



Harvey B. Gantt Center
for African-American Arts+Culture

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Adriene Cruz

A nationally acclaimed artist now residing in Portland, Oregon, Adriene Cruz is celebrated for her vibrant meditation quilts. A native of Harlem, Cruz attended the School of Visual Arts, graduating with a BFA. She initially worked in wood sculpture – often with fiber elements – however when Cruz moved to Portland, a quilting course at the Oregon School of Arts and Crafts reinvigorated her artwork. Since then, she has been creating brilliantly colored and adorned quilts.

Her work has been exhibited in museums and galleries across the United States and in Brazil, and she has been featured in numerous books and publications. Her quilt *Wisdom Wish* is included in the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture Arts and Artifacts Collection.

Alfred J. Smith (c. 1948)

While still a Boston University student, Alfred J. Smith debuted a group of four laudable oil paintings deemed “sophisticated and profound works, executed with complete technical assurance.” As Professor of Art at Howard University, Smith designed *Community Rhythms*, a mural commissioned by the National Museum of American Art and The Art in Public Places Program and completed in 1994 with the help of Howard University Art Department students. The mural is located in Washington DC’s U Street Metro Station and pays homage to Romare Bearden. Smith is also a poet and brings a poet’s imagination and fantasy to his work.

Amber Robles-Gordon (b. 1977)

Born in Puerto Rico and raised in Arlington, Virginia, Amber Robles-Gordon is a mixed-media artist whose work is representational of her experiences and the paradoxes within the female experience. She fuses found objects to convey personal memories, nature, womanhood and her belief in recycling energy and materials.

Robles earned an MFA at Howard University in 2011 and has since been commissioned by the Smithsonian Anacostia Museum and the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities (DCCA) to create a mural and a public art installation. She has exhibited in the US, Europe and Southeast Asia and is represented in public and private collections including Masterpiece Miniature Art Exhibition, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; Capital One Bank, McClean, Virginia; and New York’s Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

Faith Ringgold (b. 1930)

Faith Ringgold – painter, writer, mixed media sculptor and performance artist – began her career in the early 1960s. Her protests, events, and exhibitions broke ground and opened museum doors for artists of color and for women. Today, she is best known for her painted story quilts and her illustrated children’s books. Ringgold's first book, the award winning *Tar Beach* published in 1991, won more than 30 awards. HBO included an animated version of *Tar Beach* in "Good Night Moon and Other Sleepy Time Lullabies."

Ringgold’s artwork has been exhibited in museums and galleries throughout the world and is included in many private and public art collections including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Museum of Modern Art, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, Boston Museum of Fine Art, the Chase Manhattan Bank Collection, Baltimore Museum, the High Museum of Art, The Phillip Morris Collection, and St. Louis Art Museum.

She has received more than 75 awards, fellowships, citations and honors and 23 honorary doctorates, one of which is from her alma mater The City College of New York. Ringgold is professor emeritus at the University of California in San Diego, California where she taught art from 1987 until 2002.

Friendship Missionary Baptist Church

Friendship Missionary Baptist Church was founded in 1890 when forty congregants withdrew their membership from First Baptist Church. Under the leadership of Rev. Allen Lewis, a new church was organized and called Friendship as a nod to the historic Friendship Baptist Church of Atlanta.

These forty met in different homes until a lot was leased on South Caldwell Street where a small structure was built. The growth of the church was so rapid that the space soon became inadequate and a new site was found at the corner of East First and South Brevard streets.

In July 1970, the Friendship family moved to its current location on Beatties Ford Road and in October 1982, Rev. Dr. Clifford A. Jones, Sr. became the church’s thirteenth pastor leading the congregation under the banner of “servants affirming God’s word globally.”

James Phillips (b. 1945)

An acclaimed painter, public artist and muralist, James Phillips was born in Brooklyn, New York. He attended the Fleisher Art Memorial School in Philadelphia and the Philadelphia College of Art. After graduating in 1965, Phillips moved to New York City where he attended the Printing Trade School. His experience with the city’s musicians and artists inspired him to mimic the rhythms and moods of jazz music in his work while also incorporating African patterns and designs.

Phillips has taught at Howard University, University of California at Berkeley, the Maryland Institute College of Art – where he earned his MFA in 1998 – and at Hampton University. He is a member of the Harlem-based Weusi Artist Collective and AfriCOBRA. Phillips has exhibited both nationally and

internationally and his work is highly collected by private individuals and public institutions including the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

In 2014, Phillips' *Sankofa II* was added to the National Museum of African American History & Culture collection and will be displayed when the museum opens in September 2016.

Januwa Moja

Januwa Moja was born in Baltimore, Maryland and earned a BFA in Design and Fiber Arts at the Maryland Institute College of Art. Moja has worked as a fiber artist for the past thirty-three years and in the last ten has emerged as a glass assemblage and mosaic artist. Moja has created artwork and programs that seek to affirm the intrinsic values of culture and the ability of the arts to inspire, heal and affect social change. She has traveled extensively in Africa, and has exhibited her work in Brazil, Senegal and London and in museums in the United States including the Smithsonian, Baltimore Museum of Art, and the Museum of Natural History in New York City.

