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VIEWPOINTS  
YEARS OF ADDERLEY

BAKALAR & PAINE GALLERIES MASSACHUSETTS COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

## VIEWPOINTS: 20 YEARS OF ADDERLEY

SEPTEMBER 22-DECEMBER 6, 2014

STEPHEN D. PAINE GALLERY

MASSACHUSETTS COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

Twenty years ago, in response to a tragedy, Massachusetts College of Art and Design made a commitment to increasing its recognition of multiple viewpoints and the presentation of artists outside the mainstream.

The suicide of Tyrone Maurice Adderley, a talented and popular painting student, provided a catalyst. In his memory, faculty organized a lecture series to bring artists from underrepresented groups to give an honorary lecture to share their work and wisdom.

In 1995 Lorraine O'Grady gave the inaugural Adderley Lecture. Over the past two decades members of the MassArt community have been privileged to meet and learn from artists, writers, scholars, and activists each year. These lectures have been consistently excellent but, more importantly, they have transformed MassArt and the profound influences of speakers past still reverberate in the halls and curricula of the school.

*Viewpoints: 20 Years of Adderley* is a celebration. The individuals who have given the esteemed lecture are an inspiring and remarkable group. Some were already renowned when they came to campus, while others have gone on to do truly great things after their lecture. Including numerous perspectives, artistic media, and approaches to contemporary artmaking, *Viewpoints* presents works ranging from celebrations of the Funk aesthetic to cutting-edge Afrofuturism. This commemorative exhibition brings together a multigenerational group of prominent artists and thinkers and focuses renewed attention on an array of important and topical social issues, from discrimination and the politics of erasure and exclusion to pressing environmental concerns.

This exhibition, a collaboration between MassArt's Curatorial Programs Department and the Adderley Steering Committee, would not have been possible without the help of committee co-chairs Peter Wayne Lewis and Mercedes Evans. We would like to thank and recognize Professors Emeriti Jeremy Foss and Marcia Lloyd; Professor Kofi Kayiga; former Professor Heddi Siebel; and former Dean of Admissions Kay Ransdell, whose collective early vision provided the impetus for this lecture series. Lastly, we would like to acknowledge the ongoing support of the MassArt community, especially the ALANA faculty and COMPASS students, whose participation over the years has helped the Adderley Lecture Series evolve and thrive.

— Lisa Tung and Darci Hanna, co-curators, *Viewpoints: 20 Years of Adderley*





ADDERLEY LECTURERS

WANGECHI MUTU	2015
WINFRED REMBERT	2014
ALISON SAAR	2013
DULCE PINZÓN	2012
CORNELIUS EADY	2011
DR. ROBERT FARRIS THOMPSON	2010
DR. LOWERY STOKES SIMS	2009
BRADLEY McCALLUM & JACQUELINE TARRY	2008
XENOBIA BAILEY	2007
RENÉE COX	2006
DANNY SIMMONS	2005
AMIRI BARAKA (1934-2014)	2004
ARTHUR JAJA	2003
CHAKAIA BOOKER	2002
WILLIE BIRCH	2001
RICHARD MAYHEW	2000
DR. SHARON PATTON	1999
DR. LORENZO PACE	1998
JOHN SCOTT (1940-2007) & DR. EDMUND BARRY GAITHER	1997
MELVIN EDWARDS & FRED WILSON	1996
LORRAINE O'GRADY	1995

