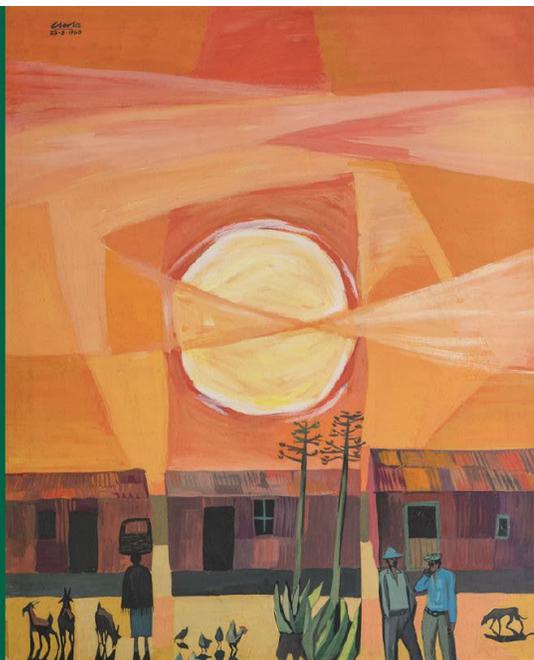


# AFRICAN MODERNISM IN AMERICA 1947-67

October 7, 2023-January 7, 2024

PHILLIPS



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The Phillips Collection

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

August 17, 2023

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## The Phillips Collection Presents *African Modernism in America, 1947-67*

Featuring more than 70 artworks by 50 artists, the exhibition explores cross-cultural artistic networks and exchanges between Africa and the US during the postwar period.



WASHINGTON, DC—The Phillips Collection presents *African Modernism in America, 1947-67*, the first major traveling exhibition to examine the connections between modern African artists and American patrons, artists, and cultural organizations amid the interlocking histories of civil rights, decolonization, and the Cold War. The show reveals the transcontinental networks that challenged academic assumptions about African art in the United States and thereby encouraged American engagement with African artists as contemporaries. **The exhibition will be on view from October 7, 2023–January 7, 2024.**

“The Phillips Collection is pleased to host this important exhibition, which provides a contextualized look into meaningful exchanges among artists who were united by shared aesthetic and political concerns,” says **Vradenburg Director and CEO Jonathan P. Binstock**. “Its presentation in Washington, DC has added significance given the pivotal role of Howard University, and other HBCUs, in providing early institutional support to African artists in the US. Ultimately, it is an important opportunity to learn about the contributions of a variety of African and African American artists to the history and lexicon of modernism, from those who have long been celebrated by the Phillips to those deserving greater recognition.”

Ranging from paintings and sculptures to works on paper, the exhibited artworks exemplify the experimentation and diverse artistic practices that emerged in Africa from the 1940s through the 1960s. The exhibition draws primarily from Fisk University's remarkable collection of gifts from the Harmon Foundation, an American organization devoted to the cross-continental support and promotion of African and African American artists. In 1961, the Harmon Foundation organized its landmark exhibition *Art from Africa of Our Time*. That same year, the Museum of Modern Art, New York, exhibited its first acquisition of contemporary African art, *Men Taking Banana Beer to Bride by Night* (1956) by Sam Joseph Ntiro (Tanzania), which is also featured in *African Modernism in America, 1947-67*. Such early exchanges introduced American audiences to modern African artists and defied preconceived Western narratives that diminished African art.

"The simultaneity of the Harmon Foundation show and the MoMA purchase was crucially important, drawing attention to African artists' modernity in the US," says **Perrin M. Lathrop**, Assistant Curator of African art at the Princeton University Art Museum and co-curator of the exhibition, who was previously the Postdoctoral Fellow in Modern and Contemporary Art History at the University of Maryland and The Phillips Collection (2021–22). "Owing to the leading role of the Harmon Foundation, HBCUs, and other cultural organizations in supporting these artists in the US, the postwar period is one of the first times there is a concentrated opportunity for them to share the same physical space and collaborate together and alongside Black American artists."

"The exhibition considers the historical and contemporary socio-political contexts during a transformative moment that shaped the collecting and exhibiting of postcolonial African art in the United States," says **Camille Brown**, Assistant Curator at The Phillips Collection and lead curator for the presentation in Washington.

*African Modernism in America, 1947-67* is organized into four sections beginning with "Art from Africa of Our Time," which foregrounds the places and people who supported the display and promotion of modern African artists in the US. Showcasing works by artists who were included in the seminal 1961 Harmon Foundation exhibition, this restaging considers the multitude of institutions where modern art from Africa was exhibited, such as the Harmon Foundation, the Museum of Modern Art, and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).

The second section of the exhibition, "Modernism Within Africa," highlights the continent-wide networks of artists, galleries, literary journals, and art education programs instrumental in the development of new, forward-thinking spaces for the display and discussion of postcolonial modern art. These collaborative workshops were influential in fostering creativity among African diasporic networks, which leads into the third section, "Modernism Between Africa and America." The establishment of meaningful connections between African and African American artists resulted in transcontinental travel and art that embraced these cultural exchanges. Artist and art historian David C. Driskell (United States), Professor of Art and Chairman of the Department of Art at Fisk University from 1966 to 1977, made numerous trips to Africa and was inspired to establish a residency for international artists at Fisk University, which played an influential role.

Concluding with "The Politics of Selection," the exhibition features a new commission of the same name by Nigeria-based artist **Ndidi Dike**. Incorporating archival research from the Harmon Foundation Records in Washington, DC, and Fisk University, Dike constructed an immersive mixed media installation that examines the multiplicity of viewpoints, biases, prejudices, allegiances, and omissions found in the

archives. Dike's paneled photo collage includes archival photography and documents to revise a complex history, investigating the presence and absence of women in the story of African modernity and the inequities inherent to white patronage.

## ARTISTS

Jacob Afolabi	Elton C. Fax	D.L.K. Nnachy
Justus D. Akeredolu	Yusuf Grillo	Sam Joseph Ntiro
Jimo Akolo	William Henry Johnson	Demas Nwoko
John Biggers	Mohammad Omer Khalil	Buluma Mordecai Ochungo
Skunder Boghossian	Ladi Kwali	Rufus Ogundele
Rene Bokoko	Grace Salome Kwami	Suzanna Ogunjami
Miranda Burney-Nicol	Akinola Lasekan	Simon Okeke
Peter Clarke	Jacob Lawrence	Uche Okeke
Leon Damas	Jean Nakadulu Luvwezo	Bruce Onobrakpeya
Emmanuel Owusu Dartey	Manyolo Estella Betty	James A. Porter
Ndidi Dike	Mohammed Melehi	Gerard Sekoto
Aaron Douglas	Thomas Mukarobgwa	George Talabi
David C. Driskell	Pilipili Mulongoy	Papa Ibra Tall
Afi Ekong	Selby Mvusi	Mamo Tessema
Ibrahim El-Salahi	Iba N'Diaye	Etso Clara Ugbodaga-Ngu
Ben Enwonwu	Malangatana Ngwenya	Solomon Wangboje
Làmìdì Olónàdè Fákéyẹ	Rekyaelimoo Njau	Viola Mariethia Wood

## EXHIBITION SUPPORT

This exhibition is co-organized by the American Federation of Arts and Fisk University Galleries and curated by Perrin M. Lathrop, Assistant Curator of African Art at Princeton University Art Museum; Nikoo Paydar, former Associate Curator at Fisk University Galleries; and Jamaal B. Sheats, Curator and Director of the Fisk University Galleries and Associate Provost of Art and Culture.



Major support is provided by Monique Schoen Warshaw. Additional support is provided by grants from the Marlene and Spencer Hays Foundation, the Mellon Foundation, and the Andy Warhol Foundation for Visual Arts. This project is supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts.



The presentation at The Phillips Collection is generously supported by Eric Richter and Charles Shoener.

The coordinating curator for the presentation at The Phillips Collection is Camille Brown, Assistant Curator at the museum.

The exhibition is accompanied by a landmark publication published by the American Federation of Arts and distributed by Yale University, which received an award for Curatorial Excellence from The Association of Art Museum Curators. Contributions include leading scholars Kate Cowcher, Ozioma Onuzulike, Paul C. Taylor, Chika Okeke-Agulu, Perrin M. Lathrop, and Nikoo Paydar, as well as an interview by Jamaal B. Sheats with the late David C. Driskell. Ndidi Dike details a digital collage based on her exhibition installation, with a written introduction by artist María Magdalena Campos-Pons.

Following The Phillips Collection, the exhibition travels to the Taft Museum of Art in Cincinnati in February 2024.

## EXHIBITION PROGRAMMING

### [Phillips Music](#)

In the upcoming 2023/24 season of Phillips Music's Sunday Concert series, the museum's long-standing international chamber music program, three performances highlight African composers and musicians: **Andile Khumalo and Ensemble Dal Niente** (November 12) as part of the program's Leading International Composers series, solo pianist **Rebeca Omordia** (November 26), and jazz superstar **Richard Bona with the Asante Trio** (December 14).

### [EmpowerED: Art & Wellness](#)

October 18, 25, November 1, 15, 5-7:30 pm

This accredited virtual 4-week, 15-hour teacher professional development equips educators with an array of teaching techniques to foster a positive outlook to uplift them and their students. The program incorporates the exhibition creating a distinctive cultural context to enrich the educational journey.

### [Curator Tour](#)

October 19 at 6:30 pm

Co-curator Perrin M. Lathrop leads an in-gallery tour of the exhibition. A book signing for the exhibition catalogue follows.

### [Phillips after 5: Afrobeat](#)

November 2 at 5 pm

Celebrate *African Modernism in America, 1947-67* with an Afrobeat-inspired evening, including music from Cheik Hamala Diabete and the Girot Street Band, a beer tasting from Soul Mega, and Ghanaian hand pies from Welle Made.

### [Film Screening](#)

November 16 at 6:30 pm

Join us for a rare screening of acclaimed director William Greaves's documentary film *The First World Festival of Negro Arts* (1966, 40 min.), the official documentary film of the festival held in Dakar, Senegal in 1966, and prolific painter Aaron Douglas's film *A Thing of Beauty* (1966, 28 min.) about Fisk University's first 100 years. A reception featuring cuisine inspired by the African Diaspora follows.

### [Guided Meditation & Curator Talk](#)

December 13 at 12:45 pm

Join us for a free, 30-minute virtual meditation led by local yoga teacher Aparna Sadananda via Zoom. Following the meditation, guest curator Dr. Perrin M. Lathrop gives a virtual tour of the exhibition.

### Guided Meditation

December 20 at 12:45 pm

Join us for a free, 30-minute virtual meditation led by local yoga teacher Aparna Sadananda and a spotlight talk led by a Phillips Educator highlighting a work from the exhibition.

### Panel Discussion

January 7 at 6:30 pm

To mark the end of the exhibition, join us for a conversation between esteemed art historians Dr. Salah M. Hassan, Cornell University, and Dr. Chika Okeke-Agulu, Princeton University.

### **IMAGE GALLERY**

High-resolution press images are available upon request. Please contact [lcantrell@phillipscollection.org](mailto:lcantrell@phillipscollection.org).

**IMAGES:** (Left to right) Peter Clarke (1929–2014, South Africa), *That Evening Sun Goes Down*, 1960, Gouache on paper, 22 x 17 7/8 in., Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN, Gift of the Harmon Foundation, © 2022 Peter Edward Clarke / DALRO, Johannesburg / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York, NY, Courtesy American Federation of Arts. Funding for the conservation of this artwork was generously provided through a grant from the Bank of America Conservation Project; Ibrahim El-Salahi (b. 1930, Sudan; active United Kingdom), *Vision of the Tomb*, 1965, Oil on canvas, 36 x 36 in., Collection of The Africa Center, New York, NY, Photography by Jerry L. Thompson, © Ibrahim El-Salahi, All rights reserved, ARS, New York, NY 2022, Courtesy of Vigo Gallery and American Federation of Arts; Uche Okeke (1933–2016, Nigeria), *Ana Mmuo (Land of the Dead)*, 1961, Oil on board, 36 1/6 x 48 in., Gift of Joanne B. Eicher and Cynthia, Carolyn Ngozi, and Diana Eicher, © 1961 Uche Okeke, Photography by Franko Khuory.

### **ABOUT THE PHILLIPS COLLECTION**

The Phillips Collection, America's first museum of modern art, was founded in 1921. The museum houses one of the world's most celebrated Impressionist and American modern art collections and continues to grow its collection with important contemporary voices. Its distinctive building combines extensive new galleries with the former home of its founder, Duncan Phillips. The Phillips's impact spreads nationally and internationally through its diverse and experimental special exhibitions and events, including its award-winning education programs for educators, students, and adults; renowned Phillips Music series; and dynamic art and wellness and Phillips after 5 events. The museum contributes to global dialogues with events like Conversations with Artists and Artists of Conscience. The Phillips Collection values its community partnership with THEARC—the museum's satellite campus in Southeast DC. The Phillips Collection is a private, non-government museum, supported primarily by donations.

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## PRESS IMAGES

### *African Modernism in America, 1947-67*

October 7, 2023–January 7, 2024

John Biggers (1924–2001, United States)

*Kumasi Market*

1962

Oil on acrylic on Masonite board

34 x 60 in.

Collection of William O. Perkins III

© John T. Biggers Estate / Licensed by VAGA at Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York, NY / Estate Represented by Michael Rosenfeld Gallery

Courtesy Swann Auction Galleries and American Federation of Arts



Peter Clarke (1929–2014, South Africa)

*That Evening Sun Goes Down*

1960

Gouache on paper

22 x 17 7/8 in.

Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN  
Gift of the Harmon Foundation

© 2022 Peter Edward Clarke / DALRO, Johannesburg / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York, NY

Courtesy American Federation of Arts

Funding for the conservation of this artwork was generously provided through a grant from the Bank of America Conservation Project



Aaron Douglas (1899–1979, United States)

*Lagos, Nigeria*

1956

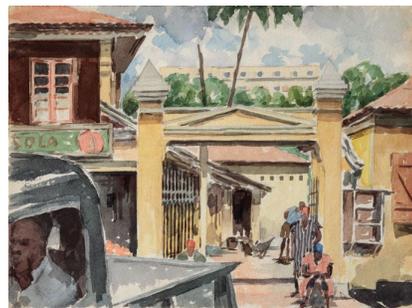
Watercolor on paper

8 7/8 x 11 7/8 in.

Collection of Steven L. Jones, Philadelphia and Chicago

© 2022 Heirs of Aaron Douglas / Licensed by VAGA at Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York, NY

Courtesy American Federation of Arts



<p>David C. Driskell (1931–2020, United States) <i>Yoruba Forms #5</i> 1969 Oil on canvas 42 1/4 x 34 in. © Estate of David C. Driskell Courtesy of DC Moore Gallery, New York, NY and American Federation of Arts</p>	
<p>Ibrahim El-Salahi (b. 1930, Sudan; active United Kingdom) <i>Vision of the Tomb</i> 1965 Oil on canvas 36 x 36 in. Collection of The Africa Center, New York, NY Photograph by Jerry L. Thompson © Ibrahim El-Salahi All rights reserved, ARS, New York, NY 2022 Courtesy Vigo Gallery and American Federation of Arts</p>	
<p>Ben Enwonwu (1917–1994, Nigeria) <i>Head of Imade</i> c. 1949 Ebony 13 x 8 x 8 in. Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville TN Gift of Harmon Foundation Courtesy The Ben Enwonwu Foundation and American Federation of Arts</p>	
<p>Yusuf Grillo (1934–2021, Nigeria) <i>Untitled (Yoruba Woman)</i> c. 1960s Oil on canvas 48 x 30 in. ©Yusuf Grillo Courtesy of Mimi Wolford and American Federation of Arts</p>	

William Henry Johnson (1901–1970, United States)  
*Mosques on a Hill (Tunis)*  
1932  
Woodcut on paper  
12 3/8 x 17 7/8 in.  
Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN  
Courtesy American Federation of Arts



Akinola Laşekan (1916–1972, Nigeria)  
*Ogendebge of Ilesha*  
c. 1958-59  
Oil on canvas  
Framed: 27 x 34 3/4 in.  
Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN  
Gift of the Harmon Foundation  
Courtesy the Laşekan Family and American Federation of Arts



Jacob Lawrence (1917–2000, United States)  
*War Series: Victory*  
1947  
Tempera on composition board  
20 1/4 x 16 3/16 in.  
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY  
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Roy R. Neuberger  
© 2022 The Jacob and Gwendolyn Knight Lawrence  
Foundation, Seattle, WA / Artists Rights Society (ARS),  
New York, NY  
Courtesy American Federation of Arts



Malangatana Ngwenya (1936–2011, Mozambique)  
*Nude with flowers*  
1962  
Oil on canvas  
37 1/16 x 23 1/16 in.  
Gift of Volkmar Wentzel  
© 1962 Malangatana Valente Ngwenya  
Photograph by Franko Khoury  
National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution,  
Washington, DC,  
Courtesy American Federation of Arts



<p>Sam Joseph Ntiro (1923–1993, Tanzania) <i>Men Taking Banana Beer to Bride by Night</i> 1956 Oil on canvas 16 1/8 x 20 in. Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY, Elizabeth Bliss Parkinson Fund © Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, New York, NY Courtesy American Federation of Arts</p>	
<p>Suzanna Ogunjami (c. 1885–1952, Igbo) <i>A Nupe Princess</i> c. 1934 Oil on canvas Framed: 21 1/2 x 17 1/2 x 2 1/8 in. Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN Gift of the Harmon Foundation Courtesy American Federation of Arts</p>	
<p>Uche Okeke (1933–2016, Nigeria) <i>Ana Mmuo (Land of the Dead)</i> 1961 Oil on board 36 1/6 x 48 in. Gift of Joanne B. Eicher and Cynthia, Carolyn Ngozi, and Diana Eicher ©1961 Uche Okeke Photograph by Franko Khoury National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC Courtesy Professor Uche Okeke Legacy Limited and American Federation of Arts</p>	

**To request access to images:** please contact Lauryn Cantrell at [lcantrell@phillipscollection.org](mailto:lcantrell@phillipscollection.org).

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**CHECKLIST: *African Modernism in America, 1947-67***

**October 7, 2023–January 7, 2024**

<p>Jacob Afolabi (1944–2004, Nigeria) <i>A Masquerader and His Power (Witchbird)</i> c. 1964 Linocut on paper 24 1/2 x 17 15/16 in. Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN, Gift of the Harmon Foundation</p>	
<p>Jacob Afolabi (1944–2004, Nigeria) <i>Contentment</i> c. 1964 Linocut on paper 15 7/16 x 18 in. Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN, Gift of the Harmon Foundation</p>	
<p>Justus Dojumo Akeredolu (1915–1984, Nigeria) <i>Chess set</i> c. 1950s Thorn carving Private collection</p>	
<p>Jimo Akolo (1934–2023, Nigeria) <i>Dancing Figure</i> c. 1960s Etching on paper 10 x 8 in. Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN, Gift of the Harmon Foundation</p>	
<p>John Biggers (1924–2001, United States) <i>Kumasi Market</i> 1962 Oil and acrylic on Masonite board 34 x 60 in. Collection of William O. Perkins III</p>	

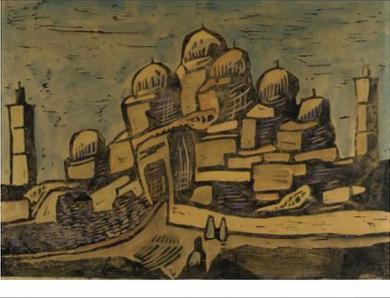
<p>Skunder Boghossian (b. 1937, Ethiopia; d. 2003, United States) <i>Bird Icon</i> 1964 Oil on canvas 13 3/4 x 10 3/4 in. Gift of the Harmon Foundation</p>	 A vertical oil painting on canvas. It features a central, stylized figure with a bird-like head and a human-like body, rendered in a complex, geometric, and somewhat abstract manner. The colors are primarily dark, with highlights in gold and white. The background is dark and textured.
<p>Skunder Boghossian (b. 1937, Ethiopia; d. 2003, United States) <i>Cave Bird and the Lantern</i> 1964 Oil on paper 9 1/16 x 12 1/4 in. Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN, Gift of the Harmon Foundation</p>	 A horizontal oil painting on paper. It depicts a dark, cavernous scene with a central figure that appears to be a bird or a creature with a human-like form. The lighting is dramatic, with a bright light source (the lantern) illuminating the scene. The colors are dark and earthy, with some highlights in red and white.
<p>Skunder Boghossian (b. 1937, Ethiopia; d. 2003, United States) <i>Three Faces</i> c. 1960 Oil on canvas Framed: 16 1/2 x 23 1/8 x 1 1/2 in. Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN, Gift of the Harmon Foundation</p>	 A horizontal oil painting on canvas. It features three stylized faces of African descent, rendered in a dark, almost monochromatic palette of greens and browns. The faces are arranged in a row, looking slightly to the right. The style is expressive and somewhat abstract.
<p>Skunder Boghossian (b. 1937, Ethiopia; d. 2003, United States) <i>Blue Composition</i> c. 1967 Acrylic, gouache and air brush on panel in artist's frame 47 x 72 1/2 in. Private Collection, London</p>	 A horizontal abstract painting on panel. It is dominated by various shades of blue, from deep navy to light sky blue. The composition is complex and layered, with geometric shapes and textures. It appears to be a composition of architectural or mechanical elements.
<p>René Bokoko (b. 1927, The Democratic Republic of Congo) <i>Unknown title</i> c. 1960 Gouache on cardboard 11 9/16 x 15 1/2 in. Gift of the Harmon Foundation</p>	 A horizontal gouache painting on cardboard. It depicts several figures in mid-air, performing acrobatic or athletic stunts against a clear blue sky. The figures are rendered in a simple, stylized manner. The overall composition is dynamic and energetic.

<p>René Bokoko (b. 1927, The Democratic Republic of Congo)  <i>Unknown title</i>                  c. 1960                  Gouache on cardboard                  11 3/4 x 15 1/2 in.                  Gift of the Harmon Foundation</p>	
<p>Buluma Mordecai Ochungo (b. 1936, Uganda)  <i>Sackville Studio</i>                  c. 1960                  Oil on canvas                  37 5/8 x 29 13/16 in.                  Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN, Gift of the Harmon Foundation</p>	
<p>Buluma Mordecai Ochungo (b. 1936, Uganda)  <i>The Mambo</i>                  c. 1960                  Oil on canvas                  Framed: 25 5/8 x 39 3/4 x 2 1/8 in.                  Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN, Gift of the Harmon Foundation</p>	
<p>Miranda Burney-Nichol (Olayinka) (1921–1996, Sierra Leone)  <i>The Conquering Hero</i>                  1972                  Incised Muslim prayer board                  21 x 9 1/4 x 0 7/8 in.                  Newark Museum of Art, NJ. The Simon Ottenberg Collection, Gift to The Newark Museum of Art</p>	
<p>Peter Clarke (1929–2014, South Africa)  <i>Conversation, Windermere</i>                  1960                  Gouache on paper                  17 3/4 x 22 1/16 in.                  Ramont Collection</p>	

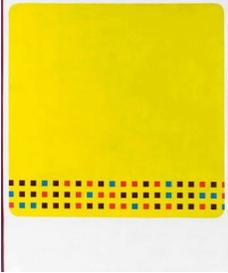
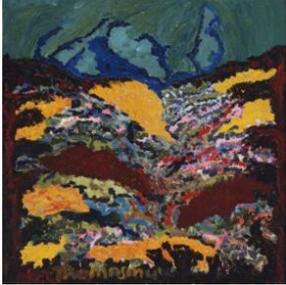
<p>Peter Clarke (1929–2014, South Africa)  <i>African Figure</i>                      1958                      Stencil print on paper                      12 1/6 x 7 15/16 in.                      Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville,                      TN, Gift of the Harmon Foundation</p>	
<p>Peter Clarke (1929–2014, South Africa)  <i>That Evening Sun Goes Down</i>                      1960                      Gouache on paper                      22 x 17 7/8 in.                      Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville,                      TN, Gift of the Harmon Foundation</p>	
<p>Emmanuel Owusu Dartey (1927–2018, Ghana)  <i>A Favorite Spot in Providence</i>                      1964                      Gouache on paper                      8 15/16 x 12 in.                      Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University Nashville,                      TN, Gift of the Harmon Foundation</p>	
<p>Emmanuel Owusu Dartey (1927–2018, Ghana)  <i>Prospect Dormitory</i>                      1964                      Watercolor and ink on paper                      12 x 16 in.                      Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville,                      TN, Gift of the Harmon Foundation</p>	
<p>Ndidi Dike (b. United Kingdom; active Nigeria)  <i>The Politics of Selection</i>                      2022                      Photocollage printed on transparency, earthenware                      vessel, earth, book, paper                      48 1/8 x 72 1/2 in., Courtesy of the artist</p>	

<p>Aaron Douglas (1899–1979, United States)  <i>Lagos, Nigeria</i>                  1956                  Watercolor on paper                  8 7/8 x 11 7/8 in.                  Collection of Steven L. Jones, Philadelphia and Chicago</p>	
<p>David C. Driskell (1931–2020, United States)  <i>Yoruba Forms #5</i>                  1969                  Oil on canvas                  42 1/4 x 34 in.                  The Estate of David C. Driskell, Courtesy of DC Moore Gallery, New York</p>	
<p>David C. Driskell (1931–2020, United States)  <i>Yoruba Scene</i>                  1974                  Linocut (6 colors)                  21 x 16 in.                  Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN</p>	
<p>Afi Ekong (1930–2009, Nigeria)  <i>Olumo Rock</i>                  1960                  Oil on canvas                  10 1/8 x 30 1/8 in.                  Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN, Gift of the Harmon Foundation</p>	
<p>Ibrahim El-Salahi (b. 1930, Sudan; active United Kingdom)  <i>Vision of the Tomb</i>                  1965                  Oil on canvas                  36 x 36 in.                  The Africa Center, NY</p>	

<p>Ibrahim El-Salahi (b. 1930, Sudan; active United Kingdom) <i>Image #6</i> 1962 Oil on canvas Framed: 32 x 15 1/4 x 1 3/8 in. Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN, Gift of the Harmon Foundation</p>	
<p>Ben Enwonwu (1917–1994, Nigeria) <i>Head of Imade</i> c. 1949 Ebony 13 x 8 x 8 in. Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN, Gift of the Harmon Foundation</p>	
<p>Ben Enwonwu (1917–1994, Nigeria) <i>Oba Akenzua II</i> 1949 Oil on canvas 36 x 23 in. Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN, Gift of the Harmon Foundation</p>	
<p>Ben Enwonwu (1917–1994, Nigeria) <i>The Ghosts of Tradition</i> 1949 Oil on canvas 22 x 16 in. Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN, Gift of the Harmon Foundation</p>	
<p>Làmídi Olónàdé Fákéyẹ (c. 1925–2009, Nigeria) <i>Oshe Sango</i> c. 1960s Wood 16 x 4 1/2 in. Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN, Gift of the Harmon Foundation</p>	