Jo Crockett & Nomawethu Bebeza Jones

Based on paintings produced as part of the "Friends with the Universe" project during South Africa's first year of Science and Technology in 1998, Jo Crockett and Nomawethu Bebeza created a quilt that illustrated the star lore heritage and legends of the African sky. The people, objects and designs applied on the quilt depicted the legends of the Khoikhoi and San peoples. The South African Astronomical Observatory Visitor Center hung this Shared Sky quilt in its lobby in Cape Town.

Kevin Cole (b. 1960)

Born in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, Kevin Cole works in a range of mediums and uses repetitive forms and color to create three dimensional structures that invite viewers to reflect upon abstracted imagery of neckties as symbols of status, beauty, fashion and the destruction of human life. He is the youngest member of AfriCOBRA.

Cole began his career in 1985 as a middle school art teacher and adjunct professor at Georgia State University. In 2003, he became chair of the Fine Arts Department at Westlake High School where he created the school's first arts program.

Cole has been commissioned for over 30 public art projects and is represented in over 1500 public, private and corporate collections including the Smithsonian, Corcoran Gallery Museum, Museum of Contemporary Art of Georgia, David C. Driskell Center at the University of Maryland College Park, Bank of America, former NBA player Michael Jordan, former NBA player Darrell & Lisa Walker and author Terry McMillan.

In 1982, Cole earned his BS in art education at University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, his MA in art education a year later, and his MFA in drawing from Northern Illinois University in 1984.

Lillian Blades (b. 1973)

Born in Nassau, Bahamas, Lillian Blades received a BFA in Painting from the Savannah College of Art and Design and an MFA in Painting from Georgia State University. She has studied at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Maine and Caversham in KwaZulu Natal South Africa. As both a public and studio artist, Blades' assemblage work reflects the improvisational compositions, colors and patterns of quilts and the textural qualities of memorial art. Her inspirations are rooted in ancestral and matriarchal visual traditions.

Blades has exhibited in solo and group shows throughout the United States, as well as in the Bahamas, Trinidad, Germany and South Africa. She has received commissions for work in Atlanta and is represented in the Birmingham Museum of Art and the National Art Gallery of The Bahamas.

Lillie Briggs Mack (1901-1996)

Mrs. Mack was the great aunt of former NBA All-Star Joe Barry Carroll who always made her home his first stop when returning to Pine Bluff, Arkansas.

Little Rock African Methodist Zion Church

Little Rock AME Zion Church was organized in 1884 in the backyard of Mrs. Mary Ann Hunter after a group of congregants left Clinton Chapel AME Zion Church. The first church was a little house sitting on a rock – hence their name. In 1906, under the leadership of Rev. W. R. Douglas, the frame structure was moved across Seventh Street, and in 1911, a brick edifice was completed. The old Little Rock Church was considered a testament to the outstanding architectural selection and financial commitment of its congregation.

After Bishop George J. Leake assumed the Episcopacy in 1972, Rev. William M. White was appointed pastor. Dr. James R. Samuel served from 1989 until September 4, 2005 when Rev. Dr. Dwayne A. Walker became the pastor of Little Rock, leading the congregation with a focus on “excellence in ministry.”

Michael Cummings (b. 1945)

Michael A. Cummings, a native of Los Angeles, currently lives and sews in the 100-year-old Harlem brownstone he purchased in the early 1980s. Ironically, Cummings – one of America's premier quiltmakers – stumbled into the art form. Inspired by the work of Romare Bearden, he viewed quilting as another way to make collages.

Cummings has shown at Bates College in Maine, Hallmark Cards, New York City's Cinque Gallery and Studio Museum in Harlem. His group shows include the Cincinnati Art Museum, Renwick Gallery in Washington, DC, the American Craft Museum, Yale University, Atlanta's High Museum of Art, and Japan's Mitsukoshi Department Store.

Cummings' work appears in some notable collections including those of Bill and Camille Cosby, Whoopi Goldberg, and the Arco Corporation.

Michael B. Platt (b. 1948)

Long known as a printmaker, Michael Platt's artwork has turned to digital imagery and book art that combines image and poetry. He continues to create work that centers on figurative explorations of life's survivors and the marginalized, referencing history and circumstance in the rites, rituals and expressions of the human condition.

Platt has exhibited internationally and nationally and is represented in both public and private collections including the Corcoran Museum; the Smithsonian Museum of American Art; the Library of Congress' Prints and Photographs Collection and its Rare Books and Special Collections; the Schomburg Research Center in Black Culture; Yale University Art Gallery; the Harris Poetry Collection of the Rockefeller Library of Brown University; the David C. Driskell Center at the University of Maryland, College Park and Hampton University Art Museum.

Murry DePillars (1938 – 2008)

An instrumental figure in the Richmond, Virginia arts community, Murry DePillars moved there in 1971 and built one of the largest art schools in the nation at Virginia Commonwealth University.

During the 1960s, he was a leading figure in Chicago's African American arts movement and a member of AfriCOBRA. Known for the color and movement in his paintings, DePillars drew his inspiration from African and African American history, literature, music, quilt-making and other cultural influences. Early African American quiltmakers' aesthetics and their insistence on building – rather than sewing – quilts had a major influence on DePillars' work.

Born in Chicago, DePillars earned an associate degree at Kennedy-King College, his BA in art education and an MA in urban studies from Roosevelt University in Chicago. He completed his doctorate in art education at Pennsylvania State University. His work has been exhibited at the Whitney Museum of American Art, Studio Museum in Harlem, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago and the Mississippi Museum of Art in Jackson.