## WILLIE BIRCH

Willie Birch was only eleven years old when he decided to be an artist. After finishing graduate school he moved to New York and made his name working in paper maché, using the medium for social commentary and exploring the concepts of fragility and preciousness. However, after receiving a grant to research the history of slavery in Louisiana, he felt drawn to his home state after two decades away. Birch's work evolved when he returned to his native New Orleans. He began drawing larger-than-life portraits of his fellow community members from snapshots he took of local scenes. The door to Birch's Seventh Ward studio is always open when he works, allowing him to tune in and draw inspiration from the daily rituals of his community and letting the people he draws see themselves depicted in large and empowering artworks that command space and attention. Birch says, "Being an artist in an African American community is an unusual phenomenon," but "people gravitate toward truth and energy. And that's what I'm trying to make happen, every day of my life." Though rooted in a specific time and place, Birch sees his works as allegorical and is fascinated by broader themes about the human condition that go beyond race or class. He views New Orleans as an extremely special place, where diverse traditions are melded and mixed, and often celebrates unique aspects of the city's cultural traditions, but he also tries to emphasize their universality. Most recently, Birch has drawn inspiration from the soil beneath his feet and the crawfish that make their own small-scale land art by tunneling into the mud in his backyard. Cast in bronze, Birch memorializes the entrances to these dwellings and elevates the crustaceans' handiwork to abstract sculpture.



Xenobia Bailey. *The Record in the Work*, n.d. Mixed media. Collection Danny Simmons. Photo: Zachary Allen.

## XENOBIA BAILEY

Harlem-based fiber artist and cultural activist Xenobia Bailey is known for her large-scale mandalas, intricately crocheted hats, and room-filling textile installations. Though formally trained in ethnomusicology and industrial design, as an artist Bailey found herself drawn to the creative and expressive potential of crochet. Using her well-honed skills, she incorporates designs from around the globe in her beautifully crafted and mesmerizing works that celebrate historical and contemporary African American artistic traditions. According to Bailey, her patterns act as "visual scats," rhythmic and jazzy freestyle designs that evolve as she creates them. Many of her pieces are part of a larger ongoing project, *Paradise Under Reconstruction in the Aesthetic of Funk*, which attempts to document and explain the ever-evolving Funk aesthetic—and to honor the underappreciated traditions of post-emancipation African American homemakers in particular. Bringing this important history to light through brightly colored and tantalizing designs, her works also have a deep intellectual impact by relating the history of colonization to ongoing contemporary struggles for justice and equality for African Americans.



Willie Birch. *Crawfish Dwelling 15908*, 2013. Bronze. Courtesy of the artist and Arthur Roger Gallery, New Orleans.



Chakaia Booker. *Muse*, 2007. Rubber tires, wood, and steel. Courtesy of the artist.

## CHAKAIA BOOKER

Chakaia Booker began her artistic career working in ceramics, textiles, and found materials, creating functional pottery, wearable sculptures, and small assemblages before turning to the large-scale works for which she is best known. While in graduate school in the early 1990s in New York, she discovered that car fires were a common occurrence and began scraping off the rubber tires after the vehicles cooled. Drawn to the ubiquitous objects and the notions of freedom, mobility, and change that they represent, Booker started weaving, slicing, twisting, shredding, and curling the salvaged tires. In a physically demanding process, she uses power tools like saws and drills to transform the rigid industrial material into intricate sculptures. According to the artist, tires can serve as a metaphor for many topics including environmental concerns, race, gender, society, and globalization. Having mastered her unusual medium over decades, she shapes the challenging material into expressive sculptures and emphasizes the tires' surprising and immensely varied textures, treads, finishes, and colors. Booker sees a symbolic relationship between the tires and people: the varying shades of the materials parallel human diversity, while the treads of the tires evoke textile designs and African scarification and body decoration. The visibly worn tires are a reminder of the physical marks of human aging but the toughness and persistence of the discarded materials also echo the will of the African diaspora for continued survival. Not content to simply create work in the studio, Booker also begins each day by sculpting herself first, creating a new elaborate headdress that has become her signature look. She notes that this inventive daily ritual is about "coming to the creative moment right off the start... and making my own statement and having my own voice before I get to the studio to continue doing what I do."

