

Wednesdays are dedicated to Black Women in Art

Beverly A Thomas

Beverly A Thomas, a woman I've become very fond of, is this week's BWIA. I so love how we discuss things at Art Chat and they manifest in different ways. During our weekly meeting, someone showed one of Beverly's paintings which led to me adding more to today's feature.

Beverly, The Creative

Beverly Thomas is a world-renowned artist, musician, and educator who has dedicated her life to creating works that are both spiritual and beautiful. She has spent years honing her craft and developing her unique style, which combines elements of impressionism and realism with a deep appreciation for the spiritual and the divine.

Beverly's educational journey

Born in Detroit, Michigan, Beverly Thomas shared her artistic talents as a musician for many years. She received her Bachelor of Science Degree in Music Education, Wayne State University and a Master of Arts Degree in Organ Performance, University of Michigan, with additional work there toward her Ph.D. in Educational Administration.

Beverly is renowned for

Thomas is known for her ability to create works that are both deeply personal and universally resonant. Her music and art are infused with a sense of wonder and awe at the beauty and people of the world around us, as well as a deep reverence for life experiences.

Beverly's impact as an educator

As a Detroit educator, Thomas taught vocal music. She has inspired countless students to pursue their own passions and explore their own creative potential. Her administrative positions include having served with distinction in Detroit public schools as Department Head of Fine Arts and

Foreign Language at Mumford High School, and Principal of the award winning Renaissance High School.

Throughout her career, Thomas has received numerous awards and accolades for her contributions to the arts.

Beverly performs

An accomplished pipe organist, Thomas has performed in organ concerts throughout the United States and parts of South Africa. Coursework at Union Theological Seminary in New York in Sacred Music and Organ Performance added to her musical skills.

Beverly's travels

Beverly spent time traveling with her husband, the late Bishop Robert Thomas, Jr., during his appointment as the 107th elected and consecrated Bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, she worked with him in South Africa as a missionary, the 8th (Mississippi and Louisiana) and they completed their tenure of Episcopal service in the 4th Episcopal District (Michigan) which is "home" for them.

Beverly's legacy

Beverly enjoys popularity as a professional artist, exhibiting her paintings throughout the United States, South Africa, Namibia and Canada. She is a Golden Life Member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. and a Life Member of the NAACP. Thomas is extremely proud of the Beverly Thomas Scholarship Trust in South Africa and other scholarship efforts established under her leadership in the 8th and 4th Episcopal Districts. Each scholarship program was established through her efforts and sale of prints from her original art work.

Beverly's legacy continues

"MOBEV GALLERY is a space that celebrates the beauty and complexity of human life. We believe that art has the power to inspire, heal, and transform, and we are committed to showcasing works that capture the essence of what it means to be human. Our collection is a testament to the power of family, friendship, and community, and we strive to create an environment that fosters connection and understanding. Through our exhibitions and events, we hope to inspire people to explore their own experiences and connect with others in meaningful ways. Our vision is to create a world where art is a source of joy, inspiration, and healing for all."

✨"Mother" Beverly Thomas is an artist, musician, and educator whose work is a testament to the power of creativity and the human spirit. Her contributions to the arts have inspired countless people around the world, and her legacy will continue to inspire future generations for years to come. ✨

Credit: movegallery + The AMEC Supervisors Council

Anita Sewell

Abstract Artist Anita Sewell is a Collect Black Art Artist whose passion for her art is evident in the video below.

Anita grew up in The D

Anita enjoyed her childhood, growing up in Detroit, Michigan. Her childhood taught her that she could be whoever she wanted to be.

What formed Anita's art

Starting out, some 15 years ago, Anita mostly used acrylic paint. However, she has begun experimenting with oil-based paint, which * takes her back to her childhood. Her motto when developing her pieces is, "Be a kid first, then be an adult." This motto shapes her technique when creating art. While critics may say, "I could have done that" Anita knows that even she cannot produce the same piece twice, and she would like to see the critic try. Another medium that transports her back to childhood is charcoal. When charcoal colors her hands, she lets her hands lead her, and a beautiful piece of art emerges.

