



African American Art Since 1950: Perspectives from the David C. Driskell Center

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Welcome to the Figge Art Museum's Teacher Resource Guide

These cards describe selected works from the exhibition. Use them to engage with the artwork, find facts about the artists, and facilitate learning. Resources are provided on each card for additional research.

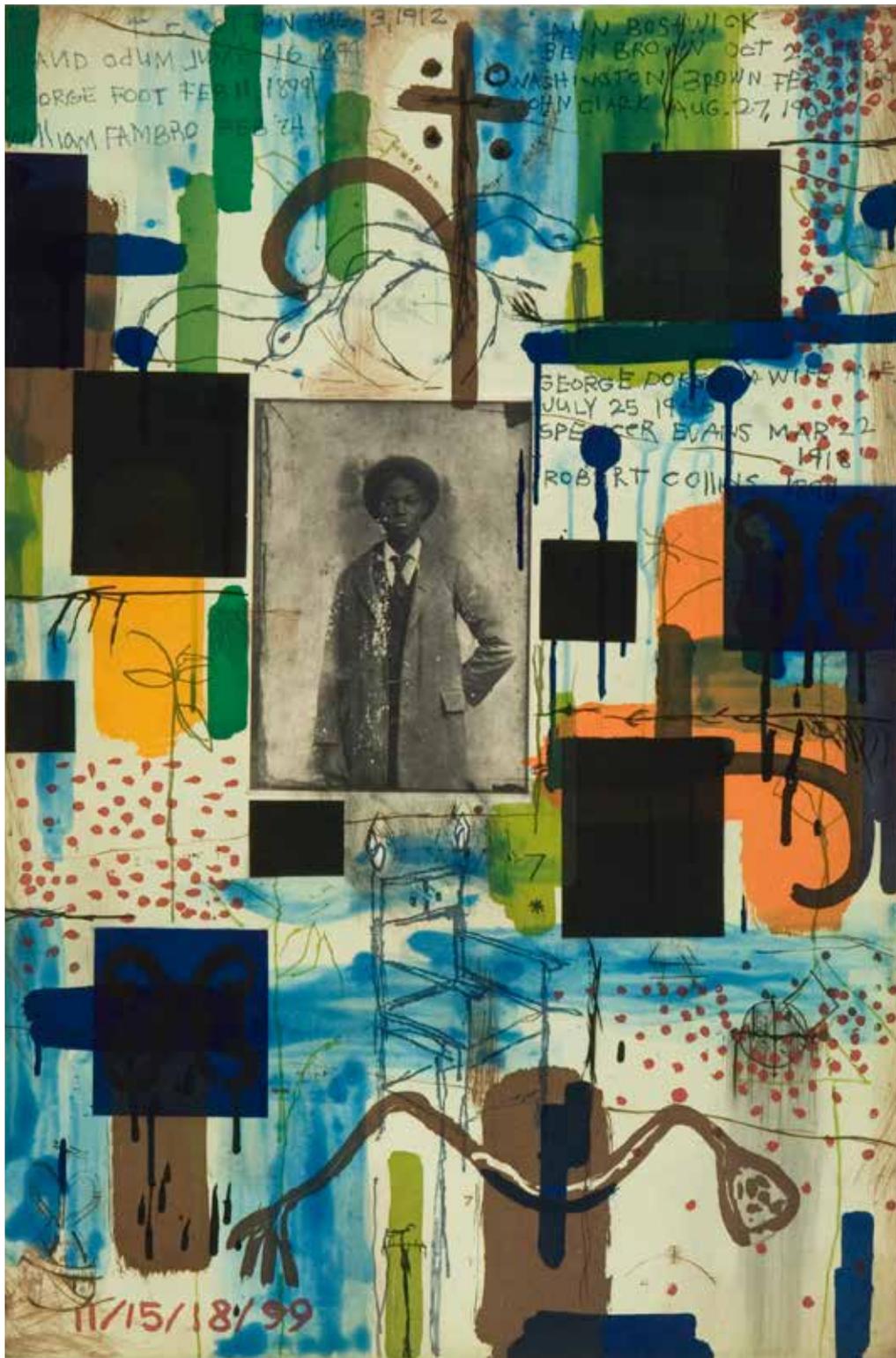
About the Exhibition

In 1976, David C. Driskell curated the groundbreaking exhibition, *Two Centuries of Black American Art: 1750-1950*. The exhibition explored the depth and breadth of African American art, often marginalized by historical texts. It had massive influence on both the artists and the general public.

The David C. Driskell Center has organized the exhibition, *African American Art Since 1950, Perspectives from the David C. Driskell Center*, as a response to *Two Centuries*. The exhibition explores the rising prominence and the complexity of African American art from the last 60 years. Many leading African American artists are featured in this exhibition including: Romare Bearden, Faith Ringgold, Jacob Lawrence, Betye Saar, Radcliffe Bailey, Kara Walker and Carrie Mae Weems. This exhibition gives a picture of the diversity of recent African American art, with its many approaches and media represented. The works explore various themes including: political activism, race, stereotypes, cultural and social identity, music, abstraction, among others.

