



Willie White, *Untitled, Markers on Poster Board, late 1980s- early 1990s*

crealdé
SCHOOL OF ART

&

HANNIBAL SQUARE
Heritage Center
A PROGRAM OF crealdé SCHOOL OF ART

JANUARY 31 – MAY 16, 2020

Power, Myth, and Memory

IN AFRICANA ART

Select Pieces from the
CJ Williams Collection

Welcome

TO CREALDÉ SCHOOL OF ART!

On behalf of our Board of Directors, talented faculty, and hard-working administrative team and volunteers, I want to welcome the Central Florida community and our visitors to our newest exhibitions at the school's main teaching campus and at the Hannibal Square Heritage Center.

The *Power, Myth, and Memory* exhibition follows Crealdé's long legacy of introducing our students and visitors to the heritage and history of our diverse communities, affirming that everyone has a place in the arts. It also is a powerful testament to the fact that people of color throughout history have created beautiful and important artwork, despite the tremendous social and political restrictions that were stacked against them.

I want to express my personal and professional gratitude towards our curator and long time collaborator Kristin Congdon, curatorial advisor Patrick Noze, collector Charley Williams, our Orange County government funders and all the visual artists of the African Diaspora who have made this free exhibition a reality.

Art lives through justice - and justice lives through the arts!

Thank you!

Peter Schreyer
CEO/Executive Director

**ART IS FOR
EVERYONE**

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SCHOOL OF ART

Alice & William Jenkins Gallery
600 St. Andrews Blvd.
Winter Park, FL 32792

HANNIBAL SQUARE
Heritage Center

A PROGRAM OF crealdé SCHOOL OF ART

Upstairs Visiting Exhibitions Gallery
642 W. New England Ave.
Winter Park, FL 32789

Power, Myth, and Memory IN AFRICANA ART

“One looks to history for the feel of time or its purgative effects;
one looks through art for its signs of renewal.” —Toni Morrison

This two venue exhibition at Crealdé School of Art's Alice and William Jenkins Gallery and Hannibal Square Heritage Center is a partnership between Crealdé and The Alliance for Truth and Justice. It is also in communication with the Orange County Regional History Center's upcoming exhibition on the 1920 Ocoee Massacre where somewhere between six and sixty African American residents were murdered with impunity. As an extension, it responds to the civil rights work of the Equal Justice Initiative in Montgomery, Alabama. The artwork in *Power, Myth, and Memory* shows the resilient side of black people. Responding to the dire cruelty of slavery, lynching, Jim Crow, and mass incarceration, the oppressed have always fought back with determination and hope for a better future.

Thanks to CJ Williams for generously sharing work from his collection and to Peter Schreyer, Crealdé's Executive Director, for quickly embracing this exhibition. Appreciation also goes to Barbara Tiffany who installs every show with the utmost care and appreciation and to Patrick Noze for assisting with his vast knowledge of Haiti and Haitian art. Additionally, gratitude goes to Barbara Chandler, Manager of the Hannibal Square Heritage Center, for her support and suggestions.

