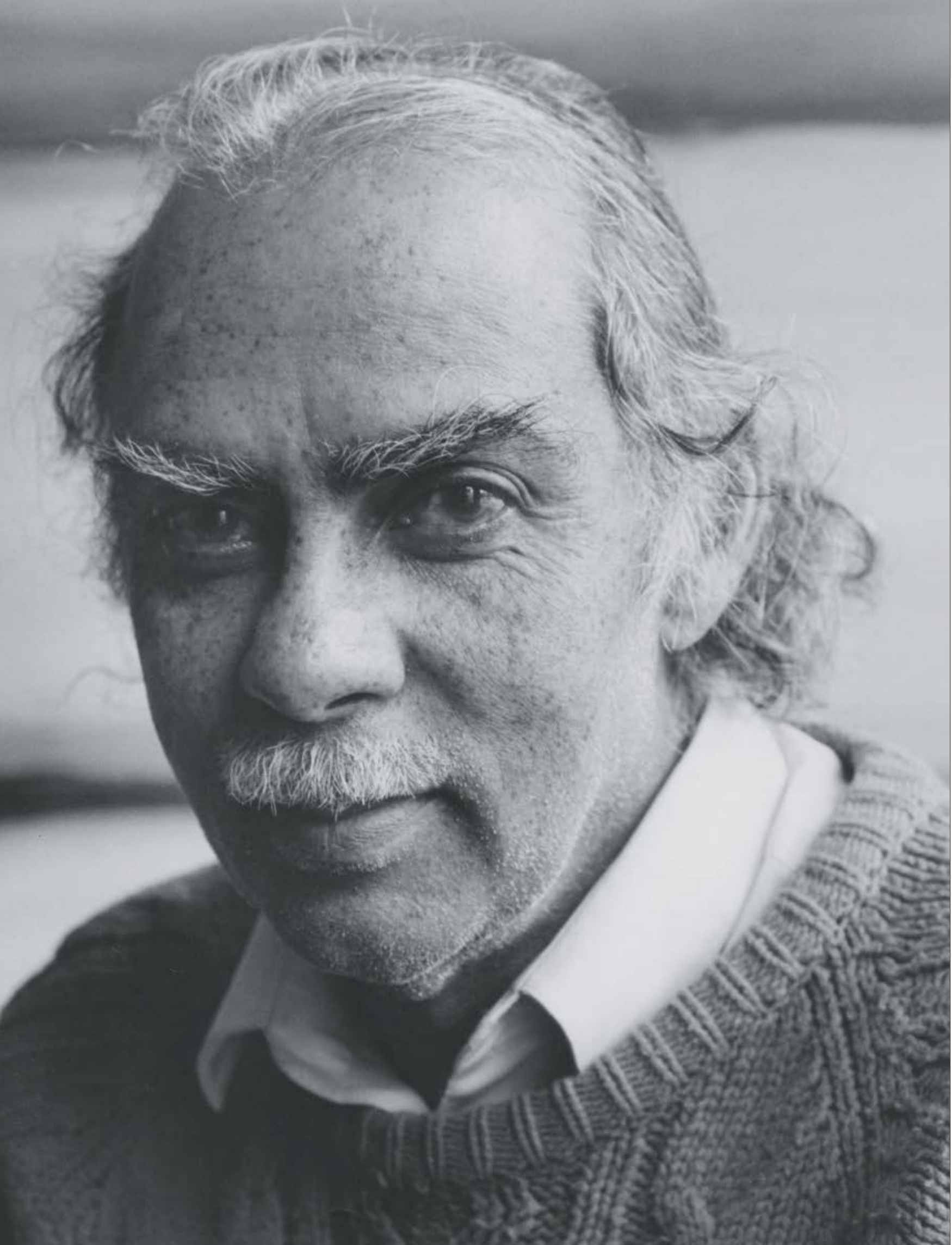


ED
CLARK
A SURVEY

ED CLARK



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CURATED BY SUKANYA RAJARATNAM

MNUCHIN GALLERY

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We remember the first time we met Ed Clark. He arrived at the gallery on the evening of March 15, 2016, full of zest at the age of 90, for the opening we were having for our exhibition *David Hammons: Five Decades*.

David and Ed had gone back years and it was clear that Ed was there for David, although David was nowhere to be found. It was a beautiful moment that captured a long friendship and a history of mutual support. Ed had stories of David, and David had previously told us that going into Ed's studio was like entering a candy store: you wanted everything! (It is no surprise that David is one of Ed's biggest collectors.)

As often happens in life, and sometimes in art, a happenstance moment of introduction evolved into something much more over the next two years.

Ed Clark: A Survey has been long overdue. New York has not seen an overview of Ed's career since the Studio Museum's retrospective in 1980, and has never seen an exhibition as comprehensive as this one. In the four decades since the Studio Museum's show, Ed has continued to push the boundaries of his practice, traveling across multiple continents to create new bodies of work that capture the spirit and light of his new locales and mine the possibilities of his materials and his push broom technique.

The gallery has a long history of exhibiting the masters of Abstract Expressionism, including many of Ed's contemporaries who worked alongside him in New York and Paris in the 1950s and '60s, such as Willem de Kooning,

Sam Francis, and Joan Mitchell. We are delighted to be able to present Ed's work among that of his peers. This exhibition is further contextualized by the exhibition *Soul of a Nation* at the Brooklyn Museum, the opening of which fortuitously coincides with our own. Here, Clark's work is seen alongside that of other African American artists working in the same period.

We are indebted to several people for facilitating this exhibition. First, we extend our sincere thanks to Melanca Clark, Ed's daughter, for her time and efforts in helping us make this exhibition the best version of itself. Second, we would like to acknowledge Lois Plehn, who has been a friend of the gallery for years and championed the idea of this exhibition from the start. Third, we would like to recognize Jack and Connie Tilton for their previous presentations of Ed's work in 2014 and 2017. They played an important role in reintroducing Ed's work to New York audiences, and we would like to dedicate this exhibition to Jack's memory.

In addition, we are grateful for the generosity of our lenders, without whom this exhibition would not be possible.

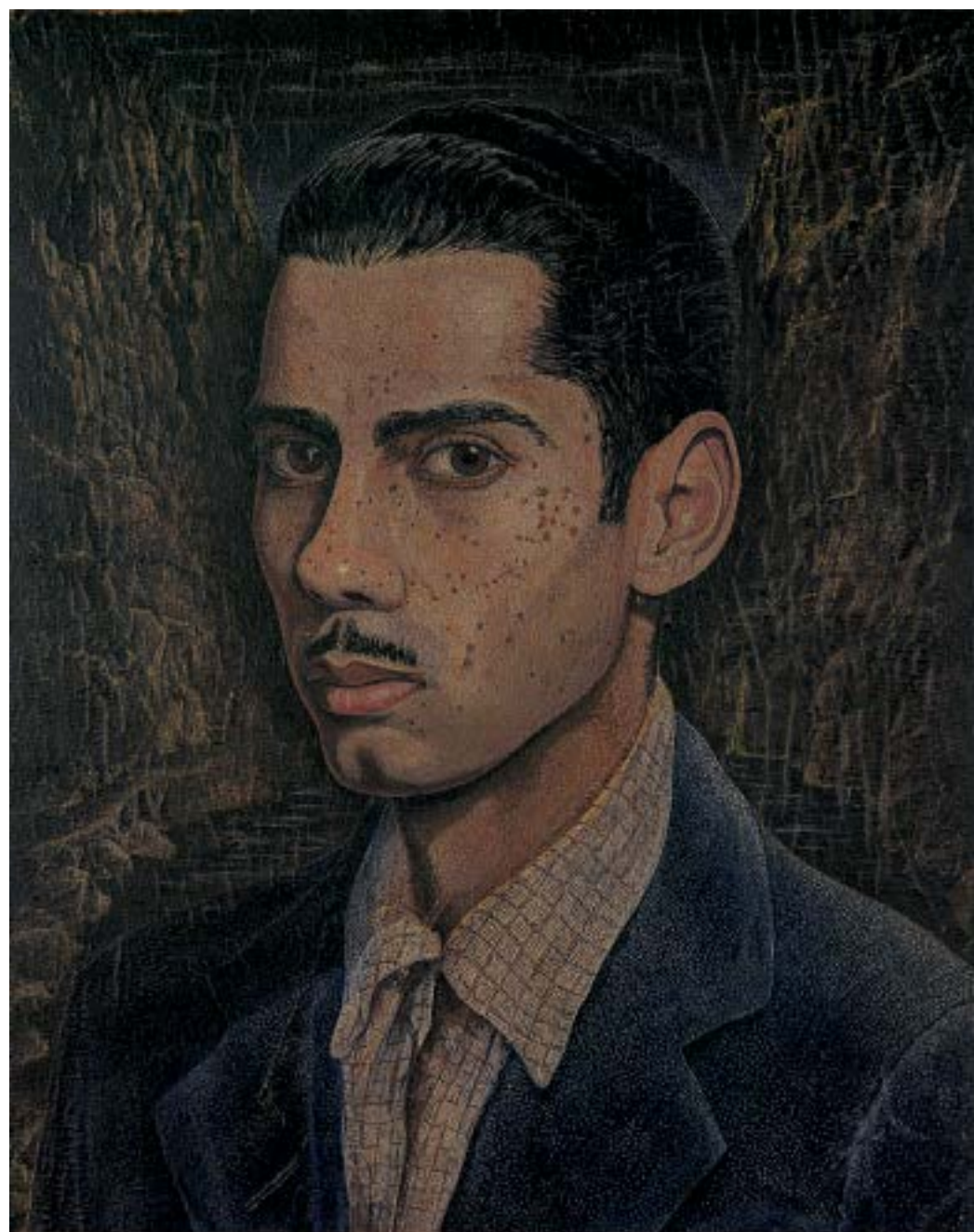
We commend Antwaun Sargent for his insightful catalogue essay and McCall Associates for their elegant catalogue design. We thank our in-house exhibitions team, including Liana Gorman, David McClelland, and Arrow Mueller, for their diligence.

And above all, we thank Ed for his fearless innovation and his important contributions to the history of art.

ROBERT MNUCHIN

SUKANYA RAJARATNAM

MICHAEL MCGINNIS



Ed Clark, *Self-Portrait*, 1947–49, watercolor on board, 14 ½ × 11 ½ inches (36.8 × 29.2 cm)

ED CLARK: A DIFFERENT KIND OF ENERGY

ANTWAUN SARGENT

Art is where and how we speak to each other in tongues audible when “official” language fails. It is not where we escape the world’s ills but rather one place where we go to make sense of them.
—Elizabeth Alexander, *The Black Interior*¹

It wasn’t so much a matter of choosing France—it was a matter of getting out of America.
—James Baldwin, *The Paris Review*²

I.