## RENÉE COX

In her own words, Jamaican-born Renée Cox does not second-guess herself or tiptoe around. A bold and boundary-pushing artist who lives in New York, her works have strong autobiographical elements and deal with topics of race, religion, gender, womanhood, and empowerment. Although critics have intimated narcissism as a source for her unabashed and often nude self-portraits, Cox takes pride in owning and controlling her self-image and says, "I wasn't brought up to think that I was inferior or that I needed to change something... I've always celebrated who I am." Through her photographs of herself and others, who often gaze unapologetically at the viewer, she attempts to deconstruct stereotypes and reclaim a sense of black pride and identity that has been stripped by history. Past series, such as *Flipping the Script*, have replaced figures in famous European religious masterpieces with African Americans or cast Cox as a discrimination-fighting superhero named Rajé. In another arresting body of work, the artist adopts the persona of the only Jamaican national heroine, Queen Nanny, who escaped slavery, was the influential leader of a maroon community, and was widely respected for her military prowess as well as her healing and spiritual powers. In her most recent series, *Sacred Geometry*, Cox transforms black bodies into fractal and kaleidoscope-like forms based on mandalas. Combining the ancient symbols with digital technology allows these portraits to be fragmented, repeated, and amplified, creating hypnotic and enticing patterns that transcend cultures and tap into the collective human imagination.



Renée Cox. *Sacred Geometry*, 2014. Archival digital print on cotton rag. Courtesy of the artist.





Melvin Edwards. *Dan Okay*, 2007. Welded steel. Courtesy of the artist and Alexander Gray Associates, New York.

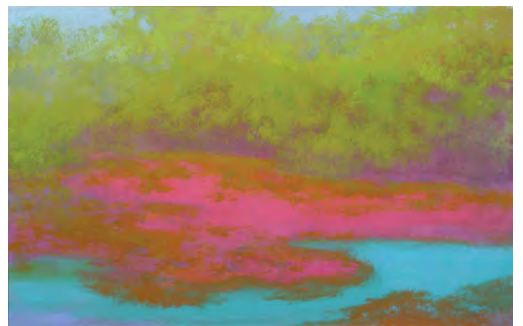
## MELVIN EDWARDS

Melvin Edwards uses sculpture to fuse his political views with abstract aesthetics and explore his African American heritage. He is best known for his multi-decade series, *Lynch Fragments*, which are created by welding together symbolically loaded found objects such as hooks, barbed wire, machine parts, chains, hammer heads, knives, and railroad spikes into abstract assemblages. The tools, many of which can represent both oppression and revolution, are irrevocably merged with one another in the works. Living in Los Angeles during the Civil Rights era, he was initially spurred to create the series by the violent police raid of a nearby Nation of Islam mosque and then the Watts Riots. He revisited the series during the Vietnam War era and again in the late 1970s to today, creating over 200 individual works. According to the artist, creating the first fragment was a moment of epiphany, "I realized I had come onto something rooted in what I was interested in, politically and aesthetically." The medium, welded steel, was also a new challenge. He says, "I like things that resist my trying to make them, because I always get something I don't expect... it's not so much a preconception of something, but that something happens in the doing." Working without preparatory drawings, his sculptures evolve intuitively and although they are small, their intentional placement on the wall at eye level gives them a face-to-face emotional impact. The *Lynch Fragments* series refers to the long and dark history of violence toward African Americans in the United States as well as the pieces' fragmentary nature, both visually and conceptually. Though they stand alone as dynamic formal abstractions, Edwards also wants the works to be "loaded up," to make people think, and to express something about where he comes from as an artist and African American man.

## RICHARD MAYHEW

Richard Mayhew has spent over seven decades studying and creating art. He was born in 1924 and grew up on Long Island, New York. From a young age, his grandmother, who was a member of the area's native Shinnecock tribe, instilled in him a deep appreciation and reverence for nature. His love of art bloomed when, as a teenager, he befriended artists who came from New York City each summer to paint the landscapes near his home. Mentored by one such artist, medical illustrator James Wilson Peale, Mayhew moved to the city in 1945 to work as a medical illustrator himself. However, his enduring love of nature led him to the type of landscape paintings for which he is best known. Full of diffuse light and vibrant color, his paintings spring from his memory and imagination rather than actual environments. Working as an improvisationalist, he begins each piece by spreading paint across the canvas with no intention, preparatory sketches, or preconceived ideas about the final product. Building layers of paint, the images evolve in the moment. He often works on several at once, waiting for inspiration to strike him from his initial marks on each canvas. The resulting pieces are filled with emotional force and when talking about the work he describes their musical qualities in the painted refrains. According to Mayhew, his art is "based on a feeling... of music and mood and sensitivity and the audio responses of sound and space." He strives to paint the essence of nature and continually seeks the "unique spiritual mood of the landscape."