<p>Elton C. Fax (1909–1993, United States)  <i>Mother and Child</i>  1963  Crayon and ink on paper  30 x 20 in.  Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville,  TN</p>	
<p>Yusuf Grillo (1934–2021, Nigeria)  <i>Untitled (Yoruba Woman)</i>  c. 1960s  Oil on canvas  48 x 30 in.  Courtesy of Mimi Wolford</p>	
<p>William Henry Johnson (1901–1970, United States)  <i>Mosques on a Hill (Tunis)</i>  1932  Woodcut on paper  12 3/8 x 17 7/8 in.  Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville,  TN</p>	
<p>Mohammad Omer Khalil (b. 1936, Sudan; active  New York)  <i>Inno</i>  1966  Oil on canvas  19 5/8 x 31 1/2 in.  Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville,  TN, Gift of the Harmon Foundation</p>	
<p>Mohammad Omer Khalil (b. 1936, Sudan; active  New York)  <i>La Chiesa</i>  1966  Oil on canvas  16 3/4 x 21 1/3 in.  Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville,  TN, Gift of the Harmon Foundation</p>	

<p>Ladi Kwali (c. 1925–1984, Nigeria)  <i>Water Pot</i>                  c. 1960s                  Glazed stoneware                  13 1/2 x 15 x 15 in.                  Collection of Mimi Wolford</p>	
<p>Grace Salome Kwami (1923–2006, Ghana)  <i>A Girl in Red (Portrait of Gladys Ankora)</i>                  c. 1954                  Oil on linen on canvas                  29 15/16 x 22 in.                  Courtesy of Atta and Pamela Kwami</p>	
<p>Akinola Laşekan (1916–1972, Nigeria)  <i>A Street in Kano</i>                  1947                  Watercolor on paper                  9 3/4 x 13 in.                  Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University,                  Nashville, TN, Gift of the Harmon Foundation</p>	
<p>Akinola Laşekan (1916–1972, Nigeria)  <i>Market Day</i>                  1947                  Watercolor on paper                  9 3/4 x 13 in.                  Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville,                  TN, Gift of the Harmon Foundation</p>	
<p>Akinola Laşekan (1916–1972, Nigeria)  <i>Ogendengbe of Ilesha</i>                  c. 1958–59                  Oil on canvas                  Framed: 27 x 34 3/4 in.                  Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville,                  TN, Gift of the Harmon Foundation</p>	
<p>Jacob Lawrence (1917–2000, United States)  <i>War Series: Victory</i>                  1947                  Tempera on composition board                  20 1/4 x 16 3/16 in.                  The Whitney Museum of American Art, NY, Gift of                  Mr. and Mrs. Roy R. Neuberger</p>	

<p>Jean Nakadulu Luvwezo (b. 1938, The Democratic Republic of Congo)  <i>Untitled</i>                  1961                  Oil on canvas                  32 1/4 x 52 1/2 in.                  From the Estate of Robert Weldon Wright</p>	
<p>Manyolo Estelle Betty (1938–1999, Uganda)  <i>Cattle People</i>                  c. 1960                  Acrylic on canvas                  50 x 38 in.                  Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN, Gift of the Harmon Foundation</p>	
<p>Mohammed Melehi (b. 1936, Morocco; d. 2020, France)  <i>Time Square</i>                  1963                  Oil on canvas                  50 x 41 3/8 in                  Courtesy of Ramzi and Saeda Dalloul Art Foundation</p>	
<p>Thomas Mukarobgwa (1924–1999, Zimbabwe)  <i>View You See in the Middle of a Tree</i>                  1962                  Oil on board                  23 7/8 x 23 7/8 in.                  Museum of Modern Art, NY                  Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Walter Hoeschild</p>	
<p>Pilipili Mulongoy (1914–2007, The Democratic Republic of Congo)  <i>Crocodile Eating Fish</i>                  ca. 1960                  Oil on board                  18 x 23 1/2 in.                  Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN                  Gift of the Harmon Foundation</p>	

<p>Pilipili Mulongoy (1914–2007, The Democratic Republic of Congo)  <i>Snake Amid Flowers</i>  c. 1960  Acrylic on Masonite  25 3/4 x 22 1/4 x 1 3/8 in.  Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN, Gift of the Harmon Foundation</p>	
<p>Selby Mvusi (b. 1929, South Africa; d. 1967, Kenya)  <i>The Funeral</i>  1961  Charcoal on paper  20 7/16 x 21 5/8 in.  Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN, Gift of the Harmon Foundation</p>	
<p>Iba N’Diaye (b. 1928, Senegal; d. 2008, France)  <i>Blues</i>  1969  Watercolor and ink on paper  34 x 48 in.  Viscusi, Collection, New York</p>	
<p>Malangatana Ngwenya (b. 1936, Mozambique; d. 2011, Portugal)  <i>Nude with Flowers</i>  1962  Oil on canvas  37 x 23 1/8 in.  National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, Gift of Volkmar Wentzel</p>	
<p>Rekyaelimoo Njau (b. 1932, Tanzania; active Kenya)  <i>The Load and the Hoe</i>  c. 1960  Lithograph on paper  Framed: 22 1/8 x 30 1/8 x 1 in.  Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN, Gift of the Harmon Foundation</p>	

<p>D.L.K. Nnachy (c. 1910–Unknown, Nigeria)  <i>Storyboard Illustrations</i>  c. 1961  Gouache and watercolor on paper  16 x 22 in.  Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN, Gift of the Harmon Foundation</p>	
<p>Sam Joseph Ntiro (1923–1993, Tanzania)  <i>Chagga Beer Making</i>  1960  Oil on canvas  48 x 36 in.  Collection of Janet Stanley</p>	
<p>Sam Joseph Ntiro (1923–1993, Tanzania)  <i>Men Taking Banana Beer to Bride by Night</i>  1956  Oil on canvas  16 1/8 x 20 in.  Museum of Modern Art, NY, Elizabeth Bliss Parkinson Fund</p>	
<p>Demas Nwoko (b. 1935, Nigeria)  <i>Folly</i>  c. 1960  Oil on board  22 3/4 x 47 in.  Collection of Nonso Okpala, Nigeria</p>	
<p>Rufus Ogundele (1946–1996, Nigeria)  <i>The Unknown World Creator</i>  1964  Oil on canvas  Framed: 20 1/4 x 17 x 1 1/4 in.  Courtesy of Mimi Wolford</p>	
<p>Suzanna Ogunjami (c. 1885–1952, Igbo)  <i>A Nupe Princess</i>  c. 1934  Oil on canvas  Framed: 21 1/2 x 17 1/2 x 2 1/8 in.  Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN, Gift of the Harmon Foundation</p>	

<p>Simon Okeke (1937–1969, Nigeria)  <i>A Face</i>                      c. 1960s                      Watercolor, ink, and acrylic on paper                      10 7/6 x 9 5/16 in.                      Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University,                      Nashville, TN, Gift of the Harmon Foundation</p>	
<p>Uche Okeke (1933–2016, Nigeria)  <i>Ana Mmuo (Land of the Dead)</i>                      1961                      Oil on board                      36 1/4 x 48 in.                      National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian                      Institution, Washington, DC                      Gift of Joanne B. Eicher and Cynthia, Carolyn                      Ngozi, and Diana Eicher</p>	
<p>Bruce Onobrakpeya (b. 1932, Nigeria)  <i>A Fulani Milkwoman</i>                      c. 1960s                      Linocut on paper                      5 11/16 x 5 5/8 in.                      Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville,                      TN, Gift of the Harmon Foundation</p>	
<p>James A. Porter (1905–1970, United States)  <i>Street of the Market, Zaria</i>                      1964                      Oil on canvas                      16 x 26 in.                      Delaware Art Museum, DE, Acquisition Fund, 2018</p>	
<p>Gerard Sekoto (b. 1913, South Africa; d. 1993,                      France)  <i>Profile</i>                      1960                      Oil on canvas                      Framed: 26 3/4 x 19 7/8 x 2 1/8 in.                      Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University,                      Nashville, TN, Gift of the Harmon Foundation</p>	

<p>George O. Talabi (b. 1929, Nigeria)  <i>Fears behind the African Wood</i>                  1963-64                  Oil on board                  24 x 30 in.                  Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University,                  Nashville, TN, Gift of the Harmon Foundation</p>	
<p>Papa Ibra Tall (1935–2015, Senegal)  <i>Vin Noir</i>                  1964                  Oil on canvas board                  38 3/4 x 38 3/4 in.                  Private collection, London</p>	
<p>Mamo Tessema (b. 1935, Ethiopia; d. 2007, United States)  <i>Jar</i>                  c. 1960–62                  Stoneware with purple glaze                  6 3/4 x 6 1/4 x 6 1/4 in.                  Bennington Museum, VT, Gift of Gloria Gil</p>	
<p>Mamo Tessema (b. 1935, Ethiopia; d. 2007, United States)  <i>Warrior</i>                  c. 1960                  Welded metal                  40 1/2 x 15 x 15 in.                  Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN,                  Gift of the Harmon Foundation</p>	
<p>Etso Clara Ugbodaga-Ngu (1921–1996, Nigeria)  <i>Beggars</i>                  1963                  Oil on canvas                  Framed: 24 1/4 x 18 5/8 x 1 1/2 in.                  Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University,                  Nashville, TN, Gift of the Harmon Foundation</p>	

<p>Etso Clara Ugbodaga-Ngu (1921–1996, Nigeria) <i>Market Women</i> c. 1960s Oil on canvas Framed: 18 3/4 x 14 3/4 x 1 1/2 in. Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN, Gift of the Harmon Foundation</p>	
<p>Solomon Irein Wangboje (1930–1998, Nigeria) <i>Mother and Child</i> 1960s Oil on panel 48 x 36 in. Detroit Institute of Arts, MI, Gift of Catherine Carter Blackwell</p>	
<p>Viola Mariethia Wood (1949–1994, United States) <i>Feasting Bowl</i> c. 1972 Glazed stoneware 5 1/8 x 5 1/8 x 5 1/8 in. Private Collection of Nina Lovelace</p>	

**To request access to images:** please contact Lauryn Cantrell at [lcantrell@phillipscollection.org](mailto:lcantrell@phillipscollection.org).

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**WALL TEXT: *African Modernism in America: 1947-1967***

**October 7, 2023–January 7, 2024**

\*Please note that though most artists are referred to by their last names, the highlighted artists from East Africa are referred to by their first name which is their cultural preference.

This exhibition is co-organized by the American Federation of Arts and Fisk University Galleries. The exhibition is curated by Perrin Lathrop, PhD, Assistant Curator of African Art, Princeton University Art Museum, Nikoo Paydar, PhD, former Associate Curator, Fisk University Galleries, and Jamaal B. Sheats, MFA, Associate Provost of Art & Culture, Director & Curator of Galleries, Fisk University.



Major support for the exhibition is provided by Monique Schoen Warshaw. Additional support is provided by grants from the Marlene and Spencer Hays Foundation, the Mellon Foundation, and the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts. This project is supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts.



The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts

The presentation at The Phillips Collection is generously supported by Eric Richter and Charles Shoener.

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## MAIN WALL TEXT

### Introduction

In 1967, Fisk University received a transformative gift of modern African art from the Harmon Foundation, a leading American organization devoted to the support and promotion of African and African American artists. This gift marked a two-decade period during which African artists became increasingly visible to American audiences in an era of significant social and political change across Africa, the United States, and the world.

The upheavals of World War II, which emboldened global calls for decolonization, reinvigorated a commitment to Pan-Africanism as a cultural and political movement of racial solidarity among people from Africa and its diasporas. As independent African nations emerged from colonialism, artists developed new visual languages in response. Organizations and institutions like the Harmon Foundation, historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs, including Fisk in Nashville), the Museum of Modern Art, and artist Merton D. Simpson's New York gallery offered new opportunities for engagement with African modernisms. Their presentation of African artists encouraged American audiences to recognize their shared aesthetic and political concerns.

This dynamic era and Harmon Foundation gift is the backbone of *African Modernism in America: 1947-67*. The exhibition examines the complex connections between modern African artists and American patrons, artists, and cultural organizations amid the interlocking histories of civil rights, decolonization, and the Cold War, revealing a robust network of transcontinental cultural exchange.

### SECTION 1.1: ART FROM AFRICA OF OUR TIME

Alain Leroy Locke encouraged African American artists to engage with historical African art in his influential 1925 essay, "The Legacy of the Ancestral Arts," launching interest in art from the continent. Two decades later, the Harmon Foundation—an organization known for its connections with prominent African Americans, including Locke—brought visibility to *modern* African artists. Under the direction of Mary Beattie Brady and Evelyn S. Brown, the Foundation's engagement with African art began in 1947, when artists Akinola Laşekan and Justus Dojumo Akeredolu from Lagos, Nigeria, sent their work to the United States. This encounter, which coincided with more forceful calls for decolonization across Africa following the end of World War II, spurred the Foundation to spend the next two decades corresponding with artists, administrators, and organizations from across Africa and assembling information about modern African art in the independence era.

The installation in this room reimagines the 1961 Harmon Foundation exhibition, *Art from Africa of Our Time*, which was staged at the New York offices of the Phelps-Stokes Fund—an organization involved in educational policy in colonial Africa. It features works from the original show and others by artists with whom the Foundation corresponded in the early 1960s. The 1961 exhibition, which built on original research by scholar Forrester B. Washington, was the Foundation's first survey of contemporary African art from the independence era and served as the blueprint for later continent-wide contemporary African art exhibitions that toured the United States in the 1960s with the Foundation's support.

