



For Immediate Release

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**ACA Galleries Presents
African American Masters**

FRIEZE MASTERS

**Frieze Masters London
October 12 – 16, 2022
Booth B9**

New York, NY. ACA Galleries is pleased to announce a group exhibition of African American Masters at Frieze London on view October 12-16, 2022 at **Booth B9**.

This presentation features outstanding examples by pre-eminent African American artists of the 20th century including Romare Bearden, Elizabeth Catlett, Jacob Lawrence, Faith Ringgold, Aminah Brenda Lynn Robinson and Charles White.

Largely narrative in focus, this show provides an overview of the black experience in various media by some of the most important African American artists of the past century.

Artists:

Romare Bearden (1912 –1988)

Romare Bearden, born in Charlotte, North Carolina, was an African American artist, author and songwriter. He worked in a range of media including prints, cartoons, oils and collages. In 1935 Bearden graduated from New York University and in 1950 returned to Paris to study at the Sorbonne.

A renowned collagist and print maker, Bearden is considered one of the pre-eminent American artists of the 20th Century. In the 1960s Bearden became a founding member of “Spiral”, a Harlem-based organization formed to explore the role of artists in the civil rights movement. This began Bearden’s life-long exploration of the collage medium.

An intimate knowledge of the Jazz world reinforced Bearden’s cultural identity within the Harlem community. By the 1950s Romare Bearden (originally a mathematician) was a cognoscente of Jazz and co-founded the Bluebird Music Company. Among the 20 songs he composed was the classic "Sea Breeze"

which was recorded by Billy Eckstine, Dizzy Gillespie and later by Tito Puente. One of the earliest collectors of Bearden's work was Jazz legend Fats Waller.

In 1970 Bearden received a John Solomon Guggenheim Foundation grant to write a book on the history of African-American art. The book, *A History of African-American Artists: From 1792 to the Present*, was co authored with Harry Henderson and published posthumously in 1993.

Bearden is the recipient of numerous awards and honors including:

National Institute of Arts and Letters membership (1972); Rockefeller Fellow at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (1973); Gold Medal for Achievement in the Arts by the Governor of North Carolina (1976); Freedom Fighter Award from the Atlanta Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (1978); Thirteenth Annual Frederick Douglass Medal from the New York Chapter of the National Urban League (1980); The Studio Museum in Harlem (along with Elizabeth Catlett and Jacob Lawrence) (1983); and the Mayor's Award of Honor for Art & Culture from New York City Mayor Edward Koch at Gracie Mansion (1984), among numerous others.



Bearden was awarded Honorary Doctorates from many institutions including: Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, New York (1973); Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, PA (1975); North Carolina Central University, Durham, NC (1977); Maryland Institute of Arts, Baltimore, MD (1977); Davidson College, Davidson, NC (1978) and Hofstra University, Hempstead, New York (1982).

In 1987, Bearden was awarded the National Medal of Arts by President Ronald Reagan.

In the early 90s, the traveling exhibition, *A Graphic Odyssey: Romare Bearden as Printmaker* was hosted by numerous institutions for almost a decade. A catalogue was published featuring virtually every print Bearden created.

Elizabeth Catlett (1915-2012)

Elizabeth Catlett, born in Washington, DC, was a sculptor, printmaker, painter and teacher. Considered a Social Realist, her works depict race, gender and class issues. She felt the message conveyed in her work was as vital as the aesthetics.

Despite challenges facing her as a black woman pursuing a career as a working artist, she achieved great acclaim and received numerous awards and recognitions including First Prize at the American Negro Exposition in Chicago (1940); induction into the Salon de la Plastica, Mexicana (1956); Candace Award from the National Coalition of 100 Black Women (1991); the Distinguished Alumni Award from the University of Iowa (1996); a 50-year traveling retrospective of her work sponsored by the Neuberger



Museum of Art at Purchase College (1998); a NAACP Image Award (2009); and the International Sculpture Center's Lifetime Achievement Award in contemporary sculpture (2002) among many others.

In 1946, Catlett received a Rosenwald Fund Fellowship to travel to Mexico and study. She accepted the grant in part because at the time American art was trending toward the abstract while she was interested in social themes.

