherry DeCarava and the DeCarava Archives

X65933, X65390, X65939, X65932

Clockwise from top left

Roy DeCarava 1919–2009

Shade cord and window 1961

Across the street, night, New York 1978

Apartment for rent 1978

Staircase tracks and doorway mid-1960s

4 photographs, gelatin silver print on paper
Courtesy Sherry DeCarava and the DeCarava Archives

X65934, X65388, X67070, X66064

Clockwise from top left

Roy DeCarava 1919–2009

Bill and son, New York 1962

Couple walking 1979

Man in window, New York 1978

Boy in print shirt 1978

4 photographs, gelatin silver print on paper
Courtesy Sherry DeCarava and the DeCarava Archives

X65389, X65945, X65393, X66066

Roy DeCarava and Langston Hughes
front cover of The Sweet Flypaper of Life, 1955

KAMOINGE

DeCarava was the first director of the Kamoinge Workshop, a group of Black photographers who came together in the summer of 1963. The works on the wall opposite DeCarava's photographs are by members of this group. 'Kamoinge' is a word from Kenya's Kikuyu language meaning 'a group of people acting together'. The group functioned as a discussion forum and its members showed their work together without ever putting forward a singular model for Black photography.

Several members were also highly involved with The Black Photographers Annual, published four times from 1973 until 1980, becoming the most useful platform for Black photographers at this time. The Annual was a publication where everyday Black life was represented in all its fullness, without an emphasis on deprivation and activism – the subjects of so much documentary photography in illustrated magazines of the time.

Works in vitrine from left to right

Ruiko Yoshida born 1938
Hajime Kijima 1928–2004

Harlem: Black Angels 1974
Digital reproduction © Yoshida & Kijima

Harlem: Black Angels 1974
Published Tokyo, Japan; Kodansha, Ltd.
Courtesy November books

X68203, X68202

Ruiko Yoshida is a Japanese photographer who lived in Harlem in this period. She published Harlem: Black Angels in Japan in 1974, one of the most touching and powerful photographic accounts of the neighbourhood during this time. 'My camera was the weapon with which I joined the struggle of blacks, yellows and other minorities in America fighting prejudice in order to gain their identity as independent human beings', she wrote. A star of the book is Zulu, whose father Terry was a Civil Rights campaigner from Mississippi, and whose Japanese grandmother Mrs Kochiyama was a Harlem resident and 'a very good friend of Marcus Garvey, Malcolm X, Angela Davis and the leaders of the Black Panther Party'.

Works on wall from left to right

Roy DeCarava 1919–2009

Bill and son, New York

1962
Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Courtesy Sherry DeCarava and the DeCarava Archives
X65389

Roy DeCarava 1919–2009

Boy in print shirt

1978
Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Courtesy Sherry DeCarava and the DeCarava Archives
X66066

Roy DeCarava 1919–2009

Couple walking

1979
Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Courtesy Sherry DeCarava and the DeCarava Archives
X65945

Adger Cowans born 1936

Shadows, New York

1961
Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Adger Cowans
X65401

Adger Cowans born 1936

Nude, New York

1970
Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Adger Cowans
X65402

Herb Randall born 1936

New Jersey

1960s
Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Herbert Randall
X65404

Herb Randall born 1936

Harlem, New York

1960s
Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Herbert Randall
X65399

Beuford Smith born 1941

Woman Bathing/ Madonna, New York

1967
Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Beuford Smith
X65405

Herb Robinson

Brother and Sister

1973
Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Herb Robinson
X65407

Al Fennar born 1938

Rhythmic Cigarettes, Greenwich Village, New York

1964
Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Albert R. Fennar
X65400

Ming Smith

When you see me comin' raise your window high, New York City, New York

1972
Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, Virginia. Adolph D. and Wilkins C. Williams Fund
X66582

Ming Smith

Hart-Leroy Bibbs Circular Breathing

1980
Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Courtesy Ming Smith and Stephen Kasher Gallery, New York
X67531

Ming Smith

Casablanca, Harlem, NY

c.1983
Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Courtesy Ming Smith and Stephen Kasher Gallery, New York
X67530

Louis Draper 1935–2002

Abstraction, Metal Sign

c.1960s
Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, Virginia. Arthur and Margaret Glasgow Fund, 2015
X66179

Louis Draper 1935–2002

Boy with Lace Curtain

c.1960s
Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, Virginia. Arthur and Margaret Glasgow Fund, 2015
X66180

ROOM 9
BLACK HEROES

‘I wasn’t ever interested in speaking for all Black folks. Much of what I was trying to do with my work was to be as good a painter as I could be.’ – Barkley Hendricks

In this period many artists – both Black and white – created powerful images of famous Black Americans. This room brings together portraits of boxers, writers and painters, such as Andy Warhol’s portrait of Muhammad Ali, Bob Thompson’s painting of the writer LeRoi Jones (later known as Amiri Baraka), and Alice Neel’s portrait of Faith Ringgold.

The concept of the ‘Black Hero’ was proposed by the Organization of Black American Culture (OBAC), presented in Room 2, who said that ‘a Black Hero is any person who honestly re ects the beauty of Black life and genius in his or her style; does not forget his Black brothers and sisters who are less fortunate; does what he does in such an outstanding manner that he or she cannot be imitated or replaced’.

