



BETTY BLAYTON
In Search of Grace

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MNUCHIN GALLERY

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CURATED BY
SUKANYA RAJARATNAM

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In Search of Grace, a painting by Betty Blayton from 2006, seemed like an apt title for an exhibition celebrating the life and legacy of an extraordinary soul. Betty, in both her activism and artistry, embodied a spirit that looked beyond the bigotry she experienced in her life and saw in the lives of those around her in a manner that could only be described by the word grace. It was also grace that enabled us to conceive of this show during the dark months of 2020, connecting us to her work and her family remotely, and with a little technical help from Zoom.

Betty was born in 1937 in Williamsburg, Virginia. She knew she wanted to be an artist from the age of four and went on to earn a degree in Painting and Illustration from Syracuse University. As a woman of color, Betty was unable to pursue an artistic education in Virginia, as the state's higher institutions remained segregated following the historic Brown vs. Board of Education ruling. Instead, Virginia paid for students to attend schools in other states that offered their chosen majors. This fortuitous turn of events brought her to New York, where she would remain for the rest of her life, changing the landscape of the art world here with fierce determination, working at Harlem Youth Opportunities Unlimited alongside Norman Lewis (1961), co-founding and serving on the board of the Studio Museum in Harlem (1965–1977), operating as Executive Director of the Children's Art Carnival (1968–1998), and serving on numerous arts education-related boards and committees.

While her dedication to bringing the arts to underserved communities was lifelong, so was her mission for creating an astonishing body of work that survived her passing in 2016. Through her half-century in New York, Betty forged a singular vocabulary, working via figuration into increasingly idealized constructs, creating what she would call "spiritual abstractions." She was unique among her peers, including other African American artists working at the time, and did not conform to prevailing expectations that African American artists needed to harness figuration as a mode of expression to be authentic purveyors of racial inequities and hardship. Her mode of expression was through washes of color, often supplemented by collages of tissue paper, that would create ethereal veils of pigment and an almost transcendental experience in the viewer. Her use of the tondo format furthered this phenomenon, a manifestation of her belief in the circle as an endless continuation of life. Today, the works stand out in the narrative of postwar abstraction.

In bringing her artistic oeuvre to life, we are indebted to several people. Of note, we would like to extend our sincerest thanks to Lowery Stokes Sims, who tells her story in this catalogue with the authority of a friend. Our gratitude also goes to Pamela Joyner for being a sounding board at the initial stages of our endeavor and for making the important introduction to Oscar and Omar Blayton, without whom the exhibition could not take place. We thank them for their tireless devotion to Betty's legacy, along with the countless hours of time and assistance they provided us in order to ensure that this exhibition came to fruition.

Our deepest gratitude goes to David Zaza and Logan Myers of McCall Associates for their catalogue design and Timothy Doyon for his photography. Additionally, we are immensely appreciative of our in-house team, including Emma Laramie, Arrow Mueller, David McClelland, Shandale Winston, and Lisa Zemann.

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BETTY BLAYTON: PLASTIC LANGUAGE AND METAPHYSICAL UNDERSTANDING

LOWERY STOKES SIMS

7

PAINTINGS

17

WORKS ON PAPER

93

EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

100

CHRONOLOGY

105



BETTY BLAYTON: PLASTIC LANGUAGE AND METAPHYSICAL UNDERSTANDING

LOWERY STOKES SIMS

“The ‘spiritual’ is a problem concept in contemporary art.” This blunt sentence opens the essay by critic and art historian Donald Kuspit, published in the catalogue for Maurice Tuchman’s 1986 exhibition, *The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting, 1890–1985*.¹ Kuspit acknowledges that when Wassily Kandinsky published *On the Spiritual in Art* in 1912, “the nature of spirituality in art was clearer than it is today. For Kandinsky the spiritual was identified with ‘the search for the abstract in art,’ and it existed in opposition to ‘the nightmare of materialism.’”² But, at the moment of his writing in the last quarter of the twentieth century, “abstract art is no longer an oppositional art... (and)... no longer understood as a mystical inner construction, transmitting inner meanings...”³

Kuspit’s characterization of Kandinsky and his aesthetic point of view would have particularly resonated with Betty Blayton. After all, her brother Oscar Blayton reveals that not only did she “(acknowledge) publicly that Kandinsky had a significant influence upon certain of her works,”⁴ but also throughout her career she forthrightly declared her deep interest in “metaphysical principles, all aspects of religion, mythology and the science of mind.”⁵ As a result, the predominant signifiers of her work include “metaphysician, ‘spiritual artist,’ ‘spirited educator,’ and, by her own description, a ‘spiritual impressionist.’”⁶ But as Kuspit indicates, this was a risky proposition. This self-declaration indicates how unabashed Blayton was in her convictions, even though her spiritual orientation towards artmaking went against the grain of twentieth and twenty-first-century art theory and criticism by the time she emerged in the New York art world in the 1960s.

The recognition of Blayton’s art was also rerouted in the 1960s when she—like a number of Black female artists—answered the call to address the cultural needs of their communities and took on the task of institutional building and arts administration.

In these roles, Blayton has never lacked accolades. A feature on her on the *Black Art in America* website is typical: “The question is not what artist Betty Blayton-Taylor did. The question is what *didn’t* Blayton-Taylor do?” The author goes on to enumerate that she was “co-founder and Executive Director of Harlem Children’s Art Carnival, co-founder and Board Secretary of the Studio Museum in Harlem, and co-founder of Harlem Textile Works. Over the years, the Williamsburg, Va., native acted as an activist, a consultant, and a board member for numerous arts and community-based organizations.”⁷ While her work in painting, illustration, printmaking, and sculpture may be mentioned, there is no analysis of the character of that work and its place in the art market and contemporary criticism. Here is the conundrum for Blayton: does this fact entrap her forever within the epithet, “Those who can, do; those who can’t, teach?” Therefore, to redress this situation, the task at hand in this essay is to attempt to focus on a discussion of Blayton’s artwork while accommodating her personal philosophy.

In a 1997 interview with Halima Taha, Blayton revealed that she could not remember “ever not thinking” that she “was an artist.”⁸ Her early memories include oil painting when she was in the sixth grade and being impressed by a memento version of Augusta Savage’s *Lift Every Voice and Sing*, the monumental commission for the 1939 World’s Fair.⁹ After attending boarding school in North Carolina, Blayton applied to Pratt Institute and Syracuse University and was accepted into Syracuse, where she studied painting and illustration—the latter major an accommodation of parental concerns about her financial future.¹⁰ By her own admission, Blayton chafed against art professors who “wanted me to do what they were doing,” and so she decided, “I would ignore them all and just watch and do what I thought.”¹¹

The one professor she singled out in her interview with Taha was George Vander Sluis (identified in the interview as Van der Sluse), who gave her a less-than-stellar grade in painting, although he found her drawing strong.¹²

Blayton received a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Syracuse in 1959. She then decided against pursuing an opportunity to earn a Master of Fine Arts at Howard University, instead finding work as a government illustrator. She subsequently taught in St. Thomas, and then on the way to a teaching job in England, she made a stop in New York City, where she decided instead to enroll at the Art Students League.¹³ At the League, she studied sculpture and gravitated to the class of painter Charles Alston after seeing his work as part of a display of instructors' work there. She noted to Taha that Alston "really didn't try to teach me. He recognized that I had had training and asked me to let him know if I needed help"¹⁴—an approach she would have particularly appreciated given her singular attitude.

As Blayton settled into the New York City art world, she relayed to Taha¹⁵ that she met Tyrone Michell, Jack White, Milton Osborne, and Arnold Prince at the League. She also interacted with Robert Blackburn at his printmaking workshop, as well as the Spiral group of artists (who sought to find an art relevant to the Black situation) and the Cinque Gallery ("the innovative non-profit artists' space dedicated to promoting the achievements of Black artists"¹⁶). Through her contact with Liza Smith in the publicity department at the Museum of Modern Art, whom she met through her work at HARYOU (Harlem Youth Opportunities Unlimited), she became involved in MoMA's plan to establish a branch of the Children's Art Carnival in Harlem, based on the art pedagogy of Victor D'Amico.¹⁷ Liz Shaw also introduced Blayton to Frank Donnelly, who in turn connected her to Lynn Hoffa and Campbell Wyly, which led to her being involved in the organizing committee to start the museum in Harlem that became the Studio Museum. Gradually, she cemented her reputation directing the Children's Art Carnival and briefly leading the Harlem Textile Works, which had begun in 1984 as part of the Carnival.¹⁸

These events indicate the catalytic role Blayton played in the New York City art world from the 1960s to the 2000s—an

era marked by social and political challenges of racial politics, gender expectations, and social sanctions. Her independent attitude posited "a potent resistance and personal triumph over racism and sexism in terms of expectations and assumptions about women of her generation with regard to their careers."¹⁹ However, despite her evident commitment to community, as an abstract artist Blayton also defied expectations in some quarters that believed Black American artists in the 1960s and '70s should produce work that represented the political and social aspirations of the era of civil rights and Black power. The frustrating challenge that Black artists faced at this time is exemplified by John Canaday's review of the Whitney's controversial 1971 exhibition, *Contemporary Black Artists in America*, and the concurrent *Rebuttal to the Whitney Museum* exhibition organized at the Acts of Art Galleries in Greenwich Village. Canaday singles out the work of Blayton and Richard Mayhew at Acts of Art, opining that "neither... can be called a black artist except of race. Miss Blayton's expert, delicately colored abstractions and Mr. Mayhew's peaceful landscapes have nothing to do with whiteness or blackness or anything except art, and this at an admirable level."²⁰ Black artists have long dealt with such backhanded compliments that both negate their actual experiences of being Black in the art world and obfuscate their aesthetic relationship to their communities.

