

[Just Above Midtown: Changing Spaces]

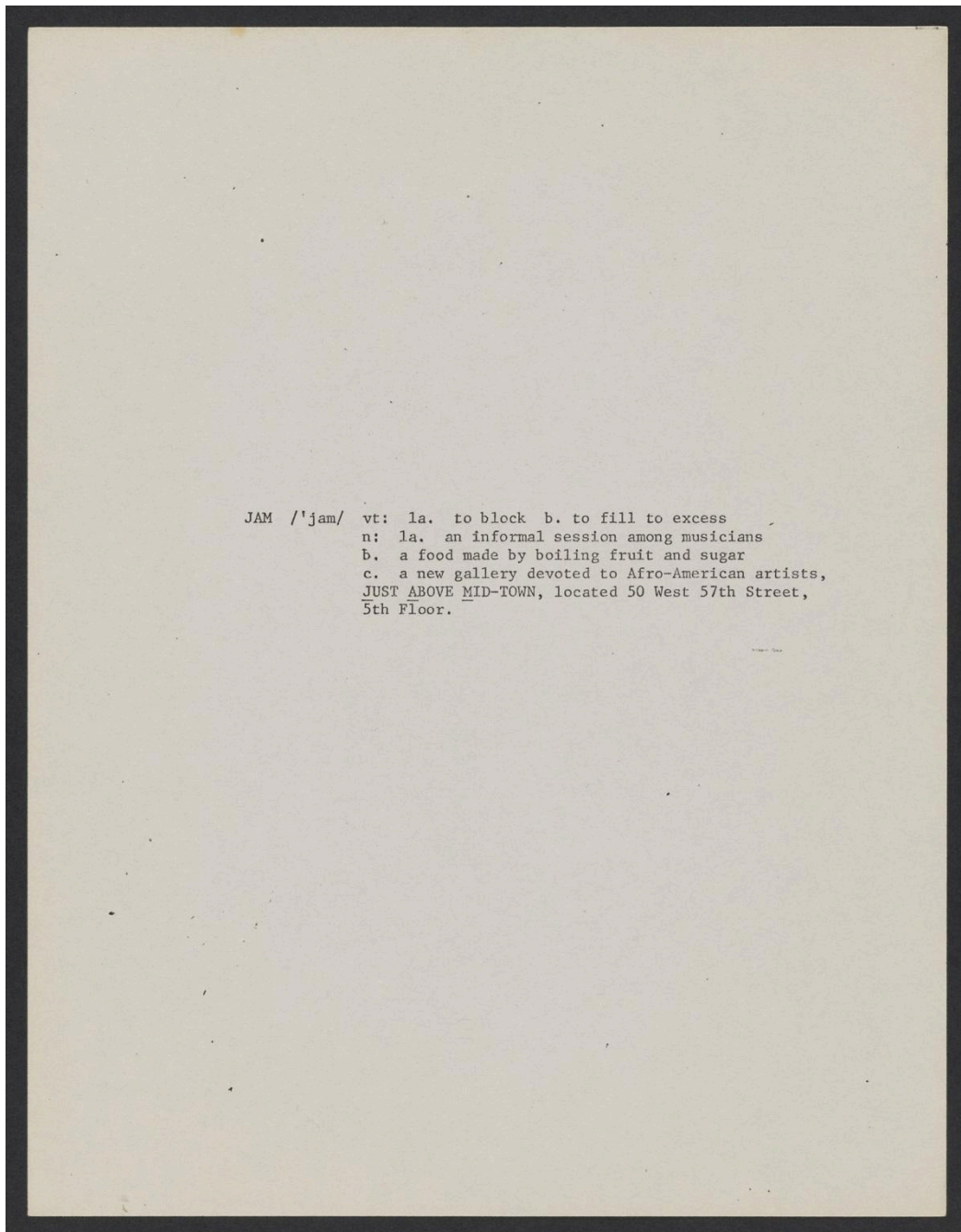
How is an artist's work valued? What is "Black art"? How does culture sustain a community?

These are some of the questions posed by Just Above Midtown – or JAM – a New York gallery that functioned like a laboratory for artists. Opened in 1974, JAM was fueled by the extraordinary drive of its founder Linda Goode Bryant, who launched the venture when she was a twenty-five-year-old mother of two. With a loyal group of staff and friends, Good Bryant aimed to create a "forum that presented Afro-American artists on the same platform with other established artists." JAM proposed an expansive concept of Black art that included artists of different races, generations, and educational backgrounds.

The gallery's first location was a compact space in the heart of the commercial gallery district in Midtown Manhattan, a center of power and wealth filled with glass high-rises. After five years, JAM moved to a former meatpacking storefront in Tribeca – then the center of the city's alternative art movement. In 1985, it relocated a final time to SoHo, where it expanded to include studios for artists to make and distribute their work. To keep its doors open, JAM relied on what Goode Bryant described as "our innate ability to use what we have to create what we need." The gallery was evicted from each of its homes, prioritizing collaboration and the needs of living artists overpaying its bills. It closed in 1986, after twelve years of serving as a community hub.

Debate flourished at JAM – fostered in its program and incited by its mere existence. The exhibition, organized as a collage, extends its experimental spirit to the present. By recognizing the relationships the gallery cultivated, this presentation asks how we might work together to create what Goode Bryant has described as "an infrastructure for art with real-life consequences."

Announcement for the opening of Just Above Midtown, 1974



Linda Goode Bryant: I'm Linda Goode Bryant, and I'm the Founder and Director of Just Above Midtown, JAM, Gallery.

It was started in response to the dominant art infrastructure not supporting or showing the work of African American and other artists of color. JAM was always about artists being as creative as they could possibly be driven by their visions and imagination and supported for that.

People certainly thought of me as the leader, but it was the most massive, amazing, diverse collaboration in terms of the types of people, personalities, processes and the way they thought, just massive.

JAM's locations really came about because we were being evicted from one place to another, to be

honest. We go into places that we see opportunity and then as we develop in those places, they become more desirable places for other folks who have more financial resources than we do, and that inevitably pushes us out.

But in the beginning, 57th Street was a political statement. When we had to move off 57th Street, we needed more space for artists to do performances, to be able to show films and media, video. Space was cheaper in Tribeca, so we landed on Franklin Street. We were evicted from Franklin Street. That took us to Broadway and that took us to 25,000 luxurious square feet of raw space. We finally declared ourselves a laboratory and that was liberating.



Artist, Maren Hassinger: JAM was a laboratory ...

JAM assistant director and children's book author/illustrator, Pat Cummings: A hub ...

Artist, Dawoud Bey: A community ...

JAM volunteer, art historian, and curator, Lowery Stokes Sims: Relationships ...

JAM curator and artist, Kathleen Goncharov: An experimental, alternative space ...

JAM volunteer and art historian, Faythe Weaver: A heady melting pot of what could be possible in the arts ...

Artist, Kaylynn Sullivan TwoTrees: JAM was pivotal to my life as an artist.

Artist, Randy Williams: Before it was JAM, it was an idea in Linda's wonderful brain.

Lowery Stokes Sims: She came up with the idea of Just Above Midtown. "I wanna open a gallery," and we went, okay.

Linda Goode Bryant: And everybody thought, well, you can't do it. You have to have money. And I've always believed that there's something that is both a passion and a mission, which I think art is, you just do it.

JAM volunteer, AC Hudgins: I know what drew me to JAM and that was Linda's personality. She was a dreamer.

Lowery Stokes Sims: She was an unstoppable force. So, the best thing we could do was just help her to keep going.

Faythe Weaver: It was very difficult to be Black in the seventies and be in the art world. People were so dead set against a major Black arts movement defined by Black people themselves.

JAM curator and artist, Tony Whitfield: JAM actually was like a home base in a hostile world for generations of Black artists.

Randy Williams: I never had worked with other artists of color. And JAM really opened up all those possibilities for me as an artist.

Pat Cummings: If you were doing something creative, off-center, and Black, you would gravitate towards JAM.

Linda Goode Bryant: Artists talked about how they couldn't get shown. "They won't let us" was a phrase that was used a lot. "They won't let us? Fuck them!" you know, is really how I said it. You find a way.

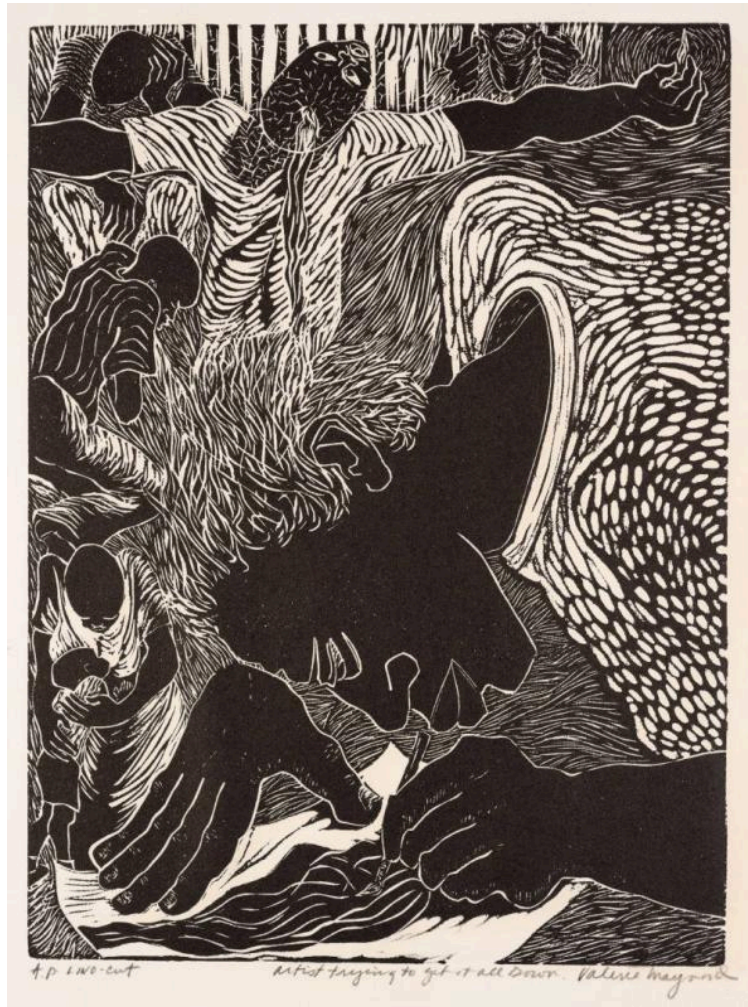
So that's how JAM got started. On 50 West 57th Street between Fifth and Sixth Avenues, us Black folks have got a gallery.

Linda Goode Bryant – Are we really that different? (2021)



This video shows Goode Bryant and a group of artist friends breaking into a former box-printing factory – which had just been acquired by Dia Art Foundation – while scouting locations for a fictional film about the art world. (The film was intended for a gala at MoMA but was never realized.) The plant was later renovated, reopening as the contemporary art museum Dia Beacon in 2003.

