April 4, 2018

Dear Friends:

On behalf of the faculty and students in the Division of Fine Arts at Howard University, I am pleased to extend my warmest welcome on the occasion of the 29th Annual James A. Porter Colloquium on African American Art. This year’s theme, Abstraction: Philosophy, Form, Innovation, explores new art histories and, examines ideologies and recent developments in documenting and exhibiting abstract art in America and the African Diaspora. This year we are pleased to celebrate and honor four exemplary individuals: Mary Lovelace O’Neal, Fred Eversley, Edward Spriggs, and Valerie Cassel Oliver. These renowned artists and scholars have challenged viewers to look outside traditional figuration and explore the aesthetics of abstraction in its varied forms and innovations.

We are also grateful to this year’s Porter Colloquium faculty coordinators, Prof. Jacqueline Carmichael and Dr. Melanee Harvey, along with the Porter Colloquium Executive Committee, for their hard work and tireless commitment to making this year’s program and benefit gala a memorable one. Thanks also to the outstanding speakers, art historians, and artists who honor us by sharing their scholarly, cultural, and historical perspectives.

We mark an historical milestone this week. Fifty years ago, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee, while leading a march in support of sanitation workers. It is our hope that the country will continue to honor and will never forget Dr. King’s legacy as a champion for human rights. It is also our hope that the Porter Colloquium will continue to affirm Howard’s legacy of encouraging, “Hard-won and very substantial progress…studded with original and enduring achievement.”

Sincerely,

Gwendolyn H. Everett, Ph.D.
Associate Dean
Director, Gallery of Art
Born in Jackson, Mississippi in 1942, Mary Lovelace O’Neal, a painter who also prints, is Professor Emerita from the University of California at Berkeley and former Chair of the Department of Art Practice. She retired from the University in 2006. She has taught at the University of Texas at Austin, The San Francisco Art Institute, California College of Arts and Crafts, Oakland, CA, Humboldt State University, Arcata, Ca, and Jorge Tadeo Lozano, Bogota, Columbia, SA. She exhibits and lectures widely – both nationally and internationally.

She is a graduate of Columbia, MFA (1969) and Howard Universities, BFA (1964). In 1963 she was a student at Skowhegan School of Painting & Sculpture where she started to understand the fundamental function of paint.

In 1991 she curated an exhibition for the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes in Santiago, Chile, “17 Artistas Latino y Afro Americanos en USA.” In 1993 she received the Artist En France Award sponsored by the French Government and Moet & Chandon. She has represented the United States at a number of Biennales & International Art Festivals including Biennale Internazionale dell’Arte Contemporanea, Florence, Italy, Amadora 2000 VII Biennale 1st International de Gravura, Amadora, Portugal, Biennale International Du Dakar, Dakar, Senegal, Africa, Mondiale d’Estampes, Musée d’Art Contemporaine de Chamalieres, France. In 2005 she was chosen by the State Committee to represent Mississippi at the Committees Exhibition at the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington, D.C. Her work is represented in numerous international collections private and public.

Two monographs have been published on the occasion of solo exhibitions-The Mississippi Museum of Art, Jackson Mississippi (2002) and Togonon Gallery, San Francisco, California (2007). She co-authored with Lee Hildebrand Colors & Cords, a book on the painting and sculpture of musician Johnny Otis published by Pomegranate Art Books in 1997. Mary Lovelace O’Neal lives and works in Oakland, California. She also maintains studios in Concon and Santiago, Chile, SA. In 2016, she served as artist in residence for a Collaborative Residency at Salon de arte Urbano in Santiago, Cuba.
Valerie Cassel Oliver is the Sydney and Frances Lewis Family Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. Prior to her position at the VMFA, she was Senior Curator at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston where worked from 2000 - 2017. She has served as director of the Visiting Artist Program at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (1995-2000) and a program specialist at the National Endowment for the Arts (1988-1995). In 2000 she was one of six curators selected to organize the Biennial for the Whitney Museum of American Art.


