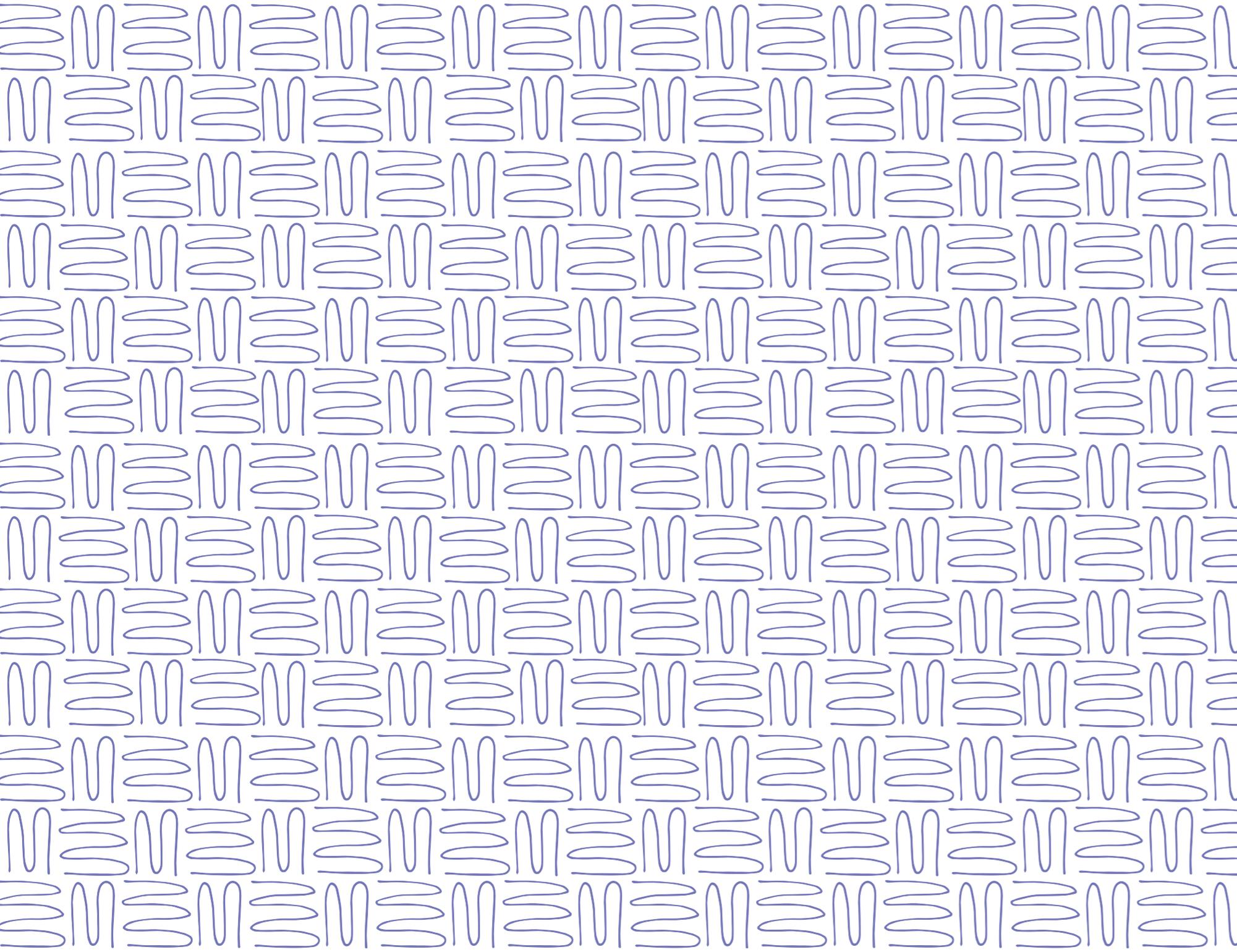


**PERCY
MARTIN'S**
Mythical
Connections
in Art

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND
GLOBAL CAMPUS
ARTS PROGRAM



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PHOTO BY KATHERINE LAMBERT



On behalf of University of Maryland Global Campus (UMGC), it is my honor to introduce the exhibition *Percy Martin's Mythical Connections in Art*.

For much of modern history, education has served to broaden our understanding of the world and the perspectives that inform that understanding. Our university, in turn, works to bring education within reach for learners across Maryland and around the world.

Master printmaker Percy Martin—along with his remarkable body of work—advances those purposes as well, both as an educator and a visual artist.

Born in Virginia and raised in the District of Columbia, Martin taught at Washington's New Thing Art and Architecture Center, the Duke Ellington School of the Arts, and Sidwell Friends School, from which he retired after 29 years. In his own work, he has created a vast, mythical world, entirely his own,

with storytelling rooted in African traditions. Through this mythical world, he continues to wrestle with contemporary issues, pose personal questions, and seek answers.

Through our Arts Program, which expands on and supports our mission, we are proud to highlight the unique talents and perspectives of artists like Martin, and we are delighted to host this remarkable exhibition.

I hope you find Martin's mythical world and technical mastery inspiring, and I thank you for your support of the arts and of our Arts Program, now and in the future.

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

PHOTO BY TRACEY BROWN



I first read about Percy Martin and encountered his prints, watercolors, and drawings early in my career, but I did not meet the artist himself until the late 1990s. At the time, he was living in Washington, D.C.; I was in town for a meeting and decided to give him a call. He graciously welcomed me into his studio, which was in the basement of his home. I was then a program director and exhibition coordinator for an organization, as well as a collector of art by artists of African descent. I greatly admired Martin's work and longevity in the arts, beginning as an art instructor.

Although etching is his favorite medium, Martin has created works in all printmaking techniques—lithographs, intaglios, etchings, monotypes and monoprints, woodcuts, and screenprints—as well as artworks in watercolor and pen-and-ink. He continues to produce prints at his home in Silver Spring, Maryland, even as his sight fails him. With his vision impaired, Martin now uses a large screen to create works digitally.

Hearing the inspiration for the artist's work is like taking an adventurous journey through another realm, with vividly detailed characters and animals. Martin created a vast mythical world, the universe of the Bushmen, and tells their story from their historical beginning. According to the artist, the series began with the belief that he needed to communicate with the ancestors. For centuries, various societies have communicated with the afterlife or believed they were connecting with spiritual beings. In traditional African culture, it

was common to seek the help and guidance of the ancestors. It is in this mindset that Martin grapples with contemporary issues, embedding personal questions and searching for answers in his art. Although Martin models his storytelling on African traditions, beliefs, and rituals, the myth is his own creation. His imaginative tale continues to unfold in watercolors and prints, keeping the viewer intrigued and wondering what's next.

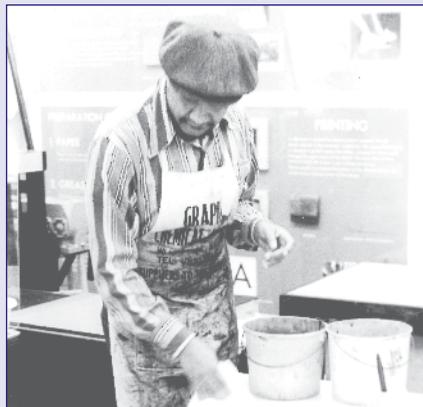
Now 80, Martin is recognized as a master printmaker and takes great satisfaction in passing his knowledge on to the next generation. His works are in major collections, including those of the Smithsonian American Art Museum, American University Museum at the Katzen Arts Center, and UMGC's Maryland Artist Collection. He has shown his works widely throughout the United States, South America, Africa, and Europe.

I would like to thank Duane Winfield for his assistance in pulling works for us. Additionally, I would like to extend my gratitude to those who encouraged us to consider Martin's works for an exhibition. This includes but is not limited to Lynn Sylvester, Eileen Berger (Just Lookin' Gallery), William Robinson, Claude Elliott, and Susan Goldman. The UMGC Arts Program is honored to present a comprehensive survey of the art of Percy Martin.

ERIC KEY
DIRECTOR, ARTS PROGRAM
UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND
GLOBAL CAMPUS

THE INCEPTION OF A NEW WORLD

BY TRESTON SANDERS, CURATOR



PERCY MARTIN IS FULL OF SURPRISES. He will surprise you with his humor, his spirit, and his retelling of a lifetime of adventures. I did not arrange for a formal interview with him, but our conversations while developing this exhibition made him feel like an old friend. Martin is a master printmaker, a teacher, and a phenomenal storyteller. He details the happenings of his mythical society of the Bushmen in hundreds of colorful prints, paintings, and drawings.

Local and Professional Connections

Born in 1943 in Danville, Virginia, Martin spent most of his upbringing and adult life in Washington, D.C. He recalled spending many summers in the countryside in Danville as a youth. He had numerous experiences of being a fish out of water there, often meeting with some disorienting adventure that would challenge his ability to adapt. He said back home in D.C., as a child in a big family, he would frequently slip away to venture out on his own, and the adults rarely caught him. He would take small “lunch breaks” at the five-and-dime during family shopping trips, sometimes not resurfacing for hours.

Martin graduated from the Washington, D.C., public school system and attended the Corcoran School of Art on a scholarship, with a double major in advertising design and printmaking. He got a job as a security guard in the Corcoran Gallery, where he met other artists who appreciated the way he looked at things, as well as family members of artists, which offered him a broader perspective of their art and working lives.

As a Corcoran graduate, he taught design and printmaking at Duke Ellington School of the Arts and Sidwell Friends School. He taught college but preferred working with high school kids—the suggestion of a future in art just seemed to excite them more. Like many artists who teach, Martin had to carefully carve out time to do his own work. The problem was that he enjoyed teaching too much, even though he originally rejected the idea. He rarely slowed down in his ambitious pursuits—he nearly attended Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore to get a master’s degree in art but

chose to focus on his Bushmen works instead. Martin has exhibited all over the world and has won a myriad of grants to continue his work.

Martin did not center his attention only on his own destiny. In 1974, he also helped his close colleagues found Gallery 10, a well-known print shop in the Dupont Circle neighborhood of Washington, D.C. He had a bit of experience, considering he had established and begun operating his own workshop, WD Printmaking, four years earlier, in 1970. He and his late wife, painter Alice Marshall Martin, ran this studio out of their home in Adams Morgan. The workshop eventually moved with Martin and his family to their new home in Mount Pleasant. WD Printmaking Workshop was conceived as a space of limitless collaborations and creation. Martin’s focus on experimental methods of printmaking led him to his own signature style and pushed those who worked with him to find their own approach as well.

Martin and his wife resided over the print workshop while raising their fraternal twins, Diane and Christopher. Many of the watercolor paintings in this exhibition are the result of a taxing summer with no air conditioning in the studio. It was just too hot for printing, so the artist retreated from the studio and created watercolors, as well as pen-and-ink drawings. He said that toward the end of that summer, he displayed his works sprawled out all over the floor to an art dealer with whom he was not familiar, who casually purchased about 75 percent of what he saw. Martin chuckled as he was telling me this, saying that he wishes he knew the gentleman’s identity and that he would love to share a conversation with him today.

The Society of the Bushmen

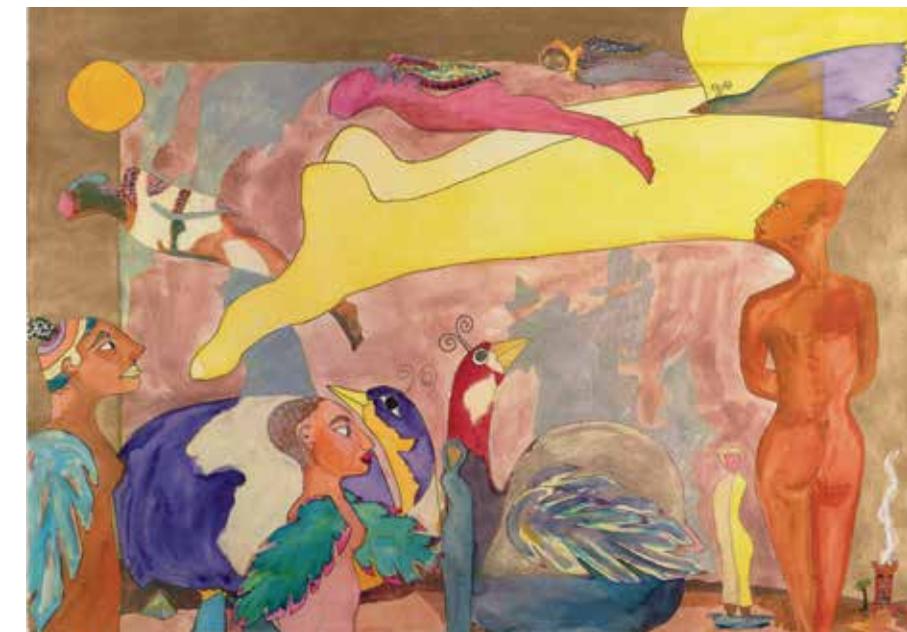
For more than 50 years, Martin has been letting us take a peek behind the curtain at the whimsical world that he has created. Every print is vivid and engages the viewer’s senses with an array of color. The artist also works in black and white and grayscale, but the ancestral nature of the colored pieces seems to take on another purpose. The figures in them effortlessly hover and drift through the air, as if underwater. The theme of zero gravity appears most frequently throughout the storylines with the female characters, who have the ability to transition into birdlike figures. The figure in charge of teaching these bird-women to fly is Nubiai, the Priestess of Flight. As a feminist and vocal advocate for women’s rights, Martin uses the birds to challenge gender bias and redefine social constructs. In the world of the Bushmen, only women can transform into birds and have the power and freedom of flight.

Often Martin’s artistic aesthetic combines theoretical fiction, folklore, and fantasy with Black and African culture. Some imagery mimics that of Australian Aboriginal cave drawings, while other works take inspiration from ancient Egyptians. While exploring African myths, Martin was inspired to create his own polytheistic chronicles. He used historical research to fashion utopian planes for African diasporic people across multiple societies. Many of his stories seem to counter specific oppressions as he uses science fiction and his artistry to dismantle stereotypical limitations of Africans and envision more intriguing adventures.

Martin mentioned wanting to turn his mythical narratives into a book or a series; however, obtaining the funding to do so never panned out. Regardless, his mythical world developed in spite of roadblocks and detours, with the backdrop of science fiction offering new possibilities for his animal and humanlike deities to thrive. The interactions between humans and these deities often involve a lesson or a quest for an answer. Martin explains, however, that venturing into this realm is more about the experience and less about the answers sought.

Each scene is only a snapshot of an entire storyline. These mysterious narratives become easy to follow once you understand the rhythm. The habits,

powers, and responsibilities of the deities and animals are usually replayed in different scenarios. New figures—and abilities of figures—are not constantly introduced. The afterlife he depicts is shown with pyramids, housebroken elephants, floating bird-women, and burial chambers—everyone and everything is trapped in this city of souls. No one there dies; they simply ascend to a different plane. The main god of this realm is Saint Mar, who resides in a temple with a priestess named Nova and a sacred elephant. Martin has also invented a hieroglyphic language, which is featured across the bottom of certain works, offering explanations. The catch is that you can’t read it, so you have to settle for the titles, which aren’t always easy to decode either.



Untitled (Female)
Bushman series
n.d.
watercolor on paper
22¾ x 30 inches



Top to bottom:
If We, 1982, woodcut
 artist's proof
 16½ x 28 inches
 Private collection

Bushman's Time Travel
 2023, pigment print
 artist's proof, edition of 12
 40 x 32 inches, Courtesy of
 Susan Goldman at Lily Press



Intersections with Afrofuturism

Long before the term *Afrofuturism* existed, Martin's works illustrated and expressed its concepts, traversing the intersection of African diasporic cultures and science fiction. His artistic aesthetic is completely built within the field of African identity, which was shaped gradually over decades and further conceptualized in the second half of the 20th century. Martin developed many of his ideals in the wake of the 1960s fight for civil rights. Being Black became something to be proud of instead of a stamp of undesirability. In printmaking, Afrofuturist artists use traditional processes to form images that render a future—or in Martin's case, an entire realm—in which African people are the masters and makers of science, purpose, and technology.