Valerie Maynard – The Artist Trying to Get It All Down (1970)

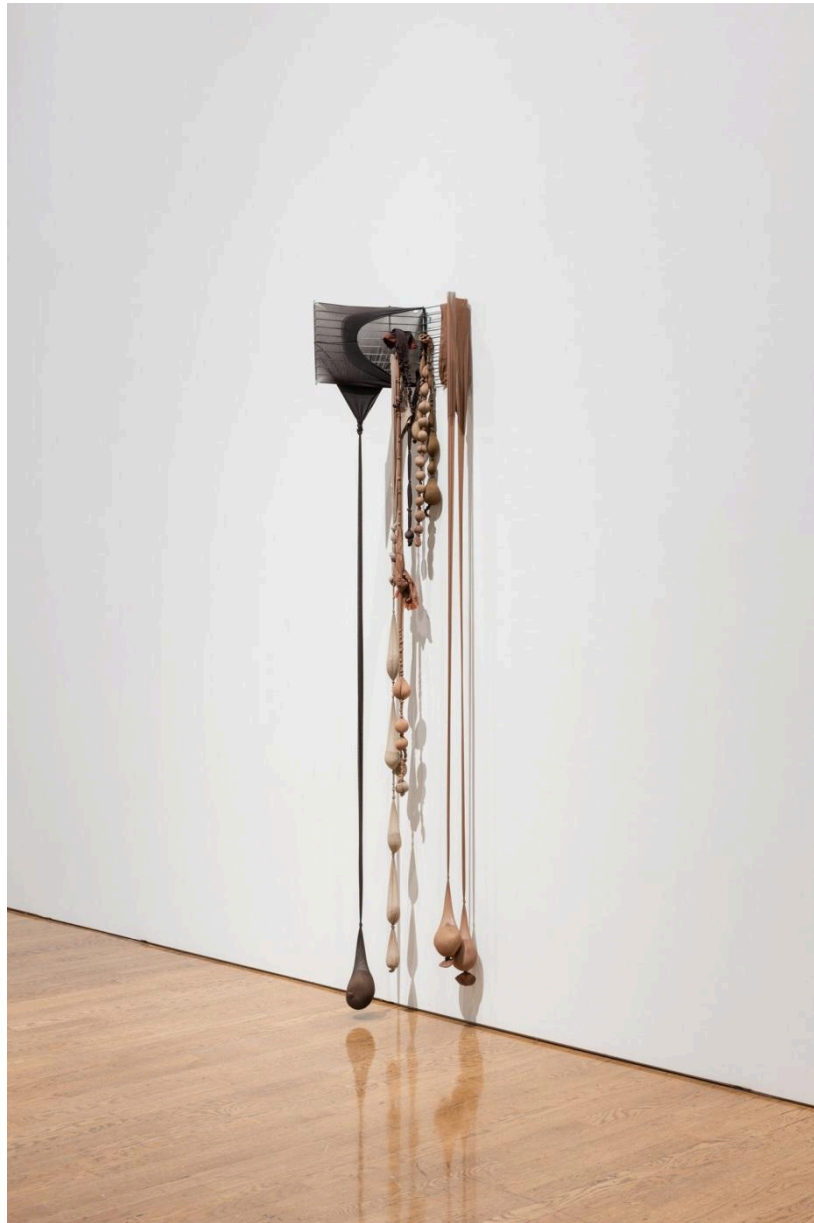


A printmaker and sculptor, Maynard has described her process of creating as being in a **trancelike state** in which everything she's seen, from social injustices to interesting faces, spill out of her, back into the physical world. "I am a medium... Consciously seeking the essence of everything in my experience," the artist has said. In *The Artist Trying to Get It All Down*, she depicts a hunched-over woman committedly transforming experience into art, surrounded by swirling spectral figures.

Sydney Blum – SWARMS four (1980)

The introductory gallery brings together a selection of archival materials and artworks that demonstrate some of the defining characteristics of JAM: a range of artistic styles, experimentation with everyday materials, and an embrace of interdependent relationships. It foregrounds Linda Goode Bryant's belief in the power of creativity, and the voices of many of JAM's staff and volunteers – an organizing principle that runs throughout this exhibition.

Senga Nengudi – Insides Out (1977/2003)



Artist, Senga Nengudi: I very much like the idea of used pantyhose because I felt as though somehow they were infused with the energy of the woman that wore them. And when placing sand in the pantyhose, there was a sense of sensuality, which I also wanted to express with these pieces.

Linda Goode Bryant: It was all about her expressing her body and what it felt like as she was nurturing a baby inside her. I had had children, and I remember what that felt like when your body is being so stretched, and it's like, whose body is this?

Senga Nengudi: I was fascinated in how resilient the body was and I really wanted to somehow duplicate that experience. I also was dealing with the idea of the female psyche—that your psyche can stretch, stretch, stretch and come back into shape.

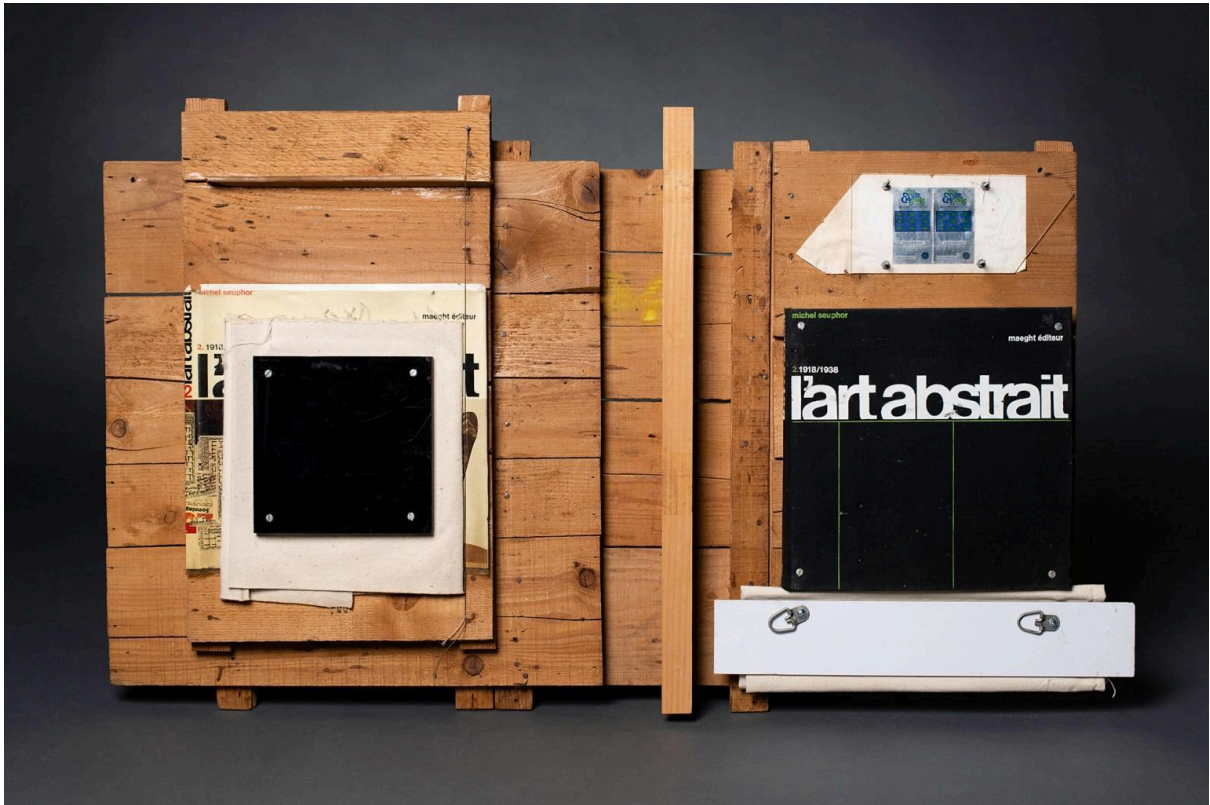
I want the viewer to participate or respond to the piece itself. The first reaction is to giggle because you see something so common as pantyhose being used in sculpture.

Linda Goode Bryant: It was just the freedom. There is the freedom to that work that I loved. A freedom that pantyhose actually stripped you of. There was no freedom in pantyhose.

Wendy Ward – Untitled (Three Inches Equals One Week of Laundry) (1974)



Randy Williams – L'art abstrait (1977)



Howardena Pindell – Untitled #87b (1977)

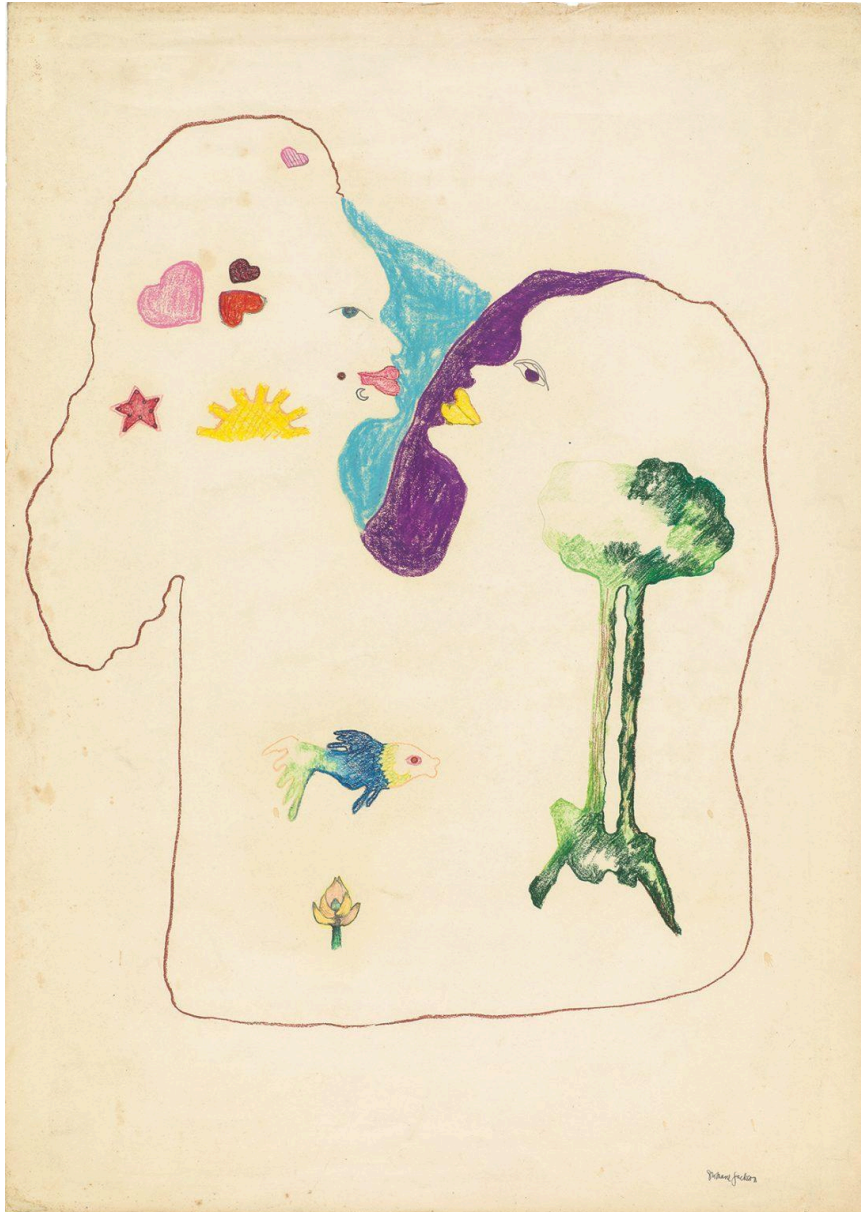


Bimal Banerjee – Natural Translaine (1977)

Noah Jemison – Acapulco Gold (1976)

Barbara Chase-Riboud – All Reverence to Her (1974)

Suzanne Jackson – Talk (1976)



Curator, Thomas (T.) Jean Lax: Suzanne Jackson's painting *MaeGame* was included in JAM's first group show, *Synthesis* in 1974.

Linda Goode Bryant: *Synthesis*, as a show, for me, was an opportunity to put together work being made by African American artists that was figurative and also abstract in the same gallery. This was during a time where Black artists were debating whether or not you could be a Black artist if you were working abstractly or conceptually, that you can only be a Black artist if you were a figurative artist.

That debate was just, to me, a distraction. We needed to figure out what it is we really wanted to talk about. Maybe the question is, why are we following the traditions of Western art?

Thomas (T.) Jean Lax: Jackson ran Gallery 32, an alternative space in Los Angeles, from 1968 to 1970. Like JAM, Gallery 32 reflected a desire among artists of color to build shared spaces for creativity.

Artist, Suzanne Jackson: Gallery 32 was really an accident. I had this very large studio, so we had some exhibitions there. We didn't worry about whether other people would create spaces for us. We just decided that we had to make our own space.

Linda visited the West Coast and met a lot of the artists. It was seamless in the sense that, well, why shouldn't we support Linda? We didn't even think about it. She was very bold in that effort of going to 57th Street.

Linda Goode Bryant: I would say, certainly the energy that came from LA at that time into New York was really key to JAM. Because folks in LA were just pushing beyond abstract painting in ways that reflected their experience and what they had and were able to use to make what they wanted to create.

