



# BEFORE *the* AMERICAS

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND GLOBAL CAMPUS / ARTS PROGRAM



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UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND GLOBAL CAMPUS  
ARTS PROGRAM

**George Mason University**  
Gillespie Gallery  
Art and Design Building  
4515 Patriot Circle  
Fairfax, VA 22030  
August 25–November 15, 2025

**University of Maryland  
Global Campus**  
Arts Program Gallery  
3501 University Boulevard East  
Adelphi, MD 20783  
February 15–May 10, 2026

On behalf of University of Maryland Global Campus (UMGC) and the 100,000 learners we serve each year, I am honored to introduce a very special exhibition: *Before the Americas*.

For more than 75 years, UMGC has embodied the belief that learning is not confined to classrooms or course materials. Rather, it is a lifelong journey of exploration, discovery, and transformation. Our mission is to inspire hope, empower dreams, and transform lives . . . one student at a time—and the arts play a vital role in that mission.

*Before the Americas* underscores this belief in the role of the arts, inviting us to see the world—and ourselves—through a broader, more discerning lens. It brings together artists whose works transcend borders and time, illuminating the enduring threads of memory, migration, and cultural connection. These works challenge us to reconsider what we think we know and to engage with histories and perspectives that have too often been overlooked.

Art has the power to expand our understanding and awaken empathy. It helps us connect across differences and reminds us of our shared humanity. Through our Arts Program, UMGC is proud to support exhibitions like this one, which enriches our community and also reflects the global, inclusive spirit of our university.

I hope that you find *Before the Americas* as inspiring and thought-provoking as I do and that it sparks curiosity, conversation, and a deeper appreciation of the ways that art can preserve our rich history, strengthen our connections, and shape our world.



GREGORY W. FOWLER, PHD  
PRESIDENT  
UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND  
GLOBAL CAMPUS

KATHERINE LAMBERT



ERIC KEY  
DIRECTOR, ARTS PROGRAM  
UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND  
GLOBAL CAMPUS

TRACEY BROWN

Cheryl Edwards, curator of *Before the Americas*, is one of the region's most enthusiastic artists and art activists. She sees art as a means to educate and to exchange ideas and experiences. Her passion for seeing the purity in each art form is evident in the body of works of this exhibition. Edwards carefully selected the artworks with the predetermined goal of sharing the cultural riches of the artists' inspiration—their story, their experiences, and their background—with a larger audience.

This exhibition embraces art history through approximately 40 thought-provoking works by Caribbean, African, Latino, Afro-Latino, and African American artists. The artists selected for this exhibition explore racial and colonial constraints in their works. Generally, the participating artists are or have been working artists in the greater Washington, DC; Maryland; and Northern Virginia area. Many of them also share an invisibility within the art narrative, yet their art speaks volumes.

There are four themes for this exhibition: genetic memory, migration, invisibility, and interconnectivity. Genetic memory reflects the artist's ability to create a work that has historical reflections of a specific moment in time that the artist has not experienced firsthand. Migration alludes to the displacement of an artist, voluntarily or involuntarily, from one place of residence to another. Invisibility is a common thread for artists of color. They are overlooked, are obstructed from the conversation, or have not been considered artistically relevant. For this project, interconnectivity refers to the artists' connections to one another without even knowing each other and to their collective creative ability to produce a work of substance.

In the end, this is the essence of culturally diverse artists in America. They create works of art that are relevant to the arts narrative and their community.

*Before the Americas* debuted last year at George Mason University, where it was on view from August 25 through November 15. UMGC is pleased to host this exploratory presentation of cultural exchange through art as the Arts Program's first exhibition of 2026. On behalf of everyone involved, I want to thank Cheryl Edwards for her vision, determination, and hard work in pulling this body of works and artists together for the benefit of all.

**BEFORE THE AMERICAS**

*Before the Americas* is a comprehensive historical survey featuring 41 artworks created by Afro-Latino, African, Latino, Caribbean, and African American artists. The exhibition includes works from artists born between the 1800s and the 1990s, representing 14 different countries.

The exhibition examines the histories and contributions that predate the colonial idea of the Americas as a unified entity. It explores the identity, heritage, and artistic expressions of Afro-descendant communities, showcasing their cultural evolution over centuries. The show aims to highlight the artistic achievements of Afro-descendant communities and emphasizes the importance of redefining the frameworks through which artistic contributions are evaluated, allowing for a more thorough understanding of cultural heritage.

The showcase of artists explores themes like ancestral memory, migration, invisibility, and interconnectivity. It examines the relationship between historical erasure and contemporary representation, urging viewers to rethink art history's narratives. The focus is on highlighting Afro-descendant artists' achievements within global artistic innovation.

The geographical reach of the artwork encompasses North, Central, and South America, including the Dutch, Anglo, and French Caribbean. The exhibition features works by Afro-Latino and Caribbean artists from private and public collections, as well as pieces created by African American, Caribbean, African, Latino, and Afro-Latino artists from the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia.



CHERYL D. EDWARDS  
ARTIST-CURATOR,  
SCHOLAR, EDUCATOR

ANNE CALIMUCCI

*Before the Americas* is a dialogue between interconnected historical paths, emphasizing African aesthetics' influence. The works use bold colors, patterns, and symbolism to challenge traditional narratives and engage viewers with art as a record of identity and collective memory.

The dialogue encourages universal and personal themes, addresses historical erasure, and celebrates artistic resilience. It highlights Afro-descendant artistry, exploring inherited experiences and cultural legacies through visual language. The works blend ancient African traditions with contemporary perspectives, challenging conventional boundaries and redefining artistic discourse.

The display presents a variety of artistic mediums, including sculpture, painting, printmaking, video, book art, and performance art. It bridges historical gaps and creates a continuum that spans centuries and continents. The works promote dialogue and provide perspectives on the resilience and influence of African aesthetic traditions.

This interplay examines how art history has often overlooked contributions from Afro-descendant communities. These artists often confront racial and colonial constructs, challenging the invisibility of their contributions within art history. The exhibition creates a space where historical narratives can be questioned, reconstructed, and highlighted, allowing these artists to redefine their position within the global artistic sphere.

Lois Mailou Jones, *Untitled (African Dancers)*, 1996, Silkscreen print, 27 1/4 x 24 inches, Collection of Leslie Oliver Ellison



Intersections in heritage and innovation are highlighted to explore intangible cultural legacies. Ancestral memory reveals the blend of individual and collective experiences, transcending limits of geography and time. These visual narratives showcase the resilience and creativity of Afro-descendant communities, critically examining artistic conventions and celebrating their contributions to global art history.

*Before the Americas* is an exploration of how genetic memory, migration, invisibility, and interconnectivity influence the participating artists' work.

**GENETIC, ANCESTRAL MEMORY AND ARTISTIC EXPRESSION**

Genetic memory typically refers to ancestral memories passed through epigenetics, shaped by repeated generational experiences. However, *Before the Americas* explores the possibility of ancestral memories that manifest remembrances which encompass information that assists in providing tools of persistence and resilience.

Lois Mailou Jones incorporated African aesthetics into modernist art, while Curlee Raven Holton explored meanings in African scarification practices, like those of the Kuba people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Artists from various cultures, including those of Africa, the Caribbean, and the Americas, use unique elements to connect their work to African heritage. Artists like Alonzo Davis, James Phillips, Nelson Stevens, Michelle Talibah, and Renée Stout challenge the limitations of Western art traditions.

Alonzo Davis's work integrates cultural influences from Brazil, Haiti, and West Africa. AfriCOBRA members Phillips, Stevens, Stout, and Talibah highlight ancestral memory through vibrant patterns and colors, linking to pre-transatlantic slave trade connections. Their work challenges traditional Western interpretations.

Several artworks by Stanley Greaves, Luis Vasquez La Roche, and Georges Liautaud directly address slavery through materials and concepts linked to African ancestral commemoration. Greaves's sculpture, *Slave Stock and Whip*, uses mahogany, Brazil cherry, and pine. Liautaud's iron sculpture, *Crucifixion*, features two serpents entwined on a figure on a cross. La Roche's performance piece, *The Cleanse (La Limpieza)*, involves using a whip as a metaphor in tribute to his Trinidadian African orisha. It was initially performed at *Documenta Fifteen* in 2022 in Kassel, Germany.

These artists engage with cultural heritage and historical accountability by imbuing their works with intricate, multidimensional meanings. Their creations challenge the binary frameworks established by colonial ideologies, instead embracing diverse expressions that capture the complexity of African history and its diasporic reflections. This in-depth examination of ancestral memory is further enhanced by a focus on the transformative power of materials and concepts deeply embedded in cultural identity.



Above: top to bottom: Michelle Talibah, *One*, 1979, Acrylic on canvas, 36 x 48 inches, Collection of New Door Creative Gallery; Stanley Greaves, *Slave Stock and Whip*, 2018, Mahogany, copper, plexiglass, nylon cord, Brazil cherry, and pine, 30 x 19 x 24 inches, Collection of the Art Museum of the Americas

The exhibition explores how artists use their heritage to innovate, creating a link between history and the present. Their art acts as a medium for intellectual and cultural exchange.

Artistic expression involves using art to convey thoughts, emotions, and experiences. Artists in this exhibit employ color usage that challenges the notion of the colonial gaze. The palettes of Sam Gilliam, David Driskell, Alma Thomas, John Beadle, and Martha Jackson Jarvis deconstruct this gaze within their work. They use color as a language to communicate emotions, stories, and cultural nuances. In Africa, this usage serves to transcend time and space and transmits ancestral knowledge and historical narratives.

By incorporating scarification patterns, vibrant colors, or materials with historical significance, these artists navigate the intersection of tangible and intangible heritage, offering perspectives on African and diasporic narratives.

Wilfredo Valladares,  
*Unmasked*, 2014,  
Cast iron and wood,  
6 x 4 feet



### MIGRATION AND IDENTITY

Migration significantly influences artistic expression. The dynamic interaction between cultural heritage and contemporary artistry embodies broader themes of migration and identity that are fundamental to the human experience. Artists featured in this exhibit transcend geographic and temporal boundaries, skillfully integrating their personal histories with broader cultural narratives. By addressing the complexities of displacement, belonging, and memory, their works prompt a reevaluation of what it means to forge an identity in a constantly evolving world.

Julio Valdez, originally from the Dominican Republic, explores themes of migration and home through his art, reflecting his experiences in the United States. Wilfredo Valladares, from Honduras, and Elizabeth Catlett, born in the United States, depict the effects of displacement and cultural adaptation in their artistic endeavors.

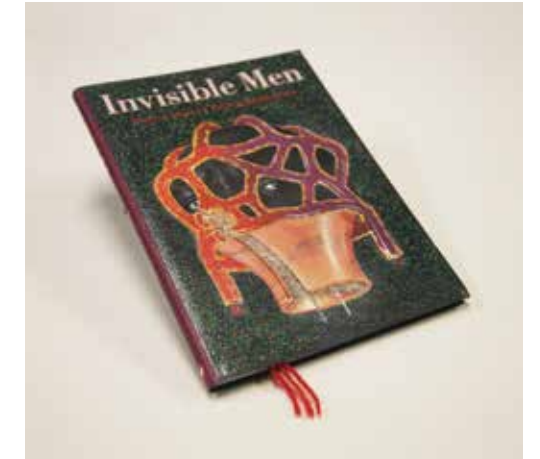
Irene Clouthier combines her experiences living in the United States with exhibitions in Washington and her birthplace, Mexico, using new media and sculpture to present a rich visual language. Alexander “Skunder” Boghossian, an Ethiopian artist who worked and taught in Ethiopia, France, and Washington, DC, developed his visual language inspired by Francisco Goya, blending modernism with his cultural perspective and incorporating iconography from the Coptic church.