Afrofuturism encompasses more than just race or racial issues. The art form also opposes oppression in gender constructs and roles, including generational trauma and misogyny. In these domains, Black and African men and women are permitted the freedom to use various tools to take control of their futures and refocus their cultural foundations. Here one can "reclaim Blackness" under old or new methodologies that allow Black people to see themselves beyond a painful past and present. The world Martin creates suspends the racism and injustices members of the Africa diaspora face, offering viewers a space to escape the confines of oppressive societal rules and expectations. Within this realm, Martin offers viewers immersion in an experience without traditional gender or social constructs and inequities. ●

“unusual”

“evocative”

“prolific”

Images courtesy of Newspapers.com by Ancestry

Since the beginning of his printmaking career, Martin has attracted the attention of art critics and audiences alike.



PHOTOS BY SCOTT S. HAWKICK

“It is the prints by Percy Martin that make the show worthwhile.”
 —OWEN FINDSON, ART CRITIC, THE CINCINNATI ENQUIRER

AN INTERVIEW WITH PERCY MARTIN

BY CLAUDE L. ELLIOTT,
ORAL HISTORIAN

This interview was conducted on October 12, 2021, and has been edited for length and clarity.



Claude L. Elliott: First, I want to thank you for taking the time to share with me your journey as an African American artist growing up in Washington, D.C. I'm very interested in the support systems that were available to you during your journey in terms of becoming an artist.

When you were in high school, what were your goals? What did you want to become after you graduated?

Percy Martin: When I was eight years old, I wanted to be an artist. I remember that clearly. I don't remember too much, but I do remember that. But I never thought about it as a job. And never thought about having a job until the 11th grade when it dawned on me that next year, you're out of this job which you got up every morning from

kindergarten all the way through 12th grade to go to every day. To me it was like a job, you just got up, went to work and that was school. But I realized after the 12th grade, I had to get a job or do something. And I had never really thought about it.

I never thought of art as a job, I thought an artist is what I wanted to be.

CLE: What was one of your early memories, in terms of your exposure to art and the feeling that you enjoyed making art?

PM: When I was eight years old, someone gave us a big roll of brown paper. Someone said let's draw on it and everybody kind of got down and was scribbling about. I thought, I don't draw but that's something I've always wanted to do. And I started drawing a train and said that's what I want to do. Usually when you'd say something like that around your cousins, your brothers and siblings, they'd laugh at you or say you can't do that. But no one said that because I had drawn the train. And for some reason, for the rest of my life they never questioned that was what I was going to do.

CLE: Did you get any art classes in school?

PM: Not really. I got them when I got to junior high school. If there was an opportunity to do some drawings and put them up, I would do that. There weren't any real art classes until junior and high school. I didn't get to go to Saturday classes. Well, there was no money for that anyway.

CLE: How did you make the connection between your interest in art and going to the Corcoran School of Art?

PM: The only school I'd heard about was a school on U Street. I didn't even know the Corcoran existed. But I knew about the school on U Street, that was a Black school. But it was for advertising.

Which made sense, because for most Black people, painting was just out of the question. I just didn't know any Black artists, and the first Black artist I met was an advertising person, he was an advertising artist.

So when I was in high school, I was taking art, and my art teacher Miss Rock got me a scholarship to the Corcoran.

CLE: Did you have to submit a portfolio?

PM: I think she took some of my work and showed it to them. She must have.

CLE: She really encouraged you?

PM: She did encourage me and she was very helpful. If she hadn't done that, it wouldn't have happened. It would have been just my dream.

CLE: When did you graduate from high school?

PM: I graduated from the Corcoran in '69. I was there for five years, so you come back five years from then.

CLE: So you graduated around '64. And what was the Corcoran like? Were there many Black students there?

PM: No, it was me and another fellow student. He took the drawing class that was three days a week, and I took the drawing class that was five days a week. I was so far behind.

CLE: What did you study?

PM: I studied drawing and advertising. Around my second year, the other Black artist, Bud Lane, who ran the school store—who turned out to be an Air Force captain—and who was a painter from Boston, said, "Percy, they just opened a new department called printmaking. Why don't you go down and see?" He knew I really did not like advertising.

So I went down the hall and sure enough, there was a room—they didn't have a room at first for printing. Whatever empty room, that was the room they used, so you'd have to move the press, you'd have to move everything and go from room to room.

And I really liked that, because no one else wanted to take the press apart and move and lug all that stuff, but I loved doing that, so I got to do that. And it was kind of like going in at the ground floor and building something. Eventually they had a huge department. It was fun doing that and I really enjoyed it.

CLE: What kind of press was it?

PM: The first one was a D Roller. I'll never forget, it's the roller that the Bureau of Engraving used to

use to proof the money plate. And it weighed 800 pounds, and it could come apart. The truth of the matter is, all presses are the same, I don't care how much they cost, they all come apart the same way. So I learned how to do that, and I really enjoyed it. It was just so much fun learning how to make the acid. There are different layers of printmaking, but being at the very bottom of it and working my way up to the top was amazing. So it was a great fit for me, and I was just lucky being there at the right time.

CLE: In terms of the printmaking media, were there certain kinds of prints you were able to make while you were at the Corcoran?

PM: Yeah, it was limited to the point that they didn't have a whole department at first.

CLE: Was it lithography, etching, or what's the medium?

PM: There was no lithography there. They had etching, engraving, anything that revolved around intaglio, and then they brought in a silkscreen teacher. I learned lithography at George Washington University.

CLE: Francine Haskins was also a student at the Corcoran. She mentioned that you were at least a year or so ahead of her but you were very helpful to her. Were there other Black students at the Corcoran before you graduated?

PM: Before I graduated there were other Black students.

CLE: After you graduated, where were you working? Were you working while a student or were you a student full-time?

PM: I was working. First, I was a dishwasher at Mrs. K's Toll House, and then I got a job at the Corcoran cleaning after school. At four o'clock, when school ended, I would walk through the green doors into the gallery, get my mops and buckets, and clean the school. I did that for a couple of years, and then I became a guard at the Corcoran, in the gallery. When Bud Lane became dean of the Saturday school classes—dean or principal—I got a job teaching at the Corcoran, and then I did some outreach for the Corcoran. I taught a year at Lorton Prison, and then I graduated.

CLE: At Lorton, did you teach printmaking?

PM: Not etching. You definitely couldn't teach etching, you couldn't take that into the prison. At first, we were going to teach silkscreen. It would just be teaching general art. They told me it was a high school. Most people didn't know that there were five Lortons. I was at the one that was equivalent to a high school that ran from 18 to 25 years old.

So I went in with a team of other artists, and I was going to do silkscreen. And the first day I got down there, I will never forget. They told us that you could not bring in knives and things like that. And we had some cloth that needed to be cut. And I just said out loud, "I need a pair of scissors, I need to cut this, you can't tear it," and one of the

inmates went into his shoe and said, “Here is a razor.” Oh, my God! Anyway, they were nice, and it was really interesting working with them. But it’s nothing like in the movies. That’s all I can tell you. All I know is Lorton was 13¼ miles from Washington, D.C., and I had to go out there two or three times a week and hold classes. So that’s what I did.

CLE: After you graduated from the Corcoran, what was your first job?

PM: I finished summer school teaching at the Corcoran, and I was cleaning up, and Topper Carew, who ran New Thing at 18th and Columbia Road . . .

CLE: That’s New Thing Art and Architecture Center, correct?

PM: It was like a community art place. Melvin Deal did the dancing, African drumming and dancing, and they had a jazz thing. And Lou Stovall and Lloyd McNeill used to do the artwork for them, but Lou Stovall was on to doing something else and McNeill was going to New York. So they needed a new artist, and they came to the Corcoran and asked in the office if there was anyone who had just graduated in graphics. They were looking for an advertising person because what they did was posters. At the Corcoran, graphics was print-making; everywhere else, graphics is advertising design. So they thought they were getting an advertising and design person. The office thought they wanted a printmaker, so they said I was there and I’d just graduated. They came down and started talking to me about a job. They said they

needed a graphic artist. I said that’s me. So I broke out my portfolio, and since I had studied advertising and printmaking—that’s the reason I was there for five years, it took that long to get both the degrees—I had it. Now they’re looking at my prints, then looking at my advertising things. They said that they knew that I was teaching here. They were thinking about starting a school. I said, “Great, that’s what I wanted to do.” I’m sitting there not realizing that they also wanted me to do advertising too. Which, it’s OK, but it was never my favorite thing. And that’s how I ended up working at New Thing, and I was there for five years.

CLE: So you were doing advertising and also teaching art?

PM: In my mind, I was there for the school, and then eventually they hired other people for the advertising part. Michael Platt was there. Francine was there. Other people who did the advertising really.

CLE: Francine shared with me that you helped her get a position at New Thing before she graduated.

PM: They were looking for other people, and I knew her. And there weren’t a whole lot of Black artists at that time, so it wasn’t a major leap.

CLE: Let’s talk a little bit about your art side—when was your first exhibition?

PM: My first exhibition was the year I graduated, with some guys at the Corcoran. They decided they were going to be anti-art and open their

own gallery. I don’t know why, but they did. I gave them some work, but they spent about a month bad-mouthing *The Post*—all the art critics, it was about three art critics at that time. They were really counterculture of anything, but anyway, we had a show and of course the critics all came. And it was so bad. I didn’t keep the paper, but at the end of the day, they said that the only shining bright star here is Percy Martin.

CLE: Good for you. So was there a show afterward? Did the gallery continue to stay open?

PM: No, no, no. Those guys were lucky that they ever did art afterward. Eventually I did find a gallery and I kind of came out of school showing. That’s never been a problem.

CLE: You mentioned there were not a lot of Black artists at that time who were actually working as artists. Where were the opportunities for you to show your work?

PM: When I got out of school, if there was a show that was an open show where you could bring your work over, I would do that. It got to the point that I was showing every month. I couldn’t sell anything because I wasn’t producing enough for the next show. I was praying that no one would buy anything so I could be in the next show. It finally dawned on me that that’s not how it’s done. You need to be in a gallery, and a gallery has a system where you only come up every two years for a show. It was scary at first, but I was in a lot of shows.

CLE: I’m curious to know the names of some of the galleries, because many of them are probably no longer in existence. For example, were there galleries in Adams Morgan where you showed?

PM: I have shown in Adams Morgan. I couldn’t go back to Gallery 10. That was on Connecticut Avenue. I showed there for years, and they went out of business. Then I went to Brody’s on P Street. Then I went back to Connecticut Avenue again, and then from there I went to Norman Parish.

CLE: Did you have a one-person show there?

PM: I had lots of one-person shows, because, like I said, I was on a two-year cycle.

There are not many university shows that I wasn’t in. I showed in a lot of little shows all over the place. I showed at Howard, GW, DC Teachers College.

CLE: How did your workshop happen? Talk about your journey in terms of establishing that and what year.

PM: That was done in ’70. It started in art school. At lunchtime we’d all sit around saying that we wanted to have our own print shops.

Eventually I got a press, and Topper let me use one of the buildings he had, Perry’s Restaurant on 18th and Columbia Road, which is still there. In the basement he let me put the press and I tried to start a workshop there, but it was kind of hard going down into the sub-basement of that building, so then I moved it over to 17th and a little street.

And then we bought a house on Lamont Street. The thing that sold me on the house was that the people before me had cut the stairs from the first floor out from the basement so you had to go outside to go into the basement. At the time, my wife was pregnant, and I knew that kids should not be near nitric acid and all the chemicals and stuff that go with the printing shop. So that space was ideal for me for a workshop. I moved the press there and built a workshop in there. And one of the nice things was that I really got to do a lot of the things I always dreamed about a print shop. I was able to give people a key, and they could come there 24/7 and work.

CLE: Who were some of the artists?

PM: Michael Platt, Bill Harris, George has a new name now, Kofi Tyus, Gail Shaw-Clemons. Francine didn’t really come to that.

CLE: I have your catalog from your show. I will mention some of the other names. This is your wife, Alice Marshall Martin. Christopher B. Martin.

PM: That was my son.

CLE: You were in the show; Mark H. Montgomery; you mentioned Michael Platt and his wife, Carol Beane; Richard J. Powell.

PM: At one point, Howard University was doing some renovation, so they used my workshop for printing.

CLE: Okay, and George H. Smith-Shomari. So how did you attract these artists?

PM: Word of mouth.

CLE: And were most of them printmakers or painters and you worked with them? Did you collaborate with them?

PM: No, most were not printmakers. They did other things. I think that was what I was looking for—people that did other things who wanted to do prints.

CLE: It’s a collaboration between you, as the master printer, and the artist?

PM: A lot of time, but most of it really was selfish. I wanted to learn things, and one way you can learn something is with people who do other things that you’ve never done. I liked the experimentation that went on. The cross-pollination all the time. You just see things. And people were doing things. I wasn’t interested in printers at that point. I mean, it’s a 13th-century technique, and there is only so much you can talk about that you have not seen already.

CLE: How were you able to support and sustain WD Printmaking Workshop?

PM: That was the thing that went back to the Corcoran and we would sit around and kind of figure out how to do it. John Sirica wanted to make money, and I never saw it as a moneymaker.

The dues were just something so I wouldn’t have people camping in the place. I always had jobs

teaching. Always been teaching ever since I came out of the Corcoran. I was teaching at Duke Ellington; Sidwell Friends; Northern Virginia Community College; University of Maryland, Baltimore. Whenever there was a job, I always had one, so anything needed in the shop, I bought it.

CLE: So you provided all the inks. And these were primarily intaglio prints?

PM: They were doing intaglio and eventually we got a lithography press, so we're doing intaglio and lithography. Jarvis Grant was there, so we had a dark room. I was really interested in the photo process, looking into the printing process. In the beginning, Kodak made chemicals that were so awful that if that didn't kill you, nothing would. And eventually the Japanese came up with a sun plate that worked with water that you could do the photo transfer and things. Having a photographer there who could talk to the photography aspect of it, having experimental printmakers there like Michael Platt and Billy Harris doing all these crazy things, we were able to incorporate a lot of things. A lot of things happened. They didn't have to buy the rollers, but they had to buy their own plates. I kept black ink. Color ink they had to buy on their own, and they had to buy their own paper. Although most of the time we would buy thousands of dollars of paper so the price went down.

CLE: Was there an assistant—someone who helped you?

PM: There always were apprentices there.

CLE: Who were some of those people?

PM: Bob Dubois. Joyce Wellman for a moment, a split second, but basically she already knew what she was doing. She came down from Bob Blackburn. She didn't do too much; she basically just went into doing her own thing. There were some students with somebody working and helping.

CLE: Did you charge a fee for people to use the workshop?

PM: I took care of most of the finances myself, so I'd never have to worry about rent. I didn't have to worry about equipment, because the workshop came with that, and I was the workshop. So if we needed something, I eventually I got it.

CLE: So this was really a passion of love for you, this project?

PM: Yeah.

CLE: And you understood the difficulties of artists not able to make prints without having access to a facility?

PM: That was the biggest problem when you left school. You didn't have any place to do anything. There weren't that many workshops around. There still aren't.

CLE: Let's talk a little bit more about you as an art educator. Were you teaching grade school or high school?

PM: When I was at New Thing I had a job at a consulting company that did workshops at night.

I got a grant to go to elementary, junior high, and high schools and do printmaking classes. So I went to the different schools, and that's when I realized which one I was going to work at because I knew that eventually New Thing was going to come to an end.

My favorite was elementary. For pure art you just can't beat that with a stick. Junior high school, well, good luck to everybody that teaches in junior high. But high school was the one that I really could feel comfortable with because you can talk to them, they can talk back to you, and they can do some art.

CLE: Let's talk a little bit about Duke Ellington. Were you there at the very beginning, when the school first started?

PM: First, they were like New Thing. They were in NE somewhere, and it was like a satellite school. They weren't part of the school system. When they became part of the school system, Bill Harris worked for Peggy Cooper Cafritz and so he went over to Duke Ellington. He asked me if I wanted to come and teach printmaking. I stayed at New Thing and enjoyed my years there. When New Thing Art ended, they had an opening, so I went there for a couple years. I taught printmaking and drawing.

CLE: These were students very much interested in art, so was this a different experience for you?

PM: They were extremely gifted. I had not seen so many gifted people before.

CLE: Were these predominately Black students?

PM: They were predominantly Black; there were only a couple of white people there. And they were so talented. Oh, they were so talented.

CLE: What advice would you give if you were still teaching at Duke Ellington? What advice would you give to those students in terms of what they need to do in order to be able to be an artist?