Although there is no indication of his ethnicity in the work, Mayhew feels the paintings are inherently multicultural and reflect all of his life's influences, including his African American and Native American heritage. During the Civil Rights era, he was an active member of the Spiral Group, an African American art collective formed with Romare Bearden and several other prominent artists, which explored the role that visual art could play in the struggle for racial equality in the United States. The name was chosen in reference to an Archimedean spiral, which "moves outward embracing all directions, yet continually upward," and reflected the diversity of the group as individuals and as artists with varying styles and artistic motivations.



Richard Mayhew. *Coyote Creek*, 2008. Oil on canvas. Courtesy of the artist and ACA Galleries, New York.



Bradley McCallum & Jacqueline Tarry. *Family Portrait* (after *Imitation of Life*, 1934, from the *Projection* series), 2009. Oil on linen, toner on silk. Courtesy of the artists.

## BRADLEY McCALLUM & JACQUELINE TARRY

A collaborative artist team, Bradley McCallum and Jacqueline Tarry have worked and exhibited globally together for over fifteen years. The focus of their work is society's marginalized members, with a specific eye towards issues of race and social justice, both historically and now. They employ a vast array of techniques and media in their art – from painting, sculpture, photography, and video to performance pieces and public projects – and their status as a mixed-race artist couple allows them a unique starting point to navigate complex notions of race and power within their work.

*The Evidence of Things Not Seen* series includes superimposed double portraits done in oil paint and silkscreen. The images are mug shots of people arrested in connection with the 1955-6 bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama. The topmost layer includes the arrest record number, which is omitted in the painted portrait, juxtaposing the use of photography as evidence and documentation against the traditional role of portraiture for portraying wealth and importance. The works pay homage to the protesters who challenged the racist and humiliating Jim Crow laws for riding public buses with a non-violent mass protest. The effort was coordinated by Martin Luther King, Jr., who was arrested along with dozens of other organizers under a 1921 law prohibiting conspiracies that interfered with lawful business. At the time, African American riders were relegated to the back of the buses and were forced to give up their seats for any white passengers. They were often required to pay at the front yet enter a separate door at the back, which gave drivers an egregious opportunity to steal their fare and drive away before they could reboard. Bus drivers were also known to skip stops in African American neighborhoods while stopping at every corner in white communities. After thirteen months, the U.S. Supreme Court finally ruled that segregation on public buses was unconstitutional and the boycott ended. However, the post-boycott violence directed toward African Americans and persistent racism kept segregation a daily reality for decades to come.

McCallum and Tarry's *Projection* series consists of oil-on-linen paintings with the artists' signature sheer silk overlay. The imagery for these works comes from film stills and photographs of stage performances with iconic and stereotypical characters, often related to minstrel shows. The series explores the often-problematic portrayal of race within the entertainment industry during a selected period, from the 1920s through the 1970s. In the work, the artists reveal the assertion of racial difference as a cultural construction. These images restage scenes in John M. Stahl's *Imitation of Life* (1934), a movie about a black single mother and her lighter-skinned daughter who tries to "pass" as white, denying her racial background and shunning her mother in the process.

