

St. James Guide to

BLACK ARTISTS



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Selected Performances:

- 1977 Studio Z, Los Angeles
- 1982 Barnes Municipal Gallery, Los Angeles
- 1983 Long Beach Museum of Art, California
- 1993 Whitney Museum at Philip Morris, New York
- 1994 Victor D'Amico Institute of Art, Amagansett, New York
- 1995 Studio Museum in Harlem, New York

Collections:

California Afro-American Museum, Los Angeles; California State University, Long Beach; Studio Museum in Harlem, New York.

Publications:

On HASSINGER: Articles—"Hassinger and Mahan: Works in Transition" by Sandy Ballatore, in *Artweek*, 4 September 1976, p. 4; "Steel Trees Grow Along Freeways" by Mark Stein, in *Los Angeles Times*, 22 November 1979; "An Artist Looking for Dangerous Ground" by Judith Hart-Sonte, *Museum of California*, November/December 1982; "Sticks and Stones at Kenkeleba" by Amy Slaton, in *East Village Eye*, November 1984, p. 35; "Bold Sculpture for Wide Open Space" by Michael Brenson, in *The New York Times*, 21 July 1989, pp. C1, C24; "Maren Hassinger at Soho 20" by Ken Johnson, in *Art in America*, May 1990, pp. 244-45; "Maren Hassinger" by Michael Brenson, in *The New York Times*, 29 March 1991, p. C19; "Airport Art for Pittsburgh" by Mary Jean Kenton, in *Art in America*, October 1992; "Interview" by Becky Godwin, in *Quadrille*, Spring 1993, p. 39; "Interview with Maren Hassinger" by Curtia James, in *Artpapers* (Georgia), January and February 1994, pp. 6-8.

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Maren Hassinger creates organic, living articles from inorganic, industrial materials. When she set out for her undergraduate degree at Bennington College in the mid-1960s, she intended to study dance. The school steered her toward sculpture, and later, as a graduate student at the University of California, Los Angeles, she became a fiber sculptor, eventually choosing wire rope as a favorite material.

With wire rope Hassinger could "create a semblance of growing things," and the mass of the subject could be created entirely from the "line" of the wire rope. She says her sculptures are "three dimensional drawings . . . pseudovolumes . . . they occupy space and are concerned with volume, like sculpture, yet their fundamental elements being line, they recall drawing." Her history of dance also remained in her work, and there often seems to be a sense of movement suggested in these "pseudovolumes."

There is also movement, of course, in her performance work. She says, "Performance helps me to get away from traditional aesthetic notions . . . from the aesthetic frame [of mind] and the work, the artifice that prevents me from communicating directly with the spectator." Furthermore, Hassinger has been more recently working on video and multimedia works. Though Hassinger is not interested in the "commodity" nature of some art, she is interested in the more popular aspect of film. "I have a new appetite now not for the quiet, but for 'remembering' and 'speaking.' The quiet stuff is egoless . . . the new stuff is about experience and has to have ego in it. I like the idea that film is seen by more people."

Hassinger remembers a particular art exhibit, of the sculpture of Eva Hesse, that especially influenced her work. "After seeing a major show of [Hesse's] work at the Pasadena Museum—particularly a piece called *Seven Poles*, an incredible experience—I felt she was looking at someone's spirit made manifest. The sculpture was like flesh, luminous and transparent as though Hesse had put all the experience of her life into it." Seeing Hesse's work was like a confirmation to Hassinger that she was headed in the right direction, as Hassinger puts her life into her work and makes her work out of her life.

—Terry Bain

HAWKINS, Cynthia

American painter

Born: New York, 1950. **Education:** Queens College, City University of New York, B.F.A. 1977; Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore, M.F.A. 1992; Brooklyn Museum Art School, New York. **Family:** Married, two children. **Awards:** Award, Provincetown Workshop, Brooklyn Museum Art School, New York, 1985; fellowship, Studio Museum in Harlem, 1987; Patricia Roberts Harris Fellowship, 1990-91, 1991-92.

Individual Exhibitions:

- 1974 Queens College, New York
- 1981 Midtown/Downtown Gallery, New York
- 1986 Francis Wolfson Art Center, Miami-Dade Community College, Florida
- 1989 Cinque Gallery, New York

Selected Group Exhibitions:

- 1979 Emily Lowe Gallery, Hempstead, New York
- 1980 Jamaica Art Center, New York
- Bronx Museum, New York
- 1984 James Szoke Gallery, New York
- Mississippi Museum of Art, Jackson
- Augusta Savage Gallery, University of Massachusetts, Amherst
- 1986 Grace Borgenticht Gallery, New York
- Kenkeleba Gallery, New York
- 1988 Studio Museum in Harlem, New York
- 1990 Dome Gallery, New York
- 1991 Decker Art Gallery, Baltimore, Maryland

Publications:

On HAWKINS: Book—*Cynthia Hawkins*, exhibition catalog, Miami, Francis Wolfson Art Center and Judith Wilson, 1986. **Articles**—"Cynthia Hawkins" by Judith Wilson, in *Art in America*, October 1980; "Cynthia Hawkins" by Vivian Raynor, in *New York Times*, 20 July 1984; "African-American Women Artists: Another Generation, Cynthia Hawkins" by Thelma Golden, in *International Review of African American Art*, 9(2), January 1991.