Featured Artists

Radcliffe Bailey
Romare Bearden
Sheila Pree Bright
Kevin Cole
David C. Driskell
Vanessa German
Robin Holder
Margo Humphrey
Jacob Lawrence
Kerry James Marshall
Faith Ringgold
Lorna Simpson
Hank Willis Thomas
Carrie Mae Weems



Radcliffe Bailey
Until I Die/Georgia Trees and the Upper Room, 1997
Color aquatint with photogravure and chin collé
© 2011 Radcliffe Bailey
Gift from the Jean and Robert E. Steele Collection

Remembering the Past



Radcliffe Bailey (b. 1968) is a celebrated Atlanta-based artist. He is known for his narrative mixed media pieces that include photographs, found objects, and maps. Many of his works include photographs that were given to him by his grandmother. His work explores his own life as well as the African American experience.

Take a closer look

Until I Die/Georgia Trees and the Upper Room addresses Georgia lynching victims. In this piece, Bailey names Spencer Evans and William Fabro as well as the dates of their deaths. The photograph of the young man in this artwork serves as a reminder of the many young people who suffered the same fate.

In his own words

I believe that by making things that are very personal they become universal. I am first and foremost an artist, a person of this world, and an artist of African descent who grew up in the South and has chosen to continue to live and work in the South. My art is about history and the mystery of history.

Did you know?

Radcliffe Bailey's grandmother gave him a family album with around 400 tintypes, which created a turning point in his art. Bailey "found that placing a photograph at the center of a wall piece provided an anchor for constellations of interconnected imagery fanning out around it, as well as a way in for viewers, particularly African Americans who 'don't necessarily go to museums,' he said, and 'don't see themselves in those objects'."

A step beyond

Biography • <http://www.bridgettemayergallery.com/artists/radcliffe-bailey/biography>

Artist Page • <http://www.jackshainman.com/artists/radcliffe-bailey>

TedX Video • <http://tedxtalks.ted.com/video/TEDxAtlanta-Radcliffe-Bailey-So>

Until I Die series • <http://paulsonbottpress.com/wp-content/uploads/bailey-press-1997.pdf>

Article • http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/03/arts/design/high-museum-in-atlanta-shows-radcliffe-baileys-art.html?pagewanted=all&_r=1&



Romare Bearden

Morning, 1975

Collage on paper

© Romare Bearden/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY

Gift of David C. Driskell

Southern Comfort



Romare Bearden (1911–1988) is one of the most renowned artists of the twentieth century. Bearden was part of the Great Migration, moving his family from North Carolina to New York in 1914. His work evolved throughout his career, but he is most well known for the photomontages and collages that addressed themes including every day life of African American families and jazz and blues music.

Take a closer look

Morning is an example in which Bearden portrays one of his favorite subjects, the daily life of African American families. The rocking chair, watermelon, and potbelly stove are all symbols of southern black domestic life. This piece is a warm representation of Romare Bearden's southern roots executed masterfully in his signature medium, collage. Bearden liked to create works that were both personal to his life experience and universal so that anyone could relate to it.

Did you know?

Bearden was the first African American artist to have a major retrospective at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC. *The Art of Romare Bearden* was on view from September 14, 2003 to January 4, 2004.

A step beyond

Romare Bearden Foundation • <http://www.beardenfoundation.org/index2.shtml>

Artist Page • <http://www.dcmooregallery.com/artists/romare-bearden>

NPR Broadcast • <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=1428038>

Artist Page • <https://www.nga.gov/exhibitions/beardeninfo.shtm>

Morning • http://www.driskellcenter.umd.edu/narratives/exhibition/sec3/bear_r_03.htm

NGA Children's Guide • <http://www.nga.gov/kids/zone/beardencg.pdf>

Interactive and Teacher Guide • <http://www.metmuseum.org/metmedia/kids-zone/art-trek/romare-bearden-lets-walk-the-block>



Sheila Pree Bright
Untitled 34 from the series *Suburbia*, 2006
Chromogenic, 2/3
© 2011 Sheila Pree Bright
Gift of the artist

My House is Your House



Sheila Pree Bright (b. 1967), is an Atlanta-based fine art photographer. Bright's work explores the African American experience in the US today, as well as identity, the perception of beauty, and suburban and urban life.

Take a closer look

Untitled 34 is part of a series of 40 photographs titled *Suburbia*. Bright's goal was to present a realistic portrayal of middle class African American life. By photographing mostly interiors of affluent African American homes in the Atlanta suburbs, Bright weaves a narrative of identities without using the people themselves. Instead she forms these portraits with everyday objects as well as elements of interior design. By keeping the specifics of the person out of the frame or disguising their face with a magazine, the photographs stay within a universal realm and act as symbols of domesticity that undermine the media-driven stereotypes of African American home life.

Did you know?

Bright received a lot of backlash for her representation of suburbia. Although she ended up winning the Santa Fe Prize in 2006, judges gave her a hard time for not depicting the African American homes "black" enough. Another consultant said that he didn't see the point; her photographs looked just like his house, to which Bright responded, "That's the point! To show our commonality...if we could get past the stereotypes, we could see that."

