

Culture Type Picks: 18 Best Black Art Books of 2018

by VICTORIA L. VALENTINE on Jan 4, 2019



The best illustrated black art books of 2018. | Photo by Victoria L. Valentine

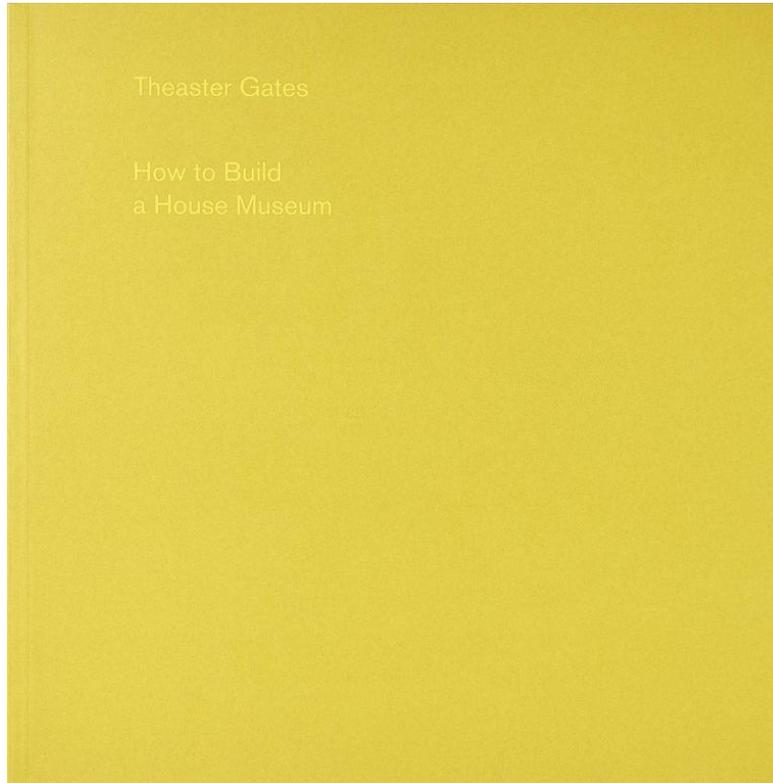
THE INCREASED INTEREST among some museums in mounting exhibitions featuring the work of African American artists has translated into a growing number of catalogs published to document them, which is wonderful. Many of those catalogs made Culture Type's 2018 list of best illustrated art books, along with a few monographs, and a volume documenting a private collection. The selected titles were chosen based on how they stood up as individual publications, not because they accompanied a "groundbreaking" exhibition or featured the work of an "important" artist. Each volume provides an absorbing experience and captures its subject in a thoughtful, informative, and accessible manner, often with an elevated design. As an added bonus, many include insights from other artists. For instance, Henry Taylor's monograph features a conversation between Taylor and Charles Gaines; Rashid Johnson and Lynette Yiadom-Boakeye contributed to Sam Gilliam's exhibition catalog; and Kerry James Marshall wrote the introduction to the catalog for Charles White's retrospective. The Best Black Art Books of 2018 are volumes you would want to actually read, in addition to leafing through the beautiful images. (Titles listed in order of publication date.)



"Fired Up! Ready to Go!: Finding Beauty, Demanding Equity: An African American Life in Art. The Collections of Peggy Cooper Cafritz," by Peggy Cooper Cafritz, with contributions by Kerry James Marshall, Uri McMillan, Simone Leigh, Hank Willis Thomas, Jack Shainman, and Thelma Golden (Rizzoli Electa, 288 pages). | Published Feb. 20, 2018

1. Fired Up! Ready to Go!: Finding Beauty, Demanding Equity: An African American Life in Art. The Collections of Peggy Cooper Cafritz

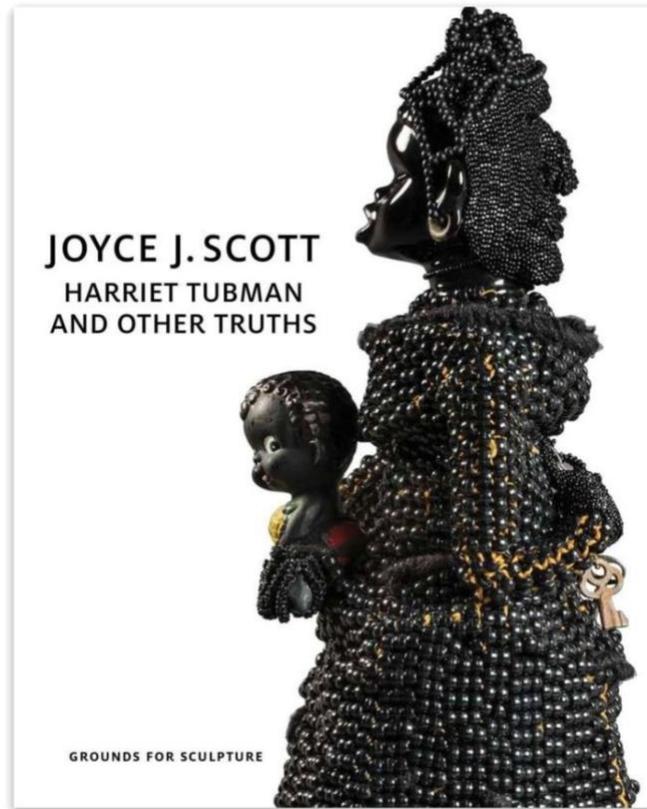
THIS VOLUME IS A REAL TREASURE. Hundreds of contemporary artworks by artists of African descent are illustrated. Peggy Cooper Cafritz (1947-2018), the passionate and inveterate collector, purchased the works over two periods of time. (She lost her first art collection to a house fire in 2009, and soon began assembling another.) The book showcases her art collections and documents her life. She pens an engrossing biographical essay that spans growing up in Mobile, Ala., to her ascension as an influential Washington, D.C., lawyer, arts patron/advocate, and founder the Duke Ellington School of the Arts. In addition, her relationships with key figures are revealed and explored through contributions from artists, gallery owner Jack Shainman, and Studio Museum in Harlem Director Thelma Golden, who conducts an interview with Cafritz for the book. Emerging artists are overwhelmingly represented in Cafritz's more recent collection, artists such as Njideka Akunyili Crosby, Nina Chanel Abney, Derek Fordjour, Tschabalala Self, Titus Kaphar, and Simone Leigh, who she supported early and are coming into their own today. Cafritz, who died at age 70, two days before the official publication of this book, bequeathed the majority of her vast collection to the Studio Museum (400+ works) and Duke Ellington (250+ works). The gesture will benefit generations to come, as will this volume, which Cafritz titled with her mantra: "Fired Up! Ready to Go!" She's left an insightful gift of great value to both new collectors and art world insiders, as well as those interested in transformational cultural leaders.



