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Pomegranate is Publishing 2018 Calendar Devoted to Paintings by Eldzier Cortor, More Products Featuring African American Artists on Horizon

by VICTORIA L. VALENTINE on Mar 10, 2017 • 11:49 am

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ELDZIER CORTOR 2018 CALENDAR



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Eldzier Cortor's "Classical Study No. 39," 1979 (oil on canvas) is featured on the cover of Pomegranate's 2018 calendar.

KATIE BURKE WAS VISITING Michael Rosenfeld Gallery in New York when she saw a major painting by **Eldzier Cortor** (1916–2015) and it sparked an idea. The publisher of Pomegranate Communications, Burke was very familiar with Cortor. The Portland, Ore.-based company produces art books, calendars and gift products and for more than a dozen years has collaborated with the gallery on wall calendars showcasing works by 20th century African American artists including Cortor, whose stately and graceful images often celebrate the black female figure.



Since 2003, the calendars have featured Charles Alston, Benny Andrews, Romare Bearden, John Biggers, Jacob Lawrence, Hughie Lee-Smith, Archibald Motley, William H. Johnson, Norman Lewis, Betye Saar, Alma Thomas, Bob Thompson, Laura Wheeler Waring, Charles White, and Hale Woodruff, among others. Many included Cortor's paintings, too.

Experiencing Cortor's work in person that day, not long after he died in 2015, convinced Burke it was time to devote an entire calendar to the African American artist. The product is coming soon. Pomegranate is publishing a [2018 wall calendar](#) featuring a selection of Cortor's works held by museums including the Art Institute of Chicago, Museum of Fine Art Boston, and the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts.

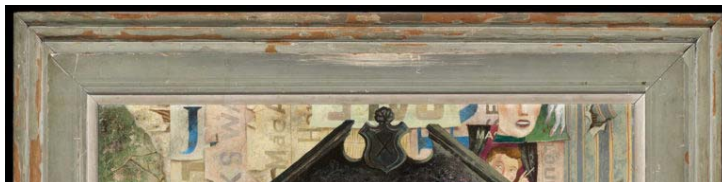
Cortor's "On Tour," a 1997 painting from a private collection depicts an interior scene with a standing wardrobe suitcase complete with overflowing drawers. The image appeared in a 2003 calendar and is also included in the forthcoming 2018 edition.

"Pomegranate has always had an interest in his work. Eldzier Cortor was very special to the gallery and we were thrilled that they were interested in revisiting a calendar project with us with Eldzier as the subject," halley k harrisburg, director of Michael Rosenfeld Gallery, told Culture Type.

"Eldzier was very cautious about the projects he would allow, but I feel this is something he would be very proud of. For years and years, we did an annual calendar with Pomegranate Press that featured important masterworks by the important historic African American artists and Eldzier was always included as one of the months. He was always delighted and always wrote Katie Burke at Pomegranate a nice note thanking her for his inclusion. So I think he would be delighted to know that he is now not just a one month calendar boy, but a 12-month."

"[Eldzier Cortor] was always delighted and always wrote Katie Burke at Pomegranate a nice note thanking her for his inclusion. So I think he would be delighted to know that he is now not just a one month calendar boy, but a 12-month." — halley harrisburg, Michael Rosenfeld Gallery

During his lifetime, the gallery never officially represented Cortor, but had a close, informal relationship handling the artist's rights and reproductions. Without a formal contract, the gallery continues to do the same with Michael Cortor, who oversees his father's estate. "He shares our enthusiasm" for the project, harrisburg said.