PM: What I would tell them is to stay focused, hold on to your dream very tightly, and don't let anyone pull it out of your hands.

CLE: Three artists that I interviewed felt that you were really helpful to their careers and you were a mentor. As an artist, were there many mentors in your life?

PM: Not really! That was a sad part, and maybe that's why I always try to help people. There just weren't many Black artists—as a matter of fact there were only a few white artists in my life, which is sad because the art world is so big, so much there, not to have it around. It's sad to me, but I just muddled through. And I got to meet a lot of people as I got older, but when I was growing up, they just weren't there. I wish they had been, but they weren't there.

I have a good friend, David Stevens, up in Philadelphia, where he got to go to art schools and things, and Saturday school. And there's so much art in Philadelphia that he got to go see. When I was a kid, Washington was segregated. There were certain places you just couldn't go.

CLE: When you were at the Corcoran, were you exposed to a lot of printmakers?

PM: Not really. I was exposed to lot of art. They had a lot of shows that came there. The best part about being a guard is that you get to hang around in the galleries all by yourself and really look at art. I got to see a lot of shows and got to see things up close. When I got to Sidwell, somehow my name got placed on something down at the National Gallery. Every time they had an opening, I got to go before the opening. It was only because of Sidwell, it wasn't me. So in later life I got to see probably more art than most people ever get to see.

CLE: Who are some of your favorite artists?

PM: I love Jacob Lawrence. I like Romare Bearden.

CLE: Any printmakers?

PM: I know Bob Blackburn. I don't know his work as much as I know him. Jack Perlmutter is a printmaker; Eugene Frederick was my first etching teacher.

We had people who would come from other countries and work at the workshop. I wish I could remember their names. A Spanish guy used to come all the time. I'm sure at some point he just couldn't make it anymore to make prints. I gave him a key and he would make prints and be gone. And he would come back from time to time. There was a young lady from Jamaica that used to come up and print. She would be there for weeks just

making prints and then she would be gone. A year or two later she would come back again. A lot of Ethiopian printers came through and worked. Skunder Boghossian, he never worked there, but he would always bring artists by for me to meet.

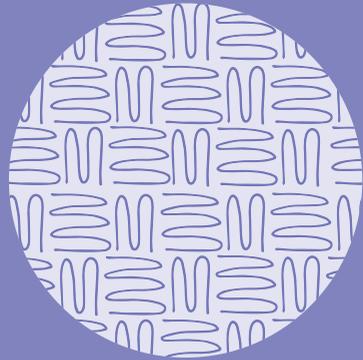
Winston Kennedy didn't print at the shop. He was a printmaking teacher at Howard. He sent students there.

CLE: Because of the existence of yourself, Bob Blackburn, and Allan Edmunds, many African American artists were able to produce prints—because these workshops existed. The opportunities existed, master printers reached out to that community, and they produced unique and very interesting works of art.

This conversation was all about community support systems. You played a major role in that community, and you enabled that exhibition to take place. So I wanted to thank you very much for your time. I really appreciate your willingness to do this. I feel that your comments provide valuable insight in terms of your generation of African American artists and the challenges that were there and how they were overcome, and hopefully this is going to give some lessons learned. This is going to give some depth to people as they begin to explore African American art history and also give some insight to young emerging artists in terms of the shoulders that they're standing on. So thank you very much. ●

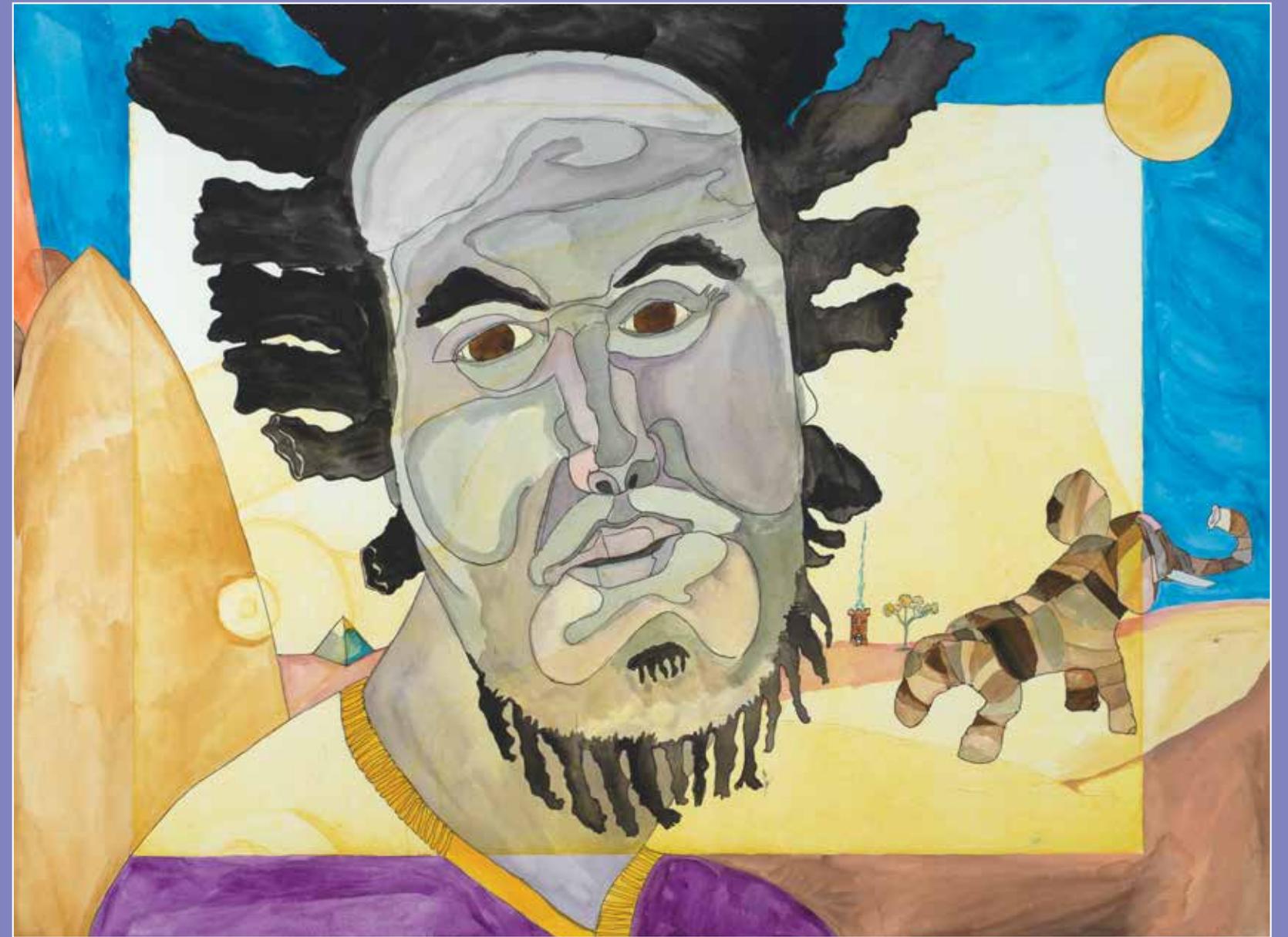
PERCY MARTIN'S

Mythical Connections in Art

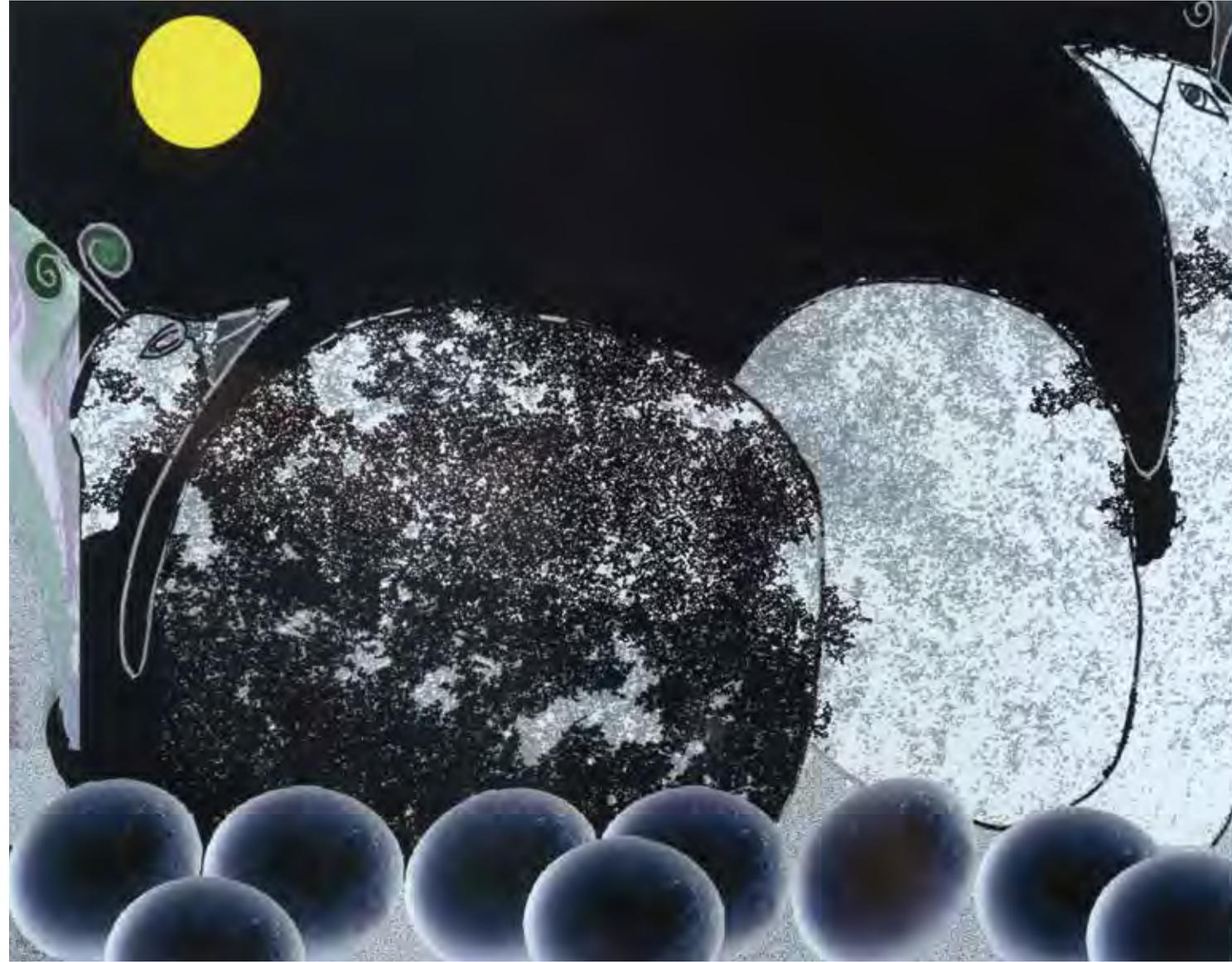


“

What I would tell [students] is to stay focused, hold on to your dream very tightly, and don't let anyone pull it out of your hands.” —PERCY MARTIN



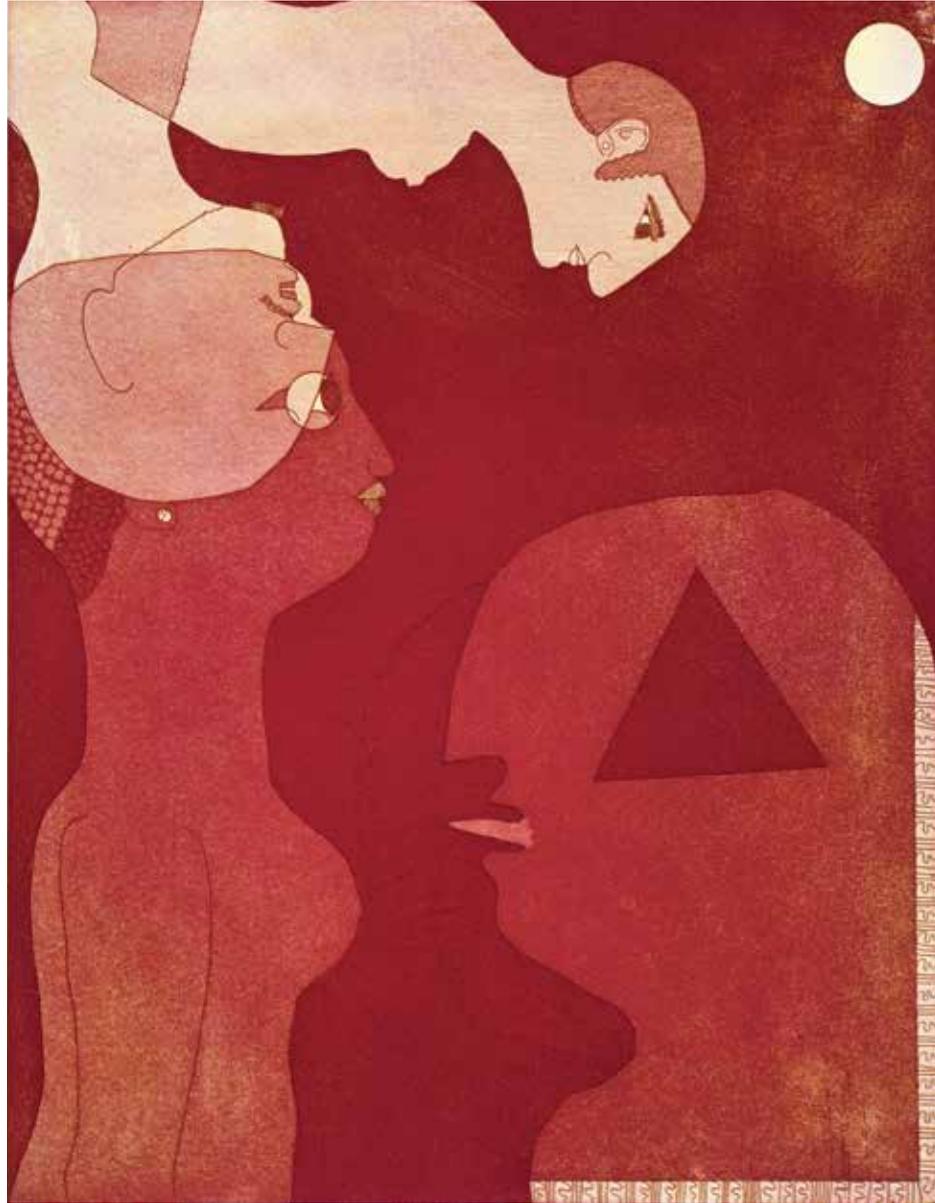
Bushmen in Elder's Village, Bushmen series, 1994, watercolor on paper, 22½ x 30 inches



Night Nursery, 2008, digital print, 10½ x 13½ inches



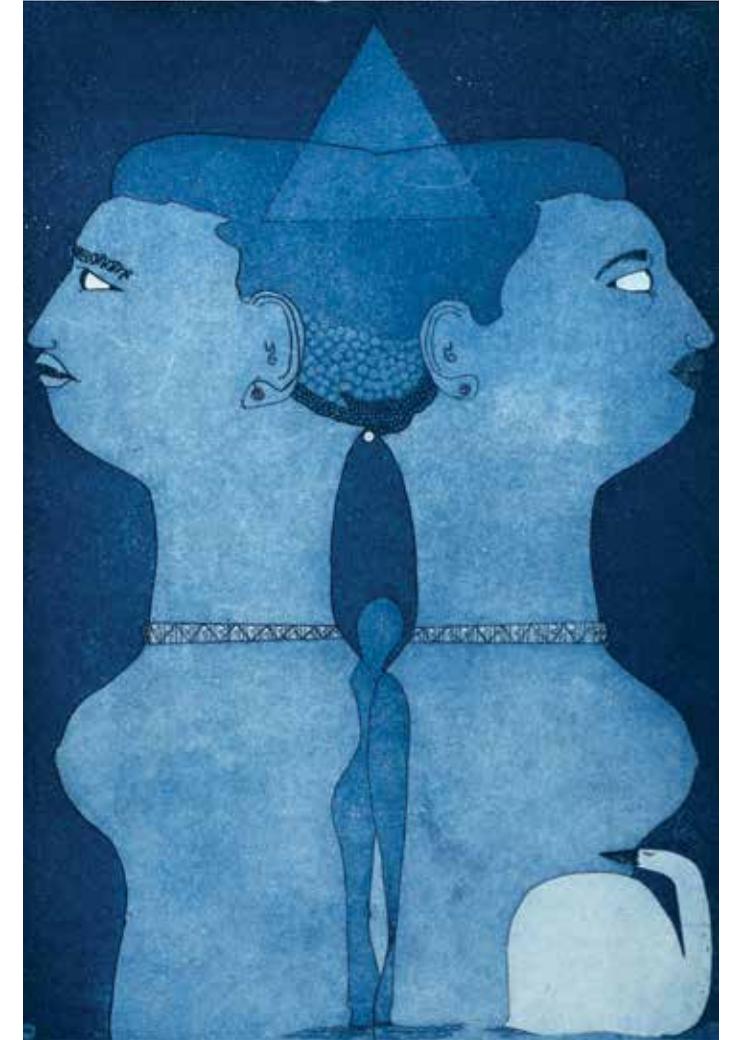
The Nursery
2011
etching, 1/5
17 x 13 inches



