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28th Annual James Porter Colloquium

The James Porter Colloquium

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Program Booklet: 28th Annual James Porter Colloquium

Department of Art

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JAMES A PORTER
C O L L O Q U I U M
ON AFRICAN AMERICAN ART

APRIL 5 - 9, 2017

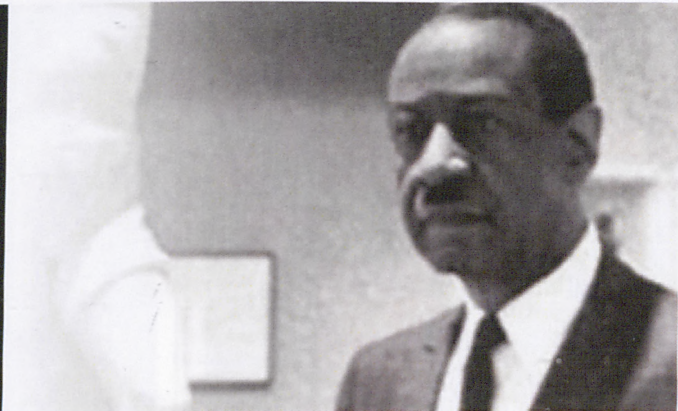


A pioneer in establishing the field of African American art history, James A. Porter was instrumental as the first scholar to provide a systematic, critical analysis of African American artists and their works of art. An artist himself, he provided a unique and critical approach to the analysis of the work. Dedicated to educating and writing about African American artists, Porter set the foundation for artists and art historians to probe and unearth the necessary skills essential to their artistic and scholarly endeavors. The canon is born from Porter's determination to document and view African American art in the context of American art.

Born December 22, 1905 in Baltimore, Maryland, Porter had a long, illustrious career in the visual arts, as an artist and historian. Under the direction and encouragement from James V. Herring, head of the Art Department at Howard University, Porter studied painting, drawing, and art history. Upon graduating with a bachelor of science in 1927, he accepted a position as instructor of painting and drawing at Howard. Being an educator did not keep Porter from honing his artistic skill and creating art.

Throughout his academic professional career, Porter painted and exhibited nationally and internationally. This dedication was acknowledged in 1933 when he received the Schomburg Portrait Prize, from the Harmon Foundation, for the painting entitled *Woman Holding a Jug* (1930). Porter was highly regarded for his finely rendered portraits, as exemplified in his award.

While Porter never stopped nurturing his artistic ability, he also did not stop educating himself. After he completed undergraduate work, Porter attended the Art Institute in New York. He also studied in Paris at the Institute of Art and Archeology at the Sorbonne, in which he received a *Certificat de Presence* in 1935. When Porter returned to the United States, he pursued a Master of Arts in Art History from New York University in 1937. Porter's thesis, which would later become the foundation for *Modern Negro Art*, focused on African American artists and artisans.



During his educational pursuits, Porter met Dorothy Burnett, a librarian at the Harlem branch, where he researched neglected black artists. On December 27, 1929, Porter and Dorothy were married. They had one daughter, Constance Porter. This union would prove to be important, not only personally but also professionally. Dorothy worked with Porter, as she provided bibliographic information critical to his investigations. Dorothy, along with Porter, has a rich relationship with Howard University. She was the director of Moorland-Spingarn Research Center where she catalogued information about African American artists.

Porter's interest in nearly forgotten and often ignored artists of African descent came from reading a brief article on African American landscape artist Robert Scott Duncanson. Due to the brevity of the account, Porter was inspired to research Duncanson and other artists of African descent. Were it not for this article, Modern Negro Art may have not come to be.

Porter, a devout educator, taught at Howard for more than forty years, heading the Art Department and the Art Gallery. Because of his dedication to the teaching profession, the National Gallery of Art selected him as one of the best art teachers in the nation. An honor he received with twenty-four others, he was presented the award by Lady Bird Johnson in 1965.

James A. Porter left a cultural and educational legacy to those passionately involved in the area of African American art. The drive to explore and firmly document artists of the Diaspora continues today. Porter's artistic and historical work provides a solid foundation in which current and future scholars can build upon. Many scholars owe Porter for the inspiration to probe the depths of African American visual culture and attest to its significance to American culture.