### SECTION 1.1 – OBJECTS

Demas Nwoko (b. 1935, Nigeria)  
*Folly*, 1960  
Oil on board  
Collection of Nonso Okpala, Nigeria

Demas Nwoko painted *Folly* in 1960 and exhibited the work in that year's Independence Exhibition, which commemorated Nigeria gaining independence from Great Britain. Representing two caged birds in contest as a hen looks on, *Folly* depicts a cockfight as a metaphor for social strife. Coupled with Nwoko's use of the colors of the Nigerian flag, the work serves as an allegory of the promise and uncertainty of the new nation.

Ben Enwonwu (1917–1994, Nigeria)  
*Head of Imade*, ca. 1949  
Ebony  
Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN  
Gift of the Harmon Foundation, 1991.1234

This intimate and precisely carved portrait head represents Samson Imade. Imade was a member of the *Igbesanmwan*, the royal wood and ivory carving guild of Nigeria's Benin Kingdom. He met internationally acclaimed Nigerian modernist Ben Enwonwu upon the latter's return to Nigeria from England in the late 1940s. The lifelike portrait conveys Enwonwu's growing ability to "twist the wood, stone, or bronze to obey my feelings" after his studies at London's Slade School of Fine Art. Working in ebony, a typical medium for Benin carvers, Enwonwu here employed academic realism to commemorate a Nigerian craftsman and his trade.

Suzanna Ogunjami (ca. 1885–ca. 1952; lived and worked in Jamaica, the United States, and Sierra Leone)  
*A Nupe Princess*, ca. 1934  
Oil on canvas  
Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN  
Gift of the Harmon Foundation, T-003.486

Suzanna Ogunjami likely modeled her profile portrait of an elegantly adorned Nupe woman from Nigeria on German artist Carl Arriens's ethnographic portrait of a Yoruba girl published in *The Voice of Africa* by Leo Frobenius (1913). Although the artist was probably born in Jamaica, she identified with Igbo heritage and claimed Nigerian birth. In this work, which she included in her 1934 solo exhibition at the Delphic Studios in New York City, Ogunjami's focus on a Nupe sitter, a subject inspired by her husband's Igbo and Nupe parentage, engages the complexity of diasporic identity and memory.

Grace Salome Kwami (1923–2006, Ghana)  
*A Girl in Red* (Portrait of Gladys Ankora, Achimota), ca. 1954  
Oil on linen canvas  
Courtesy of Atta and Pamela Kwami

As the first woman to study at the Kumasi College of Technology, Science and Arts, Grace Salome Kwami, known as Da Grace, persevered against gender bias to maintain a diverse artistic practice that included painting, sculpture, textile design, and ceramics, as well as a career in museums and art education in Ghana. In this portrait of Gladys Ankora, who was employed as a domestic worker in the

home of Kwami's brother-in-law, she honors the sitter through a dignified pose, expression, and dress. As the Harmon Foundation prepared for their 1961 survey exhibition, they corresponded with Kwami about her artistic practice.



Grace Salome Kwami working in her studio, ca. 1960.

Grace Kwami. Harmon Foundation Artworks by African Artists, 1947–1967, 200S-HN-AA 6P-3. National Archives, College Park, MD.

Gerard Sekoto (1913–1993, South Africa)

*Profile*, 1960

Oil on canvas

Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN

Gift of the Harmon Foundation, 1991.221

Gerard Sekoto painted *Profile* as part of his *Blue Head* series (1960-65) in Paris, where he had relocated from Apartheid-era South Africa in 1947. He sent *Profile* and other works to the Harmon Foundation in New York in 1961 with the hope of staging an exhibition at the Merton D. Simpson Gallery. In Paris, Sekoto became involved with Negritude, a political and philosophical movement that affirmed the value of Black civilization to counter and refuse its denigration by colonial powers. Sekoto joined a community of international artists, including Skunder Boghossian, Ben Enwonwu, Ernest Mancoba, and Palmer Hayden, who inspired him with their “search for a universal language to express their personalities.”



Skunder Boghossian (left) and Gerard Sekoto (right) in a Parisian café, ca. 1965. Iziko Museums of South Africa. Copyright the Gerard Sekoto Foundation.

**Skunder Boghossian, (b. 1937, Ethiopia; d. 2003, United States)**

*Three Faces*, ca. 1960

Oil on canvas

Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN

Gift of the Harmon Foundation, 1991.2216

In 1957, Skunder Boghossian traveled from his hometown of Addis Ababa to London and later Paris to study art with a scholarship from Emperor Haile Selassie I. In Paris, he became affiliated with the Ethiopian embassy. The paintings he sent to the Harmon Foundation in the early 1960s display his commitment to creating a distinctly Ethiopian art that drew on indigenous motifs. *Three Faces*, for example, features the elongated and angular figuration often found in Ethiopian Orthodox manuscripts. A few years later, Skunder turned to Surrealist strategies and pan-African forms.

Yusuf Grillo (1934–2021, Nigeria)  
*Untitled (Yoruba Woman)*, ca. 1960s  
Oil on canvas  
Courtesy of Mimi Wolford

In his untitled canvas, Yusuf Grillo used his typical stylized figuration and angular planes of color to represent an elegant Yoruba woman in dazzlingly vibrant cobalt blue. Grillo explored volumetric form in his almost architectural compositions, revealing his longstanding interest in mathematics and the art of the early European avant-garde, notably Pablo Picasso and Amedeo Modigliani. Grillo corresponded with the Harmon Foundation in the early 1960s, sending *Yoruba Bride*, a painting stylistically similar to this example, to New York.

Afi Ekong (1930–2009, Nigeria)  
*Olumo Rock*, 1960  
Oil on canvas  
Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN  
Gift of the Harmon Foundation, 1991.1075

*Olumo Rock* represents the famed mountain in Abeokuta, Nigeria, that protected residents from attacks during the 19th-century Yoruba Civil Wars. Though the wars ended with the onslaught of British colonialism, their battles and heroes hold an important place in the Nigerian national consciousness. Afi Ekong, one of Nigeria's first gallerists and a leading arts patron, was also a painter herself. She marked Nigeria's independence in 1960 with a painting that recalls the nation's precolonial history. Her expressionistic brushwork and disorienting composition defies a straightforward reading of the work and thus questions the stability of national symbols.

Funds for the conservation of *Olumo Rock* were generously provided through a grant from the Bank of America Art Conservation Project.

Akinola Laşekan (1916–1972, Nigeria)  
*Ogedengbe of Ilesha*, ca. 1958–59  
Oil on canvas  
Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN  
Gift of the Harmon Foundation, 1991.1121

Akinola Laşekan was one of Nigeria's foremost visual historians and among the first generation of African modernists. In *Ogedengbe of Ilesha*, he mythologizes a famed warrior of the 19th-century Yoruba Civil Wars. While the European avant-garde rejected academic realism, African artists like Laşekan associated that visual language with modernity. In his embrace of realism, Laşekan deliberately refuted racist colonialist claims that Africans were incapable of academic artistic

achievement and here provided an epic history painting for Nigeria at the cusp of independence. He sent the painting to the United States for exhibition in order to inscribe the story of a historic Nigerian hero into the annals of global history in a universally recognized visual language.

Funds for the conservation of *Ogedengbe of Ilesha* were generously provided through a grant from the Bank of America Art Conservation Project.

Miranda Burney-Nicol (known as Olayinka) (1927–1996, Sierra Leone)

*The Conquering Hero*, 1972

Incised Muslim prayer board

Collection of the Newark Museum of Art.

The Simon Ottenberg Collection, Gift to the Newark Museum of Art, 2020, 2020.4.4

“My actual growing up as well as my consciousness of being Black took place in New York. If I am an artist today, it is because of my going to America.”

After living in New York, London, and Paris in the 1950s, Olayinka maintained correspondence with an international creative network that included the Harmon Foundation, Skunder Boghossian, and other pan-African luminaries when she returned to Freetown in the early 1960s. There she continued to make work that responded to Western and African artistic traditions. The horse and rider motif incised into the Quranic writing-board support of *The Conquering Hero* sees the artist deconstructing symbols of power represented by both the culturally ubiquitous equestrian figure and the access to language through Islam.

**Mamo Tessema (1935–2007, Ethiopia)**

*Warrior*, ca. 1960

Welded metal

Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN

Gift of the Harmon Foundation, 1991.1239

Recognized for his talent in ceramics while a student at the Handicraft School in Addis Ababa in the 1950s, Mamo Tessema secured funding from Emperor Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia to enroll in the New York State School of Ceramics at Alfred University in 1958. There he earned BFA and MFA degrees and experimented with the sculptural and expressive potential of ceramics and metalwork. In *Warrior*, Mamo abstractly represents an Ethiopian patriot with his traditional conical shield in the famed 19th-century Battle of Adwa against the Italians. The subject resonated as both a national and a pan-African symbol of colonial resistance.

**Manyolo Estella Betty (1938–1999, Uganda)**

*Cattle People*, ca. 1961

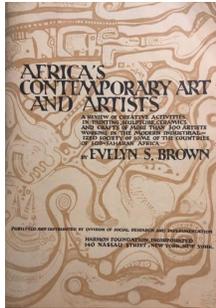
Acrylic on canvas

Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN

Gift of the Harmon Foundation, 1991.1039

In *Cattle People*, Makerere University graduate Manyolo Estella Betty depicts a young Muhima couple in a verdant landscape. The Ankole longhorn cattle between them symbolize both the livelihood and identity of the nomadic Bahima of Western Uganda, and possibly the property authorizing a marriage between the two figures.





## SECTION 1.2 TEXT PANEL: Creating Spaces for African Art

In 1950, the Harmon Foundation and Howard University collaborated on an exhibition of the work of Ben Enwonwu, who became one of the first African artists to hold a solo exhibition in the United States. The project defied the preferences of the American arts establishment, where curators such as MoMA's Rene d'Harnoncourt dismissed the idea of an exhibition of the Nigerian modernist's work at his museum. In response to such rejection from major museums, the Harmon Foundation focused on partnerships with historically Black universities like Fisk, Howard, Hampton, Clark Atlanta, and Morgan State, which had a history of supporting African arts, as well as with organizations such as public libraries that supported Black communities.

The year 1960 marked a positive shift in American enthusiasm for African modernism, as 17 African nations gained their independence from colonialism. The efforts of the Harmon Foundation, HBCUs, and other organizations with exhibitions like *Art from Africa of Our Time* were met with increased attention from institutions like MoMA and from private collectors. Trailblazing African American art dealer and Abstract Expressionist artist Merton D. Simpson founded his New York gallery to generate interest in both the historical and contemporary arts of Africa. The works in this room highlight the impact of these influential private, public, and commercial spaces on the increased visibility of African artists in America.

## SECTION 1.2 OBJECTS

\*\*One label for *Oba Akenzua II*, 1949, and *The Ghosts of Tradition*, 1949 by Ben Enwonwu

Ben Enwonwu (1917–1994, Nigeria)

*Oba Akenzua II*, 1949

Oil on canvas

Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN

Gift of the Harmon Foundation, 1991.1064

*The Ghosts of Tradition*, 1949

Oil on canvas

Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN

Gift of the Harmon Foundation, 1991.1046

Enwonwu exhibited *Oba Akenzua II* and *The Ghosts of Tradition* in his solo installation at Howard University in October 1950. The works use the visual strategies of modern painting to question the role of tradition in the social, political, and spiritual life of decolonizing Nigeria. Although the arts establishment first resisted his and other African modernists' work, Enwonwu found a receptive

audience among Black communities, including Alonzo J. Aden, director of the Barnett Aden Gallery, and Emmanuel Ledan, a Haitian representative to the Pan-American Union.

Funds for the conservation of *Oba Akenzua II* were generously provided through a grant from the Bank of America Art Conservation Project.



"Sculpture, Painting by Nigerian Artist Shown in D.C.," *The Washington Afro-American*, October 24, 1950, n.p. Located in Ben Enwonwu File, Box 87, Records of the Harmon Foundation, Inc., Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

Ibrahim El-Salahi (b. 1930, Sudan; lives and works in the United Kingdom)

*Image #6*, 1962

Oil on canvas

Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN

Gift of the Harmon Foundation, 1991.2112

Guyanese painter and art historian Denis Williams wrote that Ibrahim El-Salahi's paintings from the early 1960s reconcile contradictory worldviews through line that "appears, disappears, reveals an image, fragmentary and of terrific power, then wanders off into the shadow." In these works, El-Salahi manipulated and combined Arabic calligraphic forms to create his illusory subjects—here, a skeletal figure caught in a surreal swirl of animal and vegetal forms and patterns.

Funds for the conservation of *Image #6* were generously provided through a grant from the Bank of America Art Conservation Project.



This photograph suggests that El-Salahi painted *Image #6* while living in New York in 1962 with the support of a UNESCO travel grant. The next year, the work was probably exhibited at the Middle East House, a space run by the American Friends of the Middle East—an organization based in New York later revealed to have received covert funding from the CIA—and at Morgan State University in Baltimore in an exhibition organized by the Harmon Foundation.

Ibrahim El-Salahi. Harmon Foundation Artworks by African Artists, 1947–1967, 200S-HN-AA 10E-29. National Archives, College Park, MD.

