



Artist's Favorites

By Rhea Dillon



This was meant to be a list of “artist’s artists” who have not been revered enough, perhaps by a masses, stated the magazine’s prompt. This list, however, is no attempt at that. Instead, it consists of people who first came to mind, that I like to carry with me in my mind. Some lived as artists. Some did not. Regardless, they hold in their legacies tales of their own wielding, which have everything to do with how to be stretched and held by beauty, not necessarily with what someone should look at.

© Suzanne Jackson. Courtesy: the artist and Ortuzar Projects, New York. Photo: Tim Doyon



Suzanne Jackson

From one Aquarius to another, I knew I was in the presence of a journey that begins again and again with every gaze. That’s how Suzanne Jackson’s suspended acrylic and mixed media works affect both my vision and thinking. Eyes feel like they are working on the piece with her – at both a loss and a control. I want to lose myself in Jackson’s suspended works, which I’m grateful are consistently installed to be viewable from 360 degrees. Then, there’s her acrylic-on-canvas paintings: The way she affects the paint, into something dreamy and almost watercolor-like, leads me down Toni Morrison-esque storytelling. The washes feel like words of nuance only Jackson and a single viewer at a time can understand. An intimacy is present here, yet the spaces in the paintings allow the viewer to fill or fit oneself into the gaps. You can become part of her myths. I see so much connection to myth, fables, and folktales in these works that are treated as subtleties by their single-word/phrase titles. *Sundown* (1974), *Talk* (1976), and *Triplical Communications* (1969) sound like the beginnings of folktales that a black diaspora knows best how to tell.

Born 1944 in St. Louis, lives in Savannah, Georgia.

In a Black Man's Garden, 1973, and graphite on gessoed canvas, triptych, 272.5 x 211 x 4 cm each



Suzanne Jackson, *pressed greens*, 2021, acrylic, acrylic detritus, pressed flowers, paper, burlap, woven braid, D-rings, 139 x 66 x 12 cm
Courtesy: the artist and The Modern Institute / Toby Webster Ltd., Glasgow. Photo: Patrick Jameson

Courtesy: Jenkins Johnson Gallery, New York, San Francisco, and Los Angeles



Aubrey Williams

Born in the former British Guiana, Aubrey Williams is someone I look to for depth in color. Being heavily influenced by pre-Colombian art – although many abstract expressionists have used an array of bright tones of late – I’m taken by Williams’s muteness. The dullness of his palette has a swallowing effect, due to the texture and energy he produces through layering that I love to be struck by. I was first swept up by him in the National Gallery of Jamaica’s collection in 2018, and in the rehang at Tate Britain, a whole room has been dedicated to his paintings. This immersive way of reading the work has further cemented him as not only one of my favorite artists, but as someone whose work I would love to be read by every day.

Born 1926 in Georgetown, Guyana, died 1990 in London.

Aubrey Williams, *Chakmul IV*, 1975, oil on canvas, 80 x 105 cm

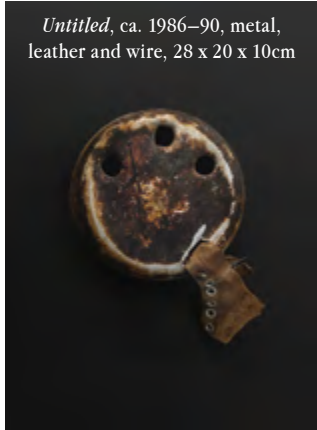


Hawkins Bolden, *Untitled*, ca. 1986–90, metal, rubber and wire, 48 x 25 x 7.5 cm