Blayton's statement of her personal philosophy on her website provides a guide to begin a discussion of her work:

... The act of creating, as in painting and print-making, ... (which) ... allows the exploration of techniques for the creation of mood and mindset changes much as in sound and music. The silent two-dimension image as in abstraction is non-intrusive and allows the individual viewer opportunities to bring forth his/her own individual subconscious thoughts and feelings.²¹

Her positioning of music as an analogous language for art parallels that of modern and contemporary artists such

as Jackson Pollock, Mel Edwards, and Sam Gilliam. Jazz was the favored genre, and Blayton indicated her special appreciation of the music of Pharoah Sanders when she reminisced with Taha about hanging out with "Leroy Jones (Amiri Baraka)... and... a host of other poets" at the Five Spot, which was near her home at the time on Bond Street.²² Then, her description of the two-dimensional image as being "non-intrusive" is tantalizingly suggestive of formalist attitudes that painting should eschew narrative for a focus on the plastic aspects of painting. But for Blayton, however, the surface of the painting evolved into a miasmic element that she hoped would inspire her viewers "to bring forth his/her own individual subconscious thoughts and feelings." These words resound with Barnett Newman's analysis of the relationship among creativity, abstraction, and transcendent thought in the statement he wrote for the exhibition *The Ideographic Picture* at the Betty Parsons Gallery in 1946. His concepts of a "plastic language" and "metaphysical understanding" could well be brought to the discussion of Blayton's artwork, through which "a shape was... a vehicle or an abstract thought-complex."²³

Betty Blayton: In Search of Grace provides us an opportunity to follow Blayton's stylistic evolution. Early chalk pastels—*Couple in the Wind* (1965) and *Family Three* (1965) (Both Page 94)—and the oil on canvas *Roots* (1969) (Page 23) show a fluctuating relationship between figuration and abstraction reminiscent of Charles Alston's work in the early 1960s. Hints at anatomical details define the organic planes of the composition, and Blayton feigns a Cubistic effect with the alternating horizontal and vertical blocks of color—probably created by dragging the pastel sticks across the paper on the full length of their shafts, rather than their pointed edges.

Another set of color chalk pastels, executed in 1968—*To be heard, Don't let me go!*, *Abstraction in ocher & blue*, *Ideas moving forward*, and *Ideas moving forward in ocher and green* (Pages 94–95)—are, in contrast to the previously mentioned works, horizontal in orientation. The tangle of allusively organic forms in more intense color hues—not unexpectedly—reminds us of Kandinsky's iconic abstractions, such as *Improvisation 27 (Garden of Love II)* of 1912 (Collection of The Metropolitan

Museum of Art, New York). Oscar Blayton reveals that Blayton used to discuss Kandinsky's work with Norman Lewis, "beginning in the early 1960s when they worked at HARYOU together."²⁴ Furthermore, in her interview with Halima Taha, Blayton notes that, along with Paul Klee and Marc Chagall, Lewis was one of the artists whose work had a pronounced effect on her: "I felt a real affinity for (his work). I felt that we were like kindred spirits in that. I dubbed his work, 'Spiritual Realism'."²⁵

Blayton developed her signature style and format by the late 1960s, as seen in the monochromatic painting *Astro Dance* (1969) (Page 25), where the anatomical forms of the earlier drawings effervesce into fluid planes in motion. This painting indicates how the morphological²⁶ origins of her signature style lie in her exercises experimenting with color rice paper²⁷ for her collages, such as three more coloristic compositions from 1970: *Abstraction in Motion #1*, *Arriving Alone*, and *Sound in Abstraction* (Pages 96–97). Here, Blayton took advantage of both the original colors and the inherent transparency of thin paper to create layers of subtly nuanced forms that suggest a landscape, a body in an ambiance, and embryonic forms. Blayton allows us an intimate glimpse of her working method and how her use of rice paper carried over into her painting in the 1971 documentary, *Five African American Artists*.²⁸ We see her applying washes of paint—a technique she experimented with early on, inspired by Chinese painting²⁹—onto which she collages the rice paper, which she comments helps to provide structure within the composition.

Blayton continued to frequently combine rice paper collage with oil—and eventually acrylic—paint. As seen in *Time Freeze* (1972) (Page 41), she introduced enigmatic narratives within alternate spatial systems, while *Forced Center Right* (1975) (Page 45) features a forceful thrust of form and color to the right. Within the plasmic zone, a figure seems to materialize as if emerging from a vortex to another realm. The cruciform elements in *To Soar* (1977) (Page 49) encourage a landscape reading, with the vertical element in the upper hemisphere reflected in the lower. The variety of washes and graphic elements that Blayton describes in the 2016 video by documentary filmmaker Adjua Mantebea³⁰



Wassily Kandinsky, *Improvisation 27 (Garden of Love II)*, 1912, oil on canvas, 47 ¾ × 55 ¼ inches (120.3 × 140.3 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

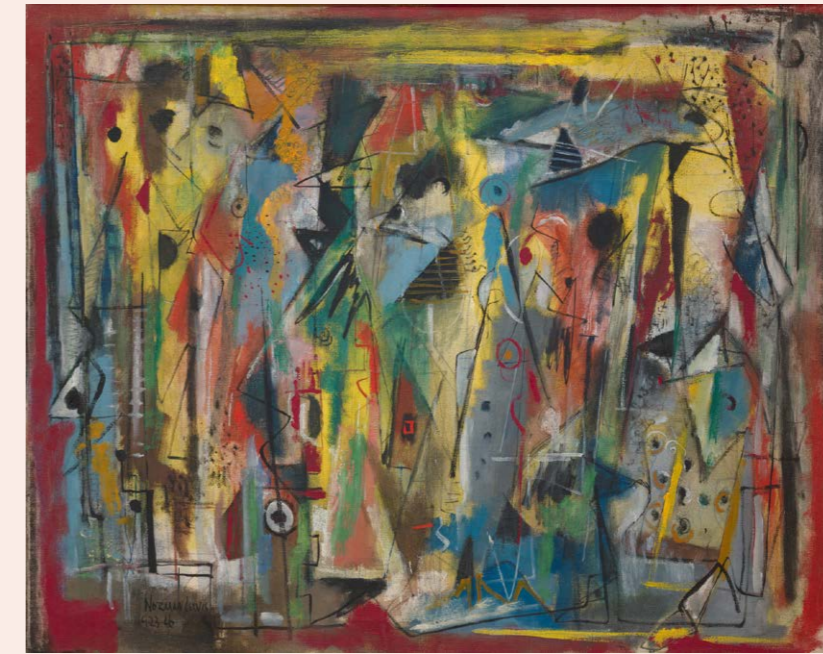
are apparent in the composing of this image. As she related to Mantebea, she had worked from sketches in the 1960s and '70s so that she would "have a good idea where she was going with her paintings."³¹ She is seen working on the painting, *So It Is With Us*, and explains that she first went over the composition with a violet wash before adding orange and blue "delineation lines in chalk" on top of that. Through these means, she is "trying to build a feeling of atmosphere" before she would go over the composition with another wash and "wipe" off the surface. After that, she would go back into the composition and "pick up some highlights with the oranges and reds."³² In a manner of speaking, this technique betrays a Cubist/Structuralist approach to form, which can be differentiated from the painterly acrobatics of Helen Frankenthaler or Morris Louis with their pouring, dripping, and splashing, as well as the more stringent geometric broadband language of Kenneth Noland, Frank Stella, or William T. Williams.

The circular shape of Blayton's painting has become the signature aspect of her work since she first used it in works of the late 1960s, such as the aforementioned *Astro Dance*. The tondo format has been deployed in paintings and sculptural reliefs since antiquity. In more recent art history, it has been seen as an alternative to the rectangular canvas, with its presumptions of one-point perspective. Especially suited to abstract compositions—as seen in the work of concrete abstractionists such as Fritz Glarner, Ilya Bolotowsky, and Carmen Herrera—the tondo

could be related to the trend of shaped canvases in the 1960s and 1970s, which mediated the space between sculpture and painting. In Blayton's case, however, as Crystal Britton writes, "the sphere... refers to wholeness, the relationship between man and nature in the most ultimate sense. Thus, her works serve as a gateway to higher spiritual levels."³³ In the 1971 documentary mentioned above, the artist notes

The circle is very symbolic for me. The circle is never-ending and life is often this way through the stages of one's being... starting from babyhood and moving on...³⁴

As noted at the outset, by positioning abstract painting as a means to her spiritual quest, Blayton was operating against the grain of the art world of the 1960s and '70s. But Blayton was not totally out of sync with the cultural environment of the times. Even Donald Kuspit would take note of the alchemical shamanism of Joseph Beuys, the spirituality of emptiness in Rothko, and the engagement of the Golden Section by Dorothea Rockburne within the media-oriented, plastically-focused art trends of the 1960s and '70s.³⁵ This was also a period when a number of spiritually centered, mind-expanding practices permeated American culture and were embraced as part of the broad spectrum of countercultural pursuits. Buddhism and a myriad of "Eastern"



Norman Lewis, *Phantasy II*, September 23, 1946, oil on canvas, 28 ¼ × 35 ¾ inches (71.4 × 91.2 cm). Museum of Modern Art, New York.