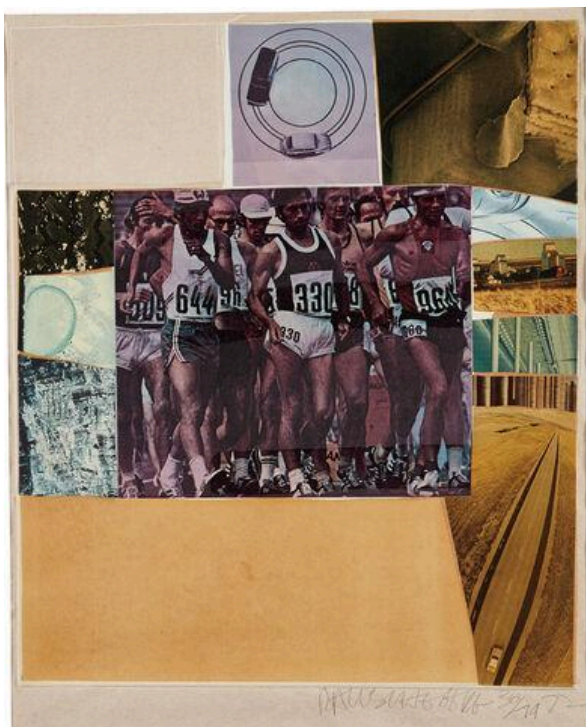
Betye Saar – Fragments (1976)



In Recognition featured works on paper, photographs, and “small constructions” by six Black and two white women artists: Valerie Maynard, Suzanne Jackson, Senga Nengudi, Howardena Pindell, Barbara Chase-Riboud, Betye Saar, Shelley Farkas, and Wendy Wilson. The exhibition was conceived to address that in contemporary art, as elsewhere, the “American female, particularly the Black American female, has not been given her just recognition,” as the show’s press release declared. Thanks to the efforts of JAM staff, the exhibition received coverage in publications like *Arts Magazine*, helping provide a platform for these artists when such opportunities were few for women.

Raymond Saunders – Title unknown (1970-1975)

Robert Rauschenberg – Horsefeathers Thirteen VIII (1972)



Jorge Luis Rodriguez – Vespers (1975)



David Hammons – Untitled (1976)



Jasper Johns – Hatteras (1963)



This invitation for the 1976 exhibition *Statements Known and Statements New* paired two works on paper, now on view together once again: a Hammons body print, which he made by oiling his body, pressing himself on paper, and then applying powder pigments, and Johns's *Hatteras*, named after an island in North Carolina that had served as a refuge for fugitive enslaved people during the Civil War. Linda Goode Bryant described the exhibition as “a forum that presented Afro-American artists on the same platform with other established artist,” bringing together a mostly younger generation of artists of color with widely recognized white artists.

Senga Nengudi – Swing Low (1977/2014)



Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe - Black Man, White Woman, Johannesburg, South Africa (1977)



Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe - Waiting for Train (1977)



Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe - Woman in Doorway (1977)



Russ Thompson – Selma Accumulation (1975)

Vivian Browne – Untitled (Man in Mountain) (1974)

Browne was fascinated by the shapes and colors she saw during travels across Africa in the 1970s. She began incorporating patterns in her work after her first visit, such as in this jewel-toned painting, in which a man wearing a pink collared shirt emerges from a mountain. "I deliberately avoided the realistic mode... Instead I chose the suggestiveness of abstraction," Browne explained. "You can feel Africa in those paintings, but it is in the color, in the design. It is symbolic rather than representative, and that means [these works] can speak to all people everywhere."

Houston Conwill – Drum (1975-1980)



Suzanne Jackson – MaeGame (1973)



“It is political to make an artwork about peace and beauty. I wanted people, especially Black people, to see the beauty,” Jackson once stated. “People need beauty. It’s a way to get people to think or consider some other ways of being.” This conviction found mystical expression in her work, including *MaeGame*, which the artist made by applying thin, delicate washes of acrylic paint on canvas. She painted a landscape merging trees, plants, birds, and human figures.

Norman Lewis – No. 2 (1973)



JAM volunteer, art historian, and curator, Horace Brockington: I'm sure Linda told you about the famous Norman Lewis issue? That was one of the funniest things that ever happened at that gallery.

Linda Goode Bryant: Norman Lewis was an artist born in the early 1900s. He was important to me as an artist to be shown at JAM.

Horace Brockington: The hunger to be shown in a 57th Street gallery got a lot of the old guard to agree to do shows. You would never think that Norman Lewis would agree.

Linda Goode Bryant: He was tough when I said, "Will you show?" Norman was like, "How old are you, girl? Yeah, yeah right." And so I had to work hard to get him to provide that piece.

In 1946, he started this series of paintings called *Black Paintings*. Opening night, the place is just packed. Given how hard it was for me to get a "yes" that he would allow us to exhibit his *Black Paintings*, I'm so happy, I'm so proud, I'm so excited. Whew.

JAM volunteer and art historian, Faythe Weaver: Well, somebody leaned up against Norman Lewis's painting and left this glob of Jheri curl grease in this painting.

Linda Goode Bryant: This is not the same painting, but that piece had quite an evening.

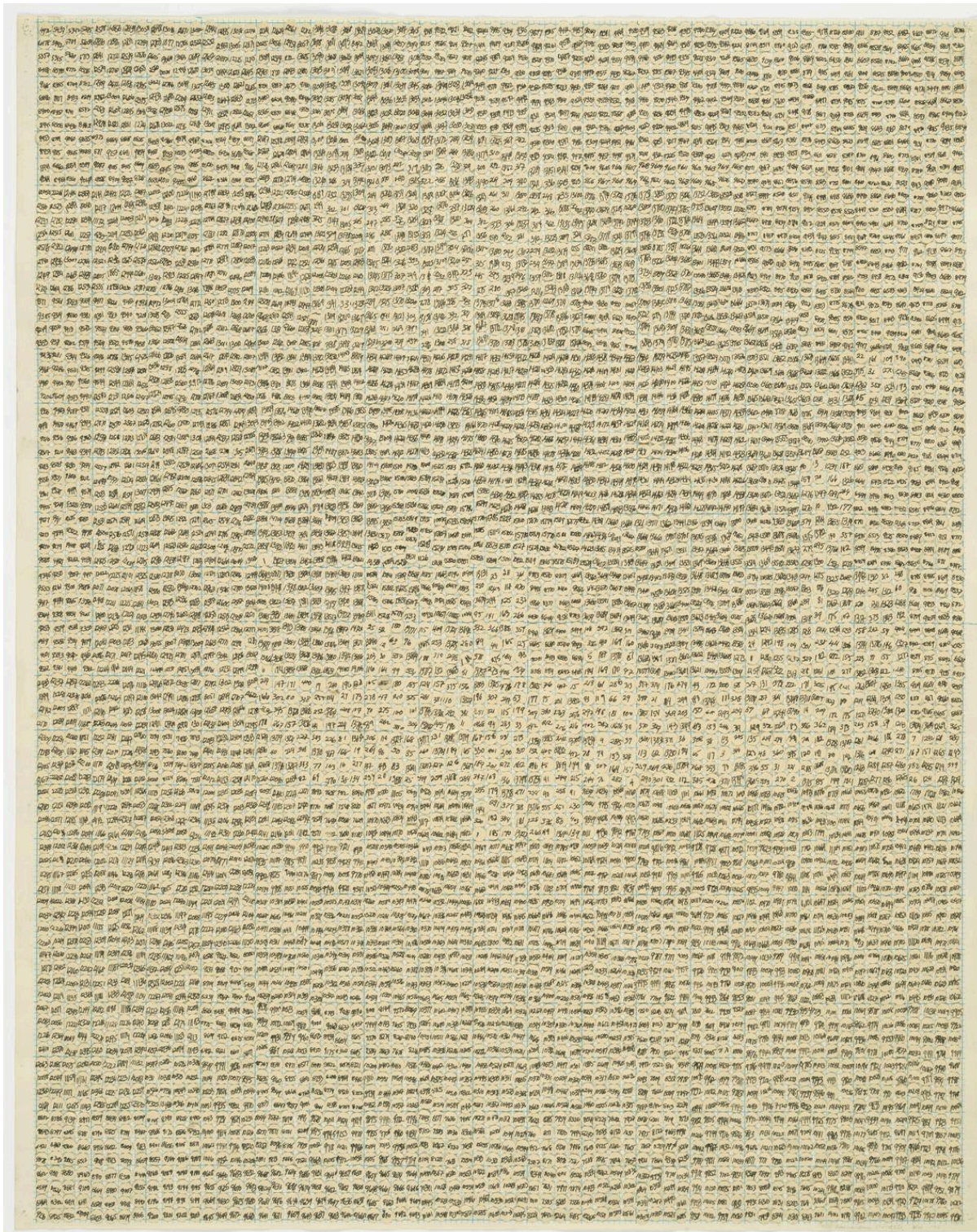
The gallery empties. It's late as hell. And as I recall it, getting ready to turn out the lights, and I'm going, "Huh? What's that on Norman's painting?" Now, panic attack. We don't have any insurance for art. And Faythe Weaver, who's a dear, dear friend, I said, "Faythe, can you figure out how to get this oil out of here?"

And next thing I know, she pulls out a loaf of Wonderbread. She said, "You just ball it up." [Laughs] "We're gonna ball it up and then we're gonna dab, dab, dab." I said, "What's dabbing going to do, Faythe? This is bread!"

And she goes, "Exactly. It will absorb the oil. It will pull it out of the canvas and off the painting."

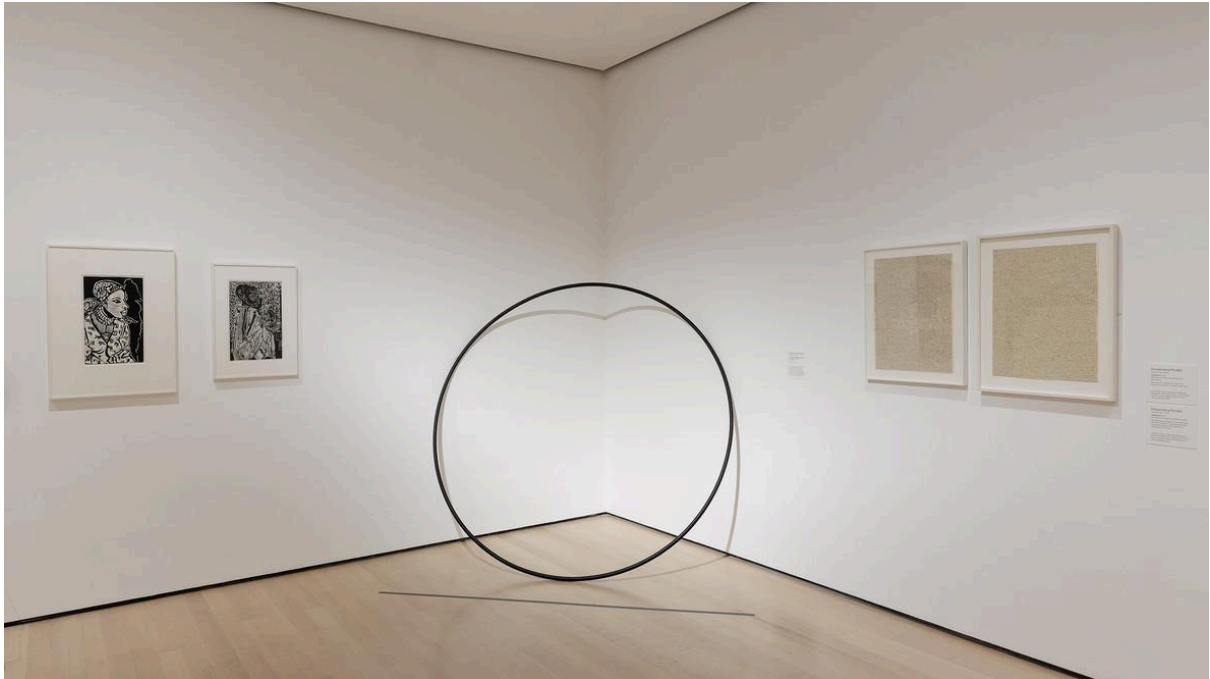
Faythe Weaver: I sat there with my wadded up Wonderbread and kept cleaning and cleaning till I got all this crap out of this painting. And I don't think any of them ever knew the difference. Thank God.

