

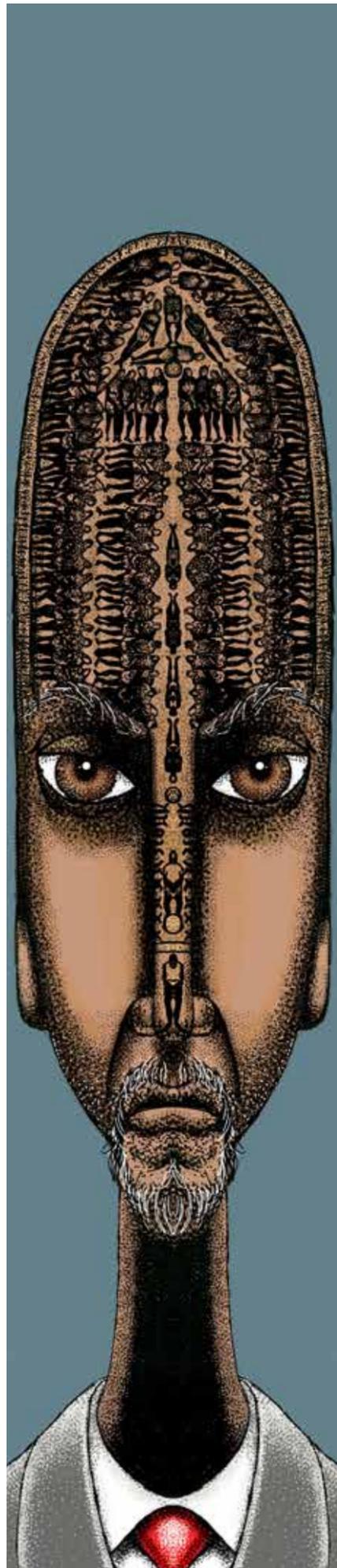
CARRYING ON:

Black Panther Party Artists Continue the Legacy

January 27 - March 15, 2025

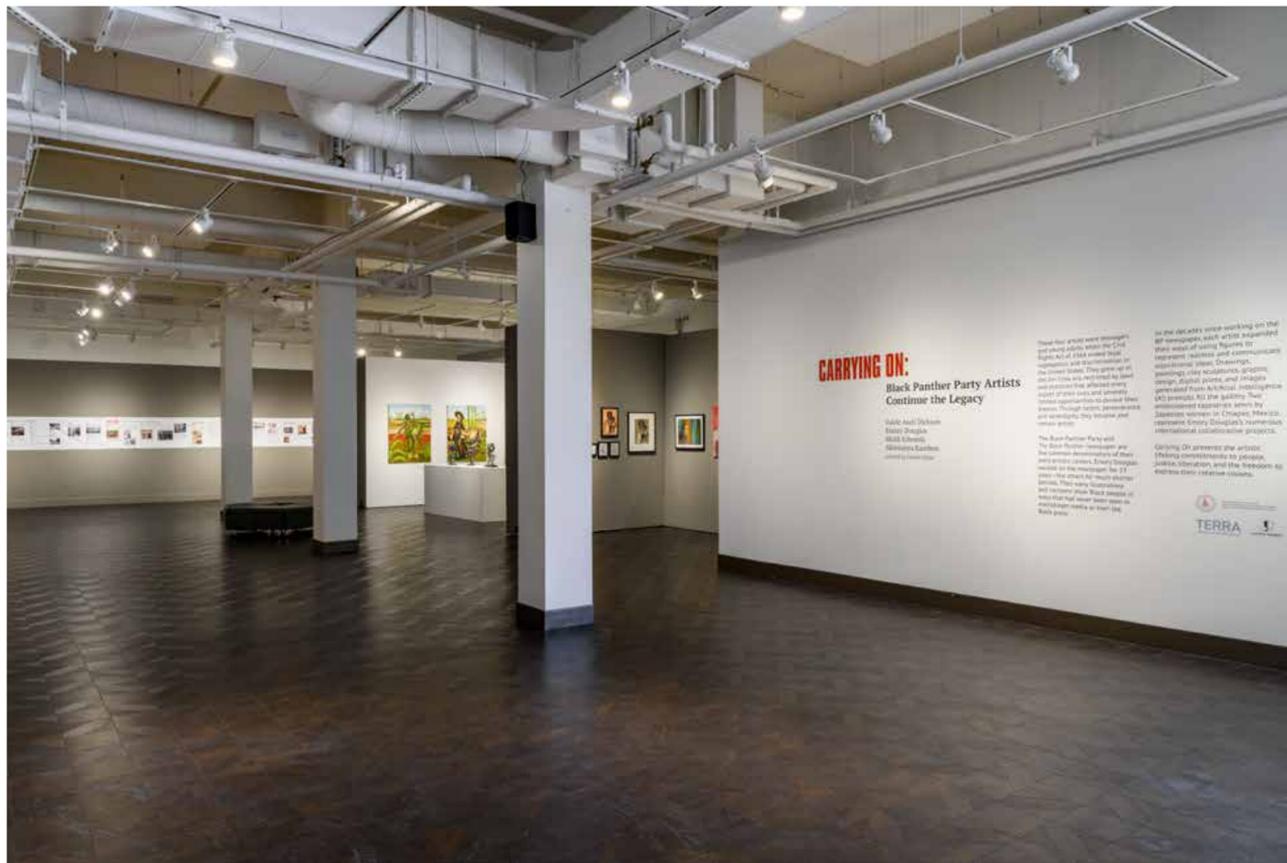
curated by Colette Gaiter

Gayle Asali Dickson, Emory Douglas, Malik Edwards, Akinsanya Kambon



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ROWAN UNIVERSITY
ART GALLERY & MUSEUM



CARRYING ON: Black Panther Party Artists Continue the Legacy

Gayle Asali Dickson
Emory Douglas
Malik Edwards
Akinsanya Kambon

Curated by
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These four artists were teenagers and young adults when the Civil Rights Act of 1964 ended legal segregation and discrimination in the United States. They grew up in the Jim Crow era, restricted by laws and practices that affected every aspect of their lives and severely limited opportunities to pursue their dreams. Through talent, perseverance, and serendipity, they became and remain artists.

The Black Panther Party and *The Black Panther* newspaper are the common denominators of their early artistic careers. Emory Douglas worked on the newspaper for 13 years—the others for much shorter periods. Their early illustrations and cartoons show Black people in ways that had never been seen in mainstream media or even the Black press.

In the decades since working on the BP newspaper, each artist expanded their ways of using figures to represent realities and communicate aspirational ideas. Drawings, paintings, clay sculptures, graphic design, digital prints, and images generated from Artificial Intelligence (AI) prompts fill the gallery. Two embroidered tapestries sewn by Zapatista women in Chiapas, Mexico, represent Emory Douglas's numerous international collaborative projects.

Carrying On presents the artists' lifelong commitments to people, justice, liberation, and the freedom to express their creative visions.