(that peculiar geo-locator designation for the continent of Asia) philosophies, as well as mind-expanding experimentations with hallucinogens and free love, permeated society. Even jazz itself was morphing into a more eclectic, free-form expression—not without cosmic associations—through the creativity of musicians such as John and Alice Coltrane, Sun Ra, Charles Mingus, Miles Davis, and Pharoah Sanders.

Oscar Blayton characterizes his sister's interest in Buddhism as the culmination of her "lifelong quest related to spirituality," which allowed for "a spiritual flexibility and fluidity that allowed her to genuinely participate in various religious practices (sometimes simultaneously)."³⁶ This sense of spiritual holism—if you will—even carried over into her pedagogical philosophy, as evident in Blayton's declaration that

The kind of thought that goes into creating a painting, a piece of sculpture, a collage is also the same kind of thinking that goes into producing a creative human being.³⁷

In her 1978 publication, *Making Thoughts Become: A Handbook for Teachers and Adults*,³⁸ Blayton not only admonishes her readers to understand that art is "one of the most dramatic means by which the child can begin to discover himself, others and...(the) inner and outer world,"³⁹ but that they also need

to nurture the imaginations of children unconditionally. Not surprisingly, she also posits the technique of collage as offering "a basic introduction to geometry... through the use of specific geometric shapes and organize these designs in space."⁴⁰ We can circle back to her own work and see how this approach to geometry is evident in paintings such as *Hard Edge #9-Form/Fractured Movement* (1969) (Page 29)—an example of Blayton's occasional reversion to the rectangular canvas—and *Sound Intruding* (1980) (Page 53). In the former, the use of color to articulate the intricacies of human musculature exemplifies the color tissue paper technique translated into oil paint, while in the latter, the artist combines acrylic paint and colored tissue paper to present the quadrants of a prismatic disk defined by undulating refracted shapes.

Starting in the mid-1980s, the juxtaposition and overlapping of color planes in Blayton's work becomes increasingly complex. Even as she worked in oil and then acrylic paint, she would layer washes of overlaying and overlapping color to create discrete and evocative shapes comparable to those achieved in the color rice paper. She continues to present inventive alternative spatial modalities: an organic/crystalline one in *Breaking Through Enter Level #1* (1986) (Page 55) and a series of whirling, tunneling wormholes in *Jewels of Thought* (1989) (Page 57). *Flight* (1996) (Page 59) and *Dream Symbols After Image* (1999) (Page 61) assume more anatomical allusions to torsos, and the erratic



Carmen Herrera, *Iberic*, 1949, acrylic on canvas on board, 40 inches diameter (101.6 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

positioning of amulet-like forms and sense of tentativeness in the application of the paint in *Fractured Thought* (1999) (Page 63) convey that state of mind.

It has to be admitted that Blayton's particularly poetic penchant for titles enables—perhaps even predicates—our interpretations of her abstractions. The titles of the works from the 2000s embody notions of “transcendence,” “searching,” “souls,” and “light and energy” on the one hand, and the frustrations of “gaps,” or forbidden “entry” on the other. So, might we read these as indications of Blayton's state of mind at the time? Oscar Blayton writes:

In her later years, Betty faced a lot of challenges related to her health, her frustration with not being recognized for what she was articulating with her art, and her anxiety over the sustainability... of the Children's Art Carnival after her departure.⁴¹

But this did not in any way signal a diminishing of her creative powers. Her connection to music is celebrated in *Big Band/Jazzman Mind* (2004) (Page 65), *Shapes of Sound* (2010) (Page 83), *Big Band Sound* (2015) (Page 91), and *Flutist Landscape* (2014) (Page 89). In the last two, in particular, Blayton indulges in what might be called an onomatopoeic visualization of sound. In *Big Band Sound*, the concentric circling and fanning phalanges in blues and dark greens are set against blocks of pinks, oranges, and yellows with a slit of red at the top right and flanking the

lighter and darker green edge at the left. In *Flutist Landscape*, strands of yellow and orange coil upward as they extend outward from and wrap around a shaft that segues from reds to oranges to yellows. As she has in the past, Blayton combines collage with paint—this time using acrylic paint.

The lyrical combinations of shapes and colors in *Souls Transcending* (2005) (Page 67) and *In Search of Grace* (2006) (Page 69), and the sense of movement in their interaction with one another, are particularly indicative of how “plastic language” and “metaphysical understanding” converged in Blayton's later work. One is captivated by the upward reaches of flame-like forms in *Souls Transcending* that are set against the rich purples and warm ochers in mid-composition. It is not difficult to see them as embodying the kind of disembodiment in some galactical transporter as the deep blue transparent orbs facilitate the transition. In *In Search of Grace*, areas of small dots and daubs at the upper edge and a larger bubble-like emanation contrast with the more tangibly physical quality of the arched and curved green, tangerine, pink, and blue planes that converge like a fantastical, if rather ramshackle, architectural element. Blayton returns to a rectangular format in *Oversoul and Protective Spirit* (2006) (Page 71), whose more brilliant hues may indeed be the product of the artist's switching to the use of acrylic paint from oil paint. Here, the particular arrangement of colors and shapes suggests a figure in red at the left intersecting with a large head/mask composed of planes of green, brown, yellow, pale and darker green, light blue, lavender, pink, and darker blue that threaten to overtake it.



Domenico Ghirlandaio, *Madonna and Child with St. John the Baptist and Three Angels*, circa 1490, tempera and oil on panel, 36 inches diameter (92 cm). Musée du Louvre, Paris.

No Entry (2006) (Page 73) seems more like a labyrinthine mountain village than a barrier, with its evocation of views of Mont Sainte-Victoire in the Provence region of France by Paul Cézanne, who shared Blayton's search for a “harmony parallel to nature.”⁴² *In Search of the Gap* (2007) (Page 75) suggests that harmony through a plant/human/aquatic hybrid. At the left, scalloped edges of a spine in yellows interlaces with reds so that the scallops form branches. This segues into a humanoid form as the color palette shifts into the greens and blues of an aquatic environment, within which floats a two-bar cross within a circle. *Gathering Source Energies* (2010) (Page 81) gathers energy from what seems to be a volcanic crater out of a form created by overlapping slat shapes of brown. And, finally, *Primal* (2012) (Page 87) features a palette of intense primary colors: the yellow orb is bisected by the orange plane and surrounded by intense hues of red, blue, and green. Is she evoking a sunset or a sunrise? Oscar Blayton suggests that this is a “statement of the beginning and ending inherent in the everlasting (and) depicts both the rising and setting sun relative to the cosmic sea and that which is beyond.”⁴³

In the end, it is clear that Betty Blayton realized the singular nature of her chosen path in life, but she was sustained by her “study of metaphysical laws, which govern the universe... ideas (that) relate to reincarnation and the possibility of lives lived between lives... (and) the possibility that this life is one of many lives lived here in Earth's school, to teach us certain lessons.”⁴⁴

These are the things that I have pondered and still often ponder when I am working. I do not expect my viewers to know what I have in mind when I am creating a work, but I hope they will have a positive sensory response to the work, on a level that their own insights are stimulated.⁴⁵

Now in the third decade of the twenty-first century, her work is finding a new appreciation along with that of her contemporaries, such as Sam Gilliam, Mary Lovelace O'Neal, Mel Edwards, Jack Whitten, and Howardena Pindell. The New York art world was (re)introduced to her in the 2017 solo exhibition of her work, organized by curator and educator Peter “Souleo” Wright, at the Elizabeth Dee Gallery (whose space coincidentally included that of the original Studio Museum in Harlem on 125th Street and Fifth Avenue) as part of the Uptown triennial.⁴⁶ The history of art is also beginning to open up to recognize trends and manifestations that heretofore have been overlooked or omitted, thus breaking the stringent canonical view of that history.⁴⁷ So, now the art world can begin to appreciate how the work of Blayton relates to a group of painters who, starting in the 1960s and '70s, “articulate(d) new questions about perception, specifically its relation to race, gender, and the coding of space” and color.⁴⁸

NOTES

I wish to thank Sukanya Rajaratnam for the opportunity to write on Betty Blayton's work. Doing research and writing on a short timeline was a challenge; therefore, I am greatly indebted to Oscar Blayton and his wife, Bonnie. Oscar's offer to assist me in this task, his painstakingly detailed responses to my queries, and his astute insights into his sister's work were invaluable. I also thank former associates of Betty Blayton for their support: Donna Jones for leads on resources, and Jose Ortiz for providing a scan of Blayton's *Making Thoughts Become: A Handbook for Teachers and Adults*. Erin Gilbert, former curator of African American art at the Archives of American Art, who collected a selection of Betty's papers there, provided key hints and suggestions that guided the essence of this essay.

