



THE LEGACY OF  
**TWO CENTURIES** *of*  
**BLACK AMERICAN ART**



THE LEGACY OF  
**TWO CENTURIES** *of*  
**BLACK AMERICAN ART**

Art Bridges + Philadelphia  
Museum of Art

THE TROUT GALLERY  
THE ART MUSEUM OF DICKINSON COLLEGE

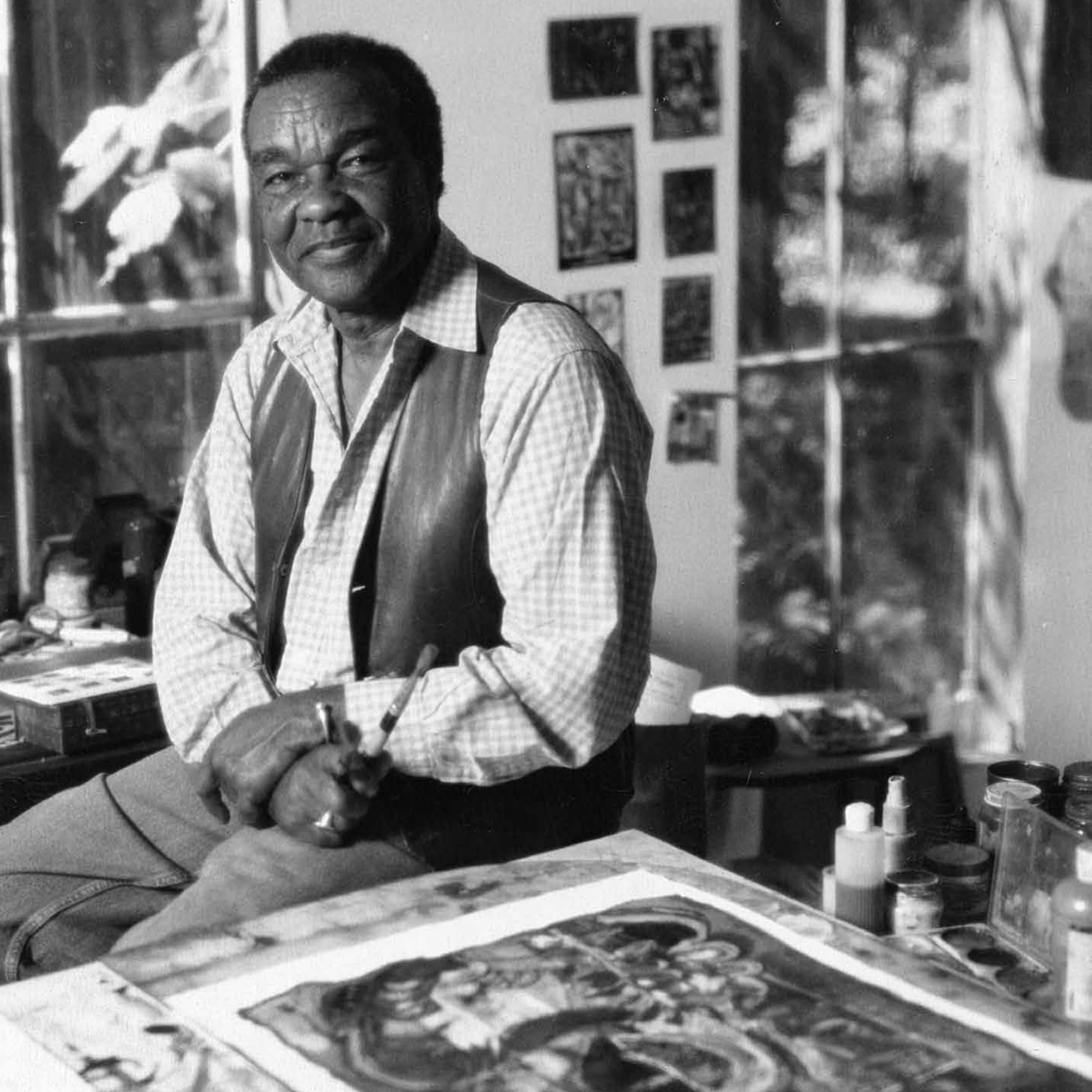


In memory of Lewis Tanner Moore (1953–2024),  
generous and dedicated collector and friend



## CONTENTS

FOREWORD.....	1
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	3
“THE BEAUTY AND SIMPLICITY OF QUIET” JERRY PHILOGENE .....	7
EXHIBITION CATALOGUE.....	17
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS.....	55





## FOREWORD

According to artist, curator, and educator David Driskell, one of the goals for his curated exhibition *Two Centuries of Black American Art* was “to honor our ancestors ... [and] pass on a mantle to go forth and look to that which came after them.”<sup>1</sup>

In April 1974, Rexford Stead, the Deputy Director of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), called artist David Driskell informing him of the idea for an exhibition of Black American art to be held in the Bicentennial year of 1976. Despite a lack of support among museum staff and trustees, Driskell, undaunted, realized the cultural significance of this project, that in his words, “would be historical in nature and comprehensive enough in format to broadly index many of the major works in painting, sculpture, the graphic arts and the crafts that had never been assembled in one exhibition prior to this time.”<sup>2</sup> After developing a comprehensive proposal for *Two Centuries of Black American Art, 1750-1950*, presenting it to the museum board, and traveling across the country to secure loans, Driskell also created a film documenting his curatorial process. The crowds that came to the exhibition at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in the fall of 1976 were record-breaking, and the exhibition then traveled to museums in Atlanta, Dallas, and Brooklyn through 1977. Similarly, the accompanying exhibition catalogue was widely read and provided a thorough survey of Black art. In addition to an introduction to pottery, woodwork, architecture, and metalwork created by enslaved Black artisans, Driskell offered an overview of the 63 artists included in the exhibition. Importantly, he outlined the complexities of defining a “Black aesthetic.”<sup>3</sup> The ostensibly simple, but ambitious aim of the exhibition, was to offer, according to Stead, “a more complete history of American art.”<sup>4</sup> Art historian Bridget R. Cooks affirms, “*Two Centuries* filled the void of this omission of Black American artists in art history and museum history and pointed

to the absence of artworks that had been discarded, devalued, and lost because of poor judgment and unequal standards of recognition.”<sup>5</sup>

*The Legacy of Two Centuries of Black American Art* on display at The Trout Gallery reflects on the significance of Driskell’s expansion of the canon of American art history and celebrates the diversity and breadth of the artists Driskell featured nearly a half century ago. The Trout Gallery’s exhibition is not a reconstruction of Driskell’s *Two Centuries*, but rather takes inspiration from his original exhibition checklist of artists to commemorate Driskell’s momentous accomplishment. In the first chapter of his exhibition catalogue, Driskell writes,

Traditionally, black artists were not encouraged to participate in exhibitions in which works by their white contemporaries were shown; in numerous cases, they were specifically excluded. Certainly, no single exhibition can rectify such omissions, but it is both timely and proper that the rich visual heritage and cultural contributions of the black artist be presented in a manner that will permit proper recognition of his talents as craftsman and artist. It is the aim of this exhibition to make available a more accurate compendium of American art by documenting the quality of a body of work that should never have been set apart as a separate entity.<sup>6</sup>

Following Driskell’s intention to demonstrate a broad selection of subjects and styles by artists with different backgrounds and perspectives, the exhibition at The Trout Gallery offers luminous and reverent works by Henry Ossawa Tanner (1859–1937) alongside Alma Thomas’s (1891–1978) monumental and bold abstraction. Important illustrations produced during the Harlem Renaissance by Aaron Douglas (1899–1979) can

be seen near jubilant scenes of dancing and music from Dox Thrash (1893–1965) and Claude Clarke (1915–2001), among other striking portraits, vibrant compositions, and disparate landscapes. In her essay that follows, cultural historian, scholar, and curator Jerry Philogene articulates the synergetic connections among the works, how “each object highlights the meditative nature of aesthetic practices that tell us about the creativity of Black people in moments of pain, joy, devotion, crisis, and celebration.”<sup>7</sup> Philogene’s close reading of select works of art illustrates Driskell’s sensitivity to the breadth of artistic and human experiences. She offers a poignant reminder of a shared humanity and depth of feeling that Driskell inspired through his commitment to expanding the canon of American art.