## WANGECHI MUTU

Originally from Nairobi, Kenya, Wangechi Mutu moved to the United States in the 1990s to study art and anthropology and eventually settled in Brooklyn. Her sophisticated multimedia works use dreamlike and provocative imagery to explore issues such as gender and sexism, race, (neo)colonialism, and rampant consumption. She is best known for her large-scale collages that incorporate a broad arsenal of materials – from watercolor, pigments, and magazine cutouts to soil, glitter, and even pearls – with imagery that ranges from carnal to alien and futuristic. Featuring women as protagonists, Mutu's works confound expectations through female bodies that are difficult to categorize (and control) and that refuse to behave in anticipated ways. Her hybrid creatures consist of animal, plant, and fantastical elements set in surreal locations and are enrapturing and disconcerting. Chimeras with marbled skin and distorted appendages, the complicated figures often appear as label-defying and transcultural, but they refer to specific societal tropes about women. In particular, Mutu's works often critique the exoticization and objectification of the black female body in the West. She interrogates the dichotomous portrayals of traditional African womanhood (as defined in ethnographic photographs) and hypersexualized African American women in the media and popular culture. The unique mix of elements in her collages, videos, animations, sculptures, and installations, which often feature a sci-fi twist, places her among the vanguard of Afrofuturism in visual art. And through her work, Mutu hopes to encourage viewers to see these mythical realms as sites for cultural, sociopolitical, and psychological exploration and change.



Wangechi Mutu. *Mushwomb 3*, 2003-4. Paint, ink, collage, mixed media, and Mylar. Courtesy of the artist, Collection Danny Simmons.



Lorraine O'Grady. *The First and the Last of the Modernists, Diptych 3 Blue (Charles and Michael)*, 2010. Fujiflex print. Courtesy of the artist and Alexander Gray Associates, New York.

## LORRAINE O'GRADY

Born in Boston to parents of Irish and Caribbean descent, Lorraine O'Grady became an artist later in life, making her first works in her mid-40s. After studying economics and Spanish literature in college, she took a circuitous path to art, working in positions as diverse as an intelligence analyst for the Department of State, a literary and commercial translator, a civil rights activist, a housewife, and a rock music critic. Growing up as a first-generation American in New England, she was raised with "middle- and upper-class British colonial values" that contrasted with the experience of African American peers and her neighborhood's dominant black working-class culture. This personal and family history informs much of her conceptually driven work. In a ground-breaking 1980 guerrilla performance, O'Grady adopted the persona of Mlle Bourgeoise Noire (Miss Black Middle-Class) to critique the racial apartheid that prevails in the mainstream art world. Fashioning a formal gown from 360 thrifted white gloves and carrying a cat-o-nine-tails studded with white chrysanthemums, she appeared at numerous art venues to loudly and publicly challenge the status quo.

More recently, her series, *The First and the Last of the Modernists*, which appeared in the 2010 Whitney Biennial, features paired images of the nineteenth-century French poet Charles Baudelaire and twentieth-century pop icon Michael Jackson at similar points in their lives. Separated by nearly 150 years, O'Grady sees remarkably similar personal traits in the two men, including their dramatic flair, need to differentiate themselves from the norm, perfectionism, drug addiction, ambiguous sexuality, and aspirations to greatness. Issues of race played a role in both men's lives as well, Baudelaire's muse and common-law wife of twenty years, Jeanne Duval, was from Haiti and Jackson had a complicated public relationship with his own black identity. Ultimately, O'Grady sees the two as ends of the modernist continuum, explaining, "Charles was both the first of the modernists and the last of the romantics... And Michael may have been the last of the modernists (no one can ever aspire to greatness that unironically again), but he was also the first of the postmodernists. Will anyone ever be as ideal a symbol of globalization, or so completely the product of commercial forces? In the end, the two, together and in themselves, were a perfect conundrum of difference and similarity."

## LORENZO PACE

"I think art is the most important thing in the world because it tells the history of all societies. It tells a story. If the artist hadn't wanted to tell the story, we wouldn't know what the Renaissance was like. We wouldn't know what the Egyptians did. Every aspect of our society is created by the individuals who set up the perimeters of what we know about the people. And sometimes artists are the least ones acknowledged." – L.P.