1. Donald Kuspit, "Concerning the Spiritual in Contemporary Art," in Maurice Tuchman, Judi Freeman, eds., *The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting, 1890–1985*, exh. cat. (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum in association with Abbeville Press Publishers, New York, 1986), 313.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Oscar Blayton, email to the author, June 29, 2021.
5. See <https://www.bettyblayton.com/vision-statement>. Accessed June 22, 2021.
6. See <https://www.blackartinamerica.com/index.php/2020/11/25/baia-bits-betty-blayton-taylor/>. Accessed June 22, 2021. On the website *Positive Imagination*, Blayton's work is also described as "Non-objective," which is described as a synonym for "Non-representational," and "Non-figurative." The website also notes that Blayton described her art as "Art of the Spiritual." <https://positiveimagination.me/2017/01/22/betty-blaton-taylor-african-american-visual-artists-achievements-series-7/>. Accessed July 5, 2021.
7. See <https://www.blackartinamerica.com/index.php/2020/11/25/baia-bits-betty-blayton-taylor/>.
8. "Interview of Betty Blayton Taylor by Halima Taha, November 9, 1997," in James V. Hatch and Judy Blum, eds., *Artist and Influence*, vol. 17 (New York: Hatch-Billops Collection, 1998), 43.
9. Ibid.
10. The circumstances of Blayton's going to Syracuse have been told often: due to a peculiarity of Jim Crow Laws, her native state of Virginia paid for her to attend Syracuse University rather than have her attend a school in-state. Oscar Blayton, email to the author, June 28, 2021.
11. "Interview of Betty Blayton Taylor by Halima Taha, November 9, 1997," 45.
12. Ibid, 44–45. While he was originally a WPA realist mural painter, by the 1960s, Vander Sluis was making abstractions with all-over calligraphic elements, as well as layers of color overlaid on one another. Given their contentious interaction, he certainly could not be considered as having any influence on Blayton's artistic development, but the stylistic coincidence is striking. For additional information on George Vander Sluis, see: <https://www.davidcookgalleries.com/artist/george-vander-sluis>. For images of the paintings in question, see: https://www.askart.com/artist/George_J_Vander_Sluis/102031/George_J_Vander_Sluis.aspx, and <https://www.invaluable.com/artist/vander-sluis-george-j-1vxx0n17jh/sold-at-auction-prices/>. Accessed July 1, 2021.

13. "Interview of Betty Blayton Taylor by Halima Taha, November 9, 1997," 46–47, and Oscar Blayton, email to the author, June 28, 2021.
14. "Interview of Betty Blayton Taylor by Halima Taha, November 9, 1997," 45.
15. Ibid.
16. This has been memorialized in the exhibition *Creating Community. Cinque Gallery Artists*, curated by Susan Stedman, and on view at the Phyllis Harriman Mason Gallery, The Art Students League from May 3 – July 4, 2021.
17. Oscar Blayton, email to the author, July 10, 2021. See also, "Interview of Betty Blayton Taylor by Halima Taha, November 9, 1997," 50–54.
18. For the relationship between the Children's Art Carnival and the Harlem Textile works, see the obituary written by Wolfgang Saxon: "Kerris Ann Wolsky, 41, Founder of the Textile Workshop in Harlem," *New York Times*, May 13, 1998. Accessed July 10, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/1998/05/13/nyregion/kerris-ann-wolsky-41-founder-of-textile-workshop-in-harlem.html>.
19. Peter "Souleo" Wright, "Remembrances of Betty Blayton Taylor, Studio Museum Co-Founder and Harlem Arts Activist," *Hyperallergic*, January 23, 2017. Accessed June 22, 2021, <https://hyperallergic.com/343882/betty-blayton-taylor-reminiscence/>.
20. John Canady, "Black Artists on View in 2 exhibitions," *The New York Times*, April 7, 1971, 51. Accessed July 5, 2021, <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1971/04/07/issue.html>.
21. See <https://www.bettyblayton.com/vision-statement>. Accessed June 22, 2021.
22. "Interview of Betty Blayton Taylor by Halima Taha, November 9, 1997," 48–49.
23. Barnett Newman, "The Ideographic Picture," reprinted in *Readings in American Art Since 1900: A Documentary Survey*, Barbara Rose, ed., (New York and Washington: Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 1968), 145–146.
24. Oscar Blayton, email to the author, June 29, 2021.
25. "Interview of Betty Blayton Taylor by Halima Taha, November 9, 1997," 49.
26. For the use of this word in conjunction with the visual arts, see Lucian Rudrauf, "The Morphology of Art and the Psychology of the Artist," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 13, no. 1 (September 1954): 18–36. Accessed June 23, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.2307/427014>.

27. Although the paper used by Blayton is frequently described as "tissue" paper, Oscar Blayton notes that "... it was actually 'rice' paper. Meredith Watson (the conservator in the VMFA video) and I have been trying to figure out / track down the type of rice paper Betty used, and I am beginning to believe that it was Kozu Thai rice paper." Oscar Blayton, email to the author, July 10, 2021.
28. *Five African American Artists*, produced by Silvermine Films Production (Milton Meltzer and Alvin Yudkoff) for Seagram Distillers Company, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nYxwj7GYH_k. Accessed July 4, 2021.
29. "Interview of Betty Blayton Taylor by Halima Taha, November 9, 1997," 46.
30. See "So It Is With Us," a Documentary through Images and Clips of the Artist: Betty Blayton Taylor" directed by Adjua Mantebea (2016; New York, NY: A Delight Production), <https://vimeo.com/201040260/>. Accessed July 3, 2021.
31. Ibid.
32. "So It Is With Us," a Documentary through Images and Clips of the Artist: Betty Blayton Taylor." Transcriptions of Blayton's comments in these videos were done by the author.
33. Crystal A. Britton, *African-American Art: The Long Struggle* (New York: Todtri Book Publishers, 1996), 123.
34. *Five African American Artists*. Transcription of Blayton's comments by the author.
35. Kuspit, op. cit., 315, 317.
36. Oscar Blayton, email to the author, June 30, 2021: "She could go to Canaan Baptist Church in Harlem to hear a particular speaker just as easily as she could participate in Science of the Mind Thought Centers. She was drawn to Science of the Mind, in part, because of their core belief that God is all there is in the universe, and its power can be used by all humans to the extent that they recognize and align themselves with Its presence. This theme occurs often in her journal entries and is reflected in her artwork." He also mentions his discussions with Blayton about Rosicrucianism, which the artist mentions in her interview with Halima Taha. See "Interview of Betty Blayton Taylor by Halima Taha, November 9, 1997," 49–50.
37. This quote can be found in a poster from MoMA reproduced in a feature on Blayton on the website of the Seattle Artist League. Accessed June 23, 2021. <https://seattleartistleague.com/2019/02/14/black-painter-printmaker-betty-blayton-taylor/>.

38. Betty Blayton, *Making Thoughts Become: A Handbook for Teachers and Adults* (New York: *The Children's Art Carnival, 1978*), unpaginated.
39. Ibid.
40. Ibid.
41. Oscar Blayton, email to the author, June 30, 2021.
42. See <https://www.nga.gov/features/slideshows/paul-cezanne.html>. Accessed July 3, 2021.
43. Oscar Blayton, email to the author, July 10, 2021.
44. "Betty Blayton Taylor: Spiritual Artist, Spirited Educator," *Persimmon* (Summer 2015). Accessed July 5, 2021. <https://persimmontree.org/summer-2015/betty-blayton-taylor-spiritual-artist-spirited-educator/>.
45. Ibid.
46. See the press release on the archived site of the Elizabeth Dee Gallery: <http://www.elizabethdee.com/exhibitions/betty-blayton>, accessed July 9, 2021. Also see Peter "Souleo" Wright, "Remembrances of Betty Blayton Taylor, Studio Museum Co-Founder and Harlem Arts Activist."
47. This has been manifested in a number of exhibitions and reinstallations in museums over the last decade in particular. See, for example: Melissa Smith, "We Have to Rethink the Categories: Curators, Scholars and Artists Discuss MoMA's Attempt to Open Us the Art Historical Cannon," *ARTnews*, October 18, 2019, accessed July 10, 2021, <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/moma-permanent-galleries-1683286>, or Robin Pobegin, "At the Entrenched Metropolitan Museum, the New Director Shakes Things Up," *The New York Times*, November 20, 2019, updated June 24, 2020, accessed July 10, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/20/arts/design/metropolitan-museum-max-hollein.html>.
48. This notion was explored in the 2019 exhibition, *Spilling Over: Painting Color in the 1960s*, organized by David Breslin and Margaret Kross at the Whitney Museum. See <https://whitney.org/exhibitions/spilling-over>. Accessed June 2, 2021. This exhibition was organized from the Museum's collection, and Blayton's work wasn't included.