Looking to represent people historically excluded from ambitious gurative painting, artists also de ned a Black hero as a person who plays a role in everyday life. For instance, Emma Amos’s babysitter, whose child care work allowed the artist’s career to flourish.

Although the artists here created positive pictures of African Americans, most aimed to make the best paintings of their time, rather than seeking to represent Black America. Raymond Saunders painted boxer Jack Johnson, the first African American world heavyweight champion, but in his text 'Black is a Color' of 1967, insisted that the Black artist should be free to use colours, just like any other painter, without symbolism. Barkley Hendricks taught himself how to use metal leaf to literally make himself an icon, having first seen Byzantine icons on a trip to Europe.

Clockwise on wall from left to right

Andy Warhol 1928–1987

Muhammad Ali

1978
Acrylic paint and screenprint on canvas

In 1977, Warhol photographed the boxer Muhammad Ali as part of his Athletes series. He created this silkscreen painting in 1978, working the surface to evoke Ali's agility.. The palette of red, black and green shares its colours with the pan-African flag where red represents the blood uniting the African Diaspora, black as representative of its people, and green being the natural riches of the African continent. Ali, ever outspoken, was an ardent civil rights supporter. 'I will not disgrace my religion, my people or myself by becoming a tool to enslave those who are fighting for their own justice, freedom and equality.'

Private collection
X62299

Raymond Saunders born 1934

Jack Johnson

1971
Oil paint on canvas

Courtesy of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Philadelphia. Funds provided by the National Endowment for the Arts, Pennsylvania Academy Women's Committee, and an Anonymous Donor

X61597

Barkley Hendricks 1945–2017

Icon for My Man Superman (Superman Never Saved any Black People - Bobby Seale) 1969

Oil paint, acrylic paint and aluminium leaf on canvas
Icon for My Man Superman (Superman Never Saved any Black People – Bobby Seale) is a self-portrait, trimmed with a border evoking the American flag. Barkley Hendricks painted himself wearing a novelty T-shirt, provocatively nude from the waist down. The work's subtitle invites a declarative statement of solidarity with the Black Panther co-founder Bobby Seale, who said these words at his 1969 trial.
Here Hendricks also portrays the Black artist as superhero, painting himself into history rather than waiting for someone else to confer the honour upon him.

Collection of Liz and Eric Lefkofsky
X61855

Barkley Hendricks 1945–2017

What's Going On

1974
Oil paint, acrylic paint and acrylic resin paint on canvas

Five figures stand nearly life-size. Amalgamations of people real and imagined, the nude woman is modelled on the body of Hendricks's recurring model, dancer Adrienne Hawkins, and the youngest man in rose-tinted glasses is based on the artist's brother. Hendricks conveys a range of complexions by seamlessly transitioning between highly malleable, slow-drying oil paint and fast-drying acrylic to suggest different textures and surfaces. The composition is Hendricks's response to the opening seconds of Marvin Gaye's song 'What's Going On', where friendly greetings – 'Hey, man, what's happening?' – are exchanged. The artist appreciated the song's ambiguous gathering (a street corner or a house party?), like the blank background that his figures occupy..

Megan & Hunter Gray
X61858

Barkley Hendricks 1945–2017

Brilliantly Endowed (Self-Portrait) 1977
Oil paint and acrylic paint on canvas

Brilliantly Endowed is a self-portrait that demonstrates swagger – defiance and cool detachment – as an everyday act of revolutionary aesthetics. Hendricks subtly targets New York Times critic Hilton Kramer, who had concluded a 1977 review by calling the artist 'a brilliantly endowed painter who erred, perhaps, on the side of slickness'. The artist tackles head-on the double entendre and its potential stereotypical connotation of Black male anatomy, while also putting on show his confidence as a painter, upending 'slickness' to embrace it as an attribute. Hendricks captures a mood through gesture, including the strategic placement of his hand.

Rennie Collection, Vancouver
X61857

Alice Neel 1900–1984

Faith Ringgold 1977

Oil paint on canvas

X63130

Alice Neel, a white artist, was an ardent supporter of the equal representation of Black people – both through her own selection of sitters, such as this portrait of artist Faith Ringgold, and in her social actions. Neel was a close friend of Benny Andrews (seen in Room 3) and she joined the Black Emergency Cultural Coalition's picket line of the Whitney Museum's 1971 exhibition Contemporary Black Artists in America, protesting the museum's refusal to hire a Black curator or involve Black art historians' expertise.

Private collection

Raymond Saunders born 1934

Black is a Color

1967
Pamphlet
X68618

Emma Amos born 1938

Eva the Babysitter

1973
Oil paint on canvas

Courtesy of Emma Amos, the Amos family, and RYAN LEE Gallery.
X63041

Emma Amos was the sole woman artist in the Spiral group (seen in Room 1). The circumstances of socially-accepted domestic and child rearing responsibilities compounded the challenges women artists faced. This image honours a woman who helped enable Amos's artistic practice. The radiant child-carer smiles while the artist's toddler daughter is barely contained by the canvas.

Beauford Delaney 1901–1979

Portrait of James Baldwin?

