

NOW DIG THIS!

ART & BLACK LOS ANGELES 1960-1980

TEACHER RESOURCE GUIDE

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Tue, Wed, Fri, Sat 11am - 7pm

Thu 11am - 9pm

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Closed Monday

10899 Wilshire Blvd. at Westwood, Los Angeles 90024.

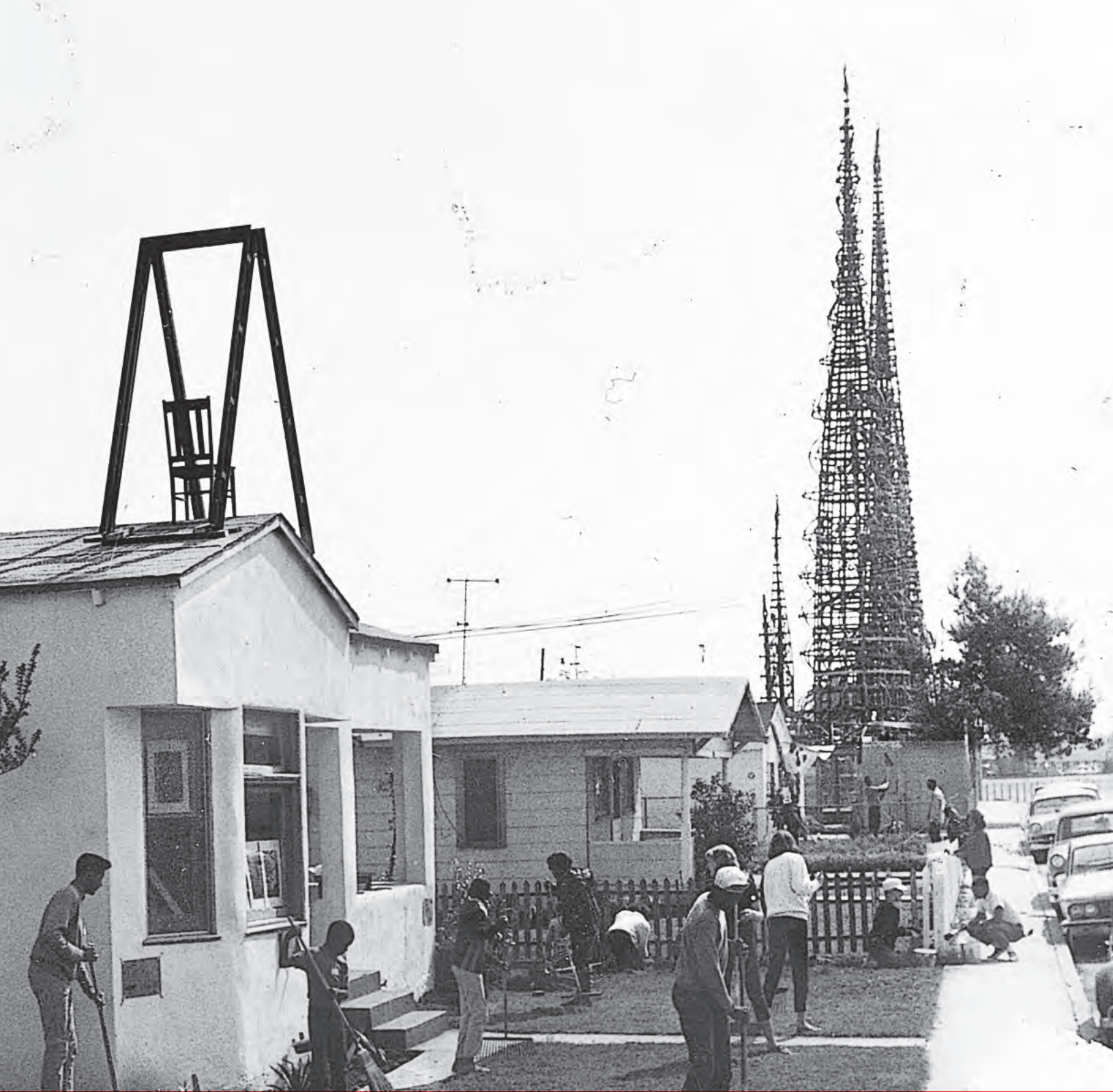
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INTRODUCTION



Operation Teacup (Tower Easter Week Clean-up), organized by the Student Committee for Improvement in Watts, at Watts Towers Arts Center and 107th Street, April 1965. Courtesy Noah Purifoy Foundation Archive.

KEY ARTISTIC MOVEMENTS and TERMS

Assemblage: Experimenting with various materials, artists integrate found objects into their works. These discarded objects are usually broken or used and evoke memories, ideas, and emotions in the viewer.

Appropriation: Closely related to assemblage, appropriation is the use of borrowed elements, such as images or symbols, in new works.

Black Art Movement: Triggered by the assassination of Malcolm X, a Civil Rights leader and leader of the Nation of Islam, the Black Arts Movement is often considered the artistic counterpart to the Black Power movement. One of the most expressive mediums in the movement was poetry.

Minimalism: Minimalism is a major movement primarily in the visual arts characterized by extreme simplicity, reducing images and sculpture to the essentials of geometric abstraction. American visual arts saw the height of minimalism in the 1960s and 1970s.

Post-Minimalism: Artists that reflected on or rebelled against Minimalism's strict purity of line, shape or color. Some Post-Minimal artists emphasize texture, shape, and context of the art. It is often a very personal expression. Performance is a major part of Post-Minimalism.

Performance: Performance pieces are often enacted by the artists or actors and can include dance, spoken word, and/or other improvisations. These pieces speak to the direct experience of a work of art and elicit an active rather than passive response from the viewer. Artists such as Senga Negudi incorporate the use of performance into their art.

Social Realism: Artists in the United States began using realistic depictions of social and racial injustice and economic hardship during the Great Depression to provoke an emotional response from viewers and to cause social change. Several artists in *Now Dig This!* work in social realism methods.

KEY FIGURES

Angela Davis: An activist, scholar, and author, Angela Davis was imprisoned for aggravated kidnapping and the murder of Judge Harold Haley because the gun used was originally purchased by her. Her declaration of her innocence spurred a committee called the Black People in Defense of Angela Davis. She was eventually found not guilty of her charges and has since been an advocate of prison reform.

Maulana Karenga: In response to the 1965 Watts Rebellion, Karenga established the US Organization. As a Black Nationalist project, the group organized around art and education. Karenga also created Kwanzaa as an African American and Pan African holiday.

William Pajaud: In 1957, artist William Pajaud was hired by Golden State Life Insurance Company, the largest black-owned insurance company in the Western United States. As art director, Pajaud oversaw the acquisition of the one of the most important collections of African American art in the world which included works by 250 black artists.



FRONT RUNNERS

Charles White in his Los Angeles studio, 1970.
Courtesy Robert A. Nakamura.

FRONT RUNNERS: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Los Angeles came into its own as a cultural capital with an increasing flurry of gallery activity and art patronage in the late 1950s. By the early 1960s, Los Angeles became the United States' second major center for art and culture after New York City. The careers of white, California-based artists Ed Ruscha, Larry Bell, John Baldessari, Dennis Hopper, James Turrell, and Robert Irwin blossomed and began to thrive in the sixties. The well-known Dwan Gallery presented artists such as Joan Mitchell and Helen Frankenthaler on the West Coast, and the Ferus Gallery successfully focused on Californian artists. Ace Gallery, still in existence today, opened in 1961, featuring emerging and midcareer artists. John Irwin Jr. founded *Artforum*, the landmark art publication, in San Francisco in 1962, and then the magazine moved to Los Angeles in 1965 for two years before moving on to New York.

During this same time, the dedication of black artists such as Betye Saar, Charles White, Melvin Edwards, Jayne Cortez, and William Pajaud helped thrust Los Angeles into the forefront of the national arts scene. These artists constituted a central group whose artwork and activism led to changes in the reception of black art and influenced a subsequent generation of artists. At this time, works by black artists were not shown in galleries or museums mainly due to racial prejudices. Through these artists' passionate efforts to exhibit their artwork- in homes, churches, community centers, and other unconventional art spaces- they established a framework for African American art in California.

In 1956, **Charles White**, already an established artist, moved to Los Angeles at age 38. White's murals depict black subjects with great detail, often focusing on civil rights issues. White, a professor at the Otis Art Institute from 1965 until his death in 1979, not only influenced but also taught several of the artists included in *Now Dig This!*. In the early 1960s, Los Angeles native **Betye Saar**, a designer by trade, was a young mother of three working with printmaking and assemblages to address cultural and feminist stereotyping. Her work underscores the important contributions of women to the black art of the time. **Melvin Edwards** came to Los Angeles from Texas in 1955 to earn his college degree. Creating sculptures focusing on violence against African Americans from slavery to the Civil Rights Movement, Edwards became one of California's most prominent black artists, with a solo exhibition at New York's Whitney Museum of American Art in 1970. His contemporary (and future wife), poet **Jayne Cortez**, was a key player in the black Los Angeles art scene of the 1960s. Cortez's artistic contributions fused jazz, literature, and politics with visual and performance art, joining a multitude of social and cultural influences in her work. **William Pajaud** was also a vital early figure in the black Los Angeles art world. He was a member of the brief, but important, Eleven Associated gallery in the early 1950s, and Pajaud later became the art director and vice president of Golden State Mutual Life Insurance Company. His support of fellow African American artists greatly impacted the local art world at the time, as he not only commissioned work and encouraged art education, but also spearheaded the company's renowned collection of black art.

WORKS



Melvin Edwards, *The Lifted X*, 1965.

Steel, 65 x 45 x 22 in. (165.1 x 114.3 x 55.9 cm). Courtesy of the artist and Alexander Gray Associates, New York.

The title of this sculpture pays homage to Malcolm X, who was assassinated while it was being created. *The Lifted X* was first shown at the Santa Barbara Museum of Art, where Edwards had his first solo exhibition in 1965.



William Pajaud, *Holy Family*, c. 1965.

Watercolor, pen, and ink on paper, 15 x 20 in. (38.1 x 50.8 cm). Welton Jones, WAJ Collectibles.

Holy Family is a religious scene originally painted for a Christmas card, chosen by the artist for the beauty of its message. Pajaud delicately outlined the figure of Saint Joseph shielding the Virgin Mary and the infant Jesus from the harsh desert winds. Deliberate brushstrokes and a heavier application of paint for the palm trees and mountains in the background communicate the urgency of the situation, while the limited palette conveys the simplicity of the story.



Betye Saar, *Anticipation*, 1961.

Serigraph, Edition 12/15, 26 x 22 in. (66 x 55.9 cm). Collection of Alvin and Jeffalyn Johnson.

Anticipation is a crucial work for Saar, as she began to experiment with layering and textures, elements that would characterize her later work with assemblage. The print portrays a pregnant woman, perhaps Saar herself, meditating. This reflective state seems to predict the artist's move away from representational work and into more mystical and symbolic imagery.



Betye Saar, *The House of Tarot*, 1966.

Color etching, Edition 1/30, 19 1/2 x 27 1/2 in. (49.5 x 69.9 cm). Collection of the artist; Courtesy of Michael Rosenfeld Gallery, LLC, New York.

Betye Saar began her career as a jewelry maker and a print artist. This work is one of her earliest works and shows her interest in mysticism. Tarot reading uses a pack of cards to read the past, present and future. Saar uses a technique of etching where acid is applied to a metal plate to gaps for the ink to sit in. When the paper is pressed to the plate and run through a pressured printing press it touches the ink and creates the print.

Charles White, *Birmingham Totem*, 1964.

Ink and charcoal on paper, 717/16 x 401/16 in. (181.5 x 101.8 cm). High Museum of Art, Atlanta, Georgia; purchased with funds from Edith G. and Philip A. Rhodes and the National Endowment for the Arts.

