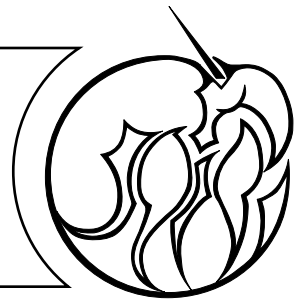


{ the avant-garde }

Katherine N. Crowley Fine Art & Design



PERIODIC JOURNAL VOLUME XV No.2 FEBRUARY 2023

by Katherine N. Crowley

Each year, in celebration of Black History Month, the February issue of *The Avant-Garde* is dedicated to the celebration of black artists and their contributions to the cultural landscape of humanity. In the autumn of 2022, I visited New Orleans where my sister Caroline lives. Having a local tour guide (and someone with a car) afforded me the opportunity to visit places that might not be at the top of the list in most visitor guides, but definitely provide an interesting view of our history as Americans.

black {art} history month

Like all cities, New Orleans has evolved both formally (through government policy, business investments, and urban planning) and organically through the residents who shape everyday life. During my visit we toured a collection of murals that lie near the railroad tracks in the Bywater in an area designated a Civil Rights cultural heritage area. We also visited the sculpture garden at the New Orleans Museum of Art, and I toured the Ogden Museum of Southern Art where I saw several exhibits including the 2022 “Louisiana Contemporary” and the “9th Annual HBCU Showcase”. Each encounter provided a unique perspective.



{portrait of p.b.s. pinchback & homer plessy}



@ianthepainter

Ian Wilkinson, also known as Ian the Painter, selected Homer Plessy as the subject of this mural for the guest wall of artist BMIKE in the Bywater. He later learned that the incident that led to the famous court case took place only 40 feet from where he was painting.



He also learned that he was not painting an image of Homer Plessy but of P.B.S. Pinchback, the first black man to serve as a governor in the United States, in Louisiana. Plessy is often confused with Pinchback, which the text added to mural explains. Wilkinson worked with Plessy's great-great-great-grandson Keith to create more proper portrait. Plessy is rendered in a rainbow of colors to acknowledge the timelessness of his actions.

Photographs by Katherine N. Crowley. Artwork by Ian Wilkinson

Homer Plessy was born Homère Patris Plessy on March 17, 1863 in New Orleans. His parents were carpenter (Joseph) Adolph Plessy and seamstress Rosa Debergue, both classified as people of color.

On June 7, 1892, Homer Adolph Plessy was removed from the East Louisiana Railroad train and arrested by Detective C.C. Cain at the corner of Royal and Press Street. He was charged with violating the 1890 Louisiana Separate Car Act that separated railroad passengers by race.

John Howard Ferguson was born in 1838 in Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts. He was appointed Judge in Section A of New Orleans Parish Criminal Court in 1892 and ruled against Plessy in November of the same year.

Plessy's act of civil disobedience was a test case organized by the Comité des Citoyens (Citizens' Committee) whose aim was to overturn segregation laws that were being enacted across the South. The philosophy and strategies of the Comité des Citoyens foreshadowed Civil Rights movements of the 20th century.

Although the Supreme Court ruled against Plessy on May 18, 1896, his case marked the first post-Reconstruction use of the 14th Amendment's "equal protection" provision in a legal challenge to segregation. In their final statement

after the Supreme Court verdict, the Comité des Citoyens proclaimed,

"We as freemen still believe we were right and our cause is sacred...In defending the cause of liberty, we met with defeat but not with ignominy"

Their position was vindicated when the Supreme Court upheld similar 14th Amendment arguments in the 1954 case of Brown vs. Board of Education.

Homer Plessy died on March 1, 1925. He is entombed in St. Louis Cemetery No. 1 and John Howard Ferguson is buried in Lafayette Cemetery, both in New Orleans.

Source: Crescent City Peace Alliance, State of Louisiana Historic Plaque.



A few steps from Studio Be is a mural commemorating the Civil Rights Movement and the role that New Orleans played in the integration of public schools. Three colorful silhouettes, based on a painting by Norman Rockwell, honor Ruby Bridges. At age 6 she was the first African-American to enroll in the all-white William Frantz Elementary school, a short distance away.



Photographs by Katherine N. Crowley. Sources: BMIKE, <https://www.bmike.co/>; "A Moving Tribute", *Tulane News*, <https://news.tulane.edu/news/true-colors>

BMIKE

{brandan "bmike" odums}

Brandan "BMIKE" Odums is a New Orleans-based visual artist who, through exhibitions, public programs, and public art works, is engaged in a transnational dialogue about the intersection of art and resistance.