A versatile multimedia artist with a doctorate in Art Education, Dr. Lorenzo Pace creates work that explores the long-reaching shadows of the past while expressing optimism for the future. His eclectic installation pieces often incorporate found objects and surprising elements, such as sound and scent, and his interactive performances involve elaborate storytelling, music, and dance. One of thirteen children, Pace was born in Alabama in 1943, grew up in Chicago, and has a studio in Brooklyn. Although he was expected to follow in his father's footsteps as a minister, Pace was drawn to a different path that has taken him around the globe. He says as an artist, "You do the work because you love it. It's something that's in your soul, in your being." In 1993, Pace was selected from more than 400 artists and commissioned by New York City's Department of Cultural Affairs to create a sculpture dedicated to the memory of all of the enslaved Africans brought to this country. The Manhattan monument, called *Triumph of the Human Spirit*, is in front of the U.S. Federal Court and is the largest outdoor sculpture devoted to the African American community. The base features a replica of the iron lock that shackled Pace's own great-grandfather when he was brought from Africa. It was this lock that inspired Pace's award-winning children's book, *Jalani and the Lock*, and the accompanying performance that tells the story to audiences around the world.



Lorenzo Pace. *Take It From Me, We'll All Be Free*, 2014. Multisensory mixed media installation. Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Zachary Allen.





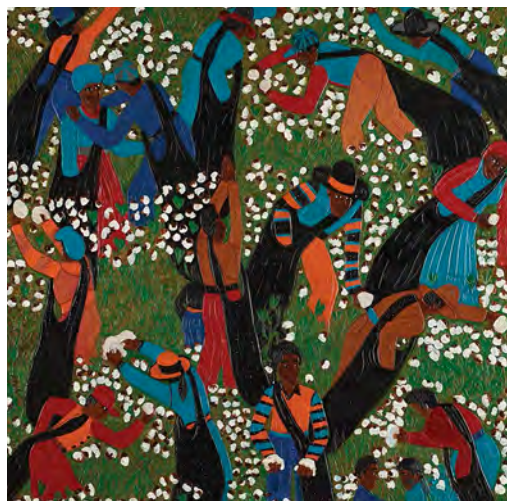
Dulce Pinzón. *Cebra*, 2011-12. C-print. Courtesy of the artist.

## DULCE PINZÓN

Dulce Pinzón is known for her playful and poignant photographs exploring themes of immigration, cultural identity, and environmentalism. Originally from Mexico, she often focused her camera on Latino subcultures while living in the U.S. In a well-known series, *The Real Story of the Superheroes*, Pinzón photographed Mexican workers living in New York dressed in superhero costumes at their job sites. The caption of each photograph noted the workers' names, occupations, and the amount of money that they send home to their family abroad each week. The powerful images highlight the laborers' common practice of working extraordinary hours in extreme conditions for low wages and sacrificing their own wellbeing so that their families can survive and prosper. More recently, Pinzón returned to Mexico and began creating images that reflect environmental concerns and the world that will be left for future generations. Photographing augmented natural history displays, she reflects on our often-unnatural relationships with the flora and fauna around us and raises questions about the current state of the planet. She notes, "Although there are many problems affecting my country right now, my frustration and indignant stance toward the severe problems that we face with environmental issues has forced me to find viable strategies in the hope of leaving a better legacy for my country and my sons: the possibility of creating a better and cleaner environment for all."

## WINFRED REMBERT

A self-taught artist, Winfred Rembert records a painful chapter of American history in autobiographical paintings. The works, created on hand-tooled and dyed leather, explore the lives of African Americans in segregated Jim Crow-era Georgia. Abandoned by his mother and raised by a great aunt, he spent much of his childhood alongside her, working in the cotton and peanut fields, digging potatoes, and rarely attending school. After taking part in civil rights demonstrations, he was thrown in jail without charges or a trial for over a year. After escaping, he survived a lynching only to be sent to prison for seven years to do hard labor on a chain gang. It was in prison that he encountered well-educated inmates, some of whom had been schoolteachers, who taught him how to read and write. He also learned leatherworking from another prisoner and began making decorative wallets. Years later, at the suggestion of his wife Patsy, Rembert began using these same techniques to portray scenes from his life on sheets of tanned leather. Working in his studio in his home in New Haven, Connecticut, he creates narrative works that offer a raw view of racism, inequality, and violence while celebrating his community's resilience in the face of such overwhelming injustice. A master storyteller with a near-photographic memory, he depicts inmates working on chain gangs, dancers in juke joints, midwives, cotton pickers, lynch mobs, churchgoers, and children playing. His colorful scenes of people working in the cotton fields are especially captivating but conceal a harsher reality about the tedious and backbreaking labor. According to the artist, "Curved cotton rows make a beautiful pattern, but as soon as you start picking, you forget how good it looks and think how hard it is." Rembert's views of his past offer an important firsthand account of aspects of American life that are rarely depicted with such bare honesty. He says, "I want to tell the truth with this art. I've got so many stories to tell, I'll never get to tell them all, but I'll do the best I can."