Driskell’s 1976 exhibition was recognized by scholars, artists, and the broader public as a watershed moment. Art historian Julie McGee describes how the “heft and mainstream visibility” of *Two Centuries* “left discernible footprints.”<sup>8</sup> Major news outlets reported on the exhibition, and cultural institutions began to question their perspective on programming, collecting, and the narrative of Black American art.<sup>9</sup> Driskell’s impact was both national and personal, manifold and multigenerational. He embraced the mentorship of artists and teachers, including James Porter, Lois Mailou Jones and James Lesesne Wells, while also championing and collaborating with his contemporaries, such as master printmaker Curlee Raven Holton and filmmaker Carlton Moss. Ultimately, he helped to launch the careers and ignite the artistic passions of students and practitioners. Artists, scholars, and audiences nationwide have benefitted from Driskell’s belief in the “intrinsic value” and “universal language” of Black art.<sup>10</sup> In reflecting on his own legacy, Driskell reaffirms, “If I could say what it should be, I would simply say integrate all these studies into one title, American art, American culture.”<sup>11</sup>

1. Cited in Julie McGee, “The Evolution of a Black Aesthetic, 1920-1950”: David C. Driskell and Race, Ethics, and Aesthetics,” *Callaloo* 31, no. 4 (Fall 2008): 1176.
2. David C. Driskell, “Some Notes Relating to the Assemblage of the Exhibition *Black American Artists, 1750-1950* for the Los Angeles County Museum of Art – June 1974-September 1976,” David C. Driskell Papers, David C. Driskell Center, University of Maryland. For a thorough analysis of the development of this exhibition, see Bridget R. Cooks, “Filling the Void: *Two Centuries of Black American Art, 1976*,” in *Exhibiting Blackness: African Americans and the American Art Museum* (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2011), 87-109. See also Julie L. McGee, *David C. Driskell: Artist and Scholar* (Petaluma, CA: Pomegranate Communications, Inc., 2006) and Jessica May, ed., *David Driskell: Icons of Nature and History* (New York: Rizzoli Electa, 2021).
3. David C. Driskell, *Two Centuries of Black American Art* (New York: Los Angeles County Museum of Art/Alfred A. Knopf, 1976).
4. Rexford Stead, “Introduction,” in Driskell, *Two Centuries of Black American Art*, 10.
5. Cooks, *Exhibiting Blackness*, 89.
6. Driskell, *Two Centuries of Black American Art*, 11.
7. Jerry Philogene, “The Beauty and Simplicity of Quiet,” herein.
8. Julie L. McGee, *David C. Driskell*, 107.
9. Programming around the exhibition included films, dance and music performances, talks with contemporary artists, lectures and symposia. Among other publications, the exhibition was reviewed in *The New York Times*, *The New Yorker*, *Los Angeles Times*, and David Driskell was interviewed by Tom Brokaw on an episode of *The Today Show* on July 5, 1977. Cooks, *Exhibiting Blackness*, 108 and 185, n. 41.
10. Driskell, *Two Centuries of Black American Art*, 79. See also McGee, “The Evolution of a Black Aesthetic, 1920-1950;” 1175-1185; Julie L. McGee, “The Driskell Circle as Centrifuge,” and Adrienne L. Childs, “Notes on the Politics of Identity in African American Art,” *African American Art Since 1950: Perspectives from the David C. Driskell Center* (College Park, MD: David C. Driskell Center for the Study of the Visual Arts and Culture of African Americans and the African Diaspora at the University of Maryland, 2012).
11. Cynthia Mills, “Oral history interview with David Driskell, 2009 March 18–April 7,” Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

# | ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

**When I started my position as Director of The Trout Gallery in the summer of 2023, I was thrilled to learn that the curatorial concept for this exhibition was already well underway.**

I am grateful to Jerry Philogene, then Associate Professor of American Studies at Dickinson College and now the Director of Black Studies at Middlebury College, and Heather Flaherty, Curator of Education at The Trout Gallery, for initiating this idea, one that was born from a generous donation by Darlene K. Morris of works by Black artists to The Trout Gallery. I am indebted to my predecessor at The Trout, Phillip Earenfight, for his work facilitating this significant gift.

*The Legacy of Two Centuries of Black American Art* is one in a series of American art exhibitions created through a multiyear, multi-institutional partnership formed by the Philadelphia Museum of Art as part of the Art Bridges Cohort Program. This program is committed to supporting lending partnerships among museums nationwide and builds on Art Bridges' mission to expand access to American art across the United States and to empower museums to broaden traditional definitions of American art. We cannot thank enough Josephine Shea, Curatorial Coordinator, Art Bridges Cohort Program at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, for all her work in making possible the third exhibition of this partnership to be installed at The Trout Gallery. We are also thankful for Associate Registrar Laura Quintrell, Art Bridges Cohort Program, and Payton Murray, Art Bridges Conservation Fellow, for their careful attention during the installation process. Along with all the staff at the Philadelphia Museum of Art who supported these loans, we especially thank Sasha Suda, The George S. Widener Director and Chief Officer; Hyunsoo Woo, The Pappas-Sarbanes Deputy Director for Collections and Exhibitions; Kathleen A. Foster, Senior Curator of American Art and Director of the Center

for American Art; Jessica Smith, Susan G. Detweiler Curator of American Art; Erica Battle, John Alchin and Hal Marryatt Curator of Contemporary Art; and Collections Assistants Sophia Myers and Alison Tufano.

Other generous partners include the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, and David Brigham, Chief Executive Officer, who not only loaned works by Dox Thrash, Henry Ossawa Tanner, and Claude Clarke to us, but also offered introductions to Curlee Raven Holton, artist, scholar, and Founding Director of Raven Fine Art Editions; and Lewis Tanner Moore, collector and grandnephew of Henry Ossawa Tanner (1859-1937). I am delighted that Curlee Raven Holton, Adrienne Childs, independent scholar, art historian, and Senior Consulting Curator at The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC; and Julie McGee, Associate Professor of Africana Studies and Art History, University of Delaware, will present their scholarly and creative expertise as well as personal experiences with David Driskell in a symposium held in conjunction with the exhibition in fall 2024. In addition to writing the excellent essay that follows for this catalogue, Dr. Philogene is moderating the symposium.

Research for this exhibition would not have been possible without the staff and resources at The David C. Driskell Center for the Study of the Visual Arts and Culture of African Americans and the African Diaspora at the University of Maryland, College Park. The mission of the Driskell Center honors the legacy of David C. Driskell (1931-2020) by preserving the rich heritage of African American visual art and culture. At the Driskell Center, I thank Jordana Saggese, Director; Abby Eron, Assistant Director; and David Conway, Senior Archivist for their invaluable assistance.

Following Driskell's lead of creating space and platforms for Black art and culture, a key component of this exhibition is our educational programming and community outreach.

With extraordinary vision and ambition, Heather Flaherty has worked tirelessly with community partners, Trout Gallery staff, and student interns to reach new and wider audiences. Support for this educational programming and community outreach has been provided by Art Bridges. We wouldn't have been successful in receiving this Art Bridges Learning and Engagement Grant without the help of the staff at the Art Bridges Foundation, especially Reveille Isgrig, Learning & Engagement Specialist and Felicia Maldonado, Program Officer; as well as Kristi Dane, Senior Program Officer, and Laura Goodwin, Associate Program Officer. Our local partners and friends in the community include Ashley Gogoj, K-12 Art and Design Program Supervisor for the Carlisle Area School District; Reverend Dr. Jeffrey W. Gibelius of The Carlisle Bridge Builders; Dr. Michael Eskridge of Bible Way Family Support Center; Shawn Gladden and Cara Curtis of the Cumberland County Historical Society; Heather Maneval and Tomeka McDonald of Hope Station, and Cathy Stone and Mo Geiger of the Carlisle Arts Learning Center.

At Dickinson College, I am so grateful for the many colleagues who have welcomed me into the Dickinson community and also offered encouragement, guidance, and expertise in coordinating and sponsoring this exhibition. Thanks to Yvette B. Davis, Director of the Popel Shaw Center for Race & Ethnicity, for her early and ongoing enthusiasm for this project. Thanks to Jim Gerencser, Associate Dean for Archives and Special Collections, Waidner-Spahr Library, for loaning first editions of significant publications of works including W.E.B. Du Bois's *Souls of Black Folk* and Alain Locke's *The New Negro*, for the exhibition. We also appreciate the support of the Departments of Africana Studies, American Studies, Art and Art History, the Clarke Forum, and English, as well as the confidence of Renée Ann Cramer, Dean and Provost, and the Gallery Advisory Committee. Special thanks to Andy Bale for the photographs of artwork for this catalogue and to Krista Hanley for the beautiful graphic design, and the whole team at the Dickinson College Print Center for designing and producing the many materials needed to install and promote the exhibition and programming.