Carrying On brings together four artists who participated in a radical justice experiment that resonates today over half a century later. Emory Douglas joined the Black Panther Party (BPP) in 1967 and practiced the Party's mantra, "Each one teach one." He later worked with Gayle Asali Dickson, Malik Edwards, and Akinsanya Kambon at various times on *The Black Panther* newspaper in the early 1970s. Edwards and Kambon joined the BPP after serving in Vietnam. Like Dickson and Douglas, they saw a way to work for liberation. The artists' early work (made during the late 1960s- early 1970s global social movements and uprisings against oppression of all kinds) alongside their later and current work reveals personal and artistic evolutions. Dickson and Edwards use spiritual elements in their art just as they did in their lives to transcend oppression and bring others along with them. Douglas and Kambon connect with ancestors for the same purpose. Various media and work styles represent the artists' need to increase their expressive range and expand their thinking. From the beginning, each artist used their talents and insights to visualize a radical future and motivate others to imagine beyond their current conditions. Their work helped make lasting changes in the world. Carrying on the BPP's teachings, all four artists still work with communities, telling visual stories that sustain a steady movement toward liberation for everyone.

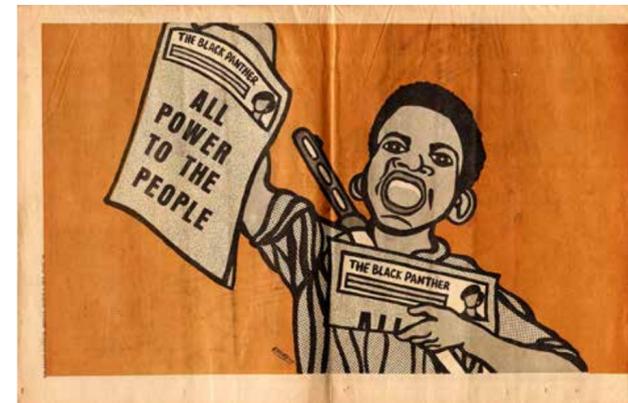
MORE THAN 50 YEARS OF ACTIVISM LATER

Gayle Asali Dickson, Emory Douglas, Malik Edwards, and Akinsanya Kambon all worked at *The Black Panther* (BP) newspaper, using their talents to help people liberate themselves and thrive. Although they each worked with Emory Douglas, only Dickson and Edwards overlapped their time working as artists for the Black Panther Party (BPP).

The four artists in this exhibition spent their young lives in the Jim Crow-segregated U.S. They became adults around the time of the 1964 Civil Rights Act's passage. Continuing their childhood art into adulthood is remarkable enough, but as young Black people, they did it while trying to liberate themselves and the world. The Black Panther Party slogan, "All Power to the People," motivated their daily work.

Their stories and art are about escape, transcendence, desire, love, and community. After escaping oppressive conditions at home in the U.S. and in Vietnam, they found their way to the Black Panther Party. The party offered them space in a community that worked together toward a common goal—creating an alternative reality to the one they were taught was their only option. They learned in the Party to desire more for themselves and others, free their minds by transcending negative thinking, and build communities where people could love and support each other in peace.

The work in the exhibition is rooted in history. A timeline is included to help visitors fully understand the references.



Emory Douglas
All Power to the People (the original Paperboy), 1969
The Black Panther newspaper, March 9, 1969
11 x 17 inches
© Emory Douglas. Courtesy of the Letterform Archive.



Emory Douglas
All Power to the People: Paperboy, 2013
Inkjet on paper
13 x 19 inches
© 2024 Emory Douglas, AFLaw. Courtesy of the artist.

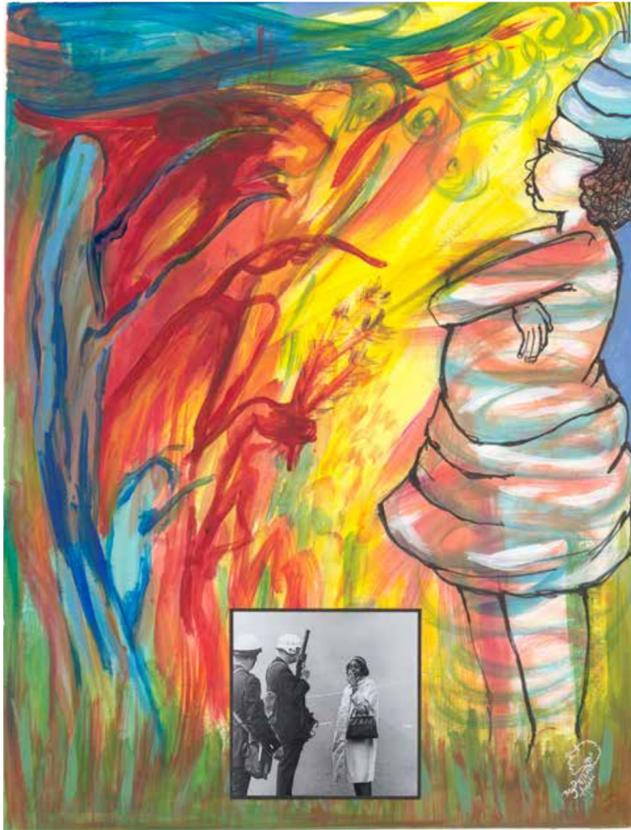
Abbreviated Timeline:

- 1619** — After being brought to the American colonies, Africans were stripped of human rights and enslaved for 246 years.
- 1776** — One-third of the signers of the Declaration of Independence were personally enslavers.
- 1811** — A number of rebellions by enslaved people took place in the U.S. Black Panther artist Akinsanya Kambon's great-grandfather was beheaded after participating in the 1811 German Coast Uprising in Louisiana.
- 1868** — After the end of the brutal U.S. Civil War in 1865, the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution gave all native-born and naturalized persons, including Black people, citizenship and equal protection under the law.
- 1966** — Huey Newton and Bobby Seale founded the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense in Oakland, California, to combat police brutality and racial inequality.
- 1967** — **April 25** - *The Black Panther* newspaper launched.
- May 25** - Emory Douglas began his work on the BP newspaper. He was named the Party's Revolutionary Artist and later Minister of Culture, overseeing all cultural activities.
- 1969** — The BPP's community programs provided meals, groceries, health clinics, schools, and arts initiatives. This period marked their transition toward broader social justice activism. "Survival Pending Revolution" was the umbrella slogan.
- December 3**
Fred Hampton, a rising BPP leader in Chicago, was assassinated while asleep with his pregnant wife during a police raid. (Emory Douglas's newspaper cover of Fred Hampton inspired a promotional poster for the film *Judas and the Black Messiah*—included in the exhibition.)
- 1971** — At peak circulation, the BP newspaper was the most widely read Black newspaper in the United States. Party members and volunteers sold newspapers on street corners in Black neighborhoods and on college campuses across the country.
- Protests against the Vietnam War, which began seven years earlier in 1964, continued across the U.S. and on college campuses.
- The FBI continued an organized campaign to infiltrate and destroy the BPP. Cointelpro (counter-intelligence propaganda) was one of their vehicles.
- 1974** — Huey Newton chose Elaine Brown as the first woman to lead the BPP. By the 1970s, two-thirds of Party members were women. Gayle Asali Dickson was a party member from 1972-1976.
- 1980** — The final issue of *The Black Panther* newspaper was published in September.
- 1982** — The Black Panther Party officially disbanded.
- 1983 to the present** — Party alumni gather every five years to remain in community while continuing their legacy of "Serve the people, body and soul."



Gayle Asali Dickson
Let it Shine! Let it Shine! Let the power of the people shine! 1972
The Black Panther newspaper, July 1, 1972
17 x 11 inches
Illustration © Gail Asali Dickson.
Courtesy of The Freedom Archives.

Tenderness and Compassion



Gayle Asali Dickson
What do you do when you've done all you can? You just stand. 2020
Acrylic on paper
18 x 24 inches
© Gayle Asali Dickson. Courtesy of the artist.