Howardena Pindell – Untitled #4 (1973), Untitled #2 (1973)



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Jorge Luis Rodriguez – Circulo con cuatro esquinas (Circle with Four Corners) (1978/2022)



Valerie Maynard – Mercedes and Vincent (1970)

Valerie Maynard – Barbara with Blanket (1970)

Mallica “Kapo” Reynolds – Roberta Flack (1970)



Mallica “Kapo” Reynolds – There She Go Satan (1974)



Kapo was a well-known preacher of Revivalism, a religious practice that combined Christian Evangelicalism and African traditions. Moved by a divine vision to start making art in the 1940s, he was one of several self-taught Jamaican artists that were celebrated as symbols of an emerging national identity following the country's independence from British rule in the 1960s. Kapo's 1975 exhibition at JAM was funded by the singer Roberta Flack, one of several celebrities who purchased work from the gallery. This painting was part of a series of portraits he made of female figures with their faces half in shadow.

JAM assistant director and children's book author/illustrator, Pat Cummings: Linda always had a lot going on. She'd like to have celebrities come in. She had a big opening planned for Kapo. He was an artist that Roberta Flack had discovered.

Curator, Thomas (T.) Jean Lax: Over the years, JAM's various locations attracted a diverse crowd, including celebrities like Roberta Flack, a singer whose portrait is shown here.

Artist, Senga Nengudi: It was a combination of Black celebrities and artists.

JAM volunteer, art historian, and curator, Gylbert Coker: Linda said, well, let's see if you could get your cousin to get Stevie Wonder to come to the gallery.

JAM volunteer, art historian, and curator, Horace Brockington: Robert De Niro is living down the street. Of course, Linda's going to somehow engage him in some craziness of hers.

Artist, Janet Olivia Henry: Liza Minnelli came to the opening.

Horace Brockington: How do you get Harry Belafonte in there every other day? And he's arguing with her about politics.

Linda Goode Bryant: That amazing opening happened where people were out on the sidewalk, on 57th Street. You couldn't get into the gallery. It was that crowded.

Gylbert Coker: Back then, if you had a party, everybody brought somebody. You know, plus one, plus two, plus somebody who heard about it. Everybody wanted to be there because Linda had the guts and the nerve to do this.

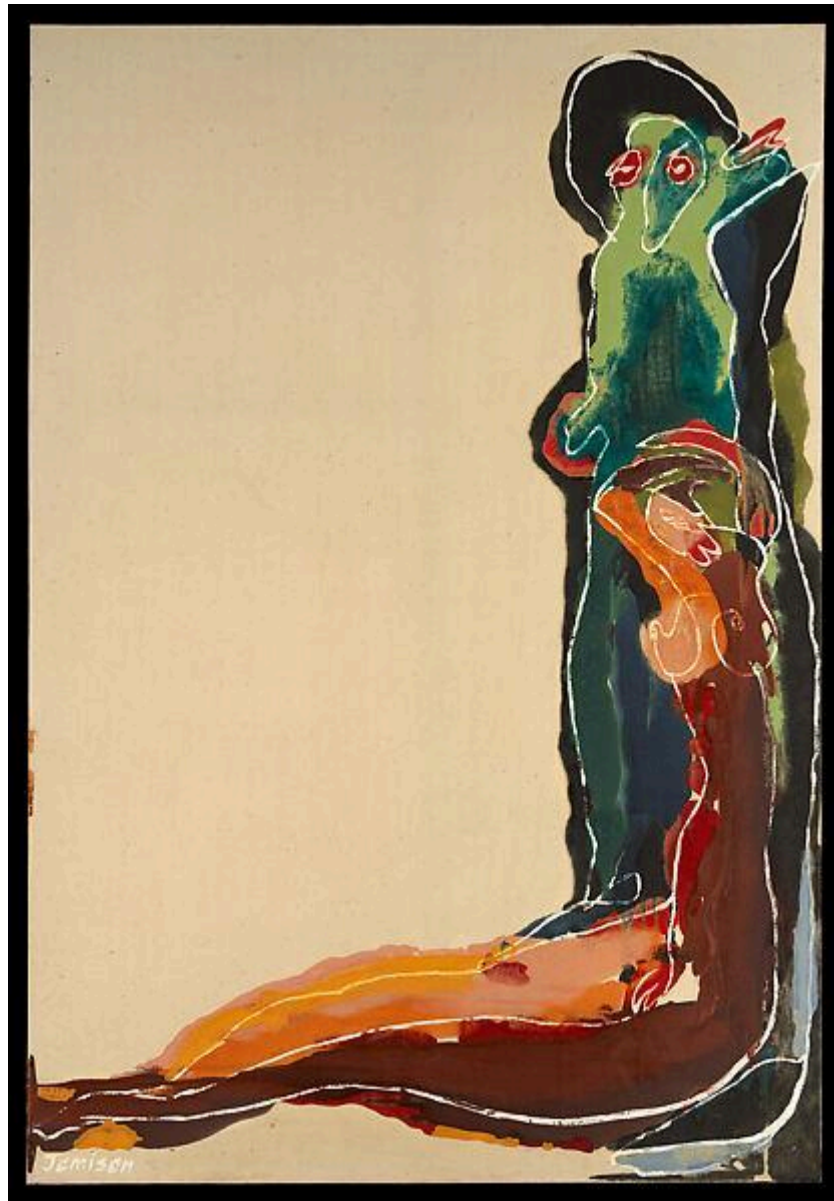
Artist, Randy Williams: What I remember is the curiosity factor. I think people showed up in a sense of disbelief that this actually had happened.

Horace Brockington: There was no forum for Black artists. Everybody would stop in there because they were so happy that there was a place for them to talk about their art, to have conversation.

JAM curator and artist, Tony Whitfield: Just Above Midtown was that rare place.

Susan Fitzsimmons – Hang Ups: Rocks from Downstate (1979)

Noah Jemison – Black Valhalla (1976)



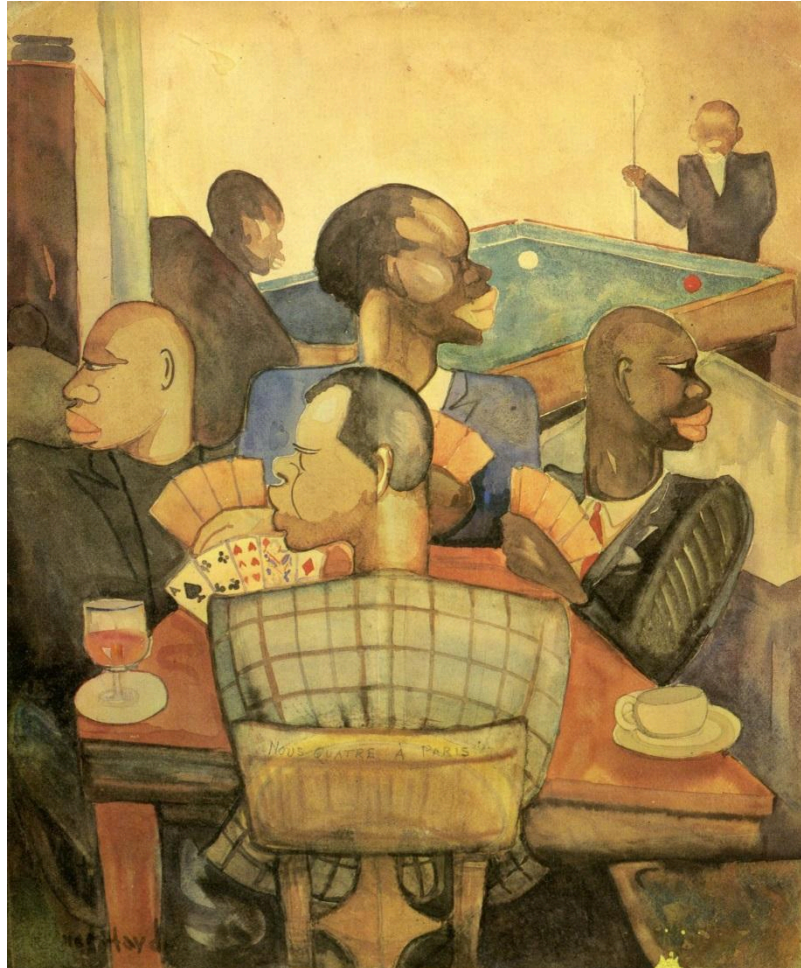
Often utilizing techniques seen in children's art, Jemison experimented with tools, materials, and application methods, as seen in the black-and-white video footage in this gallery. For *Black Valhalla*, Jemison used encaustic, a technique in which a mixture of molten wax and pigment is poured onto canvas. At the time it was created, the Vietnam War had been over for one year. Its title references the heavenly palace to which soldiers killed in combat were sent in Norse mythology. *Acapulco Gold* takes its name from a strain of cannabis popular in anti-war countercultural circles during the 1960s.

Palmer Hayden – The Subway (1941)



Palmer Hayden – Harlem Window

Palmer Hayden – Nous quatres a Paris (We Four in Paris) (1930)



As the only nonliving artist on JAM's roster, Hayden, who was active from the 1920s until his death in 1973, was an outlier. Yet his work fit squarely with the gallery's resistance to expectations of the type of art Black artists should make. When Hayden was alive, some critics saw his Black figures, such as those in *Harlem Window*, as having exaggerated facial features, and considered them demeaning caricatures. After his death, JAM staff worked with his widow, Miriam Hayden, to recontextualize his work within Black people's struggle with self-imagery amid an abundance of racist depictions – retroactively celebrating his commitment to portraying a variety of Black lives.

Just Above Midtown opened its first home in 1974, on the fifth floor of an office building located in a predominantly white commercial gallery district. With the help of friends and colleagues, Goode Bryant transformed the space, installing wood floors, painting the walls white, and bringing in plants. Over the course of the next five years, JAM organized more than fifty exhibitions (a selection of which are represented by some of the works on view here) and published one of the first books about Black Conceptual art, *Contextures* (1978).

As JAM staff member Horace Brockington recalls, “Linda created a forum and a dialogue among artists, but also with people outside the art world.” Distinct from its neighboring galleries, JAM welcomed a broad public, helping launch a childcare cooperative for Black creatives, hosting five-dollar informational lunches about collecting art geared toward Midtown professionals, and encouraging experimentation with nontraditional art materials. Although bills accumulated, the community worked together to keep the space alive and open to all, relocating to Tribeca after its first eviction.

David Hammons – Spade (1974 – 1977)

Senga Nengudi – R.S.V.P. Fall 1976 (1976/2017)



About making these works, Nengudi wrote: “After giving birth to my own son, I thought of black wet nurses suckling child after child – their own as well as others – until their breasts rested on their knees, their energies drained.” Elastic and moveable, the abstract sand-and-pantyhose sculptures are reminiscent of both breasts and testicles. Nengudi posed inside them and manipulated the sagging appendages during performances. When the series showed at JAM, some visitors took the title (the French acronym for “please respond”) literally. On a legal pad provided by the gallery to gather feedback and encourage engagement, one person replied, “we all begin + end organically.”

Linda Goode Bryant: JAM wasn’t about the objects. It always, always was about artists just being as creative as they fucking wanted to be.

Artist, Senga Nengudi: I went to JAM to do my *R.S.V.P.* exhibit and I can just picture going up in the elevator and this very small gallery with a lot of energy coming out of it. I love putting as much of a show in my purse as possible. So I was able to do that with a lot of those pieces. I was able to put ‘em in a suitcase and then pull them out and stretch them out and have this exhibit.

I would get pantyhose from friends as well as myself and go to thrift stores. They had such great crotches. They were all different. I used very specific nails for each one. And then I used a lot of needles.