Before the Abstract Expressionist painter Edward “Ed” Clark left the Art Institute of Chicago, where he studied traditional academic painting as a World War II veteran on the GI Bill, he worked gradually, between the years 1947 and 1949, on his first self-portrait. The striking image tested Clark’s painterly abilities, and ultimately gave him faith in them. He has said that his self-portrait convinced him that he was “not an artist, but a great artist. . . . Once I could do the self-portrait, I figured I could do everything.”³ He painted it at home, on a board with watercolors, while looking carefully at himself in a mirror, trying to capture what he saw before him. The product was a portrait of himself, a young Black man, against an impressionistic, otherworldly backdrop, his hair neatly combed back to reveal his fresh and freckled face and big, searching eyes, filled with wonder. But what was Clark searching for? In a look back at the oeuvre of the now 92-year-old Clark, his formal advances in abstraction show that he

was in search of the paint. His pioneering experiments are characteristic of the way mid-century abstractionists turned painting into an awe-inspiring event. Clark’s work is a protracted and extraordinary study of immediate, in-the-moment painting, how to push it, build it up, allow light to filter in to expand the possibilities of color. The marks, which begin short and energetic and grow into both serene and aggressive horizontal waves, create a highly charged interplay between figure and ground and embody emotion, movement, unconscious thought, and the passage of time. “When I’m painting,” Clark has said, “I’m not thinking about anything but the paint.”⁴

Clark’s use of paint and dry pigment has evolved endlessly throughout his career. In one of his earliest mature works, *The City*, 1953 (page 11), impastoed blocks of bright, saturated color show the influence of the French abstract painter Serge Poliakoff, a contemporary. A few years later, when Clark began painting on canvases that



Nicolas de Staël, *Footballleurs*, 1952, oil on board, 9 ½ × 12 ½ inches (24.3 × 32 cm)

he had laid down on the floor, like Jackson Pollock before him, he made abstractions, like 1959's *Winter Bitch*. These abstract works' short, slashing, energetic marks led curators and critics to associate Clark's early output with action painting. As defined by the 20th-century critic Harold Rosenberg, action painting records "a gesture of liberation from Value—political, aesthetic, moral."⁵ A few years later, in the 1960s, Clark's wide, stacked waves of flat, firm, solid color—as seen in 1966's *Flash* (page 29)—drew comparisons to Color Field painting. Clark painted first with his hands, rollers made from bunched rags, and large brushes before landing on the tool that became his signature, the push broom, which he says brought speed and "a different kind of energy" to his art. The push broom, an uncommon painting implement, has also given his imagery extraordinary structure and balance; the long, straight, bold strokes of reds and pinks, blues and blacks, capture light and texture and the phenomenological. Throughout his long career, Clark has also experimented with spontaneity and chance, allowing his oil and, later, acrylic paints to run on the canvas until they become explosive and fluid splashes of color, unhindered by the push of his brush, as demonstrated in 2005's *Untitled* (page 77) and 2009's *Untitled* (page 89). Over Clark's seven decades of faithful commitment to abstraction, he has continued to manipulate paint beyond its traditional

boundaries, creating an ever-expanding artistic vision that is entirely his own.

Clark's 2006 painting *The Tilt* (page 81) offers further evidence of the revolutionary advances he has made in the space of Abstract Expressionism. In *The Tilt*, four bands of acrylic sweep diagonally across the field to make a single wave of paint that leaves streaks of uncovered white canvas and droplets of unswept paint in its wake. The color palette of *The Tilt* is a product of Clark's exploration into what he has called "the luminosity of color"⁶ and his resulting mastery of out-of-this-world coloration. A jet black fades into a faint gray that gives way to milky white, sky blue, and verdant grassy green, all heightened by the surrounding unpainted canvas. The brilliant amplification of hue at work in *The Tilt* appears in other works of Clark's that play with a rich range of pinks, imbuing his canvases with lush sensuality. The critic and art historian April Kingsley, describing two such works, *Locomotion*, 2004, and *Pink Top*, 2003, writes:

The color pink provides the warmth in both images, as it does in much of Clark's work. It is to him what orange was to Cézanne and yellow to Van Gogh. Someone once said you can judge a painter by how well he or she handles pink. That person was probably



Ed Clark, *The City*, 1953, oil on canvas, 45 × 76 ½ inches (114.3 × 194.3 cm)

thinking of Matisse, but might just as well have been talking about Ed Clark, who uses pink more than anyone around and handles it just beautifully.⁷

Clark moved to Paris for the first time in 1952 and stayed there until 1956, studying painting at the workshop-style Académie de la Grande Chaumière. With the encouragement of his instructor, the French painter Édouard Goerg, Clark visited Paris's museums to interrogate the work of the modernists and Old Masters. In the 1950s and '60s, postwar Paris offered Clark and other African American artists and writers—Beauford Delaney, Richard Wright, James Baldwin, and Barbara Chase-Riboud, among others—refuge from racism and discrimination. Paris also granted those artists creative freedom from the demands first made during the Harlem Renaissance and, later, the Black Arts Movement, that African American artists make "Black Art" in the name of enlightenment and revolution.

Paris "was the most famous city for an artist in the 1950s," Clark told his friend, the late abstract painter Jack Whitten, in 2014. "I mean, New York in that moment was

not considered the capital of the art world—it was Paris. They were all alive, man! Picasso, Braque, both of them. Everybody was there!"⁸ His arrival in the City of Light, a few years after completing his self-portrait, saw Clark begin to move away from the figurative representation that had defined his studies at the Art Institute of Chicago. For instance, the 1952 *Portrait of Muriel*, depicting his first wife, Muriel Nelson, shows a looser representational style and bolder use of color than his self-portrait. During his first years in Paris, Clark discovered the impact of natural light and, he has explained, "It struck me that if I paint a person—no matter how I do it—it is a lie." "The truth," he realized, as he painted through Realism and Cubism and took on the influence of the Postimpressionist Paul Cézanne, "is in the physical brushstroke and the subject of the painting is the paint itself."⁹

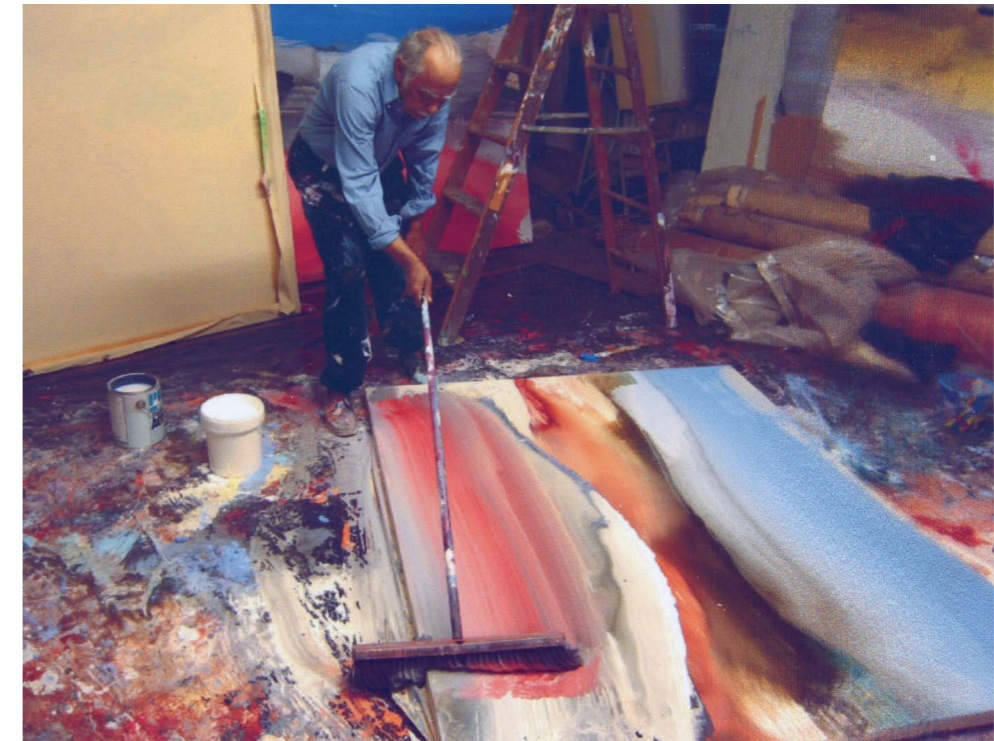
Clark's ideas of paint's potential were transformed by the plastic mark making of the Russian modernist painter Nicolas de Staël, Clark's most important early influence. De Staël's work represented the possibilities of playing the in-between of hard-edge and gestural abstraction. "To me, he was the most important artist

in Europe after the war," Clark has said. "He had a new vision and, for me, he was more emotional than the rest of them." Clark's Paris paintings from the mid-1950s are an interpretation of what he saw in de Staël's art: "big, juicy strokes, close, floating."¹⁰

Although Paris was where Clark formally moved into abstraction and shifted his focus to the brushstroke, his interest in art dates much further back, to when he was a six-year-old boy attending Catholic school in Baton Rouge. A nun had given his class an assignment to draw a tree, saying that the student who drew the best one would be awarded with a gold star. As a child, Clark could copy any image he saw, and the tree drawing he turned in was unrivaled. However, after realizing that Clark had clearly won the contest, his teacher dismissed class without awarding the gold star to anyone. The incident had a profound psychological effect on the painter: "The rejection helped prepare me for the rest of my life to face rejection, but it also taught me that I had talent."¹¹ Years later, when the 21-year-old Clark submitted his 1947–49 self-portrait to the School of the Art Institute of Chicago for consideration for the student group show, it was also rejected. These significant moments in his early career made him doubt not the power of the works but the biased arbiters of artistic talent he encountered early on. The critics and curators who outright ignored Clark's contributions to art and abstraction, even though he was on the scene alongside contemporaries and friends Joan Mitchell, Yayoi Kusama, and Donald Judd (who in his SoHo loft in 1971 organized a show of Clark's art), in fact made Clark believe in his work and experimentation, and unburdened him of expectation.

In 1956, Clark's experiments in the studio led him to his first crucial breakthrough: "the big sweep."¹² The revelation came when Clark improvised with a push broom as a paintbrush, deploying the broom's physical force to move paint wildly across raw canvas. Clark wanted to cover a large area with broader, straighter strokes than he could achieve with his wrist and a traditional paintbrush. The long, straight, horizontal strokes produced by the broom give his paintings the impression of speed, of "cutting through something really fast."¹³ He mused that perhaps he was after something psychological, an expression of anger or violence, or something more thrilling, like dance or a visual force akin to jazz. The improvisation embedded in jazz and in the paintings of black Abstract Expressionists—Clark, William T. Williams, Howardena Pindell, Alma Thomas, and Al Loving, among others—is a uniquely American phenomenon linked to the black lived experience, which has been a major asset of black abstractionist thought, past and present. When asked to explain the meaning of his art, Clark once replied, "Would you ask Miles Davis 'what does that mean?'"¹⁴ His sublime and subliminal brushstrokes are not planned or rational; the only way to understand them is to feel them. Imagine Coltrane at the salty waters of Lac Rose with buckets of acrylic paint and a push broom.

Clark sees his brushstrokes, which have the capacity to poetically portray both the ordinary and the phenomenal in a single sweep of paint, as mostly self-referential, but at times it is impossible not to read metaphor into the work. For example, in *Red & Blue*, 2005, Clark layers the browns, blues, whites, reds, and pinks of the earth to evoke a distinct emotion and mood. The painting summons both



Clark painting with a push broom in his New York studio, 2006

sexuality and nature's wondrous landscapes. All of this is conveyed by the thrusting motion of Clark's marks, which emanate a sense of monumental movement—that is to say, life. And while Clark's paint handling is influenced in part by the avant-garde style of Willem de Kooning, its movement and energy are rooted more deeply in Clark's own past. As a child of the Great Depression, Clark was often on the move as he grew up. He was born in 1926 in Storyville, the New Orleans red-light district that is now a part of the Tremé neighborhood. He and his parents, Edward and Merion Clark, and his sister, Shirley, soon moved to Baton Rouge; then, when he was eight, to Chicago. As an adult, Clark has split his time between New York and Paris and traveled to China, Mexico, Nigeria, and Brazil, among other countries, where he produced paintings that were unconsciously marked by the changes in light, pace, and access to materials in each locale. He said in a 1997 interview:

I moved so much as a kid, from home to home, from place to place. While I respect the

construction of space as it is in a Vermeer, I'm into the movement that goes on in the space. All this movement is about the stroke for me. But even things like the Cape Canaveral rocket launches, and I've never seen the rockets except on television, are a part of our experience—these kinds of breakthroughs of movement... What I notice is that if I'm in a place that's absolutely new to me and I'm in awe of it, it enters into the work in a different way. Even if it's just broken down into a few areas, I can sense it.¹⁵

Clark's awareness of the importance of place and setting to his formal experiments with color—how color moves in the space of a canvas and its ability to capture the essence of places around the world—can be traced to his visit to the Greek island of Crete at Jack Whitten's invitation in the summer of 1971. The series of 12 pastel-on-paper works Clark produced there was like nothing he had made before. They possess something of the island's magnificent color and Clark's lived experience.

II.