What Anita is most proud of

Anita's greatest achievement to date was a commissioned piece for her cousin. The piece shows Anita's mom and aunt walking down a path holding hands. This piece stretched her in amazing ways and is now hanging proudly in her cousin's home.


Societal impact on Anita's art

The pandemic and racial climate has also affected Anita's work. She felt the pain of the world and that pain shaped some of her recent works. One such work is entitled "Blood on My Hands" , which is on display today.

She wants people to know that it is not their fault. She also wants people to know that they will be ok.

Channel Anita as you admire her work

As you browse Anita's work allow your inner child to feel how she felt. There are also pieces that will speak to you as an adult. The art you are seeing are works of peace. She wants to share her peace with you. Each piece is an original piece, she hopes her art inspires you to smile and be happy. If you would like to know the story behind each piece, Anita welcomes the opportunity to share the story with you.

Want to see Anita's  up close & personal, check out her exhibit at Biggby Coffee in Madison Heights this Sunday through June 13th.

IG: @4everamarie

Carol Morisseau

As the granddaughter of a craftsman and the daughter of a visual artist, the native Detroiter is a lifelong artist by practice and in legacy.

Morisseau's work manifests in paintings, illustration and mixed media; and her career trajectory has traversed many forms, from visual art to dance and teaching.

Credit: Detour Detroiter

“My investigation has always considered the movement of the observer's eye in the development of composition. My charge is to organize space on a two dimensional surface in a meaningful manner that forms a visual rhythm. This challenge remains constant whether working figuratively or abstractly with few points of departure.”

Credit: Morisseau Art

“Healing Wall”

I was inspired to create these pieces by my exposure to the custom of tying ribbons onto the fence of a famous Cathedral or onto wrists in Maranhao, Brazil. I found the custom to be similar to the funeral customs of Ghana. I was intrigued by their similarity despite they're being an ocean apart. “Healing Wall” is a 3 dimensional interactive art installation that asks participants to write down the name of a black, brown, or indigenous

person that has been killed or brutalized by the police or a corrupt system. The participant will write this name on a ribbon and the artist attaches the ribbons to a grid. In Brazil, a black person is killed by police every 23 minutes. In the piece each ribbon represents a human life taken. There are over 4000 ribbons in the piece. Interspersed throughout the work are painted oil portraits of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and other Black and Brown people from around the globe who have suffered or met their demise through this brutality. If we can collectively grieve, then maybe we can collectively heal. “ Healing doesn’t mean the damage never existed. It means the damage no longer controls our lives.” Native American proverb. Credit: Fulbright

Faith Ringgold

Life of Faith Ringgold, 1930-2024

Although Faith Ringgold was not a Detroiter, our art collector’s group discussed her significance to and in the art world. I was 1st introduced to her by Dexter via calendars of her work and Marilyn through her children’s books such as Tar Beach. Today, we revisited Tar Beach and, had a moment of silence in Faith Ringgold’s honor.

Anyone can fly. All you need is somewhere to go that you cant get to any other way. The next thing you know, you’re flying among the stars.
– Faith Ringgold, “Tar Beach” (1991)

The Early Years

Born Faith Willi Jones on October 8, 1930, in Harlem, Faith Ringgold was a pioneering painter, mixed media sculptor, performance artist, author, teacher and activist whose powerful works address issues of race, gender, and social justice. Ringgold’s innovative use of quilting and storytelling techniques revolutionized the art world by bridging the gap between fine art and craft traditions.

The First Quilt

Ringgold made her first quilt, Echoes of Harlem, in 1980, in collaboration with her mother, Madame Willi Posey who was a prominent Harlem fashion designer. Ringgold’s quilts were an extension of her tankas from the 1970’s. Ringgold’s first story quilt, Who’s Afraid of Aunt Jemima?, was written in 1983 as a way of publishing her unedited words.

