

Color in Freedom

Journey along the Underground Railroad



After Harriet, Mixed media, 2008



The Quarters, Mixed media, 2008



Dawn of Hope, Mixed media, 2008

The stories of the Underground Railroad are some of the most powerful in American history. *Color in Freedom: Journey along the Underground Railroad* is an exhibition of 49 paintings, etchings and drawings by Joseph Holston created to capture the essence of the courage and determination required to escape, and to enhance understanding of the condition of slavery and the powerful instinct toward freedom. *Color in Freedom* is a visual interpretation and expression of a range of human experiences and emotions within the framework of this particular period in American history.

The exhibition consists of four movements that track the flow of events in the lives of those who traveled along the Underground

Railroad: The Unknown World, Living in Bondage, The Journey of Escape, and finally, Color in Freedom.

The exhibition *Color in Freedom* is organized by the Arts Program of the University of Maryland University College. An accompanying educational component includes an integrated, multi-disciplinary package including a virtual exhibition tour to be used in various classroom settings, and integrated lesson plans for specific disciplines as they relate to the virtual exhibition, such as: artistic interpretation of a historic event; artistic technique and style, including color and form; and cultural and social significance.

Color in Freedom

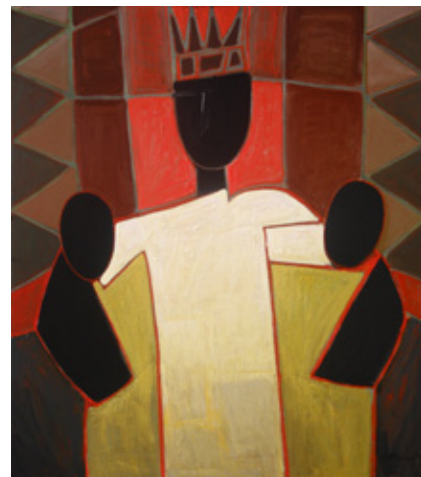
Journey along the Underground Railroad



Bedtimes, Mixed media, 2008



Property Loss, Acrylic on canvas, 2008



Protection, Mixed media, 2008

EXHIBITION SPECIFICATIONS

Number of Works:

49 paintings, etchings and drawings

Participation Fee:

\$6,500

Publication:

Full color exhibition catalogue published by Pomegrante Press

Organized by:

University of Maryland University College, Adelphi, MD

Reduced Fee:

\$3,000 January 2012 - September 2012

Booking Period:

8-week booking period

Requirements:

Moderate security;
190 running feet

Shipping:

Exhibitors pay outgoing shipping costs within contiguous US

Contact:

Jacqueline Whelchel
Exhibitions Manager
jackyw@artsandartists.org

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Arrival in the Unknown, Mixed media, 2008



Unbearable Loss, Mixed media, 2008



Subjection, Etching, 2008

The Unknown World

Africans brought to America were kidnapped from homes, families and communities that represented the entire world as they knew it, and brought to a foreign land to face an uncertain future in a hostile environment. In the first movement of the exhibition, Holston captures the sharpness of the divide

between the old world and the new by juxtaposing the warm colors enveloping the kingly figure in *Protection*, against the somber and muted tones in the scenes that follow. From initial despair to inconsolable loss, this movement chronicles the harsh adjustment to the unknown life that awaits the enslaved.

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Dawn of Despair, Acrylic on canvas, 2008

Living in Bondage – Life on the Plantation

Once they were sold and transported to their new homes, slaves were forced, usually quite harshly, to adapt to the circumstances of their new lives. For most, this new reality was centered on back-breaking, mind-numbing work, from before sunrise until after sunset. In the second movement, which opens with *Dawn of Despair*, the slaves awaken not simply to the dawn of a new day, but of an entirely new world. What was unknown becomes commonplace, and there is some peace and solace in tending to a *Private Plot*, or feeding chickens at a *Place of Respite*. Holston's trademark use of line, form and color are employed to convey emotions ranging from deepest despair, to fear and menace, to profound love as seen in *Madonna and Child*. While thoughts of escape and freedom may simmer below the surface, this movement confirms the inherent dignity in mastering the art of survival.



Private Plot, Acrylic on canvas, 2008



Place of Respite, Mixed media, 2008

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In Plain Sight, Acrylic on canvas, 2008



Pater-Roller (Study), Acrylic on paper, 2008

Journey of Escape

For most slaves, freedom was imaginable but not achievable. For tens of thousands, the promise of freedom was strong enough to overcome doubts and fears, and action was the only answer. The body of work in this movement harnesses and channels the energy of that action, and celebrates those who risked everything for their freedom. There is forward motion in the trees, the roads, even in the crackling fire in the woods of *House of Refuge*. Even the devastation of the lynching in *Property Loss* is incapable of slowing the steady, deliberate roll toward freedom. The furtive promise of safety offered by the house in *Freedom Stop* is another example of Holston using light in a way that can have many literal interpretations, but that ultimately maintains its role as a beacon of hope in an environment of uncertainty.



