Roots and Branches:
The Black Arts Movement
Into the 21st Century
A pioneer in establishing the field of African American art history, James A. Porter was instrumental as the first scholar to provide a systematic, critical analysis of African American artists and their works of art. An artist himself, he provided a unique and critical approach to the analysis of the work. Dedicated to educating and writing about African American artists, Porter set the foundation for artists and art historians to probe and unearth the necessary skills essential to their artistic and scholarly endeavors. The canon is born from Porter’s determination to document and view African American art in the context of American art.

Born December 22, 1905 in Baltimore, Maryland, Porter had a long, illustrious career in the visual arts, as an artist and historian. Under the direction and encouragement from James V. Herring, head of the Art Department at Howard University, Porter studied painting, drawing, and art history. Upon graduating with a bachelor of science in 1927, he accepted a position as instructor of painting and drawing at Howard. Being an educator did not keep Porter from honing his artistic skill and creating art. Throughout his academic professional career, Porter painted and exhibited nationally and internationally. This dedication was acknowledged in 1933 when he received the Schomburg Portrait Prize, from the Harmon Foundation, for the painting entitled Woman Holding a Jug (1930). Porter was highly regarded for his finely rendered portraits, as exemplified in his award.

While Porter never stopped nurturing his artistic ability, he also did not stop educating himself. After he completed undergraduate work, Porter attended the Art Institute in New York. He also studied in Paris at the Institute of Art and Archeology at the Sorbonne, in which he received a Certificat de Presence in 1935. When Porter returned to the United States, he pursued a Master of Arts in Art History from New York University in 1937. Porter’s thesis, which would later become the foundation for Modern Negro Art, focused on African
American artists and artisans.

During his educational pursuits, Porter met Dorothy Burnett, a librarian at the Harlem branch, where he researched neglected black artists. On December 27, 1929, Porter and Dorothy were married. They had one daughter, Constance Porter. This union would prove to be important, not only personally but also professionally. Dorothy worked with Porter, as she provided bibliographic information critical to his investigations. Dorothy, along with Porter, has a rich relationship with Howard University. She was the director of Moorland-Spingarn Research Center where she catalogued information about African American artists.

Porter’s interest in nearly forgotten and often ignored artists of African descent came from reading a brief article on African American landscape artist Robert Scott Duncanson. Due to the brevity of the account, Porter was inspired to research Duncanson and other artists of African descent. Were it not for this article, Modern Negro Art may have not come to be.

Porter, a devout educator, taught at Howard for more than forty years, heading the Art Department and the Art Gallery. Because of his dedication to the teaching profession, the National Gallery of Art selected him as one of the best art teachers in the nation. An honor he received with twenty-four others, he was presented the award by Lady Bird Johnson in 1965.

James A. Porter left a cultural and educational legacy to those passionately involved in the area of African American art. The drive to explore and firmly document artists of the Diaspora continues today. Porter’s artistic and historical work provides a solid foundation in which current and future scholars can build upon. Many scholars owe Porter for the inspiration to probe the depths of African American visual culture and attest to its significance to American culture.

- Jeffreen M. Hayes
Lisa Gail Collins is a professor in Art History, Africana Studies, and American Studies at Vassar College in Poughkeepsie, NY. She received her B.A. in Art History from Dartmouth College and her Ph.D. in American Studies—with graduate minors in Studies in Africa and the African Diaspora and Feminist Studies—from the University of Minnesota. A member of the Vassar faculty since 1998, she teaches interdisciplinary courses in American art, social, and cultural history with an emphasis on African American lives; art and social change; creativity and everyday life; feminist thought and activism; and social and cultural movements in the United States.


I am one of fifteen children born May 26, 1941 in Paterson, New Jersey to Elise North Jones and Ormsby Jones, Sr. originally of Charleston, South Carolina.

My father’s mother was Haitian, thus my childhood was influenced by both southern, (especially Gullah or Guichee) and Haitian cultures. We were a very poor but happy family. We thought our life style was normal. I remember sometimes having margarine or sugar sandwiches for lunch. Also, being Guichee people we ate a lot of rice and beans. The family and community were very close and looked out for one another during my growing up years in Paterson.

I attended local public schools, #6, #21, and Eastside High School. I, received a B.A. in Art from William Paterson University in 1963; (it was then Paterson State College.) I received an MA in Painting and Art Education from New York University in 1966, and MFA, in Painting and Printmaking from Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, New York in 1983. Some of the awards I received were from the National Endowment for the Arts and the New Jersey Council on the Arts; Joan Mitchell and Puffin Foundations.