"Theaster Gates: How to Build a House Museum," Edited by Kitty Scott, with foreword by Stephan Jost, and contributions by Josh T. Franco, Greg Tate, and Mabel O. Wilson, et al. (Art Gallery of Ontario, 236 pages). | Published April 1, 2018

2. Theaster Gates: How to Build a House Museum

CELEBRATING BLACKNESS through legacy sites, Theaster Gates mounted an grand immersive exhibition at the Art Gallery of Ontario that proposed "new ways of honoring and remembering Black experience and explore[d] the potential of these spaces through music, dance, video, sculpture and painting." The 2016 exhibition was the largest presentation of Gates's work to date. Organized as a world of symbolic structures, the show featured "houses" dedicated to the likes of blues musician Muddy Waters, legendary Chicago DJ Frankie Knuckles, brick mason George Black of Winston Salem, N.C., and Negro Progress. This last house gallery featured images of some of the graphic visualizations of Negro progress W.E.B. Du Bois displayed at the Paris Exposition Universelle in 1900 and three landscape paintings by Robert S. Duncanson (1821-1872). In the same space, a letter from Gates to fellow artists enlisting them to share their experiences with what Negro progress looks like today was presented with a response from Kerry James Marshall. Published two years after the show was on view, this volume builds on the exhibition experience. Here Gates, whose practice has its foundations in structures restored and activated to house archives and present art, film and music, presents full-color images of featured works alongside installation views of the galleries and performances. The volume also includes essays by Greg Tate and Mabel O. Wilson and an informative conversation between Gates and exhibition curator Kitty Scott that delves into the roots of the space-based aspects of the artist's practice and explores the concepts that frame the show. Copies of letters from the 61 artists and writer/curators who embraced Gates's request conclude the volume (maximum two pages, drawings allowed). In addition to Marshall, participants included Njideka Akunyili Crosby, Candida Alvarez, Xenobia Bailey, Nick Cave, Sonya Clark, Bethany Collins, David C. Driskell, Derek Fordjour, Todd Gray, Maren Hassinger, Rashid Johnson, Larry Ossei-Mensah, Lowery Stokes Sims, Carrie Mae Weems, and Wilmer Wilson IV, among many others. The collective candor, wisdom and insight is gripping.

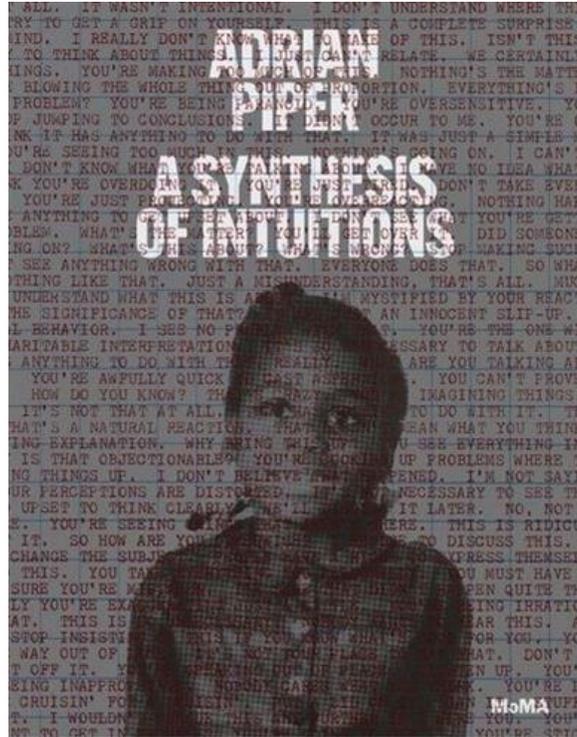


"Joyce J. Scott: Harriet Tubman and Other Truths." Foreword by Gary Garrido Schneider, with contributions by Lowery Stokes Sims, Patterson Sims, Seph Rodney, and Joyce J. Scott, and coordination by Coby Green-Rifkin and Carolyn McCormack (Grounds for Sculpture, 192 pages). | Published April 24, 2018

3. Joyce J. Scott: Harriet Tubman and Other Truths

BEAUTY, WIT AND TURMOIL co-exist in the imaginative beadwork of Baltimore artist Joyce J. Scott. Her figurative sculptures, wall hangings and jewelry address politics, racism, violence, and gender issues. A number of works honor the legacy of Harriet Tubman as both a symbolic and historic figure, hence the name of her recent, and most ambitious, exhibition presented at Grounds for Sculpture in Hamilton, N.J. Published to accompany "Harriet Tubman and Other Truths," this catalog is the most comprehensive volume to date documenting Scott's work. Rife with full-color images of her artwork, installation views, and documentary photographs, the volume features a wide-ranging conversation with the artist conducted by curator Lowery Stokes Sims. Scott talks about how the 2015 death of Freddie Gray while in police custody affected her community, learning to create with beads from her mother, and honing her glasswork skills in Seattle, Wash., Deer Isle, Maine, and Murano, Italy.

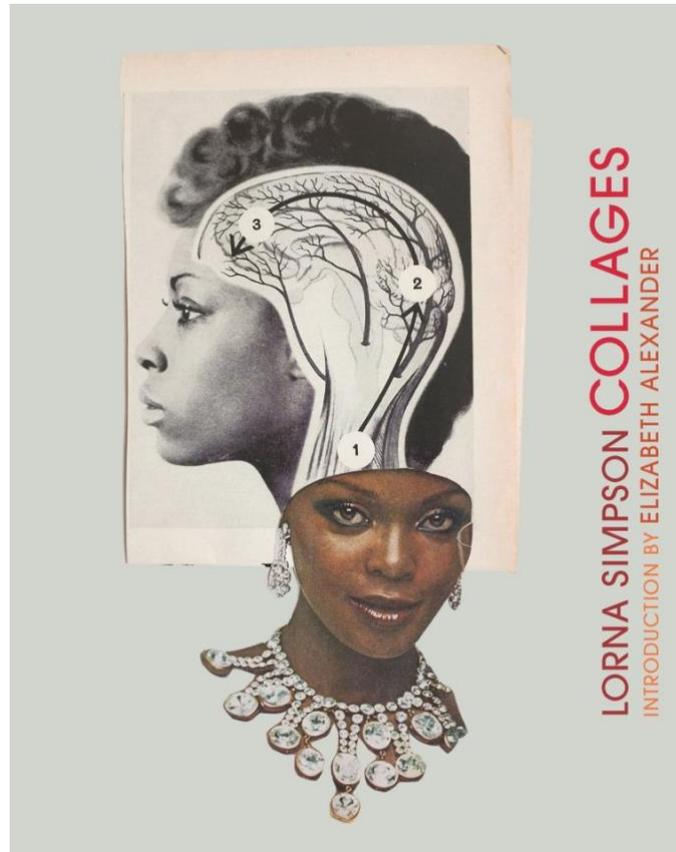
"I'd like my art to induce people to stop raping, torturing, and shooting each other. I don't have the ability to end violence, racism, and sexism...but my art can help them look and think." — Artist Joyce J. Scott



"Adrian Piper: A Synthesis of Intuitions 1965–2016," by Adrian Piper, with editing and text by Christophe Cherix, Cornelia Butler, and David Platzker, with contribution from Tessa Ferreyros (Museum of Modern Art, New York, 352 pages). | Published May 22, 2018