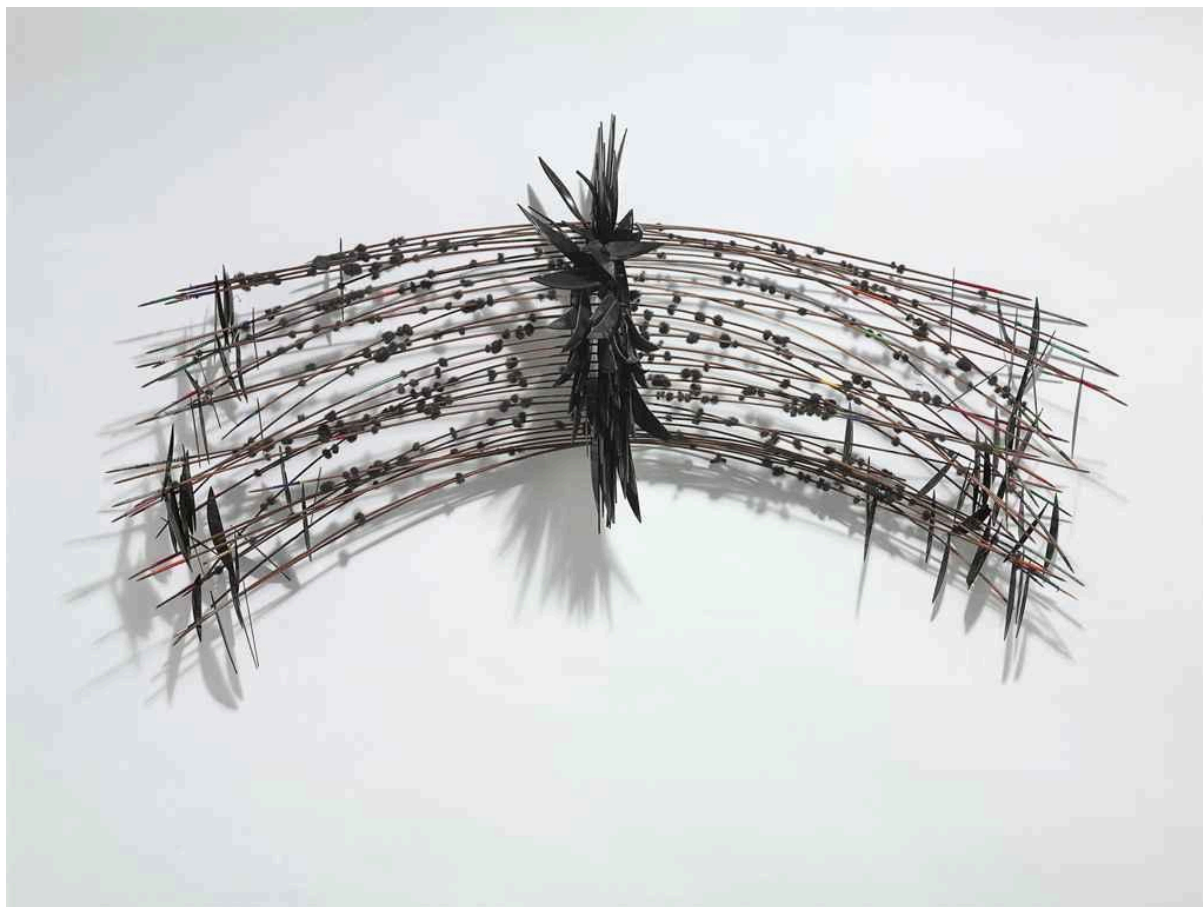
Curator, Thomas (T.) Jean Lax: David Hammons also used unconventional material in his work. *Untitled Reed Fetish* features human hair, string, and pieces cut from vinyl records.

Linda Goode Bryant: The reason I'm excited about putting David's piece and Senga's together is that they really influenced each other.

Artists were using what I called remains, like pantyhose. Once you got a run in that pantyhose, it wasn't good for anything else. So I usually tossed them away. David's using hair from barbershops on the floor to make work. Everyone was taking things out of the context of their lives.

I learned from Senga that when David started coming back and forth between LA and New York, that he would let her be in his studio in LA while he was gone. And so she was around that energy and then he'd come back and her energy would be in that space. The synergy of that affects us, even if it's subliminal.

David Hammons – Untitled Reed Fetish (Flight Fantasy) (1978)



Contextures (1978)



For the gallery's fourth anniversary, Linda Goode Bryant and the art historian Marcy S. Philips produced *Contextures*, a self-published and self-funded book. In it, Goode Bryant and Philips coined the term "Contexturalism" to describe a movement of artists making noncommercial and for the most part nonrepresentational, abstract work. "Contextures looked at artists who used materials in inventive

ways, especially everyday materials that everyone would know and have a relationship with,” explained Randy Williams, one of several artists featured. Contextualist used familiar materials like hair, pantyhose, and socks in their work, whose new settings redefined them as art even as these types of materials would continue to be used within their original contexts.

Linda Goode Bryant: African American artists and other artists of color were really not being interwoven into Western art history.

Curator, Thomas (T.) Jean Lax: Dawoud Bey took this photograph at the launch party for the book, Contextures. In that book, Linda Goode Bryant and her friend and classmate, the art historian Marcy S. Philips, explored ideas about abstraction that were fundamental to the artists at JAM.

Artist, Senga Nengudi: I can’t express how deeply important that was because a lot of our work, reviewers, critics, their excuse was, “Well, we don’t really understand the work, so therefore why should we review it?” She laid the stuff out, so that it was very clear what we were doing.

It was difficult to get something published, especially if it was related to Black art.

Linda Goode Bryant: At JAM, always, it’s like you don’t have any money, how are we gonna do this? I said we’re gonna write a good press release. We’re gonna send our presale press release to every art library and college in the United States. We’re gonna send it to every museum. People pre-ordered the book! It worked. [Laughs]

So the joy in the room for any of the folks in those photographs was just, “Oh my God, once again, we’ve pulled it off with absolutely nothing.”



On Saturday mornings, a group of women who worked in creative industries hung out at JAM with their children. Together they founded the Sunshine Circle Preschool, which operated in West Harlem from 1975 to '76. Goode Bryant's son, Kenneth, seen here playing at the gallery, was one of some twenty students. The teacher Suzette Wright was hired to run classes; she prioritized activity-based learning, approached various subjects through an art lens, avoided gendered language, and assembled children of different ages in a single classroom. Wright appears in one of David Hammons's body prints, the making of which is documented in the photographs on display nearby.

Linda Goode Bryant: Nothing could have happened at JAM without the family of JAM. And it was a family of artists, musicians and dancers, writers, also chefs.

I will never forget the night that really just flipped me out. We pooled all our money together and there was enough money to buy two pork chops and a cabbage and an onion. And one of the people at the house that night made a meal for at least seven, eight or nine people, including my two kids. Shit like that happened.

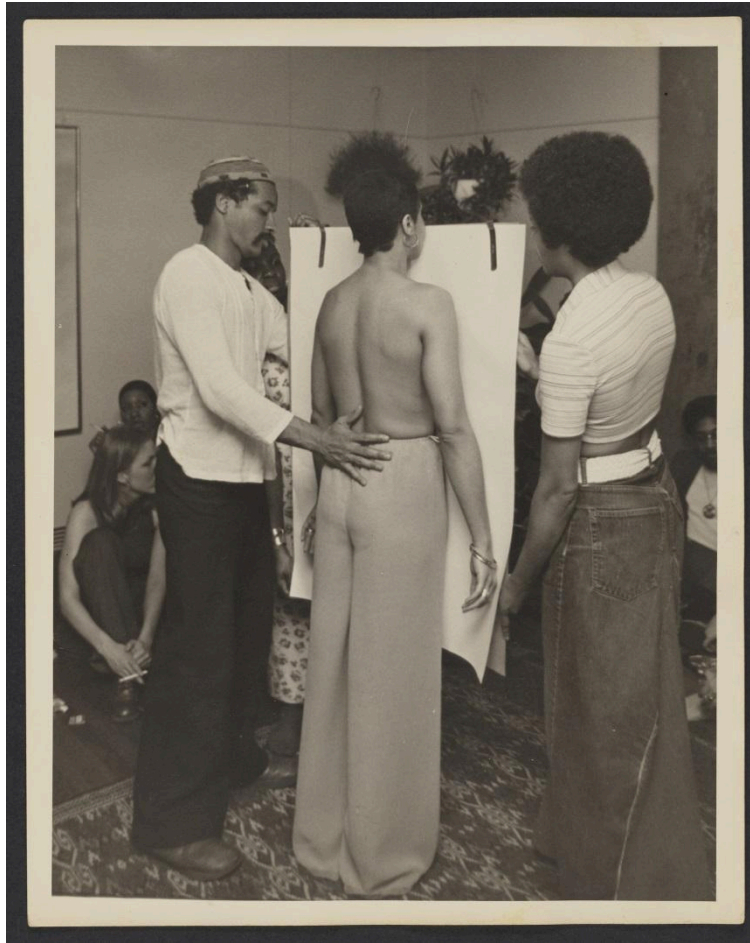
Artist, Janet Olivia Henry: Everybody volunteered at JAM. And a part of volunteering at JAM was babysitting.

JAM volunteer and art historian, Faythe Weaver: Nobody minded pitching in with Linda's kids Kenneth and Brienin, because it's hard work. JAM was almost a 24-hour-a-day enterprise.

Linda Goode Bryant: I was a single mom and had friendships with other single moms and we shared taking care of our kids. So when it was my day to take care of the kids, they were in the gallery.

JAM assistant director and children's book author/illustrator, Pat Cummings: Kenny was like seven years old and selling artwork. And I remember somebody was interested in buying one of his pieces and he wanted \$50, and whoever it was was like, that's a lot of money. And he says, you can do installments. He's seven years old! I was like, he learns very quickly.

Linda Goode Bryant: A number of those mothers were part of this group that decided we got these kids, let's start Sunshine Circle, let's start this school for kids. It was in Harlem. And it was another really creative space.



Hammons's body prints – made by oiling his body or that of another person and pressing it on paper – were some of the artworks the gallery most often sold to collectors and as fundraisers. Inspired by the sit-ins, teach-ins, and love-ins of the 1960s, Hammons staged “Print-Ins” at JAM, during which audience members could create their own body prints with his assistance (as documented in the photos here). In a press release, Goode Bryant pitched them as affordable gifts for loved ones during a period of “recession, depression, and general lack of money.” By hosting events like Hammons’s “Print-Ins,” JAM involved its community as active participants.

Lowery Stokes Sims: It was clear from the beginning that a focus at JAM would be David Hammons, because he was so out there.

Linda Goode Bryant: When I first saw David’s Body Prints, my brain just exploded in terms of how the figure was portrayed through the printing of the body. It was a way of abstracting the figure.