Fabiola Alvarez Yurcisin’s connections to her birth country are primarily seen in her use of materials, which are derived from her native Mexico. Yurcisin creates sculptures using typewriter ribbons, funerary ribbons, and Mexican amate paper. Her close relationship to her land of origin through materials is analogous to the way in which Afro-descendant artists create.

Fabiola Alvarez Yurcisin,  
*Black Cage*, 2020,  
Videocassette tape,  
double-sided adhesive tape,  
mirror, and wood base,  
41 x 17 x 21 inches



Left to right:  
Samella Lewis,  
*Bayou Woman*, 1999,  
Oil stick on paper,  
24 x 30 inches,  
Collection of Eric Key;  
Patricia Kaersenhout,  
*Invisible Men*, 2009,  
Digital prints, bound  
book, ed. 750,  
10¼ x 7¼ inches,  
Collection of the Art  
Museum of the Americas



### INVISIBILITY AND REPRESENTATION

This exhibit critiques the historical marginalization of multicultural artists within Western and European art traditions. Colonial and Eurocentric narratives often excluded African and Afro-descendant perspectives, neglecting the cultural influence found in their artwork.

*Before the Americas* offers a global perspective, viewing these artworks through various lenses, incorporating ancestral memories into the art. These artists dismantle colonial legacies’ frameworks of invisibility, celebrating African heritage’s multifaceted dimensions and its diasporic expressions. Their works resonate with themes of resilience, adaptation, and self-discovery, drawing on ancestral wisdom and cultural rituals to construct narratives that are both personal and universal.

Artists such as Samella Lewis, Elizabeth Catlett, and Martin Puryear infuse African origins into their work, challenging erasure and redefining their place within art history. The Africanity in the work of EJ Montgomery, Joyce Scott, Roberto Diago, and Bernadette Persaud speaks to their expression of Africanity.

Georges Liautaud, Everaldo Brown, and Jallim Eudovic, despite not attending art schools because of prohibitive costs or access issues, resisted indoctrination and maintained intuitive creativity within their work.

Patricia Kaersenhout, of Surinamese descent, confronts invisibility in her artist book *Invisible Men*, inspired by Ralph Ellison’s novel, exploring the discovery of invisible men in her life through layered materials. Amy Sherald’s *Puppet Master* painting depicts a Black man holding a puppet, interpreted as code-switching—a necessity for Afro-Latino and African American artists to participate in the Western art canon while creatively navigating career challenges.



Amy Sherald, *Puppet Master*, 2008,  
Oil on canvas, 74 x 52½ inches,  
Collection of DC Commission on  
the Arts and Humanities



Left to right:  
 Claudia “Aziza” Gibson-Hunter, *You Got to Give Up the Stuff That Holds You Down*, 2023, Acrylic paint and colored pencil on paper, 98 x 50¾ inches;  
 Alec Simpson, *Tribute to Mr. Wimberley*, 2019, Monotype print on paper, Unframed: 60 x 42 inches, Framed: 65¾ x 48 inches

### INTERCONNECTIVITY AND CULTURAL CONTINUITY

Interconnectivity among these artists reveals shared heritage and collective traditions. Claudia “Aziza” Gibson-Hunter, Lou Stovall, M. P. Alladin, Jacinto “Coco” Galloso, and Alec Simpson reflect their Afro-Caribbean, African American, and African roots through abstraction, conceptual designs, and vibrant use of color. Melanie Royster combines African-Caribbean iconography with Western techniques, creating a visual language bridging cultural divides.

Manuel Mendive, an Afro-Cuban artist, anchors the exhibition with his artwork entitled *Barco Negro*, recognizing Afro-Cuban elements and religious content and demonstrating African spirituality’s significance before slavery. Wifredo Lam, another Afro-Cuban artist, blends Afro-Cuban religious traditions into his art, informed by his Chinese and Afro-Cuban ancestry.

By engaging with ancestral memory and narratives of cultural resilience, the artists showcased in *Before the Americas* establish profound connections between individual and collective identities. Their works transcend geographical and temporal boundaries, skillfully integrating elements of African, Caribbean, Latino, African American, and Afro-Latino legacies with contemporary artistic practices. These creations challenge dominant historical frameworks, offering alternative perspectives that celebrate the richness and contributions of historically marginalized voices to the artistic canon.

Through the synthesis of traditional iconography and innovative techniques, these artists exemplify the intersection of heritage and contemporary expression. Their thematic explorations—whether centered on migration, invisibility, or interconnectivity—coalesce to form a cohesive narrative tapestry that resonates across cultures. By examining the threads of memory and adaptation, this exhibition invites visitors to a space where history evolves into a dynamic dialogue, reinterpreting the past while envisioning transformative possibilities for the future.



Wifredo Lam, *Croiseur Noir*, 1972, Etching, ed. 75/125, 13 x 10½ inches, Collection of Leslie Oliver Ellison

### SUMMARY

The interconnected narratives of artistry and heritage underscore how ancestral memory continues to infuse vitality into the global art landscape. These works honor their cultural roots; these artists shape a future in which Africanity enriches and redefines art discourse. Their innovation exemplifies culture’s transformative power to transcend boundaries and establish new paradigms.

*Before the Americas*, hosted by the UMGC Arts Program and George Mason University’s Gillispie Gallery, features African, Afro-Latino, Caribbean, Latino, and African American artists who explore themes of ancestral memory, migration, invisibility, and interconnectivity. The exhibit highlights African heritage’s influence, colonial challenges, and cultural continuity, offering a platform to reinterpret history and amplify marginalized voices in the art world.

In conclusion, Aimé Césaire poetically sums it up:

“It is hard to imagine all is lost  
 Since the energy of ashes is still here  
 and blows from time through the debris.”

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It is hard to imagine  
 all is lost

Since the energy of  
 ashes is still here

and blows from time  
 through the debris.

—AIMÉ CÉSAIRE

## African Diaspora Artists Shaping and Defining Art in the Americas

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GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY

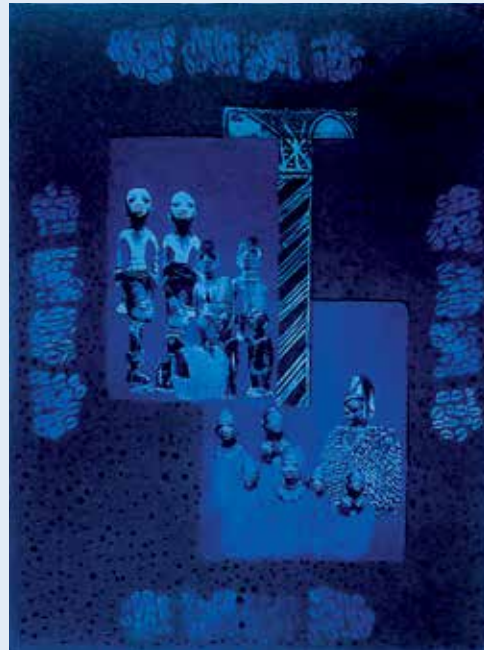
IN TEACHING ABOUT THE AFRICAN DIASPORA, I notice that students are often surprised to learn that enslaved Africans brought their culture and beliefs with them to the Americas and that these beliefs not only helped them to survive but also shaped the new places they called home. The dominant narrative of the transatlantic slave trade is that the voyage was so traumatic that enslaved people forgot, abandoned, or “lost” everything about their cultures and values. Both extensive scholarship and cultural knowledge disproves this assertion: African ideas and values are foundational to the richness and texture of societies throughout the Americas.

*Before the Americas* is a powerful, educational, and aesthetically stunning exhibition that contributes to our understanding of the role that African diaspora artists have played in shaping and defining the arts in the Americas. Each artist represents a unique interpretation of their own experiences producing art from the Black perspective, but it is the combination of their work together in this exhibition that reinforces its core themes so persuasively. Curator and artist Cheryl Edwards has brilliantly assembled works from public and private collections that address the themes of migration, ancestral memory, invisibility, and interconnectivity.

The artwork in *Before the Americas* embodies the ways in which artists of African descent draw on their ancestral heritage and memory to help them understand and interpret the world in which they live. It demonstrates how artists have confronted both personal and political obstacles to share messages of hope and resilience.

For example, a 1997 work by African American artist EJ Montgomery (who is now an ancestor) titled *Ibeji Twins–Yoruba Blue* connects directly to a shared sense of ancestral memory among people of African descent. It uses several shades of deep blue to illuminate a series of wooden sculptures called *ere ibeji*, which commemorate twins. Nigeria has one of the highest rates of twins in the world, as well as one of the highest infant mortality rates. Twins are viewed as auspicious, but unfortunately, it is also common to lose a twin. *Ere ibeji* are intricate wooden sculptures, often adorned with cowrie shells, blue kaolin powder, and jewelry to memorialize a lost twin. In Montgomery’s work, the color blue also becomes a featured character. This deep, almost meditative hue connects the blue colors of African organic materials such as kaolin to the cultural significance of blue and its evocative feelings in Black American culture: “haint blue” paint colors, blues music, indigo, and Miles Davis’s iconic jazz album *Kind of Blue*, to name a few.

Bridging the themes of ancestral memory, migration, and interconnectivity, George Mason University faculty member Luis Vasquez La Roche connects slavery’s violent past with an Afrofuturist’s ability to envision new societies buoyed by support from the ancestors in his 2022 performance



Above, top to bottom:  
EJ Montgomery, *Ibeji Twins–Yoruba Blue*, 1997, Mixed media on paper, 30 x 22½ inches, Collection of Juanita and Mel Hardy;  
Luis Vasquez La Roche, *The Cleanse (La Limpieza)*, 2022, Performance/video

work, *The Cleanse (La Limpieza)*. Based in Trinidad and Tobago and Virginia, La Roche explores how enslaved people experienced plantation life in both places, creating ritual performances to Oya, a Yoruba orisha, or goddess, from Nigeria. Because enslaved people were not allowed to honor orishas publicly in Trinidad and Tobago until 1951, La Roche’s performance work occurs on plantation sites that have been converted into schools, golf courses, and other public spaces. In this sense, the interconnectivity between Virginia and the Caribbean prompts questions about slavery’s legacies in our own public spaces.

Ethiopian American artist Alexander “Skunder” Boghossian’s work bridges modern art in the Americas and the African continent. Born and educated in Ethiopia, Boghossian traveled the world, with stays in Paris and London before settling in the United States. Inspired by Coptic religious traditions and a desire to connect to Ethiopia’s rich biblical history, Boghossian’s 1967 painting *Axum* refers to the city and ancient kingdom known for its towering obelisks and as a resting place for the tablets upon which the Ten Commandments were inscribed. Throughout his life, Boghossian named American jazz music as another important influence on his interest in improvisation, rhythm, and color in his own work.