4. Adrian Piper: A Synthesis of Intuitions 1965–2016

A PIONEERING CONCEPTUAL ARTIST, philosopher, and yoga devotee, Adrian Piper's work challenges assumptions about race, identity, gender, and class. This volume documents her 50-year retrospective presenting some of the most profound and relevant work she's produced over her career. Composed of an array of works that spans painting, drawing, video, performance, and more, her oeuvre is insightful and multifaceted. The exhibition features 291 works, a selection that includes highly personal works and others that are inherently public. There's a 2007 video titled "Adrian Moves to Berlin" that features her doing a happy dance of sorts on an open plaza in Berlin and another called "Funk Lessons" (1983), in which the artist methodically teaches a group of people at UC Berkeley how to dance. Colorful abstract "LSD" paintings made in 1966 hang gallery style. There are 35 Barbie Doll Drawings (1967) and four vintage chalk boards with the phrase "Everything will be taken away" repeated in cursive writing (2010-13). Featuring video of President George H.W. Bush shaking hands with LAPD officers, "Black Box/White Box" (1992) presents alternating perspectives of the Rodney King beating that gave rise to the Los Angeles riots. Another installation features a shelf holding jars of Piper's hair and nail clippings, an ongoing work initiated in 1985 that will be donated to the Museum of Modern Art upon the artist's death. "The Vanilla Nightmares" (1986) is composed of drawings on the pages of the New York Times, inserting black figures into articles and advertisements featuring white people, "suggesting the racial fears and biases of a culturally liberal publication." A passageway connecting two galleries requires visitors to hum ("Any tune will do.") when leaving one room to enter the other. It's a sprawling, uncompromising survey, a real thrill to wander and experience. To an extent, all of this comes through in the catalog. Essays by the curators are complemented by a contribution from Piper who writes about the intersection of her art and her philosophy work and invokes the concept of synthesized intuition, hence the exhibition title. More than 200 pages in the catalog are devoted to full-color plates—illustrations and installation views of her work, and documentation of her performances and videos. A personal chronology authored by Piper concludes the volume. The detailed, year-by-year accounting of her activities and experiences is a fascinating read.

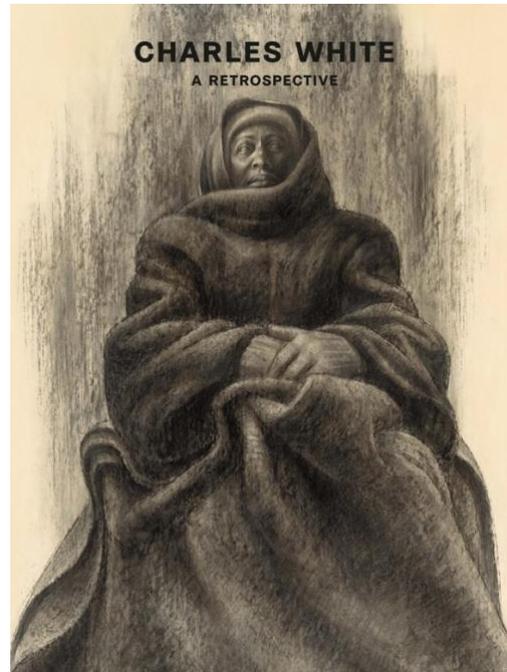


"Lorna Simpson Collages." by Lorna Simpson, with introduction by Elizabeth Alexander (Chronicle Books, 192 pages). | Published June 5, 2018

5. Lorna Simpson Collages

WORKING WITH ADVERTISING IMAGES from vintage Ebony and Jet magazines, Lorna Simpson has created countless collages defined by imaginative hair treatments—crowns of glory made with strokes of watercolor and elaborate geological formations clipped from old textbooks. The portraits have become a signature of Simpson's practice, as stand-alone works and studies and inspirations for other work. The collages fill nearly every page of this captivating and empowering book. There are 160, seemingly simple yet complex images that beg interpretation, which scholar Elizabeth Alexander provides in her brief, poetic introduction. Simpson also gives some context with a one-page artist statement that is an endless compilation of advertising phrases that accompanied many of the original photographic images. The final one reads: "Reveal the beauty that you conceal."

"In Lorna Simpson's collages, "the black and boisterous" hair is the universal governing principle. Black women's heads of hair are galaxies unto themselves, solar systems, moonscapes, volcanic interiors. The hair she paints has a mind of its own." — Scholar Elizabeth Alexander



"Charles White: A Retrospective," edited by Sarah Kelly Oehler and Esther Adler, with preface by Kerry James Marshall, and contributions by Ilene Susan Fort, Kellie Jones, Mark Pascale, and Deborah Willis (Art Institute of Chicago, 248 pages). | Published June 19, 2018

6. Charles White: A Retrospective

IN HIS OPENING ESSAY to this volume, Kerry James Marshall, a student of Charles White, speaks about a "physical sensation, a shiver induced by the mere sight of a thing," a kind of religious experience, and "the ineffable dimension of art often labeled 'sublime.'" His words aptly describe the effect of encountering White's work. Viewing his powerful, beautiful, dignified, and realistic images of black people is indeed a moving experience. Documenting the first major museum survey of White's work in more than three decades, this catalog features his paintings, drawings, and prints—193 color illustrations and 20 black-and-white ones. White was a key figure as an artist and citizen in Chicago, New York and Los Angeles. Engaging and insightful essays shed light on critical aspects of his life and contributions, including his murals and depictions of history, mastery as a draftsman and printmaker, the centrality of women in his work, his activism, and influence as a teacher. In her essay, Deborah Willis explores the role of photography in White's practice. He referenced archives and took his own photographs, using the images as source material. The artist's personal photographs were made available for the first time for the retrospective and appear in the catalog. The volume's back matter is nearly as eye-opening as the feature content. There's a lengthy, selected exhibition history; an inventory of the artist's library—a listing of the books and magazine's in his possession when he died that are now housed in the Charles White Archives; and a 15-page chronology of his life and career. A 1963 entry notes a profile of the artist published in *Negro Digest* magazine: "The article begins, 'The work of Charles White has such simple, direct—and profoundly poetic—power that it is astonishing he is not world famous. Well, perhaps not so astonishing after all: the artist is a Negro characterized by great pride and integrity, and his subject matter is, almost invariably, his own race.'"

"I have been a stalwart advocate for the legacy of Charles White. I've said it so often, it could go without saying. I have always believed that his work should be seen wherever great pictures are collected and made available to art-loving audiences. He is a true master of pictorial art, and nobody else has drawn the black body with more elegance and authority. No other artist has inspired my own devotion to a career in image making more than he did. I saw in his example the way to greatness." — Artist Kerry James Marshall

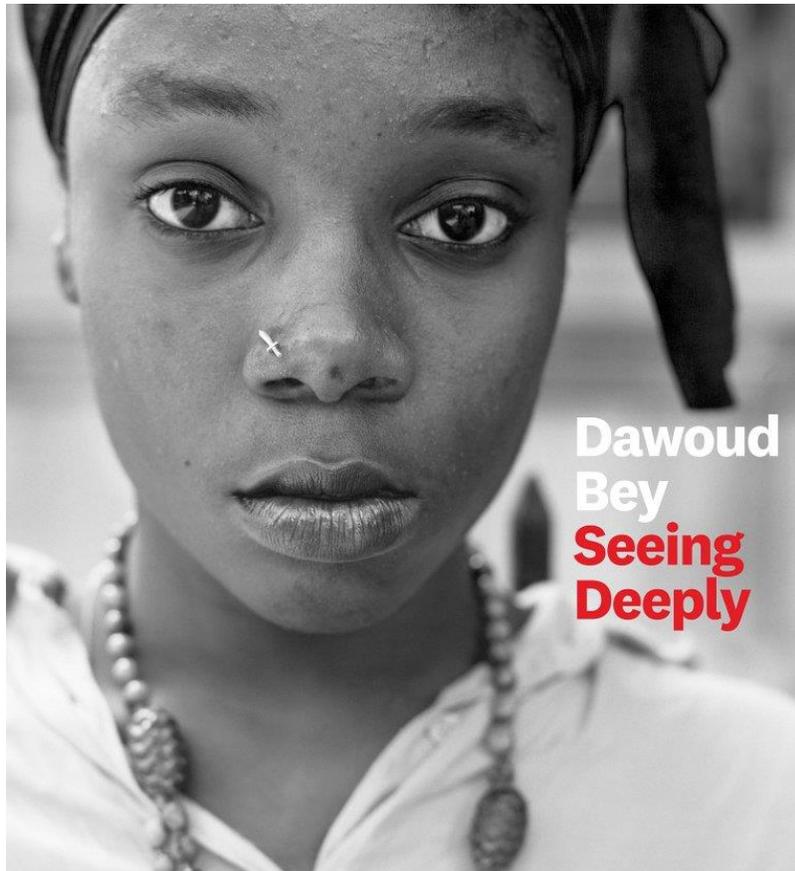


"Zanele Muholi: Somnyama Ngonyama, Hail the Dark Lioness," by Zanele Muholi, with text by more than a dozen additional contributors (Aperture, 212 pages). | Published Sept. 1, 2018