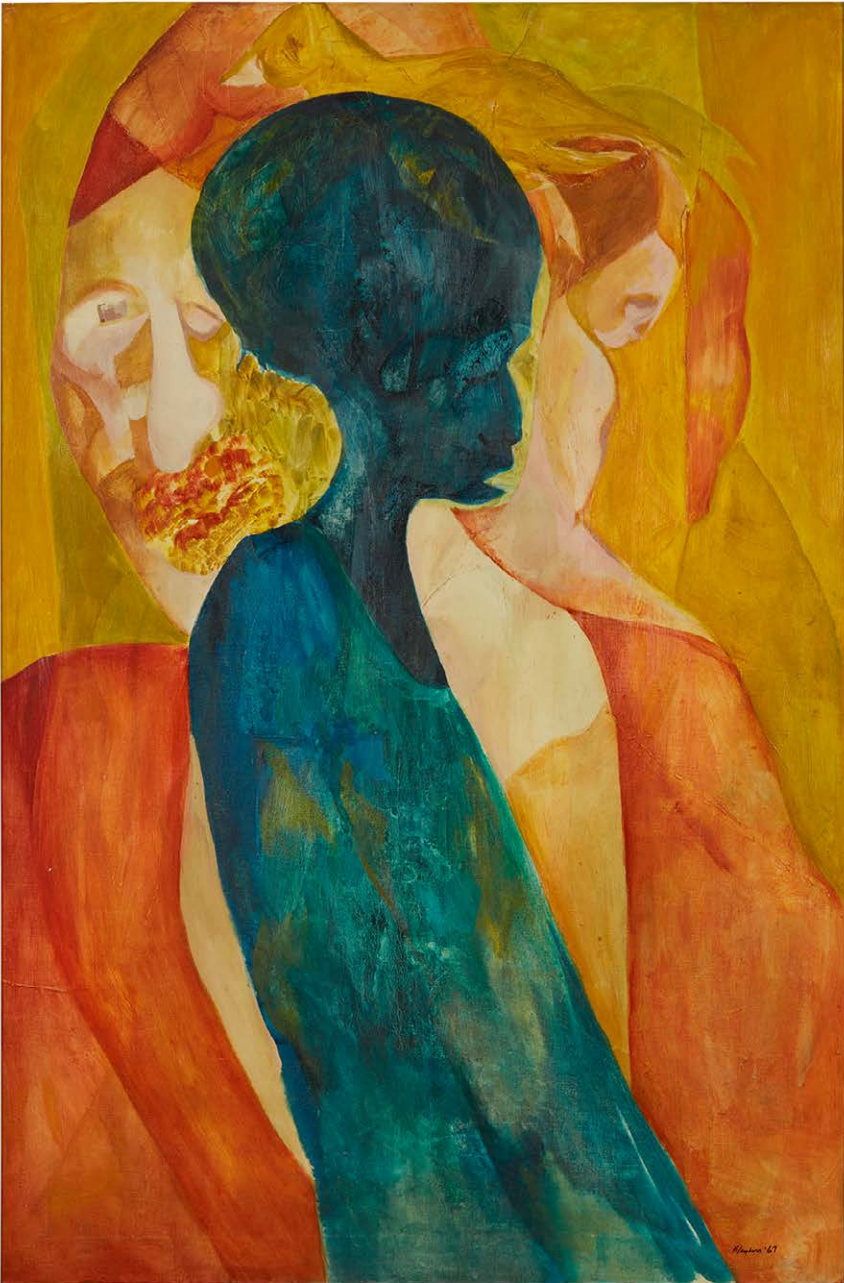
PAINTINGS

No Fun No Game

1967

oil on canvas

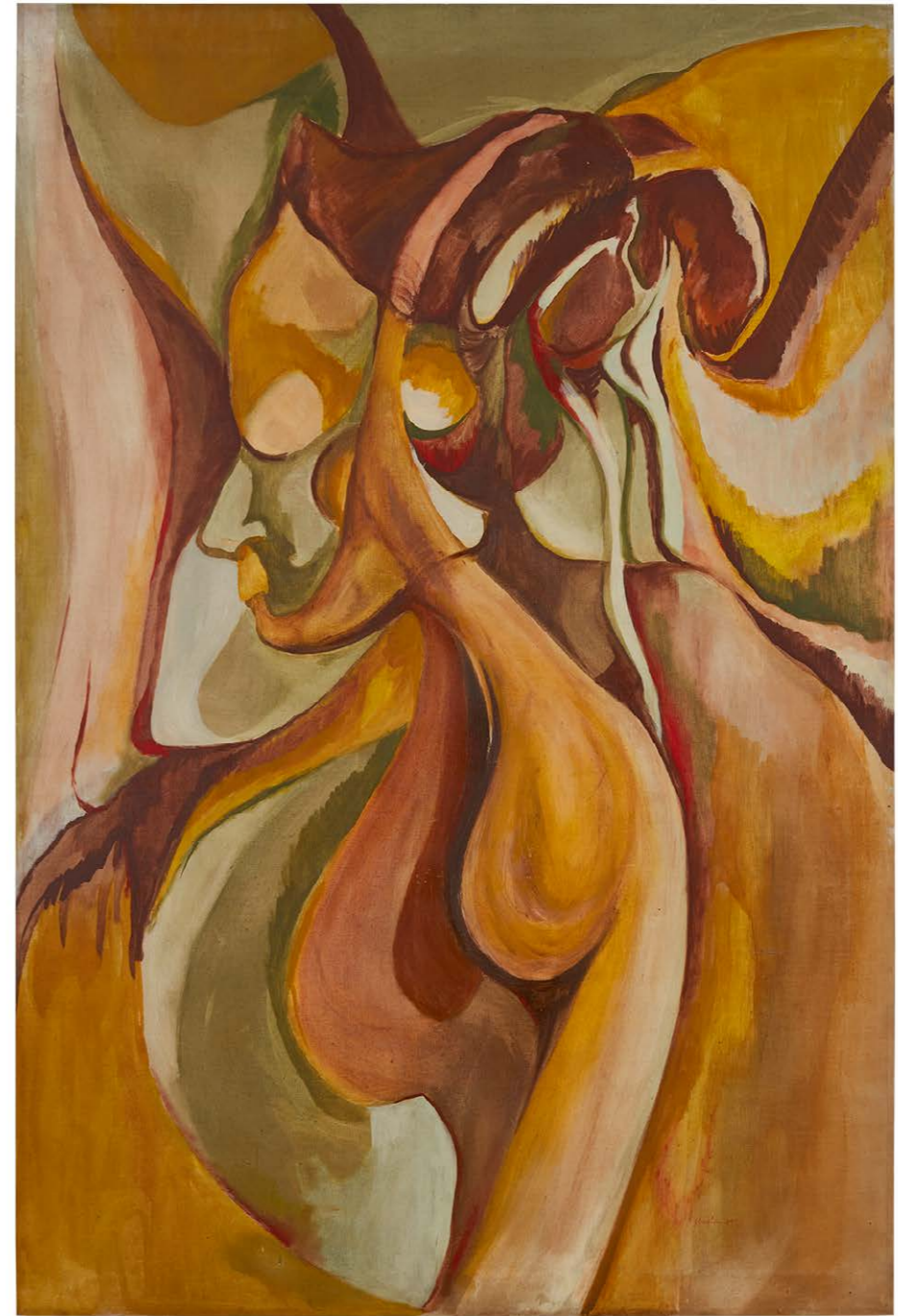
55 ½ × 37 inches (141 × 94 cm)



Moving with Energies
1968
acrylic and colored rice paper collage on canvas
40 × 40 inches (101.6 × 101.6 cm)



Roots
1969
oil on canvas
60 × 40 inches (152.4 × 101.6 cm)



Astro Dance
1969
acrylic and colored rice paper collage on canvas
40 × 40 inches (101.6 × 101.6 cm)



Hard Edge #3 - Intermezzo
1969
oil on canvas
40 ¼ × 40 ¼ inches (102.2 × 102.2 cm)



Hard Edge #9 - Form / Fractured Movement

1969

oil on canvas

58 × 39 ¾ inches (147.3 × 101 cm)



At Onement
1970
acrylic on canvas
39 ½ × 39 ½ inches (100.3 × 100.3 cm)



World Within Worlds
1970
oil and paper collage on canvas
58 ½ × 58 ½ inches (148.6 × 148.6 cm)



Venus
1970
oil on canvas with rice paper collage
35 ½ × 35 ½ inches (90.2 × 90.2 cm)



Tarot
1970
oil and paper collage on canvas
29 3/4 x 29 3/4 inches (75.6 x 75.6 cm)



Reaching for Center
1970
acrylic and oil pastel on canvas
58½ × 58½ inches (148.6 × 148.6 cm)



Time Freeze
1972
oil on canvas
39 ½ × 39 ½ inches (100.3 × 100.3 cm)



Becoming

1974

oil and paper collage on canvas
30 × 30 inches (76.2 × 76.2 cm)



Forced Center Right

1975

acrylic and oil pastel on canvas
36 × 36 inches (91.4 × 91.4 cm)



A Long Way from Home

1977

acrylic on canvas

29 × 29 inches (73.7 × 73.7 cm)



To Soar
1977
oil and paper collage on canvas
40 × 40 inches (101.6 × 101.6 cm)



Mental Maze
1979
oil and paper collage on canvas
31½ × 31½ inches (80 × 80 cm)



Sound Intruding
1980
acrylic and colored rice paper collage on canvas
35 ½ × 35 ½ inches (90.2 × 90.2 cm)



