

**Leonardo Benzant
(Elder Semerit)**

American, born 1972

**Radiations of the Midnight
Walker, Victorious in Round
Number 8, He Who Moves
Inside of the Womb of
Magik and Timelessness,
He Who Moves Here, There,
and Everywhere Chanting:
I AM THE GREATEST! And
Chanting: WITCHCRAFT
WILL NEVER TOUCH ME!,
2016**

Mixed media

Private collection; promised gift on long-
term loan to Mia L2019.164.1

Long tubular structures, like tentacles,
Larger than life,
Speak of what is required for the African
To emerge victorious
No matter how many rounds it takes.

It starts with long strands of multicolored Czech glass beads, wrapped around
handstitched appendages crafted from bundled fabric, bits of soil, plant life,
rum, bone, or even saliva.

The artist says, “There is a prayer inside each of these forms, a prayer, coins, or
other things that are symbolic.”

Thus, the work delves into the collective unconscious, encodes and remembers
African cultural memory, and offers it as an invitation to healing.

Moving us outside of time
Connecting us through strands of DNA,
Quite literally, to the Ancestors—their knowledge-spirituality
Their stature, their power.

Yoruba artist

Nigeria or Benin

Egungun ceremonial outfit,

1930-50

Cotton, velvet, silk, felt,
synthetic fibers, wool, aluminum,
wood, buttons, yarn, plastic,
string

The Simmons Family Endowment
for Textiles and gift of funds from
Jim Harris 2011.31

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Osa Meji

Egungun kiki Egungun

Praise to the mediums of the Ancestors

Expanding their consciousness to include
the eternal cycle of life, death,
transformation, and rebirth.

The Egungun priest moves beyond the
construct of time, while their feet
rhythmically move over the Earth.

What appears to be a dance filled with
colorful fiber and string is actually a
manifestation of the Ancestors.

Playing within the cycle of time, the
Egungun priest swirls to the call of the drum.

The multiple strands of fiber correlate to the
multiple strands of DNA.

A family, a community, a lineage embodied
from generation to generation.

Collective consciousness cycling from
Heaven to Earth.

E Ogun Oogun

I am the Medicine of the Bones

Kalabari artist

Nigeria

Funerary screen, 19th century
Wood, raffia, pigment

The John R. Van Derlip Fund 74.22

Among the Kalabari people, Warriors' Wives carved funerary screens, like this one, to announce the end of their watch and perform the depth of their love to beat the drum of affection for the Drum Chief. On a funerary screen, the Drum Chief sits in an armchair, dressed in a piece of white cloth with an eagle feather attached to his forehead. The Drum Chief usually holds a sword in his left hand and a human skull in his right hand, though those sacred pieces are missing here. As on this funerary screen, two protective spirits always sit beside the Drum Chief.

Have you heard about the Seating of the Amaryanabo King? It's a story from the Kelekeibari people, who live along the Niger River delta. People could not pronounce their name, so Kelekeibari commonly became Kalabari.

Richard Burnside

American, born 1944

The Ancient King, 1987

Paint on wood

The Ethel Morrison Van Derlip Fund
and gift of the Souls Grown Deep
Foundation from the William S. Arnett
Collection 2019.16.9

Richard Burnside has painted a very black, very simple face.

A face devoid of any illusion of realism.

A face through which shines the truth of essence.

A face, perhaps, we do not want to meet.

The artist titles his work *The Ancient King*.

What is the ancient part of us?

Is it present in our life?

Is it King in our life?

The face, as it is painted, is the ancient hieroglyph, Heer.

In Kemet,* the face told the entire story of one's life.

In Kemet, there is a homonym of the hieroglyph Heer

Which means "the perfected state."

The ancient King is fulfilled and realized in the face.

In this work, the face is surrounded by simple geometric shapes,

In repetition and patterns of 3s and 4s.

They are the basic building blocks;

The code of life.

* Kemet: Ancient Egypt

Joe Minter

American, born 1943

Voyage in Chains, 2000

Mixed media

Private collection; promised gift on
long-term loan to Mia L2019.154.2

The secret force of a powerful primeval energy within the soul. *Voyage in Chains* connects me to my birth in the Mississippi Delta in 1943: beautiful circular motion of objects used by sharecropping farmers to cultivate the hard rock dry lands in rural Mississippi.