7. Zanele Muholi: Somnyama Ngonyama, Hail the Dark Lioness

HAIL THE DARK LIONESS indeed. More than 90 powerful and evocative images from Zanele Muholi's ongoing self-portrait series are collected here, the South African photographer and visual activist's first monograph. Muholi came to international attention for her documentary-style portraits of South African LGBTQ and gender-nonconfirming individuals. When she turned the camera on herself, her work entered another realm. Using her own face and body as a canvas, she adopts a variety of archetypes and personas, challenging the politics of race and representation in the visual archive. Look closely and in many of the images she's adorned herself with props plucked from her surroundings, everyday items and specific objects that reflect her personal experience and certain histories, vocations, and circumstances, including a miner's helmet, bicycle tires, a wash basin, stacks of newspapers, countless clothes pins, inflated black rubber gloves, soda can tabs, a bevy of sunglasses, a zippered travel bag, a doll, masking tape, and currency. The portraits speak to black beauty, raise critical questions about human rights and social justice issues, and confront contested representations of the black body. More than 20 brief contributions from writers, poets, and curators, such as Unoma Azuah, Thelma Golden, Oluremi C. Onabanjo, and Deborah Willis, are woven throughout the illustrated volume. The book also includes a conversation with Muholi conducted by Renée Mussai (who curated an exhibition of the portraits at Autograph ABP in London in 2017), in which the artist discusses in detail the inspirations and meanings behind the images.

"In Somnyama (her self-portrait series), my skin is the same as it is in real life. It is not artificially darkened. I'm only enhancing the contrast in post-production. I'm speaking of contrast in a literal sense. ...Contrast is when two opposing forces clash. Contrast is about difference. What does the use of high contrast mean in relation to black skin? I get a lot of questions and comments such as, 'I like how she paints her face.' Why would I have to paint my face?" — Artist Zanele Muholi

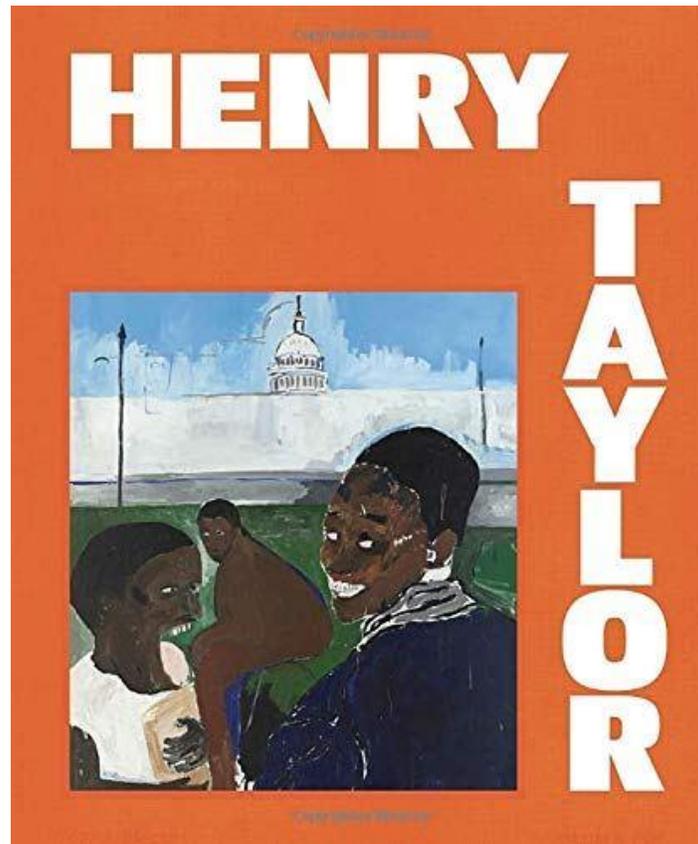


"Dawoud Bey: Seeing Deeply," By Dawoud Bey, with text by Deborah Willis, David Travis, Hilton Als, Jacqueline Terrassa, Rebecca Walker, Maurice Berger, and Leigh Raiford (University of Texas Press, 400 pages). | Sept. 18, 2018

8. Dawoud Bey: Seeing Deeply

CHICAGO-BASED PHOTOGRAPHER Dawoud Bey received the MacArthur Foundation's "genius" grant in 2017, providing confirmation of sorts that in his mid-60s his practice is singular, distinctive, and has "potential." His latest book, a mammoth retrospective volume, makes clear that a genius vision has coursed through his work for more than 40 years. Bey's largely community-based work captures the diverse American experience. The volume presents his various bodies of work dating from the mid-1970s to 2016, from his documentary photographs of Harlem, small camera work defined by light and shadow, and empowering images of youth to his 20x24 inch Polaroid portraits of fellow creatives such as Rebecca Walker, Whitfield Lovell, Lorna Simpson, Sol and Carol LeWitt, and Stuart Hall, and the diptych portraits featured in *The Birmingham Project*. In her introduction, scholar Sarah Lewis states that Bey has been guided by one question since 1975. "When is the negotiation of being seen in front of the lens a civic act? Dawoud Bey has consciously grappled with this foundational question for decades," Lewis writes. "His landmark work offers us invaluable models of what this negotiation requires of a photographer's relationships with his or her subjects and community and with the field of photographic styles that might complicate the ethics of this endeavor, particularly for black subjects." The book's description suggests Bey is the "natural heir" to legendary photographers Roy DeCarava, Gordon Parks, Walker Evans, and James VanDerZee. It's a high bar. "Seeing Deeply" makes a convincing case.