Breaking Through Enter Level #1

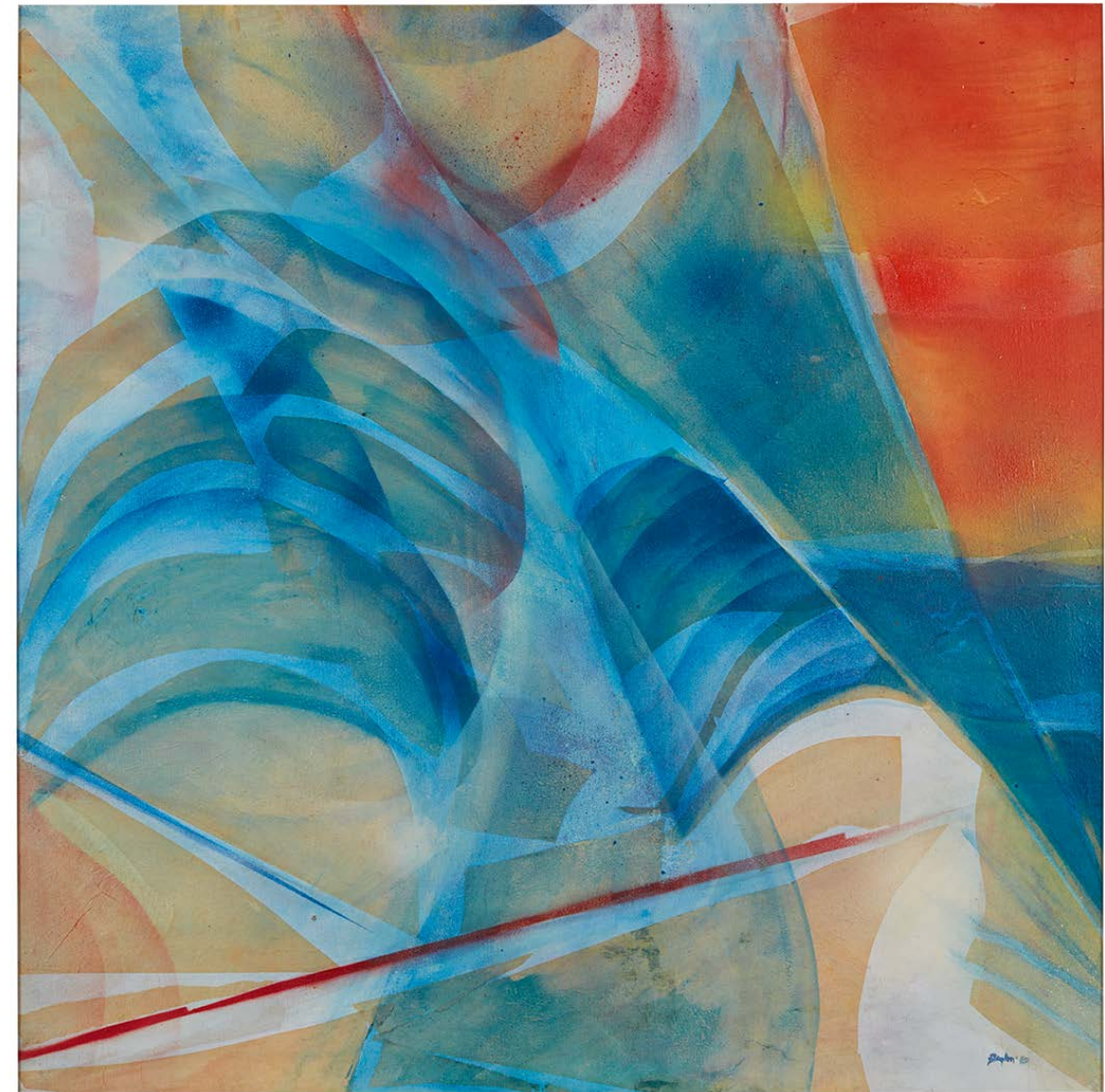
1986

acrylic on canvas

39 × 39 inches (99.1 × 99.1 cm)



Jewels of Thought
1989
acrylic on canvas
41 × 41 inches (104.1 × 104.1 cm)



Flight
1996
acrylic and oil pastel on canvas
58 ½ × 58 ½ inches (148.6 × 148.6 cm)



Dream Symbols After Image

1999

oil and paper collage on canvas
39 ¼ × 39 ¼ inches (99.7 × 99.7 cm)



Fractured Thought
1999
acrylic and oil pastel on canvas
58 ½ × 58 ½ inches (148.6 × 148.6 cm)



Big Band/Jazzman Mind
2004
acrylic and oil pastel on canvas
47 ½ × 47 ½ inches (120.7 × 120.7 cm)



Souls Transcending
2005
acrylic on canvas
40 × 40 inches (101.6 × 101.6 cm)



In Search of Grace
2006
acrylic on canvas
30 × 30 inches (76.2 × 76.2 cm)

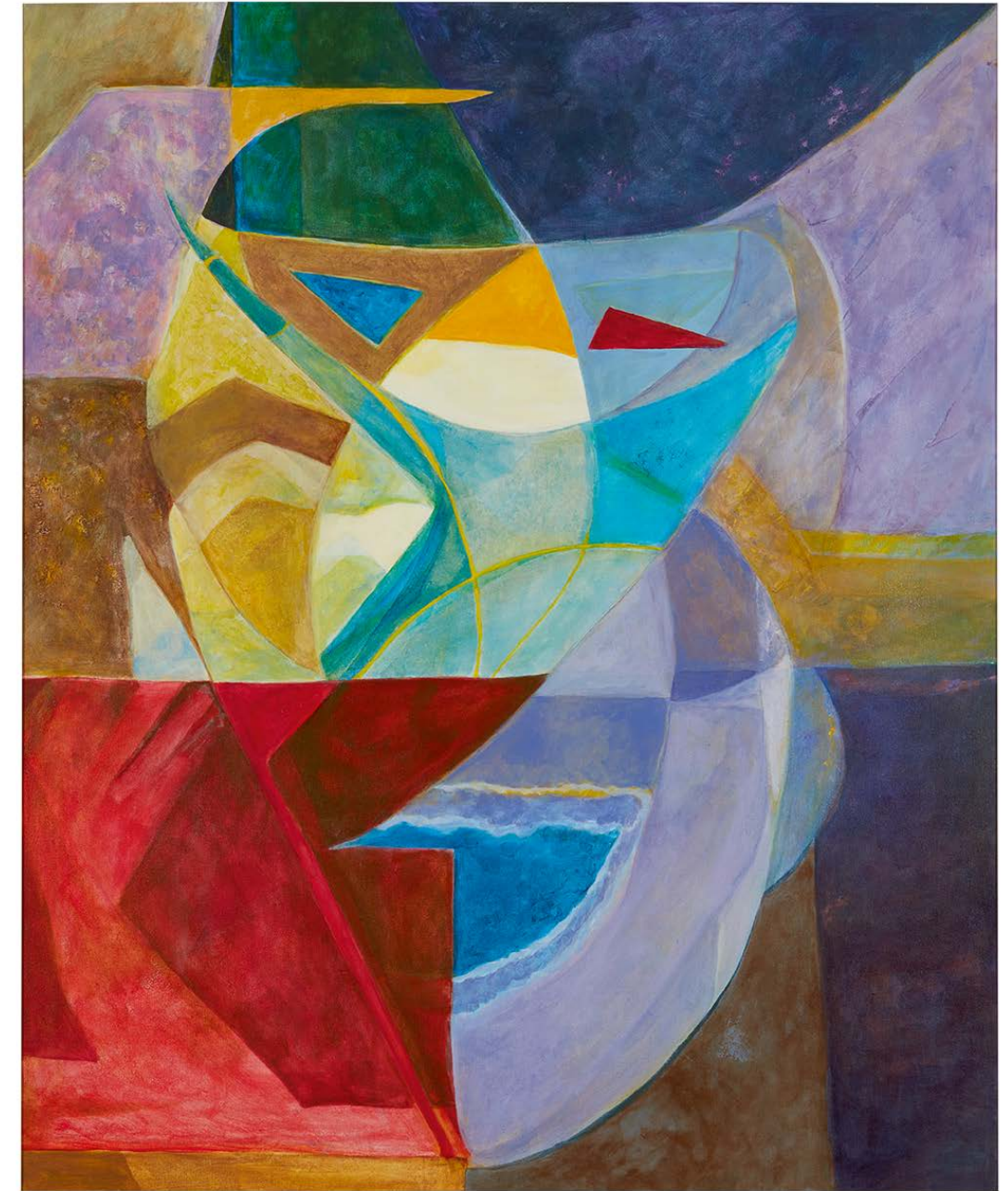


Oversoul and Protective Spirit

2006

acrylic on canvas

46 × 38 inches (116.8 × 96.5 cm)



No Entry

2006

acrylic and paper collage on canvas

29 3/4 × 29 3/4 inches (75.6 × 75.6 cm)



In Search of the Gap
2007
acrylic on canvas
36 × 36 inches (91.4 × 91.4 cm)



Positive Thought Becoming a Thing

2007

acrylic on canvas

36 × 36 inches (91.4 × 91.4 cm)



Ancestors Bearing Light
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acrylic and colored rice paper collage on canvas
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48 × 48 inches (121.9 × 121.9 cm)