In 1947, she entered the Taller de Grafica Popular, a workshop dedicated to prints promoting progressive social causes, where she worked for 20 years and became head of the sculpture department for the Escuela Nacional de Artes Plásticas. In the 1950s, her main means of artistic expression shifted from print to sculpture though she never gave up the former.

In 1958, Catlett became the first female professor of sculpture and head of the sculpture department at the Escuela Nacional de Artes Plásticas in Mexico City.

Elizabeth Catlett was the subject of an episode of the BBC Radio 4 series *An Alternative History of Art* in 2018.

Jacob Lawrence (1917-2000)

Jacob Lawrence, born in Atlantic City, New Jersey, is among the most celebrated African American painters of the 20th century. Lawrence, an impassioned storyteller known for his narratives of African American history and historical figures, chronicles the African American experience.

A major retrospective exhibition of Lawrence's work, planned before his death, opened at the Phillips Collection in Washington, DC in May 2001 and travelled to the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York; the Detroit Institute of Fine Arts in Michigan; the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

In 1937 Lawrence studied at Harlem Art Workshop in New York in 1937 which provided crucial training for the majority of Black artists in the United States. Lawrence was one of the first artists trained in and by the African-American community in Harlem.

At the age of 23 he gained national recognition with his 60-panel *The Migration Series*, which depicted the Great Migration of African Americans from the rural South to the urban North. The series was purchased jointly by the Phillips Collection in Washington, D.C., and the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

Lawrence's works are in the permanent collections of numerous museums, including the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Whitney Museum, Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Brooklyn Museum, Reynolda House Museum of American Art, and the Museum of Northwest Art.

His 1947 painting *The Builders* hangs in the White House and his last commissioned public work, the mosaic mural *New York in Transit* was installed in the Times Square subway station in New York City.



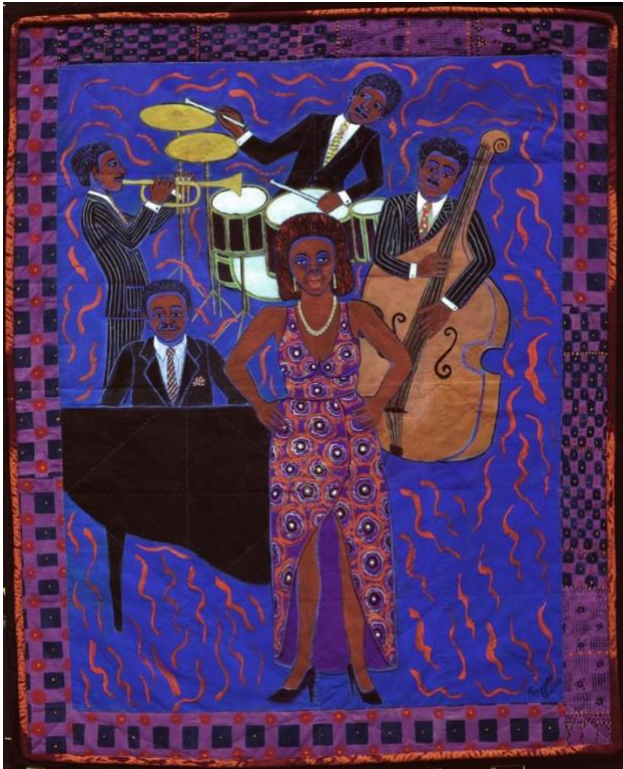
FAITH RINGGOLD (b. 1930)

Faith Ringgold, born 1930 in Harlem, New York is a painter, mixed media sculptor, teacher, lecturer and author of numerous award winning children's books. Professor Emeritus of Art at the University of California in San Diego, Ringgold has received 25 Honorary Doctor of Fine Arts degrees.