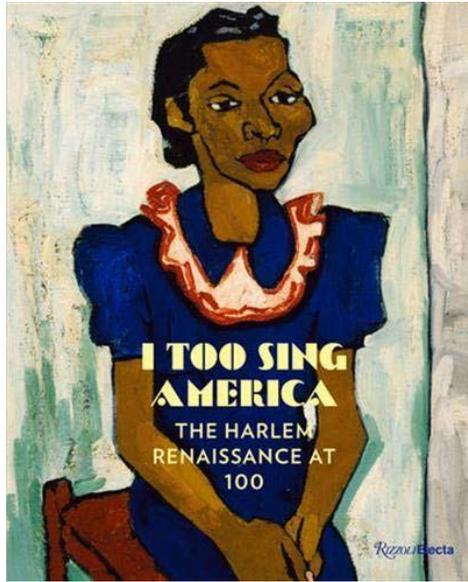
"The gaze of the subjects toward the lens signified, to me, a gaze of reciprocation: an awareness of the attention being directed at them and an attendant decision to acknowledge that by returning the gaze of the camera—and therefore the viewer." — Photographer Dawoud Bey



"[Henry Taylor](#)," with contributions by Charles Gaines, Rachel Kaadzi Ghansah, Sarah Lewis, and Zadie Smith (Rizzoli Electa, 320 pages). | Published Oct. 9, 2018

9. Henry Taylor: The Only Portrait I Ever Painted of My Momma Was Stolen

OVERFLOWING WITH MORE THAN 200 IMAGES, this new monograph documents the practice of Henry Taylor, the Los Angeles artist known for his bluesy approach to abstract figuration. It's a wonderful book and a genuinely good read. The first major volume to survey his career, "Henry Taylor" offers five ways of looking at the artist—through full-color illustrations of his works, mostly paintings and some sculptures and installations; handwritten notes and jottings interspersed throughout the pages that capture his momentary thoughts; an interview conducted by fellow Los Angeles artist Charles Gaines; and essays by Harvard University art historian Sarah Lewis, acclaimed British author Zadie Smith, and 2018 Pulitzer Prize-winning essayist Rachel Kaadzi Ghansah. A testament to their readability (and Taylor's relatability), two of the essays were published in magazines intended for general audiences in advance of the book's release. Smith's distillation appeared in *The New Yorker* and Ghansah's feature profile was included in *New York* magazine.



"I Too Sing America: The Harlem Renaissance at 100," by Wil Haygood, with contributions by Carole Genshaft, Anastasia Kinigopoulo, Nannette V. Maciejunes, Drew Sawyer (Rizzoli Electa, 248 pages). | Published Oct. 9, 2018

10. I Too Sing America: The Harlem Renaissance at 100

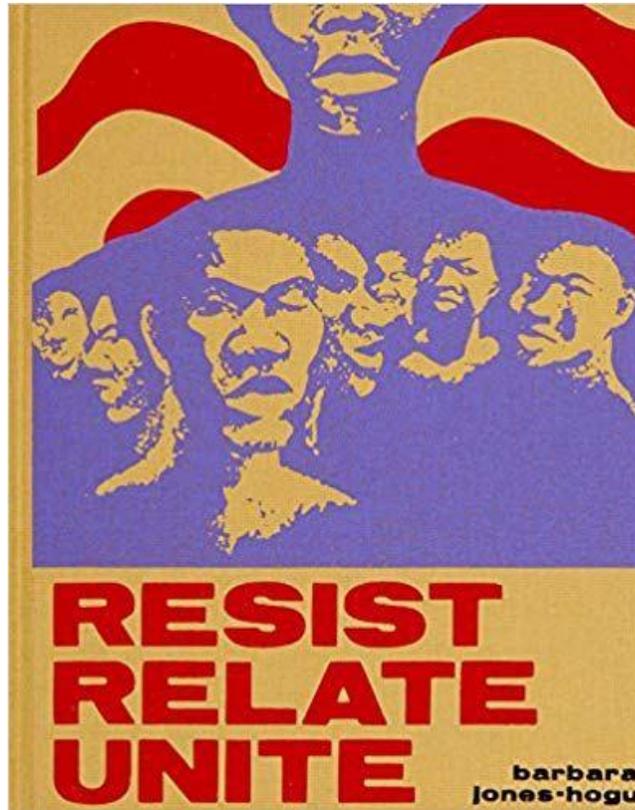
MANY VOLUMES AND EXHIBITIONS have paid tribute the Harlem Renaissance, the period generally regarded as dating from 1918 to the stock market crash of 1929. Celebrating the centennial of the creative and intellectual flowering, "I Too Sing America" is a unique exploration of the subject that brings a journalist together with his hometown museum and the community where he grew up in Columbus, Ohio. In the 1980s, Wil Haygood reported a three-part series about the Harlem Renaissance for the Boston Globe. Then he went on to the Washington Post, where his profile of a White House butler formed the basis of a feature film, and authored biographies on pioneering cultural figures Adam Clayton Powell Jr., Sammy Davis Jr., Sugar Ray Robinson, and Thurgood Marshall Jr. His early reporting and years of research for the books connected Haygood to Harlem and its history throughout much of his career and motivated the invitation for him to organize an exhibition at the Columbus Museum of Art, with support from the local Lincoln Theatre Association. Titled after Langston Hughes's iconic poem, "I Too Sing America" considers the Harlem Renaissance "as a movement not confined to either upper Manhattan or the interwar period, but as a historical moment of national and international significance that continues to have reverberations far beyond its typically noted end date in the mid-1930s." The catalog is a wonderful volume lavishly illustrated with the art and photography that defined the Renaissance. Haygood's essays on how Harlem emerged as the mecca of Black America, the feverish publishing the period sparked, the dance, theater, and music the era engendered, the two Reverend Powells, and W.E.B. Du Bois, Langston Hughes, and Zora Neale Hurston, appear throughout the volume. His contributions are punctuated by writings about individual visual artists, including Malvin Gray Johnson, Winold Reiss, Aaron Douglas, Palmer Hayden, Augusta Savage, and James VanDerZee, authored by the museum's curators.

"What American literature decidedly needs at this moment is color, music, gusto, the free expression of gay or desperate moods. ...If the Negroes are not in a position to contribute these items, I do not know what Americans are."

— Century Magazine Editor Carl Van Doren

"...it was glorious, and beautiful, and unforgettable. The impact of the movement during its time swept as far away as London and Paris. ...They were black artists who lit a torch. Men and women who made art—art that was often so potent it forced America to take notice. It was a renaissance, true enough, but nothing had come before it. And so it was a resistance."

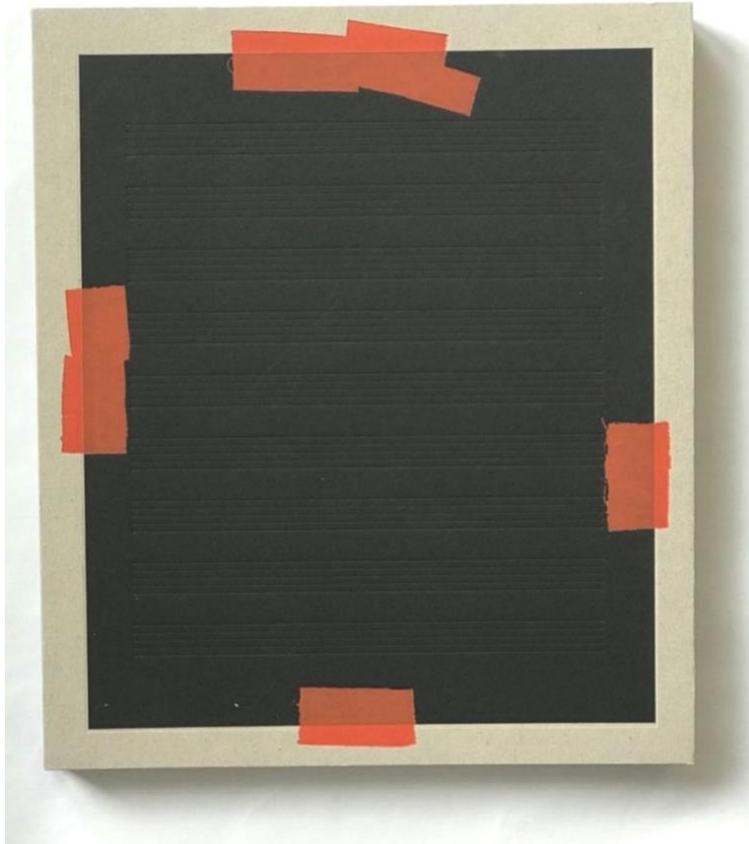
— Wil Haygood



"Barbara Jones-Hogu: Resist, Relate, Unite." Foreword by Julie Rodrigues Widholm, with contributions by Faheem Majeed, Zoé Whitley, and Rebecca Zorach (DePaul Art Museum, 104 pages). | Published Oct. 15, 2018