- Jeffreen M. Hayes



Lorna Simpson

Floyd Coleman Lecture

Lorna Simpson was born in 1960 in Brooklyn, New York, and received her BFA in Photography from the School of Visual Arts, New York, and her MFA from the University of California, San Diego. When Lorna Simpson emerged from the graduate program at San Diego in 1985, she was already considered a pioneer of conceptual photography. Feeling a strong need to re-examine and re-define photographic practice for contemporary relevance, Simpson was producing work that engaged the conceptual vocabulary of the time by creating exquisitely crafted documents that are as clean and spare as the closed, cyclic systems of meaning they produce. Her initial body of work alone helped to incite a significant shift in the view of the photographic art's transience and malleability.

Lorna Simpson rose to fame in the mid-1980s for her large-scale photograph-and-text works that confront and challenge conventional views of gender, identity, culture, history, and memory. With unidentified human figures as a visual point of departure, Simpson uses the figure to examine the ways in which gender and culture shape the interactions, relationships and experiences of our lives in contemporary America.

Over time she turned to film and video works in which individuals engage in enigmatic conversations that seem to address the mysteries of both identity and desire.



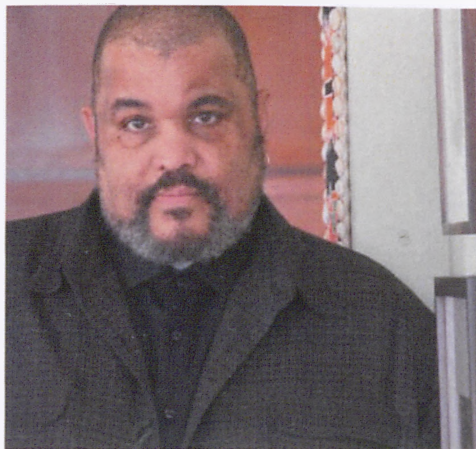
Kinshasha Holman Conwill

Humanitarian Award

Prior to joining NMAAHC as Deputy Director, Kinshasha Holman Conwill was an arts, museum, and management consultant where her projects included acting as senior policy advisor for the Museums and Community Initiative of the American Association of Museums, project director for the New York City Creative Communities program of LINC (Leveraging Investments in Creativity), project director and managing editor for Culture Counts: Strategies for a More Vibrant Cultural Life for New York City (New York Foundation for the Arts), and project manager for Creative Downtown: The Role of Culture in Rebuilding Lower Manhattan (New York City Arts Coalition).

From 1988 to 1999, Conwill served as Director of The Studio Museum in Harlem where she conceptualized, organized, or co-organized more than 40 major exhibitions, many of which traveled nationally. She also served as Assistant Exhibit Coordinator for the Museum of the American Indian in New York City and Coordinator of Activities for the Frank Lloyd Wright Hollyhock House.

Conwill writes on art, museums, and cultural policy and is a frequent lecturer and panelist at colleges, universities, conferences, and museums. She has served as an advisor for the Harvard University Program for Art Museum Directors and on the faculties of the Virginia Management Institute for Senior Museum Professionals and the Salzburg Seminars. Additionally, she has been a presenter in major international art conferences and meetings and a juror for numerous public art projects and exhibitions.



Dawoud Bey

Lifetime Achievement
Award

For over thirty years Dawoud Bey's work has been concerned with the making of resonant representations of peoples within marginalized communities that seek to position those subjects within their own active social space and histories as well as the larger historical conversation about issues of the portrait and representation. While using the portrait as a site of social narrative, individual psychological and emotion resonance, historical reimagining, and individual agency, Bey's work continually raises the questions of who is represented or not within our society, and how.

Dawoud Bey began his career as an artist in 1975 with a series of photographs, Harlem, USA, that were later exhibited in his first one-person exhibition at the Studio Museum in Harlem in 1979. He has since had numerous exhibitions worldwide, at such institutions as the Addison Gallery of American Art, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Brooklyn Museum, the Detroit Institute of Arts, the Fogg Art Museum at Harvard University, the High Museum of Art, the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, the Museum of Contemporary Photography, the Museum of Modern Art, NY, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the Studio Museum in Harlem, the Whitney Museum of American Art, and other museums worldwide. His works are included in the permanent collections of over fifty museums throughout the United States and Europe.