White created *Birmingham Totem* in response to the bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama, on September 15, 1963. The bombing, which killed four African American children, was retaliation by the Cahaba Boys, a Ku Klux Klan splinter group, against efforts to register African American voters; the Civil Rights Movement, which used the church as a meeting place; and the discussion of integration in Alabama. *Birmingham Totem* shows a young African American boy, shrouded in a large blanket, sorting through the debris of the bombing. White's three years in the Works Progress Administration (WPA) arts program introduced him to the Artists Union, a group whose efforts to improve conditions for artists taught him the power of representation to advocate for justice and equal rights.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Why do you think Charles White chose the word “totem” for the title of *Birmingham Totem*? What might the title mean? How does it affect the meaning of the image for you?

What effect might the realism used in Charles White’s works have on a person in the 1960’s? How might this piece be used to advocate for justice and equal rights? How might it be viewed differently in Los Angeles versus in Birmingham, Alabama where the bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church took place?

Why do you think Melvin Edwards used steel as his material? What other objects are made out of steel that Edwards might be referring to? Do his pieces look like anything in particular? What do the pieces look like to you?

Betye Saar’s piece, *House of Tarot*, contains imagery related to mysticism and magic, both of which have a history in the United States. What historical stereotypes of African Americans does it play into? Can you think of particular events in American history that this might relate to? What do you think she is saying about identity in this piece?

More Challenging

In the work titled *Birmingham Totem*, Charles White uses realism to depict a figure amongst debris. What effect does the realism have on a viewer? Social realism, a movement that uses realistic depictions to expose societal issues, struggles, and inequalities, was an important movement in America during the Great Depression. Why might Charles White work in the same manner during the 1960s and 1970s?

What could the artist Melvin Edwards’s pieces depict? Are they of a specific subject or are they more suggestive of an emotion? What different kinds of readings can you see in the piece? How do the formal qualities (shapes, materials, composition) contribute to the overall aesthetic impact of the piece?

Think about the assassination of Malcolm X and what it meant to different communities. What kind of response does Edwards express in *The Lifted X*?

If Edwards were to create sculptures that were figurative (realistically representing real objects or people) rather than nonfigurative (abstract, not clearly representing a real object or person), would his commentary on civil rights and American history of bondage and chains have a stronger or weaker impact upon his audience? Why do you think so?



ASSEMBLING

Noah Purifoy installing *66 Signs of Neon* exhibition at University of Southern California, Los Angeles, c. 1966. Photograph courtesy of Harry Drinkwater.

ASSEMBLING: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Assemblage refers to the art of creating three-dimensional compositions from found objects. Similar to collage, which is two-dimensional, assemblage typically combines unexpected, non-traditional materials to create a sculpture that retains references to its original components, but also takes on new meanings as a whole. This art form gained particular notoriety due to the Museum of Modern Art's 1961 exhibition *The Art of Assemblage*. In 1968, the art gallery at University of California, Irvine (UCI) mounted an exhibition titled *Assemblage in California* that featured white artists including Wallace Berman, Edward Kienholz and George Herms. Assemblage is the style most closely identified with West Coast art of the late 1950s and early 1960s, and despite the lack of black artists represented in galleries at this time, many of the artists featured in *Now Dig This!* experimented with the technique alongside their white contemporaries.

As many black Southern California-based artists were working in assemblage—including **Betye Saar, Mel Edwards, David Hammons, Noah Purifoy, John Outterbridge**—an informal “Afro-American Assemblage Movement” launched in the mid-1960s. **Daniel LaRue Johnson**, whose art focused on violence, racism, and activism, was closely associated with Californian assemblage movement. In 1965, the violent, large-scale Watts Rebellion caused enormous damage to Los Angeles and created an abundance of debris that artists took as materials for their work. Artists such as Purifoy (who claimed the event made him an artist), Outterbridge, and John Riddle all employed assemblage in order to translate the intensity of this event. In 1966, Purifoy organized the exhibition *Junk Art: 66 Signs of Neon*, praising the use of junk and abandoned objects to create beautiful art. Additionally, Saar also used the technique to highlight spiritual, political, and social influences, particularly African American stereotyping in popular culture.

WORKS

John Outterbridge, *Case in Point*, from the Rag Man Series, c. 1970.

Mixed media, 12 x 12 x 24 in. (30.5 x 30.5 x 61 cm). Courtesy of Andrew Zermeno.

Case in Point is a sculpture assembled from leather and other materials that closely resembles a bag of grenades. Outterbridge placed the phrase "Packages travel like people" on the luggage tags, communicating intense feelings about his experience with racism on a bus ride in Richmond, Virginia, in 1955. He had recently been discharged from the army and was ushered to the back of the bus despite being in full uniform. With *Case in Point*, Outterbridge confronts the all-too-common reality of racism that African Americans experienced at home after serving their country abroad in the Korean War.



John Outterbridge, *No Time for Jivin'*, from the Containment Series, 1969.

Mixed media, 56 x 60 in. (142.2 x 152.4 cm). Mills College Art Museum Collection; purchased with funds from the Susan L. Mills Fund.

Outterbridge's Containment Series grew out of an interest in containment and persecution, as well as a desire to break through the societal and institutional structures that reinforce it. His physical taking apart of the canvas was a projection of his desire to break down the limitations and boundaries placed on African Americans. Outterbridge was an assemblage artist, arts administrator, and important member of the black community in Watts and Compton. He also served as director of the Watts Towers Arts Center from 1975 to 1990.





Noah Purifoy, *Untitled (Assemblage)*, 1967.

Mixed media, 66 x 39 x 8 in. (167.6 x 99.1 x 20.3 cm). Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Museum; purchase by the William A. Clark Fund and Gift of Dr. Samella Lewis.

In this work, an array of shoes, a framed diploma, wire, rags, brushes, fabrics, and other found objects have been assembled into a complex composition. The artist's act of assembling these objects into a new form exposes their uselessness as well as their inability to elevate the social status of African Americans. For Purifoy, this reassessment of value is crucial to the meaning of his work as an artist and a community activist.



Noah Purifoy, *Watts Uprising Remains*, c. 1965-66.

Found-object assemblage, 24 x 24 x 6 in. (61 x 61 x 15.2 cm). Collection of Charles Britton.

Purifoy sourced the found objects used in this work from the charred remains of 103rd Street—dubbed “Charcoal Alley”—after the Watts Rebellion. The quality of the artwork's surface suggests that it is a shadow of its past, a remnant. The work reflects the artist's interest in reinterpretation of found objects, and more accessibility to the practice of art. *Watts Uprising Remains* and *Pressure* were shown in the exhibition *66 Signs of Neon*, which traveled nationally through 1969. Purifoy—an extremely influential teacher, activist, and mentor in the African American community—became the first director of the Watts Towers Arts Center in 1964.



John T. Riddle, Jr., *Ghetto Merchant*, 1966.

Mixed media, 41 in. (104.1 cm) tall. Courtesy of Claude and Ann Booker, Los Angeles.

John Riddle created *Ghetto Merchant* from the remnants of a cash register he found in a burned-out storefront during the Watts Rebellion. He turned to assemblage for its ability to communicate the physicality of black Los Angeles in the wake of the Watts uprising.



John T. Riddle, Jr., *Gradual Troop Withdrawal*, 1970.

Scrap-metal sculpture, 48 in. (121.9 cm) tall. Collection of J. Stan Sanders, Los Angeles.

In *Gradual Troop Withdrawal*, Riddle depicts a soldier sprawling backward, supported by a circular steel frame that extends from his right leg. The soldier's left foot is fully rendered, but his body gradually disintegrates as the eye travels up to the nonexistent head. Here Riddle expressed his staunch opposition to the Vietnam War and the United States' promise of gradual withdrawal from the conflict.



Betye Saar, *Black Girl's Window*, 1969.

Assemblage in window, 35³/₄ x 18 x 11¹/₂ in. (90.8 x 45.7 x 3.8 cm). Collection of the artist; Courtesy of Michael Rosenfeld Gallery, LLC, New York.

In *Black Girl's Window*, the African American female silhouette is presented at the bottom of the window, and small images representing destiny, phrenology, and love cascade across the top. The lion, representative of Saar's astrological sign, is inserted along with iconography of family, youth, and home. A photograph of Saar's maternal grandmother is in the bottom middle window. With *Black Girl's Window*, Saar delves into her personal biography and spirituality, engaging the personal, the political, and the mystical.



Betye Saar, *Let Me Entertain You*, 1972.

Assemblage window, 14 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 24 x 11 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (37.5 x 61 x 3.2 cm). The National Afro-American Museum and Cultural Center, Wilberforce, Ohio.

In this mixed-media three-part assemblage, Saar addresses the role of African Americans in entertainment. In the first panel, a stereotypical black minstrel is depicted playing a banjo. Minstrel shows were a form of entertainment that ridiculed and stereotyped African Americans, often portraying them as silly, lazy, and ignorant. The second panel portrays the minstrel again, but this time the image overlays a violent lynching scene. The final panel depicts an African American activist holding a rifle, with the black nationalist colors of red, black, and green behind him. With *Let Me Entertain You*, Saar asks the audience to reconsider the alternative roles that African Americans adopted—like the minstrel—as less overt but equally resistant methods of survival.



Betye Saar, *Spirit Catcher*, 1977.

Mixed media, 45 x 18 x 18 in. (114.3 x 45.7 x 45.7 cm). Collection of Kyle McBain Lesser, Los Angeles.

Spirit Catcher is a mixed-media assemblage—created from bamboo, bones, feathers, shells, and wicker—that was inspired in part by Simon Rodia's Watts Towers. The artist's conceptual inspiration for this work also comes from her first visit to Africa, as well as Tibetan spirit traps, which were blessed by shamans and placed on roofs to ward off evil spirits.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The 1960s and 1970s saw not only the Civil Rights Movement, but also the return of soldiers from the Korean and Vietnam Wars. How might these two events affect each other? What would it have been like to return from war only to face racial prejudice at home, as John Outterbridge did?

What kind of emotional connections might an artist have to the debris left behind after the Watts Rebellion, especially having lived through and experienced it?

What kinds of images are displayed in Betye Saar's *Black Girl's Window*? What different associations does each image have? What kinds of images would you use to represent your own heritage and identity? Does the girl seem to be looking in or out of the window? What might the work imply in each case?

According to artist John Riddle, assemblage is used as a metaphor to "advance social consciousness and promote black development." How does scrap metal affect what *Gradual Troop Withdrawal* is trying to say? What does Riddle say about United States war policy and war in general through this work?

More Challenging

How does changing the context of seemingly "junk" pieces create new meaning? Noah Purifoy's *Untitled (Assemblage)* work uses objects from everyday life that are used to elevate social status and create our own identities. How does the meaning of each object change when it is put into the group? What does Purifoy say about our identities?

Do you see the role of the artist as a "social agent" through the use of assemblage? How are themes of social inequity implied through the act of using of found objects?

How does or doesn't the use of found materials such as wood and metal stereotype African American identity and/or speak to an African American historical narrative?

How do the figures in Betye Saar's *Black Girls Window* relate to each other? What sort of spiritual iconography is present? If the work were translated into a painting instead of a three-dimensional assemblage, would the images retain the same meaning or impact?

Noah Purifoy's piece titled *Watts Uprising Remains*, reflects an aesthetic that is socially and politically charged. Would you consider his work as an assemblage of found material or a recontextualized object? How do you define each and how would each definition affect the reading of the work?

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Gallery 32

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ARTIST/GALLERISTS

ARTISTS/GALLERISTS: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

During the 1960s, black artists were, like the greater African American community, largely marginalized and treated unequally in America. Many artists during this time confronted political and social issues in their work, ranging from racial prejudices to the Vietnam War. For black artists, however, these political themes often compromised their ability to show in mainstream art galleries, and their work was assumed to have much more harsh sociopolitical readings than that of white artists at the time. With larger institutions failing to collect or exhibit African American art during the 1960s and 1970s, the establishment of alternative gallery spaces by key figures allowed black art to flourish in Los Angeles.

Among the most influential figures in the local arts community at this time was **Samella Lewis**. Lewis opened several important galleries and a museum, which were both run by African Americans and focused on the promotion of black art. An artist herself, Lewis earned a Ph.D. in art history and taught for many years before relocating to Los Angeles in 1964. Lewis championed the work of black artists, and highlights from her illustrious career include publishing *Black Artists on Art* in 1969, as well as the book's second volume in 1971; establishing the magazine *Black Art Quarterly* in 1976 (which later became *International Review of African American Art*, still in print today); founding Los Angeles' Museum of African American Art in the Baldwin Hills Crenshaw Plaza in 1976; teaching at Scripps College; and, in 1978, publishing a seminal book of her lectures, *Art: African American*.