Skunder Boghossian (b. 1937, Ethiopia; d. 2003, United States)

*Bird Icon*, 1964

Oil on canvas

Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN

Gift of the Harmon Foundation, 1991.1114

In *Bird Icon*, Skunder drew upon pan-African visual languages to give form to both visible and invisible realities. Here, a winged zoomorphic figure breaches the barrier between the canvas's upper and lower registers, reflecting the artist's formal and conceptual study of West African cosmologies in which the physical and metaphysical worlds are intimately connected. Skunder exhibited this work in 1965 in a solo exhibition at Merton Simpson's gallery in New York (by then renamed Merton D. Simpson-Primitive & Modern Arts), having first met Simpson in Paris, where he likely painted this work.

Funds for the conservation of *Bird Icon* were generously provided through a grant from the Bank of America Art Conservation Project.

Skunder Boghossian (b. 1937, Ethiopia; d. 2003, United States)

*Cave Bird and the Lantern*, 1964

Oil on paper

Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN

Gift of the Harmon Foundation, 1991.1036

Skunder developed a philosophy of "Afro-metaphysics," which drew on the power of religion and myth. Works like *Cave Bird*, perhaps a reference to Plato's cave, demonstrate his continued attention to "the magical reality of Africa," subjecting the varied artistic, philosophical, and religious traditions he had studied to new pictorial relationships that were also informed by Surrealism.

\*\*One label for *Chagga Beer Making*, 1957 and *Men Taking Banana Beer to Bride by Night*, 1956 by Sam Joseph Ntiro

Sam Joseph Ntiro (1923–1993, Tanzania)

*Chagga Beer Making*, 1957

Oil on canvas

Collection of Janet Stanley

*Men Taking Banana Beer to Bride by Night*, 1956

Oil on canvas

Museum of Modern Art, New York

Elizabeth Bliss Parkinson Fund, 122.1960

Art dealer Merton D. Simpson acquired *Chagga Beer Making*, a cartoon for one of the murals Sam Joseph Ntiro painted at Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda, directly from the artist. The visually dense vignettes illustrate aspects of life in Kilimanjaro, where Ntiro grew up. When Ntiro traveled to the United States in 1960, the Harmon Foundation helped organize popular exhibitions of his work at the American Society of African Culture and at Simpson's Madison Avenue gallery. These presentations

attracted the attention of the Museum of Modern Art, which purchased *Men Taking Banana Beer to Bride by Night* (1956) through the Harmon Foundation, making it MoMA's first acquisition of modern African art.



Sam Joseph Ntiro (foreground) at the opening of his solo exhibition at the Merton D. Simpson Gallery, May 1960.

Samuel Ntiro File, Box 93, Harmon Foundation, Inc., Records (1913–1967), Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

Thomas Mukarobgwa (1924–1999, Zimbabwe)  
*View You See in the Middle of a Tree*, 1962  
Oil on board  
Museum of Modern Art, New York  
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Walter Hochschild, 332.1963

In 1962, founding MoMA director Alfred H. Barr Jr. traveled to Salisbury, Rhodesia (now Harare, Zimbabwe), to attend the First International Congress of African Culture. During his visit, Barr encountered artist Thomas Mukarobgwa through Frank McEwen, director of the National Gallery in Salisbury. Though McEwen attempted to shape the narrative around Mukarobgwa's work for an international audience, the artist used color, abstraction, expressive brushwork, and poetic titles to resist imposed interpretations of his paintings.

Ibrahim El-Salahi (b. 1930, Sudan; lives and works in the United Kingdom)  
*Vision of the Tomb*, 1965  
Oil on canvas  
The Africa Center, New York

Ibrahim El-Salahi likely painted *Vision of the Tomb* in New York while residing in the city as a Rockefeller Fellow. In 1967, Museum of Modern Art curator Dorothy Miller recommended that David Rockefeller purchase it for the Chase Manhattan Bank art collection. The work demonstrates El-Salahi's pioneering development of calligraphic modernism as a powerful postcolonial visual language. He draws upon an expansive visual vocabulary informed by his upbringing in Sudan and his time spent in Mexico, Peru, Brazil, the United States, London, and Paris in the early 1960s.

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## SECTION 2 MODERNISM WITHIN AFRICA

In the independence era, numerous galleries, literary journals, art education programs, and artist societies were founded across Africa. Continent-wide postcolonial cultural networks fostered the

development of these new, forward-thinking spaces for African modernism. Such ventures, like the Art Society at the Nigerian College of Arts, Science and Technology, Zaria, helped transform art education established under colonialism. Venues like Paa ya Paa Gallery and Chemchemi Cultural Centre in Kenya, the Nommo Gallery in Uganda, and the Mbari Artists and Writers Club, as well as artist Afi Ekong's Gallery Labac in Nigeria, all supported a new generation of artists after independence. Beginning in 1961, Mbari, for example, published literature and hosted exhibitions, arts workshops, concerts, and performances. The artists and writers who founded these art spaces and workshops developed relationships across the continent and with other Cold War-era cultural organizations, bringing together an international group of collaborators.

In the 1960s, a series of cultural festivals and meetings were hosted in present-day Zimbabwe, Senegal, and Algeria. These events fostered resurgent Pan-Africanism, convening creative and diplomatic leaders in the literary, performing, and visual arts from across the Black diaspora. The First World Festival of Negro Arts, held in Dakar in 1966, tested the boundaries of the Negritude ideals articulated by its organizer, President Léopold Sédar Senghor of Senegal, by bringing together Black diasporic citizens as representatives of their respective nations. Although these transnational celebrations were driven by political and financial motivations, they offered important opportunities for artists to gather and share ideas.

## SECTION 2 OBJECTS

\*\*One label for *Snake Amid Flowers*, ca. 1960, and *Crocodile Eating Fish*, ca. 1960 by Pilipili Mulongoy

Pilipili Mulongoy (1914–2007, Democratic Republic of the Congo)

*Snake Amid Flowers*, ca. 1960

Acrylic on Masonite board

Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN

Gift of the Harmon Foundation, T-003.568

*Crocodile Eating Fish*, ca. 1960

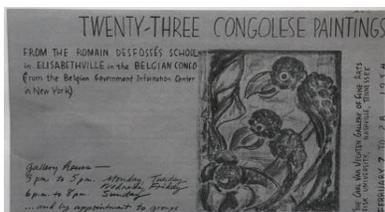
Oil on board

Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN

Gift of the Harmon Foundation, 1991.2115

In *Snake Amid Flowers*, Pilipili Mulongoy merges the seductive with the sinister as a snake conceals itself within a bold and colorful flowerbed. His dynamic decorative scenes earned Mulongoy recognition as one of the most celebrated students of painter and patron Pierre-Romain Desfossés in colonial Belgian Congo (present-day Democratic Republic of the Congo). Mulongoy exhibited his work with other Desfossés students at Fisk University in 1954.

Funds for the conservation of *Snake Amid Flowers* were generously provided through a grant from the Bank of America Art Conservation Project.



*Twenty-Three Congolese Paintings*, Carl Van Vechten Gallery, Fisk University, February 7–24, 1954. Fisk University, John Hope and Aurelia E. Franklin Library, Special Collections, Charles S. Johnson Papers, Box 44, Folder 9.

\*\*One label for *Untitled*, ca. 1960, and *Untitled*, ca. 1960 by René Bokoko

René Bokoko (b. 1927, Republic of the Congo)

*Untitled*, ca. 1960

Gouache on cardboard

Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN

Gift of the Harmon Foundation, T-003.124

*Untitled*, ca. 1960

Gouache on cardboard

Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN

Gift of the Harmon Foundation, T-003.93

René Bokoko studied with Frenchmen Pierre Lods at the Poto-Poto School of Painting in Congo-Brazzaville in the 1950s before relocating to Paris in 1960 to pursue a career as an artist. Though Bokoko repeated Lods's controversial preservationist approach to African artistic creativity, insisting on the need to protect African authenticity from colonial influence, he also fashioned himself as a modern artist in photographic portraits. He populated his forest and village scenes with archetypal villagers or ancestors in his signature skeletal figural style.



René Bokoko with his paintings, May 29, 1958.

René Bokoko. Harmon Foundation Artworks by African Artists, 1947–1967, 2005-HN-AA 3A-14. National Archives, College Park, MD.

D.L.K. Nnachy (ca. 1910–?, Nigeria)

*Seven illustrations*, ca. 1961

Gouache and watercolor on paper

Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN  
Gift of the Harmon Foundation, 1991.567

D.L.K. Nnachy began his art career in the mid-1930s when Kenneth C. Murray, the influential British colonial art education officer in Nigeria, took him on as a student alongside Ben Enwonwu and others. Nnachy's simple, flat compositions depict Igbo folk tales, games, and ceremonies and reflect the parameters imposed by his teacher's experimental pedagogy. Murray, for example, withheld access to technical skills and analytical tools of expression such as perspective. He sought instead to preserve his students' so-called "innate" ability and encouraged them to illustrate subjects he perceived as "African," especially pastoral village scenes, as reflected in these vignettes of Ohafia, Nnachy's hometown in Eastern Nigeria. Nnachy maintained his artistic ambition after his studies with Murray ended, keeping a studio in Ohafia where he continued to paint, draw, carve, practice photography, and teach art.

\*\*One label for *Beggars*, 1963, and *Market Women*, ca. 1960s by Etso Clara Ugbodaga-Ngu

Etso Clara Ugbodaga-Ngu (1921–1996, Nigeria)  
*Beggars*, 1963  
Oil on canvas  
Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN  
Gift of the Harmon Foundation, 1991.115

*Market Women*, ca. 1960s  
Oil on canvas  
Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN  
Gift of the Harmon Foundation, 1991.1048

With its rich textural surfaces and figural abstraction, *Beggars* reflects Etso Clara Ugbodaga-Ngu's study of West African sculpture. A pioneering Nigerian modernist who traveled and exhibited in Africa, the United States, and Europe, Ugbodaga-Ngu painted *Beggars* during a year spent in Boston where she held a solo exhibition at Radcliffe College. After studies in London, Ugbodaga-Ngu joined the faculty at the influential Nigerian College of Arts, Science and Technology, Zaria, in 1955. She was one of the only Nigerian professors of fine art among a staff of British colonials when students formed the now-famed Art Society in 1958.

Funds for the conservation of *Beggars* were generously provided through a grant from the Bank of America Art Conservation Project.

\*\*One label for *A Face*, ca. 1960s by Simon Okeke, and *A Fulani Milkwoman*, ca. 1960s by Bruce Onobrakpeya

Simon Okeke (1937–1969, Nigeria)  
*A Face*, ca. 1960s  
Watercolor, ink, and acrylic on paper  
Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN  
Gift of the Harmon Foundation, 1991.334

Bruce Onobrakpeya (b. 1932, Nigeria)  
*A Fulani Milkwoman*, ca. 1960s

Linocut on paper  
Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN  
Gift of the Harmon Foundation, 1991.568

Simon Okeke served as the first president of the Art Society at the Nigerian College of Arts, Science and Technology, Zaria, alongside fellow member and student Bruce Onobrakpeya. The Society formed to counter the Eurocentric fine arts program at the college through intensive study of indigenous creative traditions. In its work, the group supported natural synthesis, a philosophy that encouraged the combination of Nigerian forms with select European ones. In *A Face*, Okeke perhaps reflected on archaeological objects found at Igbo-Ukwu in southeastern Nigeria, while Onobrakpeya found inspiration for *A Fulani Milkwoman* in Fulani dress and Hausa architecture in northern Nigeria.

Jimo Akolo (1934–2023, Nigeria)  
*Dancing Figure*, ca. 1960s  
Etching on paper  
Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN  
Gift of the Harmon Foundation, 1991.727

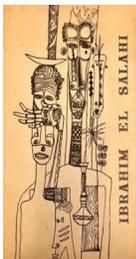
Though enrolled at the Nigerian College of Arts, Science and Technology, Zaria, alongside members of the Art Society, Akolo never officially joined the group; instead, he preferred to maintain his creative individuality. While a fine arts student, Akolo investigated the rich visual environment of northern Nigeria. *Dancing Figure* reflects his preoccupation at the time with the geometric patterns of the Islamic-inspired architecture built by Hausa communities in the region.

## SECTION 2 VITRINE OBJECTS WITH LABEL

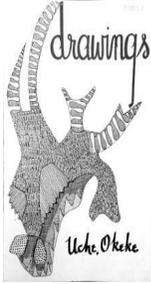
Select Mbari Publications  
Private Collection

German scholar and literary critic Ulli Beier co-founded the Mbari Artists and Writers Club in Ibadan, Nigeria, along with writers and artists Wole Soyinka, Es'kia Mphahlele, Uche Okeke, Demas Nwoko, and others. In addition to a gallery, café, and theater, Mbari maintained a publishing house that produced the literary journal *Black Orpheus* and short-form works by writers Christopher Okigbo, John Pepper Clark, Léon-Gontran Damas, Wole Soyinka, and others. These publications often included illustrations by artists like Demas Nwoko, Denis Williams, Georgina Beier, and Susanne Wenger. Mbari also published a series of artist's books that included examples by Uche Okeke and Ibrahim El-Salahi. In the 1960s, Mbari became a critical site for a transnational group of African modernists.

Ibrahim El-Salahi, *Drawings* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Mbari Publications, 1962).



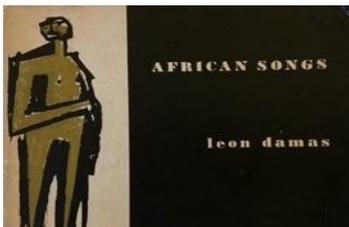
Uche Okeke, *Drawings* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Mbari Publications, 1961).