At the insistence of the sculptor George Sugarman, Clark moved to New York in 1957. The so-called first-generation Abstract Expressionists had turned the city into the center of the art world with their inventiveness. In New York, Clark began to experiment with collage, leading to his second pivotal advance in the space of abstraction: the shaped canvas painting. In *Untitled*, 1957, his first shaped work, his passion for texture, color, and movement extends beyond the traditional, contained, rectangular support, into space. He attached a piece of painted paper to the canvas, allowing it to stick out past the edge, and built a stretcher underneath the paper so it would not appear limp. (While Clark's first shaped canvas has since been destroyed, a similar example is now in the collection of the Art Institute of Chicago.) "*Untitled* recognizes the modernist truism that what is a contradiction in logic can also be an aesthetic reality, such as a closed picture plane that suggests space and light, or a flight-figure that in no way figures escape," art historian Darby English writes.¹⁶

Untitled was first exhibited in December 1957 at the Brata Gallery, the artist-run 10th Street cooperative that Clark co-founded that year in the East Village. The downtown avant-garde cooperative scene, where artists painted with what the critic Clement Greenberg famously called "the Tenth Street touch,"¹⁷ included Claes Oldenburg, Sam Francis, and Clark friends and Brata members Al Held, Yayoi Kusama, and Ron Bladen. There was no precedent in art for Clark's improvisation; in *ARTnews* in 1972, the critic and painter Lawrence Campbell wrote that Clark's *Untitled* was generally considered to be the first shaped

painting in modern art.¹⁸ It reaffirmed the abstractionist belief that painting can function beyond illustrating the world and can stand alone as an object, blurring the lines between itself and sculpture. Though this was a radical expansion of the possibilities of painting—one that Clark continued to explore during his second stint in Paris in the late 1960s with his oval paintings, beginning with the monumental work *The Big Egg*, 1968 (page 18)—it has rarely been recognized as the revolutionary approach to modern painting that it was. It is an intervention that Jasper Johns, Ellsworth Kelly, Frank Stella, and Richard Tuttle began using after Clark, one that changed the way contemporary art is made. Clark's role as progenitor of the modern shaped painting has often been overlooked in the history of American painting and Abstract Expressionism, much like the ignored modernist contributions of other black abstract painters such as Sam Gilliam, who changed the game with his *Drape* and *Beveled-edge* paintings, and Jack Whitten, whose pioneering use of a squeegee to pull paint across canvas in his 1970s *Slab* works predated similar efforts by Gerhard Richter. The failure to recognize Clark's innovation calls into question the canonical history of Abstract Expressionism.

The term "Abstract Expressionism" itself, when it was coined in the *New Yorker* by the critic Robert Coates in 1946, was established on shaky grounds. Writing of the boldly expressive, gestural style of Hans Hofmann, Coates failed to mention that the subjective approach did not originate in Hofmann's experimental color combinations and formal contrasts but in fact existed contemporaneously in figurative painting of that era.¹⁹ Norman Lewis,



Ed Clark, *Untitled*, 1957, oil on canvas and paper, on wood, 55 × 46 inches (139.7 × 116.8 cm). Collection of the Art Institute of Chicago

an often-overlooked first-generation abstractionist who turned increasingly toward so-called pure abstraction during the postwar period, used similar techniques as early as the 1930s. In a 1939 self-portrait, Lewis appears against a backdrop of yellows, reds, greens, and blues. African American artists' contributions to abstraction were ignored not only by Coates but also by other critics (including Greenberg), the uptown galleries, museums, and the white art establishment at large, who defined abstraction as primarily an investigation of form and technique rather than of life's experiences. But abstraction, as Clark's overture demonstrates, is about more than that. It has always been. The official account is a fantastical projection, a cherry-picking of history, a pitting of abstraction against figuration, though you can't have one without the other. Each has given us so much and so little.

Clark's push broom paintings have inspired discussion about abstraction's relation to representation. Darby English writes that Clark's brushstroke, which was "developed from the far end of a push broom's span and shaped

in the intermixture of paint between the bristles running along its bar, empties from the stroke-as-device any content born of clichéd, showy Abstract Expressionist interpositions of the self." The sensual yet sybaritic brushstrokes of Clark's broom allow him to "insert a real distance—of time as well as space—between his creative decisions," English argues.²⁰ But even abstraction, without telling you what to see, inevitably evokes the figure. Clark's brush repeatedly sweeps across the canvas, marking it differently with each return, calling to mind natural landscapes and human forms—visual associations that Clark has acknowledged do exist in his art.²¹ For instance, *Erotica*, 2003, appears to depict a woman's nude body, and clouds appear in *Jumaane's Choice*, 2005.

Curator James Rondeau suspects that "like his friend David Hammons, Clark embraces a double meaning: the broom is at once a tool for painting and an emblem of menial labor."²² Clark's push broom abstraction, with its sublime sweeps of explosive energy, at once transcends the limits of an imaginable world and reaches

toward the metaphysical, while evoking an “attitude of aliveness” that brings to mind the physicality, status, and movement of the artist’s body.²³ The changing strokes made with the push broom, Clark’s tool for nearly seven decades, show how his body, the mover of the broom, has changed during that same period, and how his mind, despite working with the same tools, has produced wholly different results.

Clark’s abstraction defies easy categorization; the linearity of his straight strokes of the 1960s and 1970s evolved into tubular shapes by the 1980s, and became something altogether different by the 2000s. This non-conformity has contributed to Clark’s double erasure. The first erasure: the white art world, wanting nothing to do with black abstraction, rarely acknowledged Clark’s work on an institutional level. The second: many black intellectuals ignored his and other black abstractionists’ contributions to painting and art, as English has argued. Though black and white collectors alike have acquired Clark’s art, many leading 20th-century African American and white thinkers and artists favored politically potent figuration over abstraction, which they thought was out of touch with the realities of contemporary African American life. This attitude has its roots in the Harlem Renaissance, when W. E. B. Du Bois and Alain Locke encouraged African American artists like Archibald Motley, Otto Farrill, and Charles Keene to form a movement of black artists who made “racial art.” Locke thought black artists’ work should be expressive of the African American experience and take its cues from European artists like Pablo Picasso who, during his “Negro Period,” created paintings influenced by African art objects and processes.

In his 1925 essay “The Legacy of the Ancestral Arts,” Locke argues, “If African art is capable of producing the ferment in modern art that it has, surely this is not too much to expect of its influence upon the culturally awakened Negro artist of the present generation.”²⁴ The art of black abstractionists of Clark’s generation, and of the artists who immediately followed him (including Ellsworth Ausby, Senga Nengudi, and Martin Puryear), was deeply influenced by African art and its impact on modernism.²⁵ For instance, Clark’s 1974 work *Homage to the Sands of Ife* was inspired by a trip to Ife, Nigeria, he took the year prior. Clark says that his visit to Nigeria was motivated in part by his desire to see Benin bronze sculptures, which he considers some of the best art in the world. The precise lines in the Ife series of paintings he produced in Nigeria reference the marks on Benin bronzes by Edo artisans.

The Ife paintings also developed out of Clark’s 1960s experimentation with the oval. By the 1970s, he had arrived at the contradiction of placing ovoid forms within atmospheric color fields on a rectangular frame. He has said that this imagery explored the illusion of volume, trying to resolve a question that plagued him: why do painters use the traditional rectangle if human eyes don’t see that way? That question and Clark’s earlier, more spontaneous oval works led to rectangular oval paintings like *Ife* (page 33) and *Earth Signs*, both 1973. They challenge and expand the structure of painting. The unique light and soil of Ife are reflected in Clark’s 1970s abstractions.²⁶

During the Harlem Renaissance, artists responded to Locke’s call for racial art with New Negro portraiture; the style is typified by Laura Wheeler Waring’s *Little Brown Girl*, circa 1920s, the picture of black social mobility. By

the 1960s, Locke’s championing of racial art had solidified into the expectation that black artists use their talents to create realist depictions of the community, its leaders, and its history, empowering and celebratory and identifiably black. The colors of Africa that Clark described, which appeared abstractly in *Ife* and *Earth Signs*, did not fit that mode. The writer Amiri Baraka (a friend of Clark’s) and artists collectives such as Spiral Group, Kamoinge Workshop, and AfriCOBRA believed to varying degrees in the power of figuration to restore beauty, status, visibility, and a sense of representation to a people. During the Black Power and Black Is Beautiful movements, these impulses culminated in Black Art, as defined in *Ebony* magazine in 1969 by the poet and scholar Larry Neal:

Let me be more precise: When artists like LeRoi Jones, Quincy Troupe, Stanley Crouch, Joe Goncalves, Etheridge Knight, Sonia Sanchez, Ed Spriggs, Carolyn Rodgers, Don. L. Lee, Sun Ra . . . assert that Black Art must speak to the lives and the psychic survival of Black People, they are not speaking of “protest” art. They are not speaking of an art that screams and masturbates before white audiences. . . . They are speaking of an art that addresses itself directly to Black people; an art that speaks to us in terms of our feelings and ideas about the world; an art that validates the positive aspects of our life style.²⁷

Neal narrowly defines Black Art; he either ignores abstraction (anything without a figure and an explicit political

message) or condemns it as art that “screams and masturbates before white audiences.” The formal concerns of Clark and his fellow black abstractionists allowed them to create entirely new expressions of blackness by extending the possibilities of a black artist’s imagination, but were often thought to be at odds with the revolutionary aims of the 1960s and ’70s. Today, Neal’s concept of Black Art has been carried forward by Kerry James Marshall, who paints the black figure prominently and symbolically, in art that seeks to upset the dominant position of the white figure in Western art. “Abstraction does not accomplish this, and leaves the dominant paradigm intact,” Marshall has said.²⁸ But black abstractionists’ tendencies align with what African Americans, as a group, know (having experienced uncertainty as an ordeal and an opportunity): when you can’t escape a system, you feel your way through it. Improve. Innovate.

Clark has never liked his art to be labeled Black Art. “Art is not subject to political games; its importance elevates it above any racial differences. Any man of talent, of noble spirit, can make it,” he has said.²⁹ He understands his artistic improvisation and experimentation as a marker of individuality, and he privileges them above the politics of the day. Though art historians and critics have pitted 1960s black realists against black abstractionists, Clark respected the figurative artists who confronted the dominant power narrative by depicting black people. He also enjoyed the social aspects of the Black Arts Movement. In an interview with Judith Wilson, he said:

When I returned to New York [in 1969], something else was happening—the black art thing,



Ed Clark, *The Big Egg*, 1968, acrylic on canvas, 64½ × 83 inches (163.8 × 210.8 cm).
Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture

which was in its heyday in the late '60s. And only the black artists, at that point, had the same thing as there had been on 10th Street—you know, this kind of camaraderie and being up-against-it together, trying to make something happen—that's what it had been about on 10th Street! So both times when I came back from Paris after a long stay, it was like a shot in the arm.³⁰

Although Clark is sympathetic to the Black Art cause and knows that black figurative art is “encouraged and understood a little better” than abstraction, he believes that the true blow to white power is to be a black man who refuses to be put in a box.³¹ His art refuses popular notions of the ways in which black artists can use the representational power of art to express and contest what it means to be black and free.³² The refusal appears in his deft manipulation of paint to render free blackness,

not so much as a look but as something physiological, a feeling. In Clark's acute abstractions, each wild or measured mark represents an extraordinary act of refusal in search of freedom. The freedom is in the way that the paint refuses to do what the eye thinks it should. In Clark's paintings, these colorful marks seem almost erratic, darting in one direction, only to reverse course to move in another. The independent movement of the paint refuses realism, power, and tradition. This refusal gets at the state of being black, where so much of the experience of making it through what are supposed to be “real” barriers, beliefs, and images, begins from scratch. This brings to mind a passage from the poet Elizabeth Alexander's essay “Toward the Black Interior”:

We are too often prisoners of the real, trapped in fantasies of “Negro authenticity” that dictate the only way we truly exist for a mainstream audience is in their fantasies of our authentic-

ness. Escaping from the compelling power of the imagery around us is no small feat. Where is our abstract space, our space of the real/not-real, our own unconscious?³³

Clark's peers, including Frank Bowling and Sam Gilliam, and artists who followed in the generations after, like Jack Whitten and Mark Bradford, created so-called pure abstraction as well as works that showed a radical and explicit solidarity with the black community. Politically charged works by Bowling, Gilliam, Whitten, and Bradford are social abstraction, “a fundamentally black contribution to the history of abstraction,” a description recently coined by curator Christopher Bedford.³⁴ Clark has largely spent his career making art about form and technique, focused on the stroke of the brush, the light, and the movement of the paint. Clark's art seeks to get beyond figuration's relationship to the black body, the fact that it has been made too easily available, consumed, and surveilled. Although Clark's race and his commitment to his unique way of envisioning art have stung him, abstraction allowed him to create works that have charted a path wholly his own, beyond expectation. Clark represents blackness in the way his brushstroke subtly captures his body's movement, which allows blackness “a way of being in the world that evades regulation,” in the words of theorist Fred Moten.³⁵ Clark's art is not painting without a point, or the pursuit of a field that has been already fully exhausted, as some have argued more generally about abstraction. Instead, it is an expression of freedom so broad in gesture that it eclipses the narrow notions of

black artistic self-representation.

