

ANITA SHAPOLSKY GALLERY

152 East 65TH Street New York, NY 10065 212-452-1094 FAX: 212-452-1096

African American Abstract Masters features 10 artists. Born between 1914 and 1937, these artists have participated in national and international exhibitions. The decade into which each artist was born shaped their different perspectives. They have enlisted a variety of approaches and aesthetic influences over the span of six decades. They invoke through abstraction an art of light, color, materials, gesture, sweep and space. (*excerpt from catalog*)

Mary Anne Rose, Ed. D.

Betty Blayton

Blayton was born in 1937 in Williamsburg, Virginia, and educated at Syracuse University, NY (BFA 1959), as well as at The Art Students League of New York and the Brooklyn Museum School.

With major solo exhibitions at Howard University Gallery, Syracuse University Gallery, and Adair Gallery in Atlanta GA, her work is in public and private collections, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Studio Museum in Harlem, Fisk University, Spellman College, and the Rockefeller Collection. Her honors include the Women's Caucus for the Arts "Life Time Achievement Award" (2005) and "New York State Governor's Art Award" (1989).

Frank Bowling

Born in 1936 in Bartica, Essequibo, Guyana, Frank Bowling was schooled in London at Regent Street Polytechnic, Chelsea School of Art (1957-1959) and at the Slade School of Art, Royal College of Art (1959-1962).

Selected museum collections include the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern Art, Whitney Museum of American Art, the Museum of Fine Arts London, and Tate Gallery (London).

Ed Clark

Born in 1926 in New Orleans, Louisiana, Ed Clark served in the Air Force in World War II. He was educated at the Chicago Art Institute (1947-51), completing his studies at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière, Paris (1952-54). In 1956 he settled in New York but returned to Paris 1966-1969, spending 14 months working at Véltheuil with Riopelle and Joan Mitchell.

He has had major solo exhibitions at the Studio Museum in Harlem, FIAC Grand Palais (Paris), Contemporary Art Center (New Orleans), and American Embassy (Paris). Clark's work may be found in many national and international collections including the Detroit Art Institute and Chicago Institute of Art. His awards include the National Endowment for the Arts, the Adolph Gottlieb Award and the Congressional Achievement Award.

Herbert Gentry

Born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in 1919, Gentry grew up in Harlem. He served in the Army in North Africa and France in World War II, and studied in Paris at Académie de la Grande Chaumière (1946-1949). Gentry remained abroad, living in Paris and Scandinavia. From 1972 until his death in 2003, he worked at the Chelsea Hotel, New York and in Sweden.

His work is in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Smithsonian American Art Museum, the Studio Museum in Harlem, Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Moderna Museet (Sweden), and Stedelijk Museum (Netherlands) and many private collections.

Bill Hutson

Born in 1936 in San Marcos, Texas, Hutson grew up in San Antonio, enlisting in the Air Force after high school. He studied at the San Francisco Art Academy, worked with Reginald Marsh, but was drawn to the work of Richard Diebenkorn and Frank Lobdell. A regular at Ferlinghetti's City Lights bookstore in North Beach, he met fellow artist Joe Overstreet there.

A faculty member at Franklin and Marshall College, Lancaster, PA since 1989, Hutson continued to find deep inspiration in world travel. In 2004, Hutson curated a traveling exhibition for the Phillips Museum: "Something to Look Forward To", a reflection on African American abstract artists. Selected collections include Franklin and Marshall College, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen (the Netherlands).

Sam Middleton

Born in Harlem, New York in 1927, Middleton's present work is inspired by early influences: his relationships with Duke Ellington, Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker, as well as the evolution of American Abstract Expressionism in New York. In 1957, Middleton studied in Mexico at Instituto Allende, San Miguel de Allende. After a stint in the Merchant Marines, he arrived in Scandinavia in 1960, and met Herb Gentry, Walter Williams, Clifford Jackson and Melvin Van Peebles. Middleton settled in Amsterdam, where he has lived for nearly 50 years.

Selected museum collections include the National Gallery of South Australia (Adelaide), Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture (NY), Museum of Modern Arts (Israel) and Whitney Museum of American Art. Middleton was a recipient of a Ford Foundation Purchase Award and a John Hay Whitney Fellowship.

Joe Overstreet

Born in 1933 in Conehatta, Mississippi, Overstreet's family migrated to San Francisco, CA. Sculptor Sargent Johnson was an early mentor while he was at the San Francisco Art Institute. He moved to New York in 1958, where the downtown art scene exposed him to Abstract Expressionism. There he met painters (Norman Lewis, Hale Woodruff, Romare Bearden), writers (Steve Cannon, Amiri Baraka), and jazz musicians (Ornette Coleman, Jackie McLean, Cecil Taylor).

In 1974, Overstreet and his wife Corrine Jennings founded Kenkeleba, a non-profit exhibition space on Manhattan's Lower East Side.

He had solo shows at the Everson Museum (Syracuse, NY), New Jersey State Museum, Rice University and the Studio Museum in Harlem. He is in the collections of the Menil Foundation, Brooklyn Museum and Oakland Museum.

Thomas Sills (Thomas Albert Sills) (1914 -2000)

Thomas Sills in his mid-thirties married the mosaicist, Jeanne Reynal. Inspired by her collection of abstract art, he began working with materials that his wife used in her mosaics, but soon branched out to oil on wood as well as canvas.

Thomas Sills spent most of his creative life in New York City, deeply rooted in the artistic trends as well as cultural issues from the early 1950's to 1970's. Unlike his friends: Mark Rothko and Barnett Newman who were very articulate in verbalizing about their work; he felt it was not necessary to pin down his art with words as did his other friends: William de Kooning, Arshile Gorky and Franz Kline.

In 1957, Sills exhibited at the Whitney Museum of American Art. By 1961 he had four exhibitions at the Betty Parsons Gallery. He exhibited at the Minneapolis Institute of Art and at the Bodley Gallery (New York). His work is included in the permanent collections of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Williams College (Williamstown, MA), and many private collections.

Merton Simpson

Born in 1928 in Charleston, South Carolina, Merton Simpson arrived in New York to study at Cooper Union and New York University in 1948. He was included in "Watercolors" at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (1952). When the Korean War began, Simpson enlisted in the Air Force. In 1956 James Johnson Sweeney included him in the Guggenheim Museum's "Younger American Painters" and the University of Michigan included him in the "Eight New York Painters" exhibition. An amateur musician, jazz permeated his work. His earthy colored, textured paintings included collage elements.

His work is represented in the Guggenheim Museum, Detroit Art Institute, the Studio Museum in Harlem, South Carolina State Museum, and the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor.

Frank Wimberley

Born in 1926, in Pleasantville, New Jersey, Wimberley studied with James Porter, Lois Mailou Jones, and James Wells at Howard University. During his student years he played jazz and developed friendships with musicians such as Miles Davis, Wayne Shorter, and Ron Carter, who informed his creative sensibility. He lives and works in New York City and Sag Harbor.

Wimberley is in the collections of Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Islip Art Museum (New York), Yale University Art Gallery (Connecticut), and many private collections.

(About the artists – short excerpt from the catalog.)