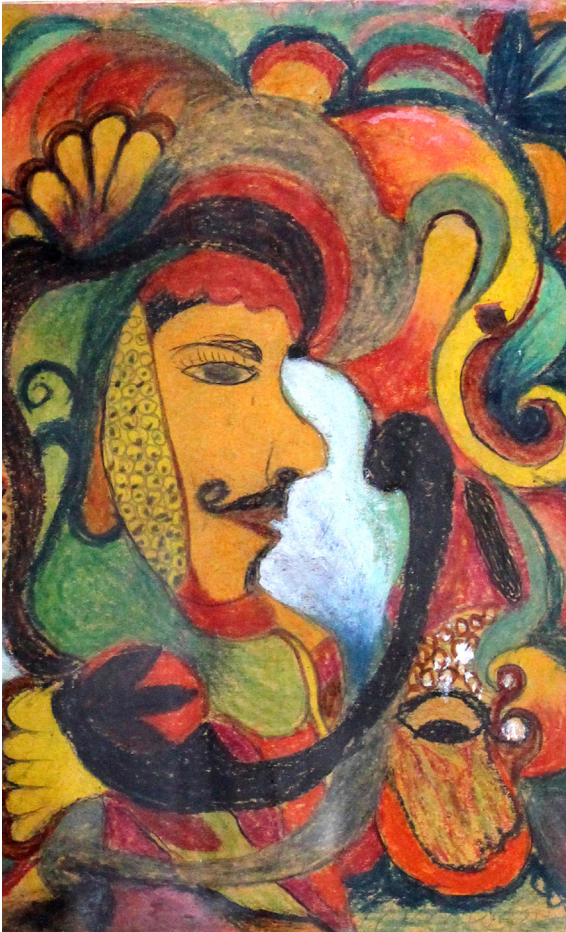
Kristin Congdon, Exhibition Curator
UCF Professor Emerita, Philosophy and Humanities



Unknown Artists, Memory Jars, clay and found objects, early to mid-1900s



Ruby Williams, "It Cost To Hate," paint on wood, 2016



Minnie Evans, "King," crayon & colored pencil on paper, c.1945-1950

Connective MEANINGS

This artwork, all from the collection of CJ Williams, comes from Africa, Haiti, and the African American South. In many cases, the artworks' meanings have been purposely hidden from white audiences, thereby promoting the false idea that it was insignificant or valueless. In this exhibition, however, the function of the art becomes visible as it is contextualized and symbolism is revealed.

The power of speech, employed to promote a spiritual presence, is harnessed in many of the objects. In Africa, this power is called *nkisi*, a force that bonds the past, present, and future. In Haitian art, the search for spirits is found at thresholds, spaces where the veil between the human and the divine is most permeable. It is here that communication between two worlds can take place. Likewise, in African American communities a focus is on the crossroads and intersections that open spiritual pathways. As in Africa, the belief systems of Haitians and African Americans in the South involve the communities of both the living and the dead.

Often created from cast-off items used to mark graves, conjure spirits, or transform power, the artwork is performative as it tells stories and functions in or relates to a specific context. This artwork is protective; it has healing powers. It links participants to ancestors, spirits, and gods. And it grants authority, furthers belief systems, and documents historical events, be they highly ritualized or everyday.

Minnie Evans was inspired by visions and dreams; she celebrates royalty in *The King*. Sometimes, however, artists like Ruby Williams speak in an unvarnished and uncoded fashion. *It Cost to Hate* communicates clearly and vibrantly to us all.



Power

“Yes send power! Power, Lord, Power!
I want my power! I want my power!”

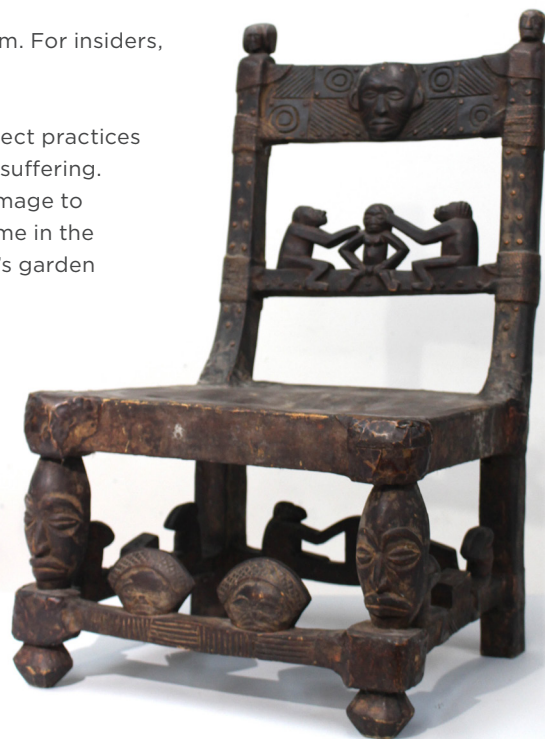
—Sister Gertrude Morgan

Many artists in this exhibition gained power through the tools of allegory and symbolism. For insiders, these works have agency.

