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Artist Statement

African American culture has been shaped by a traumatic history. It contains the elements and memories of separation, fracture, loss and oppression: histories shared by all mankind. My art bears memories of separation, fracture, loss and oppression; histories shared by all mankind. My art bears witness.

In my art, I attempt to express not only aesthetic issues, but social, moral and spiritual ones as well. My influences are many: clay, naïve art, collage, combining painting and jazz and the spirit with(in) which it was created. My work is concerned with life and existence in the inner city. I note and am impressed by the various makeshift structures I find in the urban environment. News stands, garden shacks and the temporary shelters made of cardboard, tin and/or wood, made by people without tools or homes. Structures shaped by necessity, with available materials and improvisation; where everything may be off a few degrees, but still work.

From my perspective, the “unbeautiful” can be as powerful/ attractive as the professed beautiful. As an artist I am trying to give meaning to what is beautiful and extend its parameters. Currently, my work has landscape at its root. However, I am not trying to create a record of the landscape, but a good piece that satisfies me. The inner-city landscape I depict is both map and metaphor for the actual landscape and the contents of the collective unconscious. The pieces I am working on are a tapestry of the past, present and future. Some times, I am concerned with storyline, at other times, color, texture and harmony. Presently, I am working on mixed media pieces for the wall. In them I am trying to reconcile two- and three-dimensional form, positive and negative space, using collage and found objects. These pieces are intended for the wall, but they also serve as workbooks for larger installations.

I am a mixed media artist and a native Philadelphian. I was a participant/activist in the Black Arts Movement in Philadelphia of the Sixties and Seventies. Much of that art was concerned with pressing social issues of the time. At that time, I could not afford much in the way of art supplies. However, I was very aware of the Arte Povera Movement and the work of its artists. The art of impoverished materials was an important aspect of the movement. Necessity and awareness of constructivism and assemblage encouraged me in the use of found objects and materials from the urban environment to create glaze and texture in my work. Over the twenty-plus years I lived there, my neighborhood changed, its economics and buildings deteriorated, and it became known as the "Brickyard." These changes inspired me to make slab structures, using found objects and photos reflecting my surroundings. The resulting pieces were shown at the African American Museum in Philadelphia, where a critic noted that I was the only artist in the show who had urban concerns.