Elizabeth Catlett, one of America’s preeminent sculptors and printmakers, embodies the essence of *Before the Americas* as an exploration of Black artistic expression across space and time. A DC-born and educated artist who also lived in Chicago and New York before moving to Mexico for the rest of her life, Catlett devoted most of her work to illuminating Black women’s struggles and contributions to building better societies. Her exquisite bronze sculpture, *Mahalia*, pays homage to gospel singer, businesswoman, civil rights advocate, and Black cultural icon Mahalia Jackson. Like Catlett, Jackson was only one generation removed from slavery and had to endure relentless discrimination to achieve career success. Yet Catlett’s sculpture depicts a more vulnerable Jackson in a seated position, with her hands on her knees and her head tilted backward in a moment of dynamic movement, transmitting the message that Black women also deserve rest and moments of repose.

Artists have the vision and the perspective to spark conversation and community dialogue about important subjects, which is why the arts have always been central to a well-rounded education. George Mason University has been an institutional leader in humanities inquiry through its embrace of using the curriculum to teach students how to ask critical questions, accept uncomfortable truths, hold their composure amidst discomfort, and search for information that is often hidden in plain sight. Our university’s Memorial to the Enslaved People of George Mason is one important example of these humanities principles in action. A historic exhibition such as *Before the Americas* is in the right place at the right time. For this exhibition to open in Virginia, where the narratives of freedom and enslavement are forever intertwined, connects the exhibition themes to public discourse about the state of our democracy and how we will work together to create “a more perfect union.” Art is a powerful tool in this discussion. All of the artists in *Before the Americas* have devoted their careers to this pursuit, and their collective voice through this exhibition is yet another opportunity for discussion about our hope and dreams, as well as our resilience during times of struggle.



Above, top to bottom:  
Alexander “Skunder” Boghossian, *Axum*, 1967, Oil on canvas, 45¼ x 31½ inches, Collection of Eric Steven Wray;  
Elizabeth Catlett, *Mahalia*, 2002, Bronze, 15 x 11 x 30 inches, Collection of Eric Key

“

i am accused of tending to the past  
as if i made it,  
as if i sculpted it  
with my own hands. i did not.  
this past was waiting for me  
when i came,  
a monstrous unnamed baby,  
and i with my mother's itch  
took it to breast  
and named it  
History.  
she is more human now,  
learning language everyday,  
remembering faces, names and dates.  
when she is strong enough to travel  
on her own, beware, she will.

—LUCILLE CLIFTON

## Before the Americas: A Sanctuary for the Spirit

ARIANA A. CURTIS, PhD  
MUSEUM CURATOR, LATINX STUDIES  
NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AFRICAN AMERICAN  
HISTORY AND CULTURE

**BEFORE THE AMERICAS DOES NOT SEEK** to fill historical gaps or correct the discriminatory Western art historical canon. It is not a recentering of Blackness. It does not intervene to reclaim Black narratives. That is not the spirit from which this exhibition emerged. And there is no need to reclaim what was never lost.

Jamaican-born cultural theorist Stuart Hall asserted, “People have to have a language to speak about where they are and what other possible futures are available to them.” Curator Cheryl Edwards has arranged artwork from public and private collections that do just that. This curated convocation of works by Afro-descendant artists is a self-articulation of possibility and belonging. Collectively, these works deliver a visual voice and emotional echoes through the themes of migration, interconnectivity, invisibility, and ancestral memory. Edwards proves that we can evoke, articulate, affirm, connect, and imagine with or without words.

The Washington, DC, metropolitan area, with its history of promoting Black education and cultural expression, is an ideal location and context for this exhibition. It became a Black majority city in the late 1950s and remained so into the 2010s. For many Afro-descendant migrants, the Blackness of DC is not happenstance; it is desirable. The legacy of Chocolate City continues today. It is noteworthy that the artists in this show include those born in the Washington, DC, area; those who adopted the area as home; and those whose works live in DC-based institutions, like museums.

DC native and Howard University graduate Elizabeth Catlett (1915–2012) focused her art on people. *Mahalia* (2002), for gospel singer Mahalia Jackson, is deftly sculpted from bronze. *Niña* (1957) is a color linocut of an unnamed Mexican girl. Together they represent the material diversity of her artistic skill and her commitment to her “two peoples,” African Americans and Mexicans. *Mahalia* and *Niña* characterize Catlett’s feminist lens and dedication to representing all women with dignity, from the famous to the quotidian. Catlett, among other artists in this exhibition, valued community access to her work. Redefining who “the art world” includes, she created work about and for everyday people.

Abstract painter Alma Thomas (1891–1978) moved to Washington, DC, from Columbus, Georgia, as a teenager. In 1924, she became the first graduate from Howard University’s Department of Art,



Alma Thomas, *Lunar Surface*, 1970, Acrylic on canvas, 34 x 39 1/8 inches, Collection of Katzen Arts Center, American University

a department and university that cultivated the talents of multiple generations of artists in this show. Thomas’s signature style, repetitive daubs of color, feels rhythmic, as if, in the words of Sonia Sanchez, “looking at sound.” The beauty of nature inspired her art, from the natural environment to the celestial, like the cool palette of *Lunar Surface* (1970). Like Thomas, print-maker Lou Stovall (1937–2023); multimedia artist David Driskell (1931–2020); and Thomas’s fellow Washington Color School artist, abstractionist Sam Gilliam (1933–2022) have legacies rooted in DC, though they migrated from elsewhere.

In addition to colleges and universities, DC museums have served as homes and platforms to local, national, and international audiences. Eleven of the works on view belong to the collection of the Organization of American States. They challenge the national interpretation of the term “American” and highlight themes with global histories and impacts like the transatlantic slave trade, Blackness, place and belonging, and African origins. African inheritance is echoed in the unconventionally titled *Self-Portrait* (2012) by sculptor and assemblage artist Renée Stout (b. 1958). In 1993, Stout was the first African American artist to have a solo exhibition at the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art. In 2016, portraitist Amy Sherald (b. 1973) became the first woman and the first African American to win the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery’s triennial competition. Though her fame skyrocketed after her portrait of First Lady Michelle Obama was unveiled, the Baltimore-based contemporary artist largely focuses on everyday people. Sherald’s signature style challenges color-as-race by painting skin tone in grayscale. *Puppet Master* (2008) employs this technique. The costumed male protagonist, wearing a white-collared shirt and loose tie, exists against a muted palette of whites, blues, and browns. With its subject balancing a navy jacket on his right arm and a blue whale puppet on his left, this painting questions ideas of power, control, respectability, diversion, and performance.

The DC area is home to people from all over the world. To that point, the contribution of Mexican-born multidisciplinary artist Irene Clouthier (b. 1974) is singular and unequivocal. Her bright red neon-like LED sign asserts, “No Human Is Illegal,” adding an explicit statement to legal discussions of human migration. *Before the Americas*, in title and practice, rejects nation-states and political borders as determinants of belonging. It is a reminder that African American, Caribbean, and Latin American are all African diasporic identities rooted and flourishing concurrently in the past, present, and future. On the site of a sugar plantation, now a multi-use development, the performance of artist and George Mason professor Luis Vazquez La Roche (b. 1983) embodies the perpetuity of history articulated by Lucille Clifton. Through an ancestral ritual to Oya, once banned in his native Trinidad and Tobago, *The Cleanse (La Limpieza)* is a healing and offering for the futures created by slavery and a refusal to disremember Black pasts, neither the earthly nor the divine.

Visual art is a language of memory, belonging, and possibility. The process of creation moves the artists. Experiencing the art, in turn, moves us. In this current, and frankly in any, sociopolitical moment, art can be restorative. Art can redefine our relationships with ourselves and the world around us. *Before the Americas* creates a sanctuary for the eyes, mind, and spirit. The artistic representations are diverse. The artists span centuries, media, cultures, languages, origins, and geographies to reinforce the exhibition themes. The variety also underscores the essence of the exhibition itself: that, at any period of history in any place on Earth, Black creativity is boundless.



Above, top to bottom:  
Renée Stout, *Self-Portrait*, 2012,  
Mixed media (metal and found  
objects), 33 x 9 x 11 inches,  
Collection of Dean Dalton;  
Irene Clouthier, *Neon-Like LED Sign*,  
2022–23, Neon, 30 x 35 inches

# Genetic, Ancestral Memory and Artistic Expression

John Beadle  
Alonzo Joseph Davis Jr.  
David Driskell  
Sam Gilliam  
Stanley Greaves  
Curlee Raven Holton  
Martha Jackson Jarvis  
Lois Mailou Jones  
Wifredo Lam  
Luis Vasquez La Roche  
James Phillips  
Nelson Stevens  
Renée Stout  
Michelle Talibah  
Alma Thomas



KATZEN ARTS CENTER, AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

ALMA THOMAS, *LUNAR SURFACE*, 1970, ACRYLIC ON CANVAS, 34 X 39 1/8 INCHES, COLLECTION OF KATZEN ARTS CENTER, AMERICAN UNIVERSITY



OASAMA, ART MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAS

JOHN BEADLE, *FOUR GODS OF THE MOON*, 1991, OIL ON CANVAS, 48 X 36 INCHES, COLLECTION OF THE ART MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAS



JOHN WOO

JAMES PHILLIPS, *THE OTHER JOHN*, 2014, ACRYLIC ON PAPER, 30¾ x 22¾ INCHES, COLLECTION OF NEW DOOR CREATIVE GALLERY



MICHELLE TALIBAH

MICHELLE TALIBAH, *ONE*, 1979, ACRYLIC ON CANVAS, 36 x 48 INCHES, COLLECTION OF NEW DOOR CREATIVE GALLERY



SOPHIE BAE

LOIS MAILOU JONES, *UNTITLED (AFRICAN DANCERS)*, 1996, SILKSCREEN PRINT, 27¼ x 24 INCHES, COLLECTION OF LESLIE OLIVER ELLISON



JOHN WOOD

LOIS MAILOU JONES, *STUDIO STILL LIFE*, 1970, WATERCOLOR ON PAPER, 19 x 24 INCHES, COLLECTION OF ERIC KEY



JOHN WOO

MARTHA JACKSON JARVIS, *ANCESTOR'S BONES: SOUNDS FROM THE SEA III*, 2014, MIXED-MEDIA DRAWING: BLACK WALNUT INK, WATERCOLOR, OIL, RAW PIGMENT, COLLAGE, AND PHOTO TRANSFER, 42 x 67 INCHES

ART MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAS



STANLEY GREAVES, *SLAVE STOCK AND WHIP*, 2018, MAHOGANY, COPPER, PLEXIGLASS, NYLON CORD, BRAZIL CHERRY, AND PINE, 30 x 19 x 24 INCHES, COLLECTION OF THE ART MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAS



GREG STALEY

NELSON STEVENS, *EIGHTH WONDER*, 1980, ACRYLIC ON CANVAS, 40 x 40 INCHES, COLLECTION OF ERIC KEY

RENÉE STOUT



RENÉE STOUT, *SELF-PORTRAIT*, 2012, MIXED MEDIA (METAL AND FOUND OBJECTS), 33 x 9 x 11 INCHES, COLLECTION OF DEAN DALTON



DC COMMISSION ON THE ARTS AND HUMANITIES

ALONZO JOSEPH DAVIS JR., *KALIMBA SERIES #8*, 2015,  
BAMBOO CONSTRUCTION WITH COLLAGE AND PAINT ON BOARD, 27  
x 33 x 7½ INCHES, COLLECTION OF DC COMMISSION ON THE ARTS  
AND HUMANITIES