She is the recipient of more than 90 awards and honors including the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship; two National Endowment for the Arts Awards; The American Academy of Arts and Letters Award and the Medal of Honor for Fine Arts from the National Arts Club. In 2017 Faith was elected as a member into the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in Boston, MA and in 2021 Ringgold was elected into the membership of the American Academy of Arts and Letters

Her work is in the permanent collections of numerous museums in the United States and abroad including The Art Institute of Chicago, IL; The Baltimore Museum of Art, MD; The Boston Museum of Fine Art, MA; The High Museum, Atlanta, GA; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Museum of Modern Art, Whitney Museum of American Art, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and The Brooklyn Museum in New York; The National Museum of American Art, Washington, DC; The Philadelphia Museum of Art, PA; The Studio Museum in Harlem, NY; Glenstone Museum, Potomac, MD and The Victoria and Albert Museum, London, England, among others.

Known for her oil paintings from the 1960s and her narrative painted story quilts, Faith created a body of work in the 1970s that reflected her political activism and her personal story within the context of the women's movement. Faith was one of a very small group of black women who helped galvanize the Black



and Feminist Art Movements in New York in the 1970s. This body of work, including tankas and soft sculptures, led to her painted quilts.

Tar Beach, her first children's book, has won over 20 awards including the Caldecott Honor and the Coretta Scott King award for the best-illustrated children's book of 1991. It was made into an animated short for HBO.

In 2019 the Serpentine Gallery in London organized a traveling survey of Ringgold's work. In conjunction with the exhibition BBC produced a full-length documentary, *Faith Ringgold: Tell It Like It Is*.

The traveling retrospective organized by the New Museum in NY (February 17–June 5, 2022) is currently on view at the de Young Museum in San Francisco, CA (July 16 - November 27, 2022) and will be on view at the Picasso Museum in Paris, France.

Aminah Robinson (1940-2015)

Aminah Robinson, born in Columbus, Ohio, was a pictorial historian of epic black migrations. She was an instrument of memory, gathering stories, totems, and fragments of the past. Her belief in the African concept of Sankofa, understanding the past so that we can learn from its joys and mistakes, informed her work immensely and was sustained by her travels to Africa, the Middle East, and South America.

Robinson has been the recipient of major awards and grants including a MacArthur Foundation "Genius" Grant (2004); Ohio Arts Council Visual Arts Travel Fellowship (1998); Pollock Krasner Foundation Grant (1997) and a Minority Artists Fellowship from the NEA (1989).

Robinson's work celebrates the struggles and triumphs she knew as a single mother, black female artist, and of the African American ancestral history from Africa, the Middle Passage, slavery in the American south, emancipation, and migration to the present. Using both traditional and unconventional media and processes, she created drawings, watercolors, button-beaded books and dolls, illustrated texts and journals, "hawgmog" sculptures, and rag paintings.

She has contributed illustrations for numerous children's books including *Elijah's Angel* (Harcourt Brace and Company, 1992), *Sophie* (Harcourt Brace and Company, 1994), *A School for Pompey Walker* (Harcourt Brace and Company, 1995), and *To Be A Drum* (Albert Whitman and Company, 1998).



When Robinson died, she left her estate to the Columbus Museum of Art in Ohio. The Museum has established an artist residency in her home and organized a major exhibition and monograph, *Raggin' On: The Art of Aminah Brenda Lynn Robinson's House and Journals* (July 10, 2020-January 3, 2021).

Currently on exhibit at ACA Galleries is a solo exhibition of her work, *Aminah Robinson: Sankofa* on view September 7 through October 29, 2022.

CHARLES WHITE (1918-1979)

Charles White, born in Chicago, IL was an African American Social Realist known for his chronicling of the black experience in paintings, drawings, lithographs, and murals. White's lifelong commitment to chronicling the triumphs and struggles of African Americans cemented him as one of the most well-known artists in African American art history.

At 17, Charles White won a scholarship to study at the Art Institute of Chicago, where he made his first lithograph. He eventually studied at New York's Art Students League. White's work at the League won him a place in the WPA's Federal Art Project in 1940, where he was commissioned as a muralist. His first mural depicted a "History of the American Negro Press."

In 1941, Charles White won a Rosenwald Foundation grant to travel through the American south, rounding out his experience of African-American life and history. An admirer of Diego Rivera and the other Mexican Muralists, after serving in the army during WWII, Charles White and his first wife, Elizabeth Catlett, travelled to Mexico. There he created lithographs at Mexico City's Taller de Grafica and he remained in Mexico for two years, working with the best of Mexico's internationally celebrated muralists and printmakers.