Another First

Ringgold's first children's book, the award-winning *Tar Beach*, was published in 1991 by Crown. An animated version with Natalie Cole providing the voice-over was produced by HBO in 1999. The book is based on the story quilt of the same title from the 1988 *Woman on a Bridge* series.

Accolades

Ringgold was the recipient of over 100 awards and honors; author of 20 children's books; and subject of the recent critically acclaimed touring exhibition "Faith Ringgold: American People" (2022–2024).

Credit: faithringgold.com

Carole Harris

Another recommended artist, Detroit, Carole Harris. Cool to learn Carole and I are both Wayne State alumni.

CAROLE HARRIS is

CAROLE HARRIS is a fiber artist who has redefined and subverted the basic concepts of quilting to suit her own purposes. She extends the boundaries of traditional quilting by exploring other forms of stitchery, irregular shapes, textures, materials and objects.

A Mother's Influence

Carole's mother introduced her to needle arts at an early age, teaching her embroidery and crocheting. Sewing classes in elementary school increased her skills. It wasn't until she received a BFA in art from Wayne State University in Detroit in 1966 that she began to explore fibers as an art form.

"Many of my early quilts have architectural and geometric themes, which I am sure is influenced by my years as an interior designer, working with architectural forms," she says. Carole enjoyed a career as an interior designer for over 45 years, 33 years as president of Harris Design Group, LLC (HDG), the interior and graphic design firm that she founded in 1976 and dissolved in 2009 to devote full time to her studio art practice.

Exploration through Travel

Travels to Europe, China, Japan and the Caribbean have led her to explore how time impacts and alters our natural and constructed environments.

"I now draw inspiration from walls, aging structures and objects that reveal years of use. My intention is to celebrate the beauty in the frayed, the decaying and the repaired. I want to capture the patina of color softened by time, as well as feature the nicks, scratches, scars and other marks left by nature or humans on constructed and natural surfaces. I want to interpret these changes and tell these stories of time, place and people in cloth, using creative stitching, layering and the mixing of colorful and textured fabrics."

The Technique

As to her technique: "I primarily use commercially printed cottons, silks, hand dyed and vintage fabrics, which I often alter by overdyeing or painting. Recent investigations have led me to employ found objects, paper, rust dyeing, collage, and even burning as techniques. These materials are cut up, overlaid, and repositioned until I know I have arrived at my destination of a densely layered collage. This top layer is then sewn to an inner layer and back by machine using traditional and non-traditional quilting techniques and hand embroidery."

Recognizing Carole

Carole's work has received numerous awards, including a 2015 Kresge Visual Arts Fellowship. Her work has been exhibited in museums and galleries nationally and internationally, including the Renwick Gallery of the Smithsonian Institution, in Washington, D.C; the Museum of Art & Design and the Folk Art Museum (both in New York City), and galleries in Europe, Japan and South America. She continues to be honored with multiple solo exhibitions. Her work has been published extensively, and she is much in demand as a lecturer and juror.

Website: [charris-design](http://charris-design.com)

Tiff Massey

I "claim" 6 and Livernois so there was no doubt I'd feature Tiff Massey who is not only from 7 and Livernois, it is the name of her history making

exhibition. Plus, she was recommended by a previous Woman in Black Art honoree.

Who is Tiff Massey

Tiff Massey is an interdisciplinary artist from Detroit, Michigan. She holds an MFA in metalsmithing from Cranbrook Academy of Art. Her work, inspired by African standards of economic vitality, includes both large-scale and wearable sculptures, music and performance. Massey counts the iconic material culture of 1980's hip-hop as a major influence in her jewelry. She uses contemporary observances of class and race through the lens of an African diaspora, combined with inspiration drawn from her experience in Detroit.

