

IMPARTIAL CITIZEN'S ART GALLERY: AFRO-AMERICAN ABSTRACTS

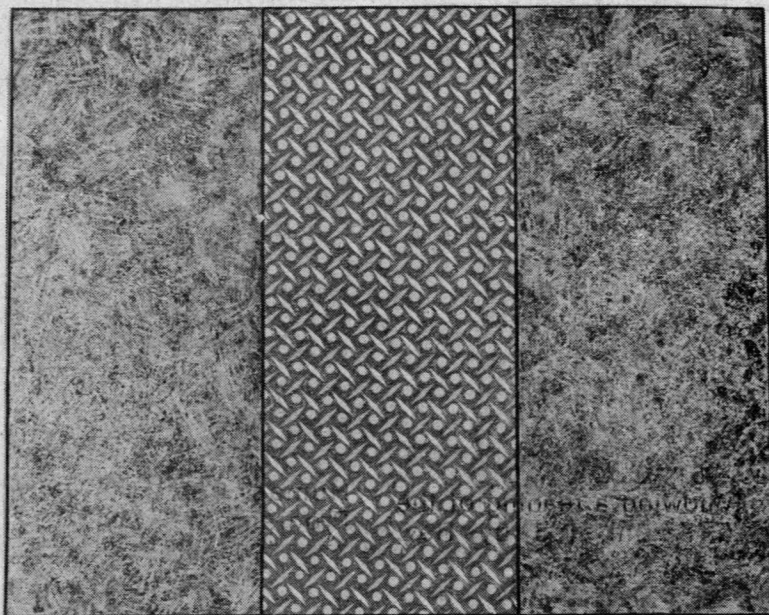
In Observance of Black History Month, Syracuse Savings Bank is sponsoring a Touring Exhibit by 19 Black American Artists at Syracuse's Everson Museum, entitled **Afro-American Abstraction**. The Show will be on view through March 29.



Space Odyssey, 1980 - Ellsworth Ausby



(At Left) Male & Female, 1980 - Jamillah Jennings. (Above) At the Vernissage of Afro-American Abstraction: (L to R) Artists Jamillah Jennings, Ellsworth Ausby and James Little.



Challenge of the Will, 1979 - James Little.

ELLSWORTH AUSBY: EXPRESSING THE SPACE AGE

Ellsworth Ausby has exhibited from Coast to Coast, in Museums, Galleries, Colleges, etc. "I'm getting a lot of exposure, but this Art (referring to the abstract genre) has to be collected, not just shown."

Ausby calls his artistic form "Contemporary Vanguard Expressionism", which reflects today's world - the space age and living at a hectic pace. He feels that African art has a significant influence on all contemporary art. The Artist regards his "roots" as an Afro-American as having more direct influence on his art than Africa per se.

Ausby was selected by the U.S. State Department to act as an Official Representative of the U.S. at the 2nd World Black & African Festival of Arts & Culture in Lagos, Nigeria, 1977. He was commissioned through a CETA grant to execute a sculpture now in place in a 20' x 45' pool of water in the New York City Technical College. He was also commissioned to undertake a large sculpture (now completed) for Howard Johnson's Eastern Corporate Headquarters in Queens Village, New York.

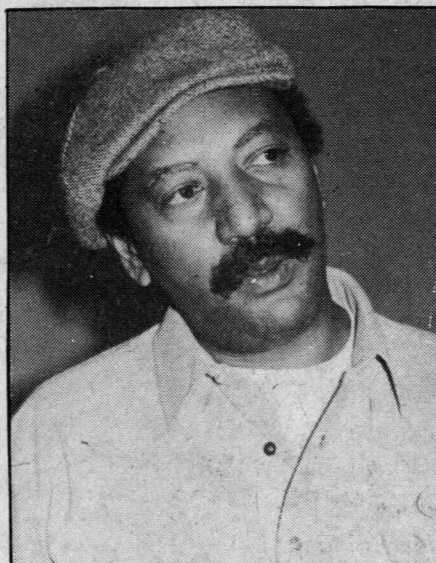
JAMILLAH JENNINGS: THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Jennings was chosen by April Kingsley (Curator of Afro-American Abstractions) to be among the 19 artists represented. She was surprised to be included among more seasoned artists (including her husband Ellsworth Ausby), but stated that she has been an artist since birth. "I have been dancing since I was 3 - Everything I do is Art. . . it is the whole environment."

Ms. Jennings is a dancer, sculptor, and painter. She graduated with a BFA from

the School of Visual Arts in N.Y. City in 1977 and with an MFA from Pratt Institute in 1979.