Cassel Oliver is the recipient of a Getty Curatorial Research Fellowship (2007); the David C. Driskell Award (2011); and the Arthur and Carol Kaufman Goldberg Foundation-to-Life Fellowship at Hunter College (2016). From 2016-17, she was a Senior Fellow in Curatorial Studies at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Cassel Oliver holds a M.A. in art history from Howard University in Washington, D.C. and, B.S. in communications from the University of Texas at Austin.
APRIL 5 Student Sessions Thursday
Morning- Afternoon: 10:30-4:30
Student Sessions

10:00-11:30 Abstract Art at Howard: Mr. Scott Baker, Assistant Director, Howard University Art Gallery

12:30-1:30 Curatorial Workshop
1:30-3:30 Designing for Innovation Workshop: Chakaia Booker

Thursday Evening: The David C. Driskell Lecture at the David C. Driskell Center at the University of Maryland College Park: David R. Brigham, PhD.
Reception: 5:00-6:00 PM / Lecture: 6:00 PM
RSVP by April 1, 2017 at driskellcenter@umd.edu or 301.314.2615
Please indicate the event’s name and the name(s) of the attendee(s).

The 29th Annual James A. Porter Colloquium on African American Art and Art of the African Diaspora
Abstraction: Form, Philosophy, & Innovation

APRIL 6 FRIDAY Day One of Colloquium Proceeding

10:30 Opening Remarks

Day Moderator: Melani Douglass, Director of Public Programming, National Museum for Women in the Arts

11:00-11:50 Opening Lecture
“Freedom / Expression / Abstraction”
Nikki A. Greene, Assistant Professor of Art, Wellesley College

11:50-12:00 Q&A

12:00-12:50 LUNCH ON YOUR OWN

1:00-2:00 Collaboration2 from the Smithsonian’s American Art Journal: Washington Modernism and the Exhibition of Works by Negro Artists (1933)

Papers and Presenters:
Charles Brock, National Gallery of Art—“Toward a History of Washington Modernism: The 1933 Display of African American Art at the Smithsonian National Museum”

Michèle Gates Moresi, Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture—“Negro Artist exhibitions at the National Gallery, 1929-1933”

Tobias Wofford, Virginia Commonwealth University—“Herring, Porter, and Locke’s Perspectives on the 1933 Exhibition”

Seth Feman, Chrysler Museum of Art—“How Children Became Modern: The Place of Students in the Exhibition of Works by Negro Artists and in Interwar Washington”

John A. Tyson, University of Massachusetts, Boston—“From Newspapers to Networks: Broadcasting Art of African Americans in the Nation’s Capital”

Moderator: Tuliza Fleming, Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture
Organizer: Robin Veder, Smithsonian American Art Museum

2:00-2:15 Q&A

2:15-2:35 New Photographic Histories Presentation
“No Body Here: Black Photo Abstractionism”
· Romi Crawford, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Visual and Critical Studies, School of the Art Institute of Chicago

2:35-3:20 Curator’s Panel: Curating African American Abstract Art
· Kevin Terval, Associate Curator of African Art, Department Head, Arts of Africa, the Americas, Asia, and the Pacific Islands, Baltimore Museum of Art
· George N’Namdi, Founder, N’Namdi Center for Contemporary Art
· Evelyn Hankins, Senior Curator, Hirshhorn Museum
Panel Moderator: Melanee Harvey, Assistant Professor, Department of Art, Howard University

3:20-3:30 Q&A

3:30-4:00 New Art Histories of the African Diaspora Lecture
· Freida High W. Tesfagiorgis, PhD, Evjue-Bascom Professor Emerita, Department of Afro-American Studies, University of Wisconsin, Madison
4:00-4:45 Concerning the Practice of Diaspora Artist Panel
   · Kesha Bruce
   · Victor Ekpuk

Panel Moderator: Lanisa S. Kitchiner, Ph.D., Head of Education and Scholarly Initiatives, National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution

4:45-5:00 Q&A

5:00 Floyd Coleman Lecture “Back Ground Check” Chakaia Booker

6:30-8:30 Howard University Faculty Exhibition Reception, Howard University, Armour J. Blackburn Gallery

April 7—Saturday Day Two of Colloquium Proceedings

10:30 Opening Remarks

Day Moderator: Jessica Stafford Davis, Founder, The Agora Culture

11:00-11:15 New Media Artist Talk - Adrian Loving

11:15-12:15 New Art Histories Scholars Panel
   · Zoma Wallace, MFA, Curator, DC Commission on the Arts & Humanities
   · Melissa Messina, Independent Curator & The Mildred Thompson Legacy Project
   · LeRon P. Brooks, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Africana Studies, Lehman College, CUNY

Panel Moderator: Raél Salley, Professor in Art History at Maryland Institute College of Art and Visiting Professor, African American Studies, University of California, Los Angeles

12:15-12:30 Q&A

12:30-1:15 LUNCH ON YOUR OWN

1:20-1:35 The Impact of Edward Spriggs
   · Margo N. Crawford, Ph.D., Professor of English, Department of English, University of Pennsylvania

1:35-2:00 DR. JAMES A. PORTER, AN ABSTRACTION, A POEM, A REMEMBRANCE
   · Mary Lovelace O’Neal

2:15-3:15 Artist Panel: Materiality and Space
   · James Maurelle
   · Amber Robles-Gordon
   · Gregory Coates

Panel Moderator: Margo N. Crawford, Ph.D., Professor of English, Department of English, University of Pennsylvania

3:15-3:25 Q&A

3:30-4:15 James A. Porter Lecture “Black in the Abstract: The Optics of Ontology”
   · Valerie Cassel Oliver, Sydney and Frances Lewis Family Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

4:15-4:45 Trajectories Innovation Lecture
   · Torkwase Dyson

Closing Remarks

** Program open to minor adjustments.

7:00 - 10:30 PM, Saturday Evening: Benefit Gala, Howard University Armour J. Blackburn University Student Center (Semi-Formal Attire)

Gala Honorees:

Lifetime Achievement Award
Two-Dimensional: Mary Lovelace O’Neal
Three-Dimensional: Fred Eversley