Wole Soyinka, *Three Plays* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Mbari Publications, 1963). Design and illustration by Denis Williams.



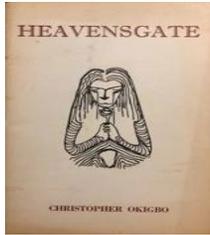
Léon Damas, *African Songs* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Mbari, 1961). Design and illustration by Georgina Betts.



John Pepper Clark, *Song of a Goat* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Mbari, 1961). Cover by Susanne Wenger.



Christopher Okigbo, *Heavensgate* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Mbari Publications, 1962). With drawings by Demas Nwoko.



Uche Okeke (1933–2016, Nigeria)

*Ana Mmuo (Land of the Dead)*, 1961

Oil on board

National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC

Gift of Joanne B. Eicher and Cynthia, Carolyn Ngozi, and Diana Eicher, 97-3-1

Uche Okeke and Demas Nwoko, both members of the influential Art Society at the Nigerian College of Arts, Science and Technology, Zaria, showed their paintings *Folly* and *Ana Mmuo* in a joint exhibition to inaugurate the gallery at the Mbari Artists and Writers Club in Ibadan, Nigeria, in 1961. *Ana Mmuo* embodies Okeke and the Art Society's aesthetic theory of natural synthesis. It demonstrates the artist's early experiments with *uli*—an Igbo female body and wall painting tradition from southeastern Nigeria based on sinuous abstract forms derived from nature—to represent aspects of Nigerian culture, here forming abstracted versions of the masquerades performed at funerals.



Interior courtyard of the Mbari Artists and Writers Club, Ibadan, with murals by Uche Okeke, ca. 1961. ©Ulli Beier Photographic Estate. Centre for Black Culture and International Understanding, Oşogbo, Nigeria, and Iwalewahaus, University of Bayreuth, Germany.

**Malangatana Ngwenya (1936–2011, Mozambique)**

*Nude with Flowers*, 1962

Oil on canvas

National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC

Gift of Volkmar Wentzel, 80-8-7

Malangatana Ngwenya is known for his powerful, darkly surreal scenes of the trauma of daily life in decolonizing Mozambique. *Nude with Flowers* is replete with complex symbolism drawn from the artist's Catholic upbringing. The Harmon Foundation learned of Malangatana's art through the Nigeria-based patron Ulli Beier, who featured the artist's work in exhibitions at the Mbari Artists and Writers Club in Ibadan, Nigeria, and in the journal *Black Orpheus*. His and other Mbari artists' work was also supported by American collectors Jean Kennedy and Richard Wolford, who lived in Nigeria in the 1960s. Their patronage furthered the artists' connection to international audiences.

Jacob Lawrence (1917–2000, United States)

*War Series: Victory, 1947*  
Tempera on composition board  
The Whitney Museum of American Art  
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Roy R. Neuberger, 51.19

Lawrence first traveled to Nigeria in 1962 to exhibit selections from his *Migration* and *War* series at the Mbari Artists and Writers Club in Ibadan and the American Society of African Culture headquarters in Lagos. *Victory* reveals the artist's exploration of the racial segregation he experienced while serving in the Coast Guard during World War II. By focusing on the physical and emotional tolls of war on a single recruit, Lawrence suggests a sense of estrangement that resonated with Nigerian audiences who, as colonial subjects, were asked to fight in wars for nations that did not honor or even fully acknowledge their humanity.



In the Nigerian press, artist and critic Okpu Eze focused on *Victory's* universality in its coverage of Lawrence's 1962 exhibitions, reproducing the painting alongside a text highlighting the pan-African connections to Black emancipation.

Okpu Eze, "The Crying Voice of Lawrence," *Nigerian Morning Post*, October 16, 1962.

Located in Mbari Club File, Box 102, Records of the Harmon Foundation, Inc., Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

\*\*One label for *Contentment*, ca. 1964 and *A Masquerader and His Power (Witchbird)*, ca. 1964 by Jacob Afolabi, and *The Unknown World Creator*, 1964 by Rufus Ogundele

Jacob Afolabi (ca. 1944–2004, Nigeria)  
*Contentment*, ca. 1964  
Linocut on paper  
Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN  
Gift of the Harmon Foundation, 1991.765

Jacob Afolabi (ca. 1944–2004, Nigeria)  
*A Masquerader and His Power (Witchbird)*, ca. 1964  
Linocut on paper  
Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN  
Gift of the Harmon Foundation, 1991.321

Rufus Ogundele (1946–1996, Nigeria)  
*The Unknown World Creator*, 1964

Oil on board  
Courtesy of Mimi Wolford

Jacob Afolabi and Rufus Ogundele participated in the arts workshops run by British artist Georgina Beier at Mbari Mbayo in Oşogbo, Nigeria, an offshoot of the Mbari Artists and Writers Club in Ibadan. Their compositions reflect Yoruba cosmologies and storytelling practices that merge the physical and spiritual worlds. In Ogundele's *World Creator*, an orange biomorphic form seems to devour two animals—possibly a pink goat and a red dog, two common offerings to *orişas*, or Yoruba gods.

**Rekyaelimoo Njau (b. 1932, Tanzania)**

*The Load and the Hoe*, ca. 1956

Lithograph on paper

Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN

Gift of the Harmon Foundation, 1991.910

Rekyaelimoo Njau founded the Chemchemi Art Gallery and the Paa ya Paa Cultural Centre, interdisciplinary spaces in East Africa where he collaborated with a new creative generation to counter the colonial control of the art world. In the early 1960s, the artist also established connections with Americans, including Fisk University librarian Arna Bontemps, and sent his work *The Load and the Hoe* to the Harmon Foundation for exhibition. Rekyaelimoo created the lithograph in Murang'a, Kenya, in 1956 to honor the strength of Kikuyu women in villages unsettled by the Mau Mau uprising (1952–60).



Paa ya Paa Gallery (Nairobi, Kenya), *Cultural Events in East Afrika*, vol. 2, no. 2 (June 1971).  
Florine Stettheimer Library, Fisk University Galleries, Nashville, TN



Paa ya Paa Gallery (Nairobi, Kenya), *Cultural Events in East Afrika*, vol. 3, no. 1 (December 1971). Florine Stettheimer Library, Fisk University Galleries, Nashville, TN

Iba N'Diaye (b. 1928, Senegal; d. 2008, France)

*Blues*, 1969

Watercolor and ink on paper

Viscusi Collection, New York

Known for frequenting the music clubs of Paris while an art student in the 1940s and 50s, Iba N’Diaye was enthralled by the possibilities of jazz as an international language. He briefly returned to Senegal to found the Department of Plastic Arts at the Ecole Nationale de Beaux-Arts in Dakar at the request of President Léopold Sédar Senghor, but relocated permanently to France in 1967. The artist traveled to New York in the late 1960s with support from the United States State Department, where he visited jazz clubs in Harlem. These experiences helped inspire drawings like this example, which uses an impressionistic and rhythmic style to capture two musicians in action.

Papa Ibra Tall (1935–2015, Senegal)

*Vin Noir*, 1964

Oil on canvas board

Private Collection, London

With its integration of sinuous linear design and the human form, this work exemplifies Ecole de Dakar artist Papa Ibra Tall’s painterly style of the early post-independence period. The title—*Vin Noir*—likely refers to a 1945 poem by Senegalese president Léopold Sédar Senghor, “Femme Noire,” in which he refers to the beauty of the Black woman as “black wine.” Senghor, who had also founded the Negritude movement, was an important patron of Tall. This work was included in the 1966 exhibition *Tendances et Confrontations* during the First World Festival of Negro Arts—Senghor’s landmark cultural festival held in Dakar.

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### SECTION 3: MODERNISM BETWEEN AFRICA AND AMERICA

Throughout the 20th century, Black diasporic artists used their art to conceive an imagined Africa. The jet age and shifting global politics in the postwar era increasingly enabled pan-African artists to share the same physical space. Meaningful connections between African and African American artists in the United States and in Africa were established through transatlantic artistic exchange and cultural diplomacy.

In the 1960s, after many African nations had gained independence, American organizations like the Ford Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, the American Society of African Culture (AMSAC), and the Congress for Cultural Freedom began to support the work of African artists internationally. Ibrahim El-Salahi, Skunder Boghossian, Sam Joseph Ntiro, Mohammed Melehi, and other African artists all traveled to the United States with the American sponsorship that increased in the Cold War era.

As artists responded to pan-African independence and civil rights movements, exhibitions of contemporary African art in the United States became instrumental in encouraging African American artists to deepen their links to the African continent. African American artists, writers, and musicians traveled to Africa in the late 1950s and 1960s and created work in response to the places and people they encountered.

### SECTION 3 OBJECTS

William H. Johnson (1901–1970, United States)

*Mosques on a Hill (Tunis)*, 1932

Woodcut on paper

Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN, 1991.2087

William H. Johnson studied art in New York and Paris, and with his wife, Danish artist Holcha Krake, lived throughout Europe. In 1932, the couple traveled to Kairouan, Tunisia. In so doing, Johnson became one of the first African American artists to travel to Africa. During his three-month stay, he studied local arts traditions and created watercolors and prints inspired by the architecture and environment he observed. *Mosques on a Hill* incorporates the bold lines and straightforward compositions he employed throughout his career.

Aaron Douglas (1899–1979, United States)

*Lagos, Nigeria*, 1956

Watercolor on paper

Collection of Steven L. Jones, Philadelphia and Chicago

Chair of the Fisk University Art Department from 1944 to 1966, Aaron Douglas traveled to West Africa in the summer of 1956. That fall, he returned to Fisk and exhibited the watercolors he had sketched of Dakar, Accra, and Lagos. In this scene, Douglas documented the vibrant street life and distinct Afro-Brazilian architecture of Lagos Island, the center of the cosmopolitan Nigerian coastal city.

\*\*One label for *A Street in Kano*, 1947, and *Market Day*, 1947 by Akinola Laşekan

Akinola Laşekan (1916–1972, Nigeria)

*A Street in Kano*, 1947

Watercolor on paper

Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN

Gift of the Harmon Foundation, 1991.1068

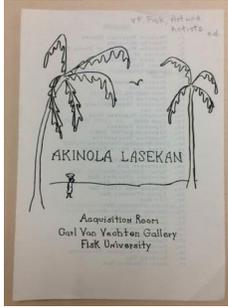
*Market Day*, 1947

Watercolor on paper

Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN

Gift of the Harmon Foundation, 1991.1067

In early 1959, Aaron Douglas viewed Nigerian artist Akinola Laşekan's scenes of Nigerian life at the Market Place Gallery in New York. Douglas chose a sampling of Laşekan's paintings for Fisk University's annual Festival of Arts in April of that year, including watercolor ethnographic portraits, line drawings, and watercolor sketches of village scenes. He included these compositions, which feature an exchange between two women at a market and the geometric patterning of Hausa architecture found in northern Nigeria. Local press coverage of Fisk's Laşekan exhibition emphasized his works' "indigenous beauty" and the preservation of a culture "seemingly unaffected by new boundaries."



Douglas gave a lecture about Laşekan's work and possibly supplied a line drawing inspired by the exhibition for the cover of the exhibition pamphlet.

*Paintings, Drawings and Pastels by Akinola Laşekan*, Carl Van Vechten Gallery, Fisk University, April 23–May 7, 1959.

Exhibition Pamphlet, Fisk University, John Hope and Aurelia E. Franklin Library, Special Collections, Fiskiana Collection, Carl Van Vechten Gallery of Fine Arts Programs/Openings 1948–1955, Folder 1.

Justus Dojumo Akeredolu (1915–1984, Nigeria)

Chess set, ca. 1950s

Thorn carving

Private Collection

In 1947, Justus Dojumo Akeredolu and his colleague Akinola Laşekan met the African American journalist and art patron Claude Barnett in Lagos. With Barnett's encouragement, the two artists sent examples of their work and information about their careers to the Harmon Foundation, which showed their art in exhibitions as early as 1948. In addition to his realistic figural sculptures, Akeredolu also used his carving skills to create functional chess sets that were advertised in newspapers like the *Philadelphia Inquirer* in the early 1960s, reflecting his popularity with an American audience.

Elton C. Fax (1909–1993, United States)

*Mother and Child, Ikeja, Nigeria*, 1963

Crayon and ink on paper

Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN, 1991.486

With the support of the American Society of African Culture, Elton C. Fax traveled to West Africa in 1959 and returned to Nigeria in 1963 with American jazz musician Randy Weston. A prolific illustrator, Fax honored important African Americans in his "They'll Never Die" illustrated column in the *New York Amsterdam News*, a popular Black newspaper. In works like this crayon and ink drawing, Fax employed his skill as a draftsman to document and dignify the people he encountered during his travels to Africa, where he gave speeches about the struggle for civil rights in the United States.

John Biggers (1924–2001, United States)

*Kumasi Market*, 1962

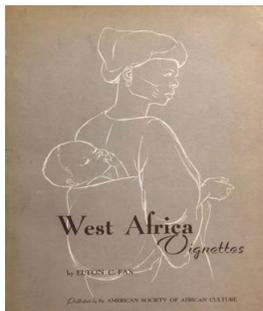
Oil and acrylic on Masonite board

Collection of William O. Perkins III

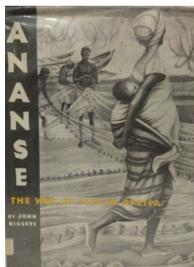
*Kumasi Market*, a remarkable panoramic painting once owned by writer Maya Angelou, reflects the confusion and dynamism of the marketplace that American artist John Biggers observed during his first trip to West Africa in 1957. Biggers traveled throughout Ghana, Benin Republic, Nigeria, and Togo with a UNESCO grant to study West African life and cultural and artistic traditions. That same year, Ghana gained its independence from Great Britain. Biggers reproduced his meticulously drawn studies from his travels in his 1962 volume *Ananse: The Web of Life in Africa*, and these form the basis of the vignettes that he later collaged together for this energetic painting.