Sheila Pree Bright was included in the exhibition *Posing Beauty in African American Culture*, which was hosted at the Figge Art Museum from September 8 to November 4, 2012.

A step beyond

Biography • http://2010biennial.fotofest.org/exhibitions/roadtonowhere/sheila_pree_bright.aspx

Artist Website • <http://www.sheilapreebright.com>

Article • <http://www.ajc.com/news/entertainment/sheila-pree-brights-look-at-suburbia-in-an-unlikel/ndBtF>

Article • http://www.artpapers.org/feature_articles/feature1_2007_0708.htm

Article • <http://mashable.com/2013/12/05/plastic-bodies-photo-series>



Kevin Cole
Handwriting on the Wall, 1996
Wood and paint
© 2011 Kevin Cole
Gift of Kevin Cole

Ties to the Past



Kevin Cole (b. 1960) is an influential art educator and mixed media artist. He is known for his use of neckties as a symbol of power, as well as for emphasizing the relationship of color and music in his work. He often integrates patterns and textures of traditional African textiles.

Take a closer look

As seen in *Handwriting on the Wall*, neckties are an important theme in Kevin Cole's work. Here he shows them intertwined, knotted like a pretzel. The ties imply motion, though, as they seem to undulate out from the center. Like a snake charmer, Cole trains his neckties to music. The colors and patterns evoke a feeling of Jazz, together yet separate like an improvisation.

In his own words

When I turned eighteen years old, my grandfather stressed the importance of voting by taking me to a tree where he was told that African-Americans were lynched by their neckties on their way to vote. The experience left a profound impression in my mind.

Did you know?

Kevin Cole was chosen to create the Coca-Cola Centennial Olympic Mural for the 1996 Olympic Games. The mural was over 800 square feet and took two years to create.

A step beyond

Biography • <http://artistkcole.com>

Biography • <http://www.thehistorymakers.com/biography/kevin-cole-41>

Article • <http://aeqai.com/main/2013/01/straight-from-the-soul>

Kevin Cole and Sam Gilliam • <http://www.accessatlanta.com/news/entertainment/calendar/artists-on-view-kevin-cole-and-sam-gilliam/nQ8qk>



David C. Driskell
Jazz Singer (Lady of Leisure, Fox), 1974
Oil and collage on canvas
© 2011 David C. Driskell
Loan from David C. Driskell

Mixing Business with Pleasure



David C. Driskell (b.1931) is a practicing artist, educator, curator, art administrator and art consultant. He is one of the world's leading authorities on the subject of African American art.

Take a closer look

Jazz Singer is one of many works created during the 1970s in which Driskell celebrates the beauty and strength of the black female. Typical of the series, this work features a strong woman in ornate clothing created in a collage/patchwork method. Driskell uses a variety of media to create this piece including woodblock prints, photographs, and paper with oil. He splits the woman's face in two, implying one part business and one part pleasure.

In his own words

I think it came about through the African infusion. And not only was I looking at African masks and statuary and things of that nature, but I began traveling to Africa. Figure became important in my work again. From the late '60s into the '70s I began doing works that were either influenced by African masks or showed a relationship to them.

Did you know?

David C. Driskell is a consultant curator for Oprah Winfrey and Bill Cosby, helping the Cosbys acquire over 300 works of art. Driskell and Camille Cosby wrote the book, *The Other Side of Color: African American Art in the Collection of Camille O. and William H. Cosby Jr.*, which presents almost one hundred works in the Cosby collection.

A step beyond

Biography • <http://www.driskellcenter.umd.edu/about/dcd.php>

Biography • <http://www.dcmooregallery.com/artists/david-driskell>

Artist Page • <http://www.thehistorymakers.com/biography/david-driskell-40>

Article • <http://www.neh.gov/about/awards/national-humanities-medals/david-c-driskell>

Artist Lecture (Video) • <http://vimeo.com/23654458>

Oral History Interview • <http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oral-history-interview-david-driskell-15943>



Vanessa German

Tar Baby Jane & Doowop: Everything Useful for Your Modern Household, 2010

Mixed-media

© 2011 Vanessa L. German

Purchased with funds from the C. Sylvia and Eddie Brown Arts Acquisition Fund

Hitting the Nail on the Head



Vanessa German (b. 1976) is a multidisciplinary artist based in Pittsburgh. She believes that her art is seamless between mediums, whether it is sculpture, poetry, photography, or acting. German is best known for her signature spoken-word operas that deal with the transcendent and tireless power of the human spirit.

Take a closer look

Tar Baby Jane Doowop is part of a series of 15 assemblages. It is reminiscent of the tribal power figures of the Lower Congo, known as Nkondi figures. These figures were believed to bring help or good health to a person who drove nails into them. German calls these works “tar babies” for two reasons. One reason is that the dolls are covered in tar before being decorated with cockle shells, nails, bottles, and beads. The other reason is that the term, tar baby, is a derogatory term that was applied to African Americans in the mid 20th century. German sews clothing and utilizes useful, domestic items to adorn her figures.