1971
Oil paint on canvas

Clark Atlanta University Art Museum, Atlanta. Bequest of Baldwin Estate, 1995
X67968

Beauford Delaney knew writer James Baldwin from the 1940s in New York. They remained close after moving to France, both finding the country more amenable to life as gay Black men than America. In France, Delaney worked with abstraction and figurative painting, often using the yellows seen here. Baldwin owned this portrait. It hung in his house in St Paul de Vence in Provence, France in the 1970s. After his death, Baldwin's brother gave it the title *Portrait of James Baldwin*. However, unlike the several other portraits of Baldwin by Delaney, it does not resemble the writer. Some believe it depicts another individual, just as assured.

Bob Thompson 1937–1966

LeRoi Jones and his Family

1964
Oil paint on canvas

LeRoi Jones and his Family is an unfinished painting that Bob Thompson had begun in 1964. LeRoi Jones would change his name to Amiri Baraka the following year, after the assassination of Malcolm X, noting, 'the man who buried Malcolm X gave me the name'. The painting marks this transition for Baraka, the father of the Black Arts Movement. Thompson overpainted another composition (a figure can be made out on the right), to depict Baraka along with his first wife, poet Hettie Jones, and their two daughters Kellie and Lisa, embodied in the one small, elfin figure.

Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC. Gift of Joseph H. Hirshhorn,1966 X61546

ROOM 10
IMPROVISATION AND EXPERIMENTATION

‘It is necessary to be free enough to create beyond the boundaries of any aesthetic… To improvise is the only real and constantly dynamic revolutionary way to be.’
– Melvin Edwards

In the early 1970s, many of the artists included in Room 7 (East Coast Abstraction) moved away from the conventions of abstract painting and sculpture, and began experimenting with materials and forms. For some artists and critics, this commitment to improvisation and experimentation connected to Black Americans’ ambitions for political freedom.

Sam Gilliam took the canvas off the stretcher, knotting it at places along the top and hanging from these points so its folds would change from one showing to the next. Jack Whitten created a rake-like implement that he called a developer, and used it to move layers of acrylic paint across a canvas stretched out on the studio floor. Alvin Loving turned away from painting geometrical shapes, instead cutting up and collaging old paintings and adding strips of cloth, leather and fur, seeing his new works as an affirmative answer to the question ‘is there a black art?’

Artists looked back to a history of oppression while celebrating present- day community and looking forward to a brighter future. Evoking slavery and incarceration, Melvin Edwards used barbed wire and chains in a series of sculptures, but titled them in homage to friends. Joe Overstreet created gridded canvases strung up away from the wall, recalling, for him, a history of lynching, but defiant in their colourful optimism. Bold colours also characterised Alma Thomas's paintings, made in the wake of a NASA mission to Mars, and Frank Bowling's Map Paintings, where vast continents appear to dissolve into and emerge from oceans of liquid paint.

Clockwise from left to right

William T. Williams born 1942

Nu Nile

1973
Acrylic paint on canvas

Courtesy of Michael Rosenfeld Gallery LLC, New York
X61578

William T. Williams's earlier abstract work was defined by diagonally-oriented blocks of varied colours. In 1973 he created a series, including Nu Nile, where each painting had a single metallic colour. He achieved a subtle tonal range by varying the direction of the brush strokes from one segment to the next. Diamonds push against the rectangular frame of the canvas. This could be seen as Williams's way of suggesting resistance to constraints: those that impacted on Black Americans in everyday life, and those that affected Black abstract painters who were sometimes told their work did not adequately represent Black experience.

Joe Overstreet born 1933

We Came from There to Get Here

1970
Acrylic paint on canvas and rope

Courtesy of Kenkeleba Gallery
X62250

In the early 1960s, Joe Overstreet was making image-based painting clearly expressing the political goals of Black Power; he was closely associated with the Black Arts Movement, and painted backdrops for the jazz musician Sun Ra. He later turned to making more abstract work, here painting a colourful grid and drawing the outlines of figures giving gestures of empowerment. The canvas is strung up in a way that for the artist suggests basic tents as well as the spectre of lynchings: 'So I made this art you could hang any place. I felt like a nomad myself, with all the insensitivity in America.' The title, as well as the colours, indicate a movement from oppression toward freedom.

Alvin Loving 1935–2005

Untitled

1973
Mixed media

Private collection, Courtesy of the estate of Al Loving and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York
X61647

Alvin Loving studied painting at the University of Michigan and showed a group of his geometric abstract paintings at the Whitney Museum of American Art in 1969. In 1971 he grew to see his work as incompatible with the spirit of Civil Rights. Inspired by Romare Bearden's collages as well as African American quilts, he cut up older paintings and stitched the fragments together. He began to improvise with torn canvas fragments, adding other materials. 'The decision to move away from [a] rigid formalist view had to do with whether there is a black art and what it looks like', he later explained.

Melvin Edwards born 1937

Curtain (for William and Peter)

1969
Barbed wire and chain

Courtesy the artist and Alexander Gray Associates, New York/Stephen Friedman Gallery, London
X61639

Melvin Edwards first made this work in 1969 for the exhibition *5+1*, curated by Frank Bowling. He next showed it in 1970 at the Whitney Museum of American Art, in a small solo show with three other barbed wire sculptures. Edwards sometimes said he used barbed wire for formal reasons as it was a linear material with kinks. However he was also transforming the language of minimalist sculpture by using materials that allude to the history of slavery and incarceration. The work is titled after William T. Williams and Peter Bradley, two African American painters he shared a studio with at the time.

