

OFF THE WALL

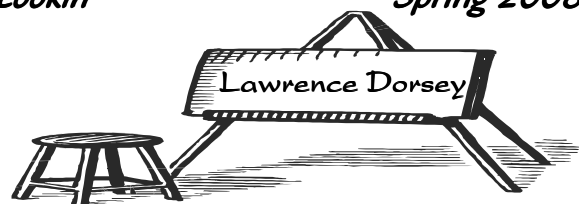
Volume 12 Number 1

Art News & Views from Just Lookin'

Spring 2008



It has been too long since our last newsletter; especially with all the exciting events we had at the gallery in 2007. Most notable was "Civil Rights - Civil Wrongs" which packed the house when **Charly Palmer** opened the show with a weekend reception in November. Over fifteen artists participated in the exhibit; many (**Keith Mallett** and **Michael Gibson** among them) created new pieces just for the exhibit. Opening weekend brought visitors from seven states! The theme resonated with many people and during its two month run generated the most press ever, crossed ethnic and generational lines and became our best attended show. We are in talks with several organization that have expressed interest in exhibiting selections from the show and we have a catalog in the works. ♦ We want to thank everyone that stopped by our booth at the **National Black Fine Art Show**. This was our tenth year there and we are going to miss our space in the Puck Building. Seems the space that has been home to the show for the last dozen years is going to be a restaurant soon. No word yet on next year's spot; we'll update our online calendar with dates and location as soon as we can. A special thanks also to all our artists who hung-out with us for most of the show. It was inspiring to watch the energy flowing as complements and ideas bounced between creative minds. Check out scenes from the show at www.justlookin.com for pictures of your favorite artists. ♦ What an exciting time in the world of **Black American Art!** History is being made daily as more collectors of all ethnicities realize both the intrinsic power and investment potential of original art. With the twelfth annual Black Fine Art show and the second annual February African American Fine Art auction at **Swann Galleries**, black art is continuing to be shown (and sold!) in ever more places. Best of all; prices for some living black masters held strong with some appreciating between 15% and 25% since last year. And paintings are so much more enjoyable to look at than a stock certificate! If you are thinking about collecting fine art and haven't started yet, don't wait. From an investment perspective; quality art is consistently out-pacing both inflation and the stock market! And if you are a business owner or corporate executive; investing in fine art has both tax and public relations benefits. ♦ **Carolyn Crump's** quilted wall-hangings are delighting collectors around the country. She is taking them to a new level with the addition of beads and ribbons to give them an even more sculptural quality. You can see one of her largest pieces in "Textural Rhythms: Constructing the Jazz Tradition" which just closed in Baltimore and opened April 20 at the Charles Wright Museum of African American History in Detroit. It will be there through August 31. ♦ Those of you that have been to our gallery or attended our road shows know how we are always introducing co-owner Eileen as our resident "know-it-all." This year marks her fortieth year loving and studying black art and we were thrilled when she was asked to be the African American art expert (Continued Page 4, Column 2)



This column has always been devoted to spotlighting artists; adding more of their human side to biographical information. So it only seems fitting to talk about someone that gave so many of the artists I've written about the 'helping-hand' needed to launch a career.

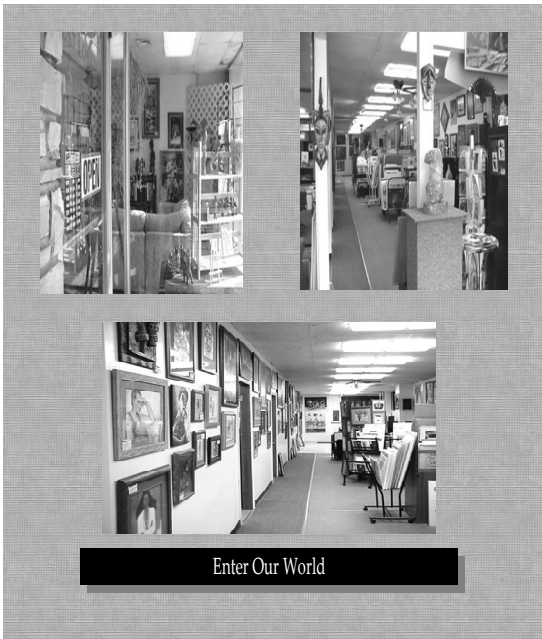
Lawrence Peter Dorsey 1919 - 2007

For many years whenever 'arts patron' came up in conversation; for some reason Dorsey's face always came to mind. But patron is far too simplistic a term to express the many roles in played in the furthering of Black Art; first in New York and ultimately the entire country. He was an art lover, collector, gallery owner, educator, and most of all, a mentor to several generations of African-American artists.