Roy Ferdinand’s *Black Magic Woman* summons spirits for health and morality. The subject practices Hoodoo, a belief system rooted in West Africa that provides protection and addresses suffering. The Chokwe *Chair* signifies its owner’s authority while Sister Gertrude Morgan pays homage to *Hurricane Betsey* (correctly spelled Betsy), the storm that flooded her New Orleans home in the Ninth Ward. And Hawkins Bolden’s *Scarecrow* can either keep the birds from the artist’s garden or attract them for company.

These are all statements of power. But they are not one-dimensional declarations; rather they are grounded in complex cultural systems that have deep roots in black culture. They yield influence like Joe Louis’ widely celebrated punch, Maya Angelou’s culture-revealing storytelling, or Alvin Ailey’s song-sermon, soul-rising dance, *Revelations*. This is power that seeks salvation.

Singing, dancing, and playing musical instruments have the power to conjure a rhythm that can awaken the spirits. The same kind of spiritual unveiling can be found in many of these works. A symbolic gift is exchanged with the gods. An oath empowers an object. Crocodiles bring messages from the ancestors. *Iwa* (Haitian spirits) function as intermediaries with God. A viewer or participant can be lead away from the object itself into a cosmological domain and a physiological experience.





Hawkins Bolton, "Scarecrow 1,"
Found Object Sculpture, 1990



Sister Gertrude Morgan, "Hurricane Betsy," ink and acrylic on paper, 1965

Power

Black power comes from blending. Jazz grew from the African genius of polyrhythm and improvisation that embraced European instrumentation and melody. Likewise, memory jars recreated African graveyard traditions in a new way. Shape shifting and masking took different forms in different spaces but still remained true to their historic roots. There is always movement in life stages, in parades, and with whirligigs and praise dancing. Movement signifies power.

Whereas white folks initially dismissed this work as primitive, ugly, or unimportant, blacks understood the language and reveled in the fact that their power spoke only to them. For the uninitiated, understanding can bring healing and empowerment to us all.

Roy Ferdinand
"Black Magic Woman"
colored pencil, marker and
watercolor on board
1991





West African Bobo
"Face With Snake and Goat"
carved wood, c.1950s

Myth

"You don't always see the magic or the beauty unless you know how to look."

—Phylis Galembo

Myths can provide power to address an unjust world. Often involving supernatural beings or events, myths are stories that form our cultural understandings as they provide group identity. They can supplement religious practices or meld with them. The truth in these belief systems resides in how knowledge bearers respond to the world.

Many of the works in this exhibition are used in ceremonies for the purpose of conjuring a new reality. Animals, which carry meanings that originated in the Kongo, are common to a number of these works. For example, Rabbit (who eventually became Br'er Rabbit) in African American culture represents a trickster. While white folks forbade slaves to use their tribal language and customs, they permitted animal stories, thinking they were harmless. Although Rabbit was physically powerless during slavery and the Jim Crow-era, he had wit, intelligence, and a keen imagination that could outsmart the white man. Rabbit tales, almost identical to the African stories about the spider Anansi, provided a way out of oppression while keeping an eye on freedom. Myth is behind the West African Bobo mask, *Face with Snake and Goat* where the animals function as messengers from the ancestors.



Victor Hector
"Mariage Gran Zili
Bayavou Avec Legba"
Haitian
paint on canvas
2006

Myth

In African, Haitian, and African American culture, Legba became the chief of the gods. As a liminal figure, he stands at the crossroads where listeners connect with spirits and ancestors who teach historical lessons. In *Mariage Gran Zili Bayavou Avec Legba* by Voltaire Hector, Legba flanks a couple being married.