In *The Big Egg*, a field of pink builds into a lyrical, earthy wave of bluish-green, topped by a fiery circle of orange-red. It possesses something of the light of Véttheuil, the Parisian suburb where Clark lived for many months with his friend and fellow American, the abstract painter Joan Mitchell. The expansive colors of the bold brushstrokes call out to things we know. The colors profoundly render the essential elements of the earth, or perhaps a distant utopia. The band of blue is its own promised land, conjuring up beaches—or, better yet, city blocks turned into urban beaches, broken concrete standing in for white sands, and the vastness of the sea embodied by the watery blaze of a fire hydrant. Clark's rigorous, sometimes romantic use of color takes you places beyond figurative art and the traditional understanding of postwar abstraction.

Over nearly seven decades of experimenting with the color and energy of paint by sweeping it powerfully across canvas, Clark has extended the very possibilities of the medium and significantly shaped the history of abstraction. Reflecting on his career in a 1997 interview, he said, “I think every artist wants to create something beautiful in the world. I do, but I'll never be satisfied with what I've done.”³⁶ This sentiment has fueled Clark's tireless innovation, inspiring his advances in painting—which are finally being recognized as the breakthroughs they were. While pushing abstraction forward, he has always adhered to its central principles of expressionistic freedom, powered by improvisation and the life-giving contradictions of individuality.

NOTES

1. Elizabeth Alexander, preface to *The Black Interior* (Minneapolis: Graywolf Press, 2004), p. ix.
2. James Baldwin, "The Art of Fiction No. 87," interview by Jordan Elgrably, *Paris Review*, no. 91 (spring 1984), <https://theparisreview.org/interviews/2994/james-baldwin-the-art-of-fiction-no-78-james-baldwin>.
3. Ed Clark, interview by Jack Whitten, *BOMB*, June 2, 2014, <https://bombmagazine.org/articles/edward-clark>.
4. Ibid.
5. Harold Rosenberg, "The American Action Painters," *ARTnews*, December 1952, p. 23.
6. Ed Clark, interview by Judith Wilson, *Issue: A Journal for Artists*, no. 4 (1985), p. 48.
7. April Kingsley, "Edward Clark, The Big Sweep," in *Ed Clark: Master Painter*, exh. cat. (New York: G. R. N'Namdi Gallery, 2006), p. 13.
8. Clark, interview by Whitten, *BOMB*.
9. Ed Clark, quoted in Joy Colby, "Ed Clark Has a Brush with Success," *Detroit Free Press*, February 12, 1990, p. 6-C.
10. Clark, interview by Wilson, *Issue*, p. 49.
11. Ibid.
12. Ed Clark, interview by Quincy Troupe, in *Edward Clark: For the Sake of the Search*, exh. cat., ed. Barbara Cavaliere, George R. N'Namdi (Belleville Lake, MI: Belleville Lake Press, 1997), p. 17.
13. Ibid.
14. Ed Clark, interview by Charles Martin, *Ed Clark: A Brush With Success* (New York: Hybrid Media Project, 2006), digital video, 29 minutes, part 1: <https://youtube.com/watch?v=u0sLC6yuZV0>, part 2: <https://youtube.com/watch?v=t03dYeM6EaU>.
15. Clark, interview by Troupe, *Edward Clark: For the Sake of the Search*, p. 23.
16. Darby English, *1971: A Year in the Life of Color* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), p. 55.
17. Clement Greenberg, introduction to *Post-Painterly Abstraction*, exh. cat. (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1964), <http://sharecom.ca/greenberg/ppaessay.html>.
18. Lawrence Campbell, "Edward Clark, 141 Prince Street Gallery," *ARTnews*, November 1972.
19. Robert Coates, "The Art Galleries: Abroad and at Home," *New Yorker*, March 30, 1946, p. 83.
20. English, "How It Looks to Be a Problem," in *1971: A Year in the Life of Color*, p. 59.
21. Clark said, in an interview by Judith Wilson, "What I am about is trying to force the field of color *per se*. I think I fail sometimes if the reference seems too close to nature—like landscape—because that's not what I'm consciously trying to get at. What I want to paint is how that color seems, even psychologically," *Issue*, p. 49.
22. James Rondeau, "James Rondeau on Edward Clark," in *Four Generations: The Joyner/Giuffrida Collection of Abstract Art* (New York: Gregory R. Miller, 2016), p. 53.
23. Kingsley, "The Big Sweep," <http://aprilkingsley.com/ed-clark-catalog.pdf>.
24. Alain Locke, "The Legacy of the Ancestral Arts" in *The New Negro*, ed. Alain Locke (New York: Albert & Charles Boni, 1925; New York: Touchstone, 1997), p. 267. Citations refer to the Touchstone edition.
25. See *Afro-American Abstraction*, the survey exhibition organized by April Kingsley at P.S. 1 Center for the Contemporary Arts, New York, February 17–April 6, 1980. It included African art–inspired works by Clark, Ausby, Nengudi, and Puryear.
26. Clark's work was deeply affected by his travels. His Moroccan series and Egyptian series (pages 51, 59) of the 1980s and '90s also seemed to reflect the radiating blaze of the African sun on those landscapes.
27. Larry Neal, "Any Day Now: Black Art and Black Liberation," *Ebony*, August 1969, pp. 55–56.
28. Kerry James Marshall, quoted in "A Move toward Freedom or How to Generate that Sparkle," interview by Annette Südbek, in *Kerry James Marshall: Who's Afraid of Red, Black and Green* (Vienna: Secession, 2012), p. 50.
29. Ed Clark, "Un musée pour Harlem," *Chroniques de l'Art Vivant*, no. 1 (November 1968), p. 15.
30. Clark, interview by Wilson, *Issue*, p. 49.
31. Ibid.
32. See English, *1971: A Year in the Life of Color*, p. 73: "My point is not to defend abstraction *tout court* but rather to suggest that the relentless representational thrust of the art history so far elaborated for these figures poses huge obstacles to reckoning the importance of their independent decisions not to represent...."
33. Alexander, "Toward the Black Interior," in *The Black Interior*, p. 7.
34. Christopher Bedford, quoted in Antwaun Sargent, "Radical Abstraction," *Sotheby's Magazine*, December 2017 / January 2018, p. 55.
35. Fred Moten, *The Universal Machine* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018); excerpted in *E-FLUX*, "Fred Moten on Levinas, Arendt, Fanon, and 'Phenomenology's Distress,'" June 8, 2018, <https://conversations.e-flux.com/t/fred-moten-on-levinas-arendt-fanon-and-phenomenology-s-distress/7967>.
36. Clark, quoted in *Edward Clark: For the Sake of the Search*, p. 114.

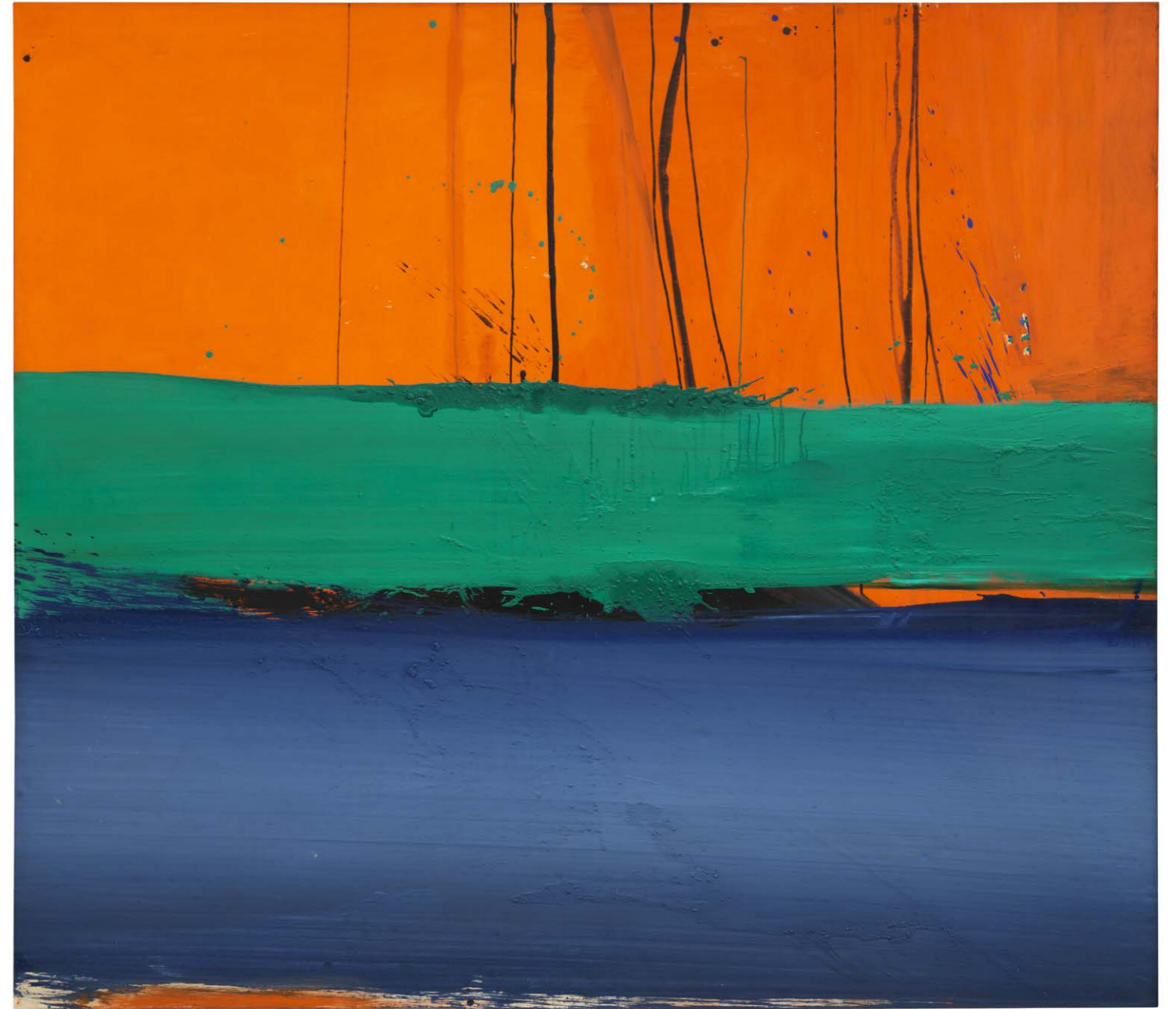
WORKS

ORANGE FRONT

1963

oil on canvas

84 × 96 inches (213.4 × 243.8 cm)





BLACKLASH

1964

oil on canvas

36 ¼ × 48 ⅞ inches (92.1 × 122.2 cm)

FLASH

1966

acrylic on canvas

44 × 58 ½ inches (111.8 × 149.2 cm)