"I think most people, when they think about the Black Panther Party, they think in very abstract, caricatured terms. They think about black fists in the air, but they don't think about the actual people, and the families, and the relationships." -Kerry Washington, 2010

Tenderness and compassion are emotions a visitor might not expect at a Black Panther Party artist exhibition. The Party's widespread misrepresentation as dangerous gun-toting thugs has persisted over decades. Yes, there were guns. The organization started as the "Black Panther Party for Self-Defense." Members were trained and legally armed themselves to patrol Black neighborhoods, preventing rampant police harassment. Over the years, the Party's focus shifted to community empowerment—organizing basic services through "survival programs."

The artists show compassion by honestly portraying people's vulnerabilities to an unjust society. In works by Emory Douglas and Akinsanya Kambon, they show uniformed soldiers crying. In a pair of Douglas's prints, a mother is kissed by her young daughter, and a father receives a hug from his delighted son. These images are reminders that moments of family tenderness are the most important motivations to fight for change. Malik Edwards's surrealist flower people and lotus-positioned black panther represent reaching for enlightenment despite oppression. Gayle Asali Dickson softens Sandra Bland, who became a symbolic activist against over-policing after she died in her jail cell following a routine traffic stop.

Gayle Asali Dickson
Sandra Bland: Show me where there has been liberty and justice for all. #SandySpeaks. 2023
Acrylic on paper
18 x 24 inches
© Gayle Asali Dickson.
Courtesy of the artist.



Continued Protest and Resistance

Dickson's painting *What do you do when you've done all you can? You just stand*, from 2020, represents standing up during the Black Lives Matter protests against police murders of unarmed Black civilians. She added a photograph of a black woman protestor smoking a cigarette as police wait to question her.

Emory Douglas takes on police terror in a poster made after Oscar Grant's killing in Oakland, California, in 2009. Black people as targets recur, as in another poster comparing imprisoned people to both commodities and enslaved people. He also directs attention to gang violence in two posters that recall his signature bold black outlines on Black Panther newspaper back cover illustrations.

Douglas addresses human rights, environmental issues, war, and genocide—always advocating for peace, freedom, and justice. As a staunch supporter of Palestinian rights since the 1960s, it was necessary to include his poster of a Palestinian person walking with their flag, paired with an image featuring the Black Panther flag.

The black panther, a formidable large cat, appears in several of Malik Edwards's pieces. A small stipple

ink drawing shows the panther leaping out of the continent of Africa. A visual and cultural icon representing the Black Panther Party, the organization's logo evolved from a symbol created by the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). The image was originally used to help people who could not read find the non-white supremacist party candidates on a ballot. Across Edwards's works, the panther morphs from a fierce running pose to a sitting Zen Buddhist to a calm and stunning animal surrounded by flowers. The image he created using AI prompts might subversively show up if someone searched "black panther" in an AI image database.

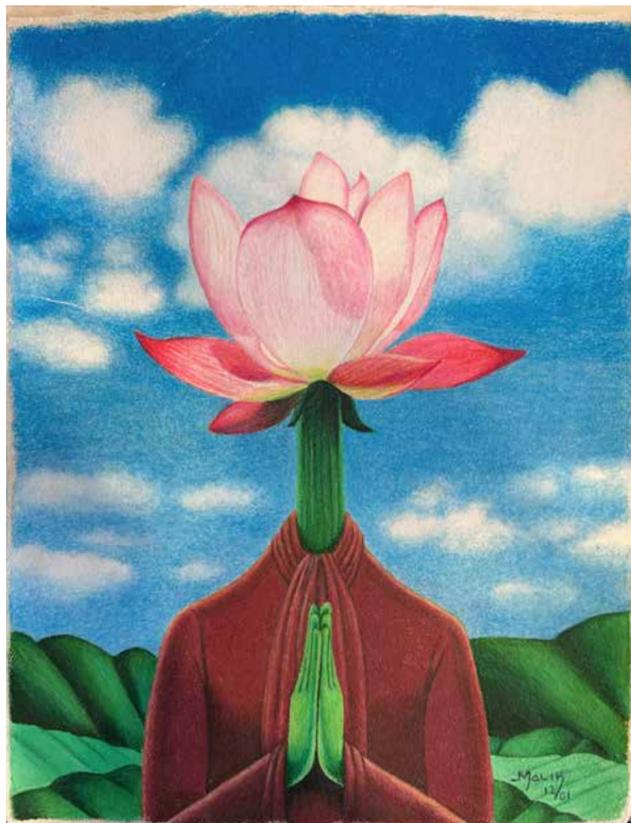
Malik Edwards's painting *Can't Forget* replaces a mind with the bird's eye view illustration of Africans shackled and packed onto the deck of a ship to live the rest of their lives enslaved.

During his time in the Black Panther Party, Akinsanya Kambon was known as Mark Teemer. As Teemer, he illustrated the 10-point Party Platform—which was the definitive guide to action—and as Kambon, he recreated them as 16 x 20-inch paintings in 2016. Some images portray cold-hearted slumlords, brutal police, and avaricious businesspeople.

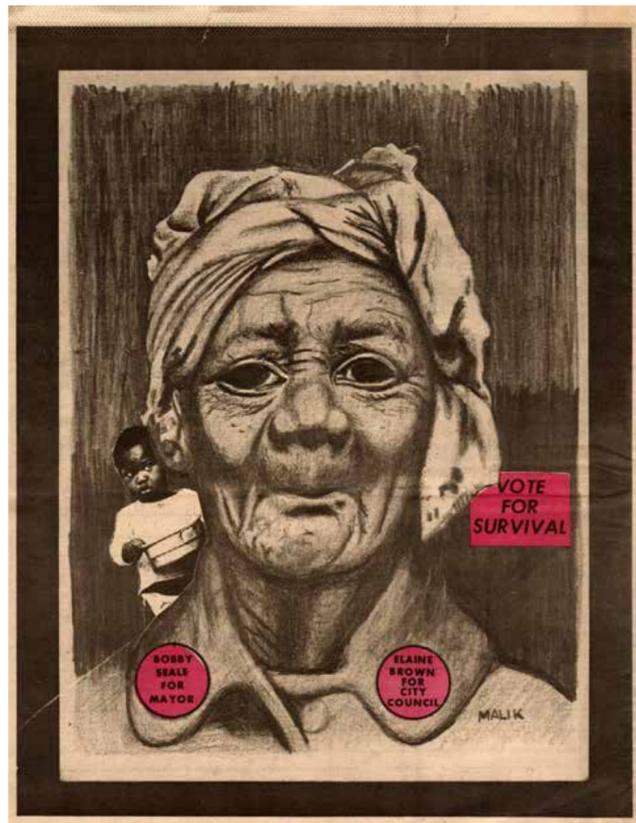


Emory Douglas
Self-Determination. 2024
Inkjet on paper
19 x 13 inches
© 2024 Emory Douglas, AFLA. Courtesy of the artist.

Akinsanya Kambon
#2. We Want Full Employment for Our People. 2016
Oil on board
16 x 20 inches
© Akinsanya Kambon. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York



Malik Edwards
Thay (Tie). 2001
Colored pencils on paper
14.75 x 11.25 inches
© Malik Edwards. Courtesy of the artist.



Malik Edwards
Vote for Survival. 1972
The Black Panther newspaper, June 10, 1972
17 x 11 inches
© Malik Edwards. Courtesy of The Freedom Archives.