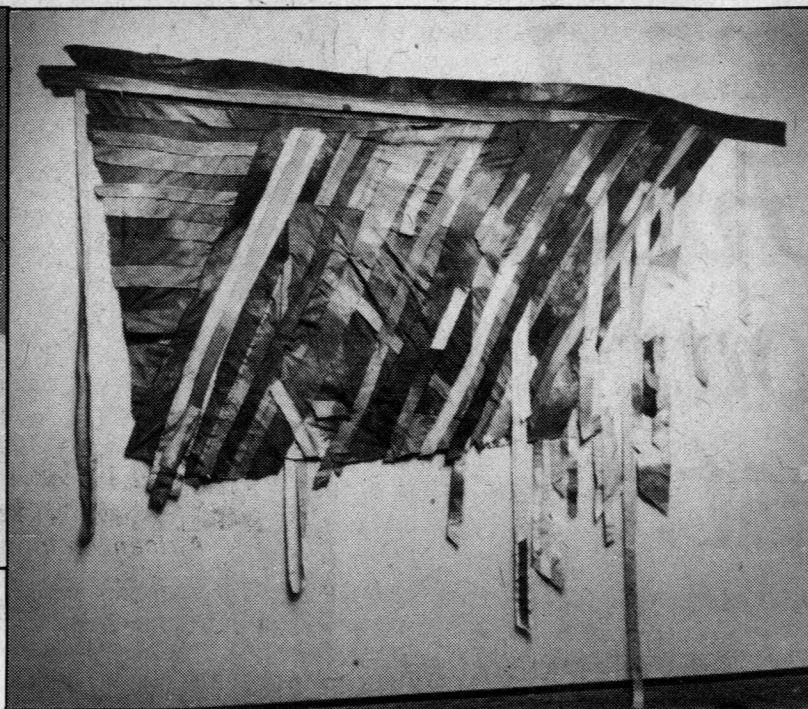
Although she has never been to Africa, Jamillah Jennings feels that her work has an African influence. "The only ancestry I know is African and American Indian (Seminole). I look at pieces of Art as Art first. I don't say that I'm going to create African Art," she told the IC at the Vernissage. "I studied African Art, Russian and Italian Ballet, Spanish Dance - I don't have to be Spanish to dance a Spanish dance." ■



Alvin Loving and his Shades of '73: Composition for 1980, 1980 dyed canvas. Loving received a MFA from the Univ. of Michigan, moved to New York where he has given many shows.

ALVIN LOVING: The Painted Walls of African Villages

Alvin Loving came to Syracuse, he said, because he was the "only one who could hang" his 10' x 15' Shades of '73: Composition for 1980 stunning dyed canvas work. He described the African influence in his work as emanating from his study of painted walls found in South African Villages, and study of African Architecture. His art has emerged from



what he described as a period of alienation in the 60's. Now, he works with his hands, having contact with the process.

Of the Afro-American Abstraction Show, he commented, "The first time I saw all our work together, as a group, I saw we're no longer eclectics in relation to the mainstream." When he first came to New York from Michigan, only Black painters Sam Gilliam and Romare Bearden were considered to be part of the International

Artistic Mainstream. "Our generation, after Bearden, came through the MFA (Master of Fine Arts) programs on a large scale.

As far as the show's importance: "It's too soon to say what it means. It does show the influence we had on each other."

Mr. Loving's future plans include a show in Washington State and in New Hampshire, plus a commission for a 53' acrylic for a Veteran's Hospital in the Bronx. ■

MELVIN EDWARDS: "BEING IN AFRICA ALL MY LIFE"

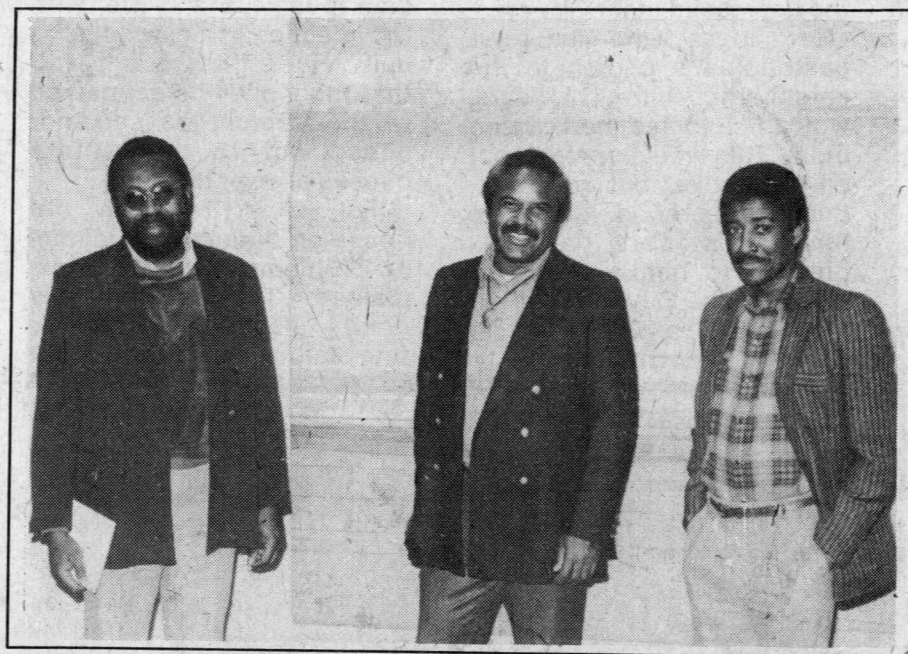
A Homage to the Poet Leon Gontran Damas, by Melvin Edwards, Chairman of the Livingston College (of Rutgers University) Art Department was on display at the Everson, a beautiful architectural piece of welded steel. Of the sculpture, he said, "It is dedicated to the Poet and my friend Leon Gontran Damas of Cayenne, one of the great proponents of Negritude. It depicts the rising and setting of the sun on a page of poetry, the rising of the sun from Africa and seeing it set in America. I enjoy celebrating people I consider creative..."