Winfred Rembert. *Picking Cotton*, 2011. Dye on carved and tooled leather. Courtesy of the artist and Adelson Galleries Boston.



Alison Saar. *Pearly Study (Sugar Sack Shroud series)*, 2013. Found sugar sacks, gesso, charcoal, polyester cloth. Courtesy of the artist and L.A. Louver, Venice, CA.

## ALISON SAAR

Born into a family of artists, Alison Saar was encouraged to explore art from around the world from a young age. The Los Angeles-based artist's sculptures and installations are informed by her extensive studies of Latin American, Caribbean, and African art and religion, as well as outsider artists and German Expressionism. Her powerful works abound in social and historic references and are made from a variety of media, including wood, dirt, roots, tin, wax, copper, and found objects. According to Saar, these reclaimed materials are artifacts and witnesses of human lives and help imbue her work with their own spirit and wisdom. Her narrative sculptures frequently incorporate diverse topics, from the African cultural diaspora and spirituality to personal and cultural identity, as well as universal themes such as fertility and life cycles, family, human vulnerability, history, and politics. Many of her works also deal with the particular challenges of being an artist, woman, and mother in the twenty-first century. Influenced by her multiracial upbringing, Saar questions simplistic black-and-white delineations of political and social forces and creates poetic visual responses that often scrutinize systemic injustices while leaving ample room for viewers to form their own interpretations.

## JOHN SCOTT

John Scott (1940-2007) was born in New Orleans and raised in the Lower 9th Ward. One of the city's most respected and renowned visual artists, he was an influential professor at Xavier University for over forty years. Early in his career he drew on Christian imagery but his focus later shifted to incorporate African, African American, Caribbean, and Southern Creole cultural elements. He was particularly influenced by musical traditions such as jazz and the blues and was best known for his monumental abstract kinetic sculptures that dot the city's landscape. In addition to wood and metal sculptures, he also created paintings, drawings, prints, and some works in glass and was an innovator of novel artistic techniques through the end of his life. He was a 1992 recipient of a MacArthur "Genius" Grant and the subject of a major retrospective at the New Orleans Museum of Art in 2005. According to fellow New Orleans artist Willie Birch, Scott broke ground for the generation of African-American artists who followed: "In the African-American community, he was the first to be embraced by the white world. He was an artist of prominence that could rival anyone in the city. He became the role model, the pinnacle that all of us strove to be like... He was important to all of us who came after." In poor health from a chronic illness, Scott was forced to evacuate his beloved New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina and leave his badly damaged studio and tools behind. Determined to continue creating despite the setbacks, he painted a series of graceful and elegiac flowers in watercolor on handmade paper. He died in Houston from complications of his illness but his legacy as a prominent and groundbreaking artist and mentor remains.