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2010
acrylic and paper collage on canvas
62½ × 74 inches (158.8 × 188 cm)



Consciousness Traveling

2012

acrylic on canvas

59 ½ × 59 ½ inches (151.1 × 151.1 cm)



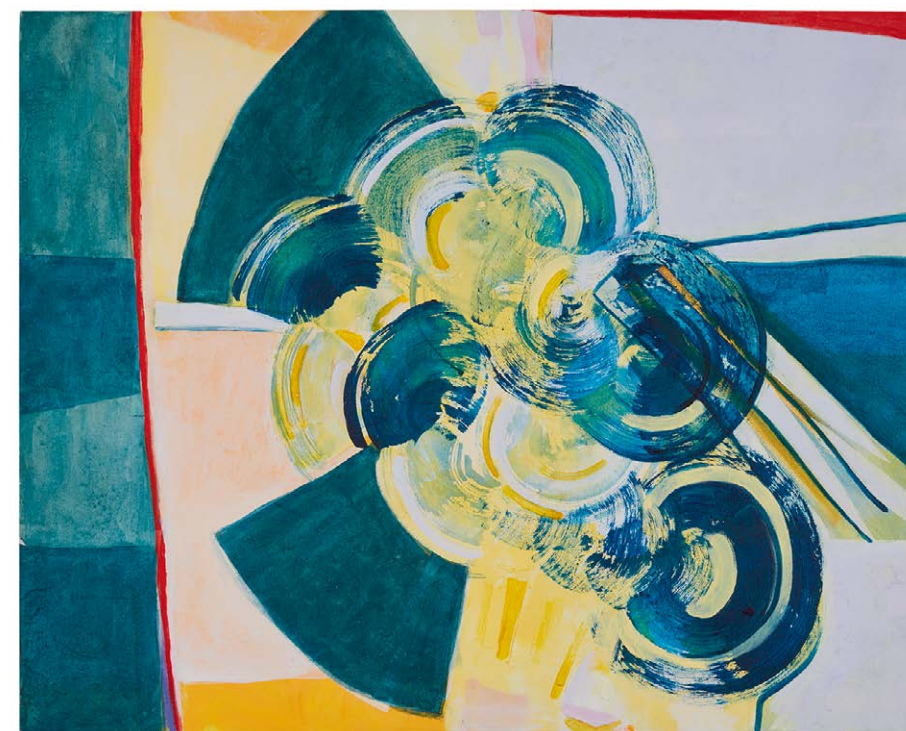
Primal
2012
acrylic on canvas
42 × 42 inches (106.7 × 106.7 cm)



Flutist Landscape
2014
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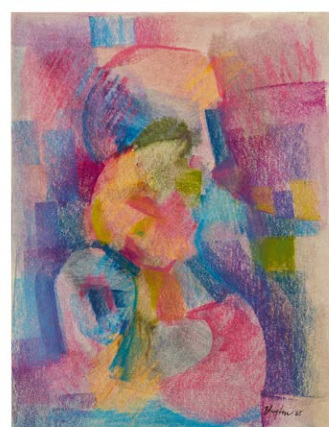
Big Band Sound
2015
acrylic and paper collage on canvas
24 × 36 inches (61 × 91.4 cm)



WORKS ON PAPER



Couple in the wind
1965
chalk pastel on paper
11 x 8 1/2 inches (27.9 x 21.6 cm)



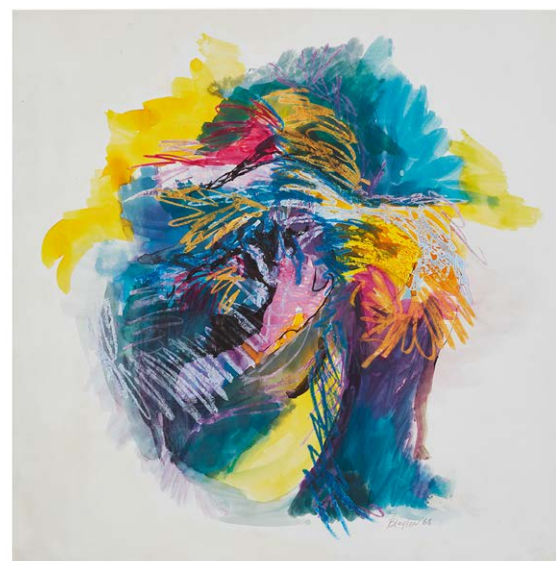
Family Three
1965
chalk pastel on paper
11 x 8 1/2 inches (27.9 x 21.6 cm)



Don't let me go!
1968
Dr. Ph. Martin's ink and oil on paper
14 x 20 inches (35.6 x 50.8 cm)



Ideas moving forward in ocher & green
1968
chalk pastel on paper
15 x 23 inches (38.1 x 58.4 cm)



Thoughts of Grief
1968
ink and oil pastel on paper
18 1/2 x 18 1/2 inches (47 x 47 cm)



To be heard
1968
chalk pastel, wash, and crayon on paper
14 x 20 inches (35.6 x 50.8 cm)



Ideas moving forward
1968
chalk pastel on paper
15 1/4 x 23 inches (38.7 x 58.4 cm)



Abstraction in ocher & blue
1968
chalk pastel on paper
15 x 20 inches (38.1 x 50.8 cm)



Arriving Alone
1970
color tissue collage on paper
10 ½ × 10 ½ inches (26.7 × 26.7 cm)



Arriving together
1970
color tissue collage on paper
10 ½ × 10 ½ inches (26.7 × 26.7 cm)



Abstraction in Motion #1
1970
color tissue collage on paper
10 ½ × 10 ½ inches (26.7 × 26.7 cm)



Abstraction in Motion #2
1970
color tissue collage on paper
10 ½ × 10 ½ inches (26.7 × 26.7 cm)



Sound in Abstraction
1970
color tissue collage on paper
10 ½ × 10 ½ inches (26.7 × 26.7 cm)



Introduction to the spirit council
1979
acrylic on paper
13 × 19 inches (33 × 48.3 cm)



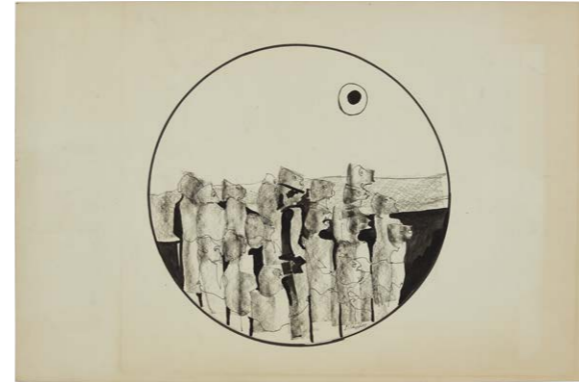
Study in Black & White #2
1979
ink on paper
24 x 18 inches (61 x 45.7 cm)



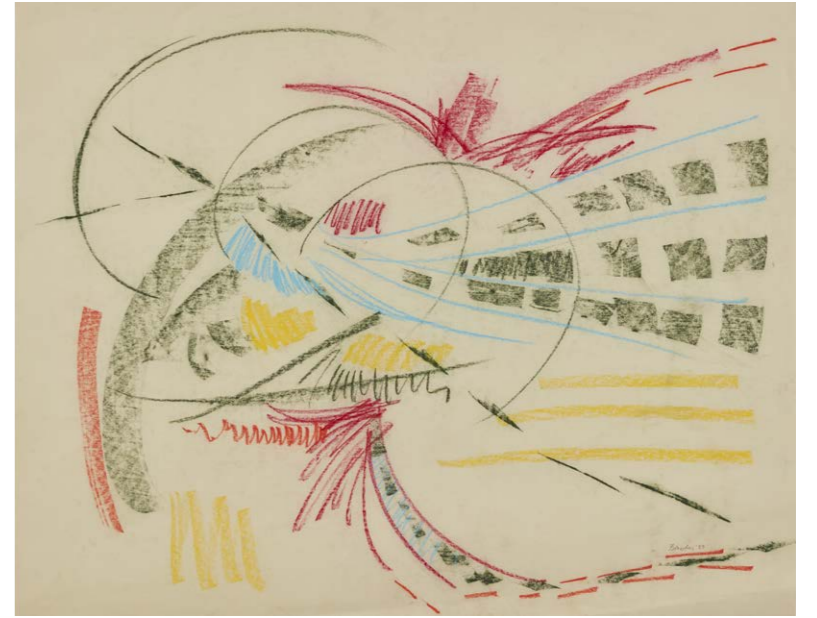
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ink on paper
24 x 18 inches (61 x 45.7 cm)



Looking over the other side
1979
Dr. Ph. Martin's ink on paper
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Waiting for a word
1979
ink on paper
17 x 14 inches (43.2 x 35.6 cm)



Happiness Energies #2
1983
chalk pastel on paper
22 x 30 inches (55.9 x 76.2 cm)



Cosmic Actions
1989
acrylic and collage on paper
22 x 33 inches (55.9 x 83.8 cm)

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CHRONOLOGY

1937

Betty Blayton is born on July 10 in Williamsburg, Virginia. She is the second of four children born to Alleyne Houser Blayton, a substitute teacher, and Dr. James Blaine “Jimmy” Blayton, a physician who opened the first hospital for Black people in his area.