### SECTION 3 VITRINE OBJECTS WITH LABEL

Elton C. Fax, *West Africa Vignettes* (New York: American Society of African Culture, 1960).  
Private Collection



John Biggers, *Ananse: The Web of Life in Africa* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1962).  
Private Collection



Observations of African life, culture, and design entered the visual vocabularies of Elton C. Fax and John Biggers during their travels in West Africa, as evidenced in the publication of *West Africa Vignettes* (Fax, 1960) and *Ananse: The Web of Life in Africa* (Biggers, 1962).

James A. Porter (1905–1970, United States)  
*Street of the Market, Zaria*, 1964  
Oil on canvas  
Delaware Art Museum  
Acquisition Fund, 2018

*Street of the Market, Zaria* is one of 25 works Porter painted during his 1963–64 trip to Africa. By this time, he was already a key figure in the study of African and African American art in the United States. He supported African artists from his leadership position at Howard University and spent over 30 years researching and engaging with African art across the world. During his travels in the 1960s, Porter spent

time in Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo, and Egypt. Experiencing and painting the continent he had long researched was crucial for his ongoing teaching and scholarship.

Selby Mvusi (1929–1967, South Africa)

*The Funeral*, 1961

Charcoal on paper

Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN

Gift of the Harmon Foundation, 1991.218

The anonymous huddled figures of *The Funeral* embody Selby Mvusi's reflections on both a family funeral in the Umzimkulu Mountains of South Africa and, more broadly, the collective mourning following the Sharpeville Massacre of 1960. On March 21, 1960, the Apartheid police killed 69 people who had gathered to protest the regime's oppressive pass laws, an internal passport system designed to control the movement of Black South Africans. Mvusi, who had earned degrees at Pennsylvania State University and Boston College and taught at Clark Atlanta University, was in the United States at the time of the tragedy, separated from his children in South Africa.

\*\*One label for *A Favorite Spot in Providence*, 1964, and *Prospect Dormitory*, 1964 by Emmanuel Owusu Dartey

Emmanuel Owusu Dartey (1927–2018, Ghana)

*A Favorite Spot in Providence*, 1964

Gouache on paper

Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN

Gift of the Harmon Foundation, 1991.904

*Prospect Dormitory*, 1964

Watercolor and ink on paper

Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN

Gift of the Harmon Foundation, 1991.501

Dartey sketched these watercolor scenes of the changing New England seasons and local Providence architecture while enrolled at the Rhode Island School of Design. Such scenes document the academic artistic training he would promote while on the faculty at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in Kumasi.

Mamo Tessema (1935–2007, Ethiopia)

Covered jar, ca. 1960

Retailed by Bennington Potters (est. 1948)

Stoneware with purple glaze

Collection of the Bennington Museum

Gift of Gloria Gil, 2009.144.2a,b

After his graduation from Alfred University in New York, Mamo became involved with American craft communities. He created this jar while he was an artist in residence with the Bennington Potters in Vermont.



Mamo Tessema forming the lip on a cylinder during his training in ceramics at Alfred University in the early 1960s.

Mamo Tessema File, Box 98, Harmon Foundation, Inc., Records (1913–1967), Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

**Buluma Mordecai Ochungo (b. 1934, Uganda)**

*Sackville Studio*, ca. 1960

Oil on canvas

Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN

Gift of the Harmon Foundation, 1991.1175

After earning his degree at Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda, Buluma continued his artistic education at Mt. Allison University in Sackville, New Brunswick, Canada. Though this part of Canada is home to some of the oldest Black communities in the country, the extant paintings from Buluma's time in the region often reveal a sense of social isolation. In this studio scene, the artist represented himself from behind, the sole Black figure sketching among his classmates. With their rounded, columnar bodies and vacant expressions, his subjects appear to be alone together.

Funds for the conservation of *Sackville Studio* were generously provided through a grant from the Bank of America Art Conservation Project.

Jean Nakadulu Luvwezo (b. 1938, Democratic Republic of the Congo)

Untitled, 1961

Oil on canvas

From the Estate of Robert Weldon Wright

In this painting collected directly from the artist in 1961, skeletal figures and objects emerge to form an abstracted village scene. Luvwezo developed this expressive style, which he termed "non-objective," as a self-taught artist in the present-day capital of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. After Congo gained its independence from Belgium in 1960, Luvwezo enrolled at Princeton University with a scholarship from the African American Institute. He was one of many African students supported by Cold War-era international policies in the wake of decolonization across Africa.

Solomon Irein Wangboje (1930–1998, Nigeria)

*Mother and Child*, 1962

Oil on panel

Detroit Institute of Arts

Gift of Catherine Carter Blackwell, 2003.200

After graduating from the Nigerian College of Arts, Science and Technology, Zaria, and working for the Ministry of Information of newly independent Nigeria, Wangboje traveled to the United States to earn an MFA in graphic design and painting at the Cranbrook Academy of Art in Michigan. A skilled printmaker, his works often feature bold, saturated color and abstracted figuration. In *Mother and Child*, produced a year after his wife gave birth to their daughter in Nigeria, the artist returned to a subject he had first explored in a 1961 linocut, which showed, as the artist noted, “the close tie between mother and child physically and spiritually.”

Mohammed Melehi (1936–2020, Morocco)

*Time Square*, 1963

Oil on canvas

Courtesy of Ramzi and Saeda Dalloul Art Foundation

*Time Square* combines a bright yellow screen with rows of small multicolored squares to evoke the rhythmic urban landscape and architecture of New York. While living in New York in 1962–64 with the support of a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation, Melehi developed a geometric visual vocabulary based on his interest in cybernetics, space exploration, and mass media. In New York, he shared a Bowery studio with artist Jim Dine and exhibited his work in group exhibitions at MoMA and the now-defunct Washington Gallery of Modern Art in Washington, DC, before returning to Casablanca to teach at the School of Fine Arts.

George O. Talabi (b. 1929, Nigeria)

*Fears behind the African Wood*, 1963–64

Oil on canvas board

Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN

Gift of the Harmon Foundation, 1991.1097

In 1961, George Talabi wrote to the Harmon Foundation about his aim to travel to the United States and “absorb something of American Art and Culture.” Two years later, he was awarded a Rotary International Fellowship that allowed him to spend a year at the Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore, where he gained exposure to new art and techniques. Seeing the work of Ibrahim El-Salahi in an exhibition at Morgan State University (also in Baltimore) likely influenced Talabi’s work in the US. In *Fears behind the African Wood*, he collaged fractured forms and otherworldly biomorphic shapes in a surreal setting to explore the close connection between the physical and spiritual worlds in many African cultures.

\*\*One label for *La Chiesa*, 1966, and *Inno*, 1966 by Mohammad Omer Khalil

Mohammad Omer Khalil (b. 1936, Sudan)

*La Chiesa*, 1966

Oil on canvas

Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN

Gift of the Harmon Foundation, 1991.1133

*Inno*, 1966

Oil on canvas

Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN  
Gift of the Harmon Foundation, T-003.99

A celebrated member of the Khartoum School, which is known for its calligraphic modernism, Mohammad Omer Khalil relocated to New York City in 1967 after studying fresco painting in Florence, Italy. Now an acclaimed master printmaker, Khalil's paintings from his time in Italy prefigure his later interest in layering found text, forms, and objects in his prints. Khalil's paintings in the collection at Fisk University are some of the only known works that survive from his Italian period.

Skunder Boghossian (b. 1937, Ethiopia; d. 2003, United States)

*Blue Composition*, ca. 1967

Acrylic, gouache, and air brush on panel in artist's frame

The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of Marie-Josée and Henry Kravis in honor of Rick Salomon's 80th birthday, 2022

Skunder returned from Europe to Addis Ababa in 1966 to teach at the university alongside prominent Ethiopian modernist Gebre Kristos Desta. There he created works that display his deepening formal and conceptual interest in the cosmological and metaphysical implications of pan-African spiritual traditions. In *Blue Composition*, for example, the horizontal and vertical bands that cut across the composition allude to the *kitab*, or healing scrolls, of Ethiopia. By 1970, however, political instability in Ethiopia led the artist to permanently resettle in the United States.

## FISK AND AFRICA

Aaron Douglas, Chairman of the Department of Art at Fisk University from 1944 to 1966, and his successor, artist and art historian David C. Driskell, both traveled to Africa, fulfilling their mutual interest in Africa and African art. Inspired by his encounters on the African continent, Driskell hosted artists at Fisk during his tenure there (1966 to 1976), encouraging students to pursue a relationship with the African continent, its people, its cultures, and its histories.

David C. Driskell (1931–2020, United States)

*Yoruba Forms #5*, 1969

Oil on canvas

The Estate of David C. Driskell. Courtesy of DC Moore Gallery, New York

David C. Driskell painted *Yoruba Forms #5* in 1969, the same year he traveled to Africa for the first time. When he returned to Fisk University in January 1970 following his month-long stay, he created opportunities for students to engage with both historical African art and contemporary African artists. To these ends, he facilitated campus visits for artists including Ladi Kwali, Peter Clarke, and Lámídi Qlónàdé Fákéyẹ. Works like *Yoruba Forms #5* reflect his commitment to exploring the historical and modern arts of Africa in his own artistic practice.

Peter Clarke (1929–2014, South Africa)

*Conversation, Windermere*, 1960

Gouache on paper

Ramont Collection

\*\*One label for *That Evening Sun Goes Down*, 1960, and *African Figure*, 1958 by Peter Clarke

Peter Clarke (1929–2014, South Africa)  
*That Evening Sun Goes Down*, 1960  
Gouache on paper  
Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN  
Gift of the Harmon Foundation, 1991.313

*African Figure*, 1958  
Stencil print on paper  
Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN  
Gift of the Harmon Foundation, T-003.331

David C. Driskell first encountered the work of Peter Clarke in the exhibitions and publications produced by the Harmon Foundation in the early 1960s. The two artists later met in Cape Town in 1972, and the next year Driskell invited Clarke for a residency at Fisk University. Although the social conditions of Black life in Apartheid-era South Africa, which are reflected in the colorful vectors and elongated figures of Clarke's paintings, resonated with Driskell's experience growing up in segregated America, Driskell found deeper meaning in the South African artist's "universal language of form." Driskell wrote of Clarke, "He is aware of his caste in an imperfect society, but his art is greater than the cast artificially made for him."

Funds for the conservation of *That Evening Sun Goes Down* were generously provided through a grant from the Bank of America Art Conservation Project.



David C. Driskell, ed., *Peter Clarke: South African Artist-Poet*, Soul Motion III (Nashville: Fisk University Division of Cultural Research, 1973). Florine Stettheimer Library, Fisk University Galleries, Nashville, TN

David C. Driskell (1931–2020, United States)  
*Yoruba Scene*, 1974  
Color woodcut on paper, artist's proof  
Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN, 1991.26

With figures reminiscent of Yoruba sculpture, *Yoruba Scene* reflects Driskell's longstanding conceptual and formal experiments with African art. This work was inspired by a sculpture by Nigerian artist Lámídi Ọlónàdé Fákéyẹ in Driskell's own collection.

Lámídi Ọlónàdé Fákéyẹ (ca. 1925–2009, Nigeria)  
*Oshe Sango*, ca. 1963

## Wood

Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN  
Gift of the Harmon Foundation, FAK-1

Làmídi Ọlónàdé Fákéyẹ visited Fisk University in April 1972, the same month that Nigerian ceramic artist Ladi Kwali traveled to Nashville. Fákéyẹ drew a large crowd on the lawn in the middle of campus, where he carved a figure “from a single block of wood,” as Fisk graduate Robert Hall recalls. This work from earlier in the decade entered Fisk’s collection in 1967, a gift from the Harmon Foundation.



Làmídi Ọlónàdé Fákéyẹ and John Simmons at Fisk University, 1972.  
Photograph by Earl Hooks.

Ladi Kwali (ca. 1925–1984, Nigeria)  
Water jar, ca. 1960s  
Glazed stoneware  
Courtesy of Mimi Wolford

As a master ceramicist at the Abuja Pottery Training Centre, Ladi Kwali modernized the traditional ceramic forms she had first learned as a child in northern Nigeria. Celebrated internationally, she toured the United States in 1972 with fellow ceramicists Michael Cardew and Clement Kofi Athey. While in Nashville, Kwali demonstrated her process for students at Tennessee State University and Fisk University. In her demonstrations, Kwali created by hand her signature water jars, similar to this example, complete with wide neck and flanged rim and incised with abstracted designs of natural forms.

Viola Mariethia Wood (1949–1994, United States)  
*Feasting Bowl*, ca. 1972  
Glazed stoneware  
Private Collection of Nina Lovelace

Wood enrolled at Fisk to study fine arts in 1967, the same year the Harmon Foundation donated a transformative collection of modern African and African American art to the university. Under the direction of David C. Driskell and Earl Hooks, Wood was exposed to African arts and aesthetics, from historical carving to contemporary film. Hooks, a Howard University-trained ceramic artist, emphasized African visual traditions in his teaching and prompted his students to question the distinction between art and craft. Wood was especially moved by the work of Nigerian ceramic artist Ladi Kwali, who visited Nashville in 1972.