At The Trout Gallery, huge thanks to Hadley D'Esopo, Post-Baccalaureate Fellow in Museum Education; Eden Sanville '24, Maya Reichenbach '27, and summer interns Ella Layton '26, and Kiersten Kahn '26, under the expert direction of Heather Flaherty, for providing programs for summer camps, community events, and opportunities for all our visitors to engage meaningfully with the exhibition. Enormous thanks to Jennifer Marsh for taking care of innumerable details in every area imaginable. Thanks to our Gallery Attendants, Meredith Costopoulos, Jolene Gregor, and Sue Russell for always warmly welcoming our visitors, and Timothy D'Angelo and his team for providing additional security services. With excellent assistance from Wyatt Cramer Harpold '28, James Bowman, Exhibition Designer and Registrar, cannot be thanked enough for his vision and attention to detail in the overall design, installation, and coordination of the artworks on display.

I also want to thank Dr. Deborah Smith for our friendship and decade-long conversations about Black art. Her enthusiasm for learning, traveling, close looking, and incredibly informed collecting has been inspiring. As this exhibition has come together, I thought often about her insightful analysis and love for many of the artists represented here.

One of the most significant experiences of this project was the opportunity to meet and connect with Lewis Tanner Moore. Lewis and his wife Judy Heggestad invited me into their spectacular home, and Lewis shared his incredible depth of knowledge about the artists included in this exhibition. He generously offered loans from his personal collection, and I was awed by his passion, his insights, and his lifelong commitment to preserving the legacy of his great-uncle Henry Ossawa Tanner through friendships and associations with Black artists, curators, and institutions. His untimely passing has left a void impossible to fill. I am heartbroken by his loss and truly admire Judy for bravely continuing Lewis's devotion to collecting, nurturing, and advancing Black art. This exhibition and catalogue are dedicated to Lewis's memory.

**SHANNON EGAN**  
**DIRECTOR, THE TROUT GALLERY**

**OPPOSITE:** Alma Thomas (1891–1978), *Hydrangeas Spring Song* (detail), 1976, acrylic on canvas, 6 ft. 6 in. × 48 in. (198.1 × 121.9 cm). Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2002-20-1. © Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.



## Two Centuries of Black American Art

Organized by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art for  
the Los Angeles area and by the Los Angeles Museum  
of Contemporary Art for the Los Angeles area  
and the Los Angeles area.



Membership  
Information



# “THE BEAUTY AND SIMPLICITY OF QUIET”

JERRY PHILOGENE

In 1976 David Driskell guest-curated the groundbreaking exhibition *Two Centuries of Black American Art* at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA). This exhibition was a watershed moment.

At the time of the exhibition, Driskell was chair of the Department of Art at Fisk University and a well-known representational and abstract multimedia artist and curator whose work had been featured in major exhibitions and museums. *Two Centuries* was intended to draw critical attention to the artwork of Black artists ranging from the eighteenth-century Haitian-French painter and naturalist John James Audubon to the famed nineteenth-century African American portraitist Joshua Johnson to Abstract Expressionist Alma Thomas and sculptors such as Selma Burke and Sargent Johnson. In his exhibition catalogue essay, “The Black Artists and Craftsmen in the Formative Years, 1750–1920,” Driskell

**“I was looking for a body of work which showed, first of all, that blacks had been stable participants in American visual culture for more than 200 years; and by stable participants, I simply mean that in many cases they had been the backbone. ... It was to show that they were good artists and that’s all they were interested in.”**

**— DAVID DRISKELL, 1977<sup>1</sup>**

celebrated the artistry of crafts persons, highlighting the work of nineteenth-century North Carolina-based cabinet maker Thomas Day, self-taught sculptor William Edmondson, and the similarities between West African imagery and woodwork and pottery made by enslaved Black people in the United States. *Two Centuries* gave visibility to artworks and artists who, largely due to “historical patterns of isolation,” had been rendered at the margins of various artistic communities as a result of either racism or sexism or a combination of both.<sup>2</sup> Correspondingly, in the catalogue essay titled, “The Evolution of a Black Aesthetic, 1920-1950,” Driskell rightly noted that the creative aesthetics of some of the artists included in *Two Centuries* were not necessarily bound to their racial and gendered categories but rather to a “universal language of form” and academic and creative techniques.<sup>3</sup>

The exhibition traveled to the High Museum of Art in Atlanta, the Dallas Museum of Fine Arts, and finally, to the Brooklyn Museum. *Two Centuries of Black American Art* boldly named a futurity that imagined the world, and perhaps more importantly the art world, in a different way; in that imagination, the simplicity and beauty of quiet were central to Black visual and cultural aesthetics. By simplicity, I do not mean an unassuming or guileless simplicity. Rather, following Kevin Quashie in *The Sovereignty of Quiet: Beyond Resistance in Black Culture*, the notion of quiet celebrates the simple and beautiful moments in the world.

This quietness, I contend, enables a deep strategic looking to uncover what is visible to the eye, yet made invisible in histories. Such an inventive and inquisitive approach, as seen in *Two Centuries of Black American Art*, affirms the exhibition and catalogue’s significance to art history in general and to Black American art history specifically. Art historian Bridget R. Cooks notes that, “*Two Centuries* served as a corrective to the brazen devaluing of Black American struggle and creativity...

OPPOSITE: Installation view of *Two Centuries of Black American Art, 1750–1950* at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1976. Courtesy of the David C. Driskell Papers at the David C. Driskell Center at the University of Maryland, College Park.



ANNE



*Two Centuries* was a Black affirmation and a political insertion into art history, art museums...”<sup>4</sup> Undoubtedly, Driskell curated the exhibition in an analogous way to how he made his paintings—through meticulous compositions, experimental choices, and with inspiration from his surroundings. Driskell’s act of making space for the work of Black artists that portrayed Black life was groundbreaking and profound, for it centered the world *from a Black perspective, reshaping Black representation, self-representation, and expression.*

The selection of works in *The Legacy of Two Centuries of Black American Art* at The Trout Gallery mirrors the stylistic diversity of Driskell’s curatorial impulses and deeply personal encounters with artists. The smaller sampling of works presented attests to the capaciousness of Black visual culture that Driskell so arduously sought to present in *Two Centuries of Black American Art*. The current exhibition pays homage to Driskell’s vigorous execution and strong curatorial vision and to the creative genius of the artists included in his exhibition. In different but profound ways, the works displayed in *The Legacy of Two Centuries of Black American Art* create

**“In humanity, quiet is inevitable, essential. It is a simple, beautiful part of what it means to be alive... An aesthetic of quiet is not incompatible with Black culture, but to notice and understand it requires a shift in how we read, what we look for, and what we expect, even what we remain open to. It requires paying attention in a different way.”**

**— KEVIN QUASHIE, 2012<sup>5</sup>**

a dynamic synergy; each object highlights the meditative nature of aesthetic practices that tell us about the creativity of Black people in moments of pain, joy, devotion, crisis, and celebration. These artworks collectively and separately exemplify innovative art forms and imaginative processes ushered in by twentieth-century modernity. Works such as Romare Bearden’s serigraphs, for example, are rooted in the creative tenets of a modernist aesthetic that celebrate the intricacies of form, balance, rhythm, and color. At The Trout Gallery, the arrangement of the works by subject or motif, rather than by chronology, inspires us to quietly meditate on the use of material, the function of the vernacular and allegories, and the liberatory possibilities inherent in spiritual and artistic expression.

In contrast to Bearden’s abstracted collaged compositions that evoke the multi-sensory experiences of Black urban living, the renowned painter Henry Ossawa Tanner’s works are intimate annunciations of his personal and spiritual beliefs. In his interior domestic genre scene, *Waiting for the Lord* (1882), what comes to light is Tanner’s exquisitely romantic and poetic painterly language developed during his studies in the U.S. and Europe, and his travels to the Middle East. Tanner places the elderly female figure at the center of the composition, compelling the viewer to focus directly on her. Head bowed, reading what might be her Bible, she is kept company by a crow, several cats, and the light emitting from a fire nearby. Rather than exuding a sense of poverty, vulnerability, and hopelessness, Tanner’s expressive use of light and shadow offers a moment of deep devotion, a moment of quiet waiting. Here, we can conceive of a future that is not of this earthly world. This scene of contemplative solitude suggests the critical and creative potentialities of an *alternative* space that allows for what it means to be human, to have hope, to have faith, to live in the beautiful moments of quiet.