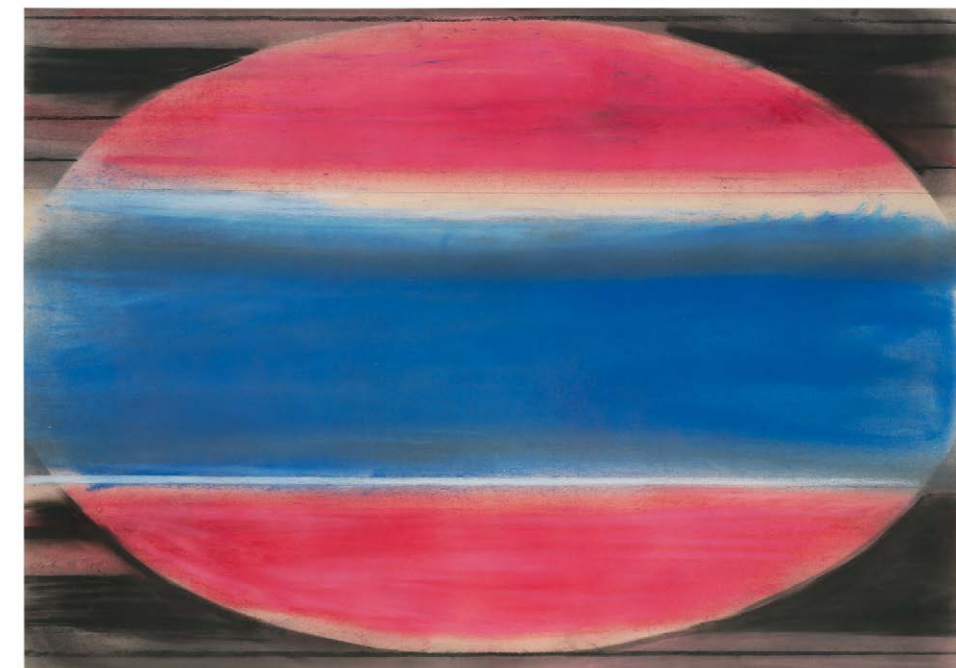


INTARSIA

1970

acrylic on canvas

119 ½ × 219 ½ inches (303.5 × 557.5 cm)



IFE

1973

graphite and pastel on paper

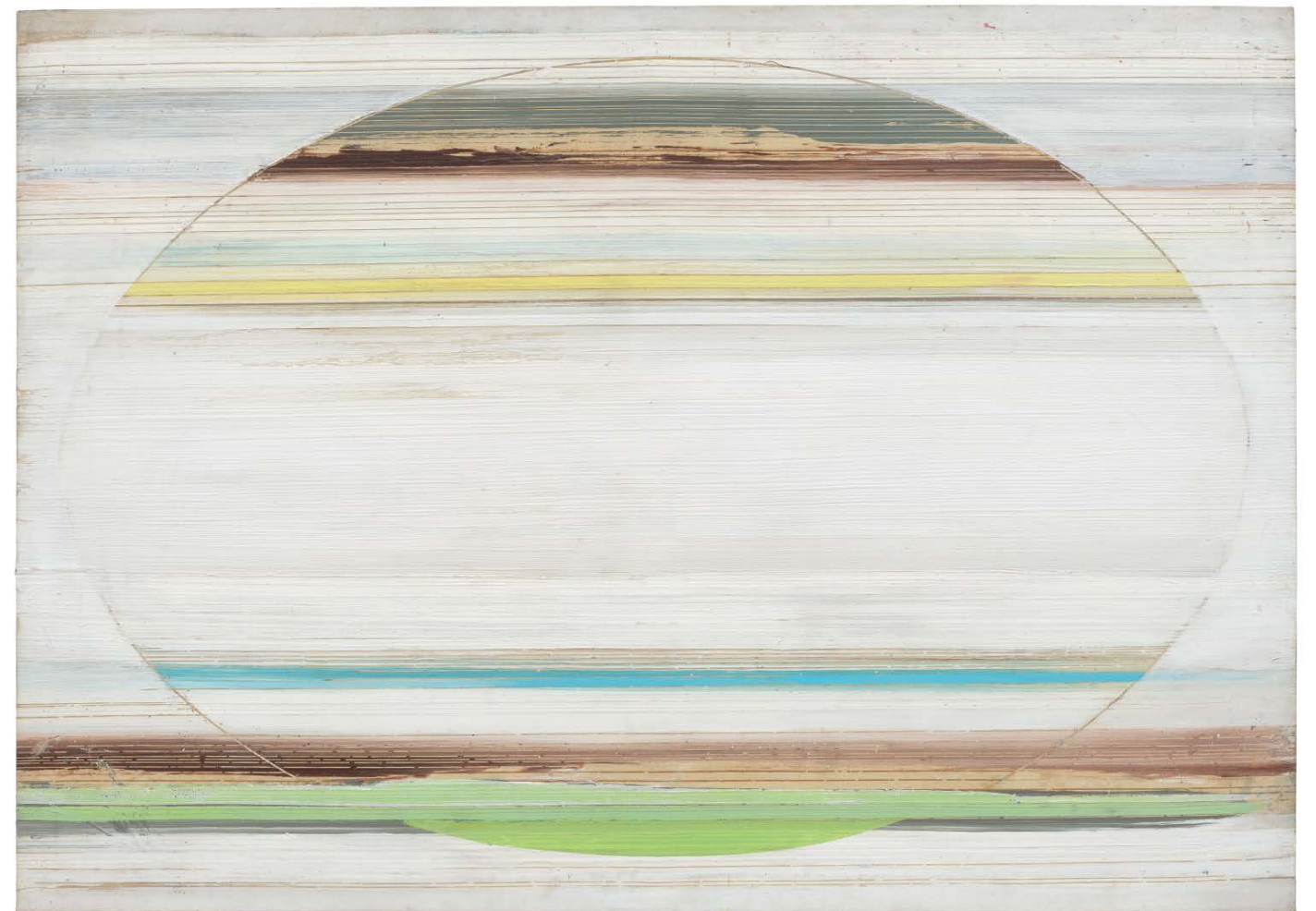
30 × 40 inches (76.2 × 101.6 cm)

UNTITLED

1974-75

acrylic on canvas

57 ¼ × 80 ¼ inches (144.8 × 203.2 cm)



YUCATAN SERIES

1976

natural pigment on paper

38 × 50 inches (96.5 × 127 cm)





SOUTHERN LIGHT (LOUISIANA SERIES)

1978

pastel and pencil on paper

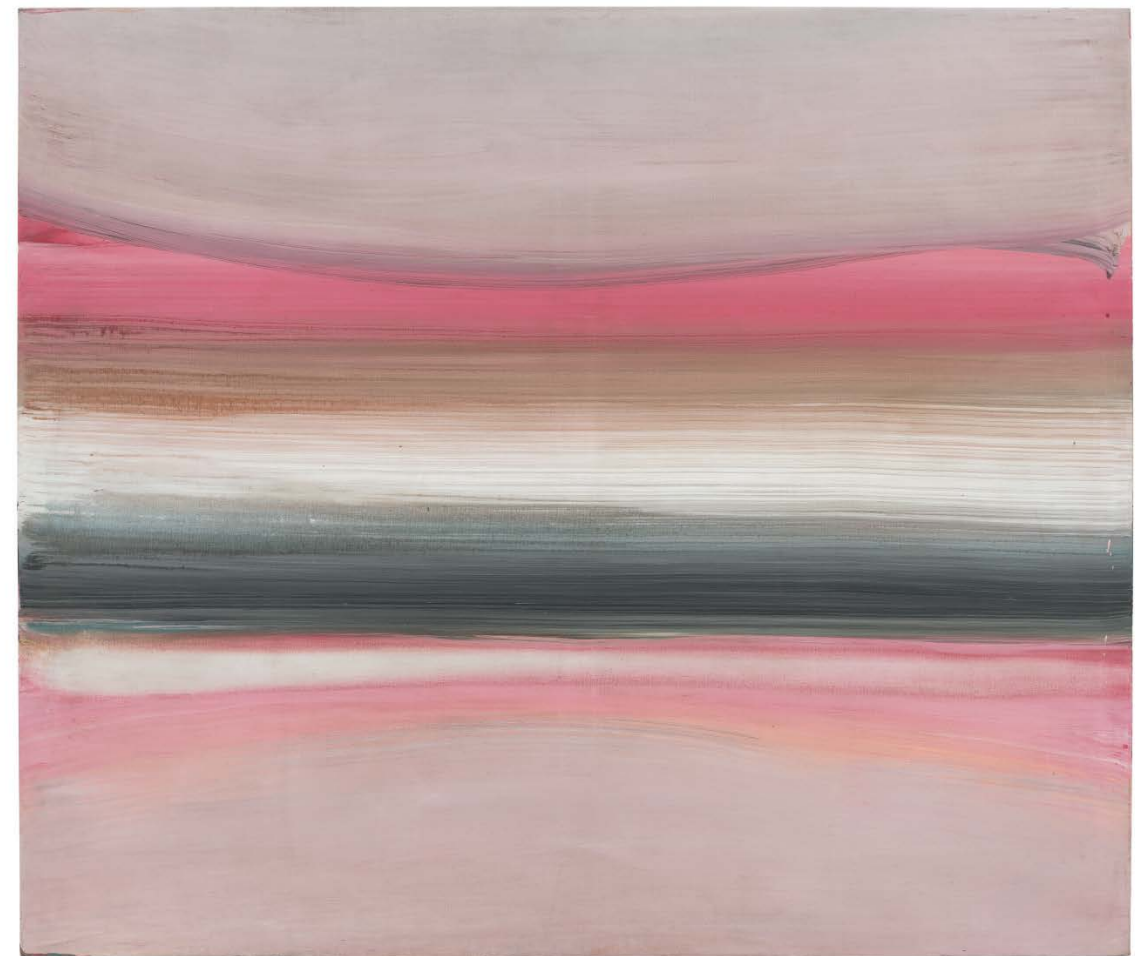
29 ½ × 41 ½ inches (74.9 × 105.4 cm)

UNTITLED (PARIS SERIES)

1983

acrylic on canvas

47 7/8 × 55 1/8 inches (119.4 × 146.1 cm)

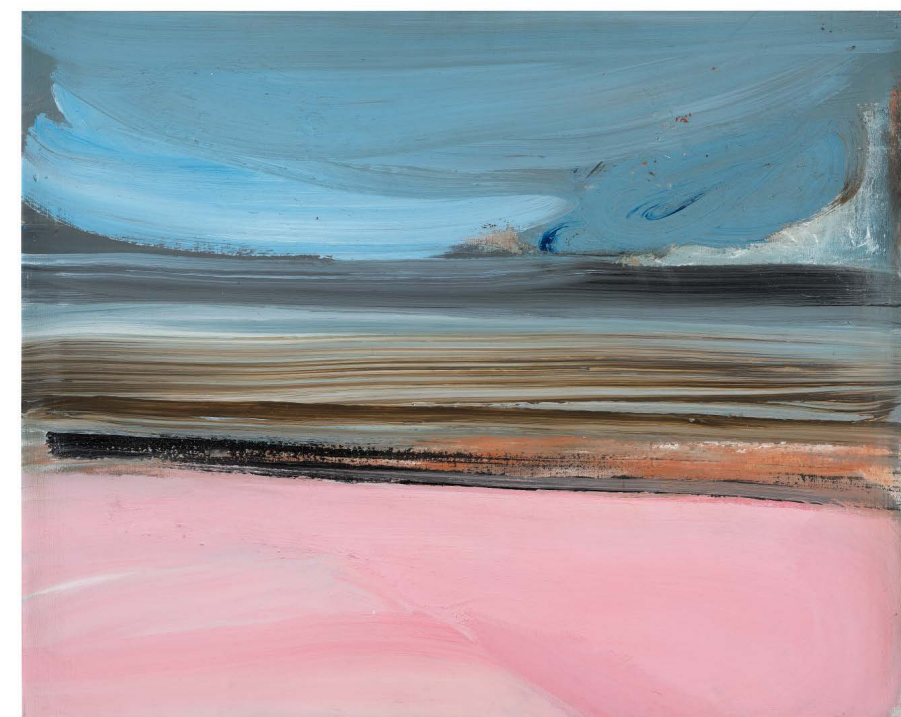


UNTITLED

1985

acrylic on canvas

24 × 30 inches (61 × 76.2 cm)



UNTITLED

1990

acrylic on canvas

30 × 30 inches (76.2 × 76.2 cm)



UNTITLED

circa early 1990s

acrylic on canvas

55 ¼ × 70 ½ inches (140.3 × 179.1 cm)