My art career really started when I was a little boy of six or seven years of age. At that time I loved drawing family members, especially those visiting us from out of town. My school teachers always encouraged me especially my high school teacher Mrs. Rosylin Feinstein. She often took me to various museums and galleries in the New York area.

As a boy, I began to exhibit my artwork in school, local beauty and barber shop windows, at church functions, libraries and, wherever I was asked to exhibit. It was always interesting to see what people thought of my talent. During my last years at William Paterson University, I began exhibiting in various New Jersey cities, at libraries, and community centers.
Roots and Branches: The Black Arts Movement into the 21st Century

“Roots and Branches: The Black Arts Movement into the 21st Century” will celebrate the influence of the Black Arts Movement (BAM) on African American art. Our mission is to reflect on the cultural and aesthetic traditions established by BAM artists during the late 1960s and 1970s and assess the cultural impact of this national movement. “Roots and Branches” is intended to define the relationship between the original BAM modes of expression and prevalent aesthetic strategies in contemporary African American art.

NOTES
THURSDAY, APRIL 7

6:00 P.M.
David C. Driskell Lecture at the University of Maryland’s
David C. Driskell Center, College Park
Leslie King-Hammond, Ph.D., Graduate Dean Emerita and
Founding Director of the Center for Race and Culture at
Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA)

FRIDAY, APRIL 8

10:30 A.M.-12:00 P.M.
Students’ Session in the Fine Arts Building
with Ben Jones, Artist
Location - Paint and Drawing Studio, Room #2012

11:00 A.M.-3:00 P.M.
On-Site Registration: School of Business

12:00-12:25 P.M.
Opening Program & Greetings:
President – Dr. Wayne A. I. Frederick
Provost – Dr. Anthony Wutoh
Dr. Gwendolyn Everett, Dean, Division of Fine Arts
Dr. Anthony McEachern, Chair, Department of Art

Day 1 Moderator: Prof. Curlee Holton, Executive Director,
David C. Driskell Center and Distinguished Artist-in-
Residence, University of Maryland Department of Art,
College Park

12:30 -1:30 P.M.
Opening Lecture:
*Power to the People!: The Art of Black Power*
Lisa Gail Collins, Ph.D., Professor of Art, Vassar College

1:35-2:35 P.M.
Literary Roots: Reflections on Black Arts Movement
Literature

Moderator: Greg Carr, Ph.D., Associate Professor and Chair,
Department of Afro-American Studies, Howard University
• Quito Swan, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Department of
  History, Howard University,
• Meta Jones, Ph.D., Associate Professor of African
  American Literature, Department of English, Howard
  University

2:35-2:45 P.M. BREAK

2:45-3:45 P.M.
Keynote Lecture: *My Journey Art, Spirit & Politics*
Ben F. Jones, Professor Emeritus of Art, New Jersey City
University
Presenter: Jasmine S. Taylor, Student, Art History, Howard
University

3:45- 4:45 P.M.
A Conversation with Ben F. Jones
Q & A session with the Artist and Professor Emeritus of Art,
New Jersey City University, conducted by Larry Cook, Artist
of the D.C. Contemporary Artist Collective, Delusions of
Grandeur

4:45-5:00 P.M. BREAK

5:00-6:30 P.M.
Black Artist Collectives: BAM and its Influence

Moderator: Kimberly D. Jacobs, Ph.D. Student, Virginia
Commonwealth University
• AfriCOBRA
• Kamoinge Workshop
• “Where We At”: Black Women Artists
• Weusi
• Delusions of Grandeur

6:30-8:30 P.M.
Howard University Blackburn Gallery Opening
Faculty Exhibition Opening

7:00-8:30 P.M.
Black Artists Collectives Reunion Reception

SATURDAY, APRIL 9

9:00-10:00 A.M.
Registration & Coffee

10:00 A.M.
Greetings and Introductions:
Dean Gwendolyn Everett, Ph.D., Division of Fine Arts
Department of Art Chair Anthony McEachern, Ph.D.

Day 2 Moderator: James Smalls, Ph.D., Professor, Art
History and Museum Studies, University of Maryland
Baltimore County

10:15 -11:30 A.M.
Re-Presenting the Movement: Film & Fashion Panel

Moderator: Rhea Combs, Ph.D., Curator, Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture
• Olivia Drake Ph.D., Lecturer, Department of Art, Howard University
• S. Torriano Berry, MFA, Associate Professor of Film, Howard University School of Communications
• Mikki Taylor, MFA, Lecturer, Department of Art, Howard University