What if we were to employ a deep strategic looking that *recognizes, acknowledges, and allows* for different modalities of seeing to comprehend what is not supposed to be seen? Driskell’s legacy, for me as someone whose scholarship is



embedded in modern and contemporary art history and visual culture of the African diaspora, specifically the Francophone Caribbean, resides in a particular *knowledge* that is both creatively conceptual and representational. Driskell's curatorial practice and scholarship added to a rich foundation of Black art and education established by scholars such as Alain Locke, sculptor and educator Augusta Savage, and artists and educators James A. Porter and Lois Mailou Jones. Moreover, Driskell gave us the *permission* and the *authority* to exhibit and write about Black artists and artisans. He urged us to see their capacious creativity which went beyond and against a world that did not see them as artists, nor as human.

Among the works chosen for The Trout Gallery's exhibition is Hale Woodruff's *Coming Home* (1935). Trained as a painter and printmaker, Woodruff's woodcut precedes his later, more abstract experimentations with paint, but this work nonetheless anticipates his energy and dynamism of line and composition.<sup>6</sup> In *Coming Home*, a full-bodied female figure shares the compositional stage with the ramshackle row homes and broken-down stairs of this black-and-white linocut. The swirling white clouds, billowing and opaque as fumes, exude a stormy presence. Woodruff creates a tight composition that suggest a rhythmic interplay between the enervated forces that reside in the Black woman's body and the racial and environmental challenges and obstacles faced by African Americans in the South, effectively exploring an "atmosphere of certain uncertainty."<sup>7</sup> We can almost feel the woman's weary tension in her heavy gait as she climbs the precariously curved stairs in her heels. However, if we look closely, we can imagine in the turn of her hips, the angle of her shoulders, and the fit of her hat, that she will come down those wobbly stairs, determined to face another day. This affective nature of Woodruff's print suggests the concept Martinican psychiatrist and theorist Frantz Fanon described as "a definitive structuring of the self and of the world—definitive because it



Clementine Hunter (1886-1988). *Bouquet of Flowers*, c. 1950, oil on canvas, 11 × 16 in. (27.9 × 40.6 cm). Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2008-10-1.

creates a real dialectic between the body and the world" that feels both overpowering and transcendent.<sup>8</sup>

A self-taught artist, Clementine Hunter's creative energies were animated by her time spent working on the Melrose Plantation in Natchitoches Parish, Louisiana rather than any set of professional practices or conventions of art making. A gifted colorist, Hunter depicted the beauty of Black Southern life, artistic and thematic traits that we also see in the Bearden serigraphs and lithographs assembled in The Trout Gallery's exhibition. In her painting, *Bouquet of Flowers* (c. 1950), Hunter captures the visual language of still life painting, in terms of her synthesis of balance, rhythm, color, and form. Hunter offers a quiet simplicity animated by the vibrancy in the forms of the flowers and a sensual tactility of paint. Hunter delicately layered the oil paint, building up the surface of the canvas so that we can almost feel the petals of the flowers and the smooth background created by the broad yet light blue brushstrokes.



One of the few purely abstract works in this exhibition is by Alma Thomas.<sup>9</sup> Her *Hydrangeas Spring Song* (1976) (page 48) emotes a quiet phonic substance. Here, I am drawing from Black feminist visual theorist Tina Campt's notion of "phonic substance," which Campt defines as "the sound inherent to an image; one that defines or creates it, that is neither contingent upon nor necessarily preceding it; not simply a sound played over, behind or in relation to an image; one that emanates from the image itself."<sup>10</sup> *Hydrangeas Spring Song* resonates an exacting utterance in the blue strokes tumbling down and across the surface of the canvas. Her approach to abstraction disrupts the conventional narrative of Abstract Expressionism, which until recently limited the inclusion of Thomas in the history of this movement. Significantly, Driskell's selection of three of her paintings affirmed Thomas's belonging within that tradition and reflected his own aesthetic philosophy and embrace of abstraction. Mainly executed in dark and light blues, *Hydrangeas Spring Song* takes on various non-representational forms, shapes, and gestural marks to achieve an emotive effect; as such, *Hydrangeas Spring Song* speaks directly to the principles of Abstract Expressionism. This is the legacy of Driskell: a progressive, strategic vision that questions the art historical canon. Without asking for permission, Driskell *recognized, acknowledged, and allowed* for a visibility and comprehension of what was not supposed to have been seen or known: Black art.

Calvin Burnett's *For This My Mother Wrapped Me Warm* (n.d.) displays an emotional intensity and quiet interiority. This painting is rooted in themes of vulnerability, conveying a melancholy mood through an alluring and soft color palette that emotes the idea of tenderness, the sense of touch, and what that touch can offer: protection and intimacy. Against a background of abstract patterning and soft tones of blues, oranges, and greens, a crouched central figure is enclosed in a string-like web of pinks and ochres that we would not associate with Black skin color. Two figures, encased in a dark, cocoon-like enclosure, look upon the figure with an inquiring gaze. The ambiguity of the painting prompts us to ask: are they returning the gaze of the viewer (us)? Or are



Hughie Lee-Smith (1915–1999). *Young Girl*, 1992, graphite, charcoal, and pastel on paper, 12 ¼ x 10 ¾ in. (32.4 x 27.3 cm). Private Collection.

they returning the gaze of the seemingly shielding crouched figure? Perhaps, to evoke W.E.B. Du Bois's notion of "double consciousness," as described in the chapter "Of Our Spiritual Strivings," in *Souls of Black Folk* (1903), is the figure seeing herself through the eyes of another, and is that image in conflict with how she sees herself?

In Hughie Lee-Smith's beautiful graphite, charcoal, and pastel drawing on paper, *Young Girl* (1992), the Black female figure takes up space in the composition. An interplay of emotions is always bubbling beneath the surface of Lee-Smith's work. Standing tall, this figure, whose cross-armed pose speaks to a particular awareness, seems to protect or prepare herself



for what is to come. Graffiti markings on the wall compete for attention with a Japanese *ukiyo-e*-style image of a *kabuki* actor breathing fire. Lee-Smith's scene also evokes a quiet ease, as the girl's posture and the slight lifting of her right foot in this seemingly urban space evoke more than an engagement with color, text, form, but an emphasis on living and being in the world differently. The theatricality of the *kabuki* actor and the soulfulness of the young girl bring together different worlds, different cultures, and different rhythms, inviting the viewer to engage with varied registers of viewing. The resulting composition offers a conceptual pursuit, highlighting a visual regime that invites a disruption of ethnic and racial hierarchies. What fascinates me about Lee-Smith's oeuvre is his controlled style that suggests an intensive expressiveness and interiority. His work conveys a certain vibrancy that resides in quiet moments of creative vitality. In this unexpected juxtaposition of images, Lee-Smith creates a complicated, nuanced picture of humanity.

As I look at Claude Clarke's *Boogie-woogie* (c. 1933–1941), I am reminded of the beautiful dynamism that Driskell brought to the white walls of LACMA, juxtaposing works by Ellis Wilson, Archibald J. Motley, Jr., William E. Scott, Henry O. Tanner, William H. Johnson, and Selma Burke, which seem to play an almost magical musical dance—rhythmically connected yet phonically singular. I am also reminded of Nina Simone's 1965 song, "Feeling Good." Both the song and *Two Centuries of Black American Art* recognized and celebrated the many ways Black joy manifests itself in Black life. Through music and dance and the unabashed candor in which the male and female figures move audaciously through their joy, I can almost hear Simone's voice before the piano and brass melodic tunes come in as she pronounces, "It's a new dawn. It's a new day. It's a new life for me, ooh. And I'm feeling good."

In the works on view at The Trout Gallery, there is a sense of ecstasy, jubilation, revelation, community, intimacy, and tenderness, surrounded by an awareness of quietness, one that brings to light our shared humanity and extends Driskell's aesthetic vision. *Two Centuries of Black American*



Installation of the exhibition *Two Centuries of Black American Art, 1750–1950* at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (September 28–November 21, 1976). Photo © Museum Associates/LACMA

Art stands as a centerpiece in curatorial practices and serves as a visual embodiment of the multitude of visual affinities found in and among works of art produced by Black artists and crafts persons. In John Maass's review of Driskell's catalogue, he writes "[Driskell] has discovered no previously unknown geniuses, but he presents many artists of solid achievement... The candid author recognizes that black visual arts are generally in the mainstream of contemporaneous white art... Driskell has produced a straightforward survey of marked initiative and interest."<sup>11</sup> While Driskell may not have discovered any "previously unknown geniuses," as the first epigraph reminds us, Driskell brought together 200 works of art by 63 Black artists that he called "the backbone of American visual culture" at one of America's major art museums. *Two Centuries of Black American Art* showed the art world that Driskell was "paying attention in a different way."<sup>12</sup> This is Driskell's legacy.