SOPHIE BAE



WIFREDO LAM, *CROISEUR NOIR*, 1972, ETCHING, ED. 75/125,  
13 x 10½ INCHES, COLLECTION OF LESLIE OLIVER ELLISON



ANANDA HOLTON

CURLEE RAVEN HOLTON, *IT IS NOT A MASK, IT IS A FAITH*, 1993, CUT-PLATE ETCHING ON WOVE PAPER, 37 x 27 INCHES



LUIS VASQUEZ LA ROCHE



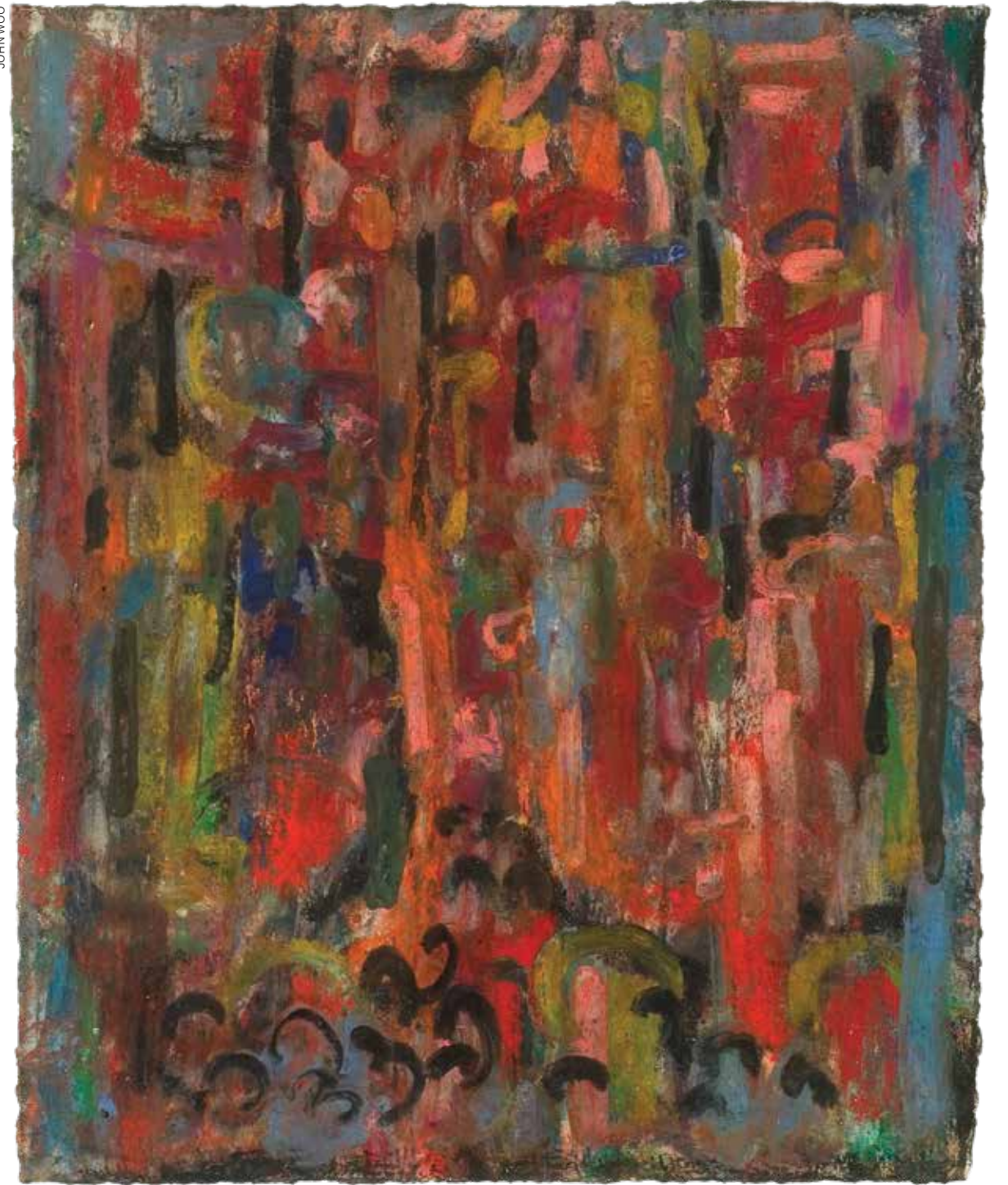
LUIS VASQUEZ LA ROCHE, *THE CLEANSE (LA LIMPIEZA)*, 2022, PERFORMANCE/VIDEO



SISC JOHNSON

SAM GILLIAM, *AIN'T MORE THAN MUSIC*,  
1989, ACRYLIC AND ENAMEL ON ALUMINUM,  
60 x 50 x 10 INCHES, COLLECTION OF GEORGE  
MASON UNIVERSITY

JOHN WOOD



DAVID DRISKELL, *LANDSCAPE*, 1980, ACRYLIC ON PAPER,  
14 x 11 INCHES, COLLECTION OF ERIC KEY

# Migration and Identity

Alexander “Skunder” Boghossian

Elizabeth Catlett

Irene Clouthier

Julio Valdez

Wilfredo Valladares

Fabiola Alvarez Yurcisin



CRAIG GARRETT

FABIOLA ALVAREZ YURCISIN, *BLACK CAGE*, 2020, VIDEOCASSETTE TAPE, DOUBLE-SIDED ADHESIVE TAPE, MIRROR, AND WOOD BASE, 41 x 17 x 21 INCHES



OAS AMIA, ART MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAS

JULIO VALDEZ, *THE GREY ECHO (EL ECO GRIS)*, 2002, SILK AQUATINT AND MONOTYPE ON PAPER, 37 x 47¼ INCHES, COLLECTION OF THE ART MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAS



IRENE CLOUTHIER

IRENE CLOUTHIER, *NEON-LIKE LED SIGN*,  
2022–23, NEON, 30 x 35 INCHES

E.S. WRAY AND H.J. FERRAND



ALEXANDER "SKUNDER" BOGHOSSIAN, *AXUM*, 1967, OIL ON CANVAS,  
45¼ x 31½ INCHES, COLLECTION OF ERIC STEVEN WRAY



JOHN WOO

ELIZABETH CATLETT, *MAHALIA*, 2002, BRONZE,  
15 x 11 x 30 INCHES, COLLECTION OF ERIC KEY



WILFREDO VALLADARES

WILFREDO VALLADARES, *UNMASKED*, 2014,  
CAST IRON AND WOOD, 6 x 4 FEET

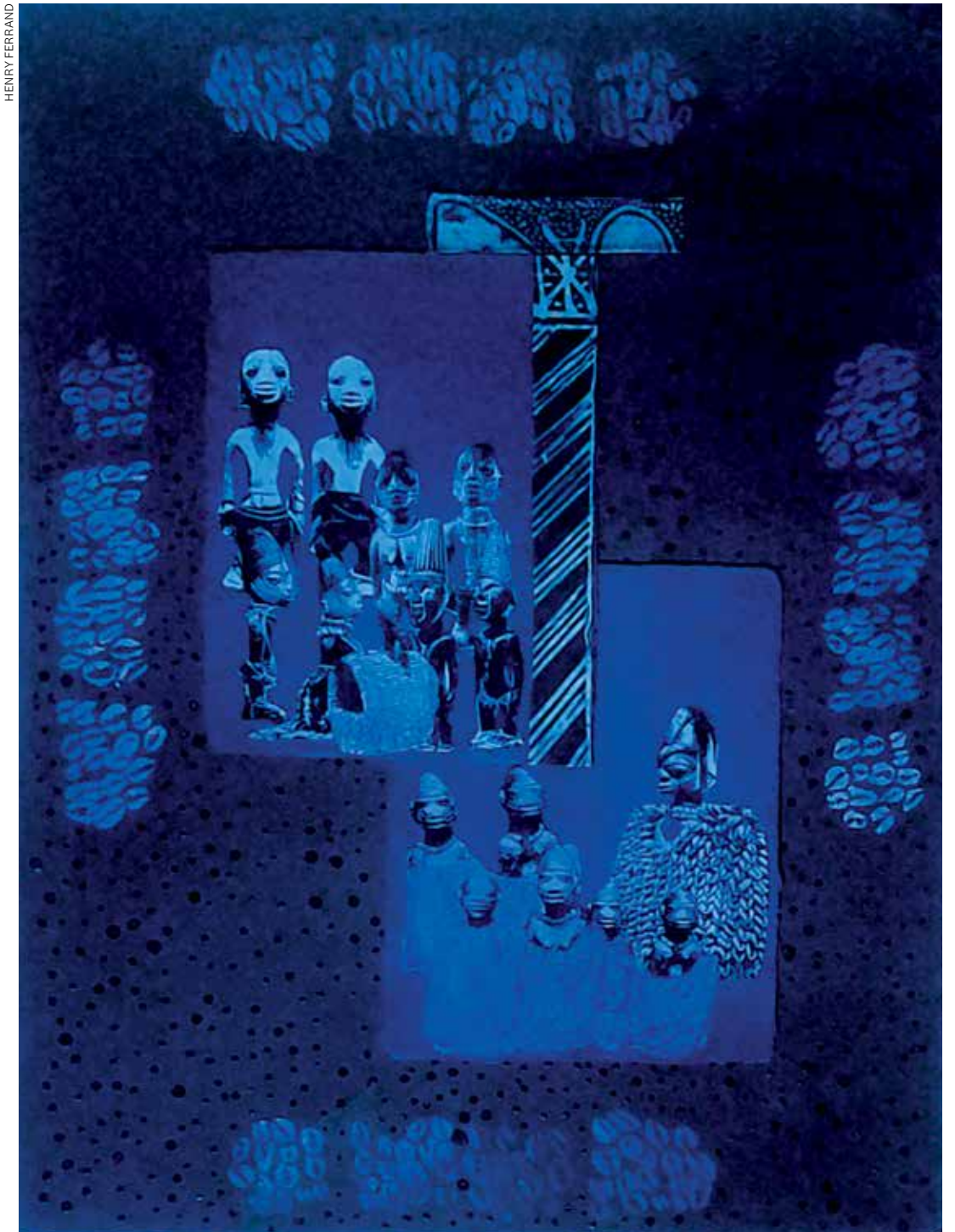
# Invisibility and Representation

Everald Brown  
Elizabeth Catlett  
Roberto Diago  
Jallim Eudovic  
Patricia Kaersenhout  
Samella Lewis  
Georges Liautaud  
EJ Montgomery  
Bernadette Persaud  
Martin Puryear  
Joyce Scott  
Amy Sherald



OASAMA, ART MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAS

ROBERTO DIAGO, *FACE II*, 1950, OIL ON CARDBOARD, 13½ x 10½ INCHES, COLLECTION OF THE ART MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAS



HENRY FERRAND

EJ MONTGOMERY, *IBJE TWINS-YORUBA BLUE*, 1997, MIXED MEDIA ON PAPER, 30 x 22½ INCHES, COLLECTION OF JUANITA AND MEL HARDY