The Harmony of Nova
1981
color etching, 7/20
19¾ x 15½ inches
Private collection



Untitled (Man with Afro), n.d., etching, 13 x 10 inches
double-sided work with *Untitled*, 1984



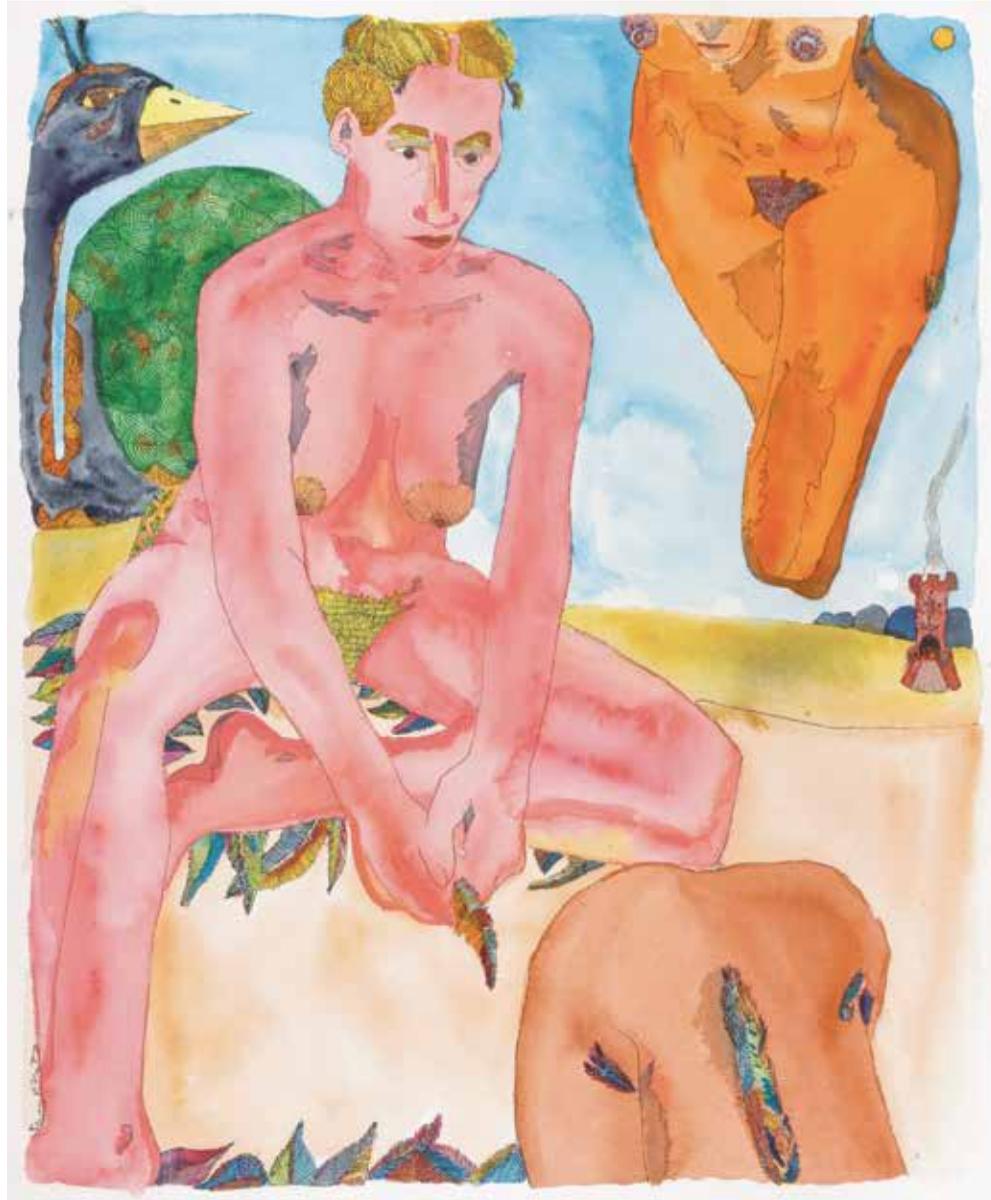
Untitled, 1984, etching, 20 x 13 inches
double-sided work with *Untitled (Man with Afro)*



*Bushman Beginning a
Dream Walk*
2011
etching, 1/5
17 x 13 inches



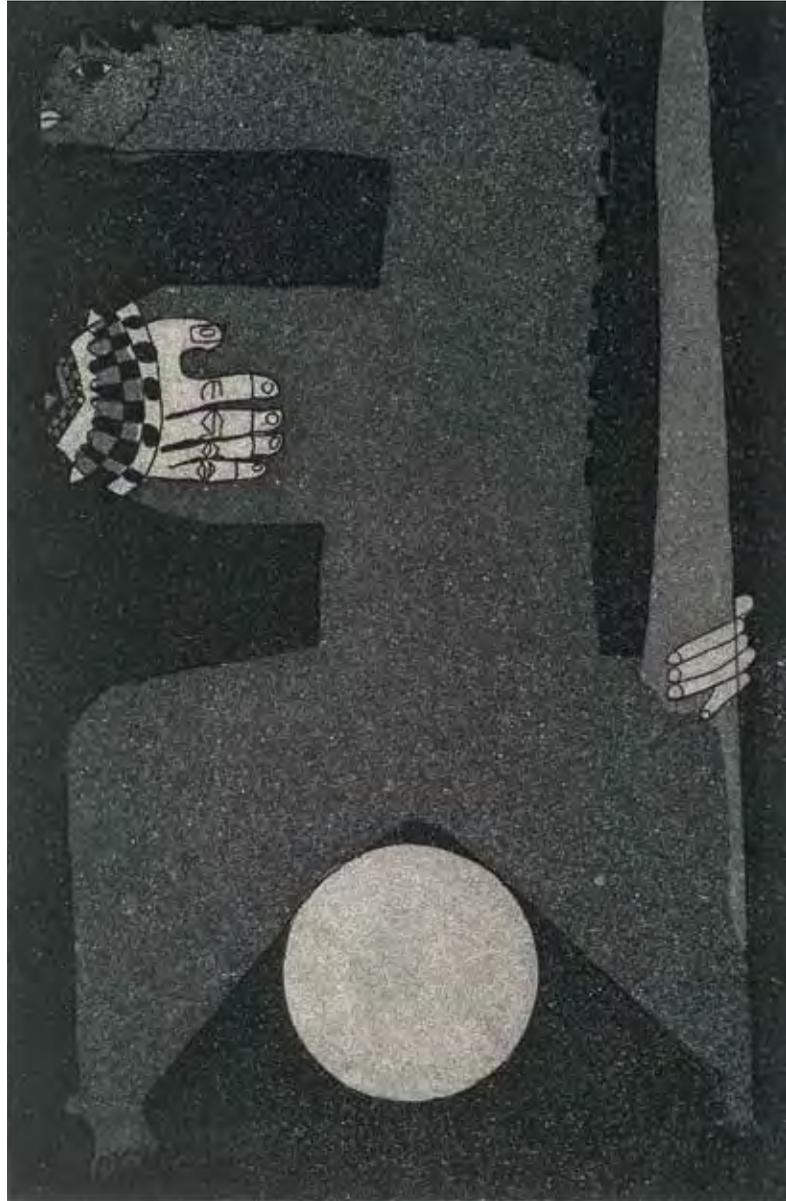
Untitled
n.d.
etching,
artist's proof
9½ x 7 inches



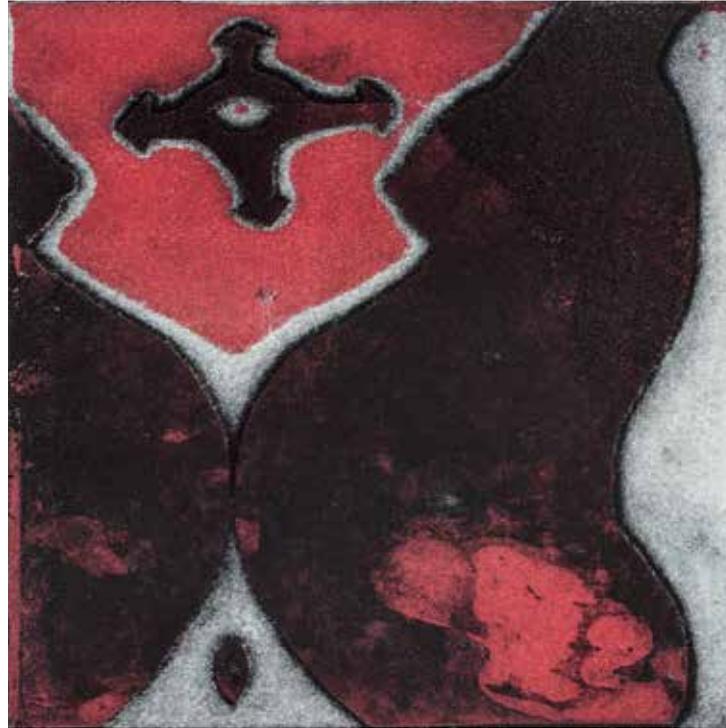
Untitled
Bushmen series
1973
watercolor on paper
22 x 18 inches
Collection of Eric Key



Untitled (Black Female), Bushmen series, n.d., watercolor on paper, 22½ x 30 inches



Ascension
1974
etching, artist's proof #2
10 x 7 inches



Nummo
n.d.
etching, 19/20
7 x 7 inches



*Avon Reading to
Nova and St. Mar*
1981
etching, 10/20
26 x 20 inches



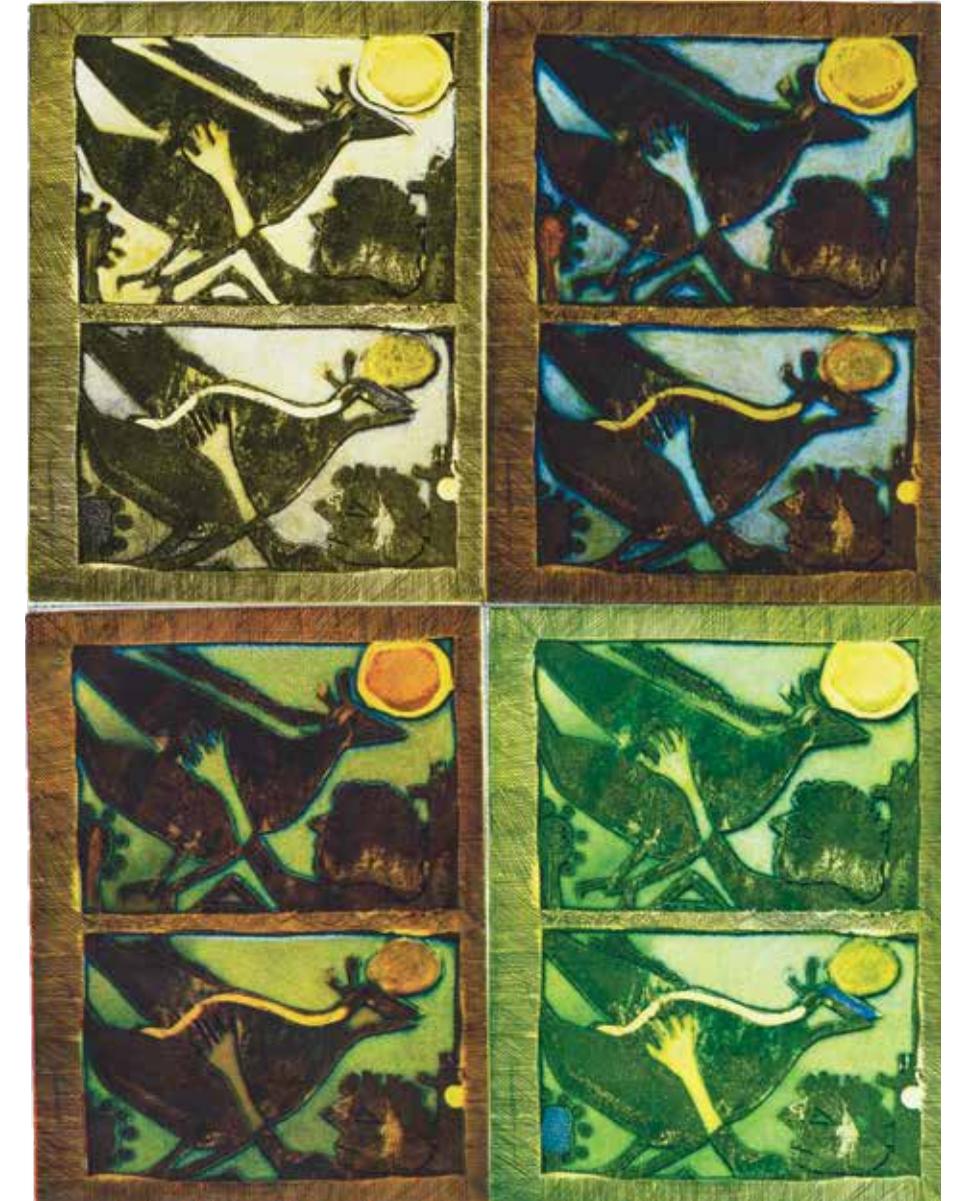
Lessons of the Bushmen
2023
pigment print,
artist's proof, edition of 12
40 x 32 inches
Courtesy of Susan Goldman
at Lily Press



Bushman's Time Travel
2023
pigment print,
artist's proof, edition of 12
40 x 32 inches
Courtesy of Susan Goldman
at Lily Press