After graduating from the New Orleans Center for Creative Arts (NOCCA), where he studied visual art, Odums began working as a filmmaker, creating original content through 2-Cent Entertainment, LLC and directing music videos for hip hop artists.

Odums began experimenting with graffiti in 2012, attracted to the medium because of its decidedly temporary nature. After painting a series of murals of black revolutionaries in the Florida Housing Development in New Orleans' Ninth Ward, other young creatives began to flock to the location, adding their own words, images, and even movement. This underground, guerilla art hub, which Odums named #ProjectBe, is the subject of the documentary "Strong Light" by Patrick Melon.

In 2016, Odums established Studio Be, a 36,000- square foot gallery and the final part of the Be Trilogy. Studio Be features "Ephemeral.Eternal," his first solo exhibition that includes over a dozen original murals, several room-sized installations, and reconstructed murals salvaged from #ProjectBe before the Florida Housing Development's demolition in 2014. The studio is open to the public 4 days a week, and welcomes hundreds of visitors from near and far weekly.

{frantz elementary school}

William T. Frantz Elementary School at 3811 North Galvez Street in New Orleans became a significant site in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. On November 14, 1960, a six-year-old girl walked through its doors and changed the course of history by entering a Deep South public elementary school that had previously been reserved for white students only. The desegregation of New Orleans schools stemmed from efforts by the NAACP and other Civil Rights organizations to end separation of school children by race. Since the Plessy vs. Ferguson decision of 1896, schools across the Deep South became rigidly segregated. Although they were supposed to be equal in quality to white schools, the black schools received subpar facilities and educational materials. In September 1952, with assistance from attorneys Thurgood Marshall and Robert Carter of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, New Orleans Attorney A.P. Tureaud a lawsuit on behalf of Earl Benjamin Bush calling for an end to the segregated school system in Orleans Parish.

In 1954, the United States Supreme Court in the Brown vs. Board of Education case set aside the Plessy decision and ruled that segregated schools were unconstitutional. The high court ordered that public schools be desegregated "with all deliberate speed". In 1956, the US Court of Appeals dismissed multiple attempts by the Louisiana Legislature to thwart integration efforts. In July 1959, Federal Judge J. Skelly Wright ordered the Orleans Parish School Board to integrate its schools.



After a series of aptitude test, four girls were selected to become the pioneers at McDonogh No. 19 Elementary and William T. Frantz schools in the New Orleans Ninth Ward. With the eyes of the nation focused on New Orleans, U.S. Marshals escorted the girls (Ruby Bridges to William T. Frantz and Leona Tata, Gaile Etienne Stripling and

Tessie Prevost to McDonogh No. 19) amidst taunts and threats from segregationists. Despite those challenges, the four children successfully completed the school year. Their courage paved the way for more peaceful expansion of integration into other schools in the following years.



{the problem we all live with}

Rockwell's first assignment for Look magazine was an illustration of a six-year-old African-American school girl being escorted by four U.S. Marshals to her first day at an all-white school in New Orleans. Ordered to proceed with school desegregation after the 1954 Brown v. Board of Education ruling, Louisiana lagged behind until pressure

from Federal Judge Skelly Wright forced the school board to begin desegregation on November 14, 1960.

Above left: *The Problem We All Live With*, by Norman Rockwell, 1964. Oil on canvas, 36" x 58". Story illustration for Look, January 14, 1964. From the permanent collection of Norman Rockwell Museum. <http://www.nrm.org/thinglink/text/ProblemLiveWith.html>

{the sydney and walda besthoff sculpture garden at the new orleans museum of art}



Alison Saar's *Travelin' Light* explores the history of slavery in the United States. Named for a Billie Holiday song of the same title, the sculpture is also a bell that chimes mournfully when you pull a chain in the back. Inspired by Japanese temple bells, the sculpture is a memorial to victims of violence and suffering all across the world.



Fred Wilson's two figures—one representing Ancient Egypt, and the other Ancient Rome—reflect on the interwoven histories of Africa and Europe. Wilson purchased cheap plaster copies of ancient sculptures and had them cast them in bronze, covering the ancient Egyptian figure in a black patina and painting the classical Greco-Roman figure white. *The Mete of the Muse* reflects on how our understanding of this history—which often valorizes Europe over Africa—has been shaped by larger racial and cultural biases.



Hank Willis Thomas's *History of the Conquest* reflects on global histories of colony and empire. Thomas based *History of Conquest* on a seventeenth-century miniature sculpture composed of a real nautilus shell covered in silver and topped with a black enamel figure. Enlarged to monumental scale and cast in solid bronze, Thomas transforms a negative stereotype from the past into a monumental hero for the present.

