

About Things Loved: Blackness and Belonging

Romare Bearden

United States, 1911–1988

Continuities

1969

Collage on board

Gift of the Childe Hassam Fund of the American Academy of Arts and Letters

1971.9

“Naturally, I had strong feelings about the Civil Rights Movement, and about what was happening in the sixties. I have not created protest images. The world within the collage, if it is authentic, retains the right to speak for itself.”

—Romare Bearden

Coming of age as an artist during the Harlem Renaissance, Romare Bearden embraced the concepts put forth by young African American intellectuals of the 1920s and 1930s and reclaimed the classical African art that had inspired early modern artists such as Picasso and Matisse. The faces of the figures in *Continuities* are portrayed in the style of traditional African masks. Improvisational jazz, rural life, and African American quilts were other influences that Bearden employed in his compositions throughout his career.

Girma Berta

Ethiopia, born 1990

Moving Shadows II, VIII

2017

Digital archival print

Promised gift of Diane and Charles Frankel

A self-taught photographer who uses an iPhone to take his images, Girma Berta has become known for colorful portraits that capture the lives of people from his hometown, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. His *Moving Shadows* series positions lone figures in a field of saturated color, then re-anchors them to the world through their shadows. As he states, “I love contrasting colours . . . It expresses the contrasting life I see throughout my photography.” Berta uses his phone as a means to document people on the street without being noticed, representing them as they are and how they move through their city.

Chakaia Booker
United States, born 1953
Quality Time
From *2004: Six by Four* (Exit Art Benefit Print Portfolio)
2004
Vulcanized synthetic rubber relief
Gift of Charles and Naomie Kremer 2007.29.3.1

Frequently working with recycled rubber tires, Chakaia Booker engages a material with a fraught history of colonialism, slavery, and systems of capitalism, classism, and consumerism. Booker's labor-intensive process mirrors the grueling work of rubber production. The history of rubber