In her own words

I am very interested in old things, specifically old domestic objects—the items my grandmothers and their mothers would have used to make a life and a world for the people around them, from tools to utensils, to the advertising ware of these things. I am imagining that there are stories in these items, that these stories remain present, in the skin of the objects. I think, Who used this item and why? What were they thinking and feeling while using it?

Did you know?

Doo-wop is a type of rhythm and blues music that originated in African American communities in urban areas across the U.S. It is distinguished by its group vocal harmony, little or no instrumentation, and simplicity in words and music.

A step beyond

Biography • <http://www.dreamsofhope.org/artist/vanessa-german>

Biography • <http://www.avam.org/our-visionaries/vanessa-german.shtml>

Artist Website • <http://www.avam.org/our-visionaries/vanessa-german.shtml>

Lecture (Video) • <http://creativemornings.com/talks/vanessa-german/1>

Tar Baby Jane • <http://www.sonjasweterlitsch.com/blog/2010/7/6/tar-baby-jane-and-doo-wop.html>



Robin Holder
My President, 2009
Hand-printed and collage stencils
© 2011 Robin Holder

Yes, She Did



Robin Holder (b. 1952), a master printmaker, brings her diverse perspective to the artwork. She is the daughter of an African American Christian father and a Russian American Jewish mother. She has many works that deal with her multiple identifications including a series titled, *What's Black and White and Red All Over?*

Take a closer look

Holder uses storytelling as a device in her artwork, weaving from personal to historical subject matters. The celebration associated with Barack Obama's 2008 presidential victory is the subject of *My President*. The figure in the foreground symbolizes Holder's personal victory and the image of the crowd emphasizes the public's role in electing the president. The print captures the celebratory moment of election, with people dancing and throwing up their arms in excitement. *My President* seems to be a colorful response to the saying, "not my president" that people under various presidential administrations have used to express their distaste and disapproval.

Did you know?

On November 4, 2008, Barack Obama won the election, becoming the first African American President of the United States. He gained almost 53% of the popular vote, the highest in 20 years. He received the most votes of any president in history, totaling over 69 million votes. President Obama also had the highest turnout, with 63% of able voters out in the polls.

A step beyond

Biography • <http://centralbookingnyc.com/galleries/gallery-1-artist-books-prints/artists-work/robin-holder>

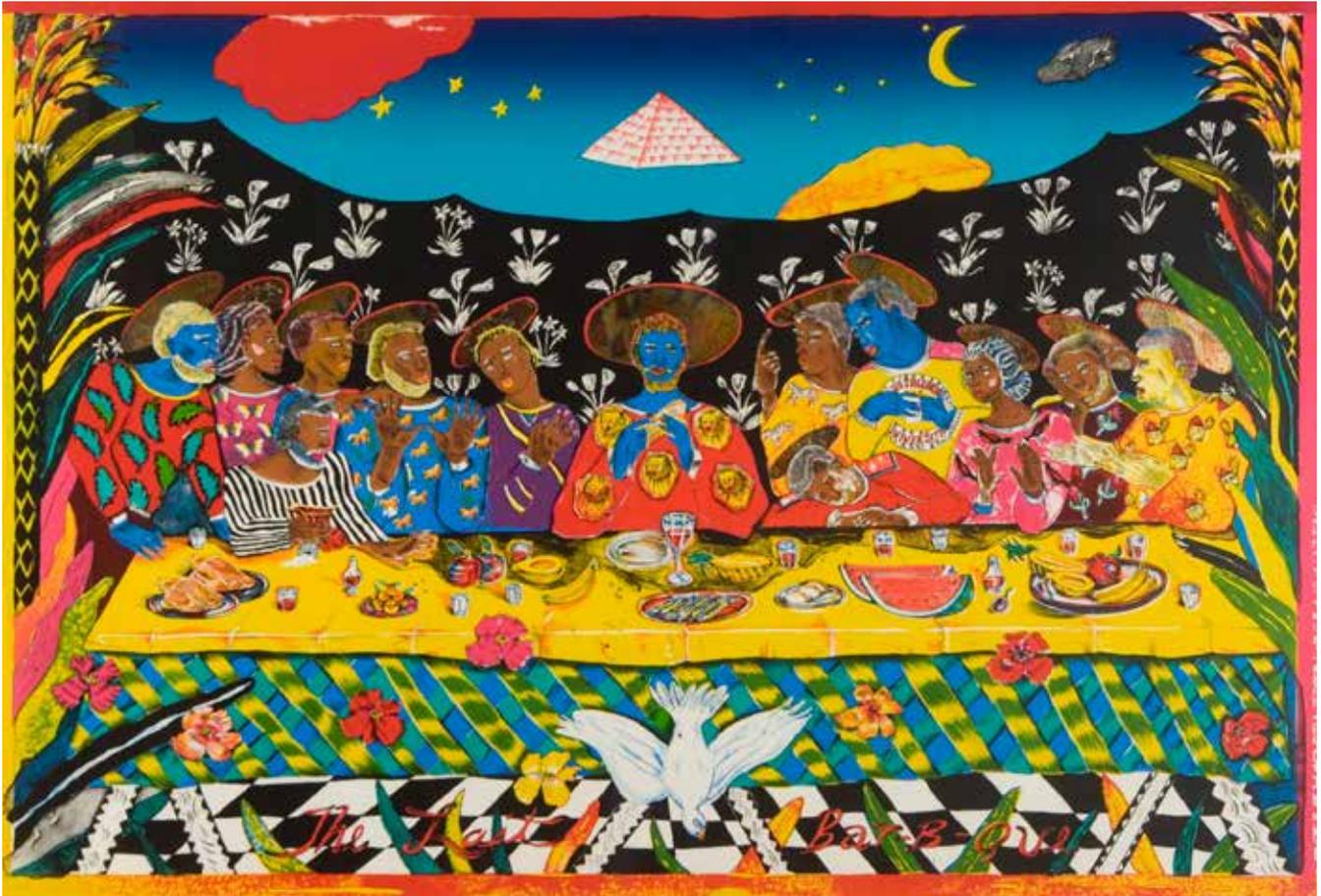
Artist Page • <http://fineartamerica.com/profiles/robin-holder.html>