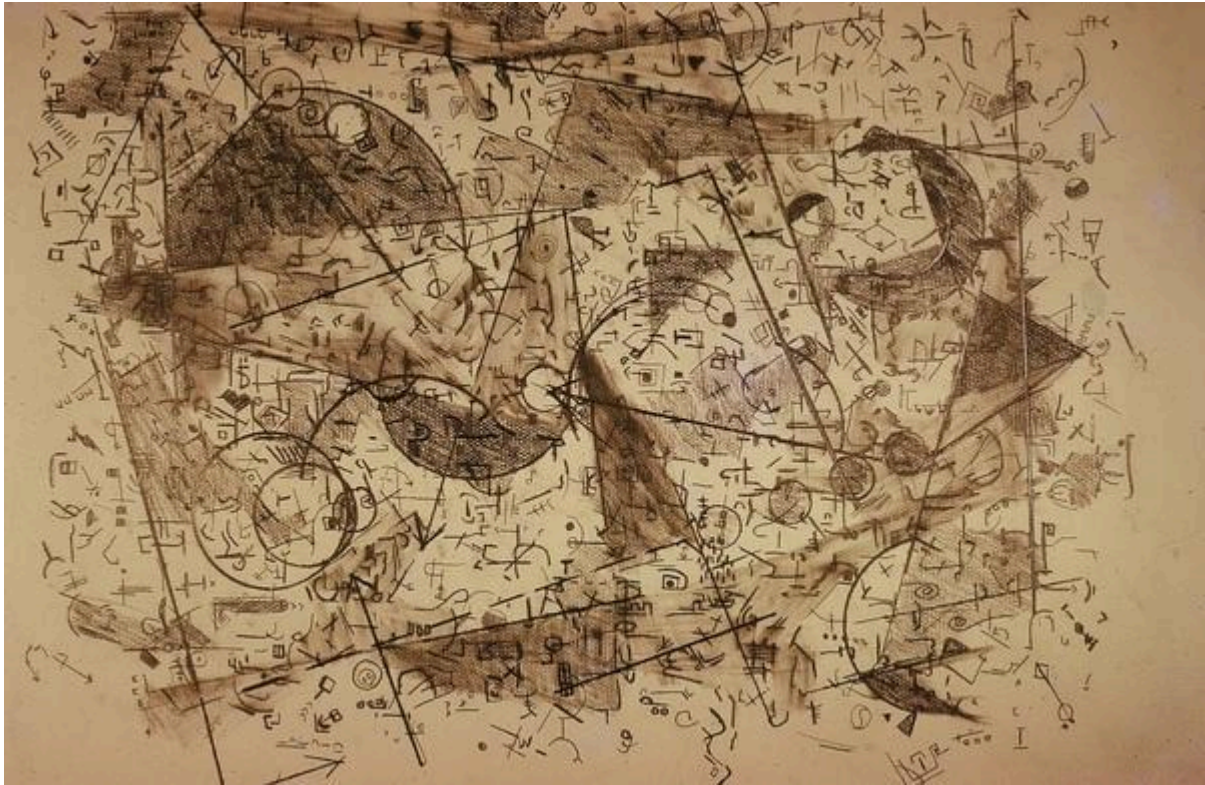
Gylbert Coker: David would take baby lotion and just rub it on his body, and then he would roll onto the paper to make that imprint, and then he would shake the powdered pigment and then blow it away, and then the image would come up.

Linda Goode Bryant: So the Body Prints sold. And, in fact, I was preparing for this Body Print show at JAM and had pre-sold them. And he says, “I’m not doing body prints anymore.”

AC Hudgins: Most people in life, when they hit a note and it's working, they keep working it. He hit a note in those Body Prints and they were selling. But he says, I'm finished. I got to move. And I respect that.

I remember one time I was going to a wedding, and I gave them a Body Print and she told me after a while, she said, "AC, you know, that Body Print you gave me was pretty much the ugliest piece of shit in the world. And I really don't like it." I said, "Well fine, give it back. I'll give you something else." So, she gave it back and I gave her a beautiful porcelain bowl. And the last time I saw her, she said, "What do these things sell for now?" I said, "You don't want to know."

Cynthia Hawkins – Heirog Inner Marks #1 (1974)



Cynthia Hawkins – Moving Box (1975)

Hawkins used the language of abstraction to depict astrological phenomena, placing her work within the context of the larger universe. In the mid-1970s, she developed a visual vocabulary of basic signs: crosshatches, semicircles, right angles, arrows, and x's. To make this painting, she used oil sticks to apply clouds of color – jubilant blues, pinks, and oranges – to which she incised repeated marks and lines moving in various directions, imbuing the work with vibrant energy.

Susan Fitzsimmons – Hang Ups: Hair (1979)

“It is essential that all of us work collectively to assure the continued operations of JAM,” Goode Bryant stated in an invitation to the 1980 reopening of the gallery downtown, in a renovated storefront in Tribeca. Previously populated by meatpacking plants and slaughterhouses, the neighborhood had become the center of New York’s alternative arts scene, which comprised nonprofit organizations fostering experimental and communal art making.

Continuing the work they’d done in Midtown, Goode Bryant and her collaborators put on programming that was focused on, but not exclusive to, artists of color. Increasingly bringing together artists across disciplines, the Franklin Street location featured performance, video, and events ranging from film screenings to workshops to open rehearsals. Staff organized sprawling group shows with evocative titles like *Dialogues* (1980), *What I Do for Art* (1982), and *A Love Story* (1983), from which select artists have works on view here. While rising debt and late-night noise complaints from neighbors led to the gallery’s second eviction and move, JAM’s avant-garde spirit flourished as artists pitched in to “keep the energy going.”



Over the last half-century, Goode Bryant saved hundreds of bills, past-due statements, and eviction notices related to JAM, moving them from one space to the next. Organized chronologically across the wall, these financial records function as a window into the behind-the-scenes of the gallery's operations.

While the gallery often did not bring in enough money through sales or grants to pay its rent and utilities, it used its resources to advocate for artists. JAM offered artists material support by helping secure the acquisition of their work by museums or writing grant applications. This support was reciprocal: JAM relied on its staff and volunteers to keep afloat, demonstrating the efficacy of mutual aid and the value of indebtedness – not to financial institutions but to one another.

Linda Goode Bryant: I kept all the bills from JAM and moved them from one storage space to another storage space, and on and on and on for almost 50 years. Because they were part of the key truth to what JAM was.

You know, the way that JAM stayed open was with debt and more debt and more debt. I mean, and I didn't have a large credit line. I was a single mom in my mid-twenties and I didn't have any money. I'm not embarrassed about debt. If you don't have opportunities that allow you to generate what are the conventional forms of resources, use what you have to create what you need.

You're able to do things because people believe in what you wanna do. So, you know, not paying the rent wasn't a strategy I planned out. [Laughs] But being able to talk about how important JAM was, and the realtor knew, he would just look at me and kind of smile and shake his head and let us stay. And same with the printers. They became invested through their belief in how important that space was. They wanted it to succeed.

Money doesn't determine if I'm gonna try to do something. That doesn't make sense to me. Money is just one type of resource. Not having money and operating with debt has been an asset in my life because it requires us to be far more creative than money allows anybody. And it is unfair, but I'm not

gonna spend my time focusing on how unfair it is. I'm gonna spend my time figuring out how I do what I need to do to realize my vision and my mission.

These photographs document a meeting Linda Goode Bryant had with the artist Janet Henry and David Hammons and the curator Gylbert Coker at JAM's Fifty-Seventh Street office, confronting the gallery's accumulating debt only one month into existence. These images were made by Camille Billops, an artist who also showed at JAM and photographed many exhibitions and gatherings of Black artists across the city from the 1970s until her death. Billops preserved photos like these in an archive she and her husband kept in their SoHo loft.

Between 1978 and 1983, JAM ran a professional development program called the Business of Being an Artist (BBA). The BBA consisted of two parts: reviews of individual artists' work by JAM staff and a thirty-three-week course. Guest speakers presented on topics such as "Housing and Workspace," "Artists Rights," and "The Art Market: Patronage and Collecting." In 1982, seeking to support artist communities beyond New York and to generate revenue for the gallery, Goode Bryant and the video artist Dieter Froese produced a film about the BBA, interviewing artists, gallerists, curators, and cultural workers on their insider knowledge of the contemporary art market.

G. Peter Jemison – Hunger on Reservations While Children in Africa Starve (1981)



Jemison was inspired to work with bags after noticing them while commuting. “The common denominator for those of us who traveled on the subway from Brooklyn to Manhattan every day was that we carried some kind of bag – a plastic bag, a shopping bag, a briefcase, a handbag, a lunch bag.” Recycling paper bags, he painted images referencing nature, personal stories, perceptions of Indigenous peoples in North America, and Haudenosaunee history and art practices like quillwork and beading. These works raise questions like: How are Indigenous peoples thought of in the popular culture of the United States? When are we inspired to transform existing materials into something new?

Cathey Billian – Taking Risk (1981-82)

Hock E Aye Vi Edgar Heap of Birds – Understanding the Uniqueness of an Ethnic Identity (1980)

The American Indian Community House presented this work in *Dialogues*, an exhibition organized at JAM in collaboration with fifteen other alternative spaces. Consisting of two columns, it resembles bilingual dictionary. However, instead of offering English translations of the Cheyenne words at left, which are terms for various animals, Heap of Birds paired them with words that reference stereotypes of Indigenous people. He has described *Understanding the Uniqueness* as an “expression of deception” made in response to a museum’s request that he create a didactic to explain his work to a non-Native audience. (He did not include a label at the JAM show.)

Walter C. Jackson – Dogon Shadow Study (1986)

Marcy R. Edelstein – Untitled (1978)



Marcy R. Edelstein – Empty Tents 17 (1980)

Lorraine O'Grady – Untitled (Mlle Bourgeoise Noire) (1980)



Linda Goode Bryant: When Lorraine first walked into Just Above Midtown, I have to say, I felt her energy right away. Mlle Bourgeoisie was her first performance, where she created this character and then came into the gallery and everybody was like, "Whoa!" Mademoiselle Bourgeoisie's point was we must take risks as African American artists.

Curator, Thomas (T.) Jean Lax: Artist, Lorraine O'Grady describes performing as her character:

Artist, Lorraine O'Grady: So here she is, dressed in her gown and cape made of 180 pairs of white gloves. And she's also carrying a bouquet. She'd begin to give away the flowers from her bouquet and she smiles and she says, "Won't you help me to lighten my heavy bouquet?" After a while all of the flowers are given away and the bouquet has now become unapologetically the cat of nine tails or, what she called, "the whip that made plantations move." And she begins to beat herself with the whip.

When she first did the performance, she shouted out, "Black art must take more risks!" She'd never encountered a world as absolutely segregated as the art world. Not just a social form of segregation, it was an intellectual and cultural form of segregation with this use of the word "quality." But this was

concealing a totally lethal combination of condescension towards Black capacity and Black relevance. Everyone seemed to have settled: "This is the way it is, we have to just do the best we can."

Unfortunately, Mlle Bourgeoise Noire was not about settling. She was about breaking down doors.

G. Peter Jemison – Art Bag (1980)



G. Peter Jemison – Number One (1980)



G. Peter Jemison – Indian Toy/Toy Indian (1984)



Artist, G. Peter Jemison: My name is G. Peter Jemison. I am a member of the Seneca Nation of Indians.

Curator, Thomas (T.) Jean Lax: Jemison was Director of the American Indian Community House Gallery, or AICH, a nearby alternative arts space that showed work by indigenous artists.

G. Peter Jemison: Linda Goode Bryant wanted to show some of my work down on Franklin Street in Tribeca.

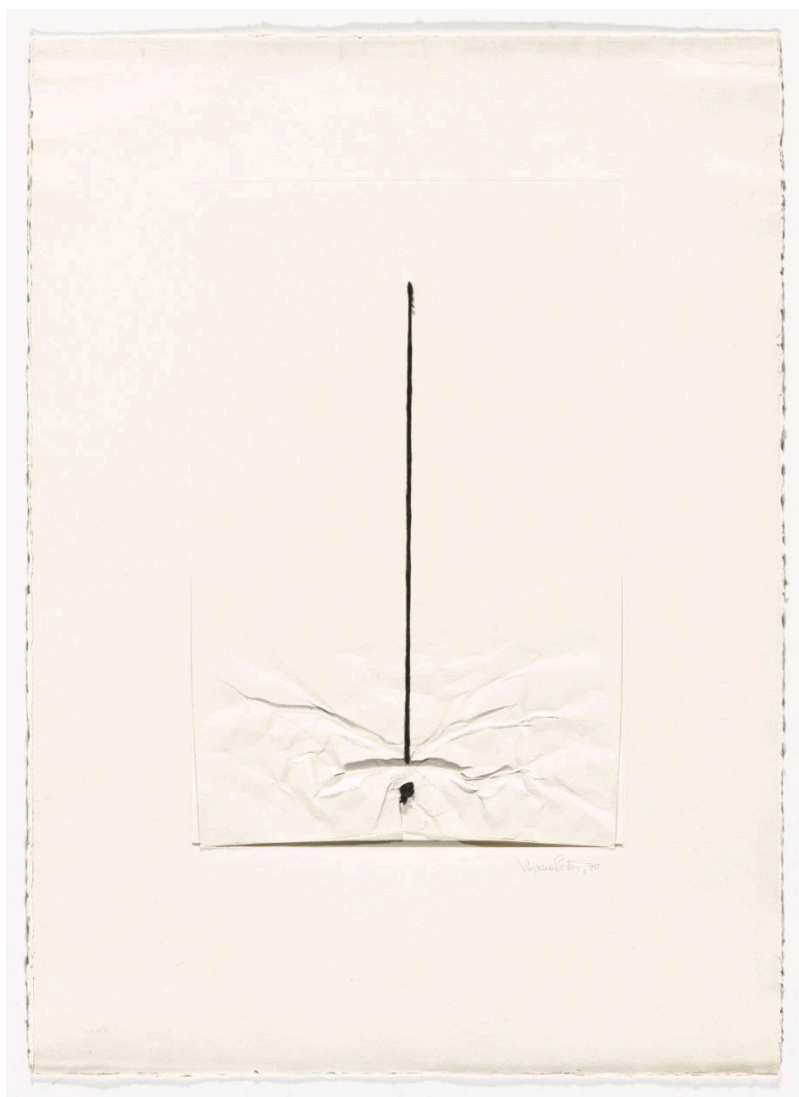
It's work that I had created on paper bags. I'm always open to different ways of making marks and different kinds of tools. I like big fat crayons. I like big fat pencils that have a lot of color and pigment. I'm not limited by what other people think of as "this is fine art and that's not."