11. Barbara Jones-Hogu: Resist, Relate, Unite

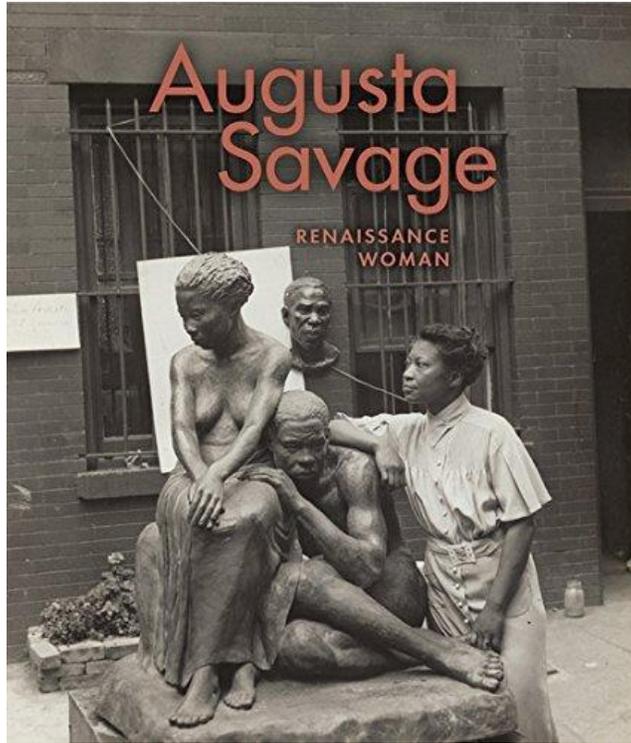
AN EXPERT PRINTMAKER who co-founded the Chicago artist collective AfriCOBRA in 1968, Barbara Jones-Hogu (1938-2017) produced political, pro-Black, color-charged images that combined figuration with dynamic graphic lettering. Two months after she died in November 2017, her first-ever solo museum exhibition opened at the DePaul Art Museum in Chicago. This volume documents the show. The modest-sized book—in scale and page count—features full-color plates of the works presented in the exhibition and an interview with the artist conducted in 2011 by art historian Rebecca Zorach and social justice archivist Skyla Hearn. Jones-Hogu is forthcoming in the conversation, explaining in detail her technical, intellectual and aesthetic approaches to printmaking. Her candor provides a backstory for the 23 works on paper dating from 1968 to 1973 that were featured in the exhibition—woodcuts, etchings, lithographs, and screenprints—with titles such as "Unite," "Heritage," "High Priestess," and "Black Men We Need You." In her essay, Tate Modern curator Zoé Whitley notes, "The titles of her artworks, notably double as the building blocks of her personal statement of intent." A fitting tribute to the practice of Jones-Hogu, the front of the book features a detail from her 1969 print "Nation Time" and a silhouetted portrait of the artist appears on the back. Both images are silkscreened on the cover fabric.



"Jason Moran," Edited by Adrienne Edwards, with foreword by Olga Viso, with contributions by Philip Bither, Okwui Enwezor, Danielle Jackson, Alicia Hall Moran, George Lewis, Glenn Ligon, and Jason Moran (Walker Art Center, 272 pages). | Published by Oct. 23, 2018

12. Jason Moran

PIANIST AND COMPOSER Jason Moran's unique practice bridges visual and performing arts. He's worked with an impressive list of artists, including Stan Douglas, Theaster Gates, Joan Jonas, Glenn Ligon, Julie Mehretu, Adrian Piper, Lorna Simpson, and Kara Walker. Published to coincide with Moran's first solo museum exhibition organized by the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, this catalog is collaborative and improvisational, reflecting the nature of his work. The volume itself is an art project, a mash up of images and text printed on a mix of matte and glossy pages bound between thick board covers. The exhibition features mixed-media "set" installations inspired by historic New York City performance venues—the Savoy Ballroom in Harlem, Three Deuces in Midtown Manhattan, and Slugs's Saloon in the East Village; collaborative projects, including the video installations "Chess" (2013) with Simpson and "Luanda Kinshasa" (2013) with Douglas; charcoal drawings by Moran; in-gallery performances; and "The Last Jazz Fest," a newly commissioned performance work. The catalog includes essays by curator Adrienne Edwards and Okwui Enwezor. George Lewis writes about how Moran's work "animates space and leaves trace." Alice Hall Moran, a mezzo soprano and Moran's wife, conducts a conversation with the composer. Ligon recalls experiences in clubs with Moran, seeing him perform and spending time backstage. One evening in 2009, Moran and Ligon were in the green room at the Highline Ballroom after then-80-year-old pianist Cecil Taylor and his trio commanded the stage. Moran mentioned he had a gig coming up at Village Vanguard, a legendary jazz venue Taylor (1929-2018) made clear he despised. He declared: "We turned that basement into a citadel."



“Augusta Savage: Renaissance Woman,” by Jeffrey M. Hayes, with introduction by Howard Dodson, and contributions by Kirsten Pai Buick and Bridget R. Cooks (GILES, 156 pages). | Published Oct. 23, 2018

13. Augusta Savage: Renaissance Woman

A HOMETOWN EXHIBITION is shining a long overdue light on the many contributions of Harlem Renaissance-era sculptor Augusta Savage (1892-1962). The pioneering artist/activist mentored two generations of artists—Charles Alton, Romare Bearden, Robert Blackburn, Selma Burke, Norman Lewis, Jacob Lawrence, Gwendolyn Knight Lawrence, and Ernest Crichlow, among them—and campaigned for equal treatment and opportunity for African Americans in the arts. This catalog duly documents her life and work and the exhibition guest curated by Jeffrey M. Hayes at the Cummer Museum of Art & Gardens in Jacksonville, Fla. Savage, who grew up poor outside of the city, left the South and headed north to find her calling. She took classes at Cooper Union School of Art in New York City and won an award to study in Paris in 1929. Back in New York, she was a founder of the Harlem Artists Guild and the first director of the Harlem Community Art Center, which operated with federal funds. On June 8, 1939, Savage opened the Salon of Contemporary Negro Art in Harlem, the “first gallery of its kind in the nation,” as cited by Bridget R. Cooks in her essay about the gallery. The same year, Savage created “The Harp” for the World’s Fair. The 16-foot-high sculpture for which she is best known, depicts 12 singing youth and was inspired by “Lift Every Voice and Sing,” the hymn by James Weldon Johnson and his brother. Savage knew Johnson from back in Jacksonville. Similar to the exhibition, this well-conceived volume features three essays and images of about 20 sculptures by Savage alongside works by the many artists she trained. Each of the full-page images includes invaluable background information about the work and in the case of the other artists, their connections to Savage, as well. The volume also presents archival photographs and several letters in which W.E.B. Du Bois corresponds with Savage and others about the artist and her work.