Another of the artists who opened her own exhibition spaces, **Suzanne Jackson**, founded Gallery 32 in 1968. Gallery 32, despite only being open for a few years, greatly contributed to the Los Angeles black art scene by exhibiting works by emerging artists while also acting as a meeting place for discussions about art, political activism, and society. Brockman Gallery, founded in 1967 by artists and brothers **Dale Brockman Davis** and **Alonzo Davis**, was a similar hub for both arts and politics. Brockman Gallery was open for over two decades, until closing in 1989. It played a crucial role in exhibiting and supporting the careers of many young artists, including several artists featured in *Now Dig This!*. This exhibition commemorates not only the friendships that these gallerists shared, but also emphasizes their contributions as artists, an aspect of their histories that has received less attention than that of their gallery work.

WORKS



Alonzo Davis, *Pan African Direction III*, 1973.

Mixed media on canvas, 55 x 49 in. (139.7 x 124.5 cm). Collection of the artist.

In *Pan African Direction III*, the form of the African continent stands out in silver against a green and red background. By using Africa as the central image, Davis acknowledged the international cultural influences that shaped his own identity as well as that of the larger community of African Americans in Southern California. With his brother Dale Brockman Davis, Alonzo Davis founded Brockman Gallery in 1967. Like Suzanne Jackson's Gallery 32, Brockman Gallery was an artistic hub exhibiting the work of black artists such as Charles White, John Outterbridge, David Hammons, and Romare Bearden.



Dale Brockman Davis, *Viet Nam War Games*, 1969.

Clay and metal, 48 x 48 in. (121.9 x 121.9 cm). Collection of the artist.

Viet Nam War Games presents a cluster of columnar ceramic, clay, and metal objects of various heights and colors. The objects resemble munitions or rockets, and one of them has a blood red smear across the front of it. Created in 1969, at the height of the Vietnam War, this work reflects the frustration and disillusionment with the war that the artist shared with an increasing number of Americans. With the death toll rising, 1969 was a watershed year for the war. Although President Lyndon Johnson initially requested a troop increase, public sentiment had turned against the war, and his successor, Richard Nixon, would begin a withdrawal of U.S. forces.



Samella Lewis, *Family*, 1967.

Linocut on rice paper, 15 3/8 x 15 5/8 in. (39.1 x 39.7 cm). Oakland Museum, The Oakland Museum Founders Fund.

Samella Lewis is a prominent figure within the Southern California art community. The first black woman to earn a joint Ph.D. in art history and studio art (1951), she has made monumental scholarly contributions to the field, founding galleries, a museum, and the journal *Black Art*, as well as writing books on the subject of African American artists. She also taught for many years at Scripps College. Lewis's art has been documented much less than her work as an art historian and curator. *Now Dig This!* features several of her works. *Family*, an abstract composition, shows three shapely vertical forms that resemble plant leaves sprouting from the earth. By using only two colors, black and white, Lewis emphasizes the graceful forms and bold outlines of the shapes.



Samella Lewis, *Field*, 1968.

Linocut, Edition 18/25, 35 x 28 3/8 in. (88.9 x 72.1 cm) approx. Collection of the artist.

This linocut print was made through a printing process in which a piece of linoleum was carved and pressed to the paper, acting as a stamp to create the image. It shows a man standing in a field, his arms raised strongly in the air, with one hand clenched in a fist. The raised fist has been used as a symbol of solidarity by many activist groups, including the Black Power movement and the Black Panthers in the 1960s. By depicting this field worker under the massive, overpowering sun, Lewis refers to the plight of slaves and migrant workers.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Why do you think Alonzo Davis creates work with ephemeral (fragile and short-lived) materials? If paper is inherently fragile, why create a collage like *Pan African Direction III* using a material that is not meant to last?

How does the title of *Pan African Direction III* affect your reading of the meaning? What do you think Alonzo Davis is trying to express about African American identity?

In the painting by Suzanne Jackson titled *Apparitional Visitations*, what religious iconography (pictures and symbols) do you see? What traditional elements of African art are incorporated into the image? Do you think there is more than one influence in art history? Why or why not?

How do you think being artists themselves affected the gallerists of this time (like Suzanne Jackson, Dale Brockman Davis, and Alonzo Davis)? What personal experiences might have caused them to open their own galleries? Imagine you were an artist in the same time, how might you have responded to similar racism?

More Challenging

Dale Brockman Davis creates work that speaks to an African American past. What aesthetic qualities (like color, line, form, and composition) of his sculpture and assemblage pieces might be a response to this past? How can we use an artist's work to read into his or her biography? What are the possible problems with looking at art in this way?

How do you perceive ceramic ware (objects made of kiln-fired clay) today, such as the work *Viet Nam War Games*? What objects are usually made of ceramic, and how do the qualities of this medium affect your reading of the artwork? How does using this material affect Davis's commentary on the Vietnam War, especially in light of the word "games" in the title?

In what ways does Suzanne Jackson's work focus on the human body? How does this specific subject matter inform the viewer of the artist's opinions on social issues? How is the body a place of social injustice?

Think about your knowledge of Los Angeles and the demographics (race, class, ethnicity, age, education level) of different areas. What kinds of events or laws might have caused LA to look like it does today?



POST-MINIMALISM & PERFORMANCE

Senga Nengudi setting up for a performance of *RSVP X* in her Los Angeles studio, 1976. Courtesy Just Above Midtown Gallery Archive.

POST MINIMALISM and PERFORMANCE: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

During the late 1960s and 1970s, several artists turned to minimal, conceptual practices based in simple forms and complicated intellectual ideas. Several of these were performance and multimedia based. By experimenting with different artistic materials and performance work like dance and poetry, artists were able to expand ideas about a “black aesthetic,” showing that African Americans were not limited in the kind of work they made. The artwork featured in this section is eclectic and diverse, representative of the many styles, materials, and forms produced by artists of the sixties and seventies. **Fred Eversley**, a Brooklyn-born engineer turned artist, was at the forefront of the Californian minimalism movement. Eversley’s sculpture, made from plastic resin, reflected the vibrant Venice Beach environment in which he was living in the 1960s. His colorful, reflective, and polished objects depended heavily on the synthetic, modern materials he used and earned the name “finish fetish.” **David Hammons** arrived in California in the 1960s, studied with Charles White at the Otis Art Institute, and had his first solo exhibition at Brockman Gallery in 1971. As Hammons’s practice evolved, he began to explore issues of identity, body, and space through both performance and multimedia, including his critically acclaimed “body prints,” a series of works created by coating his body in oil or margarine, pressing his body on a piece of paper, and then covering the resulting mark with a pigmented powder.

In the early 1970s, Los Angeles based artists **Senga Nengudi** and **Maren Hassinger** (both trained as dancers) began experimenting with performance art and often collaborated on projects. During the time, Hassinger and Nengudi’s artistic relationship challenged the roles of both artists and art museums, particularly because their performances were fleeting and could not be bought and sold like sculptures or paintings, or hung on the wall in exhibitions. Because their artworks were not collected and bought by art museums or galleries, few of their artworks exist today. For *Now Dig This!*, Nengudi and Hassinger present new installations incorporating performance, which reflects women’s relationship to Los Angeles in the 1970s. Alongside the Civil Rights Movement, the Feminist Movement in the 1970s came about as women similarly saw themselves portrayed as “other” in a male-centered society. Women questioned their expected roles, usually that of housewife and mother.

Ulysses Jenkins, whose work often combined video and performance, collaborated with Nengudi and Hassinger for a 1987 performance. Before the project, Jenkins worked in Southern California with Alonzo Davis and Judith Baca, as well as fought for alternative spaces in which to show his work, eventually founding Othervisions Studio. This section not only highlights works by all of the artists that have been put out of public view for decades, but also celebrates the public contributions of artists who were largely ignored by critics, curators and institutions in the 1960s and 70s.

WORKS

David Hammons, *Bag Lady in Flight*, 1970s (reconstructed 1990).



Shopping bags, grease, and hair, 42 1/2 x 116 1/2 x 3 1/2 in. (108 x 295.9 x 8.9 cm). Collection of Eileen Harris Norton, Santa Monica, California.

Bag Lady in Flight, like the majority of Hammons's work, addresses stereotypes about African American culture. Made from shopping bags, grease, and African American hair, this sculpture demonstrates the artist's use of "dirty" objects, which represents not only his distaste for the mainstream art world but also his identity as a black man facing racial typecasting and discrimination. By creating a complex, beautiful form out of everyday discarded items, Hammons gave mundane objects powerful visual and conceptual meanings.

David Hammons, *America the Beautiful*, 1968.



Lithograph and body print, 39 x 29 1/2 in. (99.1 x 74.9 cm). Oakland Museum, The Oakland Museum Founders Fund.

This striking work is from a series of "body prints" that David Hammons made early in his career, soon after his arrival in Los Angeles in 1963. To create these prints, he made impressions of his own face, arms, and torso by covering his body with oil or margarine, pressing it against a sheet of paper, and then sprinkling pigment on the surface. For *America the Beautiful*, the artist used lithography, a method of printing off of a flat metal or stone surface onto paper, to add the American flag. Hammons created this work in 1968, toward the end of the Civil Rights Movement and the beginning of the Black Power movement. The combination of a patriotic symbol like the flag with the body of a black man (the artist) underscores the heightened racial tensions in the United States during this period.



Fred Eversley, *Untitled*, 1973.

Cast polyester resin, 20 x 20 x 7 in. (50.8 x 50.8 x 17.8 cm). Collection of the artist.

Fred Eversley, *Untitled*, 1973.

Cast polyester resin, 20 x 20 x 4 in. (50.8 x 50.8 x 10.2 cm). Collection of Melvin and Beverly Rosenthal.

Fred Eversley's polyester resin sculptures reflect the sleek, refined look of Los Angeles's "finish fetish" movement, which began in the 1960s. His work focuses on the concept of energy, connecting his training as an aerospace engineer with his creative explorations of space, color, and light. His graceful objects often make one think of flight, as their subtle, translucent curves (shapes known in mathematics as parabolas) create luminous reflections on the walls and floors of the exhibition space. Each work affects the viewer's visual experience, as shifts in light or point of view change the appearance of the object.



Senga Nengudi, *Meditations on RSVP*, 2011.

Mixed-media installation. Courtesy of the artist. Commission for the Hammer Museum Artist Residency Program.

Senga Nengudi, a multidisciplinary artist, is well known for her sculptures, performances, and installations that often involve both dance and the female body. *Meditations on RSVP* is from a series of works that Nengudi made using nylon mesh and sand. Known as the "pantyhose pieces," these works sometimes look like a body, upside down, legs splayed. Created as an homage to the flexibility and beauty of the female body, particularly that of a dancer, *Meditations* consists of a modest, constrictive material (women's sheer tights or pantyhose) stretched to its physical limits, pinned tightly against the wall. While visually abstract, the material's intimate connection to the body prompts readings of both feminism and self-reflection.



Senga Nengudi pictured with piece from her *RSVP* series, 1976.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

In the work titled *Bag Lady in Flight*, David Hammons incorporates everyday materials, a practice that became an ongoing source of inspiration for the artist. What connection might you make between the title of the piece and the use of mundane materials such as shopping bags, grease and hair?

Why do you think artists like David Hammons and Betye Saar incorporate hair into their work?

Why do you think Fred Eversley leaves his works untitled? By using a title, would the meaning of the object change? What would you title his sculptures?

How does the work of these artists challenge the idea of a “black aesthetic”?

Senga Nengudi is not only an African American but also a woman. Do you think experiencing racism and sexism affects her work? Why or why not?

In the 1960s, Hammons incorporated body prints into his work. In the work titled *America the Beautiful*, the artist smears his body with grease and presses it against the canvas board. He then cloaks the figure in the American flag. What commentary might this make on racism in America, especially considering the title?