Although already very accomplished by this time, Charles White was offered his first representation by ACA Galleries in September of 1947 and had his first solo exhibition in New York at ACA Galleries that

same year. In 1952, the Whitney Museum of American Art purchased Charles White's ink on cardboard drawing *Preacher* for its permanent collection. White eventually moved to California in 1956 with his second wife, Frances Barrett, where his career continued to flourish. In addition to exhibiting his works, Charles White began teaching at the Otis Art Institute where he remained on the faculty until his death in 1979.

White's best known work is *The Contribution of the Negro to American Democracy*, a mural at Hampton University. In 2018, the centenary year of his birth, the first major retrospective exhibition of his work was organized by the Art Institute of Chicago and the museum of Modern Art.



Charles White has been the recipient of several awards in the United States and internationally, and was given an honorary doctorate from Columbia University. His work is held in numerous public and private collections in America and abroad, including the Whitney Museum of American Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern Art in New York; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, The Newark Museum, NJ; The Library of Congress, DC; the Oakland Museum, the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, Howard University, Deutsche Akademie der Kunst in Berlin, Warsaw's Palace of Culture, Moscow's Pushkin Museum and others.

Louis Delsarte (1944 – 2020)

Louis Delsarte, born and raised in Brooklyn, New York, is known for his bright canvases, sweeping murals, brilliant use of movement, and tireless commitment to art and representation. A painter, draftsman, muralist, printmaker, and poet his vast works earned him recognition as one of the most recognized and beloved artists of the 20th century.

Delsarte's mother, Llewellyn, recognized Louis's potential at a very early age and enrolled him in art classes when he was nine-years-old. From then on, he was never seen without a sketchbook and pencils as he soaked in the bustling inspiration of post-Harlem Renaissance New York. Delsarte's parents were close with the great musicians of Harlem Renaissance fame like Lena Horne, Count Basie, and Duke Ellington which greatly influenced Louis's artistic vision in both composition and theme.

In the 1960's Delsarte became familiar with the artists and psychedelic crowd of the Lower East Side. He earned a certificate in Fine Arts from Brooklyn College and earned his bachelors in Fine Arts from New York's Pratt Institute. During this time, he gained fame as a muralist and Andy Warhol commissioned him to paint the interior of the Electric Circus Club. During the 1970's Louis went out west to California,

spending his time on a commune, painting the scenic coastlines and composing original tarot cards. He settled in Arizona for a time, where he earned his M.F.A. from the University of Arizona, Tucson in 1977.



Louis Delsarte moved to Atlanta, GA with his wife and manager Jea Delsarte, in 1990 where he began teaching at Morris Brown College and Morehouse College, though he taught at multiple institutions around the country.

With murals commissioned from New York to Atlanta, Delsarte's mark was felt immensely in the communities of color he lived in and represented. His subjects ranged from historical figures like Martin Luther King Jr. to everyday people and celebrations of life, as in his sprawling 20-foot glass mural in the Church Ave Subway station in New York, entitled *Transitions*. He brought life and movement to each piece he vigorously created, encouraging others to see the beauty and joy in their neighborhoods and culture.

About ACA Galleries

Since 1932 the American Contemporary Art Gallery (ACA) has been at the vanguard of American Art. As one of the oldest galleries in New York, its pioneering interest in progressive art was established early on in exhibitions, often introducing the work of artists Giorgio Cavallon, Aaron Douglas, Philip Evergood, Rockwell Kent, Alice Neel, Barnett Newman, Irene Rice Pereira, David Smith, Theodoros Stamos and Charles White, among many others. Over the decades the gallery's scope and inventory expanded to include masterworks from the Renaissance to 19th century, Modern and Contemporary American and European painting, sculpture and photography. Today, ACA Galleries continues to break new ground, supporting new artists, representing established artists and distinguished estates; and presenting several exhibitions per year that honor the gallery's deep historical roots by re-imagining them in a contemporary context.

ACA Galleries

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Hours:

Tuesday – Saturday: 11 am – 6 pm

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