Linda Goode Bryant: Artists said, "Hey, why can't we make work that doesn't require that we have to buy art supplies?" Using what you have to create what you need.

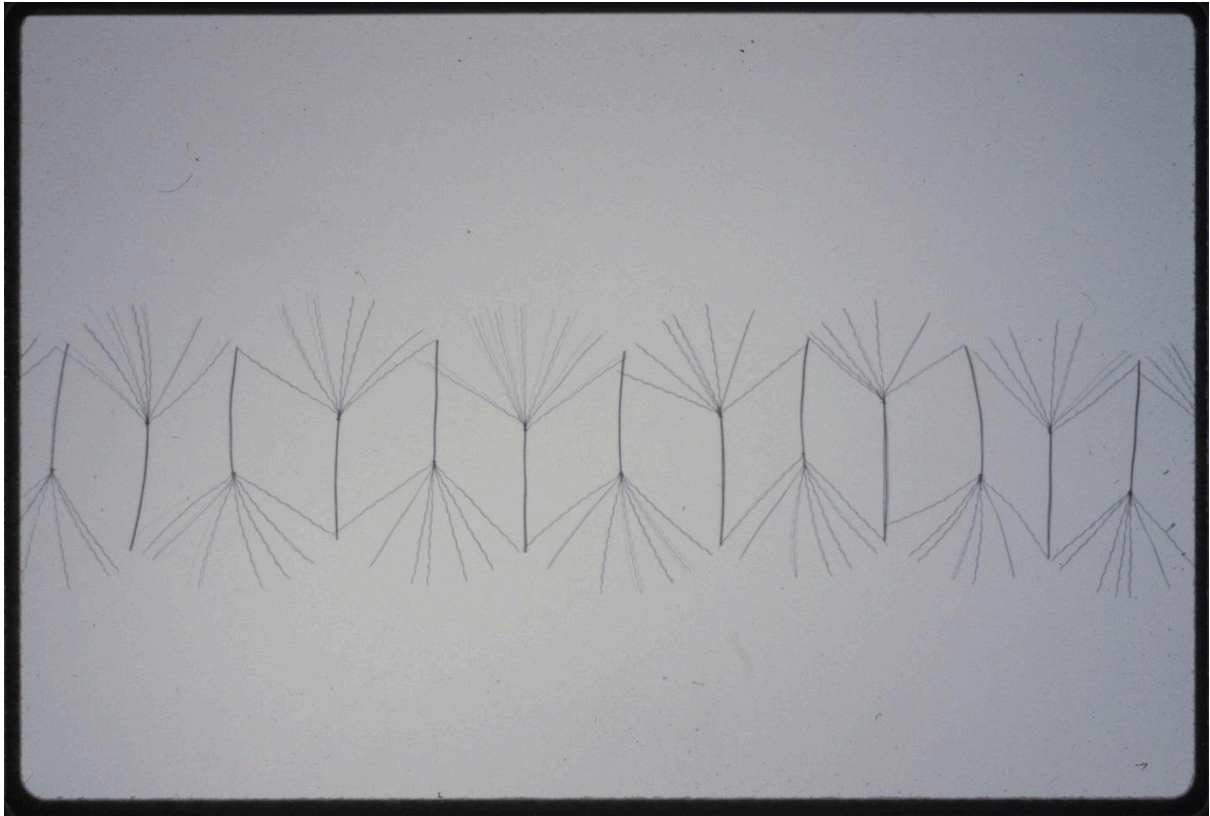
G. Peter Jemison: The thing that I really recall recognizing was how ubiquitous bags were on the subway. Everyone carried some type of a bag, whether it was from shopping, whether it was a lunch bag or maybe a grocery bag, or maybe it was just a handbag or a briefcase. Then I really began, at the same time, to visit different Native American collections and saw a variety of bags, made from leather or woven and they were decorated. And that propelled my idea further.

Indian Toy / Toy Indian was a sort of a manufactured image of what we look like. And then placing it on a paper bag, and the paper bag is a commercial object. It's a little bit of a tongue in cheek commentary about the way in which everything is commercialized, including us, including our image.

Liliana Porter – Untitled (1970)



Maren Hassinger – Consolation (after Palmetto [1980]) (1996)



Artist, Maren Hassinger: My name is Maren Hassinger.

I primarily do sculpture. But movement and dance were a big part of my development. At some point, I discovered, in a junkyard, wire rope. And I could weld it and heat it and make it bend and do all those kinds of things to it. To make these, I would ask the factory to cut them into 16 inch lengths. Then I would pry open one end with a screwdriver, and unwrap around until I got it down to where I wanted it.

And I always thought of them as palmettos or tropical vegetation. And in putting these palmettos together, facing one up, one down, they also danced, I thought. They danced in space. They became very humanoid in that way.

I met Linda Goode Bryant sometime in the early eighties. When JAM moved into its headquarters in Tribeca, I remember one of the things about that space was it was fairly cavernous and there was the opportunity to really start experimenting boldly with performances. It was a very, very lively, very artistic group of folks who inhabited the neighborhood and I felt really part of something.

Tom Finkelpearl – Wood mantelpiece with NYC MTA subway handles (1980s)

Camille Billops – Madame Puisay (1981)

Rolando Briseno – American Table (1994)



For Briseno, a Mexican American artist from Texas, **how we feed ourselves represents wider cultural values.** “I grew up in a very tight family, we’d eat together two or three times a day every day,” Briseno once reflected. “And then when I went to college I joined the real American society, and people didn’t sit down together anymore.” **Here, he paints directly on a tablecloth, setting this American table with a meal-for-one and two televisions. The everyday rituals that form community and culture were central to Briseno’s work when he showed at JAM in the 1980s, and he would continue to explore these themes throughout his career.**

Camille Billops – Untitled (lamp) (1975)

Martin Cohen – Another Monologue in Search of a Dialogue (1980)

Willie Birch – Woman Feeding Child (1983)



Willie Birch – Mourning (1983)

Sydney Blum – ONE four (1980)

Nina Kuo – Contrapted Series Quilt, Brooklyn (1983)



Nina Kuo – Contrapted Series Chinatown (1983)



George Mingo – Zebra Couple (1983)



JAM was not alone in its mission to facilitate cross-racial exchanges in an otherwise highly segregated New York art world. In 1983 the artist Lorraine O'Grady curated *The Black and White Show* at Kenkeleba Gallery, a Black-owned space on the Lower East Side. Half of the participating artists were Black and half were white, a requirement that extended to the artworks on view, all of which were done in grayscale. The only exception was this work by Mingo (who was also active JAM), which was installed in the final room of the exhibition. "Its black-and-white-in-living-color made the perfect coda," O'Grady wrote.

Rosemary Mayer – October Ghost (1980/2022)

Mayer became known in the 1970s for her ethereal, diaphanous sculptures constructed from carefully balanced and draped materials. She showed *October Ghost* at JAM in *Dialogues*, a 1980 group exhibition organized with neighboring downtown alternative arts organizations, including the Women's InterArt Center, which Mayer represented. Just as *Dialogues* was an exhibition about collaborating with your neighbors, *October Ghost* materializes the relationship of responding to, leaning on, and depending on one another. Mayer passed away in 2014; *October Ghost* was installed here with the guidance of the artist's estate, who reconstructed it in response to this exhibition.

Senga Nengudi, Cheryl Banks-Smith, Lawrence D. "Butch" Morris – Air Propo (1981)

This video documents the performance *Air Propo*, created as part of a series of collaborations among artists working in different mediums. In it, the musician Morris is seen playing a cornet before cutting to Nengudi, who is seen standing in an installation of bamboo crosses covered in a gauzy fabric. She exhales in short, sharp breaths, an act she later described as a way of "allowing the self to be gone and... [allowing] this other spirit to come in." The video then cuts back to Morris, around whose legs we see the dancer and choreographer Banks-Smith perform an improvised dance.

Charles Daniel Dawson – Backscape #2 (1970)

Randy Williams – AIDS Not So Holy (1982)



Here, Williams brings together a bible, a condom, perforated metal, and a postcard of former United States president Ronald Reagan. These seemingly disparate objects take on new meanings – even uses – when placed together, just as the work is informed by the context in which it was made. This context is explicitly pointed to by the multiplication of the word “AIDS,” which Reagan refused to say until 1985, when the epidemic had already impacted tens of thousands of people in the US, including William’s artistic community. He reflected: “It was something which affected me very personally, because I had so many friends that had died from AIDS very early on.”

Albert Chong – Minimal Mystic (1982)



Peter Feldstein - #527 (1998)

Peter Feldstein - #526 (1998)

Randy Williams – George Jackson and St. Joan of Arc (1984)



Artist, Randy Williams: I'm Randy Williams, an artist, a teacher, a father, and a grandfather, and always and forever committed to Linda Bryant and Just Above Midtown.

My father was in a card game in the Bronx and he was killed. He was shot. And I had two sons and the idea of playing with guns became something that I started to think about. When I went back and looked at this work, I was absolutely shocked by the rawness of it.

Curator, Thomas (T.) Jean Lax: Part of this rawness comes from the work's reference to a history of violence against Black people. In the upper left, a small watercolor depicts a lynching scene. Moving outward, we see other details such as a toy gun, a folding razor, and a photograph of the activist George Jackson, who was murdered by the state during a prison uprising in 1971.

Randy Williams: I wanted to make art that was a little more confronting. I think JAM is what allowed for a lot of us to go on and do these really experimental, exciting things.

The gallery was not simply a repository for work to be placed on the walls. You could meet up with people and you could talk about concepts and ideas, and then you could go back to your studio and you could play with them.

We still were struggling with the concept of identity. Like, who are we? Who are we in this country? We've been excluded, how can we strengthen our voice? What is ours to use and to make art out of? And I think a lot of the conversations fostered the collaboration.

I had never worked with other artists of color. I could never really talk about the things that were really important to me as a young Black man. And JAM really opened up all those possibilities for me as an artist.

Artwork slides sent to Just Above Midtown



From the 1960s to mid-1990s, 35 mm slides were the most affordable way for an artist to document and show images of their work. JAM staff regularly reviewed artists' slides, providing them a unique level of access to curators. A selection of hundreds of slide images from the JAM records are on view [here](#).

Linda Goode Bryant: At JAM, we learned how little artists knew what the business of art was. They didn't understand how business affected who got in galleries and who didn't get in galleries.

And so from my perspective, starting The Business of Being an Artist—the BBA workshop, as we called it—was to provide artists with an opportunity to figure out how they wanted to work around that business within their sense of integrity, and be discerning about, who do you want to represent you? You're just clamoring to be in a gallery so people see your work and somebody's selling it. The Business of Being an Artist at JAM was meant to weaponize artists so that they were deciding their fate and not this market that they knew nothing about.

I hope that there are aspects of this show that cause both artists and the public that comes to MoMA—to stop and consider. You're in this space because there is an infrastructure that is supported to provide you with an opportunity to experience art. You need to know what that infrastructure is. Because in knowing what that infrastructure is, you're gonna be better able to say, this infrastructure includes and excludes. And if I want a more expansive sense of creativity in what's being produced from artists outside of this infrastructure, I now know I've gotta go seek that out.

