

A Celebration of Black Artists in Sag Harbor



"The Silence Perpetuates," the inaugural show at Mark Borghi's Sag Harbor gallery, recognizes the village's history as an African-American enclave by showing the work of artists such as Sam Gilliam, as seen above.

By Jennifer Landes (/node/489)

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As an art dealer and businessman, Mark Borghi knows what he wants and moves quickly. When he saw that an empty space in Sag Harbor next to Flying Point Surf Boutique was available this spring, he did

not hesitate to lease it. It is now the Sag Harbor sister to his Bridgehampton space. He then opened "The Silence Perpetuates" on July 3.

The exhibition is a survey of Black artists such as Derrick Adams, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Chakaia Booker, Frank Bowling, Ed Clark, Gregory Coates, Thornton Dial, Sam Gilliam, Felrath Hines, Claude Lawrence, Glenn Ligon, Sam Middleton, Adam Pendleton, Clintel Steed, Alma Thomas, and Kenneth Victor Young.

The works span a matter of several decades, but they seem to coalesce around certain periods: the 1950s, 1970s, and 2000s.

Just before the 1950s, a work on paper by Romare Bearden with dye and India ink, "Untitled (Xmas for Jean)" from 1948, breaks down the traditional Madonna and Child format with a Cubist/Expressionist hybrid approach. It's a fascinating work that draws one in for extended viewing.

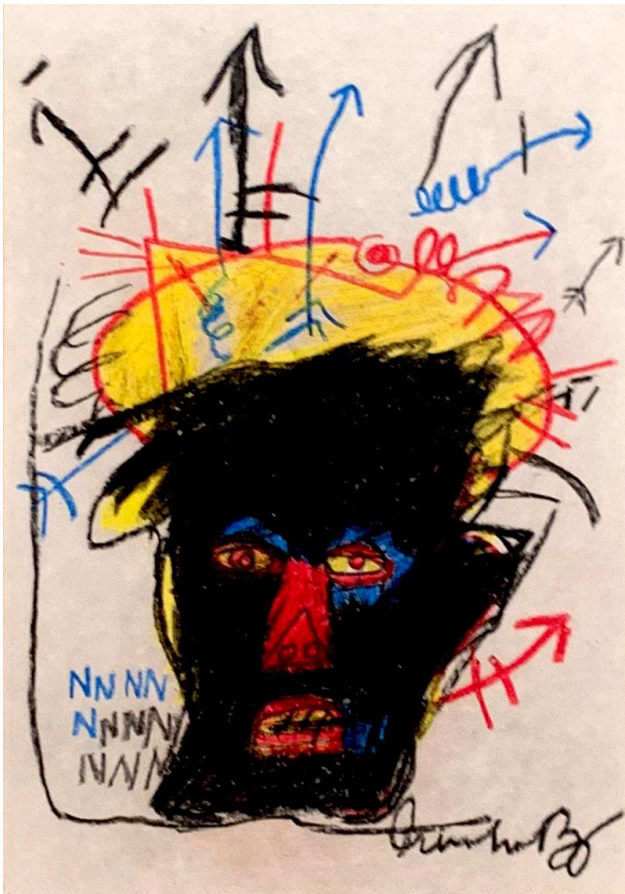
Hines is responsible for one of the 1950s works. The artist, who also served as a conservator at the National Portrait Gallery in the 1970s, moved from Cubism to softer abstractions into a geometric style in the decades that he painted. In "Totem," from 1950, the style seems to be a holdover and a synthesis of what he was painting in the 1940s, with a similar focus on the figure. He would go on to paint more abstracted landscapes.

Middleton's "Impression," from later in the '50s, captures the artist after his break with Social Realism and during a time when he began integrating collage into his work. This oil painting seems reflective of the art scene of downtown New York, which the artist frequented in this period and right before he left the United States permanently for the more open-minded atmosphere of Europe. He died in the Netherlands in 2015.

Of the artists whose 1970s works are represented, Mr. Gilliam's are the prettiest. "Blowing Cool Red 2," from 1974, is a layered paper-and-canvas work, with acrylic and aluminum dust. It's colorful and sparkly,

and its uneven edging accentuates its objectness. An untitled mixed-media-on-paper composition is more ethereal, slightly reminiscent of cherry blossoms, but only in an evanescent way. Its magic is that it moves so easily between something recognizable and a random assemblage of visual forms.

Thomas's "Untitled (Composition in Rainbow Colors)," painted about two years before her death in 1978, stacks color in its non-repetitious but thematic pattern in a prismatic way. Its happy rhythm is appealing and strong. Mr. Young's 1972 "Sun in Night" is an acrylic on canvas that deploys a fireball representation of the center of our solar system. Red dots and flames seem to engulf the circular massing of color. Clark's pastel from 1978 is calming but less compelling than his "Moroccan Series," a dry pigment on paper from 1990, where organic forms are bathed in shaded tones of purple, blue, green, yellow, and red.



A crayon drawing by Jean-Michel Basquiat from 1982

Another outlier is the Basquiat from around 1982. An untitled crayon drawing, it captures the artist's expressive use of primary color freely employed around an otherwise purely black or blackened subject.

From the aughts, Mr. Bowling supplies a very long and somewhat narrow acrylic-on-canvas abstraction in the colors and mood of a sunset. Mr. Pendleton, young enough to be Mr. Bowling's grandson, has two silkscreens on canvas on view, with poetic language that waxes visual. He is a writer and critic, and of the recent protests against police violence he wrote an essay for Artnews with the title "I Am Not Safe, and This Country Is Not Kind."

The most recent works are particularly dynamic. There is the exuberance of Mr. Steel's giant fantastical canvases, or the unrestrained, repurposed rubber tire wall sculptures of Ms. Booker. Even the more traditional acrylic abstractions of Mr. Lawrence have a lively line and energy throughout. Mr. Adams's paper print takes on traditional portrait busts and his jovial self-portrait are subversive of genres and full of expressionistic color and design.

The most staid in this group, Dial's "The Downtown," is so only because of his restrained palette of whites, blacks, and grays. Otherwise, his applied found objects offer a rich textural landscape of varied and built-up surfaces. Also making the most of texture is Mr. Ligon's "Untitled (Hands with Grit)," from 1999, a small but powerful piece in oil stick and grit on board.

The show, originally planned to close tomorrow, has been extended to Friday, July 31.