Tiff's Accolades

Tiff Massey is a 2015 Kresge Arts in Detroit Fellowship awardee, as well as a two-time John S. and James L. Knight Foundation's Knight Arts Challenge winner, and the 2019 recipient of Art Jewelry Forum's Susan Beech Mid-Career Artist Grant. Massey has participated in numerous international residencies including Red Bull in Detroit, Ideas City (in Detroit, Athens, Greece and Arles, France) hosted by The New Museum of New York and with the Volterra-Detroit Foundation in Volterra, Italy. Tiff Massey's work has been widely exhibited in both national and international museums and galleries.

Credit: tiffmassey

7 Mile + Livernois

In May 2024 (May 5th), the Detroit Institute of Arts (DIA) will open a new solo exhibition from Tiff Massey (MFA Metalsmithing 2011), Detroit-based artist and Cranbrook Academy of Art alumna. The exhibition's title, 7 Mile + Livernois, refers to the neighborhood at the heart of Detroit's Black business and fashion district. It is also where Massey grew up, and the site of a new art and community space Massey is building that blends her craft with her drive for community kinship.

7 Mile + Livernois will be on view from May 5, 2024, to May 5, 2025.

Massey Exhibitions

The Detroit Institute of Arts (DIA) describes the show as Massey's most ambitious museum presentation. She has previously exhibited at the DIA, Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History (Detroit), The

Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit, Detroit Historical Museum, Cranbrook Art Museum, Muskegon Museum of Art, and Center for Contemporary Craft (Houston), among many other galleries and institutions.

Massey is a champion for Detroit and its artists.

More Accolades

Massey is a 2021 United States Artists Fellow. She received the Art Jewelry Forum Susan Beech Mid-Career Artist Grant in 2019 and a Kresge Arts in Detroit Fellowship in 2015. She is a two-time winner of The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation's Knight Arts Challenge.

Credit: Cranbrook Academy of Art

Sabrina Nelson

Detroit Artist Sabrina Nelson warmly greeted a SisterFriend and I when we attended the Cranbrook Art Museum's Skilled Labor: Black Realism in Detroit Exhibition Artist Talk hosted by Sabrina's son, and co-curator of the exhibition, Mario Moore. Sabrina (and Mario), was one of the 20 contemporary artists featured. Additionally, one of Sabrina's former students and, BWIA (Black Women un Art) alum, Sydney James, was in the show as well.

Sabrina is

Sabrina Nelson was born in the wake of the '67 Rebellion in Detroit, Michigan. She is a painter by degree from Detroit's College for Creative Studies. Influenced by Yoruba Religion, as well as Eastern and African philosophies, Sabrina's work is a combination of spirit, motion, and intimacy. Not limited by two dimensions, the scope of her work also includes sculpture, objects, performance and installations.

Educator of the Arts

Sabrina has been a professional artist for over 35 years and an educator for nearly as long. As a studio art teacher at the Detroit Institute of Arts, she lectures and performs artist demonstrations. She is also on staff at the College for Creative Studies, where she works hard at motivating and preparing students to pursue art degrees in Detroit.

Influencing Artistic Spaces

Sabrina has lectured on the preservation of Black Feminism in Art at the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History in Detroit. She is a guest curator at both The Carr Center and the Music Hall Performing Arts Center. For over 30 years she has judged art competitions, curated numerous art talks and exhibits, and conducted interviews of guest artists for the City of Detroit's Culture video channel MyDetroitCable.

Sabrina's Work

Her work has been exhibited at the Detroit Institute of Arts, the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History, the Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit, and the African American Art in Culture complex in San Francisco. Sabrina's work has also been exhibited in Florida, New York, Louisiana, Illinois and Ohio. Her work is in the permanent collection of the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History and private collections in Florida, New York, Ohio, Georgia, California, and Michigan. She has also shown work at Jakmel Gallery as part of Art Basel Miami, as well as at the American University in Paris.