1955–1959

Attends Syracuse University in New York, receiving a BFA in Painting and Illustration. Her education was paid for at the expense of the state of Virginia due to the state’s unwillingness to integrate their schools after *Brown v. Board of Education*. As a result, the state was required to fund the education of any student whose desired curriculum was not offered at one of the state’s Black colleges.

1959

Receives a job offer at Howard University working for James A. Porter that would have allowed her to take graduate courses concurrently, an opportunity she ultimately declines. Instead, she takes a job with the federal government working in the illustration department of general services.

SOLO EXHIBITION

Collectors Corner Gallery, Washington DC.

1960

Takes a job teaching high school students on the island of St. Thomas in the Caribbean. Afterwards, she moves to New York City, which she will call home for the rest of her life.

SOLO EXHIBITION

St. Thomas Gallery, St. Thomas.

1960–1962

Studies at the Art Students League with sculptor Arnold Prince and painter Charles Alston.



Betty Blayton with her parents and sibling, circa late 1930s or early 1940s.

1961

Attends summer courses in education at the City College of New York and works with at-risk teenagers through Harlem Youth Opportunities Unlimited (HARYOU), both of which will inform her future as an arts educator. Her work with HARYOU will directly contribute to the founding of the Studio Museum in Harlem.

1963–1964

Moves to Bond Street in the NoHo neighborhood of New York, living above a manufacturing company. The writer and activist LeRoi Jones, soon to be named Amiri Baraka, was a neighbor.

SOLO EXHIBITION

Adair Gallery, Atlanta.

1964–1970

Studies at the Brooklyn Museum School with Japanese abstract sculptor Minoru Niizuma. The physical demands and space requirements of sculpture prove to be a deterrent to her work, leading her to focus solely on painting.

MID-1960S

Develops her signature method of applying paint in fluid, light washes and layering pieces of tissue paper in-between these washes.

1965-1977

Co-founds and serves as the Board Secretary of The Studio Museum in Harlem.

1966

SOLO EXHIBITION

Capricorn Gallery, New York.

GROUP EXHIBITION

The Art of the American Negro, curated by Romare Bearden, Harlem Cultural Council, New York.

1967

Marries "Rheet" Ivanhoe Taylor.

GROUP EXHIBITION

Counterpoints 23, Lever House, New York.

1968-1994

Acts as a consultant for the Board of Education of the City of New York.

1968-1998

Co-founds and serves as Executive Director of the Children's Art Carnival at the Harlem School of Arts, whose mission was to foster creative thinking through the arts and stimulate a love of learning in children across the city. Originally started by Victor D'Amico as part of the Museum of Modern Art's outreach program, the two work together to expand its offerings into Harlem. Jean-Michel Basquiat was a student, and creatives such as the playwright George C. Wolfe taught workshops.

1968

GROUP EXHIBITION

8x8, Riverside Museum, New York.

Six Painters, MARC, New York.

Three Women Exhibition, Capricorn Gallery, New York.

30 Contemporary Black Artists, Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Minneapolis.

Fifteen New Voices, American Greeting Card Gallery, New York.

1969

GROUP EXHIBITION

Contemporary Black Artists, Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence.

1971

Featured in the documentary film *Five*, which profiled five Black American artists including Charles White, Romare Bearden, Richard Hunt, and Barbara Chase-Riboud. That same year, Blayton designs and oversees the creation of a mural on 140th Street and Lenox Avenue in New York incorporating art by students of the Children's Art Carnival.

GROUP EXHIBITION

Rebuttal to the Whitney Museum Exhibition: Black Artists in Rebuttal, Acts of Art, New York.

Black Artists: Two Generations, The Newark Museum, Newark.

1974

GROUP EXHIBITION

TWO - Tonnie Jones and Betty Blayton, The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York.

1975

SOLO EXHIBITION

Caravan House Gallery, New York.

1975-1996

Serves on the board of The Arts & Business Council of New York City.

1978

Publishes *Making Thoughts Become*, a handbook about the creative process meant for teachers and adults.

1978-1998

Serves on the board of the Robert Blackburn Printmaking Workshop.

1979-1988

Serves as a member of the New York City Commission for Cultural Affairs.





1982

GROUP EXHIBITION

The Wild Art Show, Museum of Modern Art, New York.

1983–1985

Serves as a member of the David Rockefeller Art in Education Research Committee.

1983–1998

Founds and serves on the board of Harlem Textile Works, an offshoot of the Children's Art Carnival that offered fabric design workshops, arts education, and job opportunities for students in the area.

1984

Receives the Empire State Woman of the Year in the Arts Award.

1988

Travels to Egypt, which allows her to explore her African heritage and its folklore. The trip results in a series of monotypes, "Aswan Legacy," and "From the Garden of Isis," which debut at the Isobel Neal Gallery in 1990.

1989

Receives the Governor's Art Award presented by the state of New York.

SOLO EXHIBITION

Bedford Stuyvesant Skylight Gallery, Brooklyn.

1990

Receives the Eugene Grigsby Award for Excellent Contributions in Art Education from the National Arts Education Association.

SOLO EXHIBITION

Isobel Neal Gallery, Chicago.

1993

SOLO EXHIBITION

Luben House Gallery, Syracuse University, Syracuse.

1994

SOLO EXHIBITION

Pace College, New York.

1995

Receives the CBS Martin Luther King Jr., Fulfilling the Dream Award.

1997–2004

Blayton transitions from her role as Executive Director of the Children's Art Carnival and serves as Special Projects Coordinator and board member.

2002

GROUP EXHIBITION

Restoring Our Spiritual Connections: National Conference of Artists International Exhibition, National Museum of Ghana, Accra.

2004

Something to Look Forward to: an Exhibition Featuring Abstract Art by 22 Distinguished Americans of African Descent, The Phillips Museum of Art, Franklin & Marshall College, Lancaster.

2005

Receives the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Women's Caucus for Art. Other recipients this year include Yoko Ono and Agnes Martin.

SOLO EXHIBITION

Smithfield Cultural Center, Smithfield.

2006

SOLO EXHIBITION

Harrison B. Wilson Archives Gallery, Norfolk State University, Norfolk.

2007

Makes her first lithograph and begins collaborating with master printmaker Kathy Curacaccio on an edition of aquatints.

GROUP EXHIBITION

Betty Blayton and Robin Holder: Daughters of the House of Life, Hammonds House Museum, Atlanta.

2008–2009

SOLO EXHIBITION

Strivers Garden Gallery, New York; Canvas Paper and Stone Gallery, New York; and Essie Green Galleries, New York.



Betty Blayton with *In Search of Grace* (2006, see page 69).

2009

SOLO EXHIBITION

The Mackey Twins, Mt. Vernon.

GROUP EXHIBITION

Seeing Jazz: A Tribute to the Masters and Pittsburgh Jazz Legends, Manchester Craftsmen's Guild, Pittsburgh.

2010

SOLO EXHIBITION

Burgess Fine Arts, New York.

GROUP EXHIBITION

African American Abstract Masters, Anita Shapolsky Gallery, New York; Wilmer Jennings Gallery at Kenkeleba House, New York; and Opalka Gallery – The Sage Colleges, Albany.

2012

GROUP EXHIBITION

The Female Aesthetic, Dwyer Cultural Center, New York.
Movements & Moments in Spring, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York.
Faith, Courage & Purpose: Artists of the Diaspora, Arsenal Gallery, New York.

2013–2014

Participates in the Joan Mitchell Foundation's "Creating a Living Legacy" (CALL) program.

2015

GROUP EXHIBITION

Many Rivers, Saratoga Arts Center, Saratoga Springs.
Looking Both Ways, Peninsula Fine Arts Center, Newport News.

2016

Blayton passes away on October 2 in Bronx, New York at the age of 79.

2017

SOLO EXHIBITION

Elizabeth Dee Gallery, New York.

GROUP EXHIBITION

Magnetic Fields: Expanding American Abstraction, 1960s to Today, Kemper Art Museum, Kansas City; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington DC; and Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg.

2018

GROUP EXHIBITION

Surface Work, Victoria Miro Gallery, London.
Acts of Art and Rebuttal in 1971, Leubsdorf Gallery, Hunter College, New York.

2019

GROUP EXHIBITION

She Persists: A Century of Women Artists in New York, Gracie Mansion, New York.



Published on occasion of the exhibition

BETTY BLAYTON

In Search of Grace

CURATED BY SUKANYA RAJARATNAM

September 8–October 16, 2021

Mnuchin Gallery
45 East 78th Street
New York, NY 10075

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Exhibitions Director: Emma Laramie
Director of Operations: David McClelland
Senior Registrar: Arrow Mueller

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Captions

Cover: *In Search of Grace*, 2006 (see page 69)

p. 2: *At Onement*, 1970 (detail, see page 31)

p. 6: Betty Blayton in her studio, date unknown

p. 104: Betty Blayton, circa 1950s

p. 107: (L-R) Eleanor Holmes Norton, Carter Burden, Charles Inniss, Campbell Wyly, Betty Blayton-Taylor,
Frank Donnelly at The Studio Museum in Harlem on opening night in 1968

p. 108: Betty Blayton outside the Children's Art Carnival

p. 111: Betty Blayton on the beach

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