Born in St. Louis, he attended LeMoyne-Owen College in Memphis Tennessee; majoring in journalism. After a stint in the army; he lived in St. Louis before finally moving to Brooklyn in 1953.

We all have a point when we become collectors; for Dorsey it was during his time as head waiter on the S.S. United States cruise ship. When he retired he opened a bar (that must have been the inspiration for the legendary 'Friday nights at Dorsey's!') and several years later bought a frame shop in Brooklyn. That launched what became the longest, continuously open, black owned gallery in Brooklyn.

And what a gallery it was! Giving shows for (at the time) relatively unknown and under-shown black American artists; James Denmark, Tom Feelings, Otto Neals, Ernest Chrichlow, Elizabeth Catlett and Jacob Lawrence to name just a few; Dorsey's Gallery and his loyal support helped to give voice and exposure to countless artists. What incredible (Continued Page 3, Column 2)



Art Facts

prints, Prints, Prints (Revisited)

There still seems to be much confusion surrounding prints. To say not all prints are created equal is a vast understatement. Those of you that attended our seminars asked really good questions and we hope that you now understand which types of prints do have investment potential.

Without looking at a print through a magnifying loupe (the only way to see the Benday dots that comprise the image on an offset reproduction) how can you tell if what you are buying is an painting, an original hand-pulled graphic or a machine printed reproduction? Until a few years ago if a piece was on canvas and had brush strokes, you could be sure that you were seeing an original painting. That has changed with both gicleés and canvas transfers being printed on canvas with brush strokes added. As printing technology has advanced it has become more difficult to spot things with the 'naked eye' but these hints should help.

Types of machine printed pieces:

- Poster, offset print or offset lithograph (both open edition and numbered limited editions) - have a flat, uniform look. Borders of image are usually perfect.
- Gicleé, Iris print, Inkjet - more color saturation than offset printing, most have a sheen. Many are printed onto canvas.
- Canvas transfers - an existing print is lifted off the paper and bonded onto canvas. Brush strokes are often added to make them look more like a painting. Many of these are sold through home shows.

Types of hand-pulled prints:

- Intaglios (engravings, etchings, aquatints, mezzotints, drypoints) - look for an indented 'plate mark' right where the image ends.
- Woodcuts - edges of the lines will be somewhat irregular where the wood has been removed.
- Linocuts - look for a 'smudge' at the edges.
- Collagraphs - Since objects are 'built up' on a plate used to make these; the paper will have indented (pressed in) areas.
- Silkscreens/Serigraphs - look for slightly uneven edges.
- Lithographs - handpulled ones have a 'waxy' look.

What should a collector do? Get out and look at art in museums, fine art galleries and auctions to train your eye. Buy from established, reputable dealers. Ask lots of question. Ask for paperwork assuring that the piece you are considering is indeed an original piece (only one exists) or an original print pulled by either the artists themselves or a master printmaker under the auspices of the artist.

"I just consider myself to be an artist who happens to be black, who happens to have lived through black experience and inevitably, that's got to have an influence in your work. But if it is anything at all, it is American."
Charles Alston 1907-1977



HANG-UPS

Why Does Framing Cost So Much?

Our framing and wall arranging seminars proved to be two of our most popular last year. It has been fun to hear that many of you went home and re-arranged your walls based on some of our suggestions! With the ever rising cost of framing; personalized preservation framing, including the use of proper glass, helps to protect your investment and actually will save you money over time.