I remember my father's daily motions, rhythms, and expressions of joy at sunrise. I remember my father's cosmic spirituality and laborious meditation, a sacred tradition of hard work and unceasing effort. My father and ancestors of his generation came to a place of the sounds and rhythms of the souls' wisdom.

The pitchfork, the hoe, the shovel, the irons: a quadruple expression of symbols evoking the core consciousness of man's soul. A visible manifestation of the hand of man. The will of man connected to the forces in creation. The serpent's tongue probing the heavens in alignment with the soul of creator in creation.

Renée Stout

American, born 1958

**Crossroads Marker with
Little Hand, Reaching, 2015**

Metal, glass, wood, pigments,
other materials

The Blythe Brenden Endowment for Art
Acquisition 2016.2

The blessing at the crossroads

Tradition of Maat

Of reciprocity, balance, truth, and harmony

Sia, our Intelligence of the Heart

The limitless keys to access

These words, I write, are African existence.

From the Ancient King to Voyage in Chains,

Feeling the burnt from the cross

Passing the crosses to listen to

The story of the Seating of the

Amaryanabo King.

Stop at the imprint of our DNA spread

across the globe

From Haiti to Virginia,

Swimming in the Delta river on the way

To pay respect to Egungun.

These are the stories of our humanity.

The legacy of 1619

From the sign of Kongo

I mark with my little hand

In metal, and in glass

Wood and pigments

We became acquisitions

From water to land and other materials

The Endowment of this Voyage in

Chains

I mark with my little hand

In metal, and in glass

Wood and pigments

To heal our souls is to reconnect

From the crossroad

I mark with my little hand

In metal, and in glass

Wood and pigments

Lonnie Holley

American, born 1950

Pressure from the Burn, 1995

Found wood, fire hose, nails

The Ethel Morrison Van Derlip Fund
and gift of the Souls Grown Deep
Foundation from the William S. Arnett
Collection 2019.16.11

Lonnie Holley takes discarded and wasted materials from our modern human experiences and transforms them into something enlivened with our present lived experience.

Holley's work transforms what would be trash into enduring expressions of the soul. He converts human debris into lessons of purpose and value. "Having to put out a fire inside yourself, no matter how bad the blaze you been in, you got to go on carrying your burden," Holley states.

His work forces the question: What is in your true nature that endures in spite of brutality and horror in this modern life, where everything will eventually become trash, garbage, or debris? The pressure from the internal burn can be unbearable. Yet it is this very pressure that creates the elemental that produces the catalyst for personal and social transformation.

Serge Jolimeau

Haitian, born 1952

Crucifix, c. 1983

Sheet metal, pigment

The Christina N. and Swan J. Turnblad
Memorial Fund 97.3

Interwoven throughout Haitian history, a tumultuous crossroads plays out between African spirituality and official, socially acceptable, Haitian life. In the small crossroads town of Croix des Bouquets, on the outskirts of the capital city, four generations of men, mechanics or blacksmiths by day, have forged an art form imbued in the Principles of Fire and Metal at the crossroads of Vodun and Christianity.

In *Crucifix*, the personified Principle of the Cross organically looms large and subsumes the iconic figure of Christ dying on the cross.

There is a larger reality at play here—four birds bring further organicity while simultaneously depicting spirit's enduring capacity to cycle through birth, death, and rebirth. Powerfully reclaiming the cross, this work brings to life African spirituality's crossroads between mundane natural life and the truth of the Invisible.

Mose Tolliver

American, c. 1921–2006

Cross of a White Jesus with a French Bird, a Mountain Bird, and Pinto Bird, 1987

Paint and Masonite on paneling

The Ethel Morrison Van Derlip Fund
and gift of the Souls Grown Deep
Foundation from the William S. Arnett
Collection 2019.16.33

Mose Tolliver painted a cross within a cross.

The images on the outer cross must be looked at symbolically.

The diminutive “white Jesus” bears wings

And is of the same size as the birds in the natural Creation,

Who have been specifically named and identified.

Birds are about the spirit and travel within the inner world.

The inner cross shows an array of dots and lines

Reminiscent of an African transmission.

This coded language is what our spirits need

To fly free like the birds.

There is a sweetness emanating from this cross

With a code rather than a body hanging on it.

This cross invites us to life

Rather than death.