



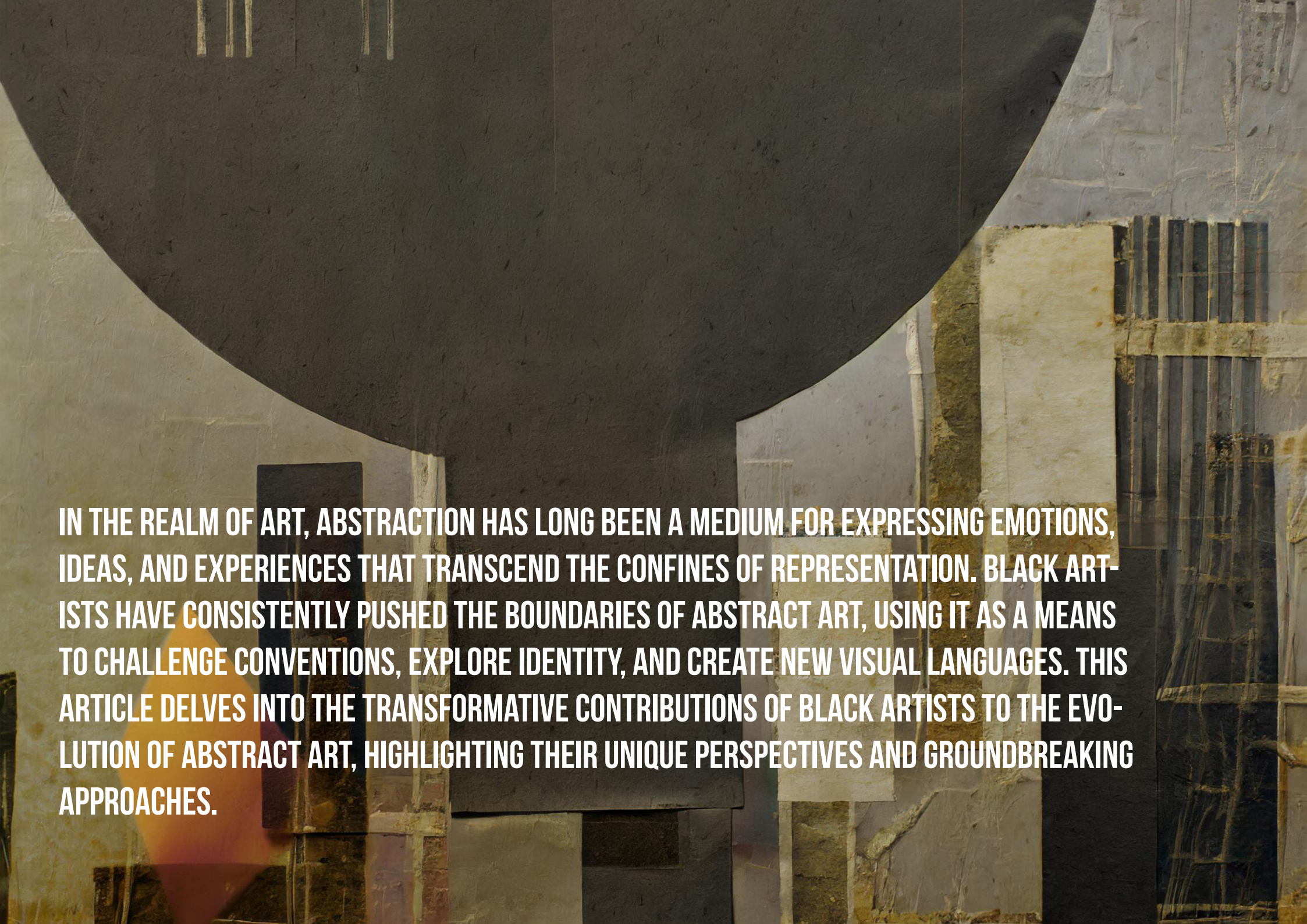
• TIGUERRE

CONTEMPORARY

BLACK ARTISTS

REDEFINING

ABSTRACT ART

An abstract artwork featuring a large, dark, curved shape at the top, possibly a shadow or a large brushstroke. Below it, there are various layers of color and texture, including a light beige area on the right, a dark blue/black area on the left, and a central area with a mix of white, grey, and brown tones. The overall composition is layered and textured, suggesting a sense of depth and complexity.