Long Road, Mixed media, 2008

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Righteous Rejoicing, Mixed media, 2008

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The fourth movement's exhilarating explosion of color signals both the end of the journey toward freedom, and the beginning of a life in freedom. It is the visual counterpart of a resounding and triumphal musical climax. Holston's pointed use of musicians and musical instruments in *Magnificent Melody* and *Rhythm of Renewal*; and dancing in *Jubilation* and *Righteous Rejoicing*, firmly grounds the works of this segment in the realm of celebratory music. However, even as these works convey joyful sound and motion, there is still a somber dignity in the figures of the segment's first work *Freedom Realized*, and the last piece in the segment and the entire series, *Responsibility of Freedom*. These works echo past accomplishments and forecast future achievements—each requiring courage and fierce determination of spirit.



Jubilation, Mixed media, 2008



Sun Warms the Freeman, Mixed media, 2008

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Joseph Holston

Painter and printmaker, Joseph Holston is best known for his use of vivid color, abstracted forms and expressive lines, reflecting his appreciation for musical composition. He states, "Lines play a very important part in my art. I want the art to speak to the viewer, and for the viewer's response to become part of the art. Ideally, viewers will become so interwoven in the art that the line between where the viewer ends and the art begins no longer exists." His abstract style draws from the cubist tradition, perfecting his ability to communicate his subjects' emotion. Viewers quickly understand the love and emotion shared between his figures. The slightest disarrangement of hands, raised eyebrows, and titled head depicts the bravery and dreams of the men and women Holston renders. His forms reflect his appreciation for musical composition.

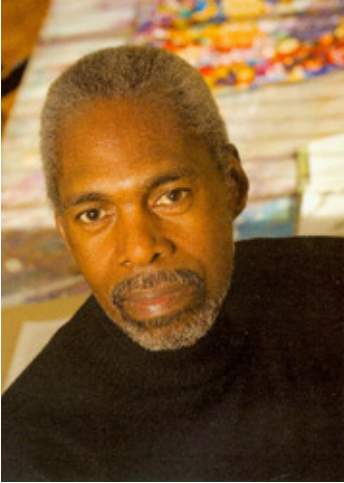
Joseph Holston's cubist abstractionist style has evolved over a fine arts career spanning more than 35 years. A critically acclaimed artist, he has exhibited at the Smithsonian's Anacostia Museum, Washington, DC; the Reginald F. Lewis Museum of African American History and Culture, Baltimore; the African-American Museum of Philadelphia; the Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art, Pennsylvania; the Arts Program Gallery at the University of Maryland University College; the Visual Arts Center of Northwest Florida; the Fort Worth Museum of Fine Art, Texas; the DuSable Museum, Chicago; the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; North Carolina A&T State University; Delaware State University; the APEX Museum, Atlanta; and the Butler Institute of American Art in Youngstown, Ohio.

Holston has also exhibited and been a guest lecturer at DePauw University in Greencastle, Indiana; the University of Maryland Eastern Shore; the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania; Howard University in Washington, DC; Delaware State University, in Dover; Bowling Green State University, Ohio; Villa Julie College in Stevenson, Maryland; and the Visual Arts Center of Northwest in Panama City, Florida. He has also been artist-in-residence at North Carolina A&T State University in Greensboro, and at the Experimental Printmaking Institute at Lafayette College in Easton, Pennsylvania. His work has been commissioned by North Carolina A&T State University in Greensboro; the AFL-CIO in Washington, DC; the Miller Brewing Company in Milwaukee; the National Urban Coalition in Easton, Georgia; the National Medical Association in Washington, DC; Gallo Winery in Modesto, California; and the Washington Urban League in Washington, DC.

Works by Joseph Holston are included in numerous museum, institution, and private collections. Among these are the permanent collection of the Yale University Art Gallery; the Lyndon B. Johnson Library at the University of Texas; DePauw University, Howard University, the University of Maryland University College, the David C. Driskell Center at the University of Maryland in College Park; the Baltimore Museum of Art; the Washington County Museum of Fine Art in Hagerstown, Maryland; the Banneker-Douglass Museum in Annapolis, Maryland; the Butler Institute of American Art in Youngstown, Ohio; the Museum of Art at the Rhode Island School of Design in Providence; the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in New York; the King-Tisdell Cottage Museum in Savannah, Georgia; the AFL-CIO, Washington, DC; the Hubert H. Humphrey Collection, the Evans-Tibbs Collection, the Donald Byrd Collection, and the Jean and Robert Steele Collection.

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Creating this body of work was both a privilege and a source of inspiration. In capturing the spiritual and emotional essence of this journey that is an essential part of my own history, I felt a strong sense of connection, and a bond with lives just a few generations removed. My principal goal was to honor those lives, and to do justice to their history and their stories. This was a very personal undertaking, during which I could almost feel the dread of capture, the degradation of enslavement, the terror of escape and the exhilaration of freedom. I had many of my own down days while recreating this journey, which I now know were essential in order for me to communicate these stories.

In every canvas, light or the contrast between light and dark means hope, even in the bleakest situations. As I worked my way through the movements toward freedom, my color palette and my mood changed from drab to bright. As we moved together toward our goal, the more generous splashes of color, with light edging out darkness, anticipated our hard won freedom, which I was finally able to express in vibrant, joyous colors.

Finally, it was very natural to conceive and execute *Color in Freedom* in movements, like a great jazz or symphonic score, with a definite beginning, middle and climax. Music is integral to my art, and for me music and art intertwine so completely that I see, hear and feel them simultaneously. Each influences the other and helps defines what unfolds on the canvas.