Driskell Retrospective • <http://www.driskellcenter.umd.edu/robin-holder/index.php>

Interview • <http://thenewtimesholler.com/ARCHIVE/robin.html>

Robin Holder on Life and Art (Video) • https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YcSMbn88I_0

Robin Holder (Video) • <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AApkgFjPRh8>



Margo Humphrey
The Last Bar-B-Que, 1989

Lithograph

© 2011 Margo Humphrey

Permanent loan from the David C. Driskell Collection

My Body, My Blood, My People



Margo Humphrey (b. 1942), known for her bold and expressive color use, is one of the earliest and most celebrated African American female artists practicing in the medium of lithography.

Take a closer look

The Last Bar-B-Que, one of her most best-known prints, dissected various artistic representations of the last supper including Pietro Lorenzetti (ca. 1320), Leonardo da Vinci (1494-1498), and Emil Nolde (1909). Humphrey adds a distinctly African American perspective to the final meal with the addition of chicken, bananas, watermelons, and mangoes, which elevates and empowers the stereotypes. She also infuses the somber occasion with color, joy and humor, by painting the cast of disciples in a rainbow of skin tones, including brown, blue, and yellow.

In her own words

The Last Bar-B-Que is a serious piece: a rewriting of history through the eyes of my ancestry, a portrayal of a savior who looks like my people.

Did you know?

The last supper has been a major subject in art, dating back to the 2nd century fresco in the Roman Catacombs, the Catacomb of Domitilla. It has been painted by many Italian Renaissance artists, most notably Leonardo da Vinci. *The Last Supper* has also been painted by expressionist, Emil Nolde and surrealist, Salvador Dali.

A step beyond

About *The Last Bar-B-Que* • http://www.driskellcenter.umd.edu/narratives/exhibition/sec5/hump_m_01.htm

About *The Last Bar-B-Que* • <http://broadstrokes.org/2011/07/08/tamarind-artist-spotlight-margo-humphrey%E2%80%99s-the-last-bar-b-que>

Biography • <http://www.art.umd.edu/faculty/mhumphrey>

Artist Page • <http://thatsinkedup.blogspot.com/2012/11/welcome-to-margos-world-prints-of-margo.html>



Jacob Lawrence

The Travelers, 1961

Egg tempera on Masonite

© 2011 The Jacob and Gwendolyn Lawrence Foundation,
Seattle/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York, NY

Permanent loan from the David C. Driskell Collection

Art That Moves



Jacob Lawrence (1917–2000) is a highly revered, African American artist whose century-long career has inspired generations of black artists. This work reflects on the theme of movement, frequently used by Lawrence, to describe the hardships and experiences of the African American people.

Take a closer look

The Travelers depicts a family, surrounded by luggage, ready to depart on a journey. The image of an African American family using public transportation recalls the political issues surrounding segregation that were current in the 1960s. Lawrence intentionally shows these travelers in the wake of the Montgomery Bus Boycott of 1955 and the Freedom Riders in 1961 to imply the hardship that African Americans faced in order to do something as simple as travel.

In his own words

Most of my work depicts events from the many Harlems which exist throughout the United States. This is my genre... the happiness, tragedies, and the sorrows of mankind as realized in the teeming black ghetto.

Did you know?

Jacob Lawrence is best known for his work on the *Migration Series*, a sequence of 60 paintings that he completed at the young age of 24. He was the first African American to have his work collected by the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

Selections from *The Migration Series* were on view at the Figge Art Museum from September 29 to October 28, 2007.

A step beyond

Interactive • <http://www.phillipscollection.org/sites/default/files/interactive/jacob-lawrence-over-the-line/index.html>

Artist page • http://www.driskellcenter.umd.edu/narratives/exhibition/sec4/lawr_j_03.htm

Biography • <http://www.biography.com/#!/people/jacob-lawrence-9375562#synopsis>

Biography • <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/aaworld/arts/lawrence.html>

Artist Page • <http://www.dcmooregallery.com/artists/jacob-lawrence>

Migration Series • <http://www.phillipscollection.org/collection/migration-series>

Artist Website • <http://www.jacobandgwenlawrence.org/artandlife01.html>



Kerry James Marshall
 May 15, 2001 R.I., 2003
 Four-color screen print on paper, 8/10
 © 2011 Kerry James Marshall
 Gift of Scott Habes

Money Talks



Kerry James Marshall (b. 1955) is well known for his range of art historical references in his figurative paintings. He uses extremely dark skin tones to suggest a dichotomy of beauty and the negativity associated with darkness and blackness.