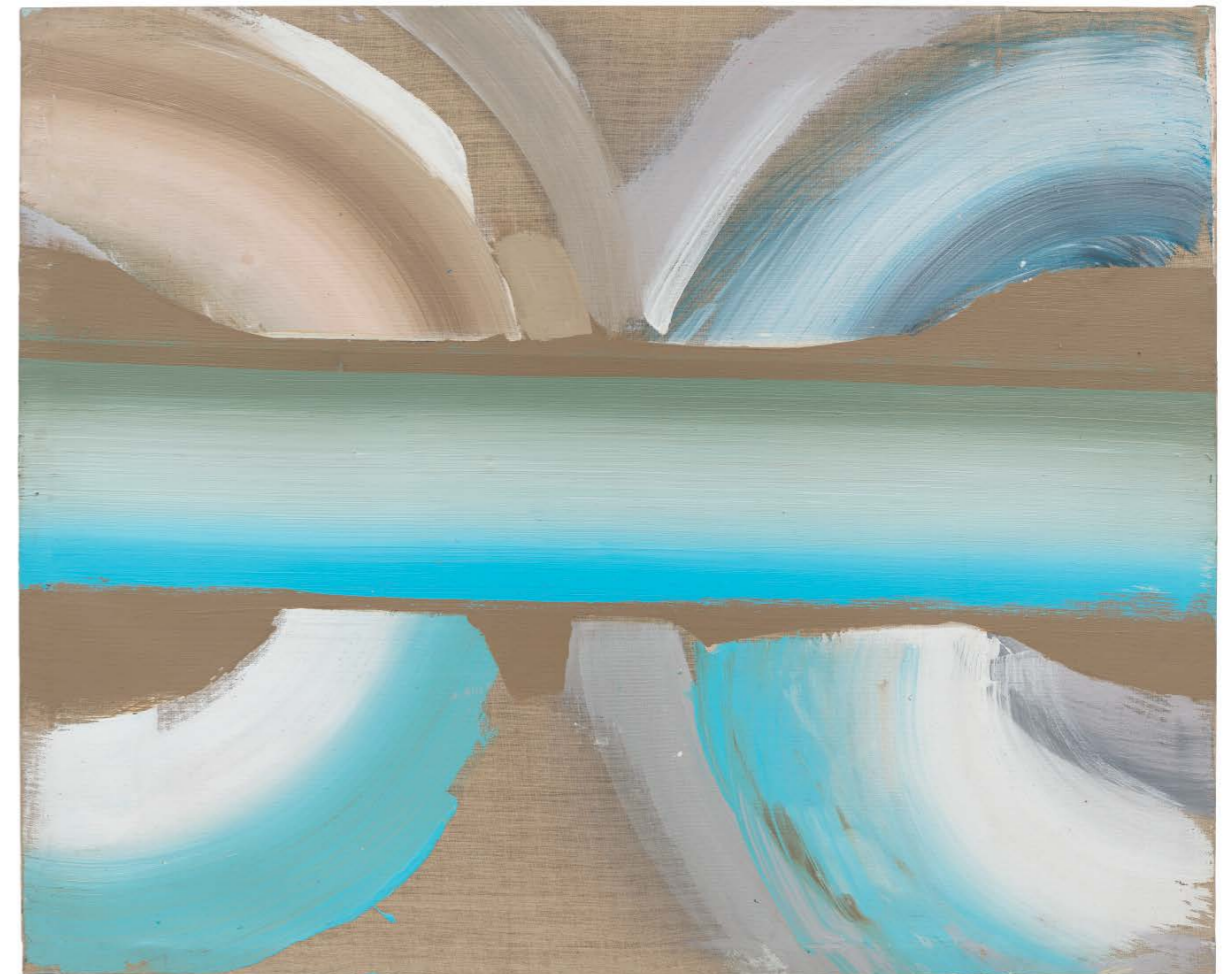


UNTITLED

circa 1990s

acrylic on unbleached canvas

50 7/8 × 62 1/8 inches (128.6 × 157.8 cm)



UNTITLED (EGYPTIAN SERIES)

circa 1990s

acrylic on canvas

60 × 70 inches (152.4 × 177.8 cm)



BAHIA SERIES

1991

acrylic and natural pigment on paper

37 ½ × 50 inches (95.3 × 127 cm)



UNTITLED (BAHIA SERIES)

1991

acrylic on canvas

38 × 50 inches (95.3 × 127 cm)





ELEVATION

1992

acrylic on canvas

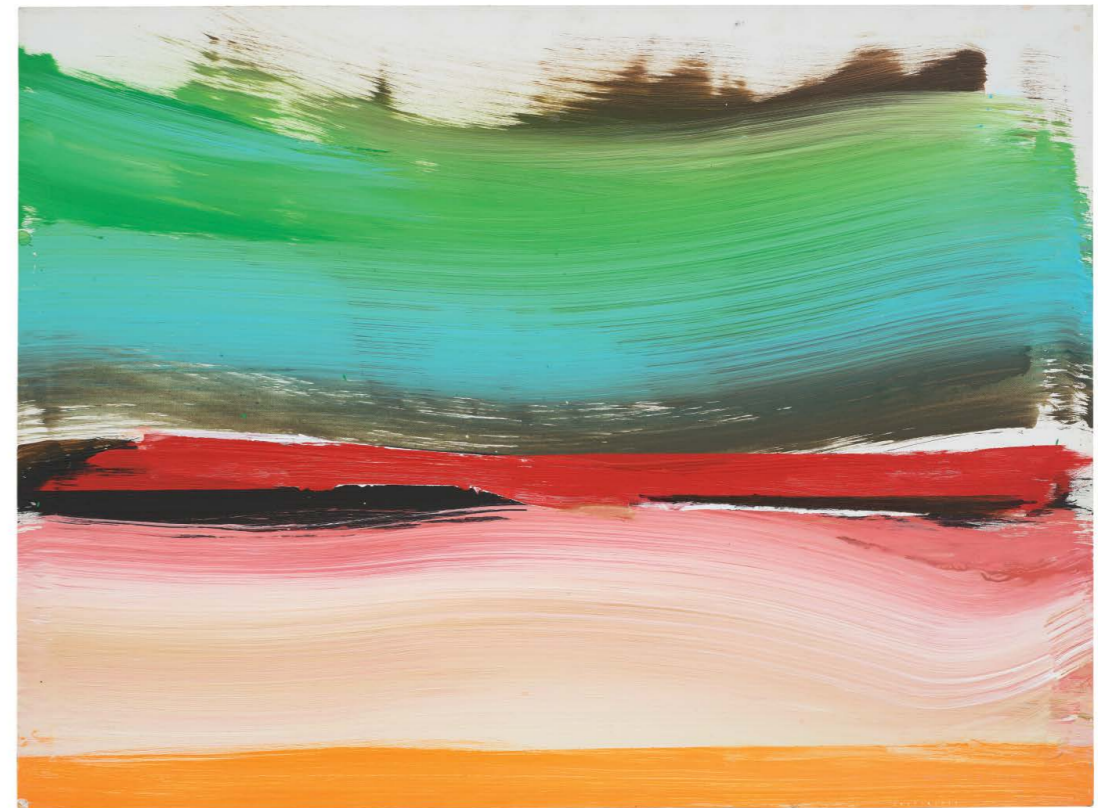
114 × 150 inches (289.6 × 381 cm)

EGYPTIAN SERIES

1997

acrylic on canvas

35 3/4 x 48 inches (90.8 x 121.9 cm)



UNTITLED (PARIS SERIES)

1998

acrylic on canvas

70 × 78 ¾ inches (177.8 × 199.1 cm)

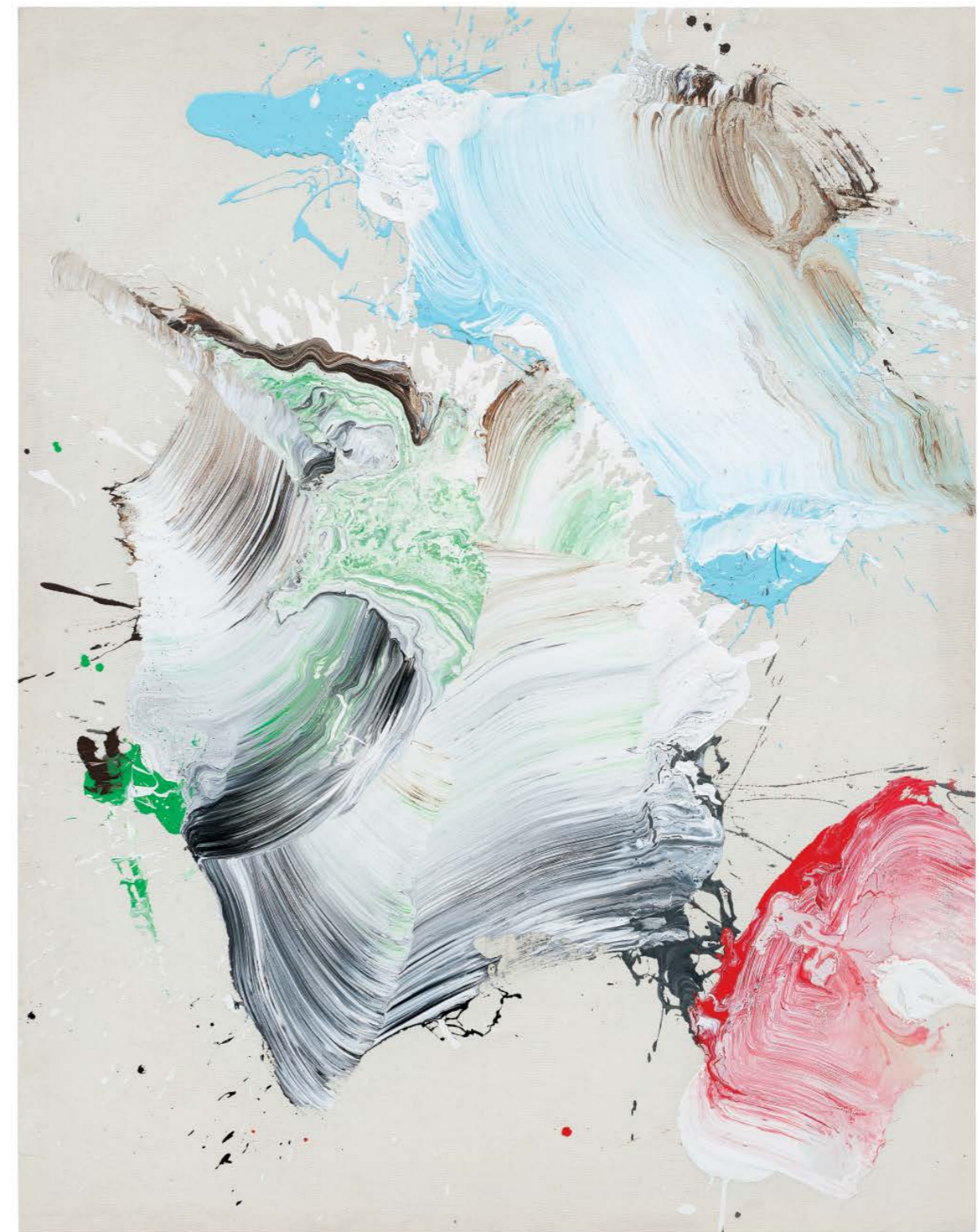


UNTITLED

circa 2000s

acrylic on canvas

80 ½ × 62 ¾ inches (205.7 × 160 cm)



MEXICAN SERIES #10

2001

acrylic on canvas

43 ½ × 56 inches (110.5 × 142.2 cm)



UNTITLED

2001

acrylic on canvas

36 1/8 x 48 1/4 inches (91.8 x 122.6 cm)



UNTITLED

circa 2002

acrylic on canvas

20 × 20 inches (50.8 × 50.8 cm)





UNTITLED

2002

acrylic on canvas

20 × 24 inches (50.8 × 61 cm)

UNTITLED

2004

acrylic on canvas

77 × 51 3/8 inches (195.6 × 130.5 cm)





UNTITLED #2 (NEW YORK SERIES)

2004

acrylic on canvas

39 3/4 x 29 7/8 inches (101 x 75.9 cm)

UNTITLED

2005

acrylic on canvas

53 ¼ × 66 inches (135.3 × 167.6 cm)



YELLOW WAVE

2005

acrylic on canvas

48 1/8 x 68 inches (122.2 x 172.7 cm)





THE TILT

2006

acrylic on canvas

40 × 30 inches (101.6 × 76.2 cm)