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Cynthia Hawkins has said that, about the time when she was in high school, "for some reason there were two Jackson Pollocks on exhibit behind glass. . . . I wondered where this work came from, where in him did it come from, how could this be. I was enthralled, amazed. I think that is what finally gripped me about art, that it has so many faces, so many forms, and it is up to the artist which way to go."

Hawkins's exploration of "which way to go" has led her to an abstract expressionist style of painting. In her early work she combined painting with sculpture, covering all sides of an object so that it would seem a different work from every angle. Later her work began to investigate the geometry of two dimensions as she began painting mostly on canvas. In her two-dimensional works, Hawkins uses a mature and highly developed vocabulary of abstraction. Symbols and signs, calligraphic and static marks, choice of color and layering of brush stroke divide, unite, and move across the face of her canvases.

In her "Currency of Meaning" series, Hawkins divides space into separate areas that are sometimes referred to as habitats, environments, or fields. The "inhabitants" of Hawkins's environments differ and sometimes contrast enough that it might seem each environment is its own painting, related to other environments perhaps only by being a part of the same painting. Parts of a painting may touch on familiar territory for Hawkins, as in *Currency of Meaning* #5 and #6 (1989), where the bottom field in each is a grid of squares; other fields may be more intuitive and abstract and perhaps difficult to interpret without close examination. Hawkins says this is a compositional device to indicate motion, something like that occurring on a television screen, which offers a continuous stream of images that combine to form the illusion of motion. Even the lines separating environment in her paintings include motion, as in *Currency of Meaning* #9, where the lines do not just divide but incorporate symbols (arrows) leading the eye toward the center field of the painting.

Cynthia Hawkins is not concerned much with interpretations of her paintings. As with most abstract expression, there is room for levels of interpretation and meaning not intended by the artist but observed by the viewer. In any case, it is not necessarily the product of painting to which Cynthia Hawkins devotes her energy but the painting itself. "I am in love with the very act of painting," she says, "the magic, mystery, and meaning. It is about the self, and the world, and vision. Anyone who says painting is dead has no vision."

—Terry Bain

HAYDEN, Palmer

American painter

Born: Peyton Cole Hedgeman, Wide Water, Virginia, 15 January 1890 (1893 in some sources). **Education:** Studied under Victor Perard, Cooper Union, New York, 1919; Boothbay Art Colony, Maine, beginning 1925; studied with M. Clivette LeFevre, École des Beaux-Arts, Paris, 1927-32. **Military Service:** U.S. Army, 1914. **Family:** Married Miriam Hoffman, a schoolteacher. **Career:** House cleaner, postal clerk, and porter, 1919. Easel painter, Division of Public Works, 1934-40. **Awards:** Harmon Gold Award in Fine Arts, Harmon Foundation, 1926; Rockefeller Prize, 1933;

American Veteran's Society of Artists honorable mention, 1965; CAPS Fellowship, 1973. **Died:** 18 February 1973.

Individual Exhibitions:

- 1935 New Jersey State Museum, Trenton
- 1937 Bernheim-Jeune Gallery, Paris
- 1939 Baltimore Museum of Art, Maryland
- 1947 Argent Gallery, New York
- 1954 New York Public Library
- 1974 Studio Museum in Harlem, New York

Selected Group Exhibitions:

- 1928 Harmon Foundation, Tuskegee, Alabama
- 1930 Salon des Tuileries, Paris
- 1933 Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.
- 1940 Rockefeller Center Galleries, New York
- Tanner Art Galleries, Chicago
- 1945 Albany Institute of History and Art, New York
- 1968 Studio Museum in Harlem, New York
- 1970 Newark Museum, New Jersey
- 1976 Los Angeles County Museum of Art, California
- 1985 Bellevue Art Museum, Washington (traveling)

Collections:

Atlanta University, Georgia; Fisk University, Nashville; Oakland Museum, California; Smithsonian Museum, Washington, D.C.

Publications:

On HAYDEN: Book—*Echoes of Our Past: The Narrative Artistry of Palmer C. Hayden* by Allan M. Gordon, Los Angeles, Museum of African-American Art, 1988.

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Palmer Hayden, named Peyton Cole Hedgemen at birth, is best known for his paintings of rural and urban black folk. The circumstances under which his name was changed are unclear, but it is known that he was a laborer and U. S. soldier for many years before giving his full time to painting. Mostly self-taught, he was well into adulthood before receiving any academic art training. At one time Hayden studied to be a commercial artist but realized that his desire to be a fine artist was stronger, and he consequently pursued formal training.

A turning point in the fledgling artist's life came when he joined the Boothbay Harbor art colony in Maine, where, exchanging labor for instruction, he learned more about composition and color. Later, after winning first prize in the Harmon Foundation's first exhibit in 1926 for one of his Boothbay Harbor paintings, Hayden moved to Paris and connected with established artists who offered their criticism and taught him technique. Although he developed as an artist during the Harlem Renaissance, he did not completely fit into the movement's ideological mold. Hayden was not compelled to paint in abstract form or to paint with African themes, although *Fétiche et fleurs* (1928-32), which includes an African fetish and weaving, closely resembles the African-cubist style that was popular at the time.

Hayden's paintings exhibit varying styles. His early works were mostly of the waterfront and scenes of Paris. *Boothbay Harbor*.