#### SECTION 4; ARCHIVING AFRICAN MODERNISM

Ndidi Dike (b. United Kingdom; lives and works in Nigeria)

*The Politics of Selection*, 2022

Photocollage printed on transparency, earthenware vessel, earth, book, paper

Courtesy the artist

Ndidi Dike created *The Politics of Selection* to confront the inherent inequities and power dynamics in the Harmon Foundation's research into African modernism, informed as it was by the residues of colonialism and Cold War-era international politics. The research that underpins her work investigates the women—artists and administrators from Africa and elsewhere—who shaped the development of African modernism.

Though the panorama unfolds across three chapters, figures, names, and narratives recur. One such figure is Ladi Kwali, the influential Nigerian ceramic artist whose portrait graces the twenty-naira Nigerian bank note on which Dike builds her world. The first panel focuses on the role of women in establishing the discourse around artmaking in Nigeria. The second centers Fisk University as a site of Black diasporic exchange. The final panel draws connections between struggles faced by Black women artists in Africa and the United States.

By repeating their names, works, and faces, Dike rebalances women artists' frequent overshadowing by their male colleagues and questions the complex and contested histories of white patronage of Black artists.



The Phillips Collection

**UPDATED RELEASE**  
September 26, 2023

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## THE PHILLIPS COLLECTION ANNOUNCES 2023-24 EXHIBITION SCHEDULE



WASHINGTON, DC—The Phillips Collection announces its schedule of exhibitions and programmatic highlights through summer 2024. Featuring an array of international artists, the museum will present exhibitions including *African Modernism in America, 1947-67*, which presents 50 artists exploring the connections between modern African artists and American patrons, artists, and cultural organizations in the postwar period; a major traveling survey reuniting significant works by the French artist Pierre Bonnard; and dynamic installations featuring acclaimed contemporary artists including Jennifer Bartlett, Ugo Rondinone, and more. The upcoming year at the Phillips will also encompass initiatives that continue the museum’s commitment to the DC community through partnerships with the University of Virginia (UVA), THEARC, The Nicholson Project, and DC Public Library.

“Through our exceptional upcoming schedule of exhibitions, visitors will find opportunities to deepen their knowledge of artists in our collection and to discover new contexts for engaging with modern and contemporary art,” says **Vradenburg Director and CEO Jonathan P. Binstock**. “A central component of our programming is exploring ways to better serve our communities inside and outside of the museum. A growing roster of interdisciplinary collaborations with organizations around DC will help us strengthen relationships with local artists, scholars, and visitors to the museum.”

This fall, The Phillips Collection will present an unprecedented reinstallation of its renowned [Rothko Room](#). In 1960, museum founder Duncan Phillips designated a specific room for the Rothko paintings in the collection, and today it remains the only existing installation designed in collaboration with the artist himself. Three works from the collections of Kate Rothko Prizel and Christopher Rothko will be exhibited in the Rothko Room—Rothko’s *Untitled (Yellow, Pink, Yellow on Light Pink)* (1955), *No. 14* (1951), and *No. 12* (1951)—temporarily replacing three of the paintings historically on view in the space. Concurrently, the Phillips’s *Orange and Red on Red* (1957), *Green and Tangerine on Red* (1956), and *Ochre and Red on Red* (1954) will be loaned to the Fondation Louis Vuitton in Paris for its upcoming Mark Rothko retrospective from October 18, 2023, through April 2, 2024. The three paintings will be exhibited by the Fondation in a re-creation of the Phillips’s Rothko Room following the artist’s specifications.

“The forthcoming exhibitions invite visitors to engage with creative ideas of the past and present,” says **Chief Curator Elsa Smithgall**. “Focusing on diverse narratives, expressions of the human experience, and exhibitions shaped by the artists’ perspectives, this year’s programming offers the opportunity to look at broader and exciting developments in art history through the lens of overlooked and understudied artists, while revealing new insights into celebrated figures, like Mark Rothko and Paul Cézanne.”

## **EXHIBITIONS (FALL 2023-SUMMER 2024)**

### **[African Modernism in America, 1947-67](#)**

**October 7, 2023–January 7, 2024**

*African Modernism in America, 1947-67* is the first major exhibition to examine the complex connections between modern African artists and American patrons, artists, and cultural organizations in the postwar period. Featuring the work of 50 African and African American artists—including David Driskell, Ibrahim El-Salahi, Ben Enwonwu, Jacob Lawrence, Demas Nwoko, and Uche Okeke—the exhibition reveals a transcontinental network of artists, curators, and scholars that challenged assumptions about African art in the United States, and thereby encouraged American engagement with African artists as contemporaries. Additionally, the exhibition includes a newly commissioned work by Ndidi Dike, *The Politics of Selection* (2022), which investigates the presence and absence of women in the story of African modernity.

This exhibition is co-organized by the American Federation of Arts and Fisk University Galleries.

Major support for the exhibition is provided by Monique Schoen Warshaw. Additional support is provided by grants from the Marlene and Spencer Hays Foundation, the Mellon Foundation, and the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts. This project is supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts. The presentation at The Phillips Collection is generously supported by Eric Richter and Charles Shoener.

### **[One-on-One: Ugo Rondinone / Louis Eilshemius](#)**

**November 7, 2023–January 14, 2024**

*One-on-One: Ugo Rondinone / Louis Eilshemius* juxtaposes paintings by Louis Michel Eilshemius (1864–1941) alongside works by acclaimed contemporary artist Ugo Rondinone (b. 1964, Brunnen, Switzerland). Rondinone has long been collecting paintings by American poet and painter Eilshemius, who is known for his expressive and lyrical depictions of landscapes, nature, and nudes. The presentation will feature paintings by Eilshemius drawn from both the Phillips’s collection and Rondinone’s expansive personal collection of the artist’s work. In dialogue with Eilshemius, large-scale

forest landscapes by Rondinone will be on view. Redolent of 17th-century Dutch woodcuts, the scenes are based on sketches by Rondinone made in 1989 during walks in the woods surrounding Vienna.

This exhibition is organized by The Phillips Collection.

### [Jennifer Bartlett: In and Out of the Garden](#)

**February 10–April 30, 2024**

This focused exhibition of American artist Jennifer Bartlett (1941–2022) will feature a selection of dynamic paintings and works on paper inspired by the garden. *In and Out of the Garden* will serve as a contemporary complement to the concurrent exhibition *Bonnard's Worlds* at the Phillips. Both Bartlett and Pierre Bonnard were avid gardeners, and their work reflects strong universal ties to nature vividly expressed through the language of modern and contemporary art.

This exhibition is organized by The Phillips Collection.

### [Bonnard's Worlds](#)

**March 2–June 2, 2024**

*Bonnard's Worlds* will reunite some of the artist's most celebrated works spanning his entire career from museums across Europe and the United States, as well as many less-exhibited works drawn from private collections worldwide. Governed neither by chronology nor geography, but by measures of intimacy, the exhibition will transport the visitor from the larger realms in which Bonnard lived—the landscapes of Paris, Normandy, and the south of France—to the most intimate interior spaces of his dwellings and his thoughts.

This exhibition is co-organized by The Phillips Collection and the Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, TX. Generous support is provided by The Robert Lehman Foundation.

### [Up Close with Paul Cézanne](#)

**April 17–July 14, 2024**

The exhibition will unveil two recently conserved works by French Post-Impressionist Paul Cézanne, *Mont Sainte-Victoire* (1886–87) and *Self-Portrait* (1878–80), major paintings that are part of The Phillips Collection's world-renowned holdings by the revered artist. These paintings, together with five other works in the museum's Cézanne 'unit,' will be exhibited together for the first time in decades. The conservation of *Mont Sainte-Victoire* and *Self-Portrait* will reveal details previously obscured by aged, discolored varnishes while also providing guests with new insight into the artist's process.

This installation is organized by The Phillips Collection and sponsored by the Bank of America Art Conservation Project.

### [Multiplicity: Blackness in Contemporary American Collage](#)

**July 6–September 22, 2024**

*Multiplicity: Blackness in Contemporary American Collage* is the first large-scale exhibition dedicated to exploring collage by contemporary Black American artists such as Mark Bradford, Kerry James Marshall, Tschabalala Self, and Kara Walker. Featuring more than 60 works by over 45 artists, this exhibition celebrates the broad variety and complexity of Black identity in art. Building on a technique that has roots in European and American traditions, the diverse, intergenerational group of artists have created innovative works with pieces of paper, photographs, fabrics, and/or other salvaged materials. The bold compositions, created with an array of experimental techniques, offer poignant expressions of human

experience, including fragmentation and reconstruction, shared history and memory, cultural hybridity, gender fluidity, and notions of beauty.

This exhibition is organized by the Frist Art Museum, Nashville, TN.

## **PROGRAMMING & INITIATIVES**

### **Phillips@THEARC**

The Phillips Collection's workshop and gallery at the [Town Hall Education Arts Recreation Campus](#) (THEARC) in southeast DC provides a space to view, discuss, make, and exhibit art to encourage community participation and action, deepening the Phillips's social commitment, responsibility, and sustainability to the Washington, DC community. In the upcoming 2023–24 season, Phillips@THEARC will present work by local artists and engage DC community members by exhibiting their art made through the center's programming.

### **Phillips Music 2023–24 Season**

The 83rd season of Phillips Music offers a characteristically eclectic tableau of music that reflects The Phillips Collection's spirit as an experiment station. The series opens with celebrated pianist Isata Kanneh-Mason (October 15) and the music of visionary composer, scholar, and pianist Vijay Iyer (with the Parker Quartet, October 22). As part of the upcoming exhibition *African Modernism in America, 1947–67*, three programs highlight African composers and performers, including the Leading International Composers series (Andile Khumalo, November 12) and jazz superstar Richard Bona with the Asante Trio (December 14). Phillips Music continues its focus on the relationship between music and art with the world premiere of composer Marcos Balter's *Therapy*, inspired by the art of Alfonso Ossorio and performed by Anthony Roth Costanzo and the Shanghai Quartet (April 14). Tickets for the full season are on sale at [phillipscollection.org/music](http://phillipscollection.org/music).

### **CARD Fellowship Program**

The Phillips Collection, DC Public Library, and The Nicholson Project have partnered to pilot the [Collaborative Arts Resource District Fellowship Program \(CARD\)](#). The 12-week fellowship connects artists with professional and financial resources to create and bolster sustainable art careers and foster the contemporary art community in the Washington, DC, area. Three awarded fellows, to be selected in August 2023, will receive tangible support to advance their craft, including a stipend, connections to leaders and institutions in the Washington metropolitan area, and the opportunity to publicly exhibit their work at The Phillips Collection, DC Public Library, or The Nicholson Project. The fellowship dates are September 18–December 15, 2023.

### **University of Virginia Academic Partnership**

A new academic partnership between The Phillips Collection and the University of Virginia (UVA) in Charlottesville, Virginia, will provide rich and meaningful opportunities in education, innovation and research, interdisciplinary collaboration, and diversity and inclusion initiatives—all hallmarks of each institution's mission. Beginning this year, the collaboration between the museum and university will support two main programs—an annual Predoctoral Fellowship in Modern and Contemporary Art History starting in the fall and a Summer Undergraduate Internship.

### **Third Thursday and Pay-What-You-Wish**

On the third Thursday of each month, The Phillips Collection offers free extended hours from 5–8 pm for guests to explore the galleries and enjoy 15-minute Spotlight Talks from Phillips Educators focused on an artwork within the collection. The museum offers Pay-What-You-Wish admission from 4 pm–close to increase visibility, ease, and accessibility for patrons.

#### IMAGE GALLERY

High-resolution press images are available upon request. Please contact [lcantrell@phillipscollection.org](mailto:lcantrell@phillipscollection.org).

**IMAGES:** Peter Clarke (South African, 1929–2014), *That Evening Sun Goes Down*, 1960, Gouache on paper, 22 x 17 7/8 in., Fisk University Galleries, Fisk University, Nashville, TN, Gift of the Harmon Foundation © 2022 Peter Edward Clarke / DALRO, Johannesburg / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York, NY, Courtesy American Federation of Arts. Funding for the conservation of this artwork was generously provided through a grant from the Bank of America Conservation Project; Pierre Bonnard, *The Open Window*, 1921, Oil on canvas, 46 1/2 x 37 3/4 in., The Phillips Collection, Acquired 1930 © 2022 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris; Wardell Milan, *Pulse. That's that Orlando moon, 808 club bass. That's that keep dancing, that's that never stop*, 2022, Charcoal, graphite, oil, pastel, pastel acrylic, cut-and-paste paper on hand dyed paper; 72 ½ x 53 3/8 in., The collection of Michael Hoeh, New York, courtesy of Sikkema Jenkins & Co., New York © Wardell Milan

#### ABOUT THE PHILLIPS COLLECTION

The Phillips Collection, America's first museum of modern art, was founded in 1921. The museum houses one of the world's most celebrated Impressionist and American modern art collections and continues to grow its collection with important contemporary voices. Its distinctive building combines extensive new galleries with the former home of its founder, Duncan Phillips. The Phillips's impact spreads nationally and internationally through its diverse and experimental special exhibitions and events, including its award-winning education programs for educators, students, and adults; renowned Phillips Music series; and dynamic art and wellness and Phillips after 5 events. The museum contributes to global dialogues with events like Conversations with Artists and Artists of Conscience. The Phillips Collection values its community partnership with THEARC—the museum's satellite campus in Southeast DC. The Phillips Collection is a private, non-government museum, supported primarily by donations.

###