11:30 A.M.-12:30 P.M.
Roots and Branches: Art Scholars Panel

Moderator: Adrienne Childs, Ph.D., Associate, W.E.B. Du Bois Center, Harvard University
• Nicholas Miller, Professional Lecturer, Art History Department, George Washington University
• Tobias Woffard, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Art and Art History Department, Santa Clara University
• Rujeko Hockley, Ph.D., Assistant Curator of Contemporary Art, Brooklyn Museum
• Edward Shaw, Ph.D., Lecturer, Black Studies Department, University of Nebraska, Omaha

LUNCH 12:30-1:30 P.M. LUNCH ON YOUR OWN

1:30-2:30 P.M.
Artists’ Conversation: Generational Dialogue on a Legacy
Moderator: Tuliza Fleming, Ph.D., Curator, Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture
• Alfred J. Smith, Artist, and Professor of Art, Howard University
• Valerie Maynard, Artist
• Kevin Cole, Artist
• Adrienne Gaither, Artist

2:30-3:30 P.M.
James A. Porter Distinguished Lecture:
Margo Crawford, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Department of English, Cornell University

3:30-3:45P.M. BREAK

3:45-4:45 p.m.
The Floyd C. Coleman Lecture: After Identity, What?
Hank Willis Thomas, Artist
Presenter: Bria Burditt, Student, Art History, Howard University

4:45 - 5:00 P.M. CLOSING REMARKS

7:00-10:00 P.M.
GALA, Howard University Armour J. Blackburn University Center Ballroom
Emcee: Rock Newman, Television Host of “The Rock Newman Show”, Howard University, WHUR-TV

Entertainment:
Howard University’s SaaSY, Jazz Vocal Ensemble, accompanied by Howard University Musical Instrumentalists

Spoken Word Tribute to the Black Art’s Movement:
Jeffery Weatherford, MFA Candidate, Painting, Howard University

Honorees:
Lifetime Achievement Award: Alonzo Davis, Jr.
Lifetime Achievement Award: Valerie J. Maynard
Humanitarian Award: Ben Jones
James A. Porter Book Award: Michael D. Harris, Ph.D.

SUNDAY, APRIL 10

2:00-3:00 P.M. - FINALE
Artist Studio Visit & Tut on PolyArt
Howard Faculty & Alumni
Prof. Alex McSwain - Electronic Studio,
Location: Howard University Lulu Childers Hall Room 2016

Save the Date 2017:
“Interventions, Ruptures and Affirmations: Archival Engagements in African American Art and Art of the African Diaspora”- April 07- 09, 2017
Hank Willis Thomas is a photo conceptual artist who works primarily with themes related to identity, history and popular culture. He has exhibited in venues throughout the United States and internationally, including the International Center of Photography in Manhattan, the Fabric Workshop and Museum in Philadelphia, the Studio Museum of Harlem, and Galerie Michel Rein in Paris.

Thomas’ work has been selected for many public collections, including: New York City’s Museum of Modern Art, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, Whitney Museum of American Art and the Brooklyn Museum, and the High Museum of Art in Atlanta and the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D. C.

A native of Plainfield, N.J., Thomas earned a BFA in Photography and Africana Studies at New York University and an MFA/MA in Photography and Visual Criticism from at the California College of the Arts. Thomas’ monograph, Pitch Blackness, was published by Aperture. His collaborative projects have been featured at the Sundance Film Festival and others have been installed permanently at the Oakland International Airport, the Birmingham-Shuttlesworth International Airport, the Oakland Museum of California, and the University of California, San Francisco.
Rock Newman is a beloved prodigal son of the DMV. He could also be described as an advocate for athletes, celebrities and the person on the street. Whatever words are used, Rock Newman is never described as anything less than engaging, sincere, energetic and caring. After a journey that has included stops in Las Vegas and Bermuda, Rock returns to the area he loves the most. “I enjoyed my time in Las Vegas and Bermuda but they never became home. Ahhh Its great to be back!”

Rock Newman returns to the Washington DC region with vast experiences and relationships to revisit his roots in radio. 2013 will see Newman add a new media recipe to his broadcasts, which include streaming video and worldwide online discussion. Keeping with his sub theme of innovation, The RNS will also be archived at (name of site URL) so that his followers can continue the discussion in a seamless basis. The RNS activates traditional and new media to create a non-stop dialogue. “I have visited with Pope John Paul II, President Bill Clinton and President Nelson Mandela, met dictators and monarchs, dined with moguls and movie stars, but my greatest joy is family, friends and being amongst the people.”