Untitled, 2001, color etching, artist's proof #1, 19½ x 25 inches



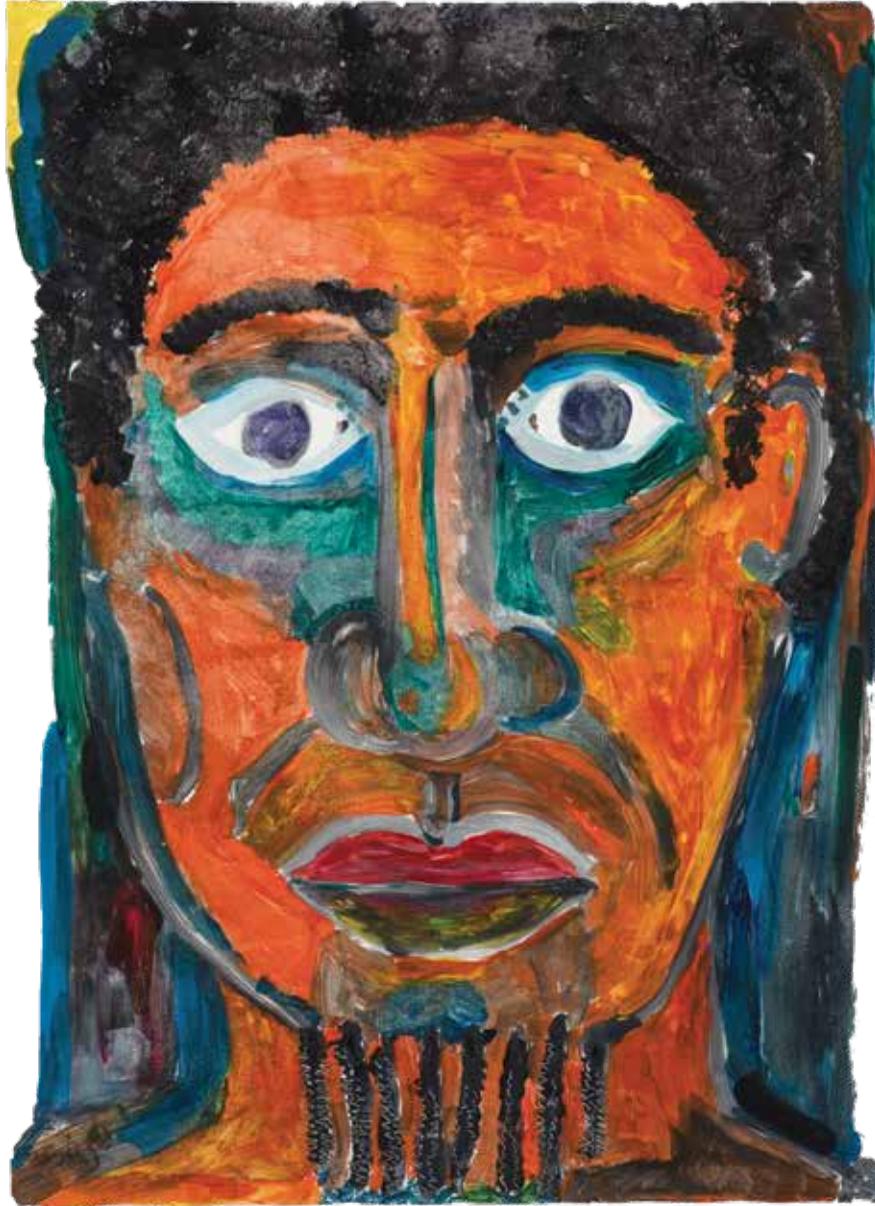
Detail from Nubiai's Quilt
1994
collage etching,
artist's proof
25 x 19 inches



Untitled (Nude), n.d., pen-and-ink on paper, 22½ x 30 inches, Collection of Eric Key



Untitled, n.d., pen-and-ink on paper, 22½ x 30 inches



Head
1996
monotype
25 x 18 inches
UMGC Permanent Collection,
Doris Patz Collection of
Maryland Artists



Untitled
1996
monoprint
25 x 15¼ inches
Collection of
Dwayne Robinson



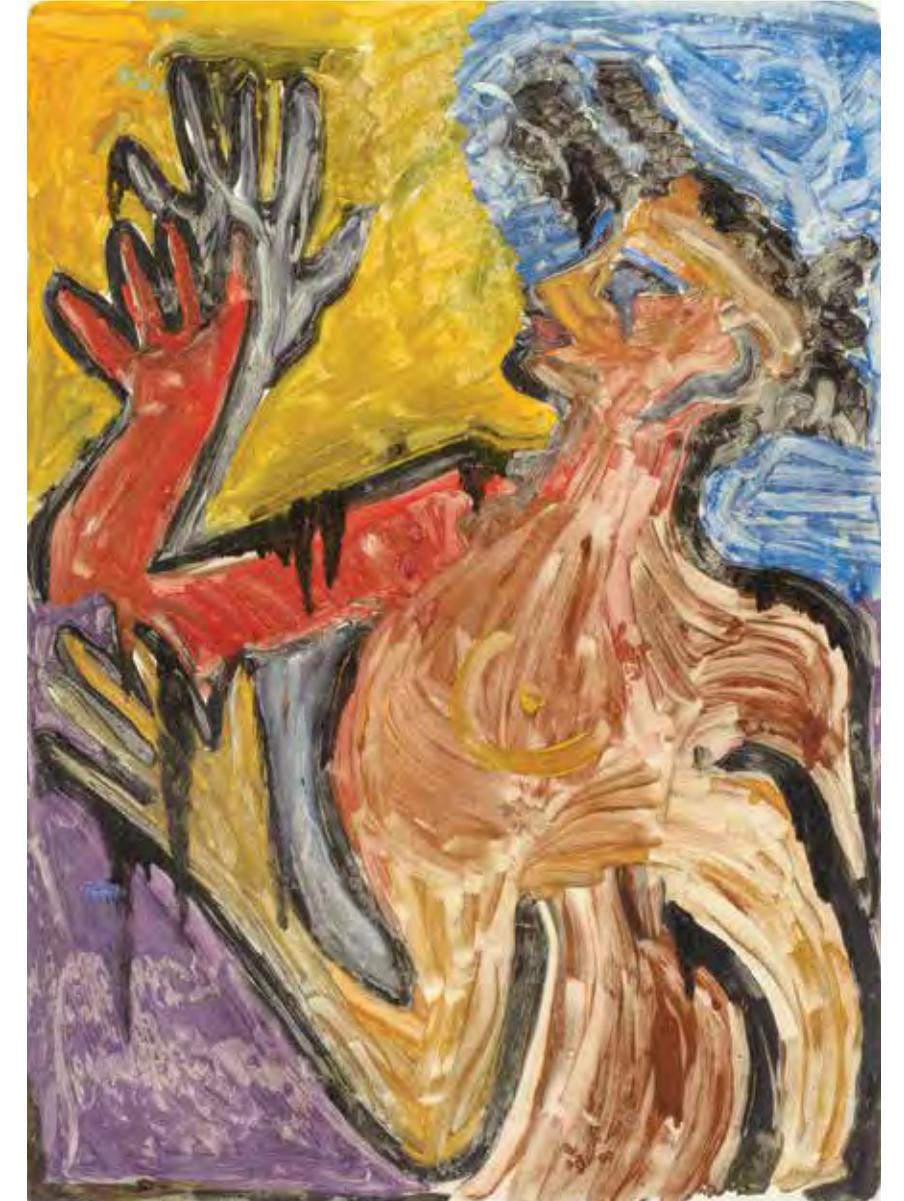
After a Flight
2019
color etching, 5/5
21 x 17 inches



*Untitled (Woman
Holding Stick)*
2013
Mylar
19 x 13 inches



Untitled, Bushmen series, n.d., watercolor on paper, 22½ x 30 inches
UMGC Permanent Collection, Doris Patz Collection of Maryland Artists



Cielo
1992
monotype
36 x 24½ inches
UMGC Permanent Collection,
Doris Patz Collection of
Maryland Artists



Drumming Bushman, 1980, etching, 4/20, 14 x 19½ inches
UMGC Permanent Collection, Maryland Artist Collection



Untitled, n.d., etching, artist's proof, 9 x 13¾ inches



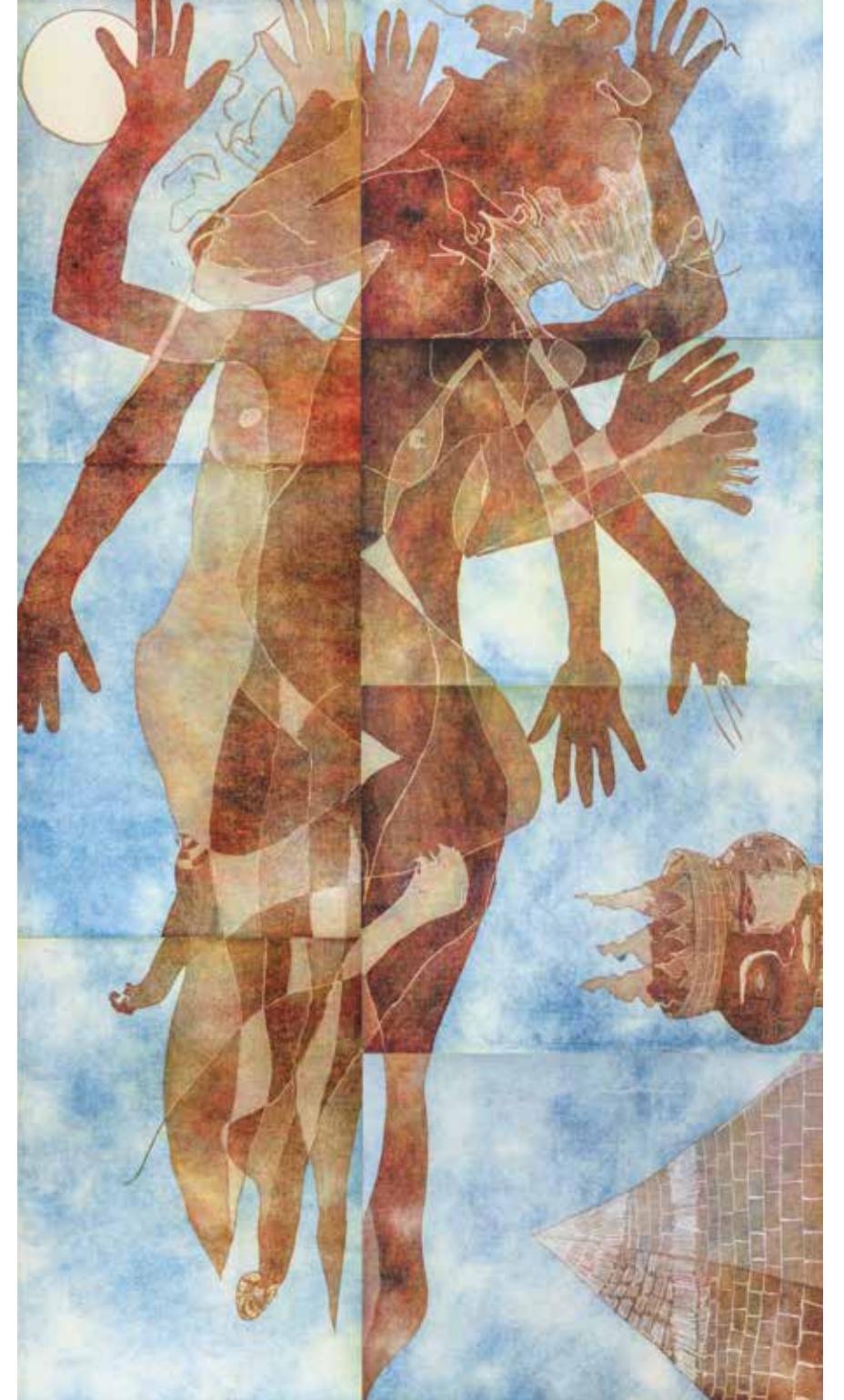
Untitled
Bushmen series
1973
watercolor on paper
40 x 30 inches
Collection of Eric Key



Sacred Elephants in Elder's Village, Bushmen series
1994, watercolor on paper, 22½ x 30 inches



Angel's Kiss, 1986, etching, artist's proof, 19½ x 26 inches
UMGC Permanent Collection, Maryland Artist Collection



Untitled
1993
etching
72 x 47 inches



#209
1989
monoprint
24 x 18 inches
Collection of
Dwayne Robinson



Untitled
1981
etching, 7/20
5 x 8 inches
Collection of
Treston Sanders



*Training for the
Rites #11*
1981
etching,
artist's proof, 1/10
12 x 17½ inches
Private collection



The Hunters, 2001, etching, artist's proof, 18 x 25 inches



Confrontation #IV, n.d., etching, artist's proof, 19 x 25 inches



Messenger
n.d.
etching, 2/20
10 x 7 inches



Untitled
2011
etching,
artist's proof
17 x 12½ inches



Kintu and Ngg's Daughter
n.d.
etching, 19/20
25½ x 19 inches



Elder Helping a Bushman, *Bushmen* series, 1994, watercolor on paper, 22½ x 30 inches
UMGC Permanent Collection, Doris Patz Collection of Maryland Artists



If We, 1982, woodcut, artist's proof, 16½ x 28 inches, Private collection



Sky Step
1992
woodcut, 1/5
62 x 24 inches
Collection of
Dwayne Robinson



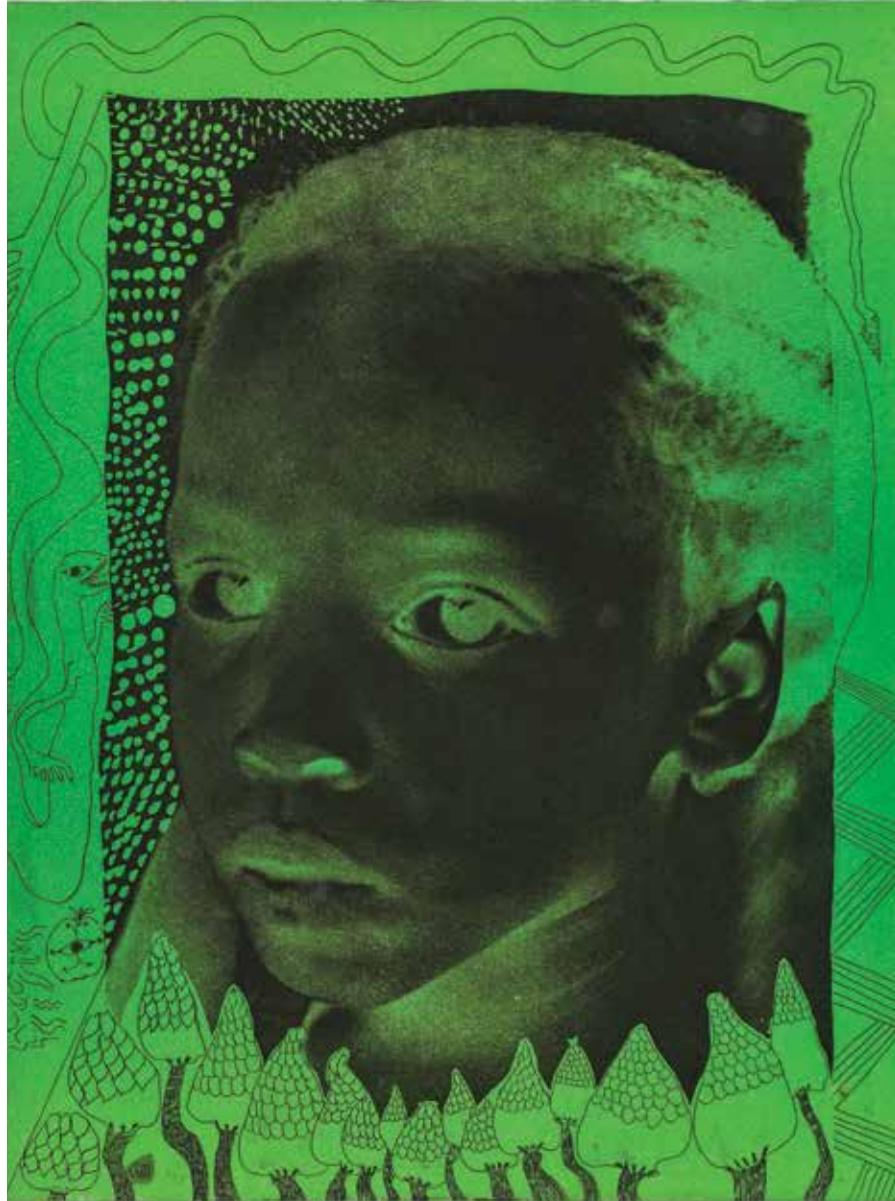
Escape of the Addict
1980
woodcut, artist's proof
16 x 16½ inches
Private collection



Uhuru
2022
etching, 1/5
22 x 20½ inches



Practice Race (Three Elephants), Bushmen series
2001, watercolor on paper, 22½ x 30 inches