1. C. Gerald Fraser, "Black Art' Label Discounted by Curator," *New York Times*, June 29, 1977. 63. Accessed online 1 June 2024.
2. David Driskell, "The Evolution of a Black Aesthetic, 1920–1950," in *Two Centuries of Black American Art* (Los Angeles County Museum of Art/Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1976), 78.
3. Driskell, "The Evolution of a Black Aesthetic, 1920-1950," 79.
4. Bridget R. Cooks, *Exhibiting Blackness: African Americans and the American Art Museum* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2011), 88.
5. Kevin Quashie, "Introduction," *The Sovereignty of Quiet: Beyond Resistance in Black Culture* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2012), 6.
6. I thank Shannon Egan, Director, The Trout Gallery for pointing this out.
7. Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 1952,1967), 110-111.
8. Ibid.
9. While most of the works featured in *Two Centuries of Black American Art* were representational, Driskell included artists who were fully working practices of abstraction, such as Hale Woodruff, James A. Porter, Romare Bearden, Norman Lewis, Felrath Hines, Walter Williams, Sam Middleton, and Richard Mayhew. See *Driskell, Two Centuries of Black Art*.
10. Tina Campt, "Black Visuality and the Practice of Refusal," *Women & Performance*, <https://www.womenandperformance.org/ampersand/29-1/campt#:~:text=phonic%20substance%3A%20the%20sound%20inherent,emanates%20from%20the%20image%20itself>. Accessed May 2024.
11. John Maass, "America as Art, by Joshua C. Taylor: Two Centuries of Black American Art by David C. Driskell," *The American Historical Review*, (June 1977, Vol. 82, No. 3): 726-727, 727.
12. Quashie, 6.



| EXHIBITION CATALOGUE





---

**Romare Bearden (American, 1911–1988)**

*Family Dinner*, 1993, serigraph created in association with the estate of Romare Bearden based on the collage painting of 1968, 21.75 x 27.13 in. (55.25 x 68.9 cm).

The Trout Gallery, Gift of Darlene Morris, 2021.1.2



---

**Romare Bearden (American, 1911–1988)**

*Carolina Morning*, 1979, serigraph on paper, 22 x 27.75 in. (55.88 x 70.49 cm)

The Trout Gallery, Gift of Darlene Morris, 2021.1.4



---

**Romare Bearden (American, 1911–1988)**

*The Lantern*, 1979, lithograph, 28.5 x 19.75 in. (72.39 x 50.17 cm)

The Trout Gallery, Gift of Darlene Morris, 2021.1.5



---

**John Biggers (American, 1924–2001)**

*The Seed*, 1983, lithograph, 27 x 33 in. (68.58 x 83.82 cm)

Private Collection



---

**Selma Burke (American, 1900–1995)**

*Kneeling Figure*, n.d., plaster, 11.5 x 6 x 4.5 in. (29.2 x 15.2 x 11.4 cm)

Collection of Lewis Tanner Moore



---

**Calvin Burnett (American, 1921–2007)**

*For This My Mother Wrapped Me Warm*, n.d., oil on panel, 35 ½ x 23 ½ in. (90.2 x 59.7 cm)

Collection of Lewis Tanner Moore





---

**Calvin Burnett (American, 1921–2007)**

*Park Bench*, 1960, handcolored 1988, woodcut on cream wove paper, 12 x 8 in.  
(30.48 x 20.32 cm)

Private Collection

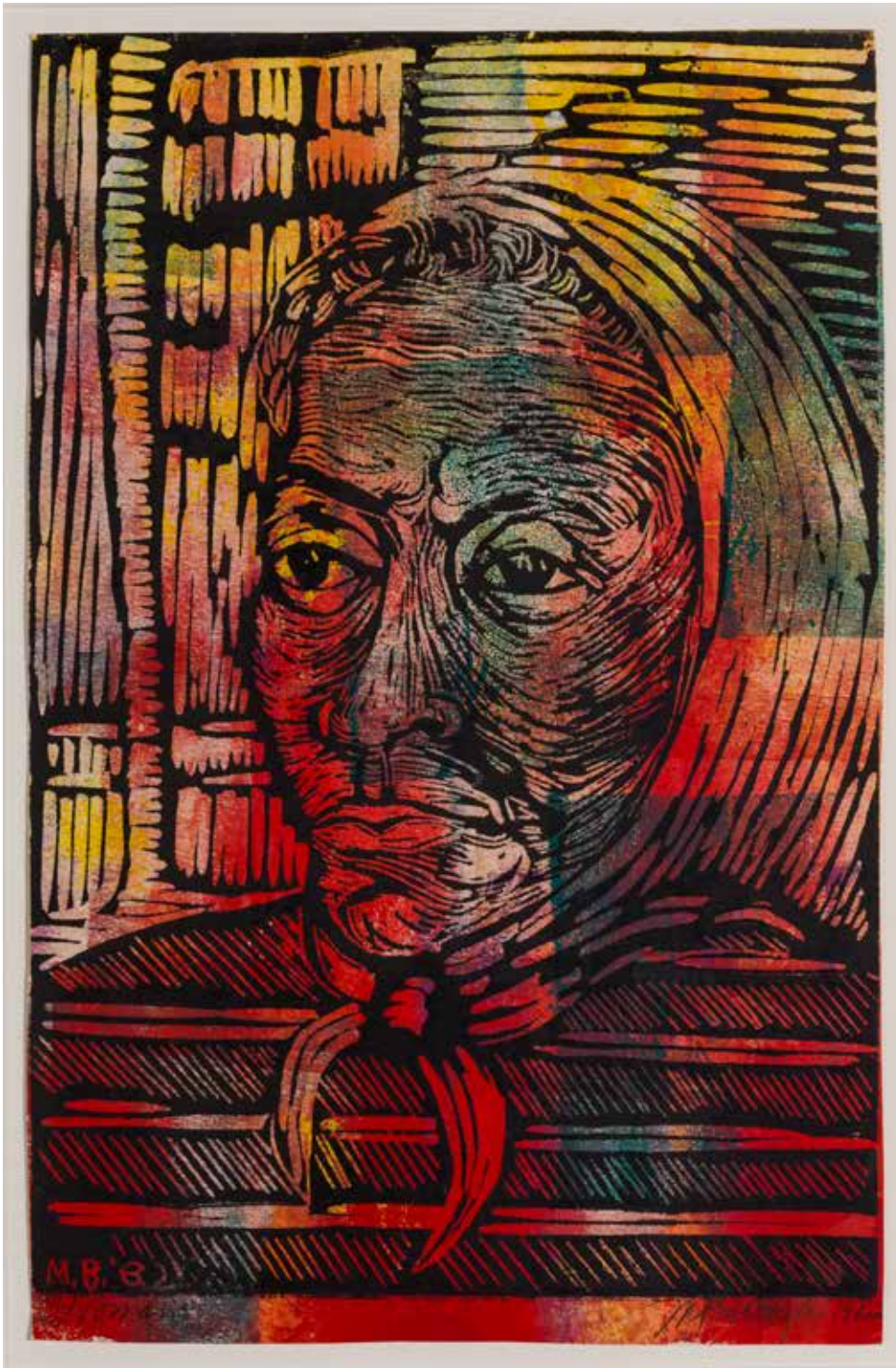


---

**Margaret Burroughs**  
(American, 1915–2010)

*Family*, c. 1952, woodcut on paper,  
23 x 17.5 in. (58.42 x 44.45 cm)

The Trout Gallery, Gift of Darlene  
Morris, 2021.110



---

**Margaret Burroughs (American, 1915–2010)**

*Woman*, 1982, linoleum cut, 12 ½ x 8 in. (31.7 x 20.3 cm)

Private Collection



---

**Elizabeth Catlett  
(Mexican (born United States),  
1915–2012)**

*Mother and Child*, c. 1956, terracotta.  
11 1/2 x 5 3/4 x 6 5/8 in. (29.2 x 14.6 x  
16.8 cm)

Philadelphia Museum of Art, 125th  
Anniversary Acquisition, Purchased  
with funds contributed by Willabell  
Clayton, Dr. Constance E. Clayton,  
and Mr. and Mrs. James B. Straw in  
honor of the 125th Anniversary of the  
Museum and in celebration of African  
American art, 2000-36-1

© Catlett Mora Family Trust / Licensed  
by VAGA at Artists Rights Society  
(ARS), New York