Website: sabinanelsonart

Gilda Snow

Introducing Gilda Snow

Detroit's Gilda Snowden (1954–2014) was a graduate of Cass Technical High School and Wayne State University, where she received a BFA, MA, and MFA in Painting. She was Interim Chair and Professor of Fine Arts at the College for Creative Studies, and also Gallery Director of the Detroit Repertory Theatre. Snowden's works have been exhibited throughout the United States, as well as in Mexico, Canada, and West Africa. Her works are featured in a number of publications, as well as private and corporate collections, including Post/Newsweek, the Neiman-Marcus Corporation, Ameritech, Blue Cross/Blue Shield, and The Detroit Institute of Arts.

Credit: kresgeartsindetroit

What Delineates Snowden's Work

What delineates Snowden's work are the imperatives of introspection, meditation and production. These facets, which are both contemplative and robust, facilitate objects and images born out of necessity, bursting with assurance, expressive resonance and personal history. There is also the

overt physical presence of an amalgamation of the biographical and historical with the physically extant - the interior and implicit juxtaposed against the exterior and explicit.


Snowden's Sense of Identity

These portrayals are inscribed with Snowden's sense of identity. On the subject of being a black artist, she has said that some people expect African American artists to make work about one thing and one thing only: being black. She counters: "To be an African American artist, especially a female artist, is a political statement. This opened me up to abstraction." In other words, she is a political artist, but maintains the right to select her vehicle of expression.

Credit: M Contemporary Art

IG: gildasnowdenestate

Linda Whitaker

In October of 2023, a group of us visited the home of David and Linda Whitaker to view their art collection and, was BLOWN away. Paintings, drawings, sculptures and antique furniture covered every inch of their home. They even have stained glass windows and humongous doors from churches throughout their home. Not only did Linda remind me of the Breakfast Club (keep reading) that artist Judy Bowman introduced to me, I'm now a more intentional collector as a result of meeting Linda. She armed us with a list of artists to invest in and I've  off acquisitions while adding more to my list.

The Detroit Fine Arts Breakfast Club

The Whitakers are long-standing members of the Detroit Fine Arts Breakfast Club, which meets each Monday morning at Marygrove College and connects local artists with peers and collectors, which, in turn, enables collectors to continue investing in Detroit's art community.

Inspiring art collectors

"I would like to say that people should not be afraid to collect artwork," Linda Whitaker said. "We all collect something. And the artists are very friendly, and they will work with you because they're excited to have you want their work — most artists have something you can afford, if you just

ask them. And they'll work with you to make sure that you can get the work. That's my advice to new collectors."

Credit: Free Press

The Alain Locke Recognition Award

(David and) Linda Whitaker are among Detroit's most widely known and respected names in the local art-collecting community. The couple of 38 years has quietly spent decades amassing a marvelous collection of mostly African American art, from mostly Detroit artists, and were honored with the Friends of African and African American Art's Alain Locke Recognition Award on February 11th at the Detroit Institute of Arts (DIA).

Dale Pryor

Dale Pryor is another Detroit must I was told I HAD to include in my weekly dedications.

Cultural Impact

Dell Pryor's cultural impact on Detroit can be traced in a wide arch across the city, from Eastern Market through points downtown, spanning the latter half of the twentieth century, to the Midtown gallery today.

After College

After college Dell had spent a good chunk of the '60s and '70s as a freelance commercial and residential interior designer. In school she had been eager to get out into the world and design. "I didn't understand why I had to study art history, art appreciation, learn about painting and sculpting before I could start designing," she says. But In the end, it was the breadth and depth of that education that really "ignited" her passion for arts more broadly. In her design work she began commissioning local artists. "I became very excited about not just introducing my clients to art, but about finding places in people's homes and offices for artists' work to be shown." When these passions grew beyond the bounds of her work, she began a modest show space in Eastern Market.

Detroit's Scarab Club

Dell Pryor, called the "grand dame" of Detroit's arts scene, is the first Black and female gallerist invited to sign a beam at the Scarab Club. It's a tradition that has been happening since shortly after the club's building was completed in 1928.