More Challenging

Nengudi says, “My installations are subtle and intimate, involving issues of time and personal change. They are durable like a bird’s nest with viewers feeling welcome enough to shift from observers to participants.” How do you think a viewer could “participate” in Nengudi’s works?

Senga Nengudi incorporates ephemeral (fragile and short-lived) materials into her work, most notably Nylon stockings. Recalling the physical presence of a woman’s body, what do the knotted, twisted, and shapeless stockings imply in the performance pieces titled *Meditations on RSVP*? How is time incorporated into both her performance pieces and sculptures?

Developed from plastics, Eversley’s sculpture pieces reflect back the image of the spectator, like a mirror. Do you think the purpose of the spectator is to be passive or active when viewing the sculpture pieces? Why?

What are Nengudi’s thoughts on the female in society? Is there a double standard for women addressed through the beautiful but constricting nature of the pantyhose stockings? Why or why not? In today’s society, can we view the work of Nengudi’s pantyhose stockings in the same manner as in the 1970s during the Feminist Movement?



FRIENDS

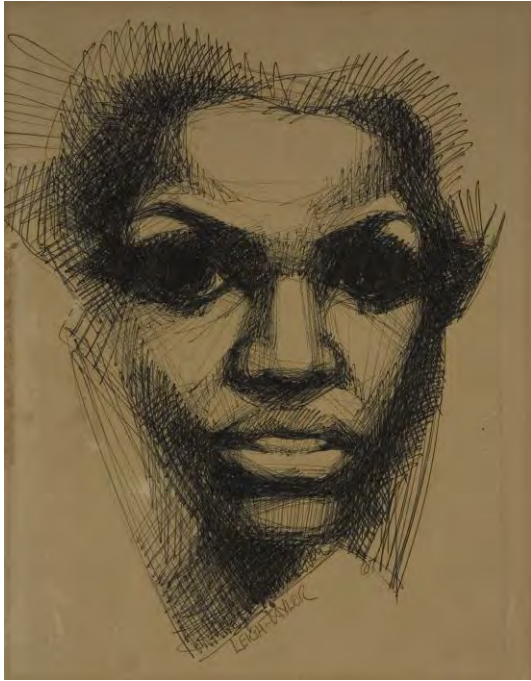
Group exhibition at the home of Alvin and Jeffalyn Johnson, June 1962. Ruth G. Waddy can be seen from the rear and one of Charles White's works is visible in the far background. Courtesy Betye Saar.

FRIENDS: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

While it is crucial to explore the role of the African American community in Southern California during this period, it is important to note that there was a strong network of supporters and friends who stood behind these artists, some of whom were not black. The network that surrounded the artists of *Now Dig This!* was strong, and racial lines were blurred based on artistic collaboration and political activism. Additionally, Los Angeles-based artists were strongly connected to black artists across the state and country, especially because many artists in California at that time had emigrated from other states. Other minority artists were also working alongside black artists featured in *Now Dig This!*, such as **Tyrus Wong**, an Asian American who was a member of Eleven Associated, a gallery of African American artists in the 1950s. **Mark di Suvero**, who was born in China to Italian parents, was another prominent artist working at this time in California. He and Melvin Edwards collaborated on the Peace Tower, an antiwar sculpture erected in 1966. Mark di Suvero also contributed to John Outterbridge's Containment Series by loaning Outterbridge power tools to craft the works. Academic institutions such as the Chouinard Art Institute (now California Institute of the Arts, or CalArts) also facilitated introductions between artists, including **Ron Miyashiro** with **Daniel LaRue Johnson** and **Ed Bereal**. Mexican American artists, such as **Andrew Zermeno**, were also creating activism-inspired works during this period. Zermeno was active in the Chicano Civil Rights Movement, a movement begun in the 1960's that called for the restoration of land grants, farm workers' rights, enhanced education, voting and political rights, as well as emerging awareness of collective history for U.S. citizens of Mexican descent. Outterbridge in particular, who at the time was running the Compton Communicative Arts Academy, got to know Chicano artists like Zermeno and arts spaces such as the Mechicano Art Center.

While racial boundaries were being confronted during this era, female artists were also fighting for the ideals of the women's movement. In 1973, Betye Saar curated *Black Mirror*, the first exhibition devoted to female black artists. This show featured Saar's own work as well as that of Suzanne Jackson, Samella Lewis, Gloria Bohanon, and Marie Johnson (Calloway). **Elizabeth Leigh-Taylor**, a white artist who showed with Samella Lewis's galleries, created portraits of black women in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Black artists in Los Angeles were also tied to African American artists working in Northern California. **Raymond Saunders** was friends with Betye Saar and Fred Eversley. **Marie Johnson (Calloway)** was also based in San Francisco but exhibited concurrently with Saar at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art in 1977. Calloway also organized the ties between black artists working in Northern and Southern California throughout this period, and this relationship is both visually and conceptually clear in their work.

WORKS



Elizabeth Leigh-Taylor, *Sharona* , 1967.

**Ink on paper, 14 1/8 x 12 1/4 in. (35.9 x 31.1 cm).
Collection of Suzanne Jackson.**

This striking portrait was created by Elizabeth Leigh-Taylor, an artist and activist who was a friend of the painter Suzanne Jackson. Leigh-Taylor emerged on the Los Angeles art scene around the same time as her colleagues Melvin Edwards, Ed Ruscha, Ed Boreal, and Judy Chicago. She exhibited at Suzanne Jackson's Gallery 32 in the late 1960s.

Elizabeth Leigh-Taylor, *Angela* , 1970.

**Charcoal on paper, 38 1/4 x 37 in. (97.2 x 94 cm).
Private collection.**

Angela is a charcoal drawing of the Black Panther Party member Angela Davis, who was arrested and imprisoned in 1970 on charges relating to the kidnapping and murder of a judge from a Marin County, California courthouse. Davis's case became a focal point of activism for many around the world who believed she was innocent and wrongfully accused, including Gallery 32 and its proprietor, Suzanne Jackson.



SI LA RAZA NO PARA A NIXON,
NIXON APLASTARÁ A LA RAZA



UNLESS LA RAZA STOPS NIXON,
NIXON WILL STOMP LA RAZA

Andrew Zerneño, *Si La Raza no para a Nixon, Nixon aplastará a La Raza*, 1968.

Offset paper, sheet: 347/8 x 223/4 in. (88.6 x 57.8 cm). Center for the Study of Political Graphics, Los Angeles.

Si La Raza no para a Nixon, Nixon aplastara a La Raza (Unless La Raza Stops Nixon, Nixon Will Stomp La Raza) is a political poster created by Andrew Zerneño, a graphic artist who produced political cartoons for Cesar Chavez's United Farm Workers Union. The bilingual poster depicts President Richard Nixon stomping victoriously on La Raza ("the race" or "the people"), a term used for citizens of Mexican and Chicano background. With this poster, Zerneño is urging farmworkers and those of Mexican and Chicano descent to fight for equal rights. Political activism was one factor that drew people together across racial lines. John Outterbridge met Zerneño when they were both engaged in activist work.

Andrew Zerneño, *Farmworkers Strike to Save Their Union*, 1971.

Offset paper, sheet: 29 x 23 in. (73.7 x 58.4 cm). Center for the Study of Political Graphics, Los Angeles.

In this graphic work Zerneño uses political symbols to inspire workers to fight for better pay and working conditions. The central portrait depicts a couple of Chicano or Mexican decent looking out as protestors holding flags march across the horizon below. The symbol at the top of the poster is an eagle, the logo of the United Farm Workers' Union, a labor union founded by César Chávez that supports farmworkers' rights. The poster, stylistically reminiscent of the political graphics of the Russian Revolution and the Chinese Cultural Revolution, is a call to action.





Joe Overstreet, *The New Jemima*, 1964, 1970.

Acrylic on fabric over plywood construction, 102³/₈ x 60³/₄ x 17¹/₄ in. (260 x 154.3 x 43.8 cm). The Menil Collection, Houston, Texas.

With *The New Jemima*—a large polychrome box—Overstreet explored different aspects of his painting practice as well as pop art. Here the artist has transformed the negative but popular image of a subservient Aunt Jemima into a powerful figure, holding a machine gun with pancakes flying through the air like bullets. The artist lived and worked in the San Francisco area and published *Beatitudes Magazine* during his time in California.

Betye Saar, *Imitation of Life*, 1975.

Mixed-media assemblage, 7 x 4¹/₈ x 3¹/₄ in. (17.8 x 10.5 x 8.3 cm). Collection of halley k harrisburg and Michael Rosenfeld, New York.

In this assemblage Saar focuses on stereotypical representations of African American women. On the inside of the box a mammy figure (a stereotypical African American maternal or nursemaid character) balances on a platform of white teeth, which reference white lies, supported by a slice of watermelon. She holds a spoon in one hand and a grenade in the other, representing the two sides of her identity and showing that she is not helpless and passive. A stopwatch mounted on the front of the figure's apron and slave-auction notices lining the inside of the box reference the relevance of time ticking away and time past. With *Imitation of Life*, Saar reframes negative archetypes of African American women, freeing these characters from oppressive and stereotypical representation. The work shares the title of a 1959 Hollywood film directed by Douglas Sirk, which questioned how we think of racial identity in the United States.





Daniel LaRue Johnson, *Big Red*, 1964.

Mixed media on canvas, 62 x 62 in. (157.5 x 157.5 cm). Collection of Dr. and Mrs. Leon O. Banks, Los Angeles.

Big Red is a geometric mixed-media painting that shares aesthetic similarities with the slickness of works by Los Angeles “finish fetish” and light-and-space artists, such as Fred Eversley. The matte black of the painting juxtaposed against the rectangular red, yellow, and white forms that extend from the center create a subtle difference in the texture of the surface.



Virginia Jaramillo, *Untitled*, 1960.

Mixed media on canvas, 62 x 43 x 6 in. (157.5 x 109.2 x 5.1 cm). Collection of Dr. and Mrs. Leon O. Banks, Los Angeles.

This work is from a body of paintings that Jaramillo created in the early to mid-1960s while living in Watts. The grid-like pattern and abstract composition look like the view from a plane flying above land. The artist was inspired by frequent trips between New York and Los Angeles, family trips to the desert, and the land art movement, a movement in the United States where landscape and art are linked. Jaramillo began constructing dark, gritty monochromatic paintings that echoed the terrain that she experienced on these trips.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Compare and contrast: How are the images of the mammy stereotype in Betye Saar's *Imitation of Life* and Joe Overstreet's *The New Jemima* similar or different? Why might an artist want to over exaggerate stereotypes from his or her past?

How do the figures in Andrew Zermeno's poster address the "everyman?" How do posters provide a way to spreading ideas during the Chicano Civil Rights Movement?

What can we learn about the black artists of Los Angeles through these friendships they had? Why could it be a problem to identify only "black" influences on black artist?

More Challenging

How do the images of Aunt Jemima and the United Farm Workers' Union display images of power and identity? In what ways do Overstreet and Saar differ in their ideas about women's empowerment? How do the mediums of drawing, sculpture, painting and assemblage help express ideas of power and identity?

How do both works by Daniel LaRue Johnson and Virginia Jaramillo differ in their conception of abstract expressionism of the early 1960s? How do both artists manipulate color field painting into assemblage?

What adjectives can be used to describe how the artist Elizabeth Leigh-Taylor depicts her subject matter through the medium of ink and charcoal? How do these adjectives contribute to the overall aesthetic of *Angela*, an outspoken figure in the political struggle for human rights? How does the image speak to progressive change, does this change when you consider that Leigh-Taylor is a white artist?



**ADDITIONAL
RESOURCES**

Left to right: Daniel LaRue Johnson, Charles White, and Betye Saar
at the *Negro and Creative Arts Exhibit* at the Los Angeles home of
actress Diana Lynn, organized by Beate Inaya, August 12, 1962.
Courtesy Betye Saar.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

The Evolution of an Artist

Many of the artists included in the exhibition are still practicing art today. Have students find the websites of artists in the show and compare the works they are doing now to those in the show. How have their practices changed or evolved? What social or political events may have shaped their evolution or affect their work today?