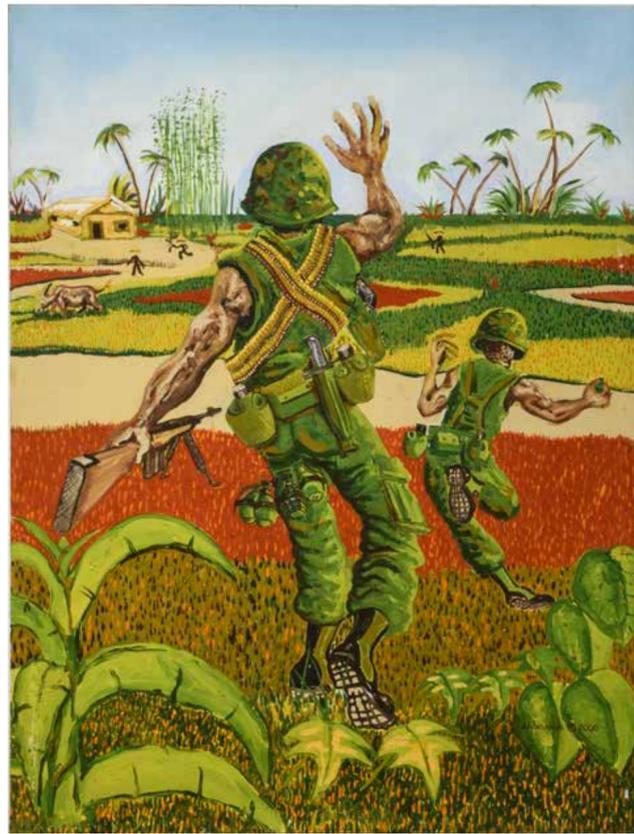
Reconciling Violence

Akinsanya Kambon and Malik Edwards were front-line combat Marines in the Vietnam War. They survived violence that still haunts them decades later. Creating art has been part of their recovery. The war pushed many Black veterans toward activism and political organizing in response to racism at home and in the military.

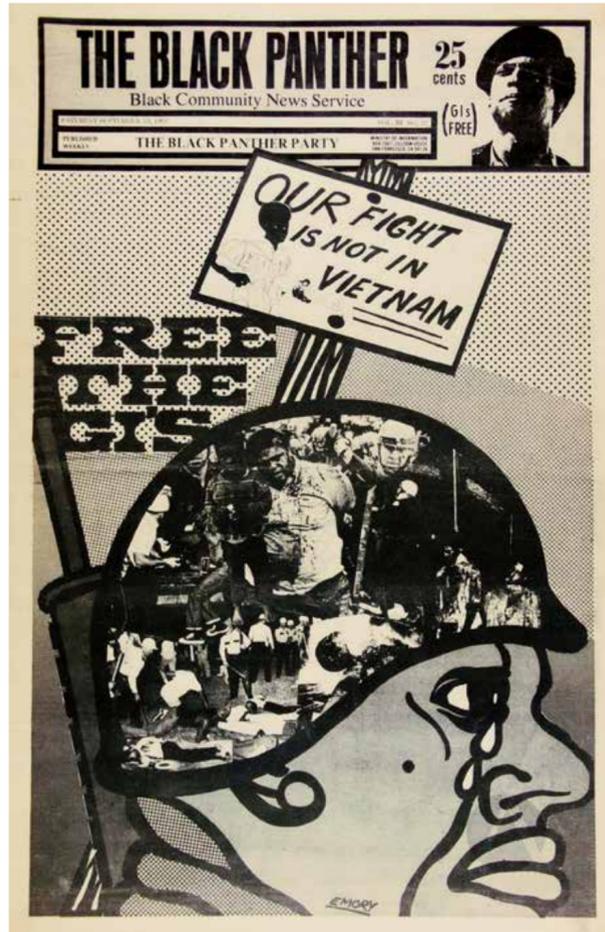
In 2000, Kambon created large paintings from his earlier Marine combat illustrator drawings to tell people more about the atrocities committed during that war. He recalls that some of his drawings were so disturbing his military superiors shredded them. One painting in the exhibition shows two soldiers who could have been running toward farmers, away from enemies, or both. In the other, a pregnant Vietnamese woman looks vulnerable, standing in a field that could become a battlefield at any moment.

In Emory Douglas's front page image for a 1969 issue of the BP newspaper, a GI's helmet is collaged with photos from a lynching and police violence in the U.S. A placard reads, "Our Fight is Not in Vietnam." The headline says, "Free the GIs." The filmmaker Spike Lee adapted the image for a promotional poster advertising his film *Da 5 Bloods*. A video about creating the poster tells the story of the disproportionate number of Black U.S. soldiers in the war and their experiences.

"Detroit Blue," the nickname for another Vietnam soldier, is the subject of another video and a small giclee reproduction of a larger painting by Akinsanya Kambon. "Blue" read the newspaper to the soldiers who could not read. This story was about a woman killed in a U.S. urban uprising by a law enforcement weapon deemed too lethal to use on civilians in the Vietnam War.



Akinsanya Kambon
ATTACK! Kill, kill, kill!, 2000
Oil on canvas
48 x 36 inches
© Akinsanya Kambon. Courtesy of the artist.



Emory Douglas
Free the GIs, 1969
The Black Panther newspaper, September 20, 1969
17 x 11 inches
Illustration © Emory Douglas. Courtesy of The Freedom Archives.



Emory Douglas and Kenny Gravillis
Da 5 Bloods, 2020
Promotional poster for Spike Lee's film.
17 x 11 inches
© 2020. Courtesy of Gravillis Inc.

Spiritual and Ancestral Guidance

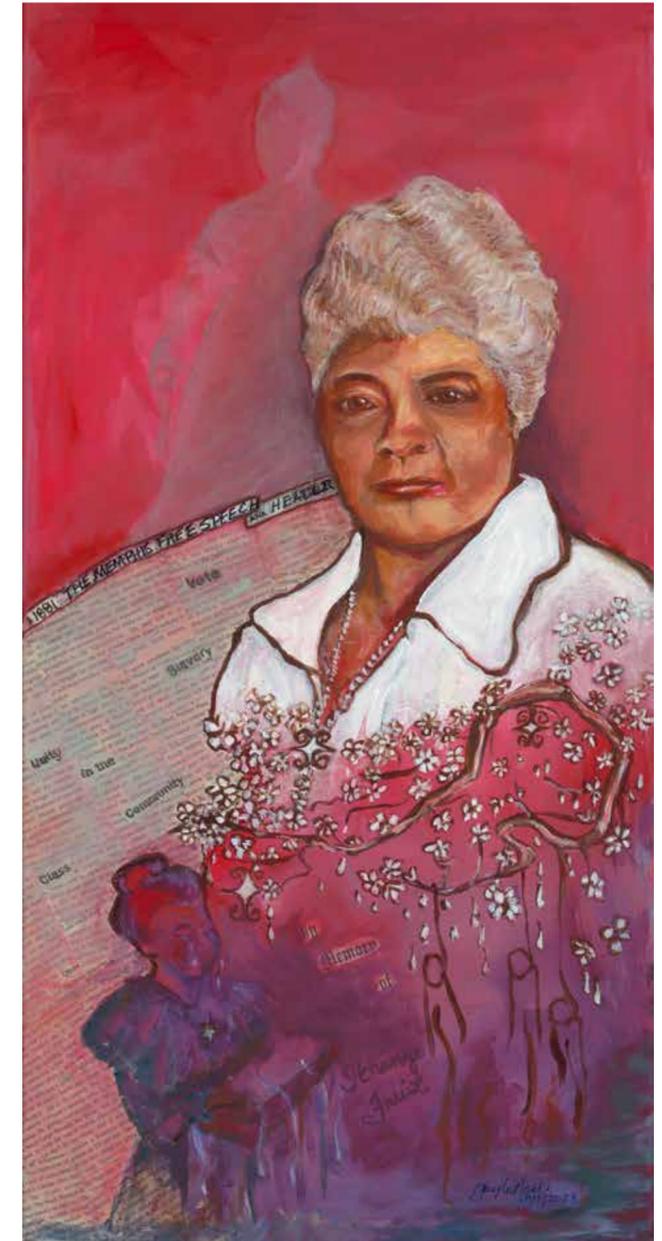
Beliefs in powers outside of themselves inspire all of the artists. Gayle Asali Dickson, as an ordained minister, is supported by her religious faith and African spirituality. For example, in Dickson's painting of Ida B. Wells, the Ghanaian Adinkra symbol Dweninmmen is worn on Wells's necklace and in her dress's fabric pattern. Dweninmmen means "the horns of a ram," representing strength (in mind, body, and soul), humility, wisdom, and learning.