---

**Eldzier Cortor (American, 1916–2015)**

*Lady with Foliage I, A/P, 2014, mezzotint with etching, 10 x 6 in. (25.4 x 15.2 cm)*

Private Collection



21/60

Allan Rohan Crite

---

**Allan Rohan Crite**  
(American, 1910–2007)

*The Revelation of St. John 21/60*, 1994,  
engraving on paper, 22 x 16 in. (55.88  
x 40.64 cm)

The Trout Gallery, Gift of Darlene  
Morris, 2021.13.8



---

**Allan Rohan Crite (American, 1910–2007)**

*The Three Kings*, late 1930s, enamel on embossed brass, 5 ¼ x 9 3/8 in. (13.3 x 23.8 cm)

Private Collection



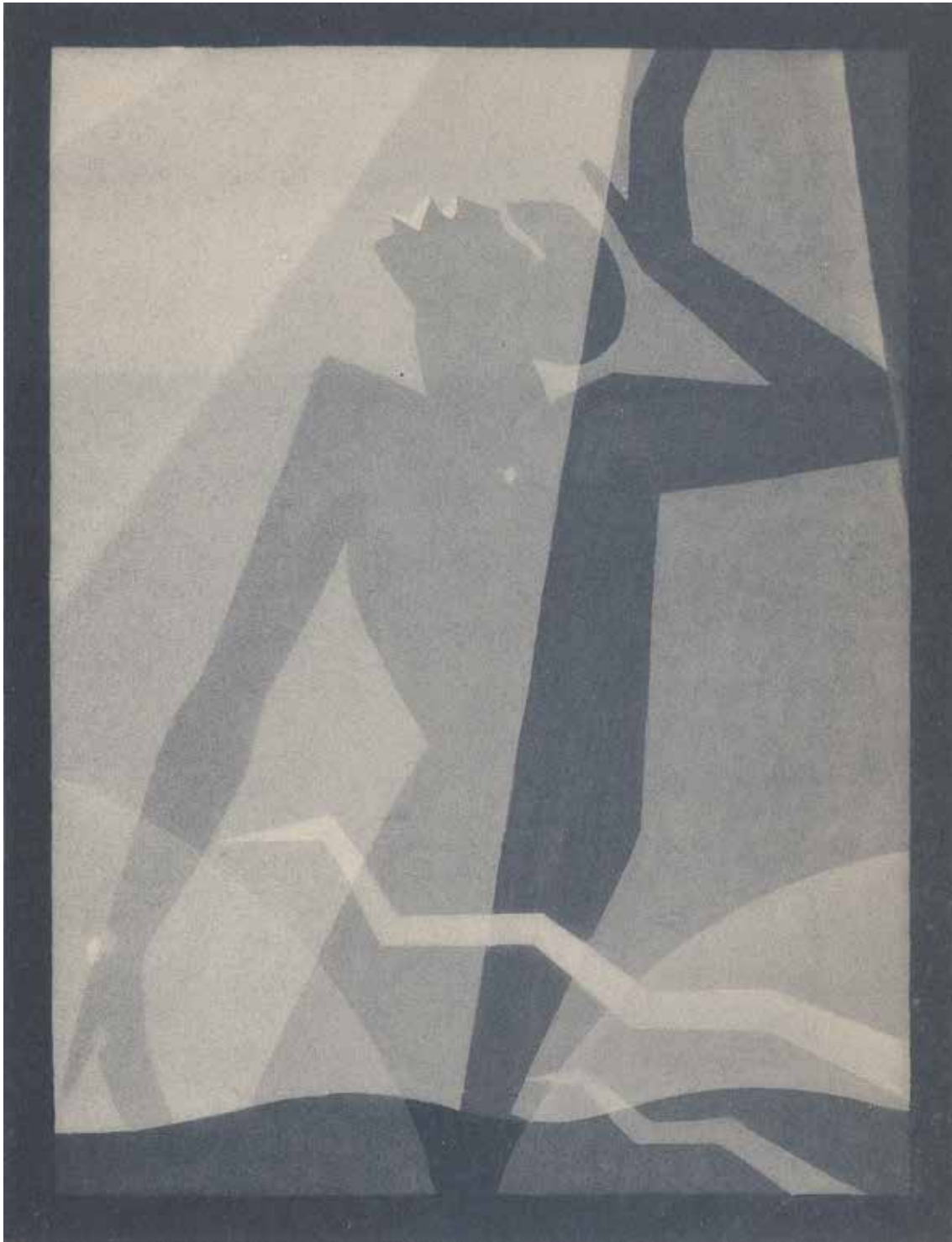
---

**Claude Clarke (American, 1915–2001)**

*Boogie-woogie*, c. 1933–41, lithograph, 6 1/2 x 8 in. (16.5 x 20.3 cm)

Historical Society of Pennsylvania





---

**Aaron Douglas**  
(American, 1899–1979)

Illustration for James Weldon  
Johnson (1871-1938), *God's  
Trombones: Seven Negro Sermons in  
Verse*, Viking Press, 1927

Dickinson College Archives and  
Special Collections



By Douglas

*“An’ the stars began to fall.”*

---

**Aaron Douglas (American, 1899–1979)**

“An’ the stars began to fall” in Alain Locke (1885–1954), *The New Negro: An Interpretation*, A. and C. Boni, 1927

Dickinson College Archives and  
Special Collections

# OPPORTUNITY

A JOURNAL OF NEGRO LIFE



JULY, 1927

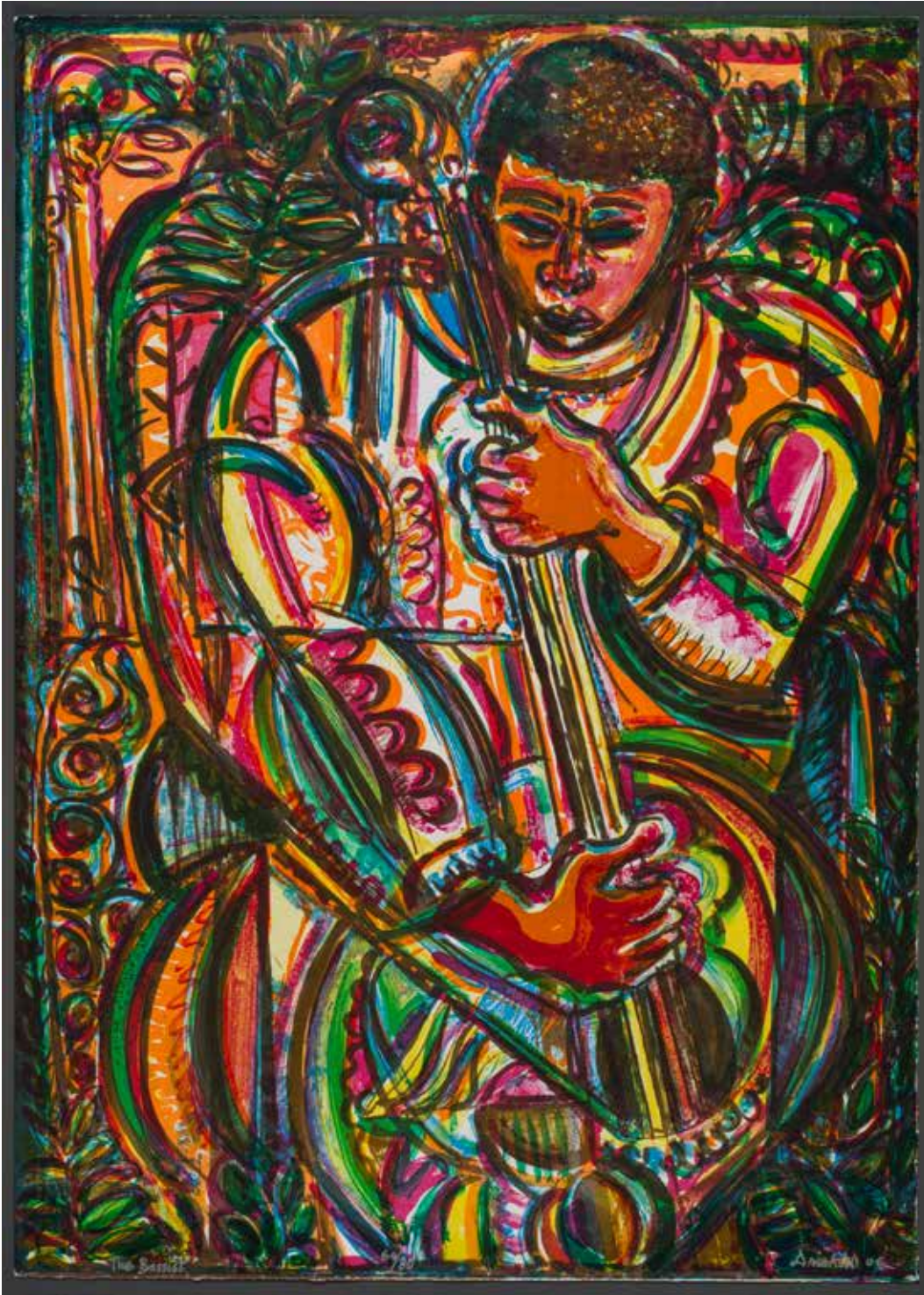
15c

---

**Aaron Douglas (American, 1899–1979)**

Cover illustration for *Opportunity, A Journal of Negro Life*, July 1927

Dickinson College Archives and Special Collections



---

**David Driskell (American, 1931–2020)**

*The Bassist*, 2006, lithograph, 29.75 x 21.25 in. (75.57 x 53.98 cm)