DC PUBLIC LIBRARY

ABOVE:  
MARTIN PURYEAR  
HAND SCULPTURE  
(BACK, DETAIL)

LEFT:  
MARTIN PURYEAR  
HAND SCULPTURE, 1993,  
WOOD, 17 x 11 INCHES,  
COLLECTION OF  
MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.  
MEMORIAL LIBRARY

JOHN WOO



JOYCE SCOTT, *HAVE YOU SEEN THIS CHILD?*, 2010,  
GLASS BEADS, THREAD, WIRE, AND WOOD, 19 x 12 x 16½ INCHES,  
COLLECTION OF UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND GLOBAL CAMPUS



OASAMA, ART MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAS

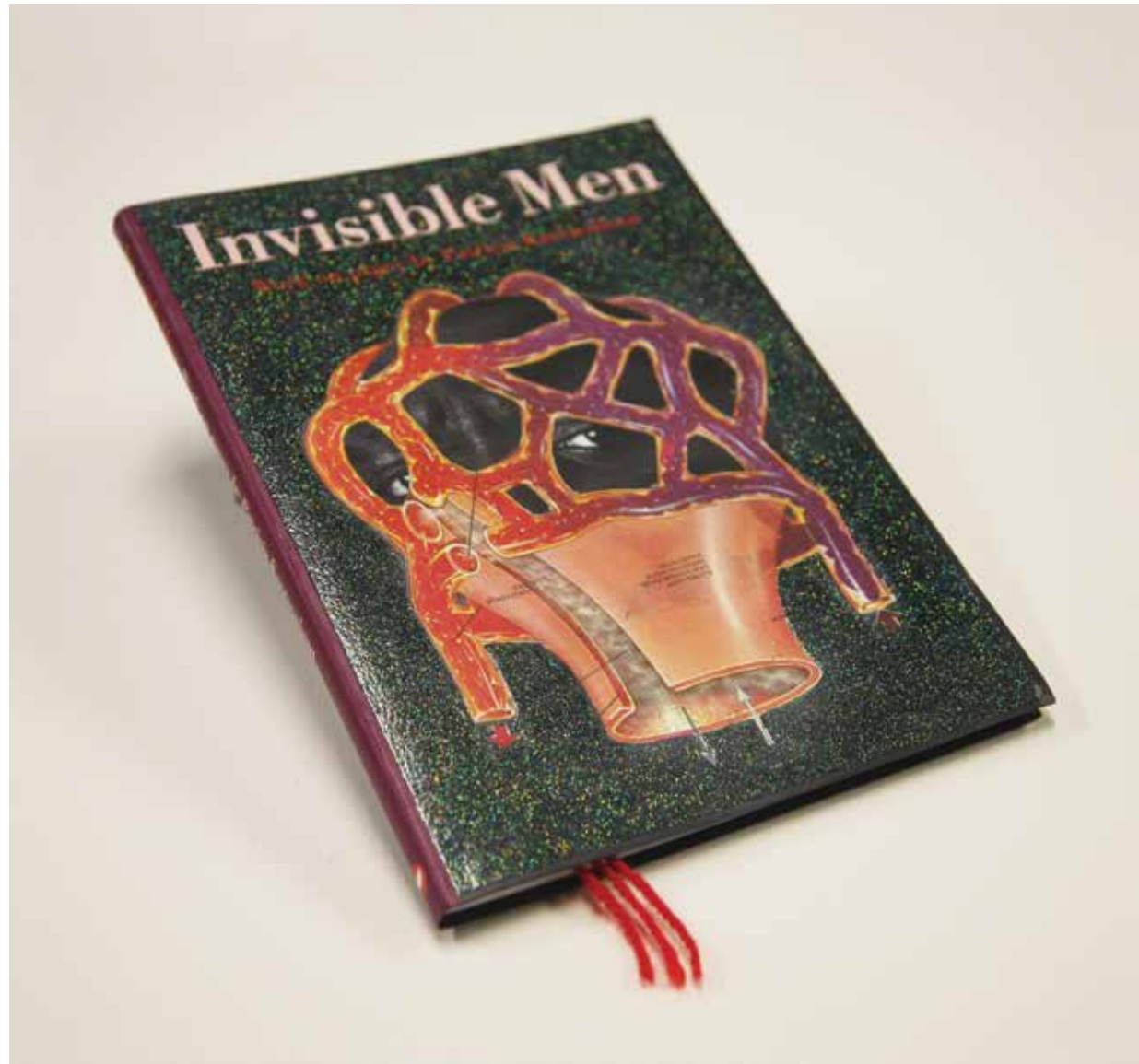
GEORGES LIAUTAUD, *CRUCIFIXION*, 1959, CUT AND HAMMERED IRON, 46 x 40½ x 9 INCHES, COLLECTION OF THE ART MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAS



OASAMA, ART MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAS



JALLIM EUDOVIC, *SPIRITUAL MECHANICS*, 2022, METAL, WOOD, AND ACRYLIC, THREE PIECES: 7⅝ x 4⅜ x 1¼ INCHES, 11 x 7⅜ x 1¾ INCHES, 11⅜ x 12 x 1⅝ INCHES, COLLECTION OF THE ART MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAS



OASAMA, ART MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAS

PATRICIA KAERSENHOUT, *INVISIBLE MEN*, 2009, DIGITAL PRINTS, BOUND BOOK, ED. 750, 10¼ x 7¼ INCHES, COLLECTION OF THE ART MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAS



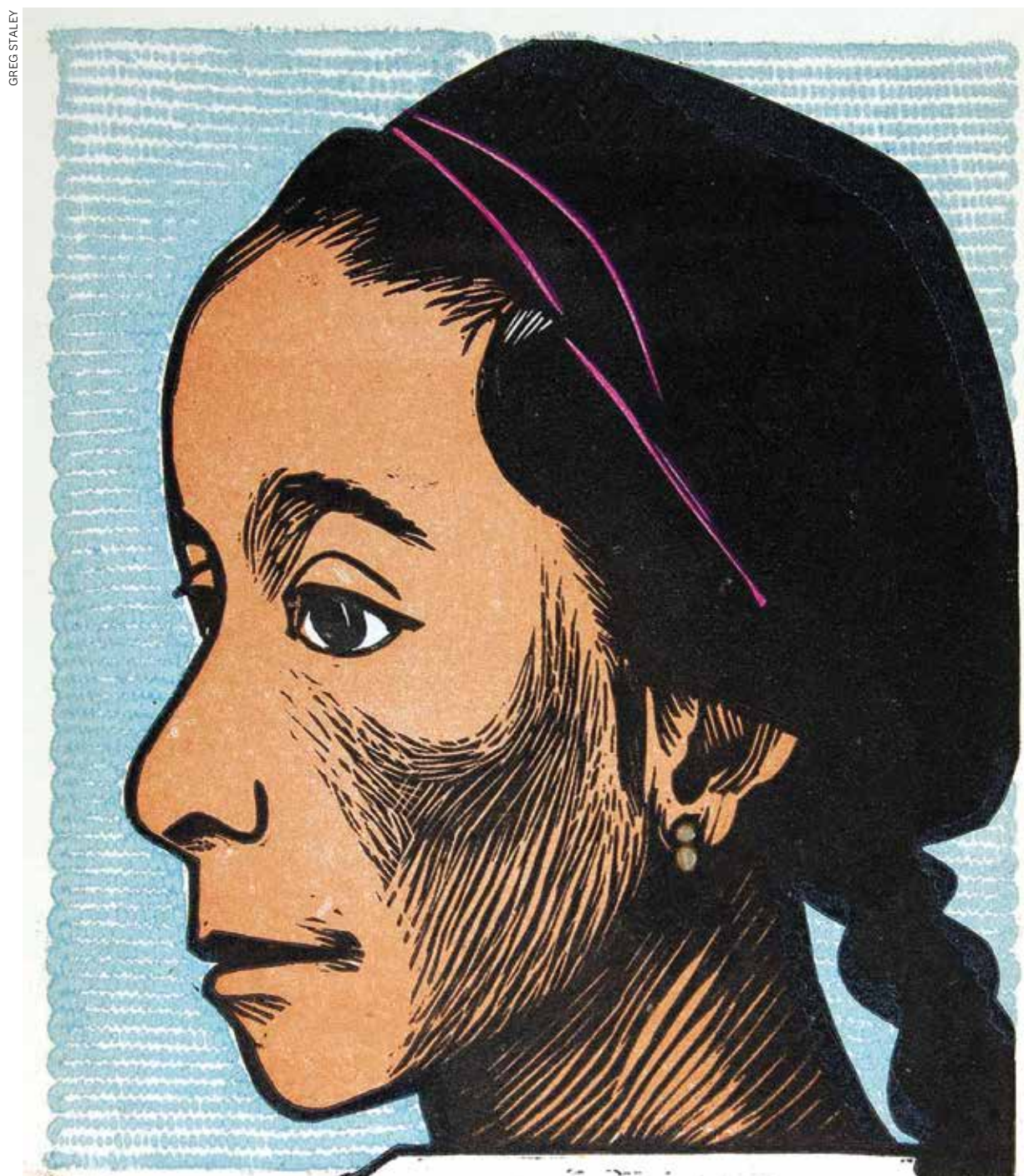
OASAMA, ART MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAS

BERNADETTE PERSAUD, *GENTLEMAN UNDER THE SKY (GULF WAR)*, 1991, OIL ON CANVAS, DIPTYCH, 50 x 74 INCHES, COLLECTION OF THE ART MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAS



DC COMMISSION ON THE ARTS AND HUMANITIES

AMY SHERALD, *PUPPET MASTER*, 2008, OIL ON CANVAS, 74 x 52 1/8 INCHES, COLLECTION OF DC COMMISSION ON THE ARTS AND HUMANITIES



GREG STALEY

ELIZABETH CATLETT, *NIÑA*, 1957, COLOR LINOLEUM CUT ON WOVE PAPER, ED. 87/100, 7 x 5 1/2 INCHES, COLLECTION OF ROMY SILVERSTEIN



EVERALD BROWN,  
*TOTEM*, 1972, WOOD,  
36 x 5 x 9 INCHES,  
COLLECTION OF THE ART  
MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAS

OASAMA, ART MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAS

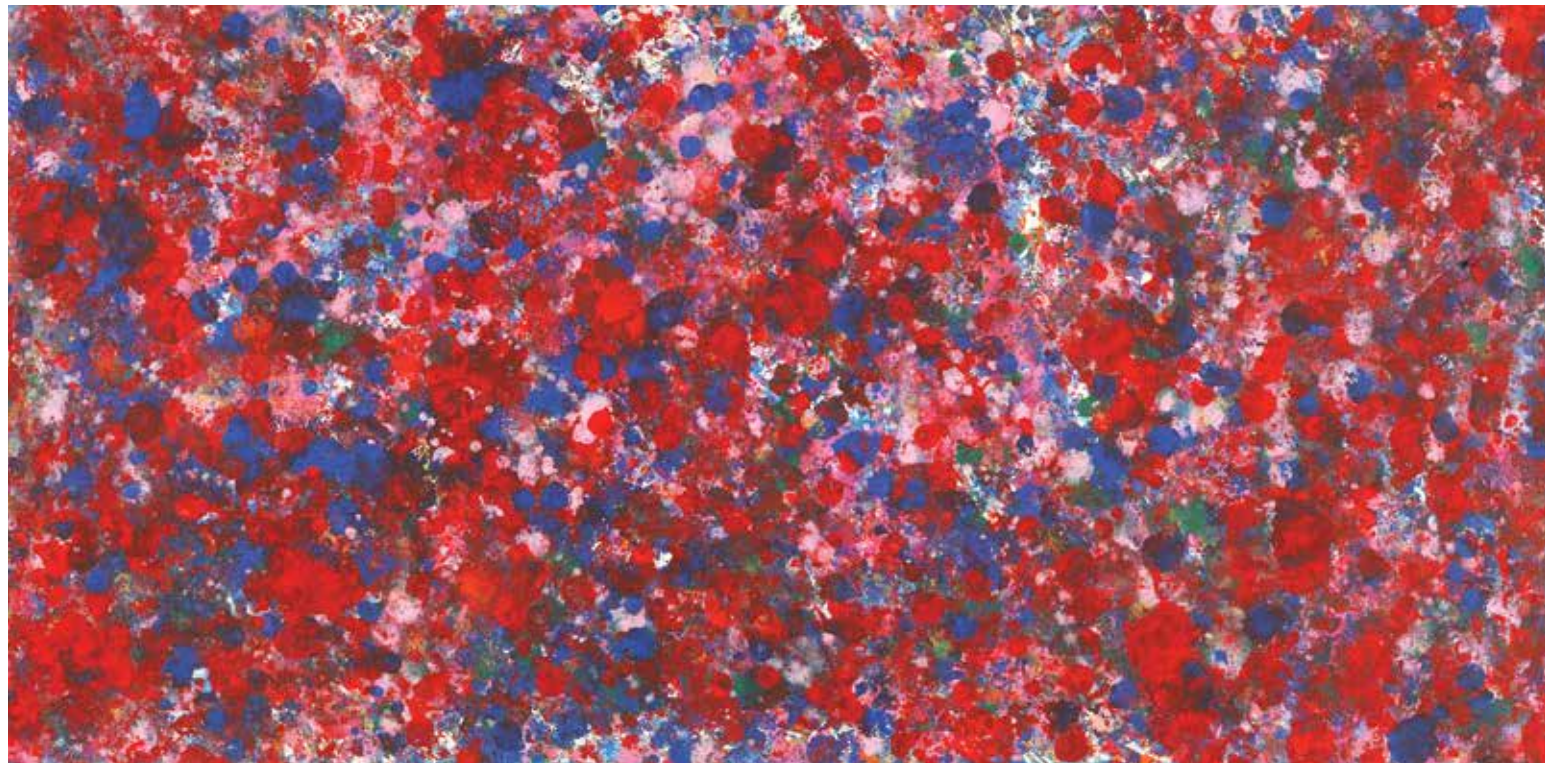


JOHN WOOD

SAMELLA LEWIS, *BAYOU WOMAN*, 1999, OIL STICK ON PAPER,  
24 x 30 INCHES, COLLECTION OF ERIC KEY

# Interconnectivity and Cultural Continuity

M. P. Alladin  
Jacinto “Coco” Galloso  
Claudia “Aziza” Gibson-Hunter  
Manuel Mendive  
Melanie Royster  
Alec Simpson  
Lou Stovall



GREG STALEY

LOU STOVALL, *IN THE MOMENT*, 2012, SILKSCREEN ON PAPER,  
20 X 40 INCHES, COLLECTION OF ADDISON/RIPLEY FINE ART GALLERY

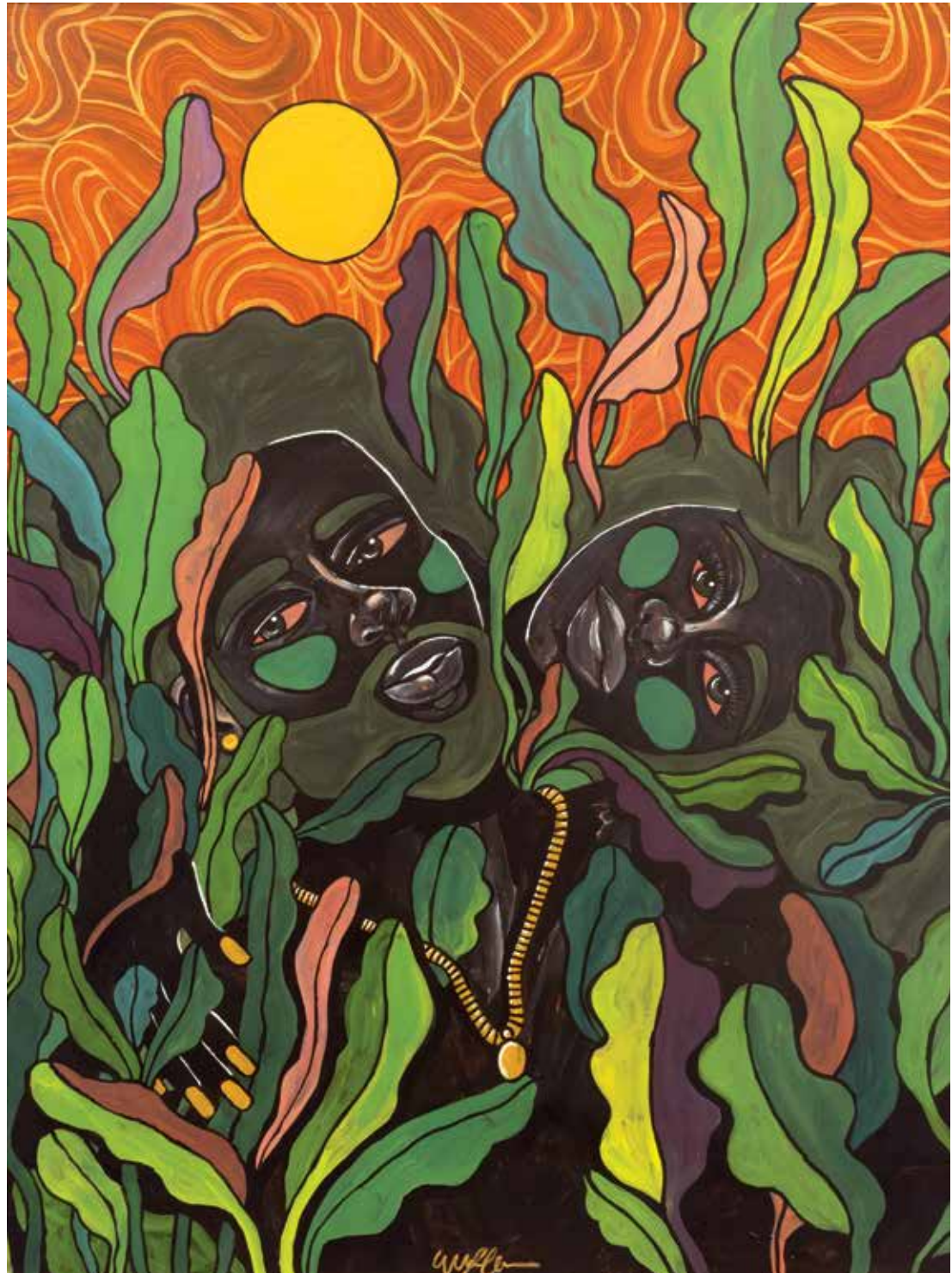
JOHN WOO



X "Tribute to Mr. Wimberley"

Alec Simpson 2019

ALEC SIMPSON, *TRIBUTE TO MR. WIMBERLEY*, 2019, MONOTYPE PRINT  
ON PAPER, UNFRAMED: 60 X 42 INCHES, FRAMED: 65¾ X 48 INCHES



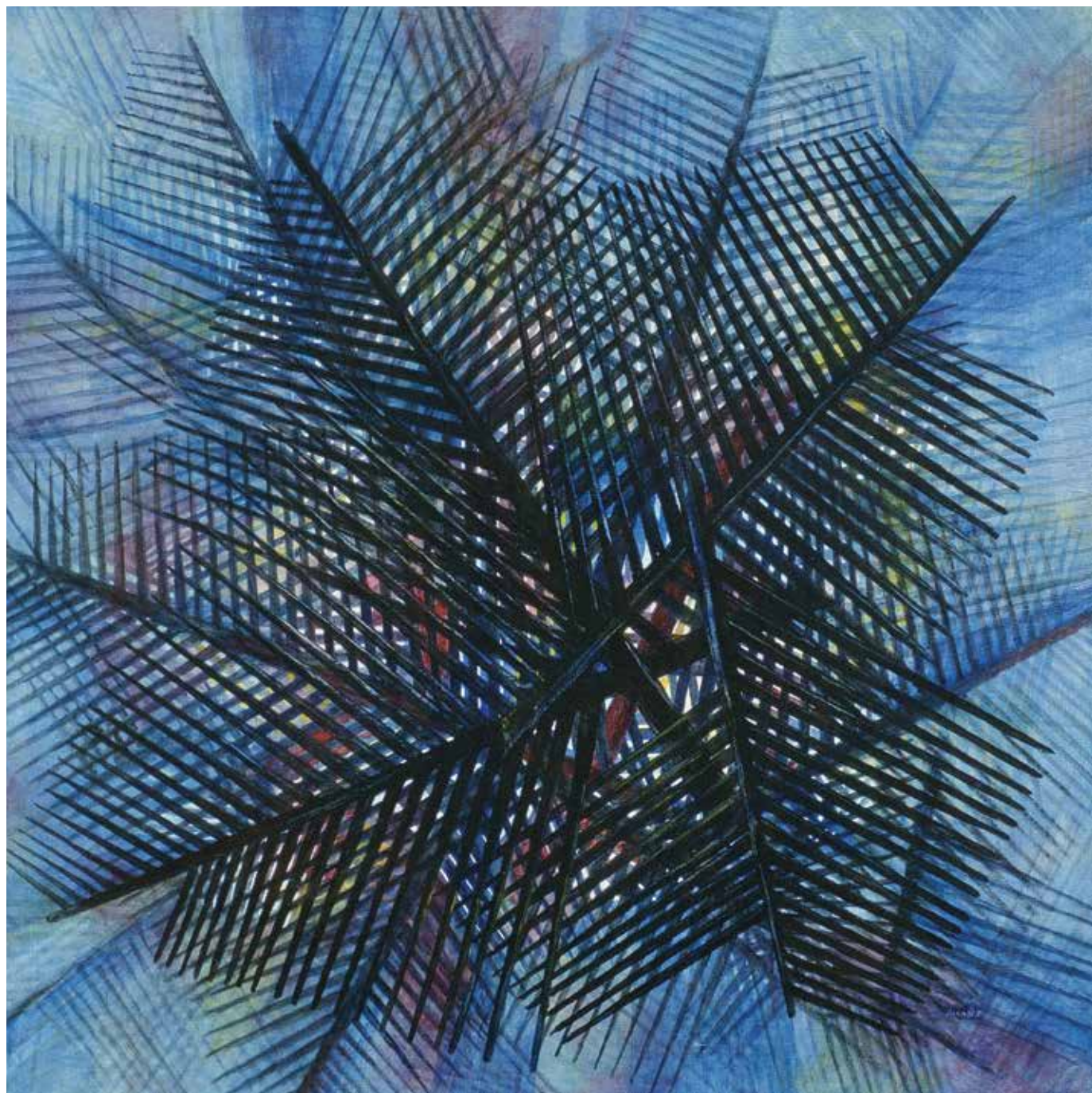
JEFFREY KENNEY

MELANIE ROYSTER, *SUMMER'S SUNSET*, 2023,  
ACRYLIC ON CANVAS, 40 x 30 INCHES



JOHN WOO

CLAUDIA "AZIZA" GIBSON-HUNTER,  
*YOU GOT TO GIVE UP THE STUFF  
THAT HOLDS YOU DOWN*, 2023,  
ACRYLIC PAINT AND COLORED PENCIL  
ON PAPER, 98 x 50¾ INCHES