Malik Edwards studied Eastern spiritual practices, evident in his work that includes meditation poses

and metaphorical references to reaching for the ideal self. The artists' beliefs affect their processes, such as in Dickson's "Spirits Revealed" paintings. She begins the painting without knowing what will emerge and lets spirits guide her. Kambon includes ritual ceremonies in kiln firings to encourage participation from forces outside of himself. Douglas and Kambon are inspired by ancestors and African and African American history, as well as their visual symbols, legends, and iconography.



Akinsanya Kambon
Oya: Goddess of the Wind, 2023
Bronze sculpture with hot patina
16.5 x 6.5 x 9.5 inches
© Akinsanya Kambon. Courtesy of the artist.



Gayle Asali Dickson
Queen Ida B. Wells-Barnette Anti-Lynching campaign, Journalist, Entrepreneur, 2023
Acrylic on canvas
30 x 15 inches
© Gayle Asali Dickson. Courtesy of the artist.

Carrying On

These artists are still motivated by the aspirations that drew them to the Black Panther Party—a better quality of life created and maintained in a community. They still live by the mantra, "Each one, teach one," helping others, especially young people, achieve their goals. They were lucky to find ways to use their talents. It is also true that they were restricted by discrimination and an acute lack of opportunities for Black artists. Dickson, Douglas, Edwards, and Kambon were part of the same revolutionary energy that guides their work since—the human desire for freedom and truth in a world that is trying to deny both.

—Colette Gaiter, curator

Colette Gaiter's career started in graphic design and then morphed into digital and interdisciplinary art. Her visual work, which has been exhibited internationally, includes artist books, photographic digital prints, multimedia collage, assemblage, artist websites (from the early days of digital art), and interactive computer-based installations.

Now, she primarily writes about Black artists, designers, and visual culture in general. Since 2005, her essays and articles on the activist and former artist for the Black Panther Party, Emory Douglas, have appeared in a range of publications, including *Black Panther: The Revolutionary Art of Emory Douglas*

and *The Black Experience in Design*. Other arts writing includes catalog essays for the Delaware Art Museum, the Poster House Museum in New York, and the Norman Rockwell Museum's exhibition *Imprinted: Illustrating Race*. The Rockwell catalog essay was about Black Panther artists whose work is in *Carrying On*. She is currently working on a book about Emory Douglas's continuing post-Black Panther Party work as an activist artist.

She retired as Professor Emerita in the Departments of Africana Studies and Art & Design at the University of Delaware. Her work as an educator and other creative pursuits have always included creative activism.





GAIL ASALI DICKSON

The Reverend Gayle Asali Dickson is a San Francisco Bay Area native. She is an artist, a member of the Black Panther Party, and an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ denomination.

Asali (as she was known at the time) joined the Black Panther Party in 1970 in Seattle, the first chapter formed outside of California. In 1972, she and other Seattle members migrated to the Oakland headquarters. She was the only woman artist for *The Black Panther* newspaper between 1972 and 1974, drawing primarily women and children during the "Oakland Base of Operation" period. Between 1974 and 1976, she taught at the Oakland Community School using art as a teaching tool. In 2016 she was on the Host Committee for the 50th anniversary of the Black Panther Party celebrated at the

Oakland Museum of California. After ordination in 1998, she served as Pastor of a church in South Berkeley for eight years. While there, she started the Friday Night Art and Dinner Program for the children in the neighborhood. The program exposed children to world cultures through art and food. She brought the Little Bobby Hutton Youth and Adult Literacy Program to the church, which used *The Black Panther* newspaper as a teaching tool. She is now retired from her service in that capacity.

Over the years, she continued her creative work, exhibiting in the Bay Area and nationally. Currently, she is working on a painting project about six women called "The Empowering Voice of Women from the Bible and African-American Women in History."

A traveler to West Africa asked one of the region's famed Griots [storyteller, musician, or historian] "Whatever became of the people of Sumer? Legend has it they were Black." The Griot thought for a moment, then said, "Ah! They forgot their story, and so they died."

—from the book *Parables, Politics, and Prophetic Faith*

Carter G. Woodson, distinguished Black author, editor, publisher, and historian, recognized for his role in establishing Black History Month, wrote that "If a race has no history ... it stands in danger of being exterminated."

I believe that as an artist, I am called to help make sure that our African American stories, and therefore America's stories, are not forgotten.

My work falls into a few categories. Some of my paintings use a process called "Spirits Revealed." The painting reveals itself to me without a plan. The subject may be something I have been thinking about or a current event that I may be feeling some emotions about, as shown in the painting *Stand...* created in the aftermath of George Floyd's murder in 2020. The Spirit reminds us that stories like this have a long history in America.

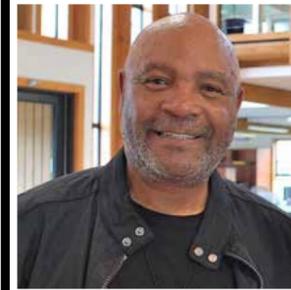
This story was heard and witnessed around the world because a brave young girl captured it in a cell phone video. The painting of a woman confronting dangerous spirits revealed itself to me as I randomly applied paint to paper. A "Human Ecology" series

originates from the idea of unity and relationships among people—family, friends, strangers, or acquaintances. These represent why we are fighting for liberation and who we are fighting for.

The portraits are part of a "Protest" series—illuminating people who fight for justice—echoing my work in the Black Panther Party. A postcard series updates issues that are surprisingly similar, if not the same as the original Black Panther newspaper drawings in the 1970s. Paintings like the ones of Queen Ida B. Wells-Barnett and Queen Ella Baker are reminders that Black history is America's history. Their voices and lives are empowering and should not be forgotten. Queen Ida was an investigative journalist and one of the early anti-lynching crusaders in America. Queen Ella was a remarkable organizer and strategist during the U.S. Civil Rights Movement. A portraits of Sandra Bland represents people who were victims of the U.S. justice system.

I recently added West African Adinkra symbols to my paintings, representing Black Americans' strong connections to the continent. "Gye Nyame," symbolizing the supremacy of God, appears as jewelry, integrated into clothing, or in other places in the work. The mandala drawing represents my efforts to connect with African ancestors, which is essential for maintaining strength and power.