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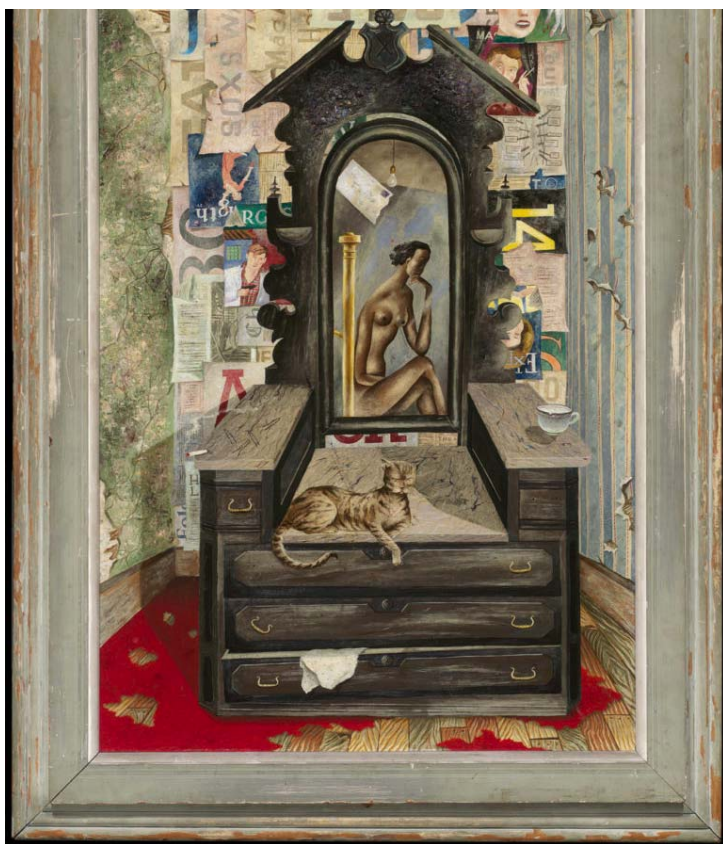


Lorna Simpson Joins Hauser & Wirth, New York Gallery Represents the Conceptual Artist and Photographer Worldwide



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BLACK RADICAL WOMEN: THIS SPRING SEVERAL GROUP SHOWS BRING TOGETHER WORKS BY AFRICAN AMERICAN FEMALE ARTISTS



ELDZIER CORTOR, "Room No. V," 1948 (oil on masonite). | Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Acquisition made possible through multiple gifts and funds. © Eldzier Cortor; Courtesy of Michael Rosenfeld Gallery, LLC, New York, NY Photograph © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

MICHAEL ROSENFELD PROVIDED Pomegranate with about 30 images of Cortor's work and Burke narrowed the selection down to 12. "Classic Study No. 39," a 1979 painting depicting a black woman in profile, appears on the cover of the calendar. Extending from her lithe hand, a single finger touches her chin in the image, drawing attention to her striking facial features. Framed between the feminine floral fabric of her head scarf and the bold yellow gold-colored fabric draped in the background, her features are further emphasized. Another painting included in the calendar, "Southern Landscape" (1941), was recently acquired by the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts.

The [product description](#) gives an overview of Cortor's background and inspirations.

"Born in Richmond, Virginia, Cortor was raised in Chicago after his family moved north to escape southern racism. He found his artistic center early, first through exposure to African sculpture while attending the Art Institute of Chicago, and soon after during a two-year stay in the Sea Islands, off the coast of Georgia and the Carolinas. There he observed Gullah communities, whose flourishing culture and preserved heritage, despite a history of slavery, became Cortor's muse. He continued on to Jamaica, Cuba, and Haiti, where he also found examples of surviving West African culture. For decades, while living in New York City, Cortor painted this dynamic—the old world thriving amid the new—in paintings rife with symbolism."

Burke told me Pomegranate has always been "big fans" of Cortor's work and the project is the first in a new wave of projects featuring African American artists.

Founded nearly 50 years ago by Burke's husband, Tom Burke, Pomegranate began in San Francisco in the late 1960s as a poster distributor. The first calendars were published a few years after Burke joined the company in 1975. Pomegranate [moved from Northern California](#) to Portland in 2013, to settle in a more affordable space that



WASHINGTON RENAISSANCE: 8 DISTINGUISHED ARTISTS REFLECT, CONNECT IN WIDE-RANGING DISCUSSION OF AFRICAN AMERICAN ART IN 20TH CENTURY WASHINGTON



ART CAPITAL: NEARLY 500 GATHER NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART TO DISCUSS AFRICAN AMERICAN ART IN 20TH CENTURY WASHINGTON



2017 VENICE BIENNALE LIST INCLUDES AFRICAN AMERICAN ARTISTS SAM GILLIAM, SENG NENGUDI, AND MCARTHUR BINION

would provide an urban setting.