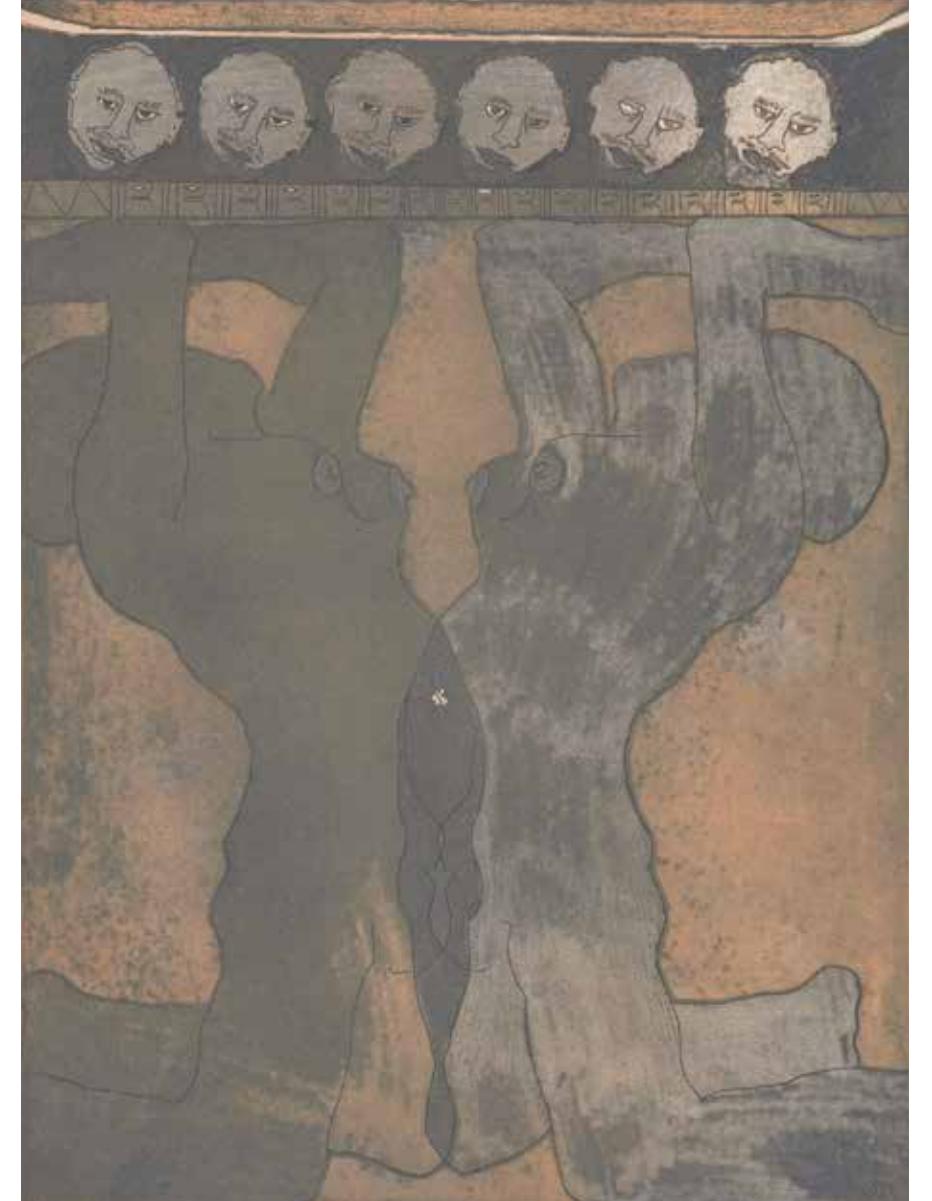
Temptation of Eve
n.d.
phototype, 8/20
13½ x 10½ inches
Image courtesy of
Just Lookin' Gallery



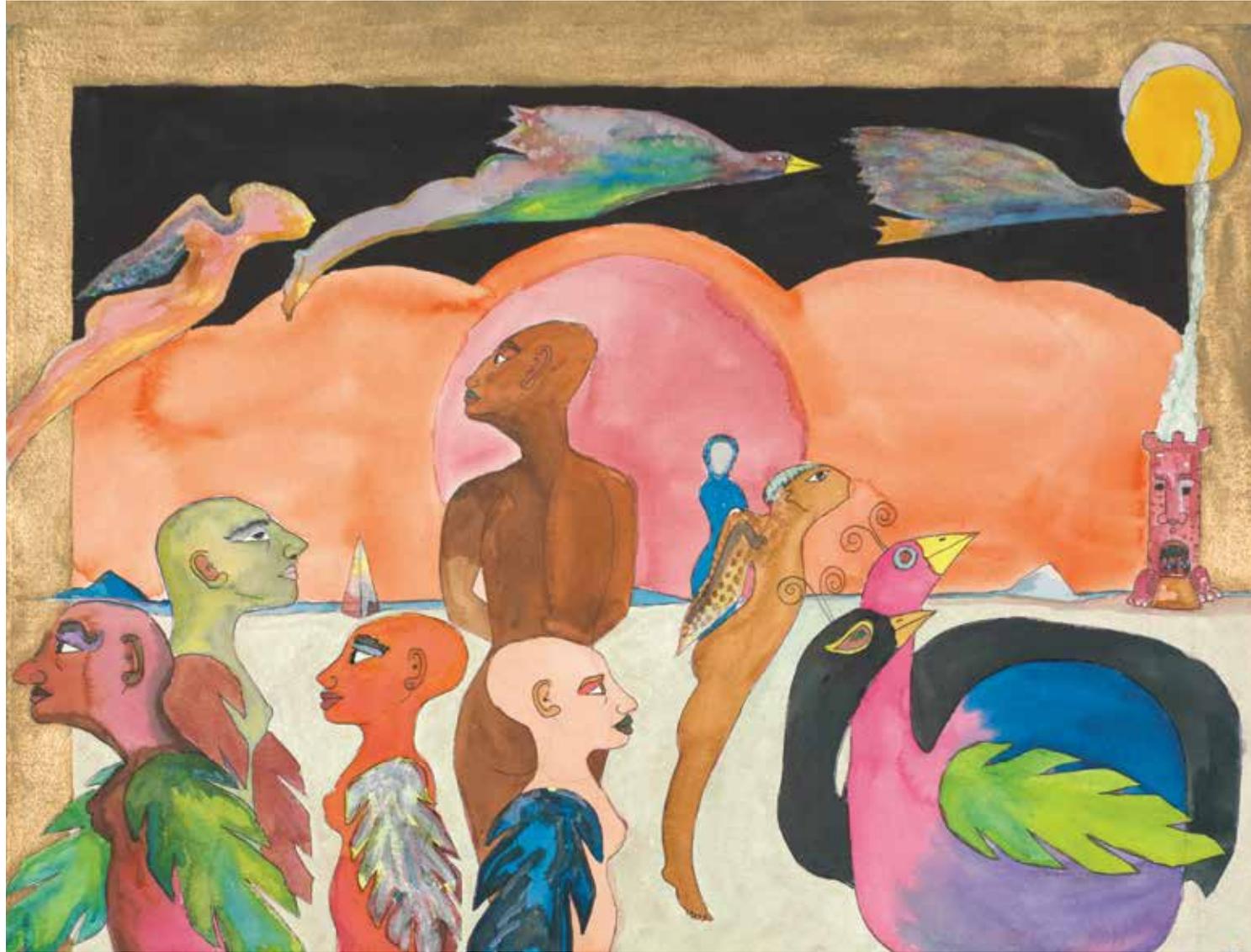
Celebration #2
2011
etching, 1/5
17 x 13 inches



Fall of St. Mar #1, n.d., etching, 14/20, 19½ x 25½ inches



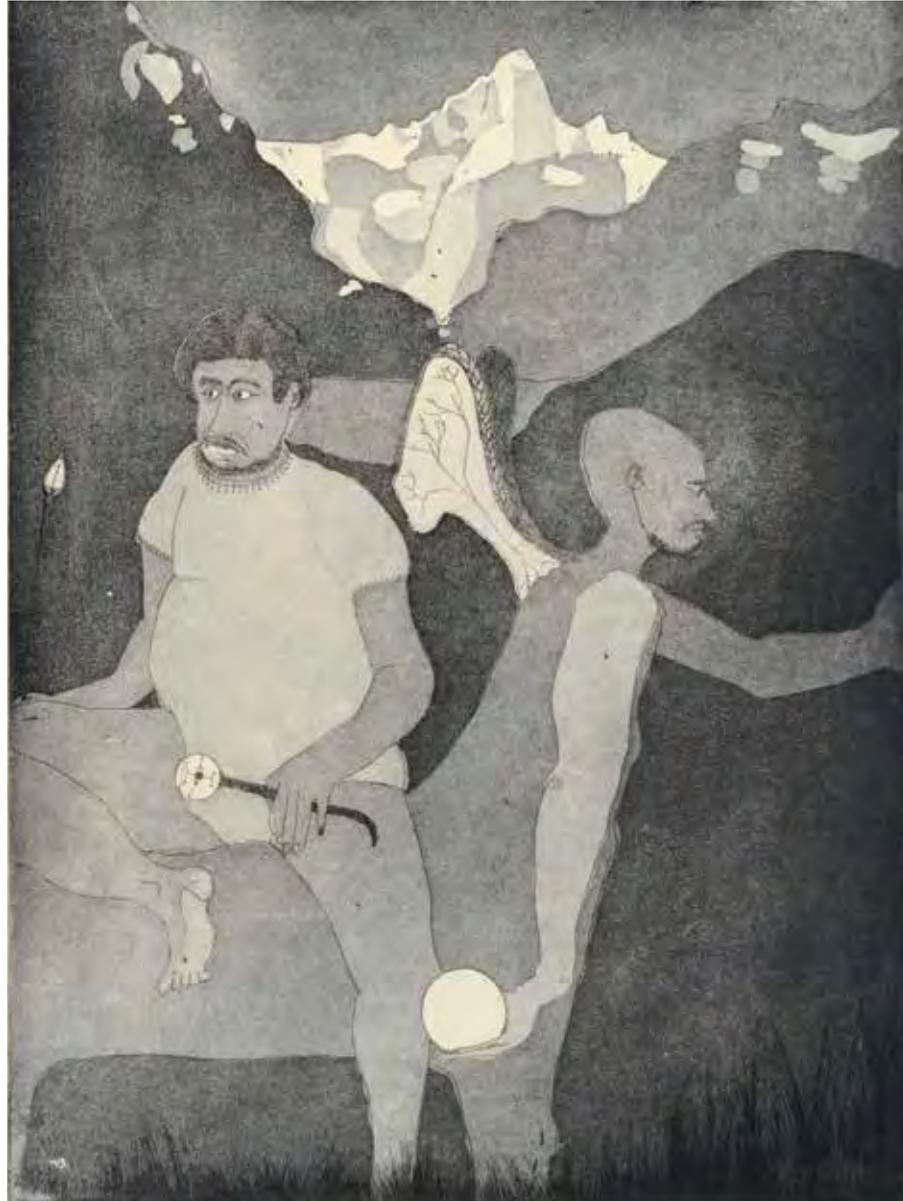
Fall of St. Mar #3
1980
etching, 1/20
25½ x 19 inches



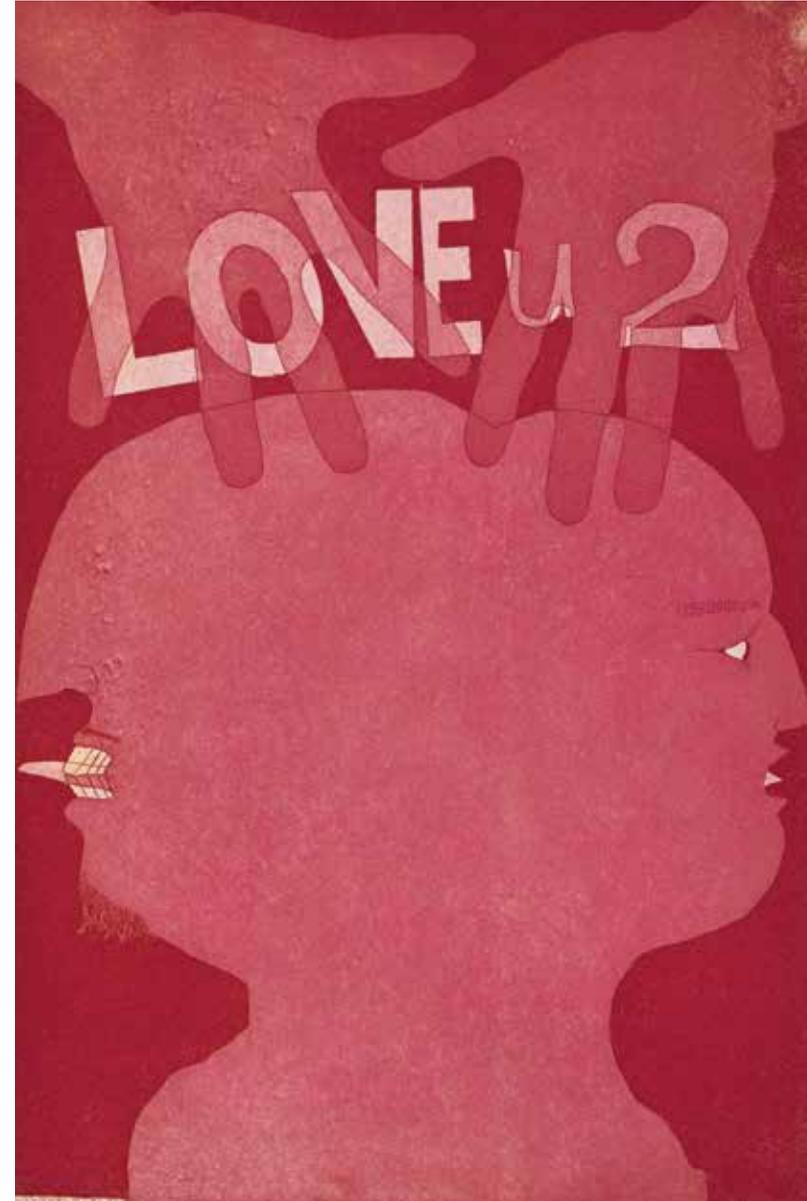
Untitled, Bushmen series, 1973, watercolor on paper
22¾ x 30 inches, Collection of Dwayne Robinson



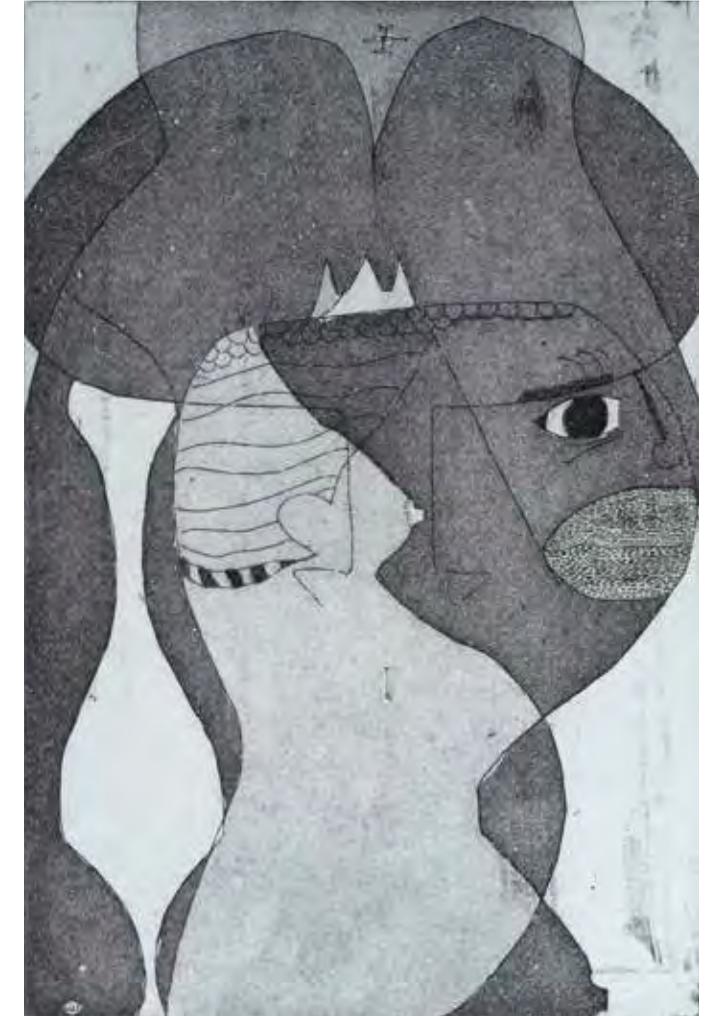
Looking Out
2011
etching, artist's proof
17 x 13 inches



Hannibal at the Alps
n.d.
etching, 3/20
23¾ x 17¼ inches
Collection of
Danielle Daugherty