Sam Gilliam born 1933

Carousel Change

1970
Acrylic paint on canvas and leather string

Tate. Promised gift of Pamela J. Joyner and Alfred J. Giuffrida (Tate Americas Foundation)
X47202

Frank Bowling born 1936

Texas Louise

1971
Acrylic paint on canvas

Rennie Collection, Vancouver.
X61522

Texas Louise was one of six ‘Map Paintings’ Bowling included in his solo exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art in late 1971. He poured waves of acrylic over stencils of continents that were removed before more paint was applied, so ghostly outlines remain. Continents emerge from and disappear into colour; oceans and rivers are combined with pools and trails of liquid paint. While many Black Americans were pointing to Africa as a mother continent, Bowling’s maps do not privilege any particular place, and celebrate a more fluid and open idea of identity and belonging to the world..

Jack Whitten born 1939

Asa's Palace

1973
Acrylic paint on canvas

Private collection; courtesy Alexander Gray Associates, New York
X63354

Alma Thomas 1891–1978

Mars Dust

1972
Acrylic paint on canvas

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. Purchase, with funds from The Hament Corporation
X62301

Mars Dust was one of a series of paintings that Alma Thomas included in a solo exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art in 1972. At 80 years old, she became the first African American woman to have a solo show there. Half a decade earlier, Thomas painted Civil Rights campaigners at the March on Washington, but began working exclusively with abstraction in her mid-70s. Fascinated by the technological advances of the space age, she looked at daily reports of NASA's Mariner 9 mission to photograph Mars. Huge dust storms on the planet initially prevented the relay of images back to earth, but inspired her to make this work.

Works in centre of room

Martin Puryear born 1941

Self

1978
Stain on red cedar and mahogany wood

Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Nebraska. Museum purchase in memory of Elinor Ashton
X61650

Martin Puryear created Self in 1978 from horizontal and vertical sheets of mahogany and red cedar, stained black. The sculpture appears solid, but is hollow. 'It's meant to be a visual notion of the self, rather than any particular self', Puryear said, 'the self as a secret entity, as a secret, hidden place'. While many other Black artists of this time created self-portraits clearly expressing their position on the debates about race, Puryear insisted on a more personal notion of 'self'.

ROOM 11
BETYE SAAR

'I'm intrigued with combining the remnant of memories, fragments of relics and ordinary objects, with the components of technology. It's a way of delving into the past and reaching into the future simultaneously. The art itself becomes the bridge.' – Betye Saar

In 1970, Betye Saar reached a turning point in her art-making. She attended the National Conference of Artists in Chicago, an annual gathering of African American artists, with fellow artist David Hammons. As part of that trip, they visited the Field Museum's collections of African and Oceanic art, which awakened in Saar an interest in ancestral connectedness, ritual objects and their spiritual power. The artist said: 'Many of the pieces have secret information, just like the ritual pieces of other cultures. There is always a secret part … to me, those secrets radiate something that makes you uneasy.'

In October 1973, her first survey show *BETYE SAAR 1964–1973* was on view at the Fine Arts Gallery, California State University, L.A. Here we re-create one aspect of that solo exhibition.

Its catalogue detailed the memorable subject matter:
… Life and death … bones, birds, sirens … questions searching mystical ancient beliefs … for answers in stars, moon, sun … Fetishes charms – beware of the evil eye – spirits concretised – shrines invoking deities long forgotten … ceremonies remembered; black and white magic never totally erased.

Saar was awarded a National Endowment for the Arts grant in 1974, which allowed her to travel to Haiti to study local religious practices and belief systems. Later in 1977, she participated in FESTAC in Lagos, Nigeria, the largest ever pan-African cultural festival. *Spirit Catcher*, displayed in this room, comes out of her research on these travels.

Clockwise on wall from left to right

Betye Saar born 1926

Nine Mojo Secrets

1971
Wood, paper, acrylic paint, fabric, glass, feathers, yarn, metal, beads and plastic objects

Collection Friends, the Foundation of the California African American Museum, Los Angeles. CAAM Foundation Purchase, with funds provided by the City of Los Angeles, Cultural Affairs Department
X65637

Betye Saar born 1926

Eshu (The Trickster)
1971
Leather, wood, straw and feathers

Collection of Alvin and Jef yn Johnson, Los Angeles
X61844

Betye Saar born 1926

Giza

1972
Leather, fur, feathers, wood, metal, yarn, string and acrylic paint

Drs Harrold & Matti Dobbs Mavritte
X66490

Betye Saar born 1926

House of the Head

1971
Acrylic paint, leather, feathers, wood and bones

Collection of C. Ian White
X66491

Betye Saar born 1926

Ten Mojo Secrets
1972
Leather, fur, yarn, fabric, printed paper, photographs, acrylic paint, plastic skulls, poker chips and chutney tin lid