The Trout Gallery, Gift of Darlene Morris, 2021.1.14



---

**Clementine Hunter (American, 1886–1988)**

*Bouquet of Flowers*, c. 1950, oil on canvas, 11 × 16 in. (27.9 × 40.6 cm)  
Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2008-10-1.

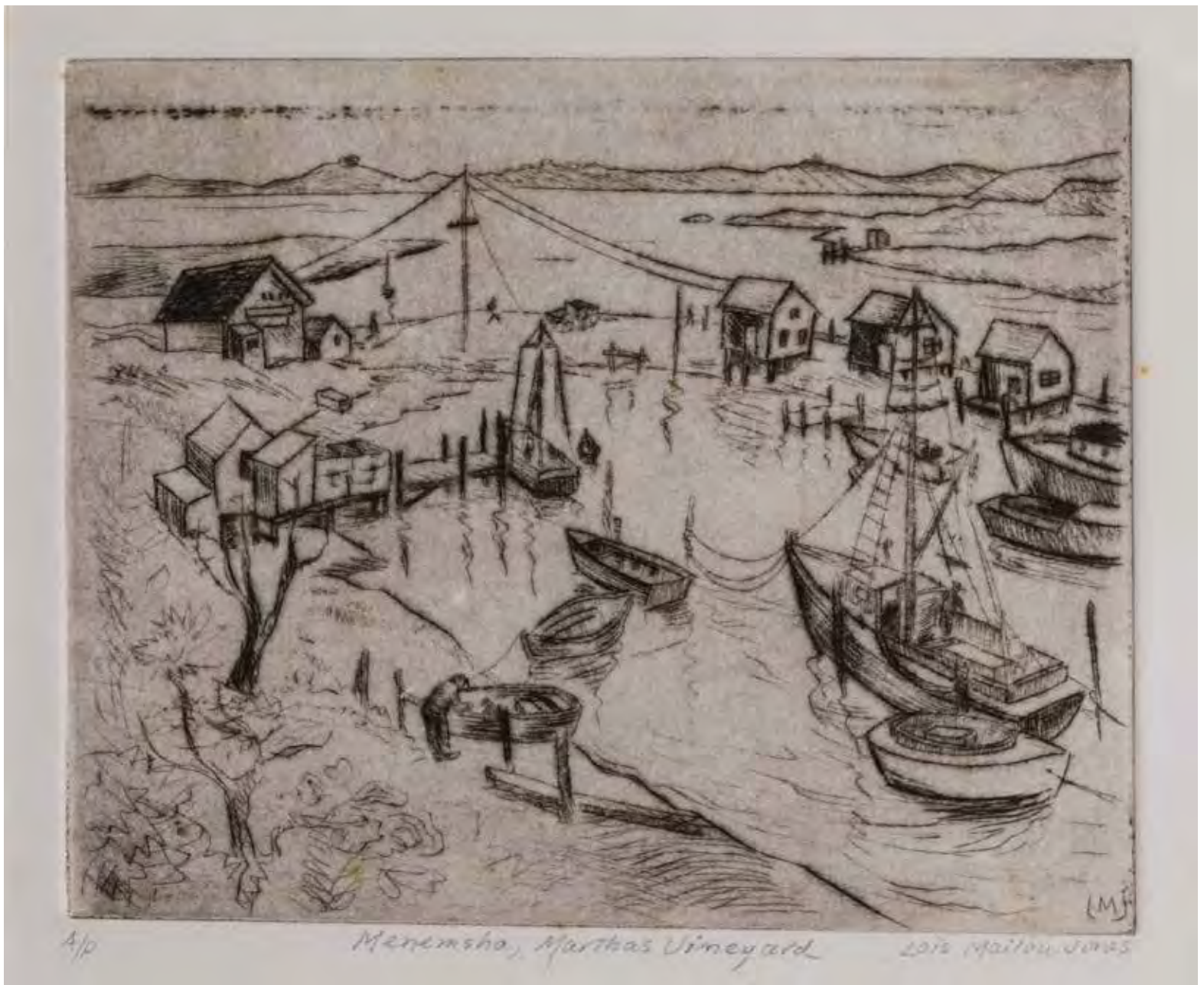


---

**Lois Mailou Jones**  
**(American, 1905–1998)**

*Quarry on the Hudson,*  
1939, etching, aquatint,  
and drypoint, 9 x 7 ½ in.  
(22.9 x 19 cm)

Private Collection



**Lois Mailou Jones (American, 1905–1998)**

*Menemsha, Martha's Vineyard*, 1939, etching, aquatint, and drypoint, 9 x 7 ½ in. (22.9 x 19 cm)

Private Collection



---

**William Henry Johnson (American, 1901–1970)**

*Winter in Kerteminde*, c. 1930-1934, oil on burlap, 21 1/4 × 25 1/4 in. (54 × 64.1 cm)

Philadelphia Museum of Art, Gift of Marguerite and Gerry Lenfest, 2008-183-10.





---

**Jacob Lawrence (American, 1917–2000)**

*Confrontation at The Bridge*, 1975, serigraph, 19.5 x 26 in. (49.53 x 66.04 cm)

The Trout Gallery, Gift of Darlene Morris, 2021.1.23



---

**Jacob Lawrence (American, 1917–2000)**

*Celebration of Heritage*, 1992, serigraph,  
30 x 22 in. (76.2 x 55.88 cm)

The Trout Gallery, Gift of Darlene  
Morris, 2021.1.22



---

**Hughie Lee-Smith**  
**(American, 1915–1999)**

*Young Girl*, 1992, graphite,  
charcoal, and pastel on paper, 12  
 $\frac{3}{4}$  x 10  $\frac{3}{4}$  in. (32.4 x 27.3 cm)

Private Collection



---

**Henry Ossawa Tanner (American (active France),  
1859–1937)**

*Bust of Bishop Benjamin Tucker Tanner, 1894 (cast  
2013), patinated bronze, 15 x 11 1/2 x 8 in.*

Collection of Lewis Tanner Moore



---

**Henry Ossawa Tanner**  
(American (active France),  
1859–1937)

*Doorway in Tangier*, c. 1912, oil on  
canvas, 14 × 10 3/4 in. (35.6 × 27.3  
cm)

Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2004-  
117-1.



---

**Henry Ossawa Tanner (American (active France), 1859–1937)**

*Mosque, Tangier*, c. 1912, etching on paper, 6.88 x 9.38 in. (17.46 x 23.81 cm)

Purchase of the Friends of The Trout Gallery, 2021.6



---

**Henry Ossawa  
Tanner  
(American  
(active France),  
1859–1937)**

*Waiting for the  
Lord*, 1882,  
gouache on  
board, 13 ½ x 12  
in. (34.3 x 30.5  
cm)

