

BILL HODGES GALLERY

Selections from the Hamptons Virtual Art Fair

September 3 - October 17, 2020

Sam Gilliam, *Renaissance I*, 1986, Acrylic, Enamel,
Aluminum and Canvas Construction on Wood (in two parts)
75 x 90 x 7 in.



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Bill Hodges Gallery is pleased to present *Selections from the Hamptons Virtual Art Fair*, an exhibition displaying over 30 artworks by prominent African American artists working in the 20th and 21st centuries. The curated selection of works from Bill Hodges' collection being featured at the Hamptons Virtual Art Fair will be available to view by appointment at our Chelsea location from September 3rd until October 17th. The exhibition includes art by Romare Bearden, Norman Lewis, Sam Gilliam, Edward Clark, Jacob Lawrence, Kara Walker, Lorna Simpson, and Mickalene Thomas, among others.

This exhibition showcases approximately 30 of the 43 works displayed at the Hamptons Virtual Art Fair, a virtual reality-based art viewing event taking place from September 2nd-7th. Organized into three virtual booths entitled "African American Artists," "Norman Lewis," and "Romare Bearden," collectors can view works of art available for acquisition in both a two dimensional format and in three dimensional virtual gallery spaces. The exhibition taking place at the gallery's Chelsea location gives collectors the opportunity to see these richly detailed works of art in person, by appointment.

"African American Artists" is our largest booth, including 22 paintings, photographs, prints, drawings, and mixed media works by Black artists working within both abstract and realist traditions. The works presented range from intimate portraits to abstract works of art by notable artists like Carrie Mae Weems, Kara Walker, and Kerry James Marshall, to name a few. Of particular interest is Sam Gilliam's *Renaissance I*, a large-scale collage that layers various materials into a chaotic yet alluring three-dimensional sculptural painting. As a prominent color field painter, Gilliam is known for pouring supple layers of color onto draped canvases, an experimentation he continues on the wood and metal surfaces of *Renaissance I*. The exhibition also features a large scale C-print by prolific contemporary artist Mickalene Thomas entitled *Les Trois Femmes Noires*. In this image, three Black women dressed in bold, contrasting patterns pose in front of the camera's lens, their relaxed poses subverting conventional portraiture. Thomas produces a bold, visually commanding compositional reality exploring feminine power and identity.

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Including such contrasting works in the same exhibition demonstrates the breadth of art chosen for display at the Hamptons Virtual Arts Fair from the gallery's collection.



Norman Lewis, *Title Unknown*, 1955-1978,
Oil on Canvas, 37 x 62 in.

Additionally, multiple works of art by artists Norman Lewis and Romare Bearden are displayed in two booths dedicated solely to each artist. Initially working in a realist tradition, painter Norman Lewis started exploring abstraction in the 1950s, joining the Abstract Expressionist movement and working alongside the infamous Irascibles. Lewis' work did not procure an audience until recently, as curators and collectors uncover Lewis' fruitful contributions to the Abstract Expressionist movement. The works selected for exhibition highlight his achievements working in an abstract expressionist style. *Title Unknown*, 1955-1978, presents a hieroglyphic-like, abstract reality as small, geometric shapes seemingly march across the textural, two-dimensional surface. Such large scale, highly abstracted works are exhibited alongside his more minimalist works on paper, like *Figures*, 1965, in which Lewis outlines a voluptuously shaped figure with densely shaded pockets of shadow. These selections demonstrate the diverse range of abstract compositions presented in Lewis' canvas and paper works.

The booth dedicated to Romare Bearden similarly features works emblematic of his signature style and long, fruitful career. Bearden is best known for his abstract collages and portrayals of Black American life. He is a founding member of the Spiral Group, a venture which ultimately inspired him to create his famous collages. Inspired by Cubism and Mexican Muralism, Bearden produced art in a lively color palette and linear abstract



Romare Bearden, *The Rites of Spring*, ca. 1941
Gouache on Cardboard, 31 ½ x 48 in.

style exploring themes related to religion and the human experience. The exhibition pairs large scale, abstract painting such as *The Rites of Spring*, ca. 1941 with densely layered, abstract collages like *Saturday Evening*, 1975, showcasing the evolution of Bearden's artistic style across his prolific career.

Established in 1979, Bill Hodges Gallery remains committed to showcasing Black artists, advocating for their status as leading artistic pioneers of the 20th and 21st centuries. Having shown exemplary works of art by Black and traditionally underrepresented artists since the mid-1970s, Bill Hodges Gallery presents highlights from this specialized, thoughtfully-curated collection in the Hampton's Virtual Art Fair online and in the Chelsea-based exhibition, *Selections from the Hamptons Virtual Art Fair*.

Bill Hodges Gallery is located at 529 W. 20th Street, suite #10E, between 10th Avenue and 11th Avenue. Our closest subway stations are 14th St. & 8th Ave. (A-C-EL) and 23rd St. & 8th Ave. (C-E). The Gallery is open Monday to Friday by appointment only. For more information or to arrange a private viewing, please contact Bill or Navindren Hodges at (212) 333-2640 or at info@billhodgesgallery.com