Private Collection, Los Angeles
X64289

Centre left

Betye Saar born 1926

Spirit Catcher
1977

Rattan, wood, leather, acrylic paint, mirror, bones, feathers, rope and shells

Kyle Leeser
X61596

Centre right

Betye Saar born 1926

Mti

1973
Wood, mirror, doll, bones, shells, candles, palm fronds, acrylic paint, printed papers, fabric and metal

Courtesy of the artist and Roberts & Tilton, Culver City, California
X61833

Above

Betye Saar born 1926

Rainbow Mojo

1972
Acrylic paint on leather

Paul-Michael diMeglio, New York
X64288

Betye Saar born 1926

Eye

1972
Acrylic paint on leather

Collection of Sheila Silber and David Limburger
X65634

ROOM 12
JUST ABOVE MIDTOWN

‘I was motivated to pursue a way to change conditions that were causing Black artists I interfaced with every day to say, ‘they won’t let us’. I got tired of hearing that, and I said, ‘Fuck them! Let’s start a gallery.’ – Linda Goode Bryant

On 18 November 1974, JAM first opened its doors. Just Above Midtown gallery was founded by Linda Goode Bryant, former Director of Education at the Studio Museum in Harlem. JAM did what the rest of the New York art world didn’t – recognise the work being made by African American contemporary artists and provide a platform for their art to be seen and sold. Such was the appetite for this new space that opening night attendees spilled out of the gallery, onto the Manhattan street.

JAM made a unique commitment to representing new work, like Dawoud Bey’s photography and Randy Williams’s sculptural reliefs. Though New York-based, JAM regularly featured the Los Angeles community of artists, as seen in Room 4. The gallery also championed avant-garde artists such as Senga Nengudi, who produced sculptures made from nylon stockings she could interact with or ‘activate’. Lorraine O’Grady orchestrated the ambitious and inclusive performance Art Is… at the Harlem African American Day Parade, supported by JAM in 1983.

JAM's artistic programme also included $5 lunches featuring a 30-minute talk with artists, critics or curators. When visitors first encountered David Hammons' works made with greasy bags, barbecue bones and Black hair, Goode Bryant staged an on-the-spot discussion so everyone could share their opinions about Hammons' art. JAM also showcased performance and music, providing a welcome to those unused to visiting exhibitions of modern art.

JAM closed its doors in 1986, having redefined itself with every project.

On walls cockwise from left to right

Senga Nengudi born 1943

Internal II

1977, 2015
Nylon tights

Lent by Tate Americas Foundation, purchased using endowment income 2016
L03811

In this work, Selma Nengudi uses nylon tights – once a standard western marker of femininity and professionalism – as an art material. Tights were increasingly rejected as an indispensable garment, particularly by Black women for whom the standard 'flesh' tone was a reminder of a white standard of beauty. Black American women appreciating their own skin tones and acknowledging African lineage challenged convention. Nengudi called to mind a history specific to the Black female body: 'I thought of Black wet-nurses suckling child after child … My works are abstracted reflections of used bodies – visual images that serve my aesthetic decisions as well as my ideas.'

David Hammons born 1943

Untitled

c.1980s
Pork ribs, gold leaf, bicycle inner tubes, wire and costume jewellery

Hudgins Family, New York
X63842

David Hammons born 1943

Nap Tapestry

1978
Hair and Perspex

Hudgins Family, New York
X63621

David Hammons born 1943

Bag Lady in Flight

1975
Reconstructed 1990 Shopping bags, grease and hair

The Eileen Harris Norton Collection, Santa Monica
X61533

Randy Williams born 1947

Color in Art

1976
Wooden window shutters, book and Perspex

Just Above Midtown Archive, New York
X66193

Senga Nengudi born 1943

R.S.V.P. XI

1977/2004
Nylon tights, rubber and sand

Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh. Nancy and Milton Washington Fund
X64197

David Hammons born 1943

Flight Fantasy Early

1980s
Records, reeds, string and hair

Hudgins Family, New York
X63841

For his exhibition at Just Above Midtown in 1975, Hammons created several works with grease-stained shopping bags and Black hair. He wanted to use materials connected to everyday life and the body, but also created subtle allusions to art history. Speaking about the work, Hammons connected the grease stains to Jackson Pollock's drip paintings, and also nodded to Marcel Duchamp's 1912 painting *Nude Descending a Staircase*. Hammons knew his kind of abstract art was (in 1975) unlikely to sell, and for some African American abstract artists, this work with greasy bags was seen as an affront.

Senga Nengudi born 1943

Untitled

1976
Nylon, tights, sand, and cardboard roll

The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of the Hudgins Family in memory of Brienin Bryant, 2013
X61535

Lorraine O'Grady born 1934

Art Is...

1983
40 photographs, c-print on paper

Courtesy of the artist and Alexander Gray Associates,
New York, NY
X61651

On a sunny day in September 1983, Lorraine O'Grady entered a parade float in the Harlem African American Day Parade. She displayed a large gold picture frame in the float, and hired 15 dancers to carry smaller gold frames, disembarking from the float to interact with the crowd. Some members of the crowd responded enthusiastically, 'Frame me, make me art!' and 'That's right. That's what art is; we're the art!' Other onlookers were less impressed, such as the glowering man. 40 images were selected by the artist from more than 400 taken over the course of the day, which convey the range of emotions and complexity that she always aimed to make visible.