In *J. B. Murray's untitled drawing*, the artist invokes the Holy Spirit by visually writing in tongues. Using a sanctified bottle of water, he was able to read through the water to the writing, employing a language only he understood. Because his writings were so prolific, extending onto his home, their function became protective, like a yard show. David Butler's work is also grounded in myth. *Fantasy Creature* is one of many tin sculptures he created for protection. Reflecting African beliefs, evil spirits can be sent away by confusing them with movement. Placed in his yard and over his windows, his creations had visual movement through the repetition of dots. Some of his artworks were activated by the wind.

To fully understand many of the works shown in this exhibition, they should be connected to the oaths, commitments, affirmations, and lived experiences of their makers. It is in this extended space of understanding where the power of the myth moves into lived space.



J B Murray, *Untitled Writings*, mixed media on paper, c. mid-1990s



David Butler, "Fantasy Creature," cut and painted metal, c.1980s



Dr. Ruth Mae McCrane
"Preservation Hall"
paint on canvas board
1992

Memory

“Where does memory live? Poets, artists, and other creative figures answer the question with this statement: it resides in love.” —Sally Mann



Bernice Sims, “Wash Day,” paint on canvas, 1994

Memory, simply stated, is a conversation with the past. Memories make up our identities and provide thought for future actions. But they are not just our own; they are also borrowed, inherited, and learned as common experience. They create a conversation that can involve “soul-travel” as it has been called in the African American South. It is a way to connect to the ancestors, even those one never knew, at least not in a “this world” sense. Remembering through artwork is a reclaiming process that can provide a sense of history while also fostering beauty and providing viewers with a kind of peace.



Clementine Hunter, “These Big Vases They is Called Spanish Water Jars”
paint on canvas board, c.1940s



Mary T. Smith, "Four Figures on Blue," paint on wood, c. late 1970s-1980s)

Memory

Many of the works in *Power, Myth, and Memory* are created from found objects. In this recycling process, there is recognition of the selected items' history, coupled with a desire to reposition them in a new space with reverence and understanding. Even nature can be used in a way that highlights memory, as is the case when gathering river mud for clay or using plant life for color. Reusing tossed out cardboard, Styrofoam plates, old tin, and various other items is common practice in African American artwork. Mary T. Smith, for example, sorted through tossed out objects in a local garbage dump. *Four Figures on Blue* is created on a recycled piece of wood.

Using recycled metal, Jean Sylvestre documents an important historic event in *Freed Slaves Carrying King Christophe*. The subject was a leader of the 1791 Slave Uprising in what is now Haiti. While King Christophe's death is a monumental event, everyday activities are also subjects for documentation. Bernice Sims memorializes an ordinary chore in *Wash Day* and Dr. Ruth Mae McCrane depicts a jazz scene in her painting of New Orleans' *Preservation Hall*. And the much-celebrated Clementine Hunter teaches us about her plantation life in *These Vases, They Is Called Spanish Water Jars*.

Pleasure rises from the song lines and musical dynamics of Mardi Gras, the delight in watching a bird fly, the making of memory



Jean Sylvestre, "Freed Slaves Carrying King Christophe," Haitian, cut tin, 2005

jars, and the act of visual storytelling. But visual storytelling also includes memories about persecution, poverty, corruption, crime, hurricanes, sickness, slave revolts, and incarceration. However, when these difficulties are portrayed, they are coupled with resilience and commemoration.

In this memorializing space, there is revitalization. These works carry with them the recognition of historical burdens as well as a fountainhead of creativity and a place where joy can be found. Memory has a way of talking to the future. To move toward freedom is to seek wisdom, whether it is in the repetition of daily activities, recycling found objects, or calling up the ancestors. These artworks are not an effort to say what really happened, for that is the job of the researcher. Instead, they represent a form of willed creation.