Nine Lynch Fragments graced the wall near the Damas sculpture, welded steel woven into a variety of forms, with a distinct African influence. Mr. Edwards began the series in 1963 before the first of his six trips to Africa.

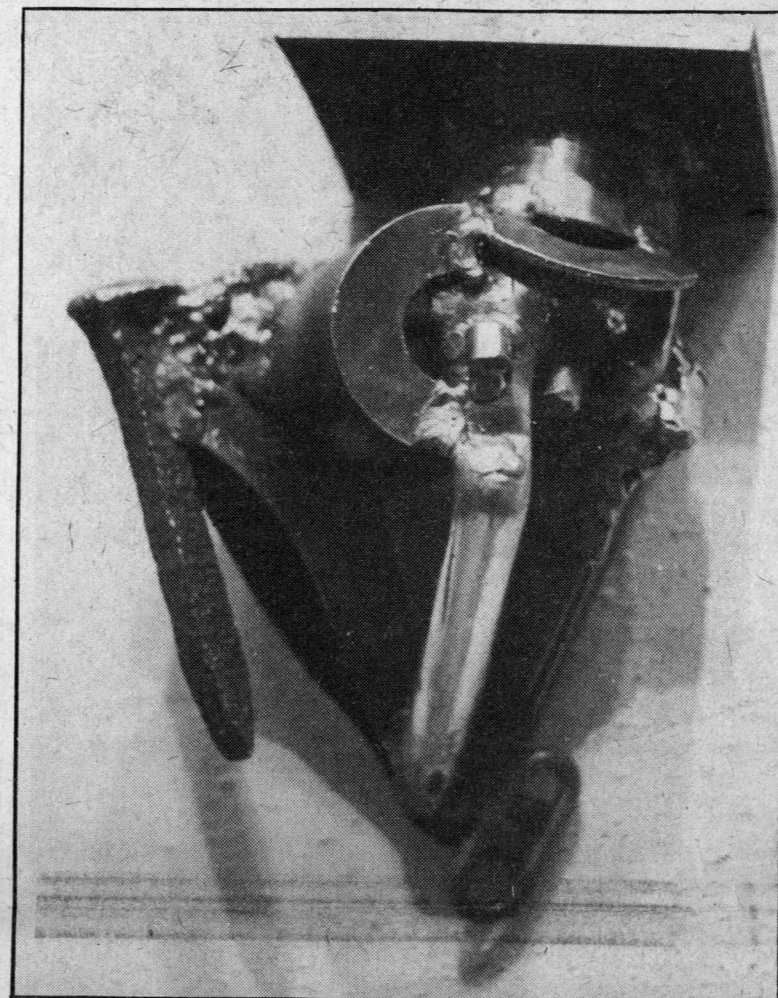
In response to a question how many times he had been to Africa, he said, "All my life". As a Black Artist, his association and evocation of an African cultural heritage is very conscious. He feels the "manifestation of Negritude may change with each individual, each cultural group, whether a person is from Haiti, Martinique, Texas, Ghana, Cuba," but they all are part of the same ethos.

Reflecting on the show, Mr. Edwards said it brought together a "group of creative people, of a common background, race and place where they live. Beyond that, there are human differences. It is interesting to me to see what others made out of their lives in the context of Art. I know what I grapple with - I assume their (experience) is similar."