Howardena Pindell born 1943

Untitled

1978
Mixed media on canvas

In addition to being an artist, Howardena Pindell began her career in the art world as the first African American Associate Curator of Prints and Illustrated Books at the Museum of Modern Art, New York. In works such as *Untitled* Pindell has cut up the canvas and sewn it back together in a grid, then embedded thousands of hole-punched dots in the surface along with sequins and paint to create an almost tactile work. Pindell saw this materiality as typical of a Black aesthetic. 'Afro-American artists are very often involved in the extended surface', she said. 'A very rich surface empowers [the works].'

Private collection, London
X61573

Works in centre of room from right to left

David Hammons born 1943

Untitled (Double body print collage)

1976
Ink, paper and body print on cardboard

Hudgins Family, New York
X68035

Dawoud Bey born 1953

A Boy in front of the Loew's 125th Street Movie Theater

1976, printed by 1979
Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago. Promised gift of Bruce and Vicki Adams
X65252

Dawoud Bey born 1953

A Man in a Bowler Hat

1976
printed by 1979 Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago. Restricted gift of Kevin and Jeanne Poorman

X65244

Dawoud Bey born 1953

Deas McNeil, the Barber

1976, printed by 1979
Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago. Restricted gift of Anita Blanchard M.D. and Martin Nesbitt
X65246

Dawoud Bey born 1953

A Woman at 7th Avenue & 138th Street

1976/7, printed by 1979
Photograph, gelatin silver print on paper

The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago. Restricted gift of Mary and James Bell
X65251

Works on Monitor on vitrine

Houston Conwill 1947–2016

Cakewalk 1983

Film by Ulysses Jenkins (born 1945)
Video, running time: 26 min 29 sec
Courtesy Ulysses Jenkins

JAM films 2017

Compiled by Linda Goode Bryant (born 1949)
Video, running time: 12 min 37 sec

In Vitrine clockwise to left from Monitors

Exhibition view, 'Houston Conwill, Notes of a Griot'

14 March–8 April 1978

Just Above Midtown Archive, New York
X68408

Exhibition view, 'Houston Conwill, Notes of a Griot'

14 March–8 April 1978

Just Above Midtown Archive, New York
X68409

Letter from Senga Nengudi to Linda Goode Bryant

11 April 1977

Just Above Midtown Archive, New York
X68404

Letter to artists from Linda Goode Bryant regarding the 'Outlaw Aesthetics' exhibition opening benefit

9 May 1980

Just Above Midtown Archive, New York
X68414

Dwight Carter

Portrait of Linda Goode Bryant
c.1974
Photograph
Just Above Midtown Archive, New York
X68432

Defnition of JAM,

Inagural exhibition promotion

19 November–23 December 1974

Just Above Midtown Archive, New York
X68384

Dwight Carter

Portrait of Linda Goode Bryant

c.1974 Photograph
Just Above Midtown Archive, New York
X68432

Exhibition invitation, 'Synthesis'

19 November–23 December 1974
Photographic negative

Just Above Midtown Archive, New York
X68383

Invitation, 'An Evening of Immortality' with David Hammons 1

August 1975

Just Above Midtown Archive, New York
X68394-5

David Hammons 'body printing' Suzette Wright

19 May 1975
5 photographs

Just Above Midtown Archive, New York
X6389-93

Invitation, 'Light Textures/

3 Photographers: Albert Fennar, Adger W. Cowans, and J. Pinderhughes'

3–12 February 1976

Just Above Midtown Archive, New York
X68396

David Hammons born 1943

Design for exhibition invitation, 'David Hammons: Dreadlock Series'

1976

Just Above Midtown Archive, New York
X68397

Photograph for exhibition invitation, 'David Hammons: Dreadlock Series'

1976

Just Above Midtown Archive, New York
X68398

Exhibition invitation 'David Hammons: Dreadlock Series'

April 1976

Just Above Midtown Archive, New York
X68399, X68400

Contact sheet, installation views, 'Senga Nengudi, R.S.V.P.'

March 1977

Just Above Midtown Archive, New York
X68403

Invitation, 'Howardena Pindell, Recent Work With Paper + Video Drawings'

11 October–5 November 1977

Just Above Midtown Archive, New York
X68405

Exhibition catalogue, 'Contextures', featuring cover artwork by Senga Nengudi

1978

Just Above Midtown Archive, New York
X68407

Open gallery artists's schedule, 'The Process As Art: In Situ'

19 September–14 October 1978

Just Above Midtown Archive, New York
X68411

Contact sheet, installation images, 'The Process As Art: In Situ'

19 September–14 October 1978

Just Above Midtown Archive, New York
X68413

Randy Williams born 1947

'Subway Song for 4 Painters' from 'Drawings for Paintings to be Performed' as part of 'The Process As Art: In Situ'

19 September–14 October 1978
Ink on paper

Just Above Midtown Archive, New York.
X68412

Contact sheet, exhibition invitation image, 'Outlaw Aesthetics'

May 1980

Just Above Midtown Archive, New York
X68415

Exhibition invitation, 'Dialogues'

1 November 1980

Just Above Midtown Archive, New York
X68418

Exhibition poster

'Hammons, Jones & Jones'