Nellie Mae Rowe, "African Mask," crayon on paper, 1980

The Black AESTHETIC

Developed alongside the Civil Rights Movement, The Black Aesthetic (known as TBA) looked beyond the slogan “Black is beautiful,” which was found to be shortsighted in its effort to establish an identifiable black aesthetic. The emphasis later turned to a focus on cultures of academically untutored artists because it was there where creativity unaffected by white historical conditioning could be found.

Scholars, artists, curators, and critics discovered TBA to be connected to sound. From the blues and jazz, artists found structure and improvisation. From this knowledge, they surmised that black music and visual art represent layered lives of the mind and imagination that could be used to understand how reality might be understood and experienced. They recognize that blackness can fluctuate and levitate. As a multiplicity, it is active and unstable. There is no fixedness or borderlines to the work; rather, there is blurring and an entanglement, suggesting a focus on social lives and interactions. In some cases, lived experience and past history hurts so much that celebration is the response. Using lyrical innovation and intervention, TBA is a search for freedom, even at the expense of destruction. It is an act of reestablishing place.

The artists in *Power, Myth, and Memory* lift themselves up through faith, pride, and traditional practices as they establish diverse ways of transcending subjugation and finding strength. This artwork has as much technical, historical, and symbolic weight to easily place it on par with artists of western descent. To recognize this fact is an act of justice.

Although TBA is a way of approaching black lives and black creativity, assisting us in understanding the works in this exhibition, it is also a process that transcends race as it reminds us of what it means to be human.



James “Son Ford” Thomas, “Clay Coffin”
baked river mud, paint and wire

Power, Myth, and Memory IN AFRICANA ART

Jesse Aaron
1887-1979
African American and Seminole
Untitled, n.d.
carved wood sculpture

Agatha Aladin
b. 1967, Haitian
Icarus, 2000
paint on canvas

Agatha Aladin
b. 1967, Haitian
Noah Receives a Sign, 2000
paint on canvas

Leroy Almon, Sr.
1938-1997, African American
Angel/Devil Fishing, 1990
carved and painted wood

Leroy Almon, Sr.
1938-1997, African American
Angel/Devil Mirror, 1989
carved and painted wood

Roi David Annisey
b. 1967-?, Haitian
Dog with Gun/Maiden Holding Bank Note, 1997
paint on canvas

Roi David Annisey
b. 1967-?, Haitian
Spirit of the Rainforest with his Dog, 1996
paint on canvas

Baule or Asante Tribe
Kongo, West-central Africa
Fertility, c. 1930s-1940s
wood with leather, gourds
and other objects

Dr. Francois L. Bellande
b. 1966, Haitian
Complex Village Scene, 2000
paint on canvas board

Dr. Francois L. Bellande
b. 1966, Haitian
Graveyard Scene, 2000
paint on canvas board

Bobo, West Africa
Face with Snake and Goat
c. 1950s, carved wood

Bobo, West Africa
Oan Owl Plank Mask
c. 1950s-1960s, wood

Hawkins Bolden
1914-2005, African American
Scarecrow, c. 1990s
found object sculpture

Hawkins Bolden
1914-2005, African American
Scarecrow, 1990
found object sculpture

Rudolph "Rudy" Bostic
b. 1941, African American
Angels Battle in Heaven, 1990
paint on cardboard

Rudolph "Rudy" Bostic
b. 1941, African American
Noah with Animals, 1980
paint on cardboard

David Butler
1898-1997, African American
Fantasy Creature, c. 1980s
cut and painted metal

David Butler
1898-1997, African American
Giraffe, 1983
cut and painted metal

Rameau Cameau
(aka Cameau Rameau),
1943-2016, Haitian
Chicken, 1998
paint on canvas

Chokwe, Angola, South Africa
Chair, c. 1950s
wood with metal inserts

Chokwe, Angola, South Africa
Chair, c. 1950s
wood with metal inserts

Minnie Evans
1892-1987, African American
King, c. 1945-1950
crayon and colored pencil
on paper