Historical  
Society of  
Pennsylvania



---

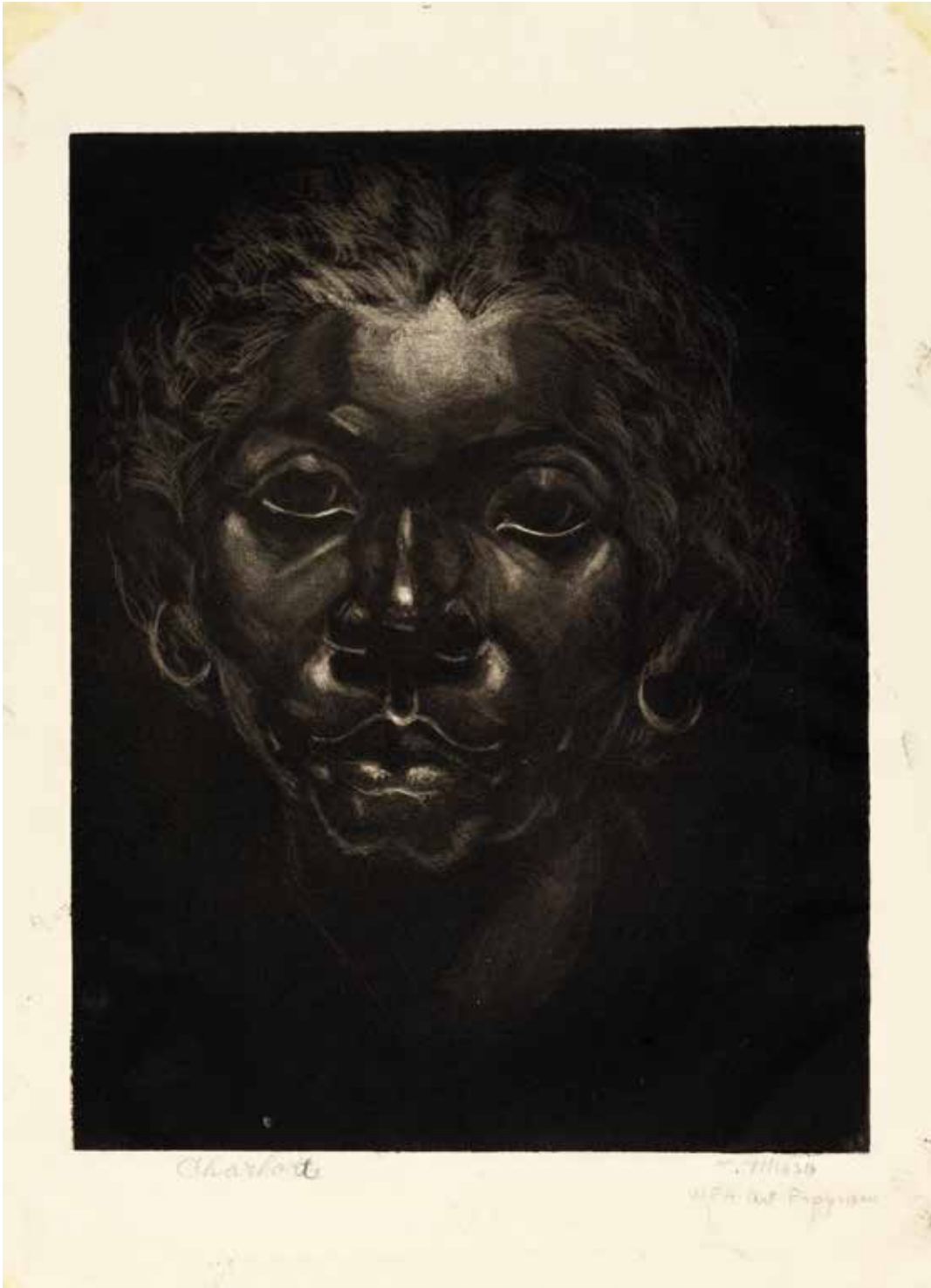
**Alma Thomas (American, 1891–1978)**

*Hydrangeas Spring Song*, 1976, acrylic on canvas, 6 ft. 6 in. × 48 in. (198.1 x 121.9 cm)

Philadelphia Museum of Art, 125th Anniversary Acquisition. Purchased with funds contributed by Mr. and Mrs. Julius Rosenwald II in honor of René and Sarah Carr d'Harnoncourt, The Judith Rothschild Foundation, and with other funds being raised in honor of the 125th Anniversary of the Museum and in celebration of African American art, 2002-20-1.

© Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.





---

**Dox Thrash (American, 1893–1965)**

*Charlotte*, c. 1933–41, carborundum  
mezzotint, 9 x 7 in. (22.9 x 17.8 cm)

Historical Society of Pennsylvania



---

**Dox Thrash (American, 1893–1965)**

*Demolition*, c. 1944, oil on canvas board, 26 x 20 in. (66 x 50.8 cm)

Philadelphia Museum of Art,  
Purchased with the Katharine Levin  
Farrell Fund, 2002-97-1.



*Evening Tide*

THRASH  
W.P.A. Art Program

---

**Dox Thrash (American, 1893–1965)**

*Evening Tide*, c. 1933–41, carborundum mezzotint, 5 x 7 in. (12.7 x 17.8 cm)

Historical Society of Pennsylvania



---

**Dox Thrash (American, 1893–1965)**

*Inveigling*, c. 1933–41, lithograph, 18 ¼  
x 14 ¾ in. (46.4 x 37.5 cm)

Historical Society of Pennsylvania



---

**Dox Thrash**  
**(American, 1893–1965)**

*Linda*, c. 1933–41, lithograph, 8  
1/2 x 6 1/2 in. (21.6 x 16.5 cm)

Historical Society of  
Pennsylvania



---

**Hale Woodruff**  
**(American, 1900–1980)**

*Coming Home*, 1935, linocut,  
19 x 15 in. (48.26 x 38.1 cm)

The Trout Gallery, Gift of  
Darlene Morris, 2021.1.35

## | NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

**JERRY PHILOGENE** is Associate Professor and Director of the Black Studies Program at Middlebury College. Prior to her arrival at Middlebury College, Dr. Philogene was Associate Professor in the Department of American Studies at Dickinson College, where she specialized in interdisciplinary American cultural history, art history, and visual arts of the Caribbean and the African diaspora with an emphasis on the Francophone Caribbean. Her publications have appeared in peer-reviewed journals and exhibition catalogues.

Dr. Philogene is also an independent curator. In 2023, she co-organized with Dr. Katherine Smith *Myrlande Constant: The Work of Radiance*, an exhibition on the contemporary textile works of Haitian artist Myrlande Constant, at the Fowler Museum, UCLA, 2023. Dr. Philogene is the recipient of a 2020 Andy Warhol Foundation Arts Writers Grant for her current book manuscript *The Socially Dead and Improbable Citizen: Visualizing Haitian Humanity and Visual Aesthetics*. She is also writing a monograph on Haitian modernist artist Luce Turnier.

**SHANNON EGAN** is the Director of The Trout Gallery, the Art Museum of Dickinson College, where she curates exhibitions and teaches courses in art history and museum studies. After receiving her MA and PhD in the History of Art from Johns Hopkins University and her BA from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Dr. Egan served as the Director of the Schmucker Art Gallery at Gettysburg College. Her writing has been published in *American Art*, *Visual Resources*, exhibition catalogues, and artists' books.

With photo historian Marthe Tolnes Fjellestad, Dr. Egan is the co-editor of the book *Across the West and Toward the North: Norwegian and American Landscape Photography* (University of Utah Press, 2022) and co-curator of the accompanying exhibition of the same name that traveled to museums throughout the United States and Norway from 2021 through 2024. They received support from the Wyeth Foundation of American Art, the Fritt Ord Foundation, the US Embassy in Oslo, and the American-Scandinavian Foundation.

## THE LEGACY OF TWO CENTURIES OF BLACK AMERICAN ART

June 21–December 20, 2024

The Trout Gallery, The Art Museum of Dickinson College

[www.troutgallery.org](http://www.troutgallery.org)

This exhibition is one in a series of American art exhibitions created through a multi-year, multi-institutional partnership formed by the Philadelphia Museum of Art as part of the Art Bridges Cohort Program.



Generous programming support provided by Art Bridges.

This publication was produced in part through the generous support of the Helen Trout Memorial Fund and the Ruth Trout Endowment at Dickinson College.

Published by The Trout Gallery, Dickinson College Carlisle, Pennsylvania 17013

Copyright © 2024 The Trout Gallery.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without written permission from The Trout Gallery.

ISBN 979-8-9869735-2-4

**DESIGN:** Krista Hanley, Dickinson College Print Center

**PHOTOGRAPHY:** Andy Bale

**PRINTING:** Brilliant, Exton, Pennsylvania Printed in the United States

**FRONT COVER:** Romare Bearden (American, 1911–1988), *Carolina Morning* (detail), 1979, serigraph on paper, 22 x 27 .75 in. (55 .88 x 70 .49 cm), The Trout Gallery, Gift of Darlene Morris, 2021 .1 .4.

**BACK COVER:** David Driskell (1931-2020), *The Bassist* (detail), 2006, lithograph, 29 .75 x 21 .25 in . (75 .57 x 53 .98 cm), The Trout Gallery, Gift of Darlene Morris, 2021 .1 .14.