Thank you for taking the time to view this exhibit. I wish you blessings no matter where you are on your life's journey.



EMORY DOUGLAS

Emory Douglas was first the Revolutionary Artist and later named Minister of Culture for the Black Panther Party from 1967 until 1982 when the party disbanded. Douglas's work became the signature style of *The Black Panther* newspaper, which usually featured bold illustrations on its covers. He was also the designer and illustrator for the San Francisco Sun Reporter until his retirement.

In 2007, the book *Black Panther: The Revolutionary Art of Emory Douglas* introduced his work to new generations. The New Museum in New York, Los Angeles Contemporary Museum of Art, and other galleries and museums worldwide mounted solo exhibitions of his Black Panther work. Represented in exhibitions such as *The Soul of a Nation* and *Hippie Modernism*, his work is now in the canon of late twentieth-

century activist art. He has presented and exhibited his work across the U.S., South America, Europe, Africa, Australia, and New Zealand.

His Black Panther work is now part of global museum collections, including the Museum of Modern Art in New York. In 2015, he became the first living Black person to win an AIGA (The Professional Organization for Design) Medal for his contributions to the field of visual communications. In 2022, he was inducted into the Society of Illustrators' Hall of Fame. He continues practicing the Black Panther directive, "each one teach one," and constantly interacts with community members, especially young people, in collaborations such as murals. Douglas's work reaches across decades, generations, and the world to achieve "All Power to the People."

The Battle Cry "Culture Is A Weapon"

The battle cry "Culture Is A Weapon" is a powerful tool in all of its expressions and forms. It has the power to transform the Colonization Of The Imagination.

It is a reflection of our history of resistance and a product of that history. Like the flower is a product of the seed.

"Culture Is A Weapon" at this time in history is the manifestation of the extreme reactionary times in the world we are living in today.

As a definition, it is not absolute but a continuation of expressions and interpretations, compassion, love, beauty, pain, and suffering that one feels and observes that penetrate the souls of the resistance via the resisters (We The People) against all forms of cruel and unjust authority.

"Culture Is A Weapon"—as a concept, it is the creative vehicle to communicate genuine truths about social concerns, truths you will never hear expressed by any reactionary or bureaucrat.

It is our duty as the makers of The Arts Of Resistance to always recognize the oppression of others.

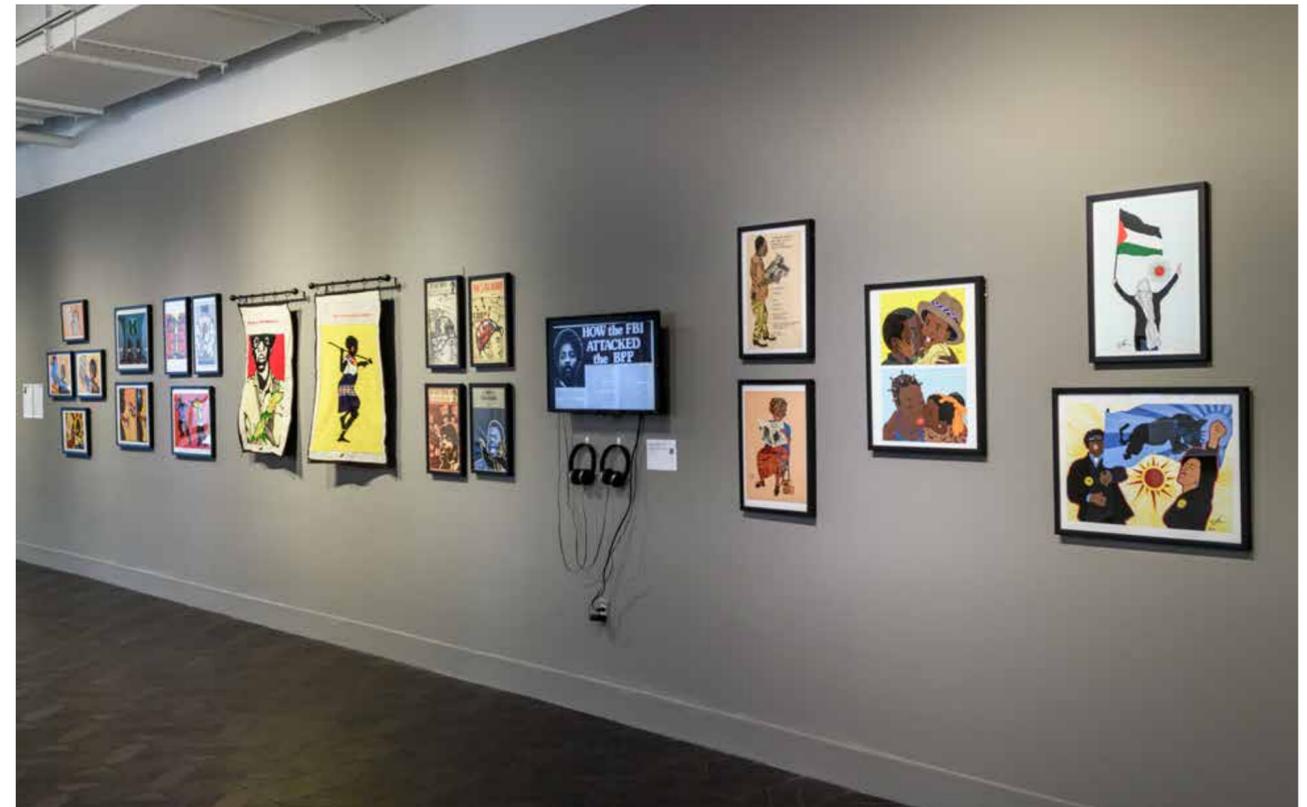
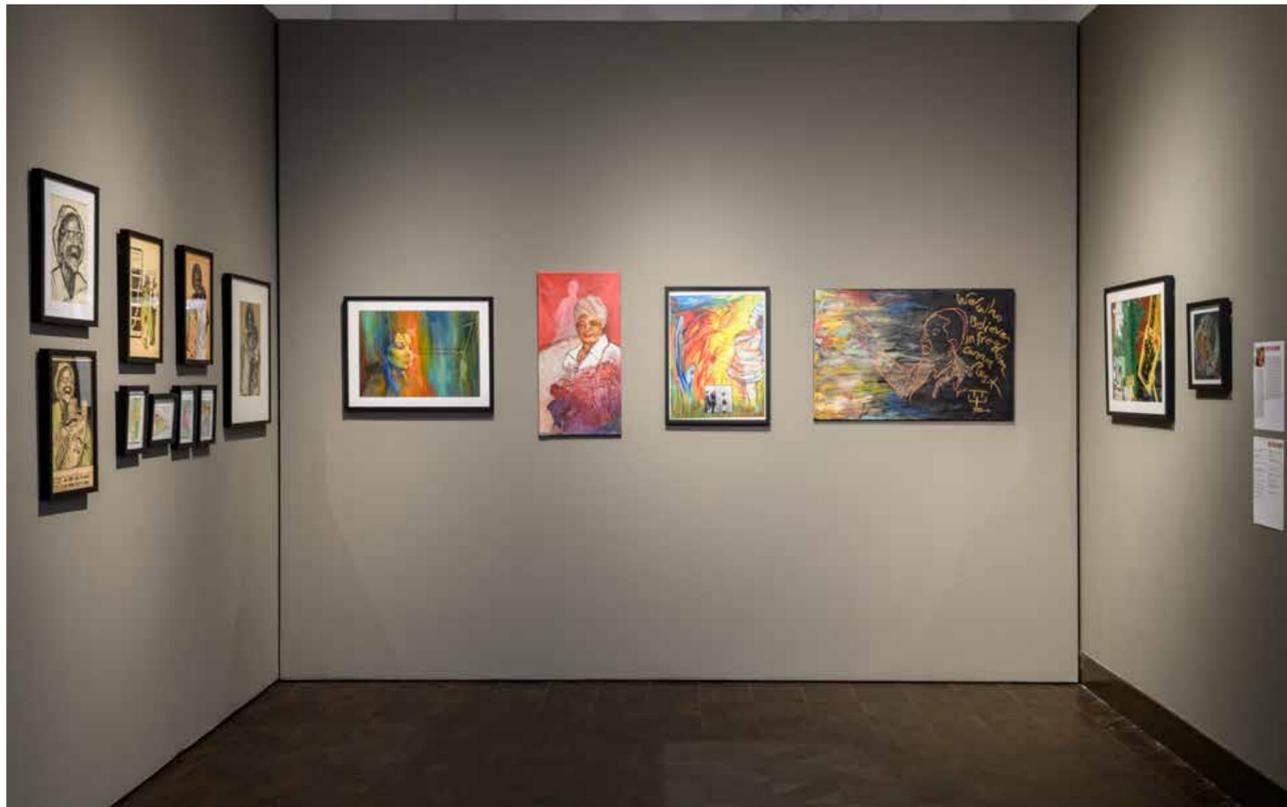
The goal should be to make the message clear so that even a child can understand it.

