

## **ARTIST STATEMENT**

I am merely a receiver, an instrument for receiving some of those energies that permeate our entire universe, and I give thanks for having been chosen to absorb those artistic forces. I try to paint and sculpt African people, working always to portray those characteristics true of their beauty, their power, and their love. We are but shadows of those who have gone before us, and as I enter the world of the spirits I hope, by example, to touch a positive nerve in our youth. — Otto Neals

**OTTO NEALS, PAINTER, SCULPTOR, AND PRINTMAKER** was born in Lake City, South Carolina. His family moved to Brooklyn, NY where he has resided ever since. He is basically self-taught, although he did study briefly at the Brooklyn Museum with Isaac Soyer, and at the Robert Blackburn Printmaking Workshop with Mohammed Khalil, Roberto DeLamonica, and Krishna Reddy. He is proficient in many mediums including oils, watercolors, pastels, and wood and stone carving.

In 1958 he participated in the newly founded Fulton Art Fair, where he met artists such as Tom Feelings, Alvin Hollingsworth, Vivian Schuyler Key, Vincent Smith, and the original co-chairs Ernest Crichlow and Jacob Lawrence. To date, he is the only artist who has taken part in the exhibitions each year since its inception. He was also a founding member of the Harlem-based Weusi Artists, which maintained a gallery called Nyumba Ya Sanaa.

Neals' works are in the collections of several notables including the late Harry Belafonte, the former NYC councilmember, the Honorable Una Clarke, the late musician Randy Weston, the late congressman John Lewis, the late Ruby Dee, and Oprah Winfrey. His works are also included in the Ghana National Museum, The Studio Museum in Harlem, and The Schomburg Library. He was commissioned by the Ezra Jack Keats Foundation to create a bronze sculpture titled "Peter and Willie" for the Imagination Playground in Brooklyn's Prospect Park, for which he was awarded the NYC Art Commission Award for Excellence in Design. Other commissions include ten bronze plaques for the Harlem Walk of Fame and a bronze work called "Discovery" for the Brooklyn Children's Center.

His works have been exhibited at Kenkeleba Gallery, The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York State Museum, Albany, NY, Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY, and one-man shows at The Schenectady Museum, Schenectady, NY, Benedict College, Columbia, SC, and The Columbia Museum of Art, Columbia, SC.

He was chosen to create the June 1986 cover of Black Enterprise, for which he also posed. Images of his works have been included in Ebony Magazine, élan magazine, sculpture magazine, Time Out, African Voices, The International Review of African American Art, and Who's Who in American Art. The artist and writer, Elton Fax, included him in "Black Artists of the New Generation."