Take a closer look

May 15, 2001 R.I. is a silkscreen print that resembles a newspaper advertisement. Instead of grocery or department store items there are artists, artworks, and sale prices taken from an actual Sotheby's art auction on May 15, 2001. Marshall's composition shows us that the one black artist on the list, Jean-Michel Basquiat, brings in a far lesser value than those of the white artists. Marshall is commenting on the great price differences even though each artist is an art historical giant. In this way, Marshall critiques the art world for financial inequality, implying its existence in other areas of life. In this image, Marshall further critiques the high prices of the art and who can afford them.

In his own words

Major museums in the U.S. have generally not been directed by a person who is not white. And with the prices people are paying for art today, it's very far outside the realm of consideration for most black people. It's not part of the cultural foundation they came out of and operate in.

Did you know?

Jean-Michel Basquiat started as a street artist, spraying graffiti on the streets of New York with poetry, sayings, and critiques all signed with the name, SAMO.

A step beyond

Biography (Video) • <http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/kerry-james-marshall>

Biography • <http://www.idvl.org/thehistorymakers/bio78.html>

Artist Page • <http://www.jackshainman.com/artists/kerryjames-marshall>

Artist Page • <http://www.walkerart.org/collections/artists/kerry-james-marshall>

Art in America Interview • <http://www.artinamericamagazine.com/news-features/interviews/storytelling-an-interview-with-kerry-james-marshall>



Faith Ringgold

You Put the Devil in Me, 2004

Serigraph, 69/100

© 2011 Faith Ringgold

Gift from the Jean and Robert E. Steele Collection

Sing Out!



Faith Ringgold (b. 1930) often uses strong female characters to tell stories in her work. Here the woman is a singer in a band. Ringgold uses text frequently in her artwork. In, *You Put the Devil in Me*, she has surrounded the image with words to a song she wrote.

Take a closer look

This print explores jazz music and its role in the African American community. The blue outlines evoke a dimly lit nightclub. The curved lines in the background imply movement. Perhaps Ringgold is suggesting the devil encourages a night life with dancing and jazz music. “My Angel Put the Devil in Me” is a 1930s American song which Ringgold was most likely referencing in this artwork.

Did you know?

Faith Ringgold’s first children’s book, *Tar Beach*, titled and adapted from her story quilt, was a Caldecott Honor Book and winner of the Coretta Scott King Award for illustration in 1991.

Faith Ringgold spoke at the Figge Art Museum in conjunction with the exhibition *Accidentally on Purpose: Improvisation in African Textiles and African-American Quilts* (November 18, 2006 to February 11, 2007). She also had a solo exhibition, *Faith Ringgold: A Twenty-Five Year Survey*, at the Davenport Museum of Art from September 15 to November 8, 1991.

A step beyond

DVD • Getting to Know the World’s Greatest Artists: Faith Ringgold

DVD • Craft in America: Threads

Artist Website • <http://www.faithringgold.com/ringgold/bio.htm>

Biography • <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/aaworld/arts/ringgold.html>

Video • <http://www.makers.com/faith-ringgold>

Artist Page • <http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/contributor/faith-ringgold>

Artist Page • <http://www.guggenheim.org/new-york/collections/collection-online/artists/bios/791>

Foundation • <http://www.anyonecanflyfoundation.org>



Lorna Simpson

III, 1994

Wood, ceramic, and felt

© 2011 Lorna Simpson

Gift of Terry Gips. Permanent loan from the collection of
The Art Gallery at the University of Maryland, College Park

Lucky Break



Lorna Simpson (b. 1960) is mostly known for her large-scale photography and text works, but she also makes drawings, sculptures, and mixed-media artworks. In them, Simpson explores notions of identity and African American culture with a language that is both deliberate and poetic.

Take a closer look

III is a sculpture comprised of a wooden box which contains three wishbones of various colors protected by a felt interior. The wishbones are labeled wish #1, #2, and #3, which encourages the viewer to think of their wishes while simultaneously referencing the mythical three wishes granted by a genie. The various materials imply different levels of fragility. The colors of the wishbones imply race. Simpson is asking the question: Are we the same beneath our skin or does race go down to the bone? Simpson uses a minimal gesture in this sculpture to hint at her wish, racial equality.

Did you know?

The tradition of breaking a wishbone dates back 2,400 years to the Etruscan era, where chickens were thought to be prophetic. Passed through time to different cultures, when the Pilgrims came to the U.S. they changed the tradition to turkeys because chickens weren't available. Today, many Americans celebrate this tradition at Thanksgiving.