Don't be fooled by deception, Know the rules before you break them. Don't lose sight of what the goal is.

ALL POWER TO THE PEOPLE!



Educate to Liberate, 2015
Inkjet on paper
17 x 22 inches
© 2024 Emory Douglas,
AFLAW.
Courtesy of the artist.





MALIK EDWARDS

Malik Edwards spent his early years in Louisiana, and discovered his talent for drawing at an early age. Encouraged by his father, who also had an interest in sketching, he often drew Captain Marvel, Superman, and other superheroes as Black, imagining himself in those roles. After graduating from high school, Edwards joined the U.S. Marine Corps (USMC) in 1963 and served in Vietnam. After returning in 1966, Edwards's artistic talents were recognized, and he was assigned to work as a Corps illustrator. He illustrated USMC technical manuals, and as he did with his superheroes as a youth, he intentionally incorporated people with distinguishably Black features in his designs.

After leaving the USMC in 1970, Edwards moved to Northern California and trained as an apprentice for the Black Panther Party's Minister of Culture, Emory Douglas. There he learned the technical details of drawing,

printing, and layout. He met and worked alongside Gayle "Asali" Dickson, another artist and Party member who also influenced his art. As the head of the Black Panther Party's Washington, D.C. regional branch, he regularly designed posters, flyers, and magazines for pro-Black events and anti-drug campaigns. Edwards left the Black Panther Party in 1973. He also taught art and worked as a drug counselor.

Malik Edwards has used a variety of media and methods in his work as a graphic designer and artist over the years. He later learned to use digital media, which is now an integral part of his practice. His work has been exhibited in galleries in the Washington DC and San Francisco Bay areas. He has produced two books of his art that include the story of his struggles with post-war PTSD and his spiritual journey. He currently works at a high school in Oakland, California, as a Restorative Practice Case Manager.

I started working in black and white, then used color media like pencils, and now I create digital color art using various software applications. Recently, I have been playing with Artificial Intelligence (AI) prompts to create images of Black people who are underrepresented in AI. I accidentally discovered digital art using my finger with a drawing app on my phone. Now, I use a tablet to generate original work, which gives me complete control.

For most of my work, the title explains the piece. To add more concept information, these elements are prevalent in most of my figurative work: flowers, plants, wings, and sometimes animals. The flowers and plants represent the opening of the Divine Mind, and the wings in my art represent the second Divine Thought. The necks are not long but are an upward seeking of the third, Divine Consciousness. When I use the word Divine, I am not

referring to religion; I mean humans at our highest ideal. I am open to the idea of the innate wisdom of mind, thought, and consciousness that comes from the teachings of the Three Principles developed by philosopher and author Sydney Banks. Also, the writing of Thich Nhat Hahn, the Buddhist monk from Vietnam, continues to have great influence. Malcolm X is still the beginning of real learning for me.

I place myself among the Surrealist camp of artists. My first influences were Charles White and Elizabeth Catlett (although they are not Surrealists), the images of Magritte, and my teacher, Emory Douglas, of the Black Panther Party. Works by Salvador Dali, the landscapes of Yves Tanguy, the erotica of Hans Bellmer, Frida Kahlo's images, and finally, and as important, African sculpture and art have also inspired my work.



Zen Panther turning of the wheel, 2019
Digital print
20 x 20 inches
© Malik Edwards.
Courtesy of the artist.



AKINSANYA KAMBON

Akinsanya Kambon creates artworks that are vehicles, both material and symbolic, for histories that have been suppressed by the forces of colonization and subjugation. Having worked in clay for almost four decades, Kambon creates sculptures in the form of vessels, figures, and wall plaques. These works are kiln-fired in African ceremony, using a Western-style raku technique mastered over decades. These ceramics visualize narratives of the Black diaspora and are tools for spiritual and educational instruction. They cover African histories and mythologies and stories of violence and revolution from throughout Africa and the Americas. It has been his life's work to study and disseminate these histories, often highlighting the struggles of everyday people and their perseverance through hardship.

From 1966 to 1968, Kambon served a tour of duty in Vietnam with the United States Marine Corps as a combat illustrator

and infantryman, where he was awarded several Purple Hearts for his bravery. Upon his return to the United States, he joined the Sacramento chapter of the Black Panther Party. As Lieutenant of Culture, he worked on the layout and illustrations for the party's legendary newspaper, *The Black Panther*. The ideology of Black Power and its belief in the value of culture as a necessary tool in political and social liberation are closely aligned with the artist's beliefs. His work is a continuation of this legacy and a contemporary expression of Black diasporic culture and power.

Kambon earned a BA and an MA from California State University, Fresno. He has long been an advocate for art and education, working as a professor of art at the California State University, Long Beach, for twenty-six years, as well as running gratis youth art programs devoted to African, Indigenous, and Latino culture out of his Long Beach studio.

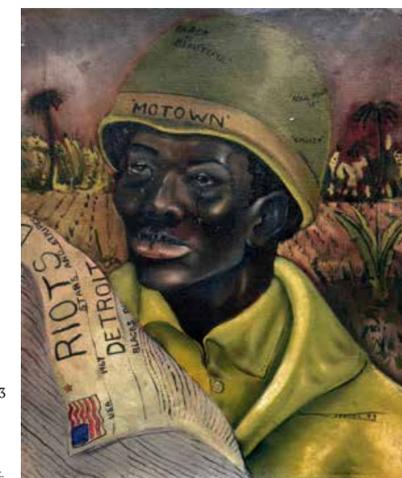
I was born into a legacy of revolution and rebellion, a calling to fight for change that is central to my work. Much of my art speaks to the struggles of oppressed people fighting for liberation. My lineage itself bears this history—my great-great-grandfather was among those who fought in the 1811 German Coast Rebellion, a powerful uprising of enslaved people in Louisiana. He was executed alongside one of his sons, and this legacy lives within me, driving my commitment to resist injustice. My art is an expression of that resistance.