29 September–1 October 1983

Just Above Midtown Archive, New York
X68427

Exhibition catalogue, 'Houston Conwill, Cakewalk' 10–30

November 1983

Just Above Midtown Archive, New York
X68428

Exhibition poster, 'About TV'

13 October–2 November 1983

Just Above Midtown Archive, New York
X68425

'Blind Dates: Blondell Cummings, Senga Nengudi, Yasunao Tone' exhibition advertisement in the 'Village Voice'

23 November 1982

Just Above Midtown Archive, New York
X68421

Press release, 'Blind Dates: Blondell Cummings, Senga Nengudi, Yasunao Tone' 2

November 1982

Just Above Midtown Archive, New York
X68422

Leaflet, 'American Dreams' performance series

1983

Just Above Midtown Archive, New York
X68426

Poster, 'February at JAM'

1983

Just Above Midtown Archive, New York
X68429

JAM publication, 'Black Currant, Vol. 2, No. 2'

1983

Just Above Midtown Archive, New York
X68423

JAM publication, 'Be Culture'

1984 –1985

Just Above Midtown Archive, New York
X68430

JUST ABOVE MIDTOWN GALLERY

The material here is a selection of invitation cards, installation photographs, posters, catalogues, publications and performance documentation published by the Just Above Midtown gallery, spanning its history from 1974–1986. Several pieces relate to works of art by artists displayed around the walls of this room. The presentation begins on the left with Linda Goode Bryant's de nition of JAM and a series of photographs of Bryant, and continues around the table.

Of the many projects that took place at JAM, the following are highlighted:

Synthesis

An Evening of Immortality with David Hammons

Light Textures / 3 Photographers: Albert Fennar, Adger W. Cowans and J. Pinderhughes

David Hammons: Dreadlock Series Senga Nengudi, RSVP

Howardena Pindell, Recent Work with Paper + Video

Drawings

Contextures

The Process as Art: In Situ

Outlaw Aesthetics

Dialogues

Hammons, Jones + Jones

About TV

Houston Conwill, Cakewalk

Blind Dates: Blondell Cummings, Senga Nengudi, Yasunao Tone

American Dreams

JAM publications

Works outside the exhibition

monitors from left to right (labels)

Martin Luther King, Jr. 1929–1968

Martin Luther King, Jr. was a Baptist minister and the leading voice of the American Civil Rights Movement. King led many of the movement's most famous and successful protests, seeking legal equality for African-Americans through nonviolent civil disobedience. This nonviolent approach often stood in stark contrast to the brutal, violent responses of local police forces. King's role in protests such as the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom and the 1965 Selma to Montgomery March directly influenced the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the 1965 Voting Rights Act. He received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964. King was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee on April 4, 1968.

Malcolm X 1925–1965

Malcolm X was a powerful orator who set out a vision for Black pride and separatism. He diverged from the position taken by King, advocating that Black Americans should use 'any means necessary' to combat racism. Born Malcolm Little, in 1950 he replaced his surname with X to signal his African name was unknown and his birth surname was a legacy of slavery. He converted to Islam while in prison and became one of the leading figures in the Nation of Islam, a movement that combined elements of Islam with Black nationalism. Later he became disillusioned with the Nation of Islam, and in 1964 founded the Organisation of Afro-American Unity. X travelled extensively that year and made a pilgrimage to Mecca, changing his views on racial separation believing that different races could unite under Sunni Islam. In February 1965, he was assassinated while making a speech in Manhattan, New York.

James Baldwin 1924–1987

James Baldwin was a novelist, playwright and essayist whose writing often drew on his personal experiences as an African American, gay man. His most famous works were published at the height of the Civil Rights Movement. They offered a unique perspective on racial inequality in the United States, as he had moved to France in the 1940s in a bid to escape American racism. Baldwin played an active role in the movement in the 1960s, carrying out lecture tours and speaking at protests and prominent events. Despite his visibility Baldwin rejected the label of 'spokesperson' claiming his mission was merely to 'bear witness to the truth'. Baldwin died in St.Paul de Vence, France in 1987.

Stokely Carmichael 1941–1998

Stokely Carmichael is known for his rallying cry of ‘Black Power’. He became an activist while studying at university in Washington D.C. In 1964 he joined the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), playing an active role in challenging segregation in the southern United States, and becoming chairman in 1966. Carmichael grew disillusioned with civil rights policies of nonviolence after experiencing brutality in the face of peaceful protest. In 1966, he declared, ''We been saying 'Freedom' for six years… What we are going to start saying now is 'Black Power!'” Many leaders of the Civil Rights Movement spoke out against the phrase and cries of ‘reverse racism’ were made in the press. The SNCC severed all ties with Carmichael. Soon after he became involved with the Black Panther Party, but resigned when the party decided to seek support among whites. After moving to Guinea in 1969, Carmichael developed a Pan-African vision, changing his name to Kwame Ture. Until he died in 1998 he answered the phone by announcing, ‘Ready for the revolution!’.