UNTITLED

2006

acrylic on canvas

47 7/8 × 66 inches (121.6 × 167.6 cm)



UNTITLED

2007

acrylic on canvas

44 × 60 ¼ inches (111.8 × 149.9 cm)

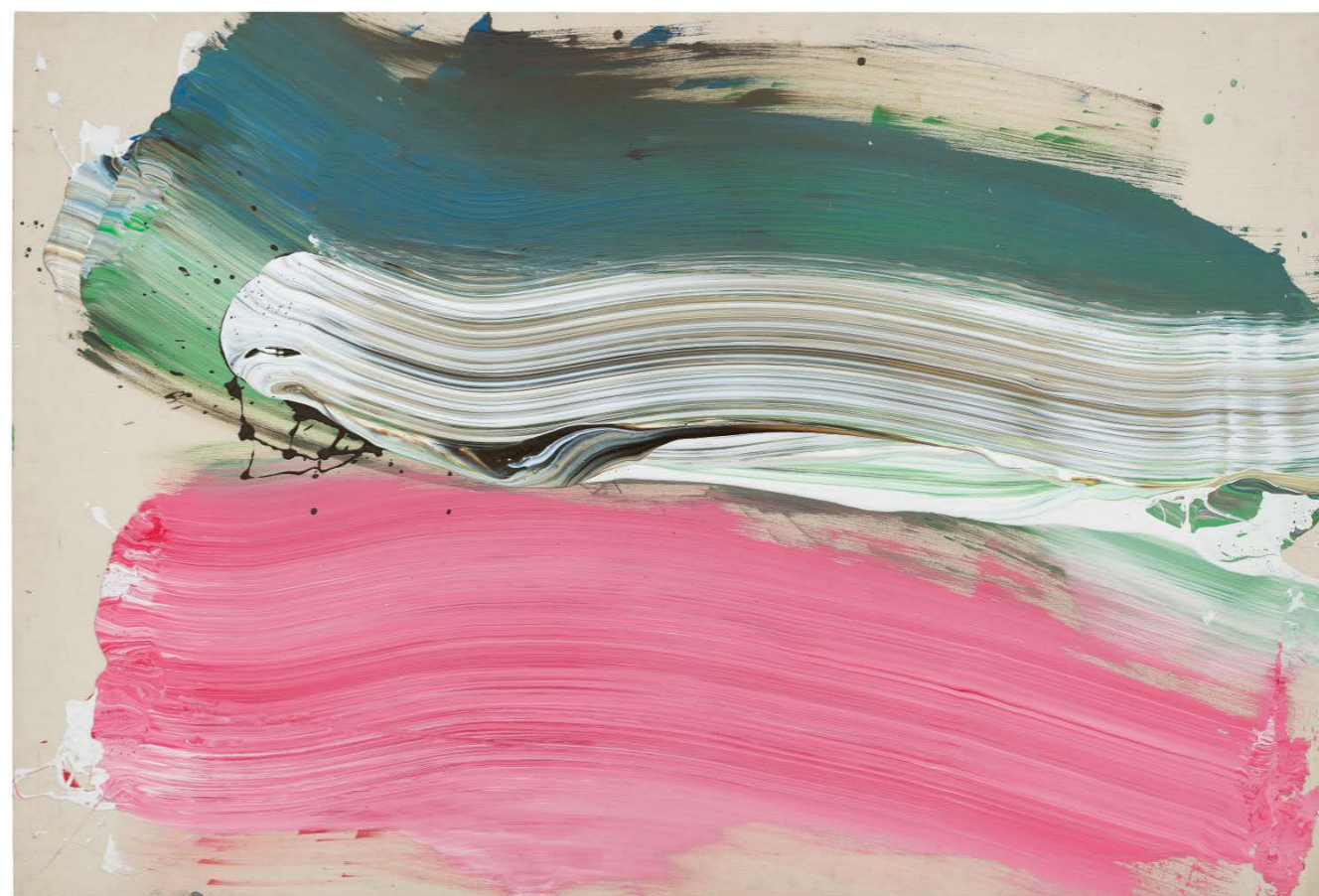


UNTITLED

2009

acrylic on canvas

50 1/8 × 73 5/8 inches (127.3 × 187 cm)



UNTITLED

2009

acrylic on canvas

53 × 66 inches (133.4 × 167.6 cm)



UNTITLED

2013

dry pigment on paper

38 3/8 x 48 inches (96.5 x 121.9 cm)



UNTITLED

2013

dry pigment on paper

38 × 47 ¾ inches (96.5 × 121.9 cm)





UNTITLED

2014

dry pigment on paper

29 ¼ × 41 ½ inches (74.3 × 105.4 cm)

EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

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oil on canvas
84 × 96 inches (213.4 × 243.8 cm)
Rennie Collection, Vancouver
page 25

BLACKLASH 1964

oil on canvas
36 ¼ × 48 ½ inches (92.1 × 122.2 cm)
Private collection
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page 30–31

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Private collection
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natural pigment on paper
38 × 50 inches (96.5 × 127 cm)
Peg Alston Fine Arts
page 37

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pastel and pencil on paper
29 ½ × 41 ½ inches (74.9 × 105.4 cm)
Peg Alston Fine Arts
page 39

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47 ½ × 55 ½ inches (119.4 × 146.1 cm)
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acrylic on canvas
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Private collection
page 43

UNTITLED 1990

acrylic on canvas
30 × 30 inches (76.2 × 76.2 cm)
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page 45

UNTITLED circa early 1990s

acrylic on canvas
55 ¼ × 70 ½ inches (140.3 × 179.1 cm)
Private collection
page 47

UNTITLED circa 1990s

acrylic on unbleached canvas
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Private collection
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UNTITLED (EGYPTIAN SERIES) circa 1990s

acrylic on canvas
60 × 70 inches (152.4 × 177.8 cm)
Private collection
page 51

BAHIA SERIES 1991

acrylic and natural pigment on paper
37 ½ × 50 inches (95.3 × 127 cm)
Peg Alston Fine Arts
page 53

UNTITLED (BAHIA SERIES) 1991

acrylic on canvas
38 × 50 inches (95.3 × 127 cm)
Private collection
page 55

ELEVATION 1992

acrylic on canvas
114 × 150 inches (289.6 × 381 cm)
Reginald F. Lewis Family Collection,
Christina Lewis and Leslie Malaika Lewis
page 56–57

EGYPTIAN SERIES 1997

acrylic on canvas
35 ¼ × 48 inches (90.8 × 121.9 cm)
Peg Alston Fine Arts
page 59

UNTITLED (PARIS SERIES) 1998

acrylic on canvas
70 × 78 ¾ inches (177.8 × 199.1 cm)
Collection of Robert Crabb
page 61

UNTITLED circa 2000s

acrylic on canvas
80 ½ × 62 ¾ inches (205.7 × 160 cm)
Private collection
page 63

MEXICAN SERIES #10 2001

acrylic on canvas
43 ½ × 56 inches (110.5 × 142.2 cm)
Peg Alston Fine Arts
page 65

UNTITLED 2001

acrylic on canvas
36 ¾ × 48 ¾ inches (91.8 × 122.6 cm)
Private collection
page 67

UNTITLED circa 2002

acrylic on canvas
20 × 20 inches (50.8 × 50.8 cm)
Cindy and Richard Plehn
page 69

UNTITLED 2002

acrylic on canvas
20 × 24 inches (50.8 × 61 cm)
Lois Plehn
page 71

UNTITLED 2004

acrylic on canvas
77 × 51 ¾ inches (195.6 × 130.5 cm)
Private collection
page 73

UNTITLED #2 (NEW YORK SERIES) 2004

acrylic on canvas
39 ¾ × 29 ⅞ inches (101 × 75.9 cm)
Private collection
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Private collection
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acrylic on canvas
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Lois Plehn
page 79

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UNTITLED 2007

acrylic on canvas
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acrylic on canvas
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Private collection
page 89

UNTITLED 2013

dry pigment on paper
38 ¾ × 48 inches (96.5 × 121.9 cm)
Private collection
page 91

UNTITLED 2013

dry pigment on paper
38 × 47 ¾ inches (96.5 × 121.9 cm)
Private collection
page 93

UNTITLED 2014

dry pigment on paper
29 ¼ × 41 ½ inches (74.3 × 105.4 cm)
Private collection
page 95



CHRONOLOGY

1926

Ed Clark is born May 6 in New Orleans, in the Storyville neighborhood.

1933

The Great Depression drives Clark's parents to move the family to Chicago to live with relatives while looking for work.

1944–46

Clark serves in US Army Air Forces and is stationed in Guam.

1947–51

Studies at the Art Institute of Chicago on the GI Bill.

1952–56

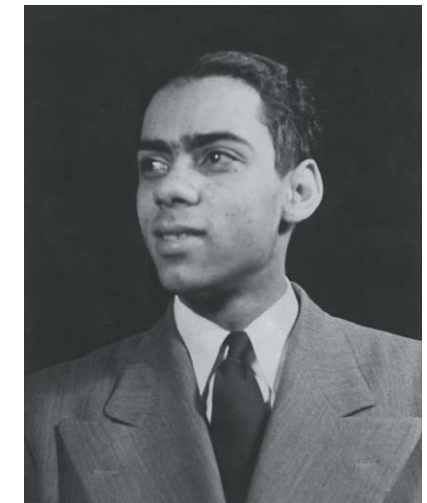
Studies at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière in Paris on the GI Bill (1952–54). After completing his studies, he remains in Paris for two years to paint and exhibit his work.

1952

Clark's work is included in the annual exhibition of the Société du Salon d'Automne, Paris. There he sees Nicolas de Staël's *Footballeurs* series of paintings (page 10), which he credits as a major influence on his transition into abstraction.

1953

Paints *The City* (page 11), which marks his turn to abstraction. Clark is included in a group exhibition of young American artists at Galerie Craven, Paris.



Clark, circa 1950s



Exterior view of Clark's studio at
22 rue Delambre, Paris



Clark working on *The City*, Paris, 1953



The Brata Gallery, East 10th Street, New York



Clark, Joan Mitchell, and friends in Vêtheuil, France

1954

Included in the Salon des Réalités Nouvelles, Paris, and in the group exhibition *Grandes Toiles de Montparnasse*, American Center for Students and Artists, Paris.

1955

First solo gallery exhibition, at Galerie R. Creuze, Paris; it is reviewed in *Cimaise* and *Le Monde*. He exhibits again in the Salon des Réalités Nouvelles and another *Grandes Toiles de Montparnasse* exhibition.

Clark is awarded the Prix d'Othon Friesz of the Musée du Louvre, Paris.

1956

Begins experimenting with shaped canvases. Solo exhibition at Galerie R. Creuze. Included in the Salon des Réalités Nouvelles and the Salon des Indépendants, Paris.

1957

Co-founds the Brata Gallery, an artists' cooperative on East 10th Street in New York; other founding members include Ronald Bladen, Al Held, Nicholas Krushenick, and George Sugarman.

In the Brata's Christmas exhibition, Clark shows *Untitled*, 1957, a collage painting with a piece of paper that extends beyond the edge of the canvas; it is believed to be the first modern American shaped canvas.

Profiled in French critic Michel Seuphor's *Dictionnaire de la Peinture Abstraite*, alongside Willem de Kooning, Sam Francis, Norman Lewis, and Jackson Pollock.

1958

First solo exhibition in New York, at the Brata Gallery.

1960

Included in the group exhibition *The Brata Group*, National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo.

1963

Begins to paint with a push broom.

1966

Returns to Paris, where he remains until 1969. Solo exhibition at Galerie R. Creuze.

1968–69

Works for 14 months in a studio at Joan Mitchell's country home 60 miles from Paris in Vêtheuil, a site that immediately effects a change in his palette. There, Clark creates his first oval painting.

1969

Solo exhibition at the American Embassy, Paris. Included in the group exhibition *Trois Noirs U.S.A.*, American Center for Students and Artists. Clark returns to the United States.

1970

Included in the group exhibitions *Afro-American Artists, New York and Boston*, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; and *Afro-American Artists Abroad*, the University Art Museum of the University of Texas at Austin (exhibition travels to Baltimore and Boston).