Those of you that attended our framing seminar seemed truly amazed at all the steps that go into proper preservation framing of works on paper. The use of conservation materials approved by the Library of Congress definitely contributes to the final price. Framing is also very labor intensive when art needs to be mounted by hinging or float mounted. Added to all that is the ever rising cost of having (heavy) wood molding shipped or delivered to us. Not to mention that the most beautiful frames all seem to come from Italy. So, can you get framing done that is both inexpensive and conservation? Maybe but remember sometimes low prices mean corners are being cut or inferior materials are being used. Be sure that the framer follows these guidelines:

- Any materials that touch the art from the front, back or sides must be acid-free.
- Never allow an original to be dry mounted, vacuum mounted, spray mounted or mounted in any way that can not be reversed years later without any residue left on the art. Paper hinges or Library of Congress approved corner mounts are the only acceptable ways to 'mount' works on paper.
- If a piece is being 'floated' have the art floated onto an acid-free white rag mat or piece of acid-free foam board rather than directly floated onto the mat. We have seen dye transfer on some pieces that were floated directly onto colored mat boards. While this usually happens only if a piece is subjected to very high humidity; it is not worth risking your investment.
- Never allow art to touch the glass (glazing) no matter what type of glass you use. Art needs to breathe. Some highly textured paintings will touch the glass even if you use double mats. Make sure spacers are used to protect the piece.

More do's and don'ts in the next issue

Dorsey (continued from page 1, Column 2)

vision he had to recognize these talents forty years ago and give artists the platform and venue so desperately needed so the world could discover what he already knew, this art would endure. His generosity continued throughout his life with events like his annual art auction; helping to buy equipment for local hospitals and provide toys for needy children.

I know now why Dorsey's picture always came to mind; he was the gallery owner, mentor, collector, friend to artists that I have always aspired to be.

"I am what time, circumstance, history, have made of me, certainly, but I am also, much more than that. So are we all."

James Baldwin (1924-1987)

Summertime Art Buying Blues

I should probably have a bumper sticker that states "I Brake For Art Festivals!" Or just art period. But while I'm rummaging through yard sales, meeting young artists, and looking at things I'll never see in galleries; that old 'Buyer Beware' voice echoes in my head. If I'm buying art for five dollars in someone's yard, I don't care if I have a receipt. But if I'm buying directly from the artist - I not only want a receipt; I make them write the title of the piece, their name, the medium, when it was created (it is amazing how many artists can't remember) and the price. I carry paper with me in case they don't have receipts. I make them give me the same information that we give our clients. Paper work is good - they may be the next Bearden!

SHOWS & EVENTS

March 14 - May 4
Concrete Abstraction

May 9 & 10
7th annual
Spring Fling
Manhattan

May 29 – July 6
Rhythmic Renditions

August 16 — September 14
Continental Drift

10 African Artists explore home

September 27
Annual Pehl Collection
Artist Open House
K. Wesley Clark
Michael C. Gibson

September 28 - October 26

“**INTERSESSION:**

COLOR MEETS CONTRAST”

December 6 - December 7
Annual Holiday Party/Opening
“Precious Petites”

Small works by the Just Lookin’ family of artists

Have You Heard (Continued from Page 1, Column 1)

on a new website ‘**America’s Next Black.**’ This entertaining and informative site can be accessed at www.americasnexblack.com and Eileen’s ramblings can be found in the expert’s corner. Take a look and log on with your opinions. Ask her the hard questions—she deserves it! ◇ **James Denmark** is busier than ever with several one-man shows coming up this year. He just spent a week at Benedict College (SC) and didn’t get a chance to be at the Swann auction to see the active bidding on one of his collages set a new auction record. His sculpture went for well over the catalog estimate. The remaining four pieces of the edition are still available. ◇ **Joseph Holston** has been busy painting the journey of the underground railroad, creating more than sixty pieces. ◇ California Senator Mark Thomas has selected **Synthia SAINT JAMES** to be the recipient of the 2008 “Woman of the Year” Award. Even if you don’t own any of her paintings; one of her more than sixty book covers (Terry McMillan’s *Waiting to Exhale*, *Disappearing Acts*, *Mama*, *Iyanla Vanzant’s Acts of Faith*, *Faith in the Valley* and *The Big Book of Faith* for starters!) is probably on your shelf right now. ◇ With the amazing public response to his ‘*Spirit Breakers*’ series; **Eli Kince** is creating a very limited edition silkscreen portfolio. We will have a special pre-publication offer for you soon. ◇ **Jamaal Sheats** is taking his repouseé in new directions with hand-coloring and paintings with copper or aluminum integrated onto the canvas. ◇ **Evita Tezeno’s** new series combining pencil, crayon and collage were a big hit at the NBFAS. ◇ With the success of last year’s **Second Saturday Seminars**; we are working on a new series for 2008. If we missed anything you would like to learn more about, suggestions are always welcome.

Until next time - Happy Collecting!

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