Roy Ferdinand
1959-2004, African American
Black Magic Woman, 1991
color pencil, marker, and
watercolor on poster board

Roy Ferdinand
1959-2004, African American
One Way for P, 1991
color pencil, marker, and
watercolor on poster board

Roy Ferdinand
1959-2004, African American
St. Louis Cemetery, 1991
color pencil, marker, and
watercolor on poster board

Gerald Fortune
b. 1925+, Haitian
Centaur Woman, 2001
paint on canvas board

Gerald Fortune
b. 1925+, Haitian
Votive Offering for Forgiveness
1986, paint on canvas board

Voltaire Hector
b. 1952, Haitian
Azaka Mede, 2002
paint on canvas

Voltaire Hector
b. 1952, Haitian
Marriage Gran Zili Bayavou Avec Legba, 2006
paint on canvas

EXHIBITION LIST

Voltaire Hector
b. 1952, Haitian
Vodou Ceremony, 2010
paint on canvas

Clementine Hunter
1886/87-1988, African American
Ducks on a Pond, c. 1980s
paint on wood

Clementine Hunter
1886/87-1988, African American
These Big Vases, They Is Called Spanish Water Jars, c. 1940s
paint on canvas board

Clementine Hunter
1886/87-1988, African American
Zinnias, 1978
paint on canvas

Kongo, West Central Africa
Fetish, c. 1930s-1940s
carved wood, nails

Dapper Bruce Lafitte
(formerly Bruce Davenport, Jr.)
b. 1972, African American
I Come to Bring the Party, 2011
colored marker

Ransom "Rocky" McCormick, Jr.
b. 1975, African American
Moved by the Word, c. 1995
paint on canvas

Dr. Ruth Mae McCrane
1929-2002, African American
Preservation Hall: Street Scene
1992, paint on canvas board

Reginald Mitchell
1960-2019, African American
Brennan's Restaurant, French Quarter, New Orleans, 2004
paint on paper

Reginald Mitchell
1960-2019, African American
Mardi Gras Indians, 1995
paint on paper

Reginald Mitchell
1960-2019, African American
Mississippi River, 2003
paint on canvas board

Reginald Mitchell
1960-2019, African American
Mississippi River with River Boat, 2004, paint on paper

Sister Gertrude Morgan
1900-1980, African American
God Rules Where He Pleases c.
1970s
paint and mixed media
on Styrofoam

Sister Gertrude Morgan
1900-1980, African American
Hurricane Betsey, 1965
ink and acrylic on paper

Sister Gertrude Morgan
1900-1980, African American
More than a Half Century of Service, c. early 1970s
paint and mixed media on paper

Sister Gertrude Morgan
1900-1980, African American
New Jerusalem, n.d.
paint and mixed media on paper

Sister Gertrude Morgan
1900-1980, African American
Path He Trod, n.d.
poem written with ink
on typing paper

J. B. Murray
1908-1988, African American
Untitled, c. mid-1980s
writings, mixed media on paper

Harold Newton
1934-1994, African American
Back County Storm, 1989-1990
paint on canvas board

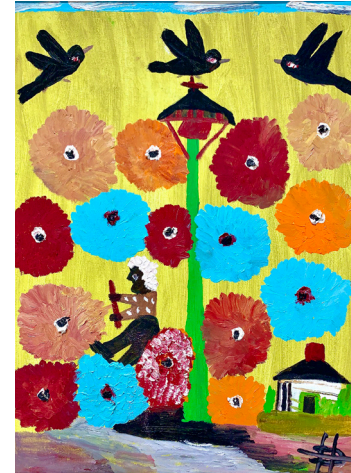
Harold Newton
1934-1994, African American
Solo Pine at Turks Ranch, c. 1960s
paint on canvas board

Sulton Rogers
1922-2003, African American
Jesus at the Temple Door, c.
1990s
carved and painted wood