Fred Wilson

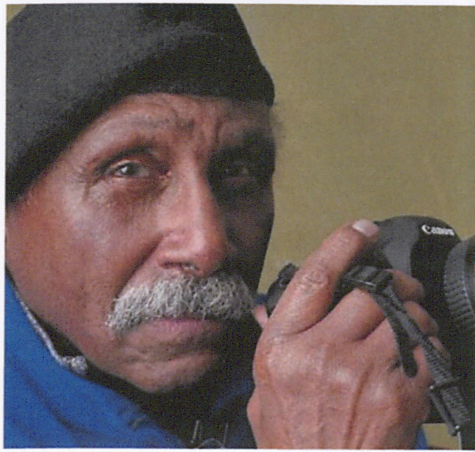
Lifetime Achievement
Award

Fred Wilson's conceptual practice includes painting, sculpture and photography. He is widely known for his glass sculptures and site-specific installations in collaboration with museums, historical societies, and other cultural institutions throughout the U.S. and abroad. He received his B.F.A. from the State University of New York, Purchase in 1976, and was awarded Honorary Doctorates from Maryland Institute College of Art, MD (2013), Skidmore College, NY (2009), and Northwestern University, IL (2007).

Wilson's work has been the subject of solo exhibitions and retrospectives worldwide, including, amongst others, the critically acclaimed *Mining the Museum: An Installation* by Fred Wilson sponsored by the Contemporary in collaboration with The Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore (1992–1993) and *Fred Wilson, Objects and Installations 1979–2000* which traveled to eight different venues nationally from 2001–2004. In 2003, Wilson represented the United States at the 50th Venice Biennale with the solo exhibition, *Fred Wilson: Speak of Me as I Am*. In 2008, Wilson was named to the Board of Trustees of the Whitney Museum of Art, New York as well as to the Board of Trustees of the American Academy in Rome.

His many accolades include the prestigious MacArthur Foundation "Genius" Grant (1999), amongst others. Wilson's work can be found in numerous public collections worldwide, including The Art Institute of Chicago; the Baltimore Museum of Art; the Brooklyn Museum of Art; Cleveland Museum of Art; The High Museum of Art, Atlanta; The Hood Museum, New Hampshire; The Tate Modern, London; The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; the Institute of Jamaica, Kingston; The Jewish Museum, New York; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art; Seattle Art Museum; and The Whitney Museum of American Art.

Fred Wilson lives and works in New York City, where he is represented by The Pace Gallery.



Adger Cowans

Lifetime Achievement
Award

Since the mid-1960s, Adger W. Cowans has established a successful career as a still photographer for the Hollywood film industry, with credits ranging from *Nothing But a Man* (1964) to *City Hall* (1996). While Cowans' film photographs are doubtless his most widely-seen work, his artistic practice also encompasses fashion, travel, landscape, and still-life photography; portraits; and even paintings. One of Cowans' most famous images is an often-reproduced portrait of Malcolm X.

Cowans' artistic influences are just as diverse as his creative output. Among his most important influences, he lists Edward Weston, a fine-art photographer from the early twentieth-century, and Gordon Parks, Sr., a photographer for *Life* magazine. While his work may be extremely broad, Cowans brings a similar visible sensibility and perfectionism to each project; according to Vivien Raynor, writing in the *New York Times*, he "describes himself as practicing with his eyes as a musician does with his instrument."

Adger W. Cowans was born on September 19, 1936, in Columbus, Ohio. After graduating from high school, he enrolled at Ohio University in Athens, where he studied with Clarence H. White Jr., an influential photographer and founding member of the group Photo-Secession. According to Les Krantz, writing in the book *American Photographers*, "Cowans' studies with Clarence H. White Jr. and Minor White were early influences on his approach to photography as an art form."



Dr. Kellie Jones

James A. Porter Book Award

Kellie Jones is an art historian and curator deepening our understanding of contemporary art of the African Diaspora and securing its place in the canons of modern and contemporary art. Her research and curatorial practice, which span large-scale museum exhibitions with extensive catalogues as well as scholarly books and articles, have been instrumental in introducing the work of now seminal black artists (such as Martin Puryear, David Hammons, and Lorna Simpson) to wide audiences and bringing to light long-forgotten or overlooked black artists.