Clockwise from top left: *Travelin' Light*, by Alison Saar, 1999, Museum purchase, Mrs. P. Roussel (Sunny) Norman 90th Birthday Fund from her family and friends, 2001.248, © Alison Saar; *History of the Conquest*, by Hank Willis Thomas, 2017, Museum purchase with funds provided by Sydney and Walda Besthoff, 2018.30, © Hank Willis Thomas; *The Mete of the Muse*, by Fred Wilson, 2006, Museum purchase with funds provided by Sydney and Walda Besthoff, 2017.191.a.,b, © Fred Wilson, Courtesy Pace Gallery. <https://noma.org/besthoff-sculpture-garden/>

{louisiana contemporary at the ogden museum of southern art}



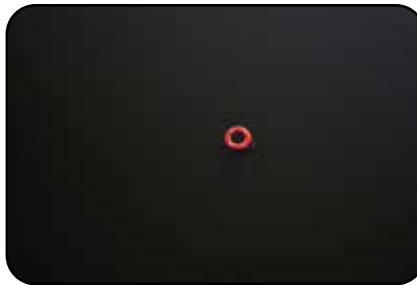
1.



2.



3.



4.



5.

by Katherine N. Crowley

This statewide, juried exhibition promotes contemporary art practices in Louisiana. The theme of trauma and displacement was evident throughout this collection of work. Visiting from the Midwest, an area that does not experience the violent storms of the Gulf Coast, I was surprised at how many pieces addressed insecurities around housing, the concept of place and home and the importance of relationships in a destructive environment. This destruction extends to concepts surrounding the immigrant experience, institutional racism, and the impact of COVID-19 on societal norms.

1. *Machete Woman (1811 Freedom or Death Series)*, by Derron Cook, documents historic re-enactors portraying the story of Charles Deslondes and the enslaved army of the 1811 German Coast Uprising. 2020, Digital photography, 14 x 20 inches, Collection of the artist.

2. *Removal of R.E. Lee (Charlottesville)*, by Julie Glass, is a sculptural interpretation of the event that led to the "Unite the Right" rally and resulted in the death of Heather Heyer. 2022 Found wood, found metal, acrylic paint, 50 x 39 x 15 inches, Collection of the artist.

3. *Patterns of Our Skin: Stars and Flowers*, by Laura Welter, 2021, Wood panel, fabrics, quilt blocks, crewel embroidery, collage, glue, acrylic paint, oil paint, 36 x 42 inches, Collection of the artist.

4. *A Life Ring Floats Near a Wrecked Boat After Hurricane Ida*,

by Ben Depp, Terrebonne Parish, Louisiana, 2021, Pigment print made from aerial photograph, 24 x 32 inches, Collection of the artist.

5. *Hecate*, is a reimagining of Édouard Manet's "Olympia", by Susan Ireland, 2021, Enamels, 24 x 36 inches, Collection of the artist.

{also at the ogden}



Left to right: Portrait of the "Queen of Creole Cuisine" and Civil Rights activist, Leah Chase, by Aron Belka.

Bélizaire and the Frey Children was conserved to uncover the portrait of Bélizaire, an enslaved domestic who had intentionally been painted over.

The 9th Annual HBCU Showcase.

{all around the town}

The Columbus Cultural Arts Center (<http://www.culturalartscenteronline.org>)
 "Ohio Art League Spring Juried Exhibition" MAIN GALLERY March 10-April 12
 "Clyde V. Berry: Rediscovery" LOFT GALLERY March 10-April 15

The Columbus Museum of Art (<http://www.columbusmuseum.org>)
 "Wild Things Are Happening: The Art of Maurice Sendak", Through March 19; "Gina Osterloh: Mirror Shadow Shape", Through October 8

COSI (<http://www.cosi.org>)
 "Tutankhamun - His Tomb and his Treasures below" Opening March 18

The Decorative Arts Center of Ohio (<http://www.decartsohio.org/>)
 "Flower Power: Flora in Fashion" & "Botany in Buttons", Through April 23

Dublin Arts Council (<http://www.dublinarts.org>)
 "Fractals: Patterns in Nature", March 7-June 2

The High Road Gallery and Studios (<http://www.highroadgallery.com>)
 "Truth Be Told: An Artful Gathering of Women", February 3-March 11
 "Divergent Views: The Art of Nature", March 17-April 22

The King Arts Complex (<https://kingartscomplex.com>)
 "First Tuesday Tea", March 7, 12:00pm-2:00pm

McConnell Arts Center (<http://www.mcconnellarts.org>)
 "Weiting Wei: Motherhood Main Gallery", Through March 16
 "Ardine Nelson- Transitory States Corridor Galleries", Through March 16