1971

Travels to Crete, where he stays with Jack Whitten. Solo exhibition at the loft of Donald Judd, New York. Featured in the group exhibition *De Luxe Show* at the De Luxe movie

theater in Houston's Fifth Ward, sponsored by the Menil Foundation.

1972

Receives National Endowment for the Arts Award in Painting. Solo exhibitions at Lehman College Art Gallery, City University of New York, the Bronx; 141 Prince Street Gallery, New York; and Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo.

1973

Included in Whitney Biennial, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

Clark is a visiting artist at the Art Institute of Chicago and the University of Oregon. Travels to Ife, Nigeria, in the summer, and begins the Ife series of paintings (page 33).

1974

Visiting artist at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Maine. Solo exhibition at South Houston Gallery, New York.



Clark in his studio, New York, 1975

1975

Travels to the Yucatán in Mexico. Receives Creative Artists Public Service grant from the New York State Council on the Arts. Solo exhibition at James Yu Gallery, New York.

1976

Clark is a visiting artist at Ohio State University, Columbus; solo exhibition at the university's Sullivant Gallery. Included in the group exhibition *Bicentennial Banners*, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC.

1977

Solo exhibition at Peg Alston Fine Arts, New York.

1978

Visiting artist at Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge; solo exhibition at the university. Included in the group exhibition *Contextures*, Just Above Midtown, New York.

1979

Returns to New York City. Solo exhibition in the fall at Randall Gallery, New York, sells out but goes unreviewed. Included in the group exhibitions *Icarus Odyssey*, Centro de Arte Moderno de Guadalajara, Mexico; and *Another Generation*, the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York.

1980

Clark is the subject of a retrospective, *Ed Clark: A Complex Identity*, at the Studio Museum in Harlem. Other solo exhibitions at Contemporary Arts Center, New Orleans; H. C. Taylor Gallery, North Carolina A&T State University, Greensboro. Included in the group exhibition *Afro-American Abstraction*, P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center, Long Island City. Visiting artist at Syracuse University.

1980–2015

Lives and works in New York City during the winter and in Paris during the summer.



Clark in his studio, Montmartre, Paris, 1995

1980–81

Travels to Martinique.

1981

Receives Adolph Gottlieb Foundation award. Solo exhibitions at the Citicorp Center, New York; Randall Gallery; and Jazzonia Gallery, Detroit. Included in the group exhibition *5+5: Artists Introduce Artists*, Just Above Midtown.

1982

Travels to Taos, New Mexico. Solo exhibitions at Randall Gallery and Jazzonia Gallery. Included in the group exhibition *Contemporary Art at One Penn Plaza*, One Penn Plaza, New York.

1983

Solo exhibition at Randall Gallery. Included in the group exhibition *Celebrating Contemporary Black American Artists*, the Fine Arts Museum of Long Island, Hempstead, New York.

1984

Included in the annual exhibition of the Salon des Réalités Nouvelles, Grand Palais, Paris.

1985

Receives award for painting from the National Endowment for the Arts.

1986

Solo exhibition at G. R. N'Namdi Gallery, Birmingham, Michigan.

1987

Solo exhibition at Alitash Kebede Fine Arts, Los Angeles.

1988

Spends three months working in Bahia, Brazil. Solo exhibition of the Bahia series of paintings at the Manhattan East Gallery of Fine Arts, New York.



Clark at work in his studio, New York, 1992



Clark working with pigment on paper on a trip to Mazunte, Mexico, 2000

1989

Solo exhibition at Gallery Kesser-Bohbot, Hamburg, Germany. Included in the group exhibition *Abstract Expressionism: The Missing Link*, Jamaica Arts Center, New York.

1990

Takes a summer trip to Morocco from Paris. Solo exhibitions at the Spiral Gallery, Brooklyn; Isobel Neal Gallery, Chicago; and G. R. N’Namdi Gallery, Birmingham. Included in the group exhibition *Artists Space Group Show*, Artists Space, New York.

1991

Solo exhibition at Galerie Resche, Paris. Included in the group exhibition *From America’s Studio*, the Art Institute of Chicago.

1992

Solo exhibition at Wilmer Jennings Gallery, Kenkeleba House, New York.

1993

Solo exhibition of his Paris series of paintings at Alitash Kebede Fine Arts.

1994

Receives Congressional Achievement Award. Solo exhibitions at A. F. T. U./Bill Hodges Gallery, New York, and Syracuse University. Included in the group exhibition *25 Years of African-American Abstraction*, the Studio Museum in Harlem.

1995–96

Featured in group exhibition *Beat Culture and the New America, 1950–1965*, Whitney Museum of American Art (exhibition travels to Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, and M. H. de Young Memorial Museum, San Francisco).

1996

Takes a summer trip to Sicily from Paris. Featured in the group exhibition *Explorations in the City of Light: African-American Artists in Paris, 1945–1965*, the Studio Museum in

Harlem (exhibition travels to Chicago Cultural Center, New Orleans Museum of Art, Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, and Milwaukee Art Museum).

1997

Solo exhibition of Clark’s Egyptian series of paintings (pages 51, 59) at G. R. N’Namdi Gallery, Chicago (exhibition travels to G. R. N’Namdi Gallery, Birmingham).

1998

Awarded the Painters and Sculptors Grant from the Joan Mitchell Foundation, New York.

2000

Travels to China. Solo exhibition of China series of paintings made during the trip, G. R. N’Namdi Gallery, Chicago (exhibition travels to G. R. N’Namdi Gallery, Birmingham).

2001

Solo exhibition of Clark’s Mexican series of paintings (page 65) at Peg Alston Fine Art, New York. Solo exhibition of the Midi series at G. R. N’Namdi Gallery, Detroit. Included in the group exhibition *Red, Black, and Green*, the Studio Museum in Harlem.

2002

Included in the group exhibitions *Six American Masters*, Sugar Hill Art Center, New York; and *No Greater Love: Abstraction*, Jack Tilton/Anna Kustera Gallery, New York.

2003

Solo exhibition at G. R. N’Namdi Gallery, Chicago. Included in the group exhibition *A Century of Collecting: African American Art in the Art Institute of Chicago*, the Art Institute of Chicago.

2004

Solo exhibition at Parish Gallery, Washington, DC.

2006

Solo exhibition at G. R. N’Namdi Gallery, New York (exhibition travels to G. R. N’Namdi Gallery, Chicago).

2007

Subject of a retrospective, *Ed Clark: For the Sake of the Search, 60-Year Retrospective*, at the Pensacola Museum of Art, Florida

2011

Solo exhibition at the N’Namdi Center for Contemporary Art, Detroit.

2012–13

Solo exhibition at Stella Jones Gallery, New Orleans. Included in the group exhibition *Blues for Smoke*, the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (exhibition travels to the Whitney Museum of American Art and the Wexner Center for the Arts, Ohio State University, Columbus).

2013

Receives the Legends and Legacy Award from the Art Institute of Chicago. Solo exhibitions at the Art Institute of Chicago and N’Namdi Contemporary, Miami.

2014

Solo exhibitions at Tilton Gallery, New York, and the Mistake Room, Los Angeles.

2016

Solo exhibitions at N’Namdi Contemporary, Miami, and N’Namdi Center for Contemporary Art, Detroit.

2017

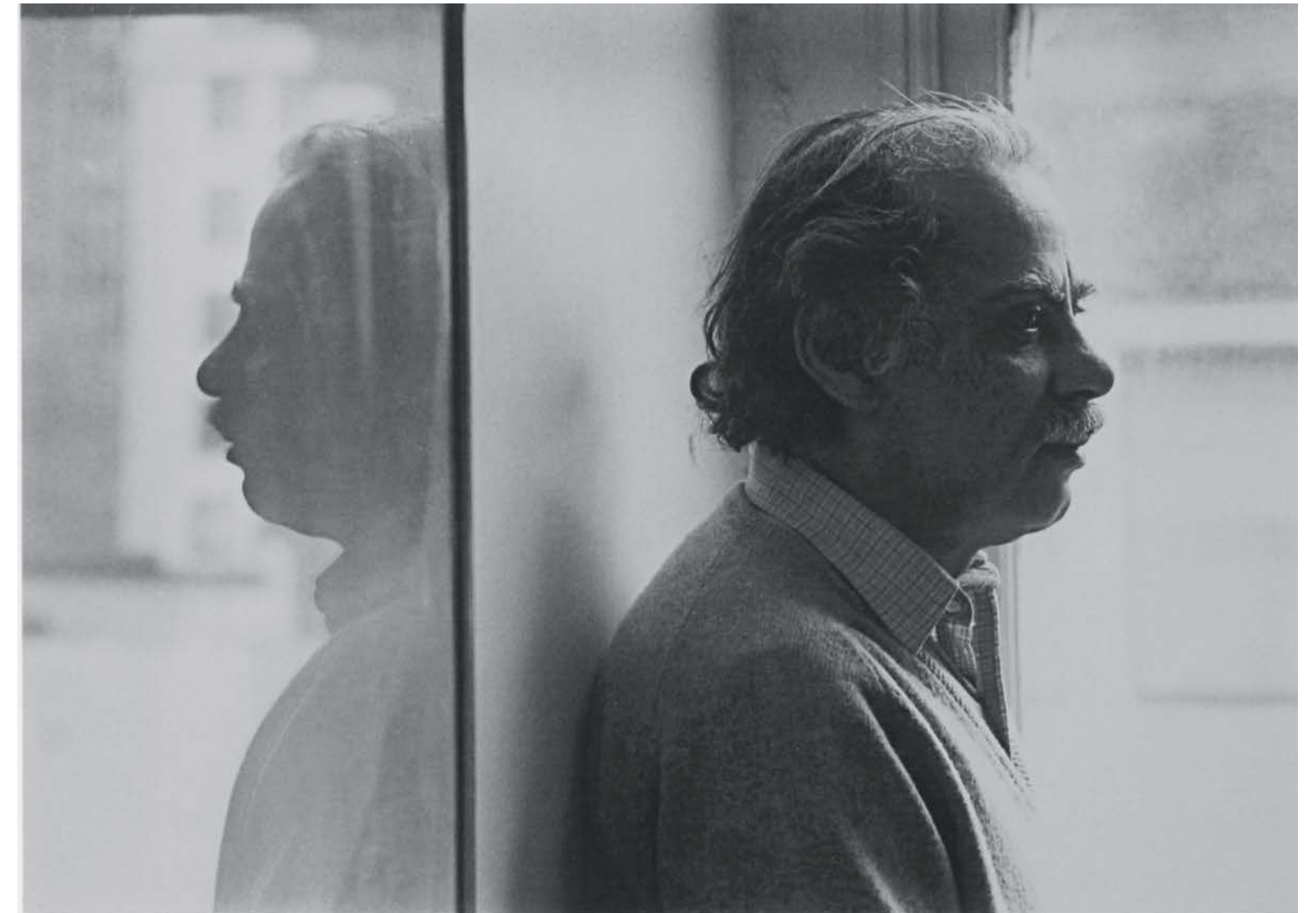
Solo exhibitions at Weiss Berlin, Germany, and Tilton Gallery. Included in the group exhibitions *Inventing Downtown: Artist-Run Galleries in New York City, 1952–1965*, Grey Art Gallery, New York University; *Abstract Expressionism and the Cold War*, the James E. Lewis Museum of Art, Morgan State University, Baltimore; and *IMPULSE*, Pace Gallery, London.

2017–18

Included in the group exhibitions *Soul of a Nation: Art in the Age of Black Power*, Tate Modern, London (exhibition travels to Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, Arkansas; and the Brooklyn Museum, New York); and *The Long Run*, Museum of Modern Art, New York.

2018

Included in the group exhibitions *Language of Abstraction*, University of Maryland University College, Adelphi; and *Painting: Now & Forever, Part III*, Greene Naftali and Matthew Marks, New York.



Clark in New York, 1990s

Chronology adapted and expanded, with thanks, from Edward Clark: *For the Sake of the Search, exh. cat.*, ed. Barbara Cavaliere, George R. N’Namdi (Belleville Lake, MI: Belleville Lake Press, 1997).

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ED CLARK A SURVEY

CURATED BY SUKANYA RAJARATNAM

September 12 – October 20, 2018

Mnuchin Gallery
45 East 78 Street
New York, NY 10075

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