**IN THE REALM OF ART, ABSTRACTION HAS LONG BEEN A MEDIUM FOR EXPRESSING EMOTIONS, IDEAS, AND EXPERIENCES THAT TRANSCEND THE CONFINES OF REPRESENTATION. BLACK ARTISTS HAVE CONSISTENTLY PUSHED THE BOUNDARIES OF ABSTRACT ART, USING IT AS A MEANS TO CHALLENGE CONVENTIONS, EXPLORE IDENTITY, AND CREATE NEW VISUAL LANGUAGES. THIS ARTICLE DELVES INTO THE TRANSFORMATIVE CONTRIBUTIONS OF BLACK ARTISTS TO THE EVOLUTION OF ABSTRACT ART, HIGHLIGHTING THEIR UNIQUE PERSPECTIVES AND GROUNDBREAKING APPROACHES.**

# Pioneering Abstraction: A Legacy of Innovation

Black artists have played a pivotal role in shaping the trajectory of abstract art since its inception. In the early 20th century, artists like Alma Thomas and Norman Lewis were among the first to experiment with abstract expressionism, a movement characterized by bold, gestural brushstrokes and vibrant colors. Their works exemplified a departure from traditional modes of representation, embracing the inherent power of form and color to convey emotions and ideas

# Alma Thomas



Alma Thomas was an African-American abstract painter who was a pioneer of the Washington Color School movement. Her paintings are characterized by their use of bright colors, geometric shapes, and lyrical lines. Thomas's work is often inspired by nature, and she was particularly fond of painting flowers and landscapes

# Abstraction as a Tool for Identity Exploration



Bob Thompson  
Untitled  
1962



Jacob Lawrence  
The Shoemaker  
1945

For many Black artists, abstraction has served as a potent tool for exploring and expressing their cultural identities. Artists like Jacob Lawrence and Bob Thompson utilized abstract elements to depict scenes from African American life, challenging prevailing narratives and stereotypes. Their works reflected a deep understanding of the complexities of Black identity, using abstraction to transcend limitations and create a space for self-affirmation

# Abstraction and the Politics of Representation

Black artists have also employed abstraction as a means to address political and social issues. Artists like Kerry James Marshall and Kara Walker have used abstract forms to explore themes of race, identity, and power. Their works engage with historical and contemporary events, shedding light on systemic injustices and challenging prevailing power structures



Kerry James Marshall. *Untitled (Painter)*, 2009. Acrylic on PVC panel, 44 5/8 × 43 1/8 × 3 7/8 in. (113.3 × 109.5 × 9.8 cm). Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, gift of Katherine S. Schamberg by exchange, 2009.15 © Kerry James Marshall Photo: Nathan Keay, © MCA Chicago.



Monumentality

2016

Kara Walker

Ink on paper; 90.8 x 120.7 cm.





The Lost Boys  
Kerry James Marshall

# The Global Impact of Black Abstract Artists



Theaster Gates

Black abstract artists have gained international recognition for their contributions to the art world. Artists like Wangechi Mutu and Theaster Gates have exhibited their works in prestigious galleries and museums around the world, challenging established norms and inspiring a new generation of artists. Their works have sparked important conversations about the role of Black artists in shaping contemporary art and the need for greater diversity in the art world.



Wangechi Mutu, Ox Pecked , 2018

# Abstraction as a Means of Liberation



For some Black artists, abstraction has served as a liberating force, a means to break free from societal constraints and explore the uncharted territories of the imagination. Artists like Mark Bradford and Rashid Johnson (pictured above) have created abstract works that transcend traditional categories, incorporating found objects, collage, and mixed media to challenge conventional notions of art-making. Their works embody a spirit of experimentation and freedom, pushing the boundaries of what is considered art.



Mark Bradford



Simone Leigh  
"Whats Her Face"

# Abstraction and the Future of Art

As abstraction continues to evolve as an artistic movement, Black artists are at the forefront of shaping its future. Artists like Njideka Akunyili Crosby and Simone Leigh are using abstraction to create works that interrogate histories, challenge conventional narratives, and explore new possibilities for visual expression. Their works demonstrate the ongoing vitality and relevance of abstraction as a medium for artistic exploration and social commentary.



Njideka Akunyili Crosby  
“Side by Side”





**BLACK ARTISTS HAVE MADE GROUNDBREAKING CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE WORLD OF ABSTRACT ART, CHALLENGING CONVENTIONS, EXPLORING IDENTITY, AND CREATING NEW VISUAL LANGUAGES.**

**THEIR WORKS HAVE HAD A PROFOUND IMPACT ON THE EVOLUTION OF ABSTRACT ART, AND THEY CONTINUE TO INSPIRE AND INFLUENCE ARTISTS AROUND THE WORLD.**

**AS WE MOVE FORWARD, IT IS CRUCIAL TO RECOGNIZE AND CELEBRATE THE TRANSFORMATIVE CONTRIBUTIONS OF BLACK ARTISTS TO THE REALM OF ABSTRACT ART AND TO CREATE SPACES WHERE THEIR VOICES AND PERSPECTIVES CAN BE HEARD AND APPRECIATED.**