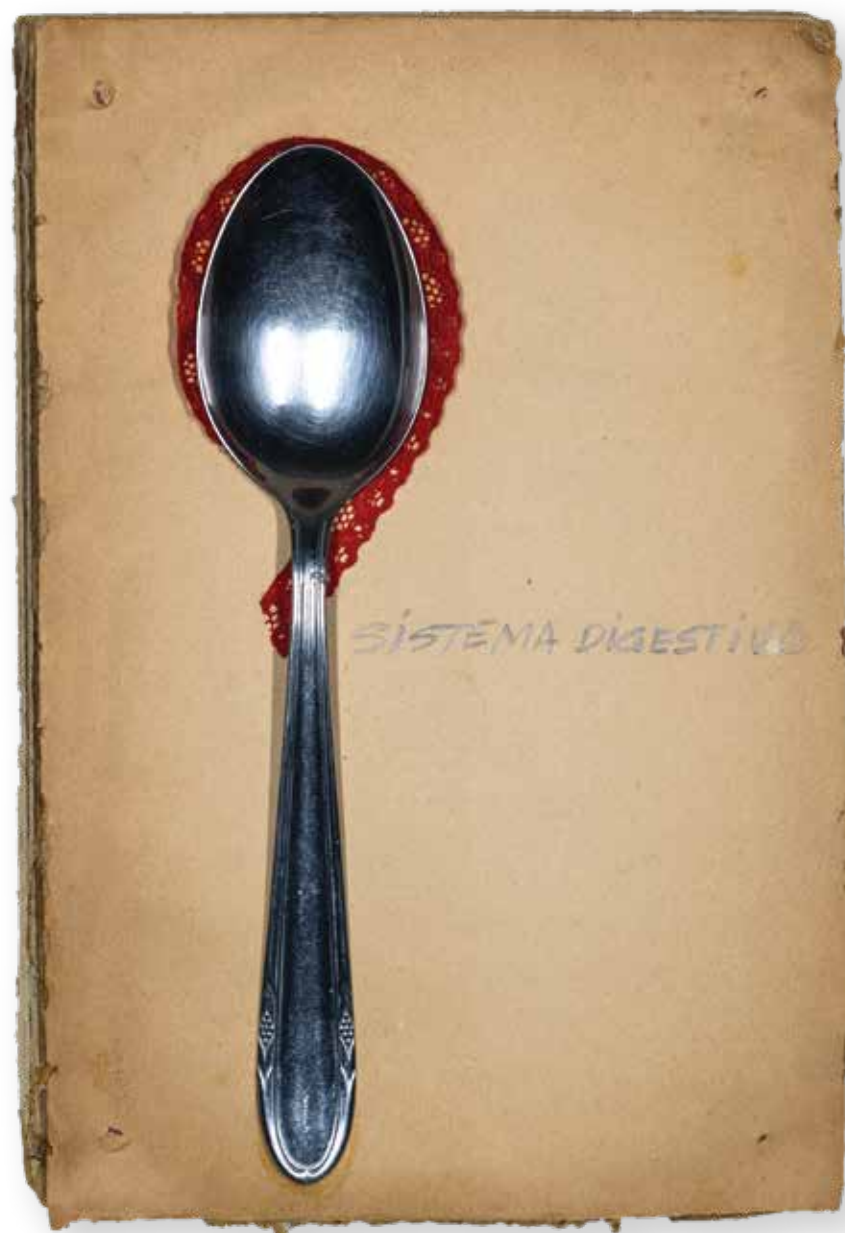
OAS AMA, ART MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAS

M. P. ALLADIN, *LAS PALMAS (THE PALMS)*, 1973, ACRYLIC ON CANVAS, 48 x 48 INCHES, COLLECTION OF THE ART MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAS

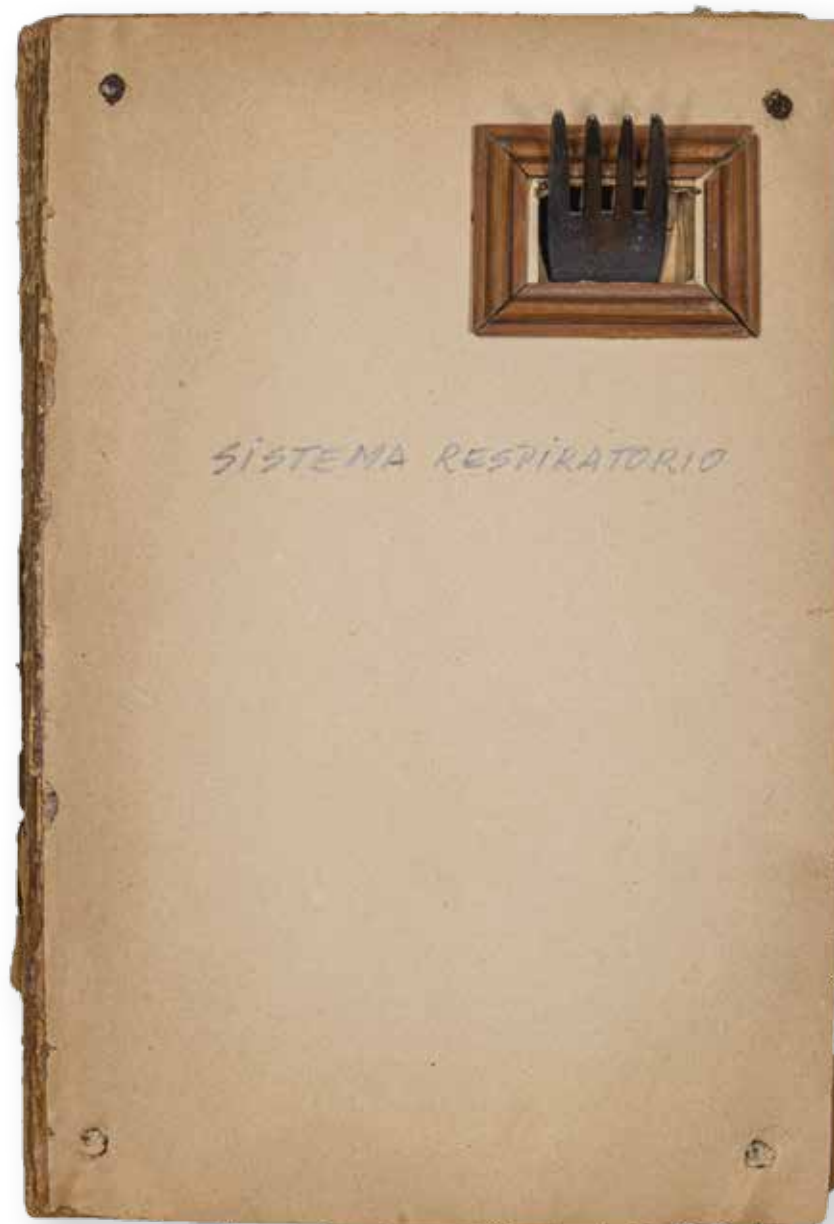


XAVIER THOMAS INTERNATIONAL CONSULTING

MANUEL MENDIVE, *BARCO NEGRERO*, 2012, SERIGRAPH, 18 x 24 INCHES, COLLECTION OF ADLAI L. PAPPY, MD



OAS AMA, ART MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAS



JACINTO "COCO" GALLOSO, *DERECHO A LA VIDA*:  
*SISTEMA DIGESTIVO, SISTEMA NERVIOSO, SISTEMA RESPIRATORIO*,  
2016, ACRYLIC ON CANVAS, THREE PIECES: 9 X 6 INCHES EACH,  
COLLECTION OF THE ART MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAS



# EXHIBITION LIST

<p><b>M. P. Alladin</b> (Mahmoud Pharouk Alladin) (Trinidadian and Tobagonian, 1919–1980) <i>Las Palmas (The Palms)</i>, 1973 Acrylic on canvas 48 x 48 inches Collection of the Art Museum of the Americas</p>	<p><b>Alonzo Joseph Davis Jr.</b> (American, 1942–2025) <i>Kalimba Series #8</i>, 2015 Bamboo construction with collage and paint on board 27 x 33 x 7½ inches Collection of DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities</p>	<p>(American, 1933–2022) <i>Ain't More Than Music</i>, 1989 Acrylic and enamel on aluminum 60 x 50 x 10 inches Collection of George Mason University</p>	<p>(Cuban, 1902–1982) <i>Croiseur Noir</i>, 1972 Etching, ed. 75/125 13 x 10½ inches Collection of Leslie Oliver Ellison</p>	<p>(American, b. 1945) <i>The Other John</i>, 2014 Acrylic on paper 30¾ x 22¾ inches Collection of New Door Creative Gallery</p>	<p>(American, b. 1958) <i>Self-Portrait</i>, 2012 Mixed media (metal and found objects) 33 x 9 x 11 inches Collection of Dean Dalton</p>
<p><b>John Beadle</b> (Bahamian, 1964–2024) <i>Four Gods of the Moon</i>, 1991 Oil on canvas 48 x 36 inches Collection of the Art Museum of the Americas</p>	<p><b>Roberto Diago</b> (Roberto Juan Diago y Querol) (Cuban, 1920–1955) <i>Face II</i>, 1950 Oil on cardboard 13½ x 10½ inches Collection of the Art Museum of the Americas</p>	<p><b>Stanley Greaves</b> (Guyanese, active U.S., b. 1934) <i>Slave Stock and Whip</i>, 2018 Mahogany, copper, plexiglass, nylon cord, Brazil cherry, and pine 30 x 19 x 24 inches Collection of the Art Museum of the Americas</p>	<p><b>Luis Vasquez La Roche</b> (Trinidadian and Tobagonian, active U.S., b. 1983) <i>The Cleanse (La Limpieza)</i>, 2022 Performance/video</p>	<p><b>Martin Puryear</b> (American, b. 1941) <i>Hand Sculpture</i>, 1993 Wood 17 x 11 inches Collection of Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library</p>	<p><b>Lou Stovall</b> (American, 1934–2023) <i>In the Moment</i>, 2012 Silkscreen on paper 20 x 40 inches Collection of Addison/Ripley Fine Art Gallery</p>
<p><b>Alexander “Skunder” Boghossian</b> (Ethiopian, 1937–2003) <i>Axum</i>, 1967 Oil on canvas 45¼ x 31½ inches Collection of Eric Steven Wray</p>	<p><b>David Driskell</b> (American, 1931–2020) <i>Landscape</i>, 1980 Acrylic on paper 14 x 11 inches Collection of Eric Key</p>	<p><b>Curlee Raven Holton</b> (American, b. 1951) <i>It Is Not a Mask, It Is a Faith</i>, 1993 Cut-plate etching on wove paper 37 x 27 inches</p>	<p><b>Samella Lewis</b> (American, 1923–2022) <i>Bayou Woman</i>, 1999 Oil stick on paper 24 x 30 inches Collection of Eric Key</p>	<p><b>Samella Lewis</b> (American, 1923–2022) <i>Bayou Woman</i>, 1999 Oil stick on paper 24 x 30 inches Collection of Eric Key</p>	<p><b>Melanie Royster</b> (American, b. 1993) <i>Summer’s Sunset</i>, 2023 Acrylic on canvas 40 x 30 inches</p>
<p><b>Everald Brown</b> (Jamaican, 1917–2002) <i>Totem</i>, 1972 Wood 36 x 5 x 9 inches Collection of the Art Museum of the Americas</p>	<p><b>Jallim Eudovic</b> (St. Lucian, b. 1980) <i>Spiritual Mechanics</i>, 2022 Metal, wood, and acrylic Three pieces: 7⅞ x 4⅜ x 1¼ inches, 11 x 7⅜ x 1¾ inches, 11⅜ x 12 x 1⅞ inches Collection of the Art Museum of the Americas</p>	<p><b>Martha Jackson Jarvis</b> (American, b. 1952) <i>Ancestor’s Bones: Sounds from the Sea III</i>, 2014, Mixed-media drawing: black walnut ink, watercolor, oil, raw pigment, collage, and photo transfer 42 x 67 inches</p>	<p><b>Georges Liautaud</b> (Haitian, 1899–1991) <i>Crucifixion</i>, 1959 Cut and hammered iron 46 x 40½ x 9 inches Collection of the Art Museum of the Americas</p>	<p><b>Georges Liautaud</b> (Haitian, 1899–1991) <i>Crucifixion</i>, 1959 Cut and hammered iron 46 x 40½ x 9 inches Collection of the Art Museum of the Americas</p>	<p><b>Joyce Scott</b> (American, b. 1948) <i>Have You Seen This Child?</i>, 2010 Glass beads, thread, wire, and wood 19 x 12 x 16½ inches Collection of University of Maryland Global Campus</p>
<p><b>Elizabeth Catlett</b> (American, active Mexico, 1911–2012) <i>Mahalia</i>, 2002 Bronze 15 x 11 x 30 inches Collection of Eric Key</p>	<p><b>Jacinto “Coco” Galloso</b> (Uruguayan, b. 1957) <i>Derecho a la Vida: Sistema Digestivo, Sistema Nervioso, Sistema Respiratorio</i>, 2016 Acrylic on canvas Three pieces: 9 x 6 inches each Collection of the Art Museum of the Americas</p>	<p><b>Lois Mailou Jones</b> (American, 1902–1998) <i>Studio Still Life</i>, 1970 Watercolor on paper 19 x 24 inches Collection of Eric Key</p>	<p><b>Manuel Mendive</b> (Cuban, b. 1944) <i>Barco Negrero</i>, 2012 Serigraph 18 x 24 inches Collection of Adlai L. Pappy, MD</p>	<p><b>Manuel Mendive</b> (Cuban, b. 1944) <i>Barco Negrero</i>, 2012 Serigraph 18 x 24 inches Collection of Adlai L. Pappy, MD</p>	<p><b>Amy Sherald</b> (American, b. 1973) <i>Puppet Master</i>, 2008 Oil on canvas 74 x 52⅞ inches Collection of DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities</p>
<p><b>Elizabeth Catlett</b> (American, active Mexico, 1911–2012) <i>Niña</i>, 1957 Color linoleum cut on wove paper, ed. 87/100, 7 x 5½ inches Collection of Romy Silverstein</p> <p><b>Irene Clouthier</b> (Mexican, b. 1974) <i>Neon-Like LED Sign</i>, 2022–23 Neon 30 x 35 inches</p>	<p><b>Claudia “Aziza” Gibson-Hunter</b> (American, b. 1952) <i>You Got to Give Up the Stuff That Holds You Down</i>, 2023 Acrylic paint and colored pencil on paper 98 x 50¾ inches</p> <p><b>Sam Gilliam</b></p>	<p><b>Patricia Kaersenhout</b> (Suriname, active Netherlands, b. 1966) <i>Invisible Men</i>, 2009 Digital prints, bound book, ed. 750 10¼ x 7¼ inches Collection of the Art Museum of the Americas</p> <p><b>Wifredo Lam</b></p>	<p><b>Bernadette Persaud</b> (Guyanese, b. 1946) <i>Gentleman Under the Sky (Gulf War)</i>, 1991 Oil on canvas Diptych, 50 x 74 inches Collection of the Art Museum of the Americas</p> <p><b>James Phillips</b></p>	<p><b>Bernadette Persaud</b> (Guyanese, b. 1946) <i>Gentleman Under the Sky (Gulf War)</i>, 1991 Oil on canvas Diptych, 50 x 74 inches Collection of the Art Museum of the Americas</p> <p><b>James Phillips</b></p>	<p><b>Alec Simpson</b> (American, b. 1944) <i>Tribute to Mr. Wimberley</i>, 2019 Monotype print on paper Unframed: 60 x 42 inches Framed: 65¾ x 48 inches</p> <p><b>Nelson Stevens</b> (American, 1938–2022) <i>Eighth Wonder</i>, 1980 Acrylic on canvas 40 x 40 inches Collection of Eric Key</p> <p><b>Renée Stout</b></p>
					<p><b>Michelle Talibah</b> (American, b. 1954) <i>One</i>, 1979 Acrylic on canvas 36 x 48 inches Collection of New Door Creative Gallery</p> <p><b>Alma Thomas</b> (American, 1891–1978) <i>Lunar Surface</i>, 1970 Acrylic on canvas 34 x 39⅞ inches Collection of Katzen Arts Center, American University</p> <p><b>Julio Valdez</b> (Dominican, b. 1969) <i>The Grey Echo (El Eco Gris)</i>, 2002 Silk aquatint and monotype on paper 37 x 47¼ inches Collection of the Art Museum of the Americas</p> <p><b>Wilfredo Valladares</b> (American, b. 1968) <i>Unmasked</i>, 2014 Cast iron and wood 6 x 4 feet</p> <p><b>Fabiola Alvarez Yurcisin</b> (Mexican, active Maryland, b. 1973) <i>Black Cage</i>, 2020 Videocassette tape, double-sided adhesive tape, mirror, and wood base 41 x 17 x 21 inches</p>

## CONTRIBUTORS

**LaNitra M. Berger** is an associate professor of history and art history and director of African and African American Studies at George Mason University. From 2010 to 2022, she was the senior director of the Office of Fellowships at George Mason. Since joining George Mason in 2010, Berger has helped students secure more than \$2 million in external funding for national scholarships and fellowships such as the Boren, Fulbright, Gilman, Truman, National Science Foundation, and Critical Language Scholarship.

**Ariana A. Curtis** is dedicated to building inclusive frameworks that disrupt systemic marginalization, misrepresentation, and erasure. She is the first curator of Latinx Studies at the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC). In this role, she leads museum research and collections that center Latinidad through an African American lens. She is curator of the award-winning NMAAHC Latinx collections portal and has held leadership roles in major Smithsonian initiatives including Our Shared Future: Reckoning with Our Racial Past and the American Women's History Initiative. Additionally, Curtis is a founding member of the Black Latinas Know Collective and a board member for Duke University Libraries, the National Association of Latino Arts and Cultures (NALAC), and the Museums Association of the Caribbean.

**Cheryl D. Edwards**, an African American artist-curator, scholar, and educator, was born in 1954 in Miami Beach, Florida. She began her studies in art in 1987 in New York City in a class at the Art Student League taught by Ernest Crichlow. Edwards holds a BA in political science from Boston University; was an MA candidate in Black Studies (Boston University); and has a JD from Syracuse College of Law. She has been living in Washington, DC, for the past 30 years. Edwards has exhibited in many shows in the United States, the Netherlands, Germany, Monaco, Costa Rica, Denmark, and Hong Kong. Her media are oil, ink, printmaking, mixed media, and acrylics. Edwards is a recipient of the Excellence in Mentoring Award given by George Mason University, Arts Management program. She is a 2024 (also 2023, 2022, 2021, and 2015) DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities Fellowship Awardee. Edwards received a fellowship award from the Long Run Foundation and is the winner of the Black Writers Fellowship: Reporter awarded by Hand Papermaking, Inc. She is an awardee in the Art Cart: Saving the Legacy project selected by the Research Center for Arts and Culture. The Art Cart Project resulted in the archiving of her artwork in Columbia University's Academic Commons archive. Edwards was also a senior advisor to the executive director of the David C. Driskell Center (2015–2023, University of Maryland), a member of the Education Committee of the McClean Project for the Arts, an advisor to the Washington Sculptors Group, and a board member of the Washington Print Club.

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Symposium Panelist

**Antoinette Peele**  
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University of Maryland Global Campus was founded more than 75 years ago specifically to serve the higher education needs of working adults and military servicemembers. Today, UMGC is the largest provider of postsecondary education in Maryland and continues its global tradition with online and hybrid courses, more than 175 classroom and service locations worldwide, and more than 135 degrees and certificates backed by the reputation of a state university and the University System of Maryland. For more information, visit [umgc.edu](http://umgc.edu).

## ABOUT THE ARTS PROGRAM AT UMGC

Since 1978, UMGC has proudly shown works from a large collection of international and Maryland artists at its headquarters in Adelphi, Maryland, a few miles from the nation's capital. Through its Arts Program, the university provides a prestigious and wide-ranging forum for emerging and established artists and brings art to the community through special exhibitions and its own collections, which have grown to include more than 3,000 pieces of art.

Artworks are on display throughout the College Park Marriott Hotel & Conference Center and the Administration Building in Adelphi. The main, lower-level gallery in Adelphi is open to the public from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. seven days a week, and the Leroy Merritt Center for the Art of Joseph Sheppard is open to the public from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. seven days a week. More than 75,000 students, scholars, and visitors come to the Adelphi facilities each year.

## ARTS PROGRAM MISSION STATEMENT

The UMGC Arts Program is dedicated to furthering the university's objectives by creating a dynamic environment in which our diverse constituents, including students and the general public, can study and learn from direct exposure to our art collections, exhibitions, and educational programs.

### COVER ARTWORK:

Manuel Mendive, *Barco Negrero*, 2012, Serigraph,  
18 x 24 inches, Collection of Adlai L. Pappy, MD  
Photo by Xavier Thomas International Consulting

### TITLE PAGE:

Alonzo Joseph Davis Jr., *Kalimba Series #8*, 2015,  
Bamboo construction with collage and paint on board,  
27 x 33 x 7½ inches, Collection of DC Commission  
on the Arts and Humanities  
Photo by Jeffrey Kenney



Catalog published in conjunction  
with the exhibition *Before the Americas*

George Mason University Mason Exhibitions Gillespie Gallery August 25–November 15, 2025	University of Maryland Global Campus Arts Program Gallery February 15–May 10, 2026
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Melanie Royster, *Summer's Sunset*, 2023, acrylic on canvas, 40 x 30 inches