Rock is a Renaissance Man. From caring for famine victims in Somalia, to buying back 3000 guns to confront violence in DC, or representing world class athletes, he is handson. He is a storyteller. He will entertain and inform. He will also make you reconsider notions of culture and society. He also brings the ability to crosspollinate the discussion from unique angles. The RNS delivers big name guests, experts and common folks who care about modern day, real life issues. Rock asks, “What Do You Care About?” The Rock Newman Show is created to capture an authentic dialogue that is rarely heard. it will be an unscripted, jazz concert that swings from breaking news to undiscovered history, from local and national politics to the nuance of race and religion, from adult relationships to children’s voices about their world. Race relations and unvarnished racism.

THE ROCK NEWMAN SHOW, delivering candid, upclose and personal interviews with Celebrities and News Makers you want to hear from!
Michael Harris is an Associate Professor of Art History at Emory University and also serves as the Consulting Curator for the Harvey B. Gantt Center for African American Art and Culture in Charlotte, NC. Previously, Harris was an Associate Professor of African and African American Art History at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill for eleven years. In spring 2004, he served as the Visiting Professor of Art at Dillard University in New Orleans, and has taught at Duke University, Georgia State University, Morehouse College and Wellesley College. He also served as the Consulting Curator for African American Art at the High Museum in Atlanta from 2005 – 2009.


Harris completed a doctorate in art history at Yale University, where he also previously received a Master of Philosophy degree, (1991), a Master of Arts degree in art history (1990), and a Master of Arts degree, with distinction, in African and African-American studies, and art history (1989). Additionally, he holds a Master of Fine Arts degree in painting from Howard University and a Bachelor of Science in education from Bowling Green State University.

As an artist, Harris has exhibited nationally and internationally, is represented in public and private collections including those of David Driskell and the Hampton University Museum, and he has been a member of the notable artist collective, AfriCOBRA, since 1979.
Alonzo J. Davis’ career as an artist spans four decades. A native of Tuskegee, Alabama, Davis moved with his family to Los Angeles in his early teens. After acquiring an undergraduate degree at Pepperdine College he earned an MFA in Printmaking and Design at Otis Art Institute. Influenced early on by the assemblagists, Davis soon took wing and began to experiment with a variety of mediums, techniques and themes. At the suggestion of artist and former professor, Charles White, Davis began to produce prints and paintings in series. While he was inspired by travel to Africa, the Caribbean and American Southwest—the colors and patterns of the Pacific Rim cultures also seeped into Davis’ artwork. During the ‘70’s and early ‘80’s, Davis’ involvement in the California mural movement culminated with the 1984 Olympic Murals project. His Eye on ’84 (recently restored) is one of ten murals on the walls of the downtown Harbor Freeway. In 1987 Davis entered new territory literally and figuratively when he moved from Los Angeles to Sacramento, California. Fellowships in Hawaii and Texas inaugurated new bodies of work and led to job opportunities in academia--deanships at the San Antonio Art Institute and the Memphis College of Art. During this period his ongoing Blanket Series of woven paintings morphed into a series of installations. Among these were Christopher Columbus Did Not Discover America which incorporated light elements, rocks and arrows, and the Tar Paper Series, richly-textured organic forms that Davis “choreographed” onto large wall spaces. These works signaled a transition from 2-D to 3-D.
Valerie Maynard is a sculptor, teacher, printmaker, and designer. She studied painting and drawing at the Museum of Modern Art, printmaking at the New School for Social Research and received a master’s degree in Art/Sculpture in 1977 at Vermont’s Goddard College. She has taught at the Studio Museum in Harlem, at Howard University and at the University of the Virgin Islands. Her work has been exhibited in many cities in the United States and in Sweden. She has received many awards including residencies in Pennsylvania, New Hampshire and New York and a New York Foundation for the Arts grant in printmaking. She has been an artist in residence at both the Rochester and Massachusetts Institutes of Technology. She also specializes in preservation and restoration of traditional art by people of color. She was artist-in-residence at The Studio Museum in Harlem where she was a part of a group exhibition Labor, Love, Live Collection in Context, held November 14, 2007 - March 9, 2008.

In January 1977, she was part of a contingent of hundreds of African-American artists who represented the North American Zone, exhibiting in FESTAC ‘77, the Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture in Lagos, Nigeria.

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Special Tribute:

On behalf of the James A. Porter Executive Committee and the Arts community, we would like to acknowledge these individuals for their relentless and untiring service in sharing their gifts and talents towards the arts and scholarship. We would like to convey our abiding appreciation to your faithfulness, support, and vision to ensure the continuation of the promotion of African American art and and Art of the African Diaspora, both internationally and at Howard University.

With heartfelt sentiments, we say Thank You!

Floyd Coleman, Ph.D. | Juliette Bethea | Teresia Bush

Departmental Coordination Chairperson
Jacqueline Carmichael, Associate Professor, Department of Art, Howard University