Ohio Craft Museum (<https://ohiocraft.org>)
 "Alchemy 6: International Exhibition of Contemporary Enamel", Through April 1; " Pysanky: Ukrainian Easter Eggs", Through April 14

OSU Urban Arts Space (<http://www.uas.osu.edu>)
 "Big Cloud (MFA Thesis Exhibition)", Through March 18

Pizzuti Collection (<http://www.columbusmuseum.org>)
 "2023 GCAC Visual Arts Awards Exhibition", February 17-August 6

The Riffe Gallery (<http://www.oac.ohio.gov/Riffe-Gallery/Exhibitions>)
 "Arts Beacon of Light", January 31-April 7

The Wexner Center (<http://www.wexarts.org>)
 "Meditation Ocean Constellation: Meditation Ocean", "Sa'dia Rehman",
 "A.K. Burns: Of space we are...", "The Native Guide Project: Columbus
 February 3-July 9

{performing arts}

BalletMet (<https://www.balletmet.org>)
 "A Celebration of New Works", March 10-18, Davidson Theater

CAPA (<https://www.capa.com>)
 "Beetlejuice", March 7-12, Ohio Theater
 "Paula Poundstone", March 18, Palace Theater
 "Fran Lebowitz", March 6, Southern Theater
 "Step Afrika!", March 27, Lincoln Theater

CATCO (<http://www.catco.org>)
 "...but you could've held my hand", March 23-April 2, Riffe Center

Columbus Symphony Orchestra (<http://www.columbussympphony.com>)
 ALL PERFORMANCES AT THE OHIO THEATER UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED
 "Mahler Symphony No. 9", March 3-4
 "Variations on Nutcracker Suite", March 17-19

{and beyond}

The Akron Art Museum (<http://www.akronartmuseum.org>)
 "Kinship", Ongoing for the celebration of AAM's Centennial

The Museum of Fine Arts Boston (<http://www.mfa.org>)
 "Making Past Present: Cy Twombly", January 14-May 7

ICA Boston (<http://www.icaboston.org>)
 "María Berrio: The Children's Crusade", Through August 6

The Cincinnati Art Museum (<http://www.cincinnatiartmuseum.org>)
 "Georgia O'Keefe, Photographer", February 3-May 7

Contemporary Arts Center (<http://www.contemporaryartscenter.org>)
 "The Cartographer Tries to Map a Way to Heaven", Through April 2

The Cleveland Museum of Art (<http://www.clevelandart.org>)
 "The Tudors: Art & Majesty in Renaissance England" Through May 14

The Art Institute of Chicago (<http://www.artic.edu>)
 "Salvador Dali: The Image Disappears", Through June 12

Dayton Art Institute (<http://www.daytonartinstitute.org>)
 "New Beginnings: An American Story of Romantics and Modernists in the West", Through May 21

Detroit Institute of Art (<http://www.dia.org>)
 "Off-Site | Rethinking Monuments", Through April 9

Indianapolis Museum of Art (<http://www.imamuseum.org>)
 "We. The Culture: Works by The Eighteen Art Collective", Through September 24

Los Angeles County Museum of Art (<http://www.lacma.org>)
 "Another World", Through June 19

Minneapolis Institute of Art (<http://www.artsmia.org>)
 "Eternal Offerings: Chinese Ritual Bronzes", March 4-May 21

Metropolitan Museum of Art, NYC (<http://www.metmuseum.org>)
 "Lives of the Gods: Divinity in Maya Art", Through April 2
 "Beyond the Light: Identity and Place in 19th-Century Danish Art", Through April 16

Museum of Modern Art, New York (<http://www.moma.org>)
 "Guillermo del Toro: Crafting Pinocchio", Through April 15

New Orleans Museum of Art (<http://www.noma.org>)
 "Katherine Choy: Radical Potter 1950s New Orleans", Through April 16

Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh (<http://www.cmoa.org>)
 "58th Carnegie International", Through April 2

The Warhol, Pittsburgh (<http://www.warhol.org>)
 "Andy Warhol's Social Network: Interview, Television & Portraits", Through March 20

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (<http://www.sfmoma.org>)
 "Joan Brown", Through March 12

The Toledo Museum of Art (<http://www.toledomuseum.org>)
 "Matt Wedel: Phenomenal Debris", Through April 2

The National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. (<http://www.nga.gov>)
 "This Is Britain: Photographs from the 1970s-80s", Through June 11

The Smithsonian American Art Museum & The Renwick Gallery, Washington, D.C. (<https://americanart.si.edu>)
 "We Are Made of Stories: Self-Taught Artists", Through March 26
 "This Present Moment: Crafting a Better World", Through April 2
 "Artist to Artist", Through September 3

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