



AFRICOBRA: Nation Time

Collateral Event of the 58th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia

AFRICOBRA: Nation Time has been selected as an official Collateral Event of Biennale Arte 2019 (May 11th – November 24th 2019), in Venice, Italy.

Promoted by bardoLA, originated and supported by the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) North Miami, and curated by Jeffreen M. Hayes, Ph.D., this will be the first major exhibition of AFRICOBRA's work in Europe. The exhibition is made possible with the generous support by Kavi Gupta Gallery, Chicago, Illinois, the City of North Miami, Florida, and the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.

AFRICOBRA was founded on the South Side of Chicago in 1968 by a collective of young Black artists, whose interest in Transnational Black Aesthetics led them to create one of the most distinctive visual voices in 20th Century American art. The key characteristics to what we now consider the classic AFRICOBRA look—vibrant, “cool-ade” colors, bold text, shine and positive images of Black people —were essential to everyday life in the community from which this movement emerged. It is a movement with roots in the soil, streets, classrooms, studios, and living rooms of the South Side of Chicago—yet its influence has extended around the world.

The five AFRICOBRA founders—Jeff Donaldson, Wadsworth Jarrell, Jae Jarrell, Barbara Jones-Hogu and Gerald Williams—understood the potential power visual art has to communicate deep meaning on multiple layers. They had the sophistication to mobilize the organic elements of their everyday visual environment into something capable of affecting the hearts, minds, and spirits of contemporary people. Their collective impact, in addition to Napoleon Jones-Henderson and Nelson Stevens both of whom joined the group in 1969, on the visual arts scene helped establish the visual voice of the Black Arts Movement of the 1960s and 70s. Their further impact—as artists, educators, and community leaders—has brought the members of AFRICOBRA to the forefront of contemporary conversations about the history, legacy, and future of Black Art in America and the world.

AFRICOBRA: Nation Time is the next chapter of *AFRICOBRA: Messages to the People*, which premiered at MOCA North Miami during Art Basel Miami 2018. *AFRICOBRA: Nation Time* will focus entirely on the historic aspects of this vital, Chicago-born Black Arts collective. More than 40 works will be on view by **Jeff Donaldson, Gerald Williams, Jae Jarrell, Wadsworth Jarrell, Barbara Jones-Hogu, Napoleon Jones-Henderson, and Nelson Stevens**. Historic documentation, archival photographs and other ephemera will be showcased throughout the exhibition offering a unique and comprehensive narrative of AFRICOBRA's birth and evolution on the South Side of Chicago in the late 1960s and early 1970s and its reverberating effect on the art scenes of Washington, DC, New York City, and Lagos, Nigeria.

This groundbreaking, museum quality exhibition will be mounted within the historic, picturesque Venetian Gothic palazzo of Ca' Faccanon, offering more than 9,000 square feet of exhibition space on two floors, adorned with its original Venetian plaster and Murano chandeliers. Its perfectly central location is only meters away from the Rialto Bridge and St. Mark's square.

AFRICOBRA: Nation Time at Biennale Arte 2019 is the first time the work of this vital, definitive, and historic Black Arts collective has been given the opportunity to be celebrated by global audiences on this scale. *AFRICOBRA: Nation Time* is an exhibition of historic importance for the Black Arts Movement in the United

States and all international audiences who are curious to discover more about the ways in which the aesthetic of African American artists relates to politics, culture and identity. Capturing the sentiment of their time with a visual language of vivid colors, rhythm, compositional arrangement and shine, the artists in *AFRICOBRA: Nation Time* reflect how a marginalized group found a way to empower themselves in a society that consistently denied them their power.

“The fullness of Blackness is important in our global culture and AFRICOBRA addresses and connects the Diaspora in their art,” said Curator Hayes. “While it represents this movement of nationhood in the 1970s, this exhibition explores the social and political fabric that continues to hold Black people together, even through the struggle in our contemporary moment.”

For more information about *AFRICOBRA: Nation Time*, please contact Abbie Lipton at Durée & Company, Inc., +1. 954-723-9350, abbie@dureeandcompany.com or Elizabeta Betinski at bardoLA, +1.310.902.3027, hello@bardoLA.org

bardoLA is a Los Angeles based nonprofit arts organization dedicated to promoting international exchange of arts and culture via traveling exhibitions and events; making art available in public spaces; and supporting its local creative community by way of partnering with like-minded entities. bardoLA was founded in 2014 by Elizabeta Betinski, a writer and curator with roots transplanted to Los Angeles from Belgrade, former Yugoslavia. Elizabeta was a founder and Director of Overtones Gallery, a contemporary art gallery in Los Angeles that showcased 70+ national and international artists in over forty exhibitions from 2003 through 2009. She was a co-editor of the seminal encyclopedia on Los Angeles artists, *L.A. Rising: SoCal Artists Before 1980*, published in December 2010 by the California/International Arts Foundation where Elizabeta served as a co-director. In 2017, Elizabeta Betinski served as the Executive Director of the inaugural Desert X, a major international biennial exhibition featuring site-specific artworks across the California desert. bardoLA presented its first Collateral Exhibition at La Biennale di Venezia in 2015, bringing twenty contemporary Los Angeles artists to the Biennale Arte 2015 with the exhibition “*We Must Risk Delight: Twenty Artists from Los Angeles.*”

The **Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) North Miami** is dedicated to making contemporary art accessible to diverse audiences – especially underserved populations – through the collection, preservation and exhibition of the best of contemporary art and its art historical influences. The Museum of Contemporary Art expanded from the original Center of Contemporary Art, which was inaugurated in 1981 in a modest single gallery space. The Museum opened a new building in 1996 designed by Charles Gwathmey of GSNY, who worked in conjunction with Miami firm Gelabert-Navia in the creation of the space. The museum is a site for discovering new artists, contemplating the work of contemporary masters, and learning about our living cultural heritage. The Museum of Contemporary Art is known for its provocative and innovative exhibitions, and for seeking a fresh approach in examining the art of our time. The museum maintains an active exhibition schedule, presenting 8 to 10 exhibitions annually.

Kavi Gupta is a leading contemporary art gallery based in Chicago. Its two permanent gallery locations host more than a dozen museum-quality exhibitions each year, and its publishing imprint, Kavi Gupta Editions, produces unique, high quality artist books and catalogues. Kavi Gupta's diverse, international program emphasizes contemporary artists from marginalized communities with complex, multifaceted practices. Working alongside these artists to develop new projects, original scholarship, and historic archives, Kavi Gupta's program is renowned for its strong academic focus and pioneering vision. Kavi Gupta is proud to be a three-time recipient of the prestigious International Association of Art Critics (AICA-USA) Award for Best Show in a Commercial Space Nationally, most recently for Mickalene Thomas in 2014. Since its inception, the gallery program has been supplemented by site-specific installations, public works, academic panels, and curated projects at art fairs.