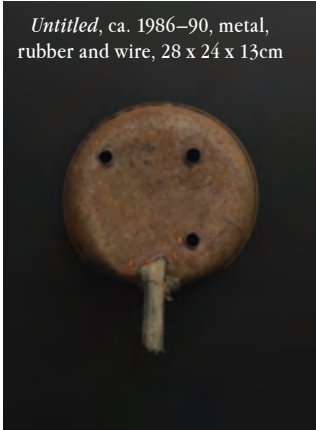
Hawkins Bolden

Seriality as both self-process and output became a question of study for me a couple summers ago. Hawkins Bolden proved a path worth following and extended my affinity for assemblage. Bolden was just seven years old when a baseball accident involving his twin brother left him blind and with lasting effects on his brain, including seizures. In his later life, he made work from discarded materials sourced, using only his sense of touch, from fields and alleyways near his home. The results were a number of incredible works, like the totemic “scarecrows” and mask-like objects that made up the 2020 exhibition “Tongues” at Robert Heald Gallery in Wellington, New Zealand. All of his works are untitled, which suggests, borrowing from Jacques Rancière, “no need for a title – the photograph (sic) itself is sufficiently eloquent on the subject.” This is the only case where I accept “Untitled” as a title or non-title. I think Bolden’s work is a great example of the fact that, where senses like language and sight fall short, intrigue and desire can still exist.

Born 1914 in Memphis, died 2005 in Memphis.



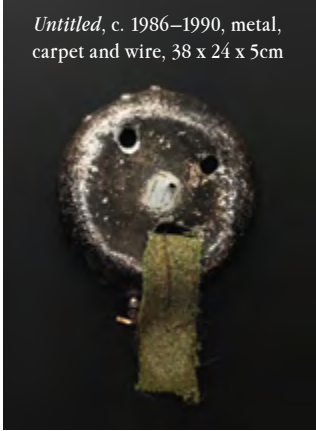
Untitled, ca. 1986–90, metal, leather and wire, 28 x 20 x 10cm



Untitled, ca. 1986–90, metal, rubber and wire, 28 x 24 x 13cm



Untitled, c. 1986–1990, metal, rubber and wire, 35.5 x 25 x 7.5cm



Untitled, c. 1986–1990, metal, carpet and wire, 38 x 24 x 5cm



© Dorothea Rockburne/Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York. Courtesy: Dia Art Foundation, New York. Photo: Bill Jacobson Studio, New York

View of “Dorothea Rockburne,” Dia:Beacon, Beacon, New York, 2018–22

Dorothea Rockburne

I discovered Dorothea Rockburne in one of my favorite art spaces: Dia Beacon. To be among her work is to be confronted by questions of study and time. She puts to the test her medium of choice: paper. I think of paper as a most tender material, but Rockburne shatters that notion with works that peel off, bifurcate, and often fold against the walls. I’ve been returning to Deleuze’s fold theory in my practice, which holds that the marginalized individual can encounter an alternate self through the fold. It’s an idea that I see with an affinity in Rockburne, whose folds make space for the margin to be seen in its minimal glory. A fold for a margin. A margin for a fold. I bend to her practice when I am lucky enough to witness it, for it truly demands a presence of sight/site, unlike versions of digital or printed life. I can’t wait to study a single medium for as long as she has – and I only hope to make something as beautiful.

Born 1932 in Montréal, lives in New York.



Barbara Ferland

While I was in the poetry archives at the National Library of Jamaica, Barbara Ferland was one of two women poets that I found whose work was published before Jamaica became independent in 1962 (the other was the revered dub poet Louise “Miss Lou” Bennett-Coverley). Ferland’s less widely claimed style, which I would call “Caribbean poetics,” was ahead of its time. While researching and working through the final work for my current exhibition, “An Alterable Terrain” (Art Now, Tate Britain), I was feeling deeply connected to cal-abashes, which Barbara mentioned in the poem “At the University” (1960), and how reminiscent of the womb they are. During my time in Kingston, I was reading from a series of anthologies of Caribbean poetry, and hers proved to be the only one that stood out for me. Then, when I was back in my studio in London, I realized the correlation whilst listening to my friend cktrl’s song “Will the Feelings Leave” (2020); it felt like fate aligning, and I cried in deep relief, recognizing that my innate sense of following where my energy leads had, yet again, proved to be the best thing for me.

Born 1919 in Spanish Town, Jamaica, died in England (date unknown).

RHEA DILLON

(*1996, London) is an artist, writer, and poet based in London. Surveying and abstracting her intrigue of the “rules of representation” as a device to undermine contemporary Western culture, Dillon probes what constitutes the ontology of Blackness versus the ontic. Recent solo shows took place at Tate Britain, London; Sweetwater, Berlin (both 2023); Soft Opening, London (2022). Recent group shows include “Real Corporeal,” Gladstone Gallery, New York (2022); “Catgut – The Opera,” Park Nights, Serpentine Pavilion, London (2021).