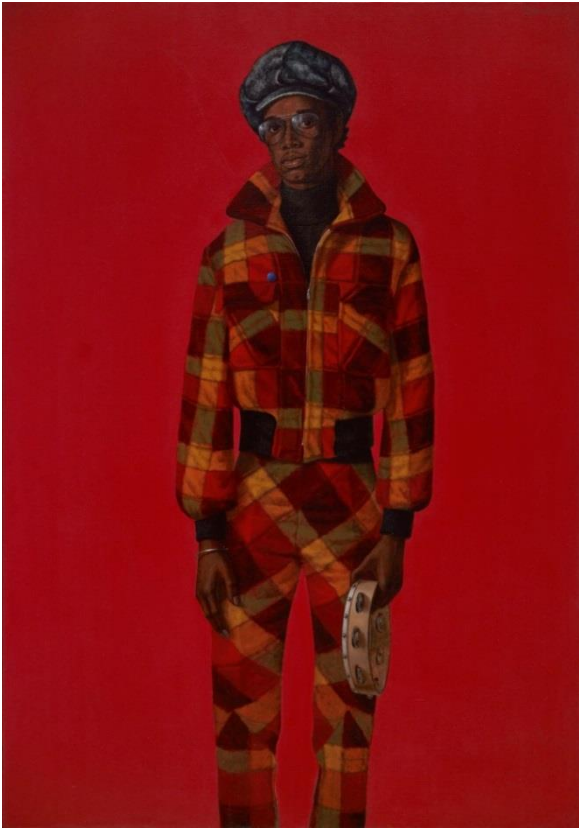


Press Release

Brooklyn Museum



Barkley L. Hendricks, (American, 1945–2017), *Blood* (Donald Forney), 1975. Oil and acrylic on canvas, 72 x 50½ in. (182.9 x 128.3 cm). Courtesy of Dr. Kenneth Montague | The Wedge Collection, Toronto. © Estate of Barkley L. Hendricks. Courtesy of the artist's estate and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York. (Photo: Jonathan Dorado, Brooklyn Museum)

The Brooklyn Museum Presents *Soul of a Nation: Art in the Age of Black Power*

Featuring over 150 works by more than 60 artists, the exhibition offers a sweeping view of the remarkable art made by Black artists during one of the most crucial periods in American history

On view September 14, 2018–February 3, 2019

The Brooklyn Museum presents the critically acclaimed exhibition *Soul of a Nation: Art in the Age of Black Power*, an unprecedented look at a broad spectrum of work by African American artists from 1963 to 1983, one of the most politically, socially, and aesthetically revolutionary periods in American history. *Soul of a Nation* considers the varied ways that Black artists responded to the demands of an urgent moment and brings together for the first time the disparate and innovative practices of more than sixty artists from across the country, offering an unparalleled opportunity to see their significant works side by side. The Brooklyn Museum is the only East Coast venue for this exhibition, which was organized by Tate Modern in London and traveled to Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Bentonville,

Arkansas, in early 2018. Opening September 14, the Brooklyn presentation will remain on view through February 3, 2019.

Soul of a Nation features more than 150 works of art in a sweeping aesthetic range, from figurative and abstract painting to assemblage, sculpture, photography, and performance. Among the influential artists of the time highlighted in the exhibition are Emma Amos, Frank Bowling, Sam Gilliam, Barkley Hendricks, Betye Saar, Alma Thomas, Jack Whitten, and William T. Williams. The Brooklyn presentation will also include several works by artist and scholar David Driskell, Suzanne Jackson's *Tripical Communications* (1969), and a large-scale draped painting by Sam Gilliam titled *Carousel Merge* (1971). In addition, a monochromatic work by Emma Amos will be on view, as well as two large-scale paintings by British Guyana-born artist Frank Bowling and an abstract push-broom painting by Ed Clark from the late 1970s, which recently joined the Museum's permanent collection.

The show begins in 1963, before the emergence of the Black Power Movement later in the decade, with the Spiral collective. This group of New York-based painters, including Romare Bearden, Norman Lewis, and Emma Amos, worked in diverse aesthetic styles and explored the role of Black artists in the struggle for civil rights. Also active in New York at the time was the Kamoinge Workshop, a group of photographers who responded to the lack of institutional support and mainstream representation of Black artists by conducting workshops and producing their own gallery shows and portfolios.