Connecting to Contemporary Artists

Many of the artists included in the show were gallery owners themselves. Have students curate their own show from pieces not only in *Now Dig This!* but also from artists working today. They can choose as few as two artists and discuss how their artworks relate to each other—whether in medium, theme, subject, etc. Ask your students why they chose to exhibit their selected artists together. Discuss the purpose of art in the different pieces and analyze how art is “used” in our contemporary culture.

Using Timelines

Break students into small groups and distribute different timeline sheets to each group. Ask students to make comparisons between events that happened in the United States and events that happened specifically in Los Angeles. How might these events have shaped artists working in those times? To expand, ask students to do their own extended research on their specific assigned year/s. How are newspaper articles and headlines telling of the atmosphere of the times? In what ways might an artist be affected by this atmosphere? Discuss how the issues of time, place, and cultural influence are reflected in selected works of art from the show.

Abstraction and Assemblage

Ask students to research an artist who uses abstraction or assemblage as their main method of working. How do these types of pieces create meaning? Often this type of artwork falls outside a student’s own conceptions of art. Ask students to construct a rationale for the validity of a specific work of art. How might a student draw inspiration from his or her own daily life to create a piece that speaks to their own identity? What types of materials would the student collect and assemble in their own assemblage or collage?

Free Writing

Have students choose a particular piece of work they saw in the show. Ask them to write freely for three to five minutes about their initial response to the piece and what they remember. Have them evaluate how the choice of medium and subject matter affect the meaning of the piece. Encourage students to cite specific formal qualities of the work and discuss how the artist’s distinctive style and its contribution to the meaning of the work for them. Why were certain aspects of the piece memorable to them?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Did seeing the work of these artists change your perception of Los Angeles during the 1960s and 1970s? If so, how?
2. What connections did you see between the pieces by various artists? Did you notice similar themes? Similar materials? If so, what?
3. Can art be a tool for social change? Why or why not?
4. Which pieces were the most interesting for you? Why?
5. After visiting the *Now Dig This!* exhibition, what potential problems do you see with the idea of a “black aesthetic?” or “black art”?
6. What is your opinion on the different types of materials and media used by various artists in the exhibition? Did the types of media incorporated in the artwork reflect “high art” (a term often applied to painting, literature, music, theater) or “low art” (a term often used for popular culture or craft)? Do you see issues with creating these distinctions?
7. How do you feel about the number of artworks and artists within the exhibition? How might the show have changed if fewer artists were represented?
8. Did anything about this exhibition inspire you? If so, what and how?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Online Resources

The Social Explorer. "Interactive Demographic Maps." Oxford University Press.
<http://www.socialexplorer.com/pub/maps/home.aspx>

Los Angeles Almanac. "Headline History Los Angeles County 1963 to 1979." Given Place Media.
<http://www.laalmanac.com/history/hi01i.htm>

Behrens, Zach. "Maps: A Quick Look at the Changing Demographics of L.A., 1940 to the Present" Social Focus. KCET. http://www.kcet.org/updaily/socal_focus/places/maps-a-quick-look-at-the-changing-demographics-of-la-1940-to-the-present.html

Black Is Black Ain't, curated by Hamza Walker:
<http://www.renaissancesociety.org/site/Exhibitions/Essay.Black-Is-Black-Ain-t.595.html>

Books

Collins, Lisa Gail and Margo Natalie Crawford eds., *New Thoughts on the Black Arts Movement*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2006, 43-74.

English, Darby. *How to See a Work of Art in Total Darkness*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2001.

Hunt, Darnell and Ana-Christina Ramon eds., *Black Los Angeles: American Dreams and Racial Realities*. New York, NY: New York University Press, 2010.

Patton, Sharon F. *African-American Art*. New York: Oxford, 1998, 182-232.

Powell, Richard J. *Black Art: A Cultural History*. London: Thames and Hudson, 2002.

Wallis, Brian, Marianne Weems and Philip Yenawine, eds., *Art Matters: How the Culture Wars Changed America*. New York: New York University Press, 1999.

Widener, Daniel. *Black Arts West: Culture and Struggle in Postwar Los Angeles*. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2010.

ARTISTS in the SHOW + WEBSITES

Further information on all of the artists in the show can be found online. Below is listed artists with dedicated websites showcasing their most recent works.

John Altoon

Sister Karen Bocalero/Self Help Graphics

Marie Johnson Calloway

George Clack

Dan Concholar

Houston Conwill

Alonzo Davis: <http://www.alonzodavis.com/>

Dale Brockman Davis: <http://dalebrockmandavis.net/>

Sheila Levrant de Bretteville

Mark di Suvero: <http://www.spacetimecc.com/>

Melvin Edwards: <http://www.meledwards08.com/>

Fred Eversley

Charles Gaines

David Hammons

Maren Hassinger: <http://marenhassinger.com/>

Suzanne Jackson: <http://www.suzannefjackson.com/>

Virginia Jaramillo

Ulysses Jenkins: <http://ulyssesjenkins.com/>

Daniel LaRue Johnson

Elizabeth Leigh-Taylor

Samella Lewis

Ron Miyashiro: <http://ronmiyashiro.com/>

Senga Nengudi: <http://sengasenga.com/>

John Outterbridge

Joe Overstreet

William Pajaud

Noah Purifoy: <http://www.noahpurifoy.com/>

John T. Riddle Jr.

Betye Saar: <http://www.betyesaar.net/>

Raymond Saunders

Ruth G. Waddy

Gordon Wagner

Charles White

Tyrus Wong

Andrew Zermeno/Mechicano Art Center:

<http://www.farmworkermovement.us/gallery/index.php?cat=66>



TIMELINE

David Hammons in his Los Angeles studio, 1970.
Courtesy Robert A. Nakamura.

1960

FEBRUARY 1: Four African American students in Greensboro, North Carolina—Ezell A. Blair Jr. (later known as Jibreel Khazan), David Leinail Richmond, Joseph Alfred McNeil, and Franklin Eugene McCain—hold a lunch-counter sit-in at Woolworth’s.

APRIL: Inspired by the protests against racial discrimination cropping up in Southern states, students at Shaw University in North Carolina, under the guidance of Ella Baker, organize the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). “We Shall Overcome” becomes the informal anthem of the nonviolent civil rights movement of the 1960s when it is taught to students at the early SNCC meetings.

JULY 31: The Nation of Islam, led by Elijah Muhammad, begins to garner national attention and becomes the focus of extensive surveillance by the FBI under the direction of J. Edgar Hoover. Elijah Muhammad calls for a separate black state.

NOVEMBER 8: John F. Kennedy is elected the thirty-fifth president of the United States.

NOVEMBER 13: Benjamin Horowitz opens the Heritage Gallery on La Cienega Boulevard, the first commercial art-rental gallery in the area. The Heritage Gallery eventually becomes one of the first white-owned galleries in Los Angeles to show African American artists.

NOVEMBER 25: CBS radio broadcasts the final episode of *Amos ‘n’ Andy*. Making its radio debut in 1928, the show emerged from a culture of blackface, minstrel, and trickster traditions. During its run there were two unsuccessful campaigns to end the program, one launched in 1931 in Pittsburgh, the other in 1951 by the NAACP to take the related television show off the air. Although the television show ended in 1953 because of poor ratings, the radio program continued for another seven years.

DECEMBER 5: The U.S. Supreme Court, in *Boynton v. Virginia*, rules that racial segregation in public transportation is illegal under the Interstate Commerce Act. The ruling becomes the legal basis for the interracial Freedom Rides of the 1960s.

1960: The United Nations names 1960 the “Year of Africa,” when seventeen nations on that continent gain independence.

1961

JANUARY 4: The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors approves a plan to divide the Los Angeles Museum of History, Science and Art into two separate entities: the Natural History Museum and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA). The new LACMA opens in 1965.

JANUARY 15: The Supremes, an all-female musical group composed of Florence Ballard, Mary Wilson, and Diana Ross, sign with Motown Records in Detroit.

APRIL 17–19: About 1,300 Cuban exiles land on the coast of southern Cuba armed with American weapons and military training and supported by U.S. armed forces. The Bay of Pigs invasion failed in its attempt to overthrow the political regime of Fidel Castro and served to increase tensions between the United States and Cuba.

MAY 4–21: The first Freedom Riders journey to the South. Thirteen CORE (Congress of Racial Equality) activists—seven black and six white—depart Washington, D.C., for New Orleans on two public buses to test the recent *Boynton v. Virginia* ruling. One bus is firebombed in Alabama and passengers on the other bus are brutally attacked by a mob, leading the governor to declare martial law.

SEPTEMBER 28: *Purlie Victorious* opens on Broadway. Written by Ossie Davis and starring the author and his wife, Ruby Dee, the play is a satirical study of segregation. Along with *A Raisin in the Sun* and *Take a Giant Step*, it is one of an increasing number of plays to depict African American life, written by an African American and starring African American actors.

OCTOBER 2–NOVEMBER 12: The Museum of Modern Art in New York opens the exhibition *The Art of Assemblage*. The show brings together early twentieth-century works by European artists such as Marcel Duchamp, Georges Braque, and Pablo Picasso with those by contemporary California artists such as Wallace Berman, Edward Kienholz, and Bruce Conner.

OCTOBER 29: The Ebony Museum of Negro History (the precursor to the DuSable Museum of African American History) opens in Chicago on the first floor of schoolteacher Margaret Burroughs's home.

NOVEMBER 12: Henry Hopkins, director of the Huysman Gallery on La Cienega Boulevard in Los Angeles for less than a year, launches the fully integrated exhibition *War Babies*, showcasing the work of Ed Bereal (African American), Joe Goode (Jewish American), Larry Bell (Catholic American), and Ron Miyashiro (Japanese American). Its controversial poster leads to the gallery's closing. Hopkins is subsequently hired as a curator by LACMA.

NOVEMBER 30: W. E. B. DuBois joins the Communist Party at age ninety-three and assumes permanent residence in Ghana.

END OF 1961: Musician and composer Horace Tapscott, a resident of the Watts neighborhood, founds a jazz collective known variously as the Underground Musicians' Association, the Union of God's Musicians and Artists Ascension, the Community Cultural Arkestra, and the Pan Afrikan Peoples Arkestra. The group offers music lessons and jazz concerts in Watts with the objective of raising black consciousness through music and community ownership.

1962

MARCH 18: The signing of the Évian Accords in France brings an end to the Algerian War. The conflict between France and Algeria began in 1954 as a struggle for independence from the colonial rule of the French government.

APRIL 10: Dodger Stadium opens, hosting the newly relocated baseball team from Brooklyn, New York, as well as a variety of musical concerts. Its construction leads to the forced relocation of a primarily Latino community that fought unsuccessfully for more than ten years, in the “Battle of Chavez Ravine,” to maintain control of their property.

JUNE 15: Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) issues a manifesto titled “The Port Huron Statement.” One of its main tenets encourages participatory democracy, while at the same time offering a scathing critique of the Cold War and racism within the United States. SDS members become important contributors to the New Left, antiwar, and civil rights movements.

JULY 8: The Ferus Gallery in Los Angeles gives Andy Warhol his first solo exhibition.

OCTOBER 1: After being denied admission numerous times based on his race, James Meredith, with a court order in hand and escorted by federal marshals, becomes the first black student to attend Mississippi University (Ole Miss). In the mob violence that accompanies his enrollment, two people die and more than three hundred are injured.

OCTOBER 12: Charles Mingus stages *Epitaph*, a two-hour-long event that mixes a variety of jazz types and solos. This is the only staging of the piece during his lifetime. Though not a contemporary success, it is now regarded as one of the great jazz masterpieces. Mingus allegedly wrote portions of it as a teenager in the 1940s when he was living in Watts.

NOVEMBER 6: Augustus F. Hawkins (D-Calif.) becomes the first African American from California to be elected to the U.S. Congress. He began his political career as a state assemblyman for South Los Angeles in 1935.

FALL: Artist Ruth Waddy forms Art West Associated, a group aiming to foster public discussion, coordinate educational forums, and advocate for the inclusion of African American artists in the L.A. art scene.

1962: Walter Hopps becomes a curator at the Pasadena Art Museum.