“This essay considers [Augusta] Savage as a ‘race woman’—an artist, a thinker, and a scholar whose works helped create space for Blackness to exist in and outside of the arts and contributed to social and cultural change...”

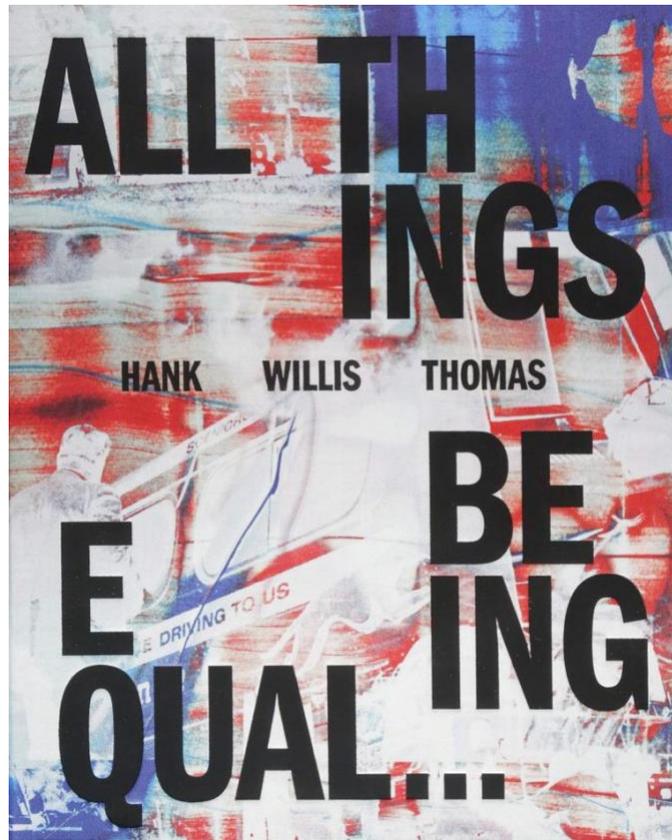
— Curator Jeffrey M. Hayes



"Mickalene Thomas: I Can't See You Without Me," by Mickalene Thomas, with foreword by Sherri Geldin, and text by Nicole R. Fleetwood, Michael Goodson, Beverly Guy-Sheftall, and Antwaun Sargent (Wexner Center for the Art, 128 pages). | Published Oct. 23, 2018

14. Mickalene Thomas: I Can't See You Without Me

A SERIES OF MUSES have inspired Mickalene Thomas over the years, expanding her vision of black female beauty and influencing her powerful representations of the black female body. Her elaborate rhinestone embellished paintings and layered collages cast her subjects in eclectic surroundings that replicate her immersive installations. This volume documents an exhibition of the same name at the Wexner Center Center for the Arts in Columbus, Ohio. Exploring beauty, identity, and authorship, the featured works include self-portraits and images of her muses—Sandra “Mama” Bush (her late mother), Maya (her former lover), Racquel (her current partner), and other collaborators. The exhibition also presents sculptures and a multichannel video. The fully illustrated catalog is anchored by essays from Michael Goodson, Antwaun Sargent, Nicole R. Fleetwood, and Beverly Guy-Sheftall. The volume’s design calls to mind Esopus, the multidisciplinary magazine that was produced in “a striking visual format.” Thomas contributed an artist project to the magazine in 2016 and it ceased publication in September 2018. A month later, this volume was released with a similar (but superior) design approach, including the use of a variety of paper stocks, multiple paper sizes, and vanity gatefolds with the essays printed on bound inserts. In her essay titled “Rebel Woman,” Guy-Sheftall concludes, “...Mickalene Thomas continues to challenge and unmask demeaning images of black womanhood, offering instead compelling alternatives that are impossible to ignore. Her stunning, larger-than-life portraits of black women mesmerize, delight, and overwhelm us and are a visual testament to the transformational and healing power of art.”



“Hank Willis Thomas: *All Things Being Equal*,” by Hank Willis Thomas, with contributions by Sarah Elizabeth Lewis, Kellie Jones, Julia Dolan, and Sara Krajewski (Aperture, 256 pages). | Published Nov. 15, 2018

15. Hank Willis Thomas: *All Things Being Equal*

TEN YEARS AFTER the publication of his first monograph, “Pitch Blackness,” a new volume surveys the career of Hank Willis Thomas. Published in advance of his exhibition of the same name at the Portland Museum of Art in Oregon, “All Things Being Equal” features key bodies of work from 2002-2018 that display the artist’s dexterity with representation and interpretation of images and language. He’s engaged with branding and advertising, political slogans, civil rights and apartheid-era photography, and more recently public art projects. The graphically driven, image-rich volume was designed by Bobby Martin. Essays by scholar Sara Elizabeth Lewis and curators Julie Dolan and Sara Krajewski are complemented by a conversation between Thomas and art historian Kellie Jones. She introduces the interview by informing readers that she has known the artist for most of his life. The first question she asked Thomas was, “Did you always know you wanted to be an artist?” His answer was, “I never wanted to be an artist.” Over the course of the lengthy conversation, he explains how he realized art was his calling and figured out how to frame and focus his unique photography-based practice. At its core “is his ability to parse and critically dissect the flow of images that comprises American culture, and to do so with particular attention to race, gender, and cultural identity.”

“Hank Willis Thomas continues in the legacy of these artists and cultural workers, taking on the imperative of this still urgent question: What is role of art for civic life? He also prompts us to consider others: How does visual culture create narratives that shape our notion of who counts in society?”

— Scholar Sarah Elizabeth Lewis



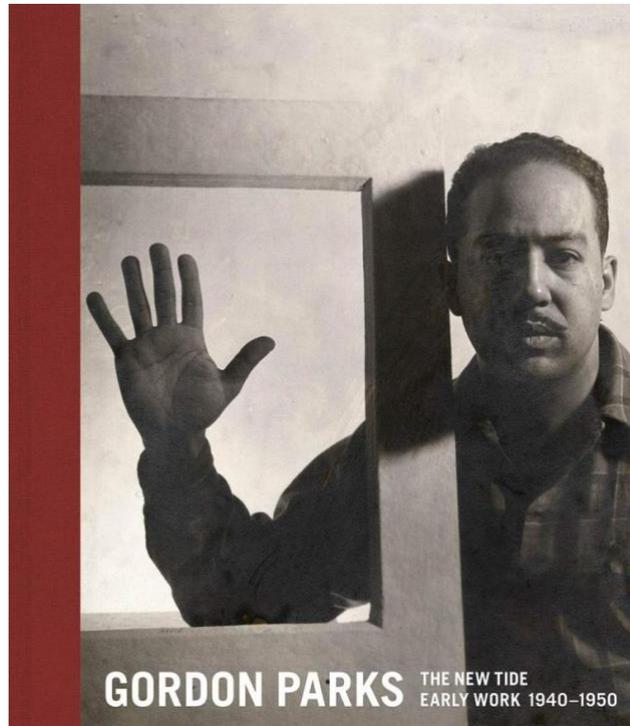
"Sam Gilliam: The Music of Color: 1967–1973," Edited by Jonathan Binstock and Josef Helfenstein, with contributions by Lynette Yiadom-Boakye, Larne Gogarty, Rashid Johnson, and Rafael Squirru (Walther König, Köln, 192 pages). | Published Nov. 20, 2018