The exhibition goes on to trace how artists across the country continued to work in collectives, communities, and individually during the rise of the Black Power Movement. In Los Angeles, years of urban unrest propelled a number of artists to experiment with assemblage and sculpture. Artists such as John Outterbridge and Noah Purifoy made works inspired by the aftermath of the Watts Rebellion of 1965. Emory Douglas, who served as the minister of culture for the Black Panther Party, founded in Oakland, California, in 1966, created striking graphics and illustrations that became powerful symbols of the movement—twenty-four of which are included in the exhibition. In Chicago, a group of artists formed AfriCOBRA, whose manifesto and aesthetic philosophy aimed to empower Black communities. Works by its founding members are on display, including Gerald Williams's *Say It Loud* (1969), whose vibrant colors, graphic lettering, and use of black figures were emblematic of the AfriCOBRA style. In New York, painters incorporated symbols of protest, solidarity, and Black pride, while many organized for institutional inclusion. Also featured is artist and professor David Driskell, who drew upon similar themes in his painting, as he worked to organize university art departments across the South and promote scholarship of African American art.

The show also addresses formal concerns and aesthetic innovations across abstraction and figuration in painting and sculpture, featuring such works as Sam Gilliam's *April 4* (1969), Barkley Hendricks's *Blood (Donald Formey)* (1975), Frank Bowling's *Texas Louise* (1971), and Martin Puryear's *Self* (1978). With its central triangular form, Jack Whitten's powerful *Homage to Malcolm* (1970) recalls the pyramids that Malcolm X visited on a trip to Africa in 1964, and was painted as a memorial to the late activist. Other works show the emergence of integral figures in Black feminism such as Kay Brown, Faith Ringgold, and Betye Saar, highlighting an important moment of visibility for female artists. The exhibition concludes with a section on Just Above Midtown (JAM), the first commercial gallery space dedicated

to showing the work of avant-garde Black artists, notably including artists working in performance, such as Lorraine O'Grady, David Hammons, Senga Nengudi, and others.

The timely exhibition extends the Brooklyn Museum's trailblazing commitment to a vital period in American art, following its exhibitions *Witness: Art and Civil Rights in the Sixties* (2014) and *We Wanted a Revolution: Black Radical Women, 1965–85* (2017), as well as the Museum's major acquisition of forty-four works from the Black Arts Movement in 2013.

"With *Soul of a Nation*, we are honored to highlight the truly exceptional work produced by African American artists during one of the most significant moments in U.S. history and to honor these artists and all those arts professionals, here in Brooklyn and beyond, who have long supported their work," said Anne Pasternak, Shelby White and Leon Levy Director of the Brooklyn Museum.

Ashley James, Assistant Curator of Contemporary Art, adds: "Artists in this exhibition bravely and variously created art responsive to an urgent time of social, political, and aesthetic rupture, resulting in some of the most striking works created in the late twentieth century. This exhibition adds to an already existing and growing focus on the art produced during the Black Power Movement, an indication of the period's important and continued resonance with our present as well as the absolute excellence that defines the art of the era."

Soul of a Nation: Art in the Age of Black Power is organized by Tate Modern in collaboration with Brooklyn Museum and Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, Arkansas, and curated by Mark Godfrey, Senior Curator, International Art, and Zoe Whitley, Research Curator, Tate Modern. The Brooklyn Museum presentation is organized by Ashley James, Assistant Curator of Contemporary Art, Brooklyn Museum.

Leadership support for this exhibition is provided by the Terra Foundation for American Art.

Related Programming:

Opening Celebration: *Soul of a Nation: Art in the Age of Black Power*
Saturday, September 15, 2018

Celebrate the opening of *Soul of A Nation: Art in the Age of Black Power* during a day of conversations exploring the intersections between self-imaging and photography, art and activism, and geography and artistic practice. The celebration begins with a behind-the-scenes glimpse into the making of the exhibition in Brooklyn with Ashley James, Assistant Curator of Contemporary Art, and features a keynote address from Margo N. Crawford, Professor of English at the University of Pennsylvania and author of *Black Post-Blackness: The Black Arts Movement and 21st Century Black Aesthetics* (2017), followed by intimate discussions among participating artists such as Melvin Edwards, Sam Gilliam, Ming Smith, and Herb Robinson.