1963

MARCH 31: Los Angeles ends its streetcar service after ninety years, contributing to the evolution of the city's car culture. The decreased accessibility to public transportation also leads to a rise in racial tensions, since it is now more difficult for many African Americans to get around from areas of the city where they are forced to live because of restrictive housing covenants.

APRIL 4–MAY 13: The Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and Martin Luther King Jr. launch their first nonviolent campaign, in Birmingham, Alabama. During this period King is arrested and on April 16 pens his famous "Letter from a Birmingham Jail." The initial nonviolent protests contribute to larger mass demonstrations opposing segregation. Local law enforcement in Birmingham uses police dogs and high-pressure water hoses on the demonstrators; media coverage of the assaults leads to increased national attention.

APRIL 25: The California State Legislature passes the Rumford Fair Housing Act, which outlaws discrimination by property owners and landlords against potential buyers and renters based on race, color, religion, sex, marital status, and disability.

AUGUST 28: The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom draws more than two hundred thousand demonstrators. Martin Luther King Jr. gives his famous "I have a dream" speech in front of the Lincoln Memorial.

SEPTEMBER 15: The Ku Klux Klan bombs the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama, killing four young black girls, Denise McNair, Carole Robertson, Addie Mae Collins, and Cynthia Wesley.

SEPTEMBER 19: Walt and Roy Disney merge the Los Angeles Conservatory of Music and Chouinard Art Institute to create CalArts, the first institute in the United States to offer a higher-education degree in visual and performing arts.

NOVEMBER 22: President John F. Kennedy is assassinated by Lee Harvey Oswald in Dallas, Texas. Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson is sworn in as the thirty-sixth president.

1963: Joan Ankrum opens the Ankrum Gallery in Los Angeles. It will eventually show work by numerous African American artists, including Suzanne Jackson, Joe Overstreet, Dan Concholar, and Betye Saar.

1964

JANUARY: David Hockney visits Los Angeles for the first time and shortly thereafter begins producing his first series of swimming pool paintings.

JANUARY 7: *The California Eagle* closes. One of the oldest African American newspapers in the West, it opened its doors in 1879. Charlotta Bass, who was one of the few African American female editors of a major newspaper in the United States, ran the *Eagle* for more than forty years and wrote many influential editorials.

MARCH 8: Malcolm X breaks with Elijah Muhammad's Chicago-based Nation of Islam. He announces he will be organizing a new "black nationalist party" that would move African Americans from strategies of nonviolence to active self-defense against white supremacists.

MAY 3: The Museum of African Art opens in Washington, D.C., in the former home of abolitionist Frederick Douglass.

JUNE 12: Nelson Mandela and seven others are sentenced to life imprisonment for attempting to overthrow the South African government in their fight to end apartheid.

JULY 2: President Lyndon B. Johnson signs the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The law forbids discrimination based on race and sex in employment practices, and outlaws segregation in public facilities, schools, and housing.

AUGUST 7: Congress passes the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution (known officially as the Southeast Asia Resolution). It authorizes President Johnson broader military powers in dealing with North Vietnam. This results in a prolonged military intervention by the United States in Vietnam without an official declaration of war.

AUGUST 24–27: The Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party demands to be seated at the Democratic National Convention, held in Atlantic City, New Jersey. The party members claim that the Mississippi delegates already in place had been unfairly seated because of discriminatory voting practices in certain districts that used literacy tests and the threat of violence to keep African Americans from voting. Although they do not gain the seats, their activism paves the way for women and racial minority delegates at future conventions.

SEPTEMBER: James Woods, a local savings and loan officer and jazz club doorman, invites some local musicians and artists to help him form Studio Watts. Jayne Cortez, a Los Angeles poet, is made director of the workshop, which provides classes in painting, sculpture, dance, acting, and music to local residents while also making the space available to artists in need of studios for their own artistic production.

OCTOBER 14: Martin Luther King Jr. is awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his leadership in the civil rights movement and his dedication to nonviolent tactics. He is the fourteenth American to win the prize and the third black recipient.

1964: Noah Purifoy, artist and social worker, helps found the Watts Towers Arts Center and becomes director of the community organization. Its original mission is to increase access to the arts for local residents and artists, targeting at-risk teens and exposing them to the arts.

1965

FEBRUARY 21: Malcolm X is shot and killed while giving a speech at a meeting for the Organization of Afro-American Unity in New York City.

MARCH 30: The Los Angeles County Museum of Art opens along Wilshire Boulevard's Miracle Mile, becoming the second largest museum in the United States at the time, after the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.

AUGUST 6: President Johnson signs into law the Voting Rights Act of 1965, outlawing the use of literacy tests to determine voter eligibility.

AUGUST 11: In Watts, a white police officer pulls over a young black man on suspicion of drunk driving. The ensuing altercation, witnessed by a growing crowd of onlookers, erupts into violence. Over six days of racial unrest, thirty-four people are killed, more than one thousand are injured, and local businesses sustain more than \$200 million in damages.

AUGUST: The federal Office of Economic Opportunity helps fund the relocation of the Watts Happening Coffee House, which had been destroyed in the Watts uprising. The new location becomes the center of arts and cultural production in Watts for years to come, housing the Pan Afrikan Peoples Arkestra, the Watts Repertory Theater, the Watts Writers Workshop, the New Art Jazz Ensemble, and the Mafundi Institute.

SEPTEMBER 7: In response to the Watts uprising, Ron (Maulana) Karenga establishes the US organization, a black nationalist project. On a local scale, the group organizes around issues of arts and education. Karenga creates Kwanzaa as an African American and pan-African holiday.

1965: Screenwriter and author Budd Schulberg forms the Watts Writers Workshop as an interracial response to the devastation of the Watts uprising. The creative writing workshop seeks to link politics with art in the writings and activism of its students.

1965: Detroit-based obstetrician and gynecologist Dr. Charles Wright organizes with others to form the International Afro-American Museum. The collection they build will grow to become the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History in Detroit, the world's largest institution dedicated to the African American experience.

1965: Charles White begins teaching at Otis Art Institute in Los Angeles (now Otis College of Art and Design). His students include David Hammons, Timothy Washington, and Kerry James Marshall.

1965: Charles Cowles takes over as publisher of *Art-forum* and moves to Los Angeles; the magazine is housed in the same building as the Ferus Gallery. Through the journal, artists on the West Coast are able to gain national exposure.

1966

JANUARY 13: Robert C. Weaver is named Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, becoming the first African American to serve in a Cabinet position.

FEBRUARY 22: The nearly 60-foot-high Artists' Tower of Protest (also called the Peace Tower) opens in Hollywood on Sunset Boulevard at La Cienega to protest U.S. involvement in Vietnam. Designed by sculptor Mark di Suvero and constructed with the assistance of Melvin Edwards, the tower was covered with some four hundred 2-by-2-foot paintings by artists from across the country and around the world.

APRIL 1: President Leopold Senghor of Senegal stages the first World Festival of Negro Arts in Dakar. Activist and author W. E. B. DuBois is in attendance as are more than 130 artists, musicians, and dancers from the United States, including Duke Ellington.

APRIL 10: Otis Redding records his album *In Person at the Whisky a Go-Go* at the famous Los Angeles club on the Sunset Strip.

JUNE 16: Stokely Carmichael, chairman of the SNCC, gives a speech in Mississippi in which he coins the slogan "Black Power."

JUNE 30: The National Organization for Women (NOW) is formed after the Commission on the Status of Women releases its report documenting the continued existence of sex discrimination in the workplace. NOW's initial founders include Pauli Murray (first female African American Episcopal priest) and Shirley Chisholm (first female African American candidate for president of the United States).

AUGUST 12–14: A coalition of civil rights, antipoverty, and black nationalist groups organize to launch the first Watts Summer Festival, timed to coincide with the first anniversary of the Watts uprising. This festival celebrating black arts and culture will become an annual event.

SEPTEMBER 12: The art gallery at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) launches the month-long exhibition *The Negro in American Art*, and two weeks later the UCLA University Extension starts the Negro and the Arts program, which includes lectures, stage performances, and concerts.

OCTOBER 22: Huey Newton and Bobby Seale found the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense in Oakland. Their Ten-Point Program includes a call for adequate housing, jobs, health care, education, and an end to police brutality against blacks.

NOVEMBER 8: Yvonne Brathwaite, who had organized a legal defense team for participants in the Watts uprising in 1965, becomes the first African American woman to be elected to the California Assembly.

1966: Gemini G.E.L. (Graphic Editions Limited) forms as an artists' print workshop in Los Angeles, helping to establish printmaking as an artistic medium on a par with drawing, painting, and sculpture.

1967

JANUARY 3: Ronald Reagan is sworn in as governor of California.

JANUARY 3: Edward W. Brooke (R-Mass.) is sworn in as the first African American elected to the U.S. Senate.

APRIL 26: Brockman Gallery opens in South Central Los Angeles. Started by two artist brothers, Alonzo and Dale Davis, the African American–owned gallery functions as a commercial gallery, later adding a nonprofit component.

APRIL 28: Heavyweight boxing champion Muhammad Ali, who changed his name from Cassius Clay after joining the Nation of Islam, refuses to enter military service on religious grounds. As a result, the World Boxing Association strips him of his boxing title.

MAY: Emory Douglas joins the Black Panther Party. He is made the first and only minister of culture for the party. During his tenure he produces the majority of images appearing in *The Black Panther* newspaper.

JUNE 4: Bill Cosby wins an Emmy Award for Outstanding Continued Performance by an Actor in a Leading Role in a Dramatic Series for his work in the television program *I Spy*.

JUNE 12: The Supreme Court hands down a 9-0 decision in favor of the plaintiffs in *Loving v. Virginia*, a landmark civil rights case outlawing anti-miscegenation laws and legalizing interracial marriage.

JUNE 13: Thurgood Marshall is appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court, becoming the first African American to serve on the high court.

JUNE 16–18: Jimi Hendrix headlines at the Monterey Pop Festival in Monterey, California. Drawing close to ninety thousand people over the course of three days, the concert was the first of its kind and a precursor to Woodstock. The festival came to represent California counterculture and the beginning of the nation's "Summer of Love."

OCTOBER 21: Some one hundred thousand Vietnam War protesters descend on Washington, D.C. More than fifty thousand demonstrators assemble outside the Pentagon.

NOVEMBER 7: Carl Stokes is elected mayor of Cleveland, becoming the first African American mayor of a major city.

1967: Jublo Solo opens the Black Man's Art Gallery in San Francisco, exhibiting both African art and art produced by local black artists. Additionally, it serves as an educational space for school groups to visit.

1967: *Artforum* moves its operations from Los Angeles to New York City.

1967: The San Francisco–based band Sly and the Family Stone is formed. Their groundbreaking blend of rock, funk, R&B, and soul will heavily influence American music and result in numerous chart-topping hits.

1968

FEBRUARY 12: *Soul on Ice*, a collection of prison essays by Black Panther militant Eldridge Cleaver, is published.

FEBRUARY 26: Thirty-nine nations boycott the Olympic Games in Mexico City in protest of the International Olympic Committee's readmission of apartheid-driven South Africa.

FEBRUARY 28: Aretha Franklin wins her first Grammy Award for her rendition of the late Otis Redding song "Respect."

MARCH 10: While campaigning in California for the presidency, Robert F. Kennedy meets with Cesar Chavez, the migrant farmworker and labor organizer who was fasting as a way to illustrate his movement's dedication to nonviolence. During this meeting Chavez agrees to end his fast. The meeting with Senator Kennedy brings national attention to *La Causa* (The Cause), a strike by grape pickers demanding better working conditions.

MARCH 19: In Washington, D.C., Howard University students lead protests and sit-ins against the university's Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) program and demand more Afrocentric curriculum choices.

APRIL 4: Civil rights leader and Nobel Peace Prize winner the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. is assassinated.

APRIL 11: The federal Fair Housing Act (Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968) is passed. The initiative outlaws discrimination in the sale, rental, and financing of dwellings.

SUMMER: Larry Neal publishes the article "The Black Arts Movement," in which he outlines a radical political theory, tied to the Black Power movement, calling for an art that speaks to the needs of black Americans as well as an arts movement that would reorder the Western cultural aesthetic.