A Constant

Dell has been a constant ever since she opened up decades ago in Eastern Market," said Wilkinson. "She's really championed a lot of artists who wouldn't have much visibility otherwise." Not many gallerists have had Pryor's staying power, said Mariuca Rofick, board president at the Scarab Club. "As a curator her gallery spaces have had a significant cultural impact in the city for decades as she tirelessly showcased both new and established artists," said Rofick in a press release.

Credit: Detroit News

Over Time

Over a fifteen year span in Harmonie Park, Dell showcased and brought in local and national artists, as well as a performing arts component that focused largely on live jazz.

Credit: Model Media

Show Space

A show space in the Market became a cultural destination in the late Trapper's Alley throughout the '80s, but when the cranes of development came swinging through Greektown, the casino subsumed her space, and Dell moved to Harmonie Park.

Website: dellpryorgalleries

Sydney G. James

Meet Sydney G. James, proudly a girl raised in, and by, Detroit

Sydney and I met last summer at her talk at MOCAD and continue to run into each other.

The D & Sydney

Sydney G. James, proudly a girl raised in, and by, Detroit. Her name is synonymous with colors and brushwork as strikingly defiant, and ever changing, as the city itself.

The Artist in Flow

Since returning to her hometown in 2011, Sydney has personified artist in flow, quickly building upon her creative roots as a BFA graduate of Detroit's College for Creative Studies. Her murals have transformed Detroit's skyline and its arts narrative, and helped her earn a coveted 2017 Kresge Arts in Detroit Fellowship.

The Painter on a Mission

She is a painter on a pointed mission to let each brush stroke spark conversations long silenced. In paintings and murals, Black women are first. Never last and never forgotten. Her works boldly rewrite the narrative in hues evoking the complexities of Black reality, joy and pain, and phoenix-like resilience.

The Exhibitions

Her artwork has been exhibited at Detroit's Museum of Contemporary Art and Design (MOCAD), the Charles H. Wright Museum, Inner State Gallery, PlayGround Detroit Gallery, Collective Detroit Gallery, Detroit Artist Market, Red Bull House of Art; and Janice Charach galleries as well as the Arts, Beats and Lyrics traveling exhibit. Sydney's murals have lit up walls in New Orleans, Brooklyn, NY; Atlanta, GA.; Los Angeles, CA.; Pow Wow Hawaii, Pow Wow Long Beach, Pow Wow Worcester, and across six continents.

The Mural Takeover

She is a co-founder of the biannual BLKOUT Walls street mural festival which debuted in Detroit in 2021. Sydney's artwork is featured by major marketing brands looking for authentic cultural connection. Brands include: Vans shoes, PepsiCo, Ford Motor Company, Detroit Pistons, Detroit Lions, as well as being one of the faces of the Lip Bar brand of cosmetics.

Dr. Cledie Taylor

When I shared at the Art Chat, group of collectors, this series, in unison, everyone said "you have to include Dr. Cledie Taylor! Although Dr. Taylor is a force in the art world, Detroit and Black/African American art in particular, little is written about her. Sharing what I found.

Please note, this Detroit trailblazer turns 98 on March 8th.

Arts Extended

Founded in Detroit in 1952, and currently located in a quiet neighborhood tucked between I-96 and Tireman and Livernois Avenues, Arts Extended is a 70-year-old project that is a contender for the nation's longest continuously operating Black arts organization.

Why Arts Extended

Arts Extended began as a group for Black arts educators and professionals, inspired by art's potential to enrich lives but excluded from much of the city's art establishment. Initially, they met monthly to discuss topics relating to art and collecting. In their early years, they hosted two annual pop-up shows to display their art. The first was a group show of members' work, and the second was a more commercial exhibition in the run-up to Christmas. They invited their friends and started to develop an educated collector base.