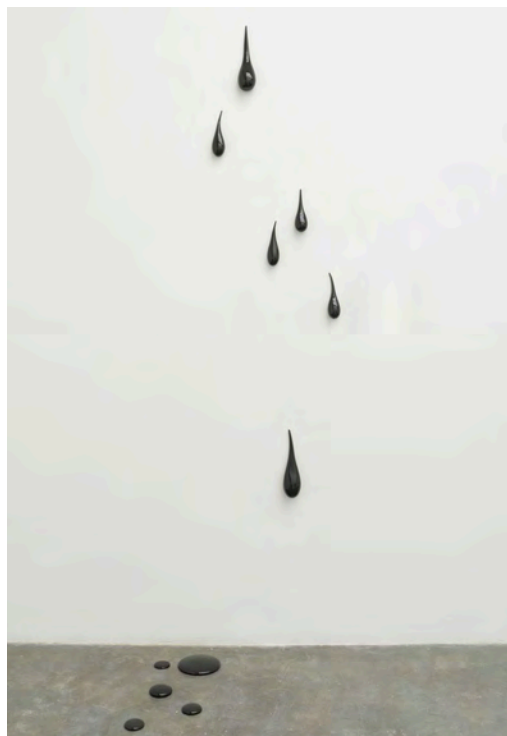


John Scott. *Reliquaries #8*, 2000. Bronze. Courtesy of the John Scott estate and Arthur Roger Gallery, New Orleans.



## FRED WILSON

A prominent conceptual artist, United States representative in the Venice Biennale, and MacArthur “Genius” Grant recipient, Fred Wilson was born in the Bronx to parents of African American and Caribbean descent. His family moved to the suburbs when he was young but, upon arriving in Westchester in the late 1950s, they were greeted with racist graffiti, broken windows in their new home, and a neighborhood petition to buy back their land. As the only black student in his elementary school, he was isolated and teased. Moving back to the Bronx after grade school, Wilson found himself having to adapt once again to a new environment and others’ perceptions. These formative experiences helped shape his later work, especially his pieces that explore race, class, and power in social and historical narratives. Drawing on his own extensive museum experience – as an art installer, administrator, educator, and guard in many of New York’s major museums – Wilson became acutely aware of what was and was not being shown to the public. He notes, “What they put on view says a lot about a museum, but what they don’t put on view says even more.” In his most celebrated works, he creates site-specific installations that reconceptualize historical objects and thoughtfully critique major cultural institutions. Since his breakthrough piece, *Mining the Museum* (1992-93), he has gone on to do equally eye-opening reinterpretive projects throughout North America, the Caribbean, Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. More recently, he has returned to creating objects such as *Sneaky Leaky*, a black glass sculpture inspired by his time living in Venice, Italy and the complex history of blackness in Venetian art and culture. Evocative of loaded cultural symbols such as ink, tar, and oil, the work also alludes to tears. In other iterations of the piece, some of the drips and drops have eyes reminiscent of 1930s cartoons that featured racist caricatures of African Americans and which were later recycled in the cartoons of Wilson’s childhood.



Fred Wilson. *Sneaky Leaky*, 2009. Blown glass. © Fred Wilson. Courtesy of the artist and Pace Gallery, New York. Photo: Kerry Ryan McFate.



Danny Simmons. *Black as the Ace of Spades*, n.d. Oil and fabric on canvas. Courtesy of the artist.

## DANIEL SIMMONS, JR.

Brooklyn-based Danny Simmons is a painter, author, arts advocate, art collector, and philanthropist. Although he began his career as a social worker, Simmons found his passion for helping others paralleled his love of the arts and began focusing his efforts toward the art world. In 1995, Simmons founded the Rush Philanthropic Arts Foundation, a non-profit organization “dedicated to providing disadvantaged urban youth with significant arts exposure and access to the arts,” along with his younger brothers, music mogul Russell Simmons and hip hop artist Joseph Simmons (“Rev Run”) of Run-D.M.C. The associated exhibition space, Rush Arts Gallery, and national talent-scouting competitions provide an important venue for young and underrepresented artists to showcase their work and gain exposure. Simmons is also a vocal advocate for arts curriculum in low-income schools and has sat on the boards of numerous organizations, including the Brooklyn Museum, the Brooklyn Public Library, the New York Foundation for the Arts, and the Brooklyn Academy of Music, among others. In addition, he has written five books and conceived of and co-produced the hit HBO series *Def Poetry Jam*. In his own artwork, he refers to his unique painting style as “neo-African Abstract Expressionism,” and draws inspiration from diverse sources, including African patterns and designs, comics, and works by Salvador Dalí and Afro-Cuban artist Wifredo Lam. His brightly colored paintings are meticulously rendered and often incorporate textiles, which add texture and depth to the surface.





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