JUNE 5: Shortly after midnight, presidential hopeful Senator Robert F. Kennedy is shot at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles and dies nearby at Good Samaritan Hospital.

AUGUST 28: Outside the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, violence breaks out between the police and antiwar protesters. The "Chicago Seven" are placed on trial for conspiracy to incite a riot. Some are acquitted and others are not, but eventually all convictions are overturned. Black Panther leader Bobby Seale, the eighth defendant, whose case had been separated from the others, is given a sentence of four years for contempt of court.

AUGUST: College student Katiti Kironde appears on the front cover of *Glamour* magazine's "10 Best-Dressed College Girls" edition, marking the first time an African American woman is featured on the cover of a national women's monthly magazine.

OCTOBER 15: The National Center of Afro-American Artists is founded by Dr. Elma Lewis in the Roxbury section of Boston. The institution's mission is to preserve and sponsor the growth of artistic heritage of black people on a global level. The space offers classes, performances, and visual arts.

OCTOBER 16: At the Olympics in Mexico City, while accepting their gold and bronze medals for the United States, Tommie Smith and John Carlos give Black Power salutes. The gesture ignites a controversy resulting in their suspension by the U.S. Olympic Committee.

1968 CONT.

NOVEMBER 5: Richard M. Nixon is elected the thirty-seventh president of the United States.

NOVEMBER 5: Shirley Chisholm (D-N.Y.) becomes the first African American woman elected to Congress, serving in the U.S. House of Representatives.

1968: The Ashanti Art Service, located in Pasadena, begins publishing *Nigger Uprising*, one of the few black literary and art journals in California. Published by Ridhiana Saunders, the journal has a specific black nationalist mission and poses political critiques to the larger white establishment.

1968: Suzanne Jackson opens Gallery 32 in Los Angeles, showing work primarily from younger and more experimental artists and hosting open forums, poetry readings, and fund-raisers.

1968: Claude Booker, Cecil Fergerson, and others form the Los Angeles Black Arts Council. One of its main objectives is to bring public attention to racism in LACMA's hiring and exhibition practices and to demand inclusion of African American voices at the county-funded institution.

1968: The Coalition of Black Revolutionary Artists (COBRA) forms on the South Side of Chicago. This artists' collective would later become well known as AfriCOBRA, African Commune of Bad Relevant Artists.

1969

JANUARY 2: Lorraine Hansberry's play *To Be Young, Gifted and Black* premieres in New York.

JANUARY 17: Black Panther leaders Bunchy Carter and John Huggins are killed on the UCLA campus during a gunfight with members of Ron (Maulana) Karenga's US organization. The dispute erupts from a disagreement over which political organization would govern the direction of the UCLA Black Studies program.

FEBRUARY 23: President Nixon approves the bombing of Cambodia.

APRIL 30: H. Rap Brown (later Jamil Abdullah Al-Amin) publishes the autobiographical *Die Nigger Die!*, telling his personal journey in becoming a revolutionary leader in the black nationalist movement.

JUNE: Artists Rozzell Sykes and his nephew Roderick Sykes move into St. Elmo Village in mid-city Los Angeles. Their mission is to informally redevelop the neighborhood into a vibrant "art colony" to encourage social creativity and tolerance.

JUNE 28: Police raid the Stonewall Inn, a gay bar in Greenwich Village in New York City. The resulting uprising, called the Stonewall rebellion, lasts three days and inaugurates the gay liberation movement.

JULY 12–24: The first Pan-African Cultural Festival begins in Algiers. The event is marked as a hopeful moment for the rising number of African nations that had recently gained independence. One of the festival's purposes is to inspire the formation of new cultural nationalisms in the wake of cast-off colonial regimes.

JULY 20: Astronaut Neil Armstrong walks on the moon, making his "one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind."

AUGUST 15–18: The Woodstock Music and Art Fair opens in upstate New York. More than four hundred thousand young people converge on a 600-acre farm to hear musicians such as Joan Baez, Jimi Hendrix, and the Grateful Dead.

FALL: UCLA launches its Ethnic Studies program at the Institute of American Cultures. Composed of four research areas—African American, Mexican American, Asian American, and American Indian—the institute seeks to expand research within academia related to the marginalized histories of non-Anglo Americans.

NOVEMBER 20: Eighty Native American college students take over Alcatraz Island in San Francisco Bay and occupy it for nineteen months. For the good of "Indians of all tribes," they offer to purchase the land for \$24 in beads and cloth in order to establish an American Indian university, museum, and cultural center and to make the island into an Indian reservation.

DECEMBER 14: The Jackson Five appear on the *Ed Sullivan Show* with an eleven-year-old Michael Jackson.

1969: Music producer-arranger Bob Thiele launches the Flying Dutchman music label in Los Angeles. It seeks out progressive artists who experiment with jazz and soul music fused with black politics.

1970

MAY 1–3: In response to President Nixon’s televised speech announcing the deployment of U.S. troops to Cambodia, students at Kent State University in Ohio stage a massive war protest, which results in the dispatch of National Guard troops. Four students are killed and ten wounded by guardsmen.

MAY: The first issue of *Essence*, a monthly beauty magazine for African American women, is published.

JUNE 28: Los Angeles’s first “gay pride” parade is held in Hollywood.

AUGUST 7: During a hearing held at the Marin County Courthouse in northern California, an armed attempt is made by the younger of the Soledad Brothers to free three prisoners accused of murdering a guard at Soledad Prison. UCLA assistant professor Angela Davis, accused of purchasing the weapons used in the incident, is charged with murder, kidnapping, and conspiracy, leading to an extensive “Free Angela Davis” campaign; she is acquitted in 1972 after spending one year in jail. Davis becomes an important icon of the Black Power movement.

SEPTEMBER 12: Cheryl Brown, Miss Iowa, becomes the first African American contestant and finalist in the Miss America beauty pageant.

NOVEMBER 3: Ronald Reagan is elected to a second term as governor of California.

In San Francisco, René Yañez helps found Galería de la Raza in the Mission District. Its goal is to showcase the work of Latino and Chicano artists.

1970: Women, Artists, and Students for Black Liberation is founded in New York City.

1970: Hip-hop is born in the Bronx, New York; its varied forms include rap, dj-ing, graffiti art, and break dancing.

1971

JANUARY 26–MARCH 17: LACMA puts on *Three Graphic Artists: Charles White, David Hammons, and Timothy Washington*, the first of three exhibitions over the next five years dedicated to African American artists. The exhibitions are prompted by the advocacy work of the Los Angeles–based Black Arts Council.

FEBRUARY 2: In Uganda, Idi Amin assumes power and appoints himself president.

APRIL 6–MAY 16: The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, presents the exhibition *Contemporary Black Artists in America*, which elicits controversy because no black specialists were involved in the selection. In response, a coalition of local black artists launch a counter-exhibit, *Black Artists in Rebuttal*, at the Acts of Art Gallery.

APRIL 23: The film *Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song* is released, written, produced, and directed by Melvin Van Peebles with a score by Earth, Wind, and Fire. The plot centers on an African American man trying to get out from under white persecution, and the movie is generally acknowledged as having launched the “blaxploitation” film genre.

MAY 21: Marvin Gaye releases “What’s Going On,” a song inspired by his brother’s return from serving in Vietnam.

JULY 1: Congress ratifies the 26th Amendment, which lowers the voting age from twenty-one to eighteen.

SEPTEMBER 13: State troopers descend on Attica Correctional Facility in New York State to end a four-day inmate uprising protesting the prison’s poor living conditions. Eleven guards and thirty-two prisoners are killed in the resulting conflict.

OCTOBER 2: *Soul Train* premieres on national television with guests Gladys Knight and the Pips. In its thirty-five-year history—one of the longest runs in syndication in the history of television—the show will feature performances by a wide array of African American musicians from various genres.

OCTOBER 12: The Equal Rights Amendment for women passes the House of Representatives but later fails to be ratified.

DECEMBER 17: The Compton Communicative Arts Academy receives a \$20,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts in recognition of its successful community-centered art programs for local African American and Latino youth.

DECEMBER 18: After his break with the SCLC, the Reverend Jesse Jackson of Chicago announces the founding of Operation PUSH (People United to Save Humanity), a new program to address the needs of the local urban community in areas such as employment, youth, and civil rights advocacy.

1971: Lorenzo Milan founds KPOO radio station in San Francisco, the first black-owned, noncommercial radio station west of the Mississippi.

1971: D-Q University, the first of six Indian tribal colleges founded in the United States, opens just west of Davis, California.

1971: Charles Mingus’s book *Beneath the Underdog*, about growing up in Watts, is published.

1972

JANUARY 14: *Sanford & Son* premieres on NBC starring Demond Wilson and Redd Foxx. The show traces the lives of a widower and his son living in Watts, and goes on to become one of the most successful black-oriented television series in history, ending in 1977.

JANUARY 25: Shirley Chisholm (D-N.Y.), the first African American woman elected to Congress, announces her presidential candidacy.

JANUARY 30: In Northern Ireland, British troops open fire during a civil rights march, resulting in fourteen deaths. The incident becomes known as the Bloody Sunday massacre and is a precursor to the escalating violence against the Irish under British rule.

JULY 1: *Ms.* magazine publishes its first regular issue. The magazine will go on to become a centerpiece of feminist activism throughout the 1970s.

AUGUST: Ishmael Reed's fiction masterpiece *Mumbo Jumbo* is released.

AUGUST 31–SEPTEMBER 24: Modeled on the Black Panther Party, the Chicano activist group the Brown Berets occupy Catalina Island near Los Angeles. Their purpose is to raise awareness of relations between Anglos and Latinos.

NOVEMBER 1: Carlos Bueno, a California painter and muralist, and others organize the first Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead) celebration in Los Angeles. The revival of the popular Mexican holiday is one of many events marking the growing support of the Chicano movement. The holiday has become one of the largest annual festivals in California.

NOVEMBER 7: President Nixon is reelected.

NOVEMBER 8: California assemblywoman Yvonne Brathwaite Burke is elected to Congress, becoming the first black woman from a western state to serve in the House of Representatives.

DECEMBER 2: In Australia, Neville Bonner becomes the first Aborigine to be elected to the federal parliament.

1973

JANUARY 22: The Supreme Court rules in *Roe v. Wade* to legalize abortion.

JANUARY 27: The Paris Peace Accords take place, resulting in the end of direct U.S. military involvement in Vietnam and a temporary armistice between North and South Vietnam.

FEBRUARY 27–MAY 8: American Indian Movement members occupy Wounded Knee, on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota. The area was the site of a Sioux massacre by American soldiers in 1890.

MAY 17: The *Los Angeles Sentinel*, an African American–owned and operated newspaper with an emphasis on the Los Angeles black community, celebrates its fortieth anniversary.

MAY 29: Tom Bradley is elected the first black mayor of Los Angeles, becoming the second African American mayor of a major urban area in the United States. He will serve for five terms, over the next twenty years, the longest tenure of any mayor in Los Angeles's history.

JUNE 5: Doris A. Davis is elected mayor of Compton, California, becoming the first African American woman to serve as mayor of a large urban area.

AUGUST 21: Cesar Chavez calls an end to the grape pickers' strike after the Teamsters Union and the United Farm Workers Union reach an agreement.

AUGUST 23: General Augusto Pinochet is named commander in chief of the Chilean army by President Salvadore Allende. Weeks later Allende's rule is ended by a violent military coup. Chile would experience nearly two decades of brutal repression under Pinochet's military dictatorship.

SEPTEMBER 21: The film *The Spook Who Sat by the Door* is released. Based on a novel of the same name by Sam Greenlee, published in 1969, it is an examination of the civil rights movement and black militancy.

NOVEMBER 29: Seventeen-year-old Joyce Elaine Hawkins becomes the first African American princess on the Royal Court for the 85th Annual Pasadena Tournament of Roses.

1973: Renowned Los Angeles African American architect Paul R. Williams retires. He designed more than two thousand private homes, most in Los Angeles, including those for Frank Sinatra, Bill "Bojangles" Robinson, Lucille Ball, Tyrone Power, and Barbara Stanwyck. His public projects included the futuristic theme building at Los Angeles International Airport, the Los Angeles County Courthouse, and the Beverly Hills Hotel.