16. Sam Gilliam: The Music of Color: 1967–1973

LEAFING THROUGH THIS VOLUME, readers are met with a symphony of color. Page after page brings a rush of greens, yellows, pinks, blues, and purples, countless installation images of Sam Gilliam's color-washed abstract canvases folded, draped and stretched, hanging from walls and ceilings and laying over a wood sawhorse. It's a fitting experience given the catalog documents "The Music of Color: Sam Gilliam, 1967-1973" the Washington, D.C.-based artist's first retrospective exhibition in a European museum. Presented at the Galleries of Kunstmuseum Basel, the show featured 45 paintings from a particularly creative and experimental seven-year period when Gilliam first produced the Beveled-Edge and Drape paintings for which he is most recognized. The works are expansive and improvisational. The array of images in the volume is complemented by excerpts from a series of ongoing conversations between Gilliam and Jonathan P. Binstock initiated in 1994 (when Binstock was a graduate student, he is now director of Memorial Art Gallery of the University of Rochester), that illuminate the artist's perspective and motivations with regard to his work. Within the color plates, a series of explanatory notes define and provide context for the artist's various works in seven categories such as Slice Paintings, Drape Paintings, Music and Painting, and Abstraction and Politics. Another plus, the volume features five poems for Gilliam composed by British artist Lynette Yiadom Boakye.

"In his 1983 book 'The Fire Next Time,' James Baldwin make reference to lyrics created by a black slave from a passage in the Bible: 'God gave Noah the rainbow sign. No more water the fire next time.' These words ring in my head each time I experience the work of the artist Sam Gilliam."

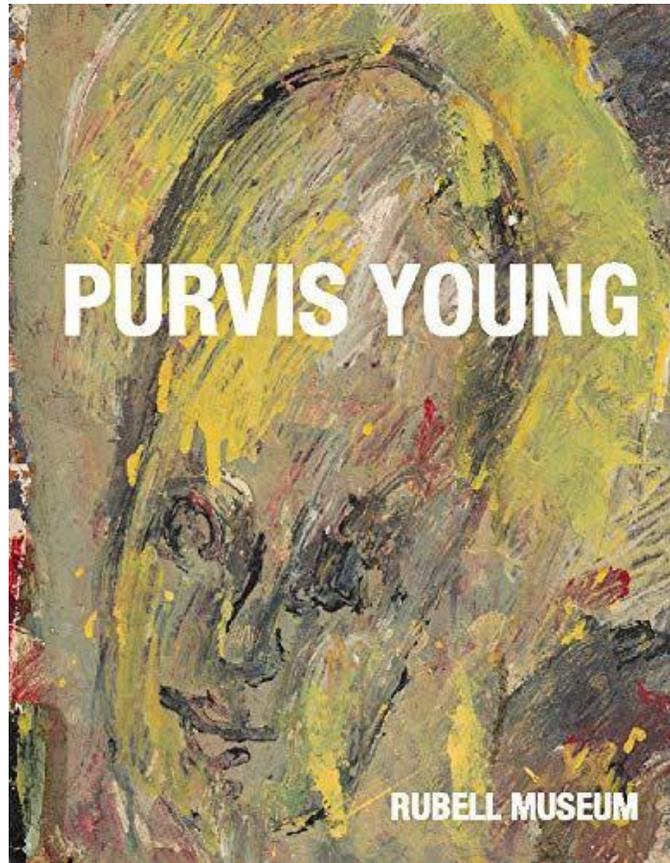
— Artist Rashid Johnson



"Gordon Parks: The New Tide: Early Work 1940–1950," Edited by Philip Brookman, with foreword by Earl Powell and Peter Kunhardt, introduction by Sarah Lewis, and contributions by Maurice Berger, Richard Powell, Deborah Willis, and photographer Gordon Parks (Steidl/Gordon Parks Foundation/National Gallery of Art, 304 pages). | Published Nov. 20, 2018

17. Gordon Parks: The New Tide: Early Work 1940–1950

INVARIABLY IDENTIFIED as the first African American staff photographer at Life magazine, Gordon Parks had a decade of experience when he was hired in February 1949. Those early years were incredibly fruitful and are explored in an exhibition at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., and this accompanying catalog. A self-taught photographer, Parks's work appeared in the St. Paul Recorder newspaper in 1939, providing a launch pad. In the 1940s, he trained his camera on life in Chicago, where he was connected with the South Side Community Art Center. During employment with the Farm Security Administration, Office of War Information, and Standard Oil, he documented American labor, struggle and industry. Parks contributed to a variety of publications, including Ebony, Vogue, Glamour, Fortune, and Life, before he was brought on full time. He made portraits of Langston Hughes, Ralph Ellison, and artist Charles White, among others, and published two books, as well. His relationships with Hughes, Ellison, Roy Stryker, Richard Wright, and Alain Locke, are also captured in "The New Tide," which explores Parks's formative period for the first time. Emphasizing new research and forgotten images, the volume presents his early work as published in a variety of newspapers, magazines, and other printed matter, as well as his documentary, feature, and fine art work from the period. Several essays provide context. In the introduction, scholar Sarah Lewis explains the origins of the title. "In '12 Million Black Voices: A Folk History of the Negro in the United States,' which Parks referred to as his bible, Wright described a dawning sense of the role of photography for the civil rights movement and a new solidarity committed to racial equality and justice," Lewis writes. "Wright inscribed a copy of his 1940 novel 'Native Son' to Parks as 'one who moves with the new tide,' signaling his position as leader not only within mass media, devising a mode of visual reporting that could have impact and inspire empathy to move past the boundaries of one's own particular experience." Billed as developmental work that shaped Parks's vision, any accomplished photographer would be proud to claim this incredible collection as the hallmark of his or her career.



"Purvis Young," Edited by Juan Valadez, with an introduction by Mara Rubell, and contributions by César Trasobares, Barbara N. Young, Hans Ulrich Obrist, Rashid Johnson, and Franklin Sirmans (Rubell Museum, 364 pages). | Published December 2018

18. Purvis Young

ENCAPSULATING THE WORLD of Purvis Young (1943-2010), this volume presents full-color illustrations of more than 250 works by the prolific Miami-born artist who said he painted what he saw—around his neighborhood and in the world, the problems and some good things, too. Published to coincide with his solo exhibition currently on view at the Rubell Family Collection in Miami, the book features texts by those who knew him best, the local artist and curator César Trasobares, who organized an early show of Young's work in 1976 and Barbara N. Young, a librarian who operated the Artmobile (a museum on wheels) and met the artist the same year. A conversation between the artist and curator Hans Ulrich Obrist is also featured. Meeting for the first time, they spoke in 2005, five years before Young died. The exchange reveals the artist's authentic voice, the way his mind works, his artistic intentions emerge, and he also expresses concerns that people are "getting a fortune off my artwork and stuff." The Rubells met Young in 1998 through friends who invited them to the artist's studio. In the catalog's introduction, Mara Rubell writes, "We knocked on a heavy steel door and Purvis answered the door almost immediately, welcomingly. ...Mountains of paintings confronted us. All around us and piled to the top of the tall ceiling, thousands of wooden paintings were stacked on top of each other. ...This was where Purvis worked and where he lived alongside several decades' worth of paintings. It was his personal universe—an authentic place for him to live, to be close to his subjects and to capture the life and struggles of his community." After page 50, the volume is an album of Young's artwork a succession of dozens and dozens of paintings on wood and fiberboard grouped into themed sections such as Pregnant Women, Slaves, Faces, Prisoners, Drugs, Horses, Protesters, Funerals, Holy Men and Angels, and Planets and Stars. CT