Nellie Mae Rowe
1900-1982, African American
African Mask, 1980
crayon on paper

Nellie Mae Rowe
1900-1982, African American
Twins, 1978
felt tip on paper

O. L. Samuels
1931-2017, African American
Brahma Bull Walking Stick, 2009
carved and painted wood



Clementine Hunter, "Zinnias," paint on canvas, 1978

Power, Myth, and Memory IN AFRICANA ART



Sister Gertrude Morgan, "New Jerusalem," mixed media on paper

EXHIBITION LIST (CONTINUED)

Bernice Sims
1926-2014, African American
New Hope Baptist Church, 1998
paint on canvas

Bernice Sims
1926-2014, African American
Cotton Picking, 1994
paint on canvas

Bernice Sims
1926-2014, African American
Free Food and Beds, 1993
paint on canvas

Bernice Sims
1926-2014, African American
Wash Day, 1994
paint on canvas

Dr. Charles Smith
b. 1940, African American
Ebony Boy, 2000
mixed media sculpture

Mary T. Smith
1904-1995, African American
Four Figures on Blue
c. late 1970s-1980s
paint on wood in shadowbox

Mary T. Smith
1904-1995, African American
Lord Save Me, c. 1980s
paint on wood in shadowbox

Mary T. Smith
1904-1995, African American
Black Figure on Blue, c. 1980s
paint on tin in shadowbox

Mary T. Smith
1904-1995, African American
Three Figures/Yellow and Blue
1986, paint on wood

Buddy Snipes
b. 1943, African American
Peppermint Wonder House, 2012
sticks and mixed media

Jimmy Lee Sudduth
1910-2007, African American
Boar with Snake, c. 1978-1980
finger painting with house paint,
mud, berries, and plants on wood

Jimmy Lee Sudduth
1910-2007, African American
Four Figures with Building, 1988
finger painting with house paint,
mud, berries, and plants on wood

Jean Sylvestre
b. 1957, Haitian
**Freed Slaves Carrying
King Christophe**, 2005
cut tin, fè koupé

James "Son Ford" Thomas
1926-1993, African American
Clay Coffin, n. d.
baked river mud, paint, and wire

Mose "Mose T" Tolliver
c. 1920-2006, African American
Dry Bones Charlie, 1986
paint on wood

Mose "Mose T" Tolliver
c. 1920-2006, African American
Fierce Portrait, c. late 1980s
paint on wood

Mose "Mose T" Tolliver
c. 1920-2006, African American
Ocean Bird, c. 1991, paint on wood

Mose "Mose T" Tolliver
c. 1920-2006, African American
Trees with Moon, c. 1980
paint on wood

Unknown Artists
African American
Memory Jars, early-mid-1900s
clay with found objects

Willie White
1910-2000, African American
Untitled, c. late 1980s-early 1990s
markers on poster board

Willie White
1910-2000, African American
Untitled, c. late 1980s-early 1990s
markers on poster board

Willie White
1910-2000, African American
Untitled, c. late 1980s-early 1990s
markers on poster board

Lavon Williams
b. 1958, African American
Boots in the Air, 2008
carved and painted wood

Ruby Williams
b. 1928, African American
It Cost to Hate, 2016
paint on wood

Ruby Williams
b. 1928, African American
Singing Tree, 2001
paint on wood

Purvis Young
1943-2010, African American
Funeral, c. early 1990s
paint on wood

Frantz Zephirin
b. 1968, Haitian
**Couple Being Wed,
Enriched by Spirits**, 1997
paint on canvas board

Frantz Zephirin
b. 1968, Haitian
**Purple Winged Devil Spirit
with Two Human Profiles**, 2001
paint on canvas

Frantz Zephirin
b. 1968, Haitian
Trinity with Eyes, 2002
paint on canvas



Purvis Young, "Funeral," paint on wood, c. early 1990s

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Hannibal Square Heritage Center

Established to pay tribute to Winter Park's historic African-American community through documentary photography, oral history and public art.



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