Enters Dr. Cledie Taylor

Dr. Cledie Taylor was a founding member of Arts Extended in the early 1950s and has been a quietly forceful presence in the Detroit art world since. Widely traveled, she is best known artistically as a metalsmith and sculptor. Dr. Taylor studied with the esteemed metal arts Professor Philip Fike at Wayne State University, with a particular focus on working Niello, a traditional black silver alloy, and she received her Ph.D. in Art History from Antioch College. Now in her mid-90s, she talks precisely and energetically about upcoming exhibitions and new projects such as a "beautifully illustrated" neighborhood newsletter and a library for the Arts Extended archives.

Credit: Metro Times

Judy Bowman

Meet Detroit mixed-media collage artist Judy Bowman.

I had the pleasure of learning about and meeting Judy last winter during her artist talk at MOCAD. Judy shared her early days at what is now the Detroit Fine Arts Breakfast Club (DFABC) of which I am now a member. DFABC is dedicated to nurturing artists' talents and teaching them the business aspect of art.

Artist Biography

The Medium

Judy Bowman is a mixed-media collage artist who was born and raised in Detroit, Michigan. Considering herself a visual griot, she sees her job to tell stories that are reflective of her coming-of-age in Detroit's Eastside and Black Bottom neighborhoods. Scenes in her vibrant collages depict love, community and a type of fellowship that resides in jazzy nights, the sway of young Black women and the swag of young Black men, church on Sundays followed by family dinner, family outings and cultural dignity and richness.

The Collections

Bowman's work appears in private and public collections—nationally and internationally—including Institutional Collections of the Sarasota African American Cultural Coalition, Sarasota, Florida; The Free Press building, Detroit, Michigan; R.W. Norton Art Gallery/ Museum, Shreveport, Louisiana; Georgetown University Library, Booth Family For Special Collections, Washington DC, US Department of State, Art Bank Program, Washington, DC; and the Flint Institute of Arts, Flint, Michigan.

“Through my artistry, I aspire to leave a legacy for my children and grandchildren that paints our rich and complex history. I want my art to serve as a gift of joy from me to the universe and continue to make an impact long after I am gone.”

Judy Bowman

Credit: Judybowmanartist.com

Artis Lane

Meet “Detroit” Canadian painter and sculptor Artis Lane.

I chose Artis next as I've recently acquired one of her paintings. As with many of her pieces, it's a nude. After the acquisition, I realized I'd “attracted and manifested” it as I'm going through my “falling in love with myself and body” phase. Curious to know why nudes are a significant part of her work, I read “A Woman's Journey: The Life and Work of Artis Lane” and learned Artis sees the woman's body as a temple. This gave me a new perspective and appreciation for this blue chip painting.

All my life I have worked on three levels of consciousness:

Portraits, Social Injustice & Metaphysics

In my work I strive to heal, uplift and inspire viewers and collectors to find perfection in their own being.

Artis Lane

The Early Years

Artis Lane was born near an all Black village in North Buxton, Ontario, Canada. After three years of art college in Toronto, Canada, Artis Shreve Lane moved to Detroit to study at Cranbrooke Art Academy. While in the Motor City she painted and sculpted the portraits of many of the business and political leaders of the day; Governor George Romney, Ford family members and! Coleman Young, the Mayor of Detroit. From Detroit she moved to New York City, spent time in Texas, Ruidoso, New Mexico and traveled to Mexico City, Mexico to paint many of the prominent families in the region. She eventually returned to Los Angeles where she has called the city home for over 35 years.

The Dignitaries

Since her early prominence in Detroit her portrait work has depicted dignitaries like Jacqueline Kennedy, Nelson Mandela, Gordon Getty, President Reagan, Oprah Winfrey and today both the First Lady and President Obama.

The Social Injustice Artist

"Social issues became the next focus of her work. She was honored by the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery in Washington DC during the installation of her bronze portrait of civil rights leader and long time friend, Rosa Parks. In 1999 she was selected to design the Congressional Medal of Honor awarded to Ms.Parks." Marlina Donahue LA Times Art Critic

"My Civil Rights images led me naturally to ideas about what and who we are outside of race. I went from there to the most important body of work, the metaphysical images of generic man and generic woman emerging out of the ignorance of material concepts and evolving into spiritual awareness."