Pomegranate has promoted the work of 20th century African American artists for years, selling products such as books, bookmarks, notecards, and calendars. Boxed cards have featured Lois Mailou Jones and contemporary artist Whitfield Lovell. Pomegranate published Romare Bearden calendars in 2004 and 2011 with the Bearden Foundation, and partnered with the Newark Museum to publish a 2013 African American art calendar.

For a while, there was a lull, but in recent years the company has been offering new selections. In 2015, the company collaborated with another contemporary artist. A Kehinde Wiley wall calendar and two sets of boxed notecards coincided with "Kehinde Wiley: A New Republic," the artist's traveling exhibition organized by the Brooklyn Museum. Pomegranate published a William H. Johnson calendar with the Smithsonian in 2016.



ELDZIER CORTOR, "Environment," 1947 (oil on board). © Eldzier Cortor; Courtesy of Michael Rosenfeld Gallery, LLC, New York, NY. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. The John Axelrod Collection—Frank B. Bemis Fund and Charles H. Bayley Fund. Photograph © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

BURKE SAID PROJECTS featuring African American artists have always been an important part of Pomegranate's list and more are on the horizon. "We do some many things. It has gone in waves recently. We are starting to increase now," she said, referring to the company's focus on African American art products.

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NJIDEKA AKUNYILI CROSBY PAINTING SELLS FOR RECORD \$3.1 MILLION AT CHRISTIE'S, NEARLY THREE TIMES PREVIOUS HIGH MARK



BLACK WOMEN IN THE ART WORLD TAKING STOCK ON INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY



BACKSTORY: HALF A CENTURY AGO, CALIFORNIA COLLEGE STUDENT VISITED ALMA THOMAS IN WASHINGTON AND BOUGHT A MAJOR PAINTING

part of Pomegranate's list and more are on the horizon. "We do some many things. It has gone in waves recently. We are starting to increase now." — Katie Burke, Publisher at Pomegranat

She expects a handful of items, including boxed cards, will debut in 2018. Burke has been reaching out to major museums with solid representations of African American artists in their collections. The projects are not contracted yet, she said, so she was unable to provide specifics about the institutions or the artists under consideration. When asked whether black female artists would be included in the mix, Burke said, "I hope so."

With prices starting at five-figures, the art Michael Rosenfeld Gallery sells exceeds the budgets of average consumers, even those passionate about African American art. Given this, the gallery recognizes the value of working on projects with Pomegranate that reach a wider audience.

"It helps to make artists like Eldzier much more of a household entity. It helps for identification and for artist acknowledgement," harrisburg said. "Certainly I think for a family, whether the artist is alive or deceased, in this case deceased, it helps to provide that kind of legacy and ultimately for an artist that is what's left, the art work. It gets it out into the world in a very, very different way and we support that." **CT**

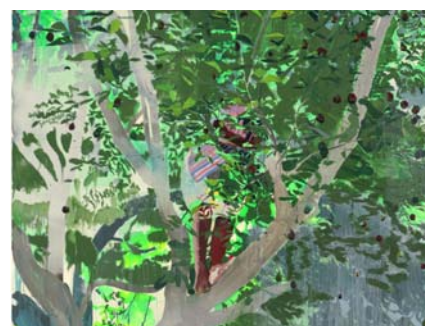
IMAGE: Top left, Eldzier Cortor in his studio in 1995. | Photographer unknown via Smithsonian Archives of American Art



'I AM NOT YOUR NEGRO' LACES JAM BALDWIN'S PRESCIENT WORDS WITH POTENT IMAGES INCLUDING SEGREGATION-ERA PHOTOGRAPHS GORDON PARKS



CULTURE TALK: BRITISH PAINTER HURVIN ANDERSON ON PERSONAL AND POLITICAL HISTORIES



BACKSTORY: NINA CHANEL ABNEY REVISITS HER FIRST MAJOR PAINTING 'CLASS OF 2007'