A step beyond

Biography • <http://www.learner.org/catalog/extras/wabios/simpson.html>

Artist Website • <http://lsimpsonstudio.com/biography.html>

About *III* • http://www.iub.edu/~iuam/online_modules/aaa/artist.php?artist=9

Artist Page • http://www.brooklynmuseum.org/exhibitions/lorna_simpson

Artist Page • <http://www.salon94.com/artists/detail/lorna-simpson>

Interview • <http://bombmagazine.org/article/2091/lorna-simpson>

TO BE SOLD on board the
Ship *Bance-Island*, on tuesday the 6th
of *May* next, at *Ashley-Ferry*; a choice
cargo of about 250 fine healthy

NEGROES,



just arrived from the
Windward & Rice Coast.
—The utmost care has
already been taken, and



shall be continued, to keep them free from
the least danger of being infected with the
SMALL-POX, no boat having been on
board, and all other communication with
people from *Charles-Town* prevented.

Austin, Laurens, & Appleby.

N. B. Full one Half of the above Negroes have had the
SMALL-POX in their own Country.

Hank Willis Thomas

Untitled, 2009

Offset lithograph, 20/30

© 2011 Hank Willis Thomas

Permanent loan from the Jean and Robert E. Steele Collection

The Cost of Slavery



Hank Willis Thomas (b. 1976) examines history and who frames the issue of it by using a variety of devices, such as advertising and popular culture. In this work, Thomas blends advertising language that spans 350 years.

Take a closer look

Can you tell who the figures are in this print? One is the famous basketball player, Shaquille O’Neal, represented by Reebok’s SHAQ Dunkman logo. The other is the “King of Pop”, Michael Jackson, performing one of his signature dance moves. What does it mean when you put those two figures, admired for their talents and physical strength, on a replicated image of an actual sales poster advertising slaves in 1760? On it are the most popular ports, Bance Island (now Sierra Leone, Africa) and Charleston, South Carolina, as well as the best-known trade firm: Austin, Laurens, and Appleby. Thomas utilizes a 350-year-old document to critique society and question the role of racism today.

In his own words

Part of advertising’s success is based on its ability to reinforce generalizations developed around race, gender and ethnicity which are generally false, but [these generalizations] can sometimes be entertaining, sometimes true, and sometimes horrifying.

Did you know?

Hank Willis Thomas is the son of the well-known artist, Deborah Willis, who is also in the exhibition, *African American Art Since 1950*.

Deborah Willis curated the exhibition *Posing Beauty in African American Culture*, which was hosted at the Figge Art Museum from September 8 to November 4, 2012. Hank Willis Thomas was one of the artists included in the exhibition.

A step beyond

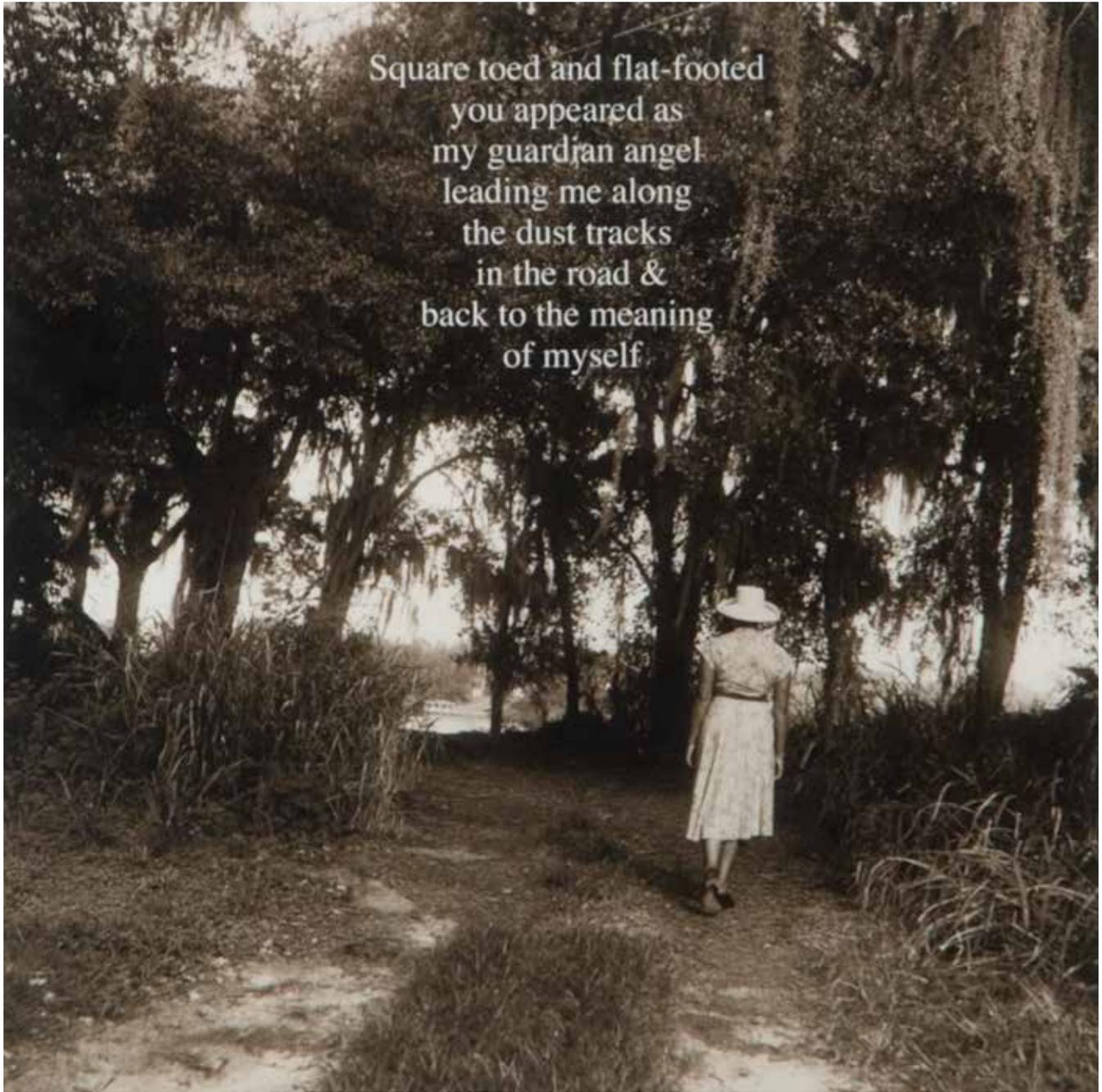
Artist’s Website • <http://www.hankwillisthomas.com>