Through the exhibition *Energy/Experimentation: Black Artists and Abstraction, 1964–1980* (2006)—which highlighted numerous black artists working in abstract painting or sculpture—and her scholarly work on African American conceptualists, Jones has prompted a reevaluation of the view that African American art of the period was predominantly figurative or representational. At the same time, she refuses to treat the work of black artists as an isolated phenomenon, instead drawing on a keen attention to cross-cultural aesthetics and a highly developed sensitivity to the formal properties of art objects to integrate their work into the broader artistic production of the United States in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

In *Now Dig This! Art and Black Los Angeles, 1960–1980*, she both unearthed the histories of previously unknown Los Angeles-based black artists and contextualized their work alongside West Coast artists of other racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Friday - School of Medicine Auditorium, Howard University

9:30 - 10:00 - Welcome and Opening Remarks

Dr. Gwendolyn Everett, Dean, Division of Fine Arts

Dr. Anthony McEachern, Chair, Department of Art

Day Moderator: Dalila Scruggs, Ph.D., Senior Museum Educator
and Fellowship Coordinator

10:10 - 10:55 - Opening Lecture

Bridget R. Cooks, Associate Professor, Department of African
American Studies and Department of Art History, University of
California, Irvine

"The Everlasting Now"

11:00 - 12:00 - Archives Panel: Considering the Archival Potential at Educational Institutions

*This panel will investigate the range of archival collections
housed at colleges or universities that reveal new, overlooked
art histories or expand our knowledge of African American
artists and art practice. In addition to sharing select artifacts,
presenters should briefly speak to the accessibility of collections
as well digitization possibilities.*

- Panel Moderator: Lopez Matthews Jr., Ph.D., Digital
Production Librarian, Howard University Libraries and the
Moorland-Spingarn Research Center
- Ms. Andrea Jackson, Head of Archives Research Center,
Robert L. Woodruff Library and Research Center, Atlanta
University Center
- Dr. Pellom McDaniels III, Ph.D., Curator of African American
Collections, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives & Rare Book
Library, Emory University
- Ms. Stephanie Smith, Archivist David C. Driskell Center at
University of Maryland, College Park
- Mr. Scott Baker, Assistant Director, Howard University Art
Gallery, Howard University

12:00 - 12:15 - Question & Answer

12:15 - 1:25 LUNCH ON YOUR OWN

1:30 - 2:00 - Artist's Reflection on the Archive Sadie Barnette

2:00 - 2:10 - Question and Answer

2:10 - 2:50 - Art History in the Archives: Scholars Panel

This panel will present art historical research that features new archival research featuring art historical artifacts or primary sources (for example, elements of artist's papers, letters, sketchbooks, correspondences, etc.). This panel also will provide a platform for revisionist interpretations or reconsideration of a prominent artwork or artist from scholarship anchored in archival exploration.

- Panel Moderator: Gwendolyn Shaw, Associate Professor of History of Art, University of Pennsylvania
- James D. Smalls, Professor Art History and Museum Studies, University of Maryland, Baltimore County
- Kirsten Buick, Professor, Department of Art, University of New Mexico
- David C. Driskell, Professor Emeritus, University of Maryland at College Park

2:50 - 3:00 - Question and Answer

3:00 - 3:45 - Artistic Archival Explorations: Artist Panel

This panel will explore how painters are engaging archival materials (such as photographs) or artifacts (such as masks or religious ritual items). In addition to addressing art practice and process, artists should consider how he or she encounters, implements or represents archival knowledge in their art.

- Panel Moderator: Dr. Melanee C. Harvey, Art Department, Howard University
- Larry Cook, artist
- Aziza Claudia Gibson-Hunter, artist
- Margaret Rose Vendryes, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Fine Arts and Art History, York College, City University of New York, Director, Fine Arts Gallery

3:45 - 3:55 - Question and Answer

4:00 - 4:10 - BREAK

4:10 - 4:50 - Art Collecting Institutions and the African American Archival Legacy: Museum Archives Panel

This panel will investigate the range of archival collections housed in art and cultural museums that reveal new, overlooked art histories or expand our knowledge of African American artists and art practice. In addition to sharing select artifacts, presenters should briefly speak to the accessibility of collections as well digitization possibilities.

