

## Black Arts Movement show in Kingston honors Ben Wigfall

1 [hudsonvalleyone.com/2018/04/26/black-arts-movement-show-in-kingston-honors-ben-wigfall](http://hudsonvalleyone.com/2018/04/26/black-arts-movement-show-in-kingston-honors-ben-wigfall)

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If you had anything to do with the visual arts in New Paltz in the 1960s through 1990s, you probably have fond memories of Ben Wigfall as a teacher, a mentor, a community activist and quite possibly a friend. He may have been the first African American addition to the SUNY-New Paltz faculty, but Wigfall certainly didn't live in an ivory tower (or even an ebony one). An extraordinarily gifted painter and printmaker from an early age, he was also famously accessible, humble, engaged and engaging, tirelessly challenging and boosting younger artists. He championed the inclusion of African American culture into the canon of fine art; worked with students to help the college establish a Black Studies program; opened and ran, for two decades, the influential Watermark/Cargo Gallery in Kingston's Rondout; and turned his print studio in

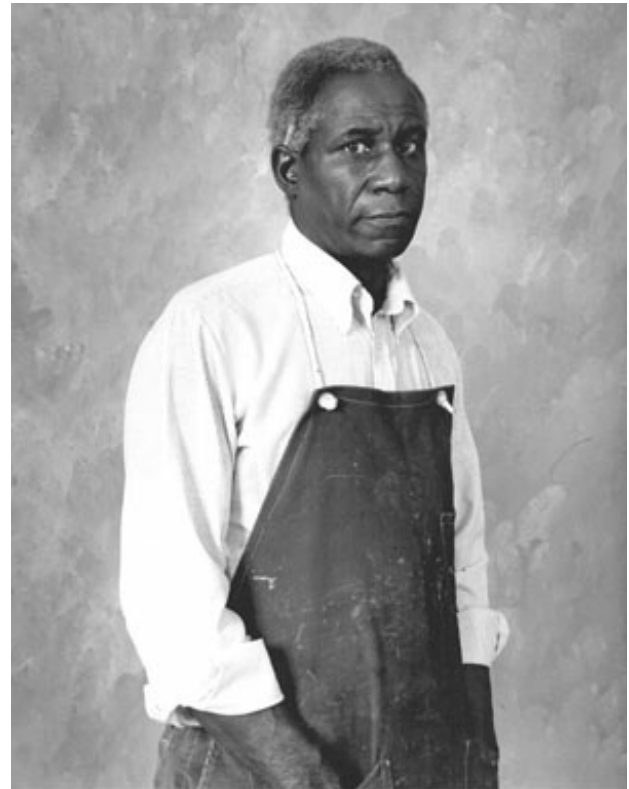


Photo of Ben Wigfall by Nancy Donskoj

Ponckhockie into a community center and contemporary art showcase called Communications Village, where up-and-coming stars of the Black Arts Movement would meet and mingle with Wigfall's academic colleagues, students and protégés and regular people from the neighborhood. "Beloved" is a word that one hears a lot when talking with people who knew Ben.

Benjamin Wigfall died a little over a year ago, and his importance as a catalyst for the mainstream appreciation of contemporary art by African Americans has not gone unnoticed. Organized by TRANSART & Cultural Services and curated by Marline A. Martin, a new exhibition titled "Restoring Pride in Culture: Legacy and Tradition" opens at SUNY-Ulster's Kingston Center, where it will remain on view through June 10. The exhibit celebrates Wigfall's spirit and legacy through artworks by several of his prominent peers, including Romare Bearden, Robert Blackburn, Betty Blayton, Melvin Edwards, Ann Tanksley and Emmett Wigglesworth. The collection of 37 works – paintings, lithographs, woodcuts, etchings, quilts,

collages and monoprints – also features art by Myrah Brown Green, Willie Mae Brown, Bryan Collier, Roy Crosse, Robin Holder, Dindga McCannon, Otto Neals, Donovan Nelson, Ademola Olugebefola and Michael Kelly Williams.

“Restoring Pride in Culture: Legacy and Tradition” will be open to the public from 3:30 to 9 p.m. Monday through Thursday and from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturdays. A number of the living artists whose work is shown in the exhibit will attend the opening reception this Saturday, April 28 from 2 to 5 p.m., which will feature music by Joakim and Chris, an Afro-Rock dance and trance duo. On Thursday, May 10 at 5 p.m. in Room 104 of the Kingston Center, *Living Treasures of Harlem: Continuing the Movement*, a documentary about the Weusi Artists’ Collective and their contributions to the Harlem community, will be screened, followed by a talkback with exhibit curator Marline A. Martin and TRANSART president Greer Smith.

The Kingston Center of SUNY-Ulster is located at 94 Mary’s Avenue in Kingston. For more information, e-mail [info@transartinc.org](mailto:info@transartinc.org) or call (845) 384-6350.

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