1973: *The Pointer Sisters*, the debut album of the Oakland-based female group, is released.

1973: Betye Saar organizes the *Black Mirror* exhibition of African American female artists at Woman-space in Los Angeles.

1974

JANUARY 16: The J. Paul Getty Museum opens in Malibu, California. Designed by Robert E. Langdon Jr. and Ernest C. Wilson Jr., the museum showcases Greek and Roman antiquities and is a replica of a Roman seaside villa.

FEBRUARY 4: Publishing heiress Patty Hearst is kidnapped by the Symbionese Liberation Army. The group demands that millions of dollars be donated to hunger relief organizations in California in exchange for Hearst's release. Eventually Hearst participates in the group's armed robberies, leading to a conviction in 1976 despite her Stockholm Syndrome defense. Hearst serves two years in prison before having her sentence commuted by President Jimmy Carter in 1979.

FEBRUARY 7: The Caribbean island of Grenada officially gains its independence from Great Britain and establishes a parliamentary democracy.

APRIL 5: The World Trade Center opens in New York City. At 110 stories, it is the tallest building in the world.

AUGUST 9: Facing impeachment in the wake of the Watergate scandal and allegations of tax evasion, Richard Nixon resigns as president. Gerald Ford becomes the thirty-eighth president of the United States. In September, President Ford pardons Nixon for any crimes he may have committed while in office.

SEPTEMBER: Charles White becomes the second African American painter after Henry Ossawa Tanner to be elected as a member of the National Academy of Design.

OCTOBER 30: The "Rumble in the Jungle" boxing match between Muhammad Ali and George Foreman takes place in Kinshasa, Zaire (which later becomes the Democratic Republic of the Congo). Ali beats the younger Foreman.

NOVEMBER 5: Democrat Jerry Brown wins the California gubernatorial race. Mervyn Dymally is elected as lieutenant governor, becoming the first African American to hold that position in any state since Reconstruction.

NOVEMBER 12: South Africa is suspended from the United Nations General Assembly because of its racist policies.

NOVEMBER 26: The new Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art opens in Century City.

Linda Goode Bryant opens Just Above Midtown Gallery on West Fifty-Seventh Street in New York as an alternative venue for cutting-edge African American (and other) artists and providing consistent exposure of black West Coast art.

1974: Work begins on the *Great Wall of Los Angeles* mural, among the largest public art landmarks in the city. Measuring over a half mile long, the completed mural depicts the contributions of various racial and ethnic groups to the history of Los Angeles.

1974: In New York City, Afrika Bambaataa (born Kevin Donovan) forms the Universal Zulu Nation, a music collective of socially and politically conscious deejays and rap and hip-hop artists. The organization seeks to provide a more positive alternative to black youth increasingly involved in gang life and violence.

1975

JANUARY 5: *The Wiz*, a musical version of L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, opens at the Majestic Theater on Broadway with an all-black cast. The show will run for four years, with more than 1,600 performances.

JANUARY 24: Seeking independence for Puerto Rico from the United States, the Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación Nacional Puertorriqueña, otherwise known as the Puerto Rican Armed Forces of National Liberation, set off bombs in New York City.

MARCH 21: Ethiopia ends its three-thousand-year-old monarchy and proclaims Marxism-Leninism as its new form of government.

APRIL 30: Saigon falls to the North Vietnamese.

MAY 8: Homosexuality is legalized in the state of California with the passage of a bill authored by African American state assemblyman Willie Brown of San Francisco.

JULY 22: The Los Angeles City Council approves giving oversight of the Watts Towers to the Los Angeles Municipal Arts Department. The adjacent Watts Towers Arts Center will go on to host the Watts Summer Festival, the Watts Jazz Festival, and the Day of the Drum Festival.

1976

FEBRUARY: The first Black History Month launches. The national celebration of the contributions and histories of African Americans grew out of Negro History Week, sponsored by the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, which was first celebrated in February 1926.

MARCH: California governor Jerry Brown reorganizes California's arts policy organizations. He ends the California Arts Commission, the long-standing state mechanism for arts funding, and creates the California Arts Council, whose founding members include Noah Purifoy. For the first time, the new council includes artists in deciding the grants-in-aid and focuses more on community-based art projects.

APRIL 1: Steve Jobs and Stephen Wozniak launch Apple Computer, Inc.

APRIL 4: The Los Angeles city school system desegregates its teaching staff, and in the first year more than two hundred of the city's teachers are transferred. In June the California Supreme Court rules in favor of busing in order to institute desegregation in the Los Angeles Unified School District.

AUGUST: Alex Haley publishes *Roots*, a novel that emerged from his personal search for his African ancestry. The following year, it is awarded a Pulitzer Prize and made into a renowned television miniseries

AUGUST 5: Premiere of the television show *What's Happening!!*, which follows the lives of three African American teens in Watts. The show will run until 1979. Its title loosely references the Watts Happening Coffeeshouse, a centerpiece of black artistic production in the 1960s and 1970s.

SEPTEMBER 10–23: In Northern California, Bulgarian-born artist Christo (Javacheff) installs his *Running Fence* in Sonoma and Marin Counties, California. The work is 24.5 miles long and composed of white nylon.

SEPTEMBER 24–26: Watts community artists John Outterbridge, Alonzo Davis, and Greg Bryant establish Los Angeles's first jazz festival. Over the years the Simon Rodia Watts Jazz Festival will come to represent the entire range of jazz expressions while also providing a venue for other local arts, crafts, cuisines, and workshops.

OCTOBER: The first Oakland Black Cowboys Parade is held to raise awareness of the contributions made by African Americans to the growth of the American West.

NOVEMBER 2: James Earl "Jimmy" Carter, the first presidential candidate from the Deep South since the Civil War, is elected the thirty-ninth president of the United States.

1976: Dr. Samella Lewis, a professor at Scripps College, cofounds *Black Art: An International Quarterly* in Los Angeles and opens the Museum of African American Art in the Baldwin Hills Crenshaw Plaza.

1977

JANUARY: President Carter appoints Patricia Harris as Secretary of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), making her the first African American woman to serve on any president's cabinet and to move into the presidential line of succession.

APRIL: HUD allocates \$250,000 for preserving the Watts Towers.

APRIL: The Combahee River Collective Statement is drafted in Boston. The black feminist organization that authored the text had begun meeting in 1974 and was named after the Combahee River area where Harriet Tubman had freed more than 750 slaves. The manifesto argues that racism, sexism, and classism do not operate independently from one another, but instead work in tandem.

APRIL 30: In Argentina, fourteen mothers whose children were among the "disappeared" begin congregating to protest Argentina's "Dirty War." They will meet every Thursday in the main plaza of Buenos Aires for more than a decade, becoming globally renowned human rights activists known as the Asociación Madres de Plaza de Mayo (Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo).

JULY 13: New York City is struck with a twenty-five-hour power blackout resulting in urban disturbances and looting.

SEPTEMBER: The state of California charters the California African American Museum, which will initially launch in 1981 in temporary quarters at the Museum of Science and Industry. A permanent building, designed by African American architects Jack Haywood and Vince Proby, opens in Exposition Park during the 1984 Olympic Games.

OCTOBER 12: The Community Reinvestment Act is passed, requiring that banks serve their entire community by providing loans to low- and moderate-income neighborhoods.

NOVEMBER 4: The United Nations votes unanimously to impose an arms embargo against South Africa to pressure it to end apartheid. The embargo is partially a result of the death, while in the custody of government officials, of antiapartheid leader Steve Biko; more than fifteen thousand people attend his funeral.

1977: Writer and director Charles Burnett submits *Killer of Sheep* for his MFA in film at UCLA. The film, which traces African American life in Los Angeles, would go on in 1981 to win the Critics Award at the Berlin International Film Festival. In 1990 the Library of Congress declared it a national treasure and placed it among the first fifty films entered in the National Film Registry for its historical significance.

1977: Dick Griffey founds SOLAR Records (an acronym for Sound of Los Angeles Records).

1977: In Kenya, Wangari Maathai helps lead the Green Belt Movement, which grows out of her work on the National Council of Women. The organization seeks to train poor rural women to stop deforestation and soil erosion by planting trees and to help restore their food and water sources.

1978

JANUARY 16: NASA names thirty-five astronaut candidates to fly on the next space shuttle, including Sally K. Ride, who would become America's first woman in space, and Guion S. Bluford Jr., who would become America's first black astronaut in space.

FEBRUARY 1: Harriet Tubman becomes the first African American woman honored on a postage stamp.

JUNE 6: California voters overwhelmingly pass Proposition 13, which provides for major cuts in property taxes. As a result, city social services such as the arts and education are severely reduced.

JUNE 8: The hierarchy of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints decides to allow African American men to become priests. Days later Joseph Freeman Jr. becomes the first black Mormon priest.

SEPTEMBER 17: President Carter, Menachem Begin of Israel, and Anwar Sadat of Egypt sign the Camp David Accords. The provisions include the establishment of a self-governing authority in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and better diplomatic and trade relations between Egypt and Israel. A month later the Nobel Peace Prize is awarded jointly to Begin and Sadat for brokering the Middle East peace agreement.

NOVEMBER 27: San Francisco's mayor, George Moscone, and the city's first openly gay supervisor, Harvey Milk, are shot and killed at City Hall by former supervisor Dan White. Pleading diminished capacity in what becomes known as the "Twinkie Defense," White is convicted of voluntary manslaughter, not murder. The verdict sets off the "White Night" protests on May 21, 1979, involving thousands of demonstrators outside City Hall.

1978: Trinidadian-born American civil rights and Black Power activist Stokely Carmichael changes his name to Kwame Ture in honor of Kwame Nkrumah and Ahmed Sékou Touré, the first presidents of independent Ghana and Guinea, respectively.

1978: The musical group Los Lobos release their first album, *Just Another Band from East L.A.*

1979

JANUARY 16: The Shah of Iran flees for Egypt as many Iranians align with Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. Once in power, the Ayatollah establishes a Muslim theocracy with a Shiite majority.

FEBRUARY: More than five thousand farmworkers take to the streets in Northern California in support of the United Farm Workers Union lettuce strike.

APRIL 11: Ugandan rebels and exiles join forces with Tanzania to oust dictator Idi Amin, who flees first to Libya and then to Saudi Arabia.

MAY 3: In England, Conservative Party leader Margaret Thatcher is elected prime minister, making her the first woman to hold that office. She will serve three terms of office until 1990.

MAY 29: Bishop Abel Muzorewa is elected the first black prime minister of Zimbabwe-Rhodesia, the name given to the country in the brief period before full independence. Days later the country proclaims independence from Britain.

JULY 19: Sandinista rebel soldiers establish control of the Nicaraguan government.

AUGUST 10: Michael Jackson launches his solo career at the age of twenty-one with the release of the album *Off the Wall*.

OCTOBER: The Sugar Hill Gang releases the hit song "Rapper's Delight," later claiming it as the beginning of hip-hop.

1979: The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, is founded.

1979: The Laugh Factory opens on the Sunset Strip; Richard Pryor is one of the first comedians to perform there.

1979: Judy Chicago produces *The Dinner Party* as part of a feminist collaborative project.

1980

JANUARY 25: Robert Johnson launches Black Entertainment Television (BET).

MARCH 4: Black nationalists win elections in Rhodesia leading to a black-run government; the country is renamed Zimbabwe.

MAY 21: The \$22 million *Star Wars* sequel *The Empire Strikes Back* premieres, starring Mark Hamill, Harrison Ford, Carrie Fisher, and Billy Dee Williams.

JUNE 16: Huey P. Newton, cofounder of the Black Panther Party, finishes his PhD at the University of California, Santa Cruz. His dissertation is titled "War Against the Panthers: A Study of Repression in America."

NOVEMBER 4: Ronald Reagan is elected the fortieth president of the United States.

NOVEMBER 17: WHHM-TV in Washington, D.C., becomes the first African American public broadcasting television station.

1980: Section 987(a) of the California State Civil Code is enacted, making it a crime to alter, deface, or destroy a work of fine art.