Angela Davis Born 1944

Angela Davis is an academic, writer and activist known for her ongoing work to combat oppression in the USA and beyond. She grew up in the notorious 'Dynamite Hill' area of Birmingham, Alabama, so called after the Klu Klux Klan campaign to drive Black families out of the area by bombing their homes. In 1967, while completing her graduate studies, she joined the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and later became a member of the Black Panther Party and a Black branch of the Communist Party. Davis came to national attention in 1969 after she was dismissed from her teaching position at the University of California, Los Angeles due to her Communist links. Davis's commitment to prisoners' rights dates back to her involvement in the 1970 campaign to free the 'Soledad Brothers', which led to her own arrest and imprisonment. An international 'Free Angela Davis' campaign was organised in response to her incarceration and she was acquitted in 1972.

Work to the top right of monitors

Tom Lloyd 1929–1996

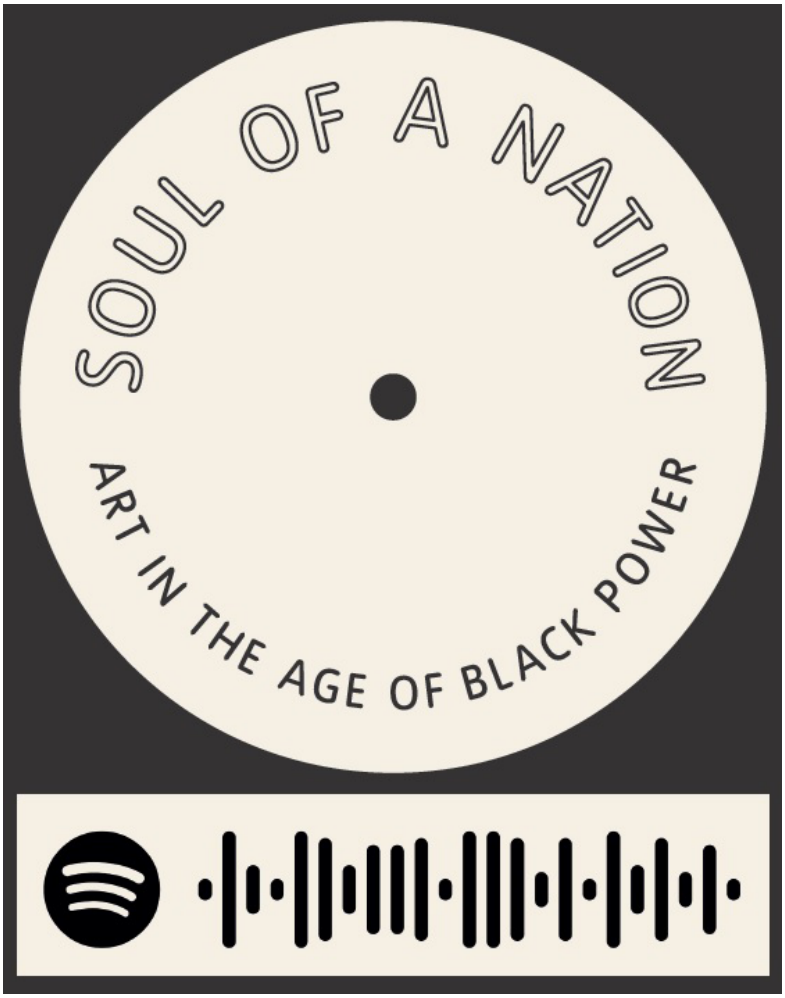
Narokan 1965

Aluminium, light bulbs and plastic laminate Tom Lloyd began to work with light bulbs in the mid-1960s, using materials that interested a number of other New York sculptors such as Dan Flavin. Lloyd was chosen for the inaugural solo exhibition at the Studio Museum in Harlem in 1968. Unlike the other artists in this room, he was interested in a separate Black art, and prior to the exhibition, expressed his hope that his work would speak to Black audiences in the area. In 1971 Lloyd set up *The Store Front Gallery*, a Black arts centre in the New York borough of Queens.

The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Darwin K. Davidson
X61898

FIND OUT MORE

Listen to extracts from the curators' playlist, featuring music from the period of the show, including Aretha Franklin, John Coltrane and Gil Scott-Heron, To hear the curators' playlist in full, scan the code using Search in your Spotify app.
Please use headphones in the gallery.



EVENTS

CURATOR'S TOUR WITH PRIYESH MISTRY
31 July, 18.30–20.30
£20, concessions available

LISTENING SESSIONS
Mondays 11 September, 25
September, 9 October
£20, concessions available
Series exploring the links between American music of the 1960s and 70s and the art and artists featured in the exhibition

WORK IT OUT: REACTIONS TO SOUL OF A NATION
23 September, 12.00–18.00
£25, concessions available

Workshop exploring how the exhibition relates to contemporary social issues

TALK: CLAUDIA RANKINE
12 October, 18.30–20.30
£9, concessions available

Keynote talk by award-winning American writer Claudia Rankine.

BLACK ART, BLACK POWER: RESPONSES TO SOUL OF A NATION
13 October, 10.30–18.00
£24, concessions available

Landmark conference featuring artists, curators and scholars from the UK and USA

CREDITS

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Curated by Mark Godfrey, Senior Curator, International Art, Tate Modern and Zoe Whitley, Curator, International Art, Tate Modern; with Priyesh Mistry, Assistant Curator, Tate Modern

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Photography is not allowed in the exhibition