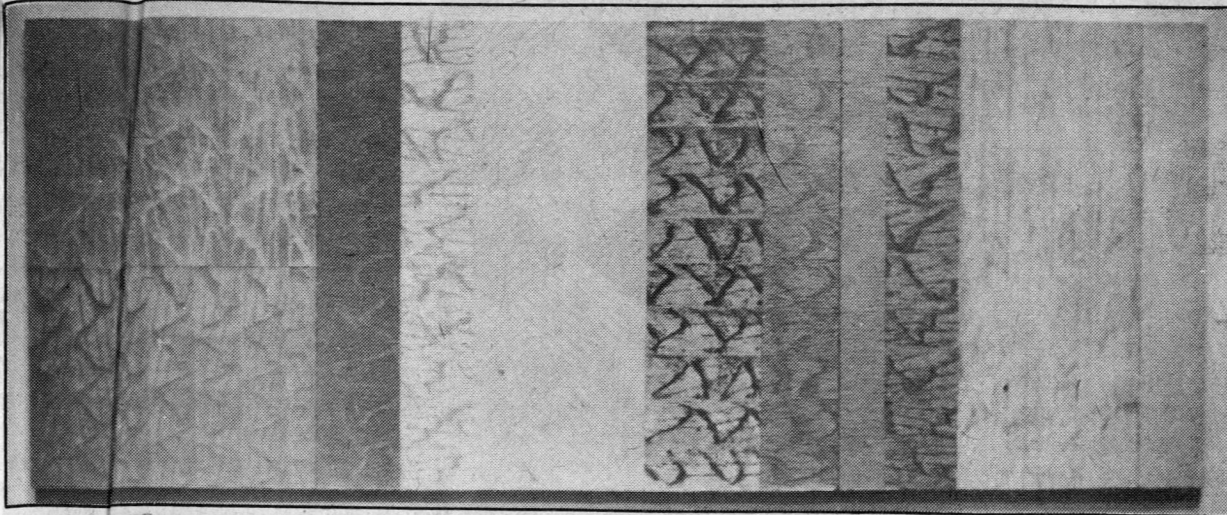
Mr. Edwards is preparing a show for the State Museum in Trenton, N.J. and an 18' x 30' two-part commission for the Mt. Vernon Plaza in Columbus, Ohio. ■



Artists at the Exhibition: (L to R) George Smith, Melvin Edwards and William T. Williams. Homage to the Sands of Life, 1974 by Edward Clark is in background.



One of the Nine Lynch Fragments, 1979-80 by Melvin Edwards, composed of steel.



Savoy by William T. Williams, brilliantly colored and designed 20' x 7' acrylic on canvas.

GEORGE SMITH: ART AS SPACE YOU CAN WALK INTO: The Houses of the Dogon of Mali

For the past ten years, George Smith has been doing "basically architectural sculpture. . . Architectural art-works that's what I'd call it. Many of my works are shelte that you can walk into." He termed the Syracuse show "excellent", and said he wished there was more space for his larger piece.

Smith has travelled to two African countries: Mali and Ghana and considers that the greatest African influence on his work was the "cliff architecture" of the Dogon people of Mali. He was recently awarded a CAPS (Creative Artist Public Service) Grant by the N.Y. State Council on the Arts, and plan to use it to go "out West to do an underground shelter drawing based upon his experience with the Dogon people."

In 1971, Mr. Smith held a one-man show at the Everson Museum. He is presently Associate Professor of Fine Art at the State University of New York in Buffalo.

WILLIAM T. WILLIAMS: "INFINITE POSSIBILITIES" & The Diversity of the African Continent

William T. Williams teaches at Brooklyn College in New York. He described his brilliantly colored and designed 20' x 7' acrylic on canvas, entitled Savoy, as "suggestive of movement, rhythm, changes, having a tactile quality. The viewer comes to it, experiencing color." He went on to say that it "celebrates Art as a human activity, a rejoicing in infinite possibilities."

When asked if he as a Black Artist experienced any unique problems, he responded, "The ultimate problem for any artist is to go into the studio and be creative. If there are obstacles, we have to be aware of them, overcome them, turn them around to be positive obstacles and make Art."

The influences on his creative spirit he described as "every object I've ever seen." He said the works of Sam Gilliam and Melvin Edwards inspired his work, and their personalities inform his humanity. His view of the

world is a holistic one - of give and take, of inter-connections on different planes, where no person is isolated. Mr. Williams paid homage to Dr. Martin Luther King as "influencing all of our lives - humanizing us as a culture - the one human being able to humanize our society."

Mr. Williams also related how his generation of artists has gained a familiarity with African Civilization, not just its artifacts. "We're far more interested in the history of Africa, the diversity of the continent."

He urged younger people, especially, to see the show as evidence of 19 human beings fighting obstacles before them and "doing positive things in society." Artists, he added, are positive people, who "rejoice in positive change in the world," as people giving evidence that there is a "spirit at work. I believe in the idea of Art as a force to change people's lives. It won't feed them, but the moment they (are exposed to art, they may) come to terms with themselves, and will be better able to perceive the world. What would the world be without artists? It benefits the world to look at Art." ■