- Panel Moderator: Cynthia Hodge, Undergraduate Student, Art Department, Howard University
- Kimberly Camp, President, Galerie Marie LLC, presenting on the Albert C. Barnes Collection, Philadelphia
- Kelli Morgan, Winston & Carolyn Lowe Curatorial Fellow, Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts
- Ms. Alexandra Mitchell, Archivist, Schomburg Research Center, New York Public Library
- Catrina Hill, Archivist, Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture

4:50 - 5:00 - Question and Answer

5:00 - 5:50 - Keynote Lecture Fred Wilson, artist

5:50 - 6:00 - Question and Answer

Reception, Howard University Blackburn Gallery
& Exhibition Reception & Book Signing, Childers Hall

Saturday - School of Medicine Auditorium, Howard University

9:30 - 9:50 - Welcome and Opening Remarks

Morning Moderator: Dr. Melanee C. Harvey, Art Department,
Howard University

10:00 - 10:50 - New Art Histories Panel

- Panel Moderator: Tina Campt, Claire Tow and Ann Whitney Olin Professor of Africana and Women's Gender and Studies, Director of the Barnard Center for Research on Women, and Chair of the Africana Studies Department, Barnard College
- Emilie Boone, Ph. D. Assistant Professor, African American Studies Department, City University of New York, New City College of Technology
- Chanda Laine Carey, PhD, Assistant Professor/Faculty Fellow, Department of Art History, Mellon Diversity Postdoctoral Fellow, Center for the Humanities, New York University
- Tiffany E. Barber, Carter G. Woodson Fellow, University of Virginia/ Ph.D. Candidate, Visual Culture Studies, University of Rochester

10:50 - 11:00 - Question and Answer

11:00 - 11:15 - Art & Design Talk: Fashion and the Archive

Elka Stevens, Ph.D., Art Department, Howard University

11:15 - 11:30 - Artist Talk: Marilyn Nance

11:30 - 12:00 - Artist Talk: Adger Cowans

12:00 - 12:10 - Question and Answer

12:10 - 1:10 LUNCH ON YOUR OWN

Afternoon Moderator: Sarah Lewis, Assistant Professor of History of Art and Architecture and African American Studies, Harvard University

1:15 - 1:50 - The Potency of Portraiture: a Conversation with the Dawoud Bey

- Dawoud Bey, Professor of Art, Distinguished College Artist, Columbia College Chicago, Chicago, IL
- Emilie Boone, Ph. D. Assistant Professor, African American Studies Department, City University of New York, New City College of Technology

2:00 - 2:50 - James A. Porter Distinguished Lecture

Cheryl Finley, Associate Professor, Department of History of Art and Visual Studies, Cornell University
"Photography and the Archive"

2:55 - 3:05 - Question and Answer

3:05 - 3:15 - COFFEE BREAK

3:15 - 4:05 - Floyd Coleman Lecture, Lorna Simpson

4:05 - 4:15 - Question and Answer

4:15 - 4:30 - Closing Remarks

7:00 - 10:30 Gala and Awards Dinner - Law Banquet Dining Hall

Honorees -

Lifetime Achievement Award

- Adger Cowans
- Dawoud Bey
- Fred Wilson

Humanitarian Award

- Kinshasha Holman Conwill

James A. Porter Book Award

- Dr. Kellie Jones

Sunday - Lulu Vere Childers Hall Room 2016

2:00 - 4:00 - Artists Studio Visit with Allen Jackson, Photographer

NOTES



2017 Executive Committee Members:

- Carolyn Gautier Adams
- Ronald Akili Anderson
- Scott Baker
- Dr. Alice Bonner
- Jacqueline Carmichael
- Carol R. Dyson
- Dr. Gwendolyn H. Everett
- Larry Frazier, Esq.
- Dr. Melanee Harvey
- Dr. Leslie King Hammond
- Dr. Anthony McEachern
- Alexander McSwain
- Evangeline Juliet Montgomery
- Lynn Sylvester, Esq.
- Dr. Dianne Whitfield-Locke
- Dr. Deborah Willis

Special tributes to Dr. Floyd Coleman and Dr. Dianne Whitfield-Locke for their unwavering support of the James A. Porter Colloquium.

Administration:

Mrs. Sheilah Tucker

Founders Award created by

Professor Reginald Pointer
Associate Professor of Ceramics,
Howard University

Social Media:

- Ashley McDonald
- Summer Brown

Banquet Decorations:

- Lydia Young
- Harmoni Moore
- Lynauja Robinson

Audio/ Visual Production

- Dr. Olivia Drake
- Wilbur Allen

Volunteers:

Kimberly Jacobs, Curator, and PhD student in Art History at Virginia Commonwealth University

Faculty Studio Visit – Sponsored by
Lynn Sylvester

The James A. Porter Colloquium was established at Howard University in 1990. It is named in honor of James A. Porter, the pioneering Art Historian and Professor, whose 1943 publication *Modern Negro Art* laid the foundation for the field of study. The Colloquium continues his legacy through dynamic programming, scholarly research and artistic leadership.