Dan Concholar – Zebra Man Coming Series (1972)

Dan Concholar – Title unknown (1970)

Janet Olivia Henry – The Studio Visit (1983)



What and whom does an artist surround themselves with in their studio? Can it be a space of refuge and comfort as well as a space for creativity and risk-taking? In *The Studio Visit* Henry explores these questions through a scene inspired by her work as an artist and key staff member at JAM.

Reimagining her world in miniature, Henry used materials she collected at department stores, mom-and-pop toy stores, secondhand shops, flea markets, and yard sales to depict a Black artist in her workspace being visited by a white curator.

Janet Olivia Henry – Ritual (1982-83)



Artist, Janet Olivia Henry: I am Janet Henry and I've considered myself an artist I think forever. I met artists in high school. Most of them were white and men, but I met artists. I knew you could have a profession. And when I went into Just Above Midtown, there it was. It was a magnet for artists, who just wanted to follow their minds.

And then somebody told me it was gonna close. So I came up there. I was just, like, spouting, "Well, you can't close, please don't close!" And Linda said staying open was partly due to me almost having a nervous breakdown in front of her.

When JAM moved downtown, every day Linda would get up early, she would look at ads, she'd go walking around Tribeca until she found a place on Franklin Street. I used to say, if you saw somebody in a suit down there, they were lost. It was still industrial.

The office at JAM was in the basement and I remember bringing in toys and photographing them down in the basement.

My work, it's social commentary. What I found is that American culture had been replicated in miniature. I have a range of characters. Even though I don't create the dolls and the clothes, I have to find the thing that makes it come together.

I really thought I had to invent my own medium. And I kind of came with that attitude from high school through art school. And it flowered at JAM.

After their second eviction, in 1984, JAM relocated for a final time, to a large, 25,000-square-foot loft on Broadway in SoHo with major renovation needs. There, the organization's program evolved, specializing in performance and new technology in film, video, animation, and sound. It also shifted its focus from organizing exhibitions to providing artists with studio space and the financial support to create new work. As JAM staff member Tony Whitfield described, "We moved farther and farther away from being a place to go and buy things."

Aiming to generate funds for operations and artist stipends, Goode Bryant began setting up subsidiaries of JAM, including the Corporation for Art and Television (CAT). Conceived as a for-profit production facility that would capitalize on the recent expansion of film and television production in New York, CAT was never fully realized: a dispute with the landlord led to JAM's eviction from Broadway in 1986. Although the physical location shuttered, JAM would shape the dance, theater, and musical arts ecosystem for generations to follow.

Sandra Payne – Untitled drawings from the series *Most Definitely Not Profile Ladies* (1986)



"I am interested in remembering the unseen, the untouched, the unexpected," Payne once wrote. For JAM's final exhibition at 503 Broadway, Payne made drawings of feminine figures in profile as black silhouettes on empty backgrounds. **Fleshy and oozing, their shapes at times look more like monsters, vegetables, or microbes than humans.** Payne's friend and fellow artist Lorraine O'Grady described them as **"joyously sexual and sublimely spiritual."**

Lorna Simpson – Screen 4 (1986)



Lorraine O'Grady – Announcement Card 1 (Banana-Palm with Lance) (2020)

Lorraine O'Grady – Announcement Card 2 (Spike with Sword Fighting) (2020)



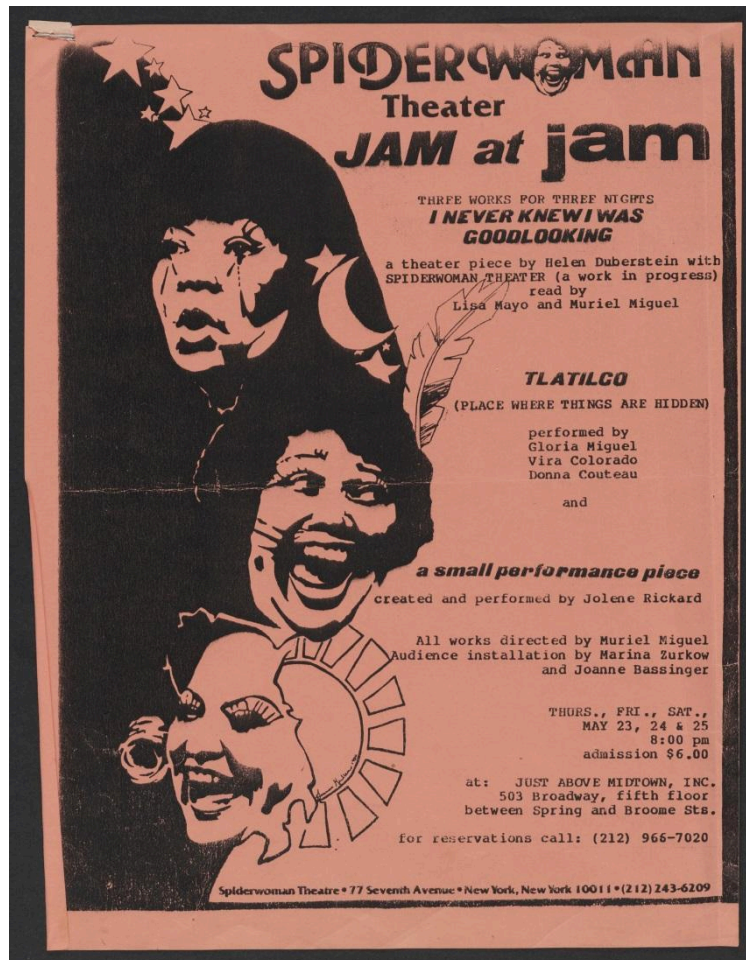
In 1980 O'Grady arrived at a party at JAM wearing a tiara and an evening gown and cape made from white dinner gloves. She then lashed herself with a whip while reciting a poem, at one point exclaiming, "Black art must take more risks!" With this performance, O'Grady introduced Mlle Bourgeoise Noire, a fictional persona generated out of the artist's anger at the racism and sexism then prevalent in the art world, and her own complex relationship to race. Forty years later, she announced a new avatar, the Knight. In *Announcement Cards 1* and *2*, the Knight, atop whose helmet a Caribbean palm tree grows, appears ready for battle. What might her call-to-action be today?

Linda Goode Bryant – Project EATS (Randalls – Wards Islands Farm) (2022)

Despite closing in 1986, JAM's energy lived on in projects like those documented in this video – including Project EATS, a system of neighborhood-based farms throughout New York City, which was founded by Goode Bryant in 2008. Self-described as “art that feeds,” Project EATS fosters collaboration and creative thinking in underserved communities through farming. Centering the need for both personal and physical nourishment, Project EATS provides open-ended time and space to create for working-class and low-income people.

Beginning in 1978, JAM increasingly supported live performance, bringing artists from different disciplines together, offering them time and space to collaborate, and encouraging audience participating through process-oriented programs. After the gallery's closure, JAM staff continued programming under the auspices of JAM Presents and Catconcerts at venues throughout Manhattan. A selection of excerpted archival footage documenting JAM-produced performances is on view here.

- **Blondell Cummings, Senga Nengudi, and Yasunao Tone – Blind Dates (1982)**
- **Martha Wilson – The State of the Art Union Address (1983)**
- **Meg Eginton – Wind Shear (1985)**
- **Harry Whittaker Sheppard – Retakes (1985-86)**
- **JAM Presents: Spirit Ensemble, Graham Haynes, and No Image, and Olu Dara (1989)**



Linda Goode Bryant: The Broadway space was amazing, all that space that we could just be a laboratory in.

JAM volunteer, art historian, and curator, Lowery Stokes Sims: She really became more of a kind of, you know, resource for people, particularly when she moved to Broadway. If you had a good idea, Linda would help you realize it.

JAM volunteer, art historian, and curator, Horace Brockington: The performance part of it started getting heavier and heavier. And it was clear to people that Linda was not going back to traditional painting and sculpture.

Lowery Stokes Sims: There were a group of Black women who were doing more installations and performance and video. I think JAM was a really important venue for these artists because there were not many other places that they could go.

Artist, Kaylynn Sullivan TwoTrees: Because JAM was so alive with other artists, the process of creating and the opportunity to get feedback from other artists was unique. I began to understand that there was a world that I could participate in and grow in.

But I remember conversations about the lease. Keeping this space seemed like it was harder work.

JAM curator and artist, Tony Whitfield: I think, probably, someone else would not have occupied 503 Broadway without paying any rent for as long as Linda did. It was basically, let's keep trying to raise the money.

Linda Goode Bryant: Closing JAM, the Broadway space, was really hard. There were so many things that contributed to me saying, "I think I'm done now," not the least of which was the market itself. Art was becoming more and more commodified. But it's about being aware of to what extent you are compromising your work, let alone your spirit.

So much of my art is made from the people I'm with and the people I know and how we collaborate to create this thing together. That's really fulfilling.

May 5, 1987

Dear Artists, Friends, Colleagues and Patrons,

JAM is still here with a keener eye, a more perceptive ear, an increasingly sensitive touch, a better smell, an even higher taste for quality and enough guts to grow from the challenge of change.

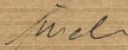
JAM has faced many challenges since the fall of 1983 when the sale of its Franklin Street space forced its untimely move. Upon notice of the sale, JAM had to shift its attention from an active year of regular exhibition and presenting programs, the implementation of a major project on popular culture and a documentary on the art market to an assessment of its organizational and program needs for the future. As a result, JAM made several major changes: organizationally it sought to significantly increase its earned income and secure a long-term site for its activities through the development of a large Soho space. Programmatically, it introduced the "Laboratory Program" which allowed JAM to provide artists with financial, administrative and creative support in the development of new art and/or new art forms.

JAM was successful in these efforts. External conditions, however, adversely effected JAM's ability to remain in the space and in August 1986 JAM moved. From then, JAM worked toward strengthening and reorganizing itself so that it could effectively resume programs which continued to address the current needs of artists and their public(s).

Yes, JAM's still here, proud about the progress we're making to clear up the debris from the past and excited as hell about the programs we've planned in the coming year. From new artists, new works, and new environments to new formats? (yes, there is a B. Culture). We're kicking it off with a 4 night, music/performance series at the Knitting Factory, 47 East Houston Street between Mott and Mulberry. At 9 & 11 PM you can listen to Geri Allen, solo on June 2; Graham Haynes & No Image on June 3, Fred Holland and DanceNoise on June 4, and Lawrence (Butch) Morris & Ensemble on June 5th. We're working on a vocal surprise on the 5th....

Yes, we're out to get your enthusiastic, emphathetic and, of course, energetic support. It's a support we need to make it happen...so let's get started folks...get/stay in touch, for together we are going to have one wonderfully exciting (uh huh) unexpected year!

Sincerely,


Linda Goode Bryant

Just Above Midtown, Inc. • P.O. Box 1824 • Canal Street Station • New York, N.Y. 10013 • (212) 787-8258

Artist, Randy Williams: Just Above Midtown, as much as it is a physical entity, I think it's also a spiritual entity as well. It created, for a lot of us, this extended family.

Linda Goode Bryant: There was arguments, there were thoughts and ideas. There were debates that were going on.

JAM curator and artist, Tony Whitfield: It's where you actually would meet people in other disciplines, who are people of color. But you also met all of these folks who wanted to be involved with them.

Artist, Kaylynn Sullivan TwoTrees: I think that there was something about the time of JAM, the place of JAM, the liberty that JAM offered us and the kind of collective care that people had for each other.

Randy Williams: I'm still a part of that connection with all of those things that happened.

Artist, Senga Nengudi: It's sort of like when you throw a rock into a pond. That's how JAM was. It kept expanding and getting larger and more beautiful.

JAM volunteer, art historian, and curator, Horace Brockington: It was a forum for letting people know the diversity of Black artists. There's no one aesthetic that ever ran through.

JAM curator and artist, Kathleen Goncharov: Anything goes. Basically, you could do anything if you could figure out how to do it.

JAM volunteer, art historian, and curator, Lowery Stokes Sims: JAM was a rule-breaking experiment in highlighting the work of artists who would've not got any recognition and spawned many of their careers. And I think it lives through the relationships that were built.

Linda Goode Bryant: And it was electric, it was alive. It was unexpected. Every moment you didn't know what to expect. It was life-giving. It really was.