For any artist or creative from an oppressed background, I believe that our work must confront the systems that perpetuate inequality, for these systems continue the same injustices our ancestors endured. To remain silent or complicit is to betray those who

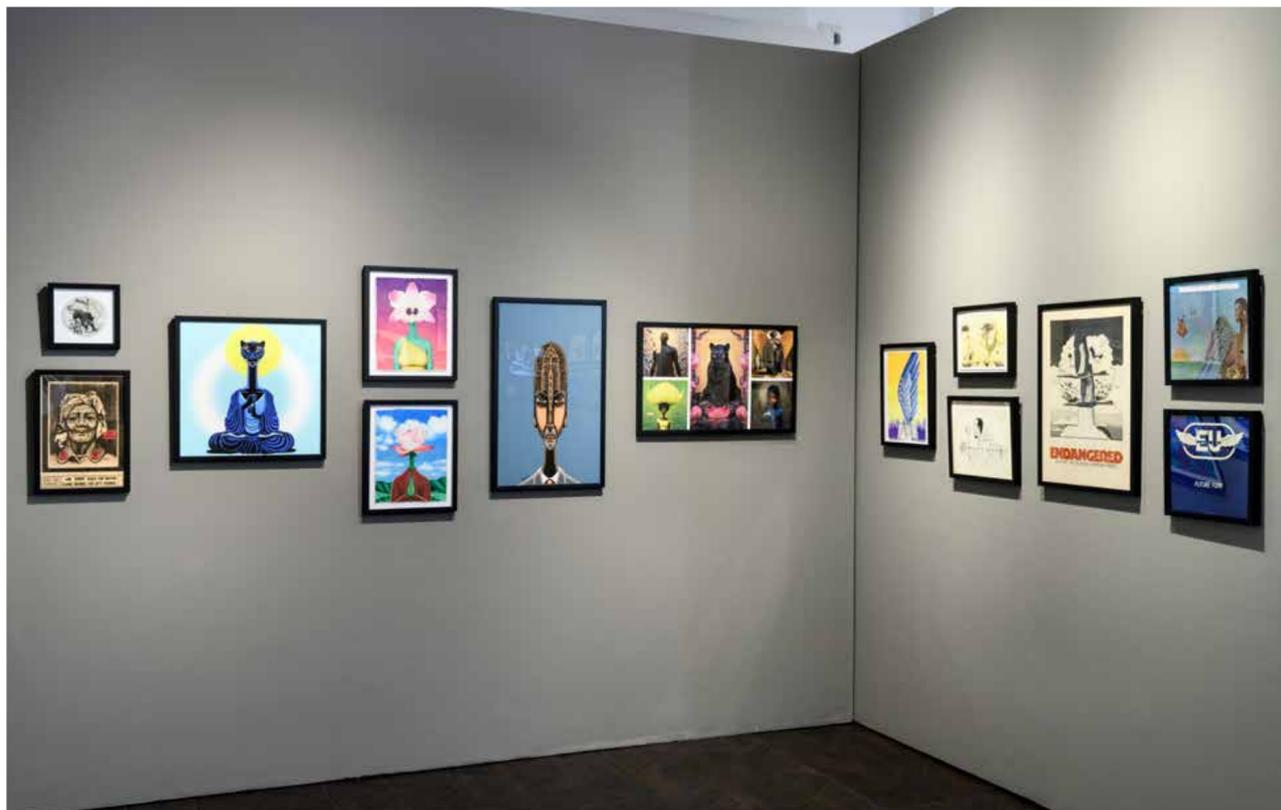
came before us. Our purpose is to make the world better for those who come after us, honoring the sacrifices made by generations before.

My earliest recognition came with drafting the *Black Panther Coloring Book* (1968), which was, in reality, a history book—not something meant to be colored in by kids. It told the story of African people kidnapped from their homeland and forced into slavery to build the economic foundations of this nation. Our labor powered this country's rise to global dominance, and that history should not be forgotten.

Through my work, I aim to ensure that this truth remains visible, refusing to let our contributions—and our struggles—be erased.



Detroit Blue in Vietnam, 1993
Small reproduction of original oil 24" x 30"
painting on canvas, 1973.
Giclee print
10 x 8.5 inches
© Akinsanya Kambon. Courtesy of the artist.





A Message from the Director,

On behalf of Rowan University Art Gallery & Museum it has been an honor to present this exhibition. This marks the first time that these four BPP artists have exhibited together, making this a unique and extraordinary opportunity for us. We are deeply grateful to the artists - Gayle Asali Dickson, Emory Douglas, Malik Edwards, and Akinsanya Kambon - for their willingness to participate. This event would not have been possible without the exceptional work of our guest curator Colette Gaiter. Through her research, scholarship, organization, and relationship building she has created a thoughtful and inspiring exhibition for us.

Additional thanks go to our Gallery Coordinator Kristin Qualls, for her tireless efforts in ensuring the smooth operation of this program. We also appreciate our art installers CJ Stahl and Nathan Dixon, and our dedicated student assistants: Rachel Hanan, Leila Hewitt, Fran Lombardo, Jaylah Ross, and Taha Shanbaz. Special thanks to Keith Ragone for his design consultation, Caitlin Mullally of University

Archives and Special Collections for their invaluable help with scanning archival materials, Gavin Schweiger for photography, and AJ Amoroso and Jon Akass for video production. We are also grateful to Kyle Galvan in the Print Center for assistance with graphics fabrication.

Colette Gaiter would like to extend her heartfelt thanks to the following individuals and organizations for making this exhibition possible: Billy X Jennings (BPP Historian), William Cordova, Claude Marks (Freedom Archives), Marxist Archives, Adrienne Fields, Rosie Shields, Yesenia Terrones Flores, Jack Shainman Gallery, Curtis Small, Robyn Phillips-Pendleton, Leila C. Nadir, Sasha Thompson, Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, and the University of Delaware.

Lastly we offer our sincere gratitude to our funders, whose support made this exhibition a reality: the New Jersey State Council of the Arts, the Terra Foundation, and the Joseph Robert Foundation.

-Mary Salvante,
Director and Chief Curator

Photography courtesy of:
Constance Mensh, gallery views
Gavin Schweiger, panel view

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Dickson, Douglas, Edwards, Kambon



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The Terra Foundation for American Art, established in 1978 and having offices in Chicago and Paris, supports organizations and individuals locally and globally with the aim of fostering intercultural dialogues and encouraging transformative practices that expand narratives of American art, through the foundation's grant program, collection, and initiatives.



ROWAN UNIVERSITY ART GALLERY & MUSEUM

Rowan University Art Gallery & Museum serves as a vibrant cultural destination for South Jersey, the Rowan community, and surrounding region. We are committed to cultivating an inclusive, accessible, and just environment that encourages dialogue and collaboration between exhibiting artists, students, faculty, and the general public through the presentation of interdisciplinary art exhibitions, artist talks and other public programming. Our mission is to present diverse forms of contemporary art by professional artists with content that is thought provoking, relevant, and timely. With our exhibitions and programming, we seek to engender curiosity and a passion for contemporary art, enrich the quality of life for area residents, and create a welcoming and inclusive cultural destination at Rowan University.

301 High Street Gallery
301 High Street West
Glassboro, NJ 08028

Information
rowan.edu/artgallery
artgallery@rowan.edu

Gallery Hours
Mon-Fri, 10:00 - 5:00 PM
Sat, 11:00 - 5:00 PM

**OPEN TO ALL
FREE ADMISSION**



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