Artis Lane

The Messages in Her Art

"In the jaded 1990s, conceptual art rendered spiritual messages an artistic taboo. Always ahead of her time, Lane has never veered from her subject matter, regardless of the vagaries of what happened to be "in" or "out." As the new century opened, Museum shows and reviews indicate that more and more artwork had begun to deal with questions plaguing us: who are we, why are we here, what does our spiritual life entail? As this content inevitably comes to the fore, Lane's work becomes more and more germane. As we catch up to her profound vision, Lane will point the way to the future with work that addresses our highest selves.

Marlina Donahue LA Times Art Critic

These questions lead her to her Metaphysical work. She leaves the workings of the foundry: the gaiting material, ceramic shell mold, etc., (the "birthing" materials of the foundry), on the bronze to symbolize generic man emerging out of material thinking into spiritual consciousness.

She then shows the work in pairs... the traditional black patina bronze, with the ceramic shell pieces as a metaphor for the moralistic/materialistic conversations that mankind has wrestled with throughout eternity.

The New Millennium

The new millennium brought new challenges and celebrations of her work. At the age of 80, Lane was commissioned to create a 12 ft bronze of her "Emerging First Man." The sculpture was created for an 1100 acre private estate community in Atlanta, GA. In 2007 she was honored by The California African American Museum with a retrospective of her life's work which included almost 100 works of art. One of her latest creations was unveiled by First Lady Michelle Obama, her bust of Abolitionist and Suffragette, Sojourner Truth. The bust has been installed in Emancipation Hall and is part of the collection of the United States Capitol.

Shirley Woodson

Meet acclaimed Detroit artist Shirley Woodson

In reading « The Walter O. Evans Collection of African American Art », he shares how significant Shirley was in his art journey. Being a Detroit, I thought of no one better to kickoff this weekly series.

“Paintings are my diaries; drawings are my prose; collage is my poetry; assemblages are my dialogue,” notes artist, educator, arts advocate, and now 2021 Kresge Eminent Artist, Shirley Woodson.

The Early Years

Woodson connected with her creative energy at a young age leading to a BFA and MA from Wayne State University and additional graduate studies in painting and art history at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

The Exposure

Known for bold and expressive use of color and brush strokes in large-scale, figurative paintings, Woodson’s paintings have garnered attention from far and wide. In 1966, she received a prestigious MacDowell Fellowship. She used this opportunity to explore new ideas and techniques, including collage, a medium that continues to provide a counterpoint and complement to her paintings. Woodson has been featured in over 30 solo exhibitions, and her paintings are included in more than 20 permanent collections across the United States including, locally, the Detroit Institute of Arts and Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History. She is also featured in “The Art of Black American Women: Works of Twenty-Four Artists of the Twentieth Century” (McFarland Publishing, 1993) and “Gumbo Ya Ya: Anthology of Contemporary African-American Women Artists” (Midmarch Arts Press, 1995), among other books and publications.

The NCA Michigan Chapter

In 1974, she co-founded the Michigan chapter of the National Conference of Artists (NCA), the longest-running national arts organization dedicated to nurturing, developing, and promoting opportunities for Black visual artists. Woodson is an executive board member with the national organization and is the president of the Michigan chapter.

The Kresge Eminent Artist Award

The Kresge Eminent Artist Award is a \$50,000 no strings attached prize. Woodson’s life and work clearly and thoroughly reflect the award criteria, including a distinguished record of high quality work, professional achievement, and significant impact in the arts, paired with generously sharing one’s talent, expertise, and contributions to the growth and vibrancy of Detroit’s cultural environment.

The Detroit Art Scene

Upon receiving the award, Woodson noted that Detroit is fortunate to “have an arts community that’s never stopped.” In large part, that is due to the unwavering commitment and decades of education and advocacy for which she is renowned.