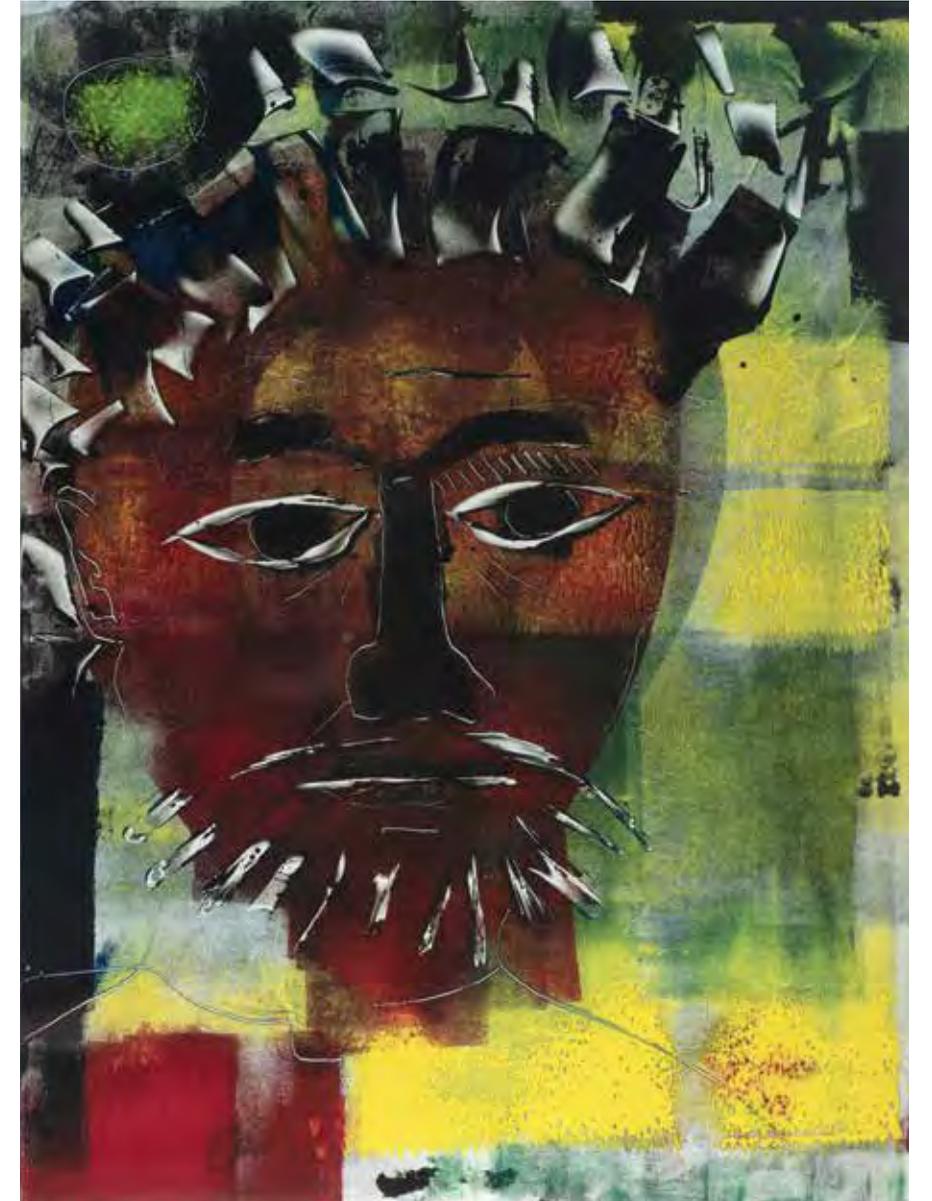
Love U 2
1981
etching, 8/20
18 x 13 inches



*Nova and the
Rites of Life*
n.d.
etching,
artist's proof #11
10 x 7 inches



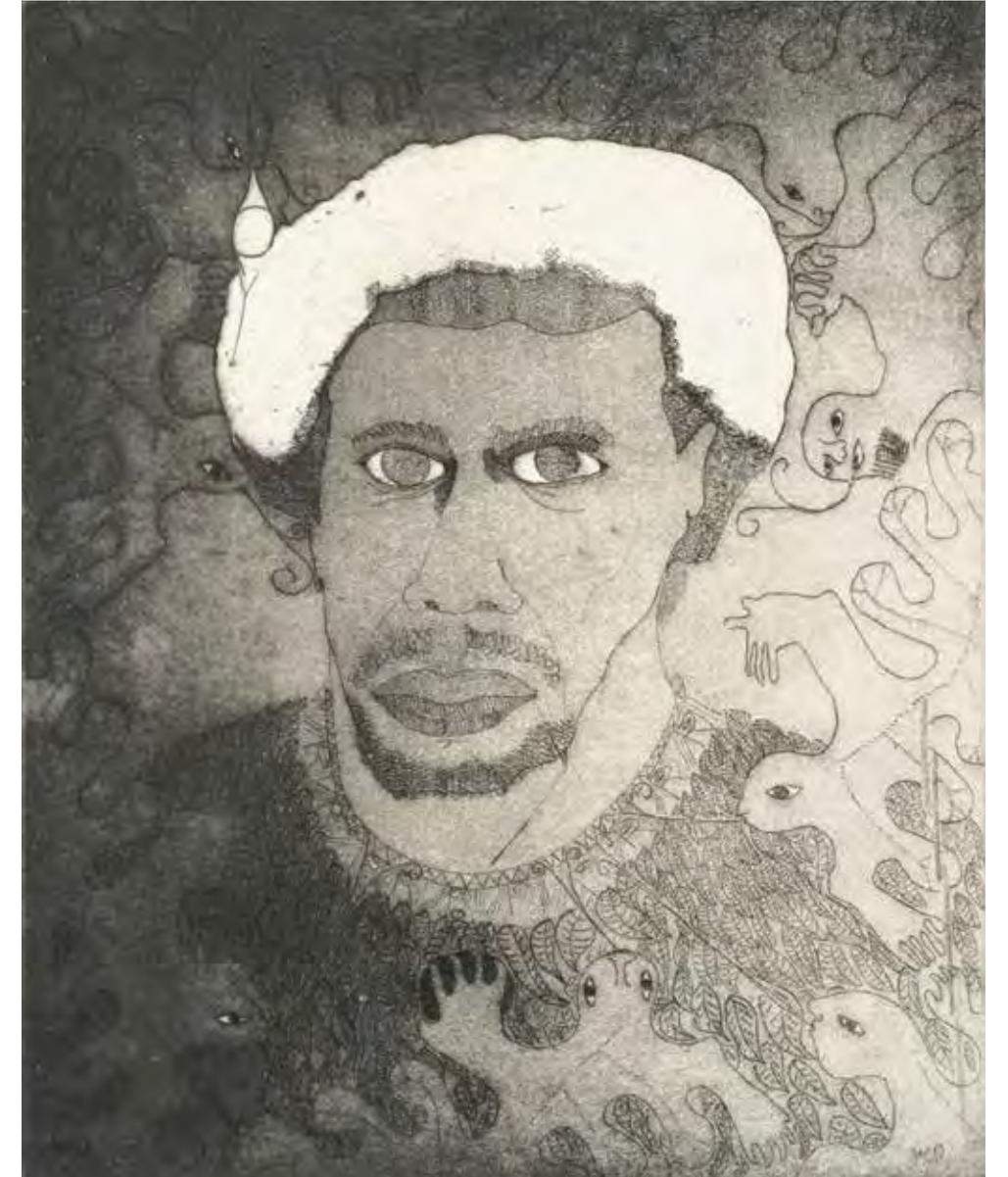
Incubus Attack #II, 1987, etching, 1/20, 19½ x 26 inches
UMGC Permanent Collection, Maryland Artist Collection



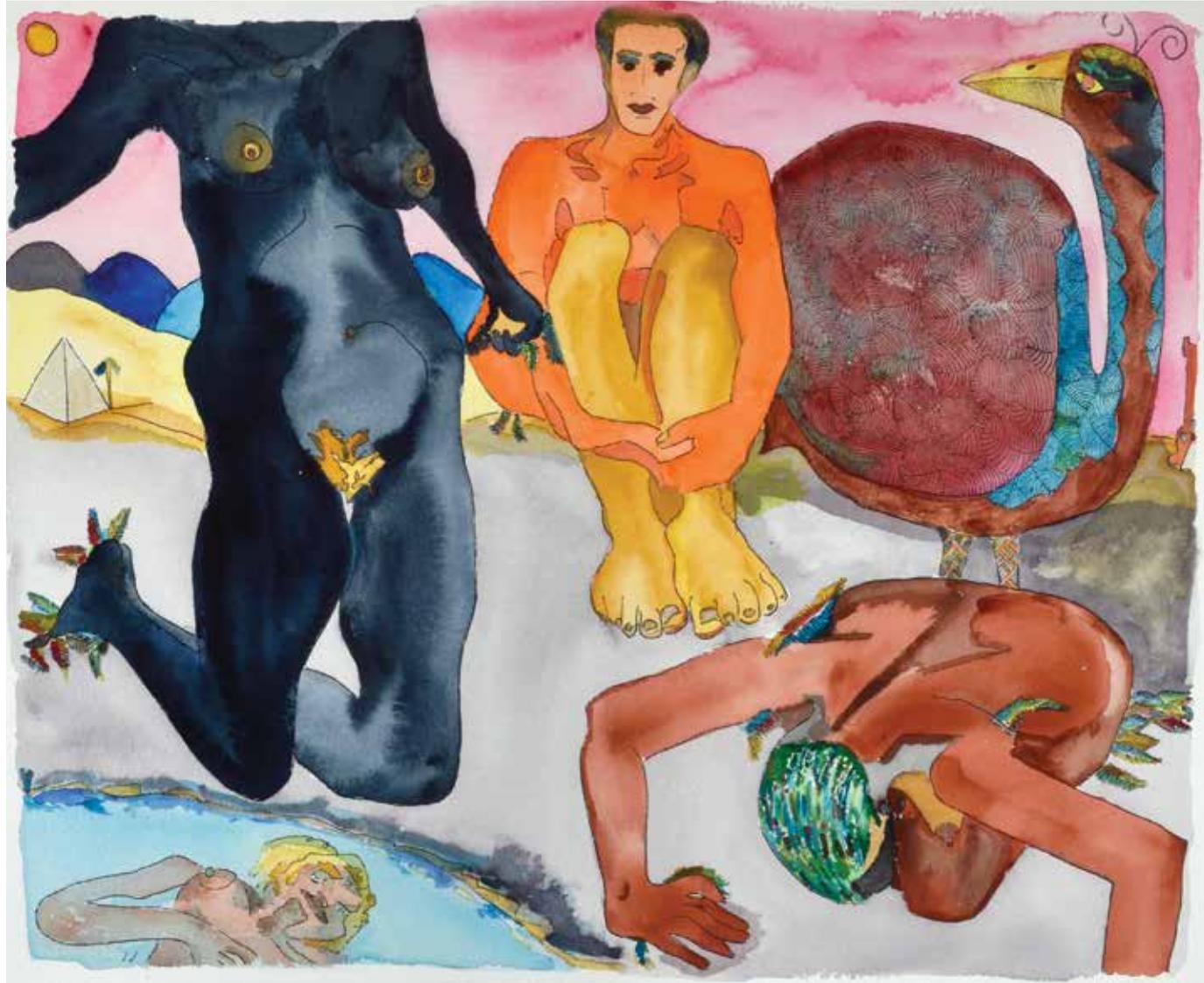
Untitled
1988
monotype
25 x 18½ inches



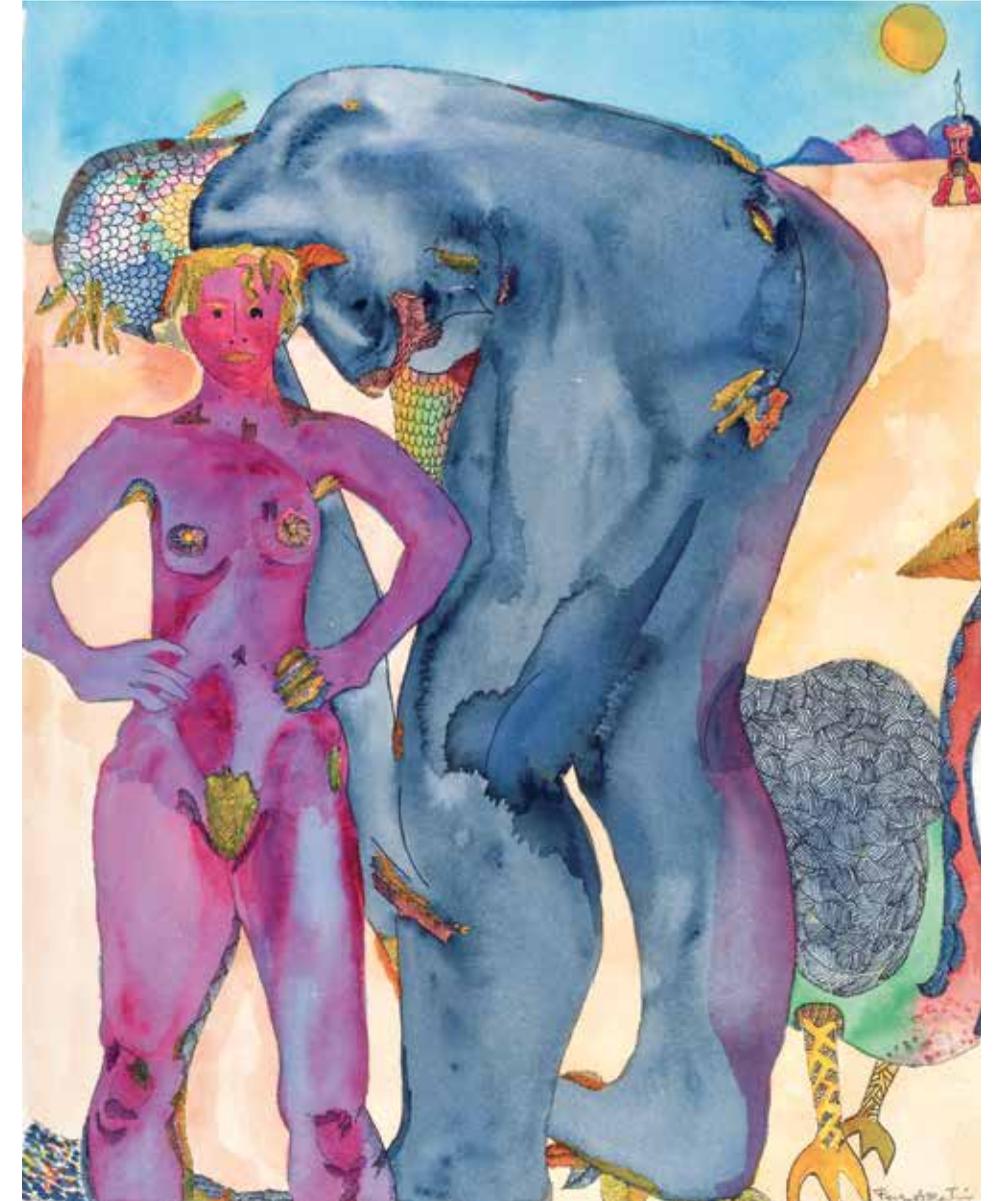
Untitled
n.d.
etching, artist's proof
19½ x 16 inches
Collection of
Danielle Daugherty



Untitled
1980
etching,
artist's proof #1
16 x 13 inches



Untitled, Bushmen series, 1973, watercolor on paper
18 x 22 inches, Collection of Eric Key