Biography (Video) • <http://www2.corcoran.org/30americans/artists/hank-willis-thomas>

Artist Page • <http://www.jackshainman.com/artists/hankwillis-thomas>

Artist Page • <http://www.clevelandart.org/events/exhibitions/hank-willis-thomas>

Art News • <http://www.artnews.com/2012/10/24/hank-willis-thomas-stages-a-photo-shoot>



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

Carrie Mae Weems
Untitled from the *Eatonville* series, 2003
Pigment inkjet
© 2011 Carrie M. Weems
Gift of Terry Gips

Walking in Her Shoes



Carrie Mae Weems (b. 1953) often puts herself into her photographs as a way of understanding other people. In this work, she is attempting to enact and understand Zora Neale Hurston's creative process.

Take a closer look

This photograph is part of *Embracing Eatonville*, a photographic project based in Eatonville, Florida, the oldest black incorporated town in the U.S. Eatonville is hometown to the celebrated African American writer and folklorist Zora Neale Hurston.

In her own words

My work has led me to investigate family relationships, gender roles, the histories of racism, sexism, class, and various political systems. Despite the variety of my explorations, throughout it all it has been my contention that my responsibility as an artist is to work, to sing for my supper, to make art, beautiful and powerful, that adds and reveals; to beautify the mess of a messy world, to heal the sick and feed the helpless; to shout bravely from the roof-tops and storm barricaded doors and voice the specifics of our historic moment.

Did you know?

Zora Neale Hurston wrote plays and well-known works of fiction such as *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937). As an anthropologic folklorist, she traveled through the American South, the Caribbean and Central America. Her research still informs what we know about African American culture today.

Carrie Mae Weems was included in the exhibition *Posing Beauty in African American Culture*, which was hosted at the Figge Art Museum from September 8 to November 4, 2012.

A step beyond

Biography and Interview on Art 21 (Video) • <http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/carrie-mae-weems>

Biography and Interview (Video) • <http://www.macfound.org/fellows/905>

Artist Website • <http://carriemaeweems.net/index.html>

Artist Page • <http://www.jackshainman.com/artists/carriemae-weems>

Artist's Retrospective • https://museum.stanford.edu/news_room/weems.html

Embracing Eatonville • <http://www.lightwork.org/archive/embracing-eatonville>

Zora Neale Hurston's Website • <http://zoranealehurston.com>

Want to learn more?

Book a Guided Tour

Schedule a guided tour for your group or classroom.

Contact Heather Aaronson at 563.326.7804 x2045 or haaronson@figgeartmuseum.org

Schedule a Classroom Visit

The Big Picture outreach program can visit your class with educators Laura Dunn and Brian Allen.

Contact Laura at 563.326.7804 x2047 or ldunn@figgeartmuseum.org

Contact Brian at 563.326.7804 x2005 or ballen@figgeartmuseum.org

Come to a Program

Attend a workshop, lecture, art talk or performance.

Upcoming programs appear on our calendar at www.figgeart.org/calendar

Follow the Figge Art Museum



Check out our Blog

Figge Pudding at www.figgeart.org/blog

Get involved

Become a member or join our volunteer program. Information is available on www.figgeartmuseum.org or by calling the museum.

Membership • Contact Amy Martens at 563.326.7804 x2007 or amartens@figgeartmuseum.org

Volunteer • Contact Heather Aaronson at 563.326.7804 x2045 or haaronson@figgeartmuseum.org

Teacher Resources

Available at [www.figgeart.org/Education/Teacher Resources](http://www.figgeart.org/Education/Teacher%20Resources)



563.326.7804
Davenport, Iowa
www.figgearmuseum.org

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