Humanitarian Award
Edward Spriggs

James A. Porter Book Award
Valerie Cassel Oliver

APRIL 8 SUNDAY -
2:00 Faculty Studio Visit (See Registration Table to Sign Up)
Reginald Pointer, Associate Professor, Ceramics, Howard University
Frederick John Eversley is a Los Angeles-based sculptor, one of a group of artists associated with the 1960’s “L.A. Light & Space” movement. Fred Eversley was born in Brooklyn, New York in 1941, graduated from Brooklyn Technical High school and received a degree in Electrical Engineering from Carnegie Institute of Technology (now Carnegie Mellon University). Postponing an opportunity to pursue medicine and biomedical engineering, Eversley moved to Southern California for the exploding electronics and aerospace industry of the early 1960’s. Intrigued by the hot bed of art and music in Los Angeles’s Venice district, he retired from his engineering career at 25 and began an exploration of “art informed by science and technology”. He soon found initial success with translucent sculpture in polished resin. His first solo show was at New York’s Whitney Museum in 1970 which launched his international career. He was appointed as Artist-in-Residence at the Smithsonian Institute in 1977, and for three years, he had a studio at the National Air and Space Museum. His art is in the permanent collection of 35 museums and he has executed 20 large public artwork commissions. Eversley was honored with the “Lorenzo di Medici” 1st prize for sculpture at the 2001 Biennale Internazionale Dell’ Arte Contemporanea di Firenze in Florence, Italy. In 2011, Fred Eversley was featured in the widely acclaimed exhibitions including: Pacific Standard Time, Crosscurrents in L.A. Painting and Sculpture 1950-1970 at the J. Paul Getty Museum, Now Dig This! Art and Black Los Angeles 1960-1980 at the Hammer Museum, and Places of Validation, Art & Progression at the California African American Museum. The William Turner Gallery in Santa Monica presented the one-man show Fred Eversley: Four Decades, 1970-2010, featuring more than 30 pieces. Fred Eversley maintains studios in Venice Beach, California and Soho, New York City.
Poet and cultural activist Edward Sims Spriggs was born the youngest of three children into a Baptist preacher’s family in Cleveland, Ohio in 1934. He earned a bachelor’s degree in with a focus in Studio and Art History in 1965 from San Francisco State College. Spriggs has been a community arts leader and public art advocate for fifty plus years. He has curated over 200 community-based and museum art exhibitions, and he has consulted on numerous art projects. Spriggs curated the first Bay Area-wide exhibition of African American Artists. Spriggs joined forces with like-minded students to establish two small, off-campus nationally recognized literary journals of the period—Black Dialog and the Journal of Black Poetry. He continued his service with these journals as an East Coast and contributing Editor when he relocated to New York City in 1965. Samella Lewis cites Spriggs in her book; The Art of Elizabeth Catlett (1984) as initiating the campaign in 1970 to have Catlett’s Visa restored and her travel ban lifted. In New York, he worked as a commercial artist and volunteered at Baraka’s Black Arts Repertory Theater School, and later went on to organize poetry readings at the Countee Cullen and Schomburg Libraries in Harlem. The growing Black Arts Movement in Harlem noted Spriggs’ arts community work, which resulted in his appointment as the first permanent Director for the then new Studio Museum in Harlem (1969-1975). While there he received fellowships to study Museum Operations from the Metropolitan Museum of Art (1970); and in 1972 the International Council of Museums awarded him a travel fellowship to study museums in Europe. From 1972 to 1977 Spriggs served on the coordinating board of the North American Zone of the Second World Black & African Festival of Arts and Culture. In 1976 Spriggs lectured on African American Art History at Howard University’s Art Department while continuing work organizing and selecting artists for FESTAC. In 1980 Spriggs relocated to Atlanta, Georgia as Director of The Information and Minority Affairs Program with the Southern Arts Federation (1980-81). In 1986-88 he was appointed as the Visual Arts Program Coordinator for the Fulton County Arts Council. He served as the Literary Executor of the Hoyt W. Fuller Estate and was the founding president of the Atlanta African Film Society. Shortly after that, he lobbied for, developed and implemented plans to establish the Hammonds House Museum and served as Founding Director and Curator (1987-2002). While at Hammonds House Museum he received a fellowship to the Getty Trust Museum Management Institute at U. C. Berkeley in 1991. When Spriggs retired from Hammonds House he was sought out as one of the leading appraisers of African American Art, a service he provided from 2002-2012.
Torkwase Dyson was born in Chicago Illinois, and spent her developmental years between North Carolina and Mississippi. Traversing these regions helped develop a fundamental sensitivity towards urban development, southern landscape and black spatial justice. During her years at Tougaloo College where she majored in Sociology and double minored in Social Work and Fine Art, she began to examine the spatial dynamics of black history and how these histories where connected geographically. Over the next 10 years, Dyson traveled to Africa and South and Central America to strategize with communities of color on ways to attain resource equality. During this time she earned her Bachelor’s in Fine Arts in Painting from Virginia Commonwealth University and her Masters in Fine Arts in Painting from Yale School of Art.

In 2016 Dyson designed and built Studio South Zero (SSZ) a solar-powered mobile studio where the context of nomadicity became the framework for learning and making art about the environment. It was traveling with SSZ that inspired her experimental project The Wynter-Wells Drawing School for Environmental Liberation where she explores contemporary theorizations of space, architecture and the infrastructure of extraction economies. Though working through multiple mediums, Torkwase Dyson describes herself as a painter who uses distilled geometric abstraction to create an idiosyncratic language that is both diagrammatic and expressive. The works are deconstructions of natural and built environments that consider how individuals negotiate and negate various types of systems and spatial order. Dyson's work has been exhibited at the Studio Museum in Harlem, the Whitney Museum of American Art, The Drawing Center, the Corcoran College of Art and Design, the Schuylkill Center for Environmental Education, and the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art.