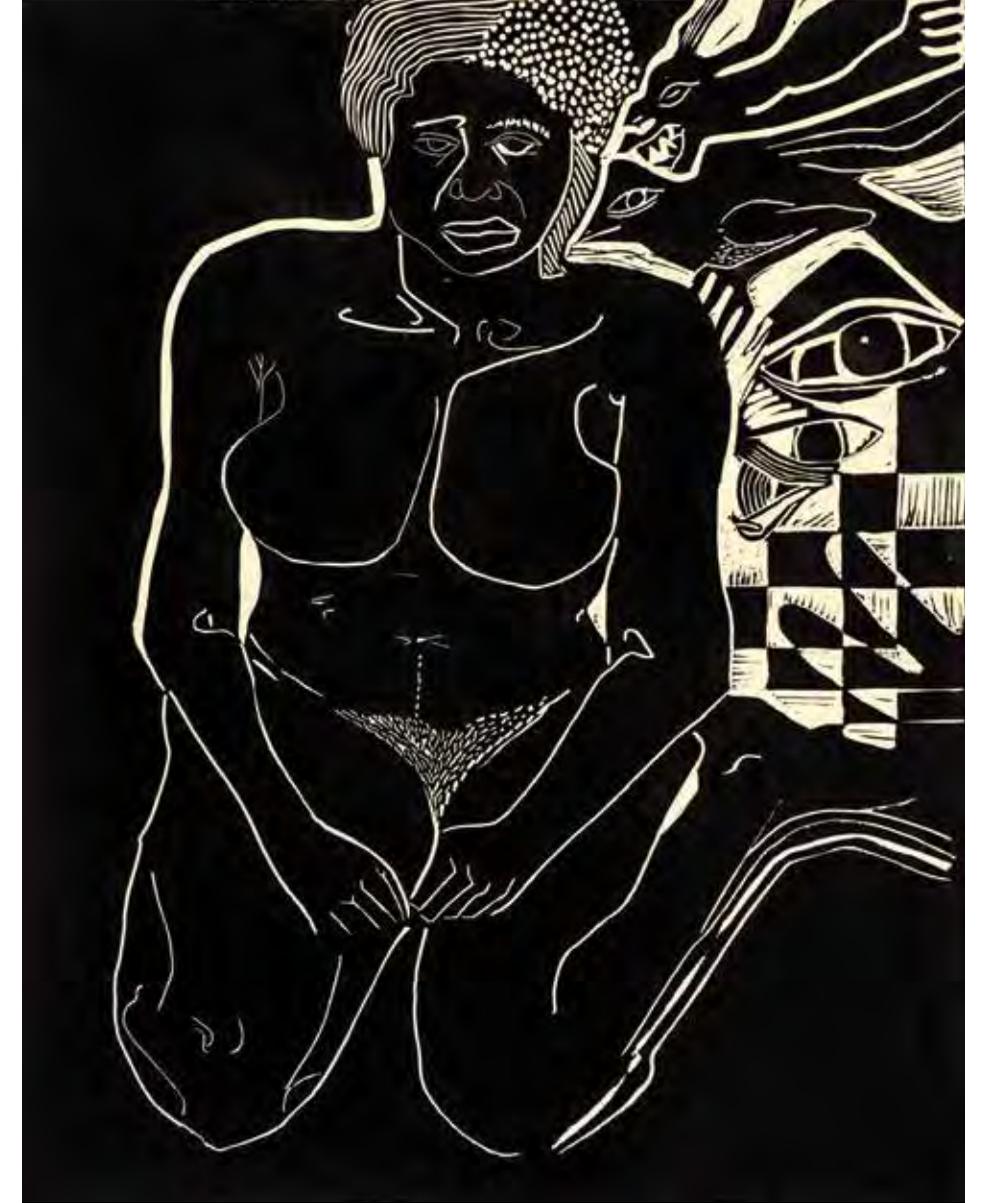
Untitled
Bushmen series
1973
watercolor on paper
26 x 22 inches
Collection of Eric Key



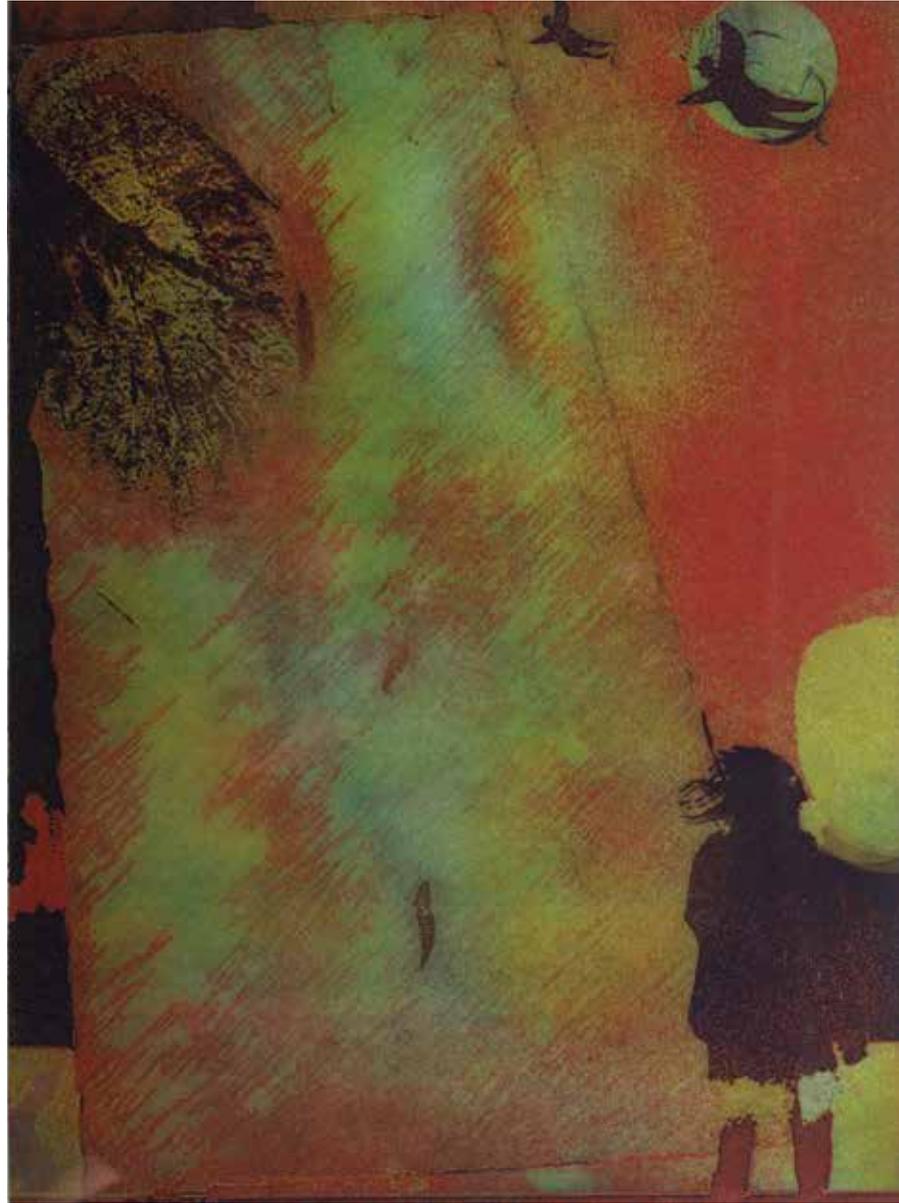
Tere
1980
woodcut on rice paper,
artist's proof
27 x 20½ inches
Private collection



Asase #2
1980
woodcut, artist's proof #11
14 x 13 inches
Private collection



Odudua and Orungan
1992
woodcut, 20/20
22 x 18 inches
Private collection



Dream Walker III
2012
etching, 1/5
17 x 13 inches



Dream Garden, 2012, color etching, 1/5, 13 x 17 inches



Untitled (Female), Bushmen series, n.d., watercolor on paper, 22½ x 30 inches



Sahadah
2011
etching, 1/5
17 x 13 inches



Untitled, n.d., Mylar, 13 x 19 inches



Untitled
2013
Mylar
22 x 17 inches

#209
1989
monoprint
24 x 18 inches
Collection of Dwayne Robinson

After a Flight
2019
color etching, 5/5
21 x 17 inches

Angel's Kiss
1986
etching, artist's proof
19½ x 26 inches
UMGC Permanent Collection,
Maryland Artist Collection

Asase #2
1980
woodcut, artist's proof #II
14 x 13 inches
Private collection

Ascension
1974
etching, artist's proof #2
10 x 7 inches

Avon Reading to Nova and St. Mar
1981
etching, 10/20
26 x 20 inches

Bushman Beginning a Dream Walk
2011
etching, 1/5
17 x 13 inches

Bushman's Time Travel
2023
pigment print, artist's proof,
edition of 12
40 x 32 inches
Courtesy of Susan Goldman
at Lily Press

Bushmen in Elder's Village
Bushmen series
1994
watercolor on paper
22½ x 30 inches

Celebration #2
2011
etching, 1/5
17 x 13 inches

Cielo
1992
monotype
36 x 24½ inches
UMGC Permanent Collection,
Doris Patz Collection of
Maryland Artists

Confrontation #IV
n.d.
etching, artist's proof
19 x 25 inches

Detail from Nubiai's Quilt
1994
collage etching, artist's proof
25 x 19 inches

Dream Garden
2012
color etching, 1/5
13 x 17 inches

Dream Walker III
2012
etching, 1/5
17 x 13 inches

Drumming Bushman
1980
etching, 4/20
14 x 19½ inches
UMGC Permanent Collection,
Maryland Artist Collection

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Bushmen series
1994
watercolor on paper
22½ x 30 inches
UMGC Permanent Collection,
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Maryland Artists

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woodcut, artist's proof
16 x 16½ inches
Private collection

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n.d.
etching, 14/20
19½ x 25½ inches

Fall of St. Mar #3
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etching, 1/20
25½ x 19 inches

Hannibal at the Alps
n.d.
etching, 3/20
23¾ x 17¾ inches
Collection of Danielle Daugherty

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1981
color etching, 7/20
19¾ x 15½ inches
Private collection

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1996
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25 x 18 inches
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digital print
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etching, artist's proof #II
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woodcut, 20/20
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22½ x 30 inches

Sacred Elephants in Elder's Village
Bushmen series
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watercolor on paper
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etching, 1/5
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Sky Step
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Temptation of Eve
n.d.
phototype, 8/20
13½ x 10½ inches
Image courtesy of
Just Lookin' Gallery

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1980
woodcut on rice paper,
artist's proof
27 x 20½ inches
Private collection

Training for the Rites #II
1981
etching, artist's proof, 1/10
12 x 17½ inches
Private collection

Uhuru
2022
etching, 1/5
22 x 20½ inches

Untitled
Bushmen series
1973
watercolor on paper
22¾ x 30 inches
Collection of Dwayne Robinson

Untitled
Bushmen series
1973
watercolor on paper
18 x 22 inches
Collection of Eric Key

Untitled
Bushmen series
1973
watercolor on paper
22 x 18 inches
Collection of Eric Key

Untitled
Bushmen series
1973
watercolor on paper
26 x 22 inches
Collection of Eric Key

Untitled
Bushmen series
1973
watercolor on paper
40 x 30 inches
Collection of Eric Key

Untitled
Bushmen series
n.d.
watercolor on paper
22½ x 30 inches
UMGC Permanent Collection,
Doris Patz Collection of
Maryland Artists

Untitled
1980
etching, artist's proof #1
16 x 13 inches

Untitled
1981
etching, 7/20
5 x 8 inches
Collection of Treston Sanders

Untitled
1984
etching
20 x 13 inches
double-sided work with
Untitled (Man with Afro)

Untitled
1988
monotype
25 x 18½ inches

Untitled
1993
etching
72 x 47 inches

Untitled
1996
monoprint
25 x 15¼ inches
Collection of Dwayne Robinson

Untitled
2001
color etching, artist's proof #1
19½ x 25 inches

Untitled
2011
etching, artist's proof
17 x 12½ inches

Untitled
2013
Mylar
22 x 17 inches

Untitled
n.d.
etching, artist's proof
9 x 13¾ inches

Untitled
n.d.
etching, artist's proof
9½ x 7 inches

Untitled
n.d.
etching, artist's proof
19½ x 16 inches
Collection of Danielle Daugherty

Untitled
n.d.
Mylar
13 x 19 inches

Untitled
n.d.
pen-and-ink on paper
22½ x 30 inches

Untitled (Black Female)
Bushmen series
n.d.
watercolor on paper
22½ x 30 inches

Untitled (Female)
Bushmen series
n.d.
watercolor on paper
22½ x 30 inches

Untitled (Man with Afro)
n.d.
etching
13 x 10 inches
double-sided work
with *Untitled*, 1984

Untitled (Nude)
n.d.
pen-and-ink on paper
22½ x 30 inches
Collection of Eric Key

Untitled (Woman Holding Stick)
2013
Mylar
19 x 13 inches

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About UMGC

University of Maryland Global Campus was founded 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 125 degrees and certificates backed by the reputation of a state university and the University System of Maryland. For more information, visit 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 2,900 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.

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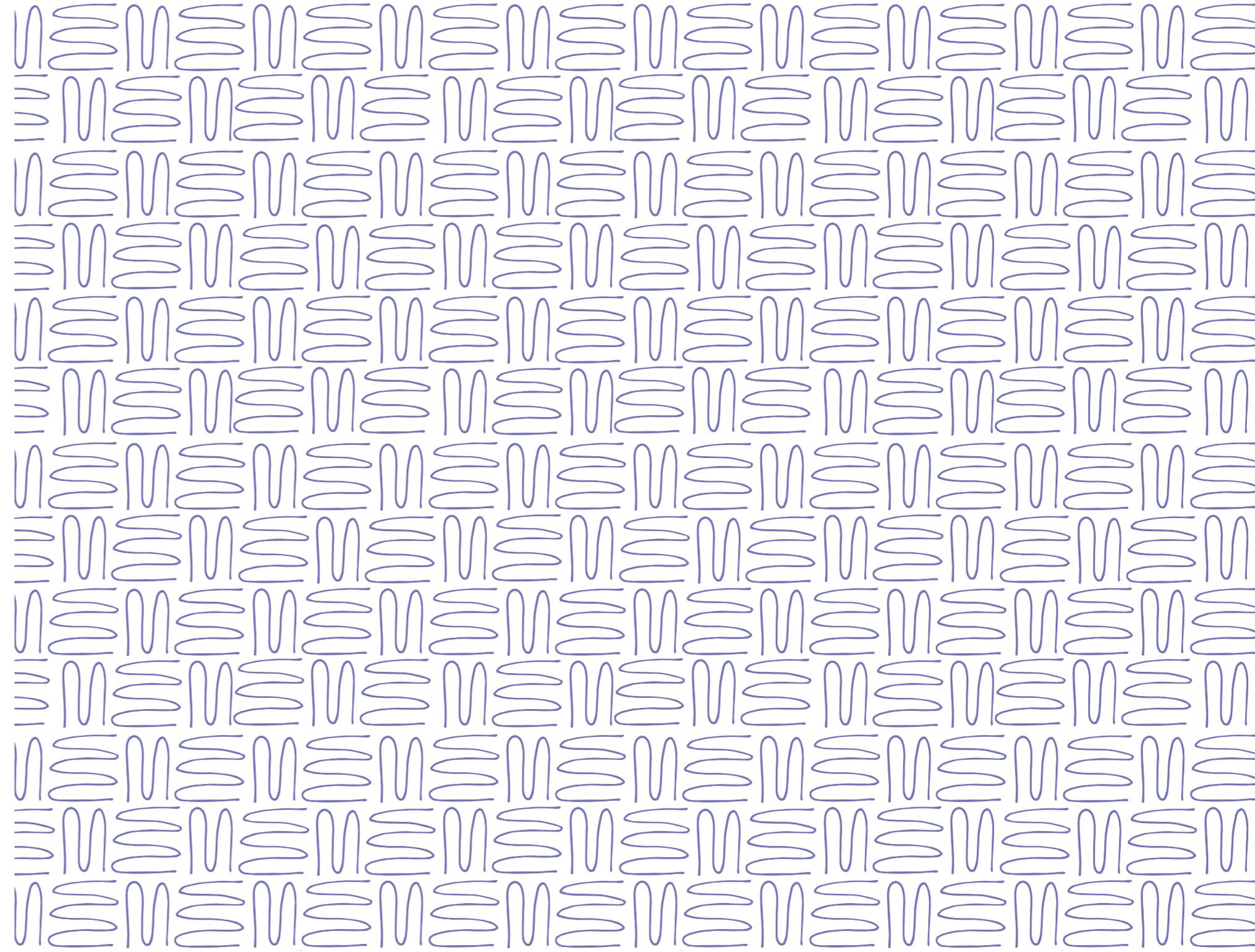
John Woo

Catalog published in conjunction with the exhibition *Percy Martin's Connections in Art* UMGC Arts Program Gallery August 13–October 8, 2023

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ISBN: 13:978-0-9842265-0-4
ISBN: 10:0-98442265-0-8

COVER ARTWORK:
Untitled, Bushmen series, 1973, watercolor on paper, 22¾ x 30 inches, Collection of Dwayne Robinson





Angel's Kiss, 1986, etching, artist's proof, 19½ x 26 inches,
UMGC Maryland Artist Collection

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