Dyson has been awarded the Graham Nancy Graves Grant for Visual Artists, Visiting Artist grant to the Nicholas School of the Environment at Duke University, and the Culture Push Fellowship for Utopian Practices. Fellowships include, Graham Foundation, Eyebeam Art,Technology Center Fellowship, and the FSP/Jerome Fellowship. In 2016 Dyson was elected to the board of the Architecture League of New York as Vice President of Visual Arts.
Nikki A. Greene is Assistant Professor of Art History at Wellesley College and the Visual Arts Editor of Transition magazine. Her book manuscript, Rhythms of Grease, Grime, Glass, and Glitter: The Body in Contemporary Black Art, presents a new interpretation of the work of David Hammons, Renée Stout, María Magdalena Campos-Pons, and Radcliffe Bailey, and considers the intersection between the body, black identity, and the musical possibilities of the visual. She has also written on performance and photography. Recent and upcoming publications on abstract painting include, “‘Wind, Sunshine, and Flowers’: The Visual Cadences of Alma Thomas’s Washington, DC,” in the exhibition catalogue, Alma Thomas (Studio Museum in Harlem & Tang Teaching Museum, 2016) and “Moe Brooker and the Influence of Wassily Kandinsky,” Panorama: Journal of the Association of Historians of American Art (June 2018). Dr. Greene has held a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship, the Richard D. Cohen Fellowship at the Hutchins Center for African and African American Research at Harvard University, and a Mellon Postdoctoral Fellowship at Wellesley College. She blogs about art, teaching, and work-life balance at nikkigphd.com.

Chakaia Booker is a prominent artist known for her work using tires as a medium. Other mediums in which she works include metal fabrication, printmaking, painting and ceramics. Booker fuses ecological concerns with explorations of racial and economic difference, globalization, and gender by recycling discarded tires into complex assemblages. Booker began to integrate discarded construction materials into large, outdoor sculptures in the early 1990s. Tires, resonate with her for their versatility and rich range of historical and cultural associations.

Booker slices, twists, weaves, and rivets this medium into radically new forms and textures. The tones of the rubber parallel human diversity, while the tire treads suggest images as varied as African scarification and textile designs. The visible wear and tear on the tires evokes the physical marks of human aging. Equally, Booker’s use of discarded tires references industrialization, consumer culture, and environmental concerns. Booker’s artistic process is enormously physical, from transporting the tires to reshaping them with machinery. Booker received a B.A. in sociology from Rutgers University, NB, NJ, and an M.F.A. from the City College of New York. She gained international acclaim at the 2000 Whitney Biennial with “It’s So Hard to Be Green” (2000). Booker received the Anonymous Was a Woman Award in 2000, the Pollock-Krasner Grant in 2002 and a Guggenheim Fellowship in 2005. In 2016 “The Liquidity of Legacy” a monumental sculpture was commissioned for the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington DC.
2018 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

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- Dr. Alice Bonner
- Jacqueline Carmichael
- Dr. Floyd Coleman, Emeritus
- Larry Cook
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Everette Hampton
Stephanee Hinton

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Chris-Annthia Johnson
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Special tributes to Dr. Floyd Coleman and Dr. Dianne Whitfield-Locke for their unwavering support of the James A. Porter Colloquium.

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Save the Date  April 5-7, 2019 - 30th Anniversary James A. Porter Colloquium

Critical In/sight: Contemporary Developments in the History and Practice of Black Visual Culture

The James A. Porter Colloquium was established at Howard University in 1990. It is named in honor of James A. Porter, the pioneering Art Historian and Professor, whose 1943 publication Modern Negro Art laid the foundation for the field of study. The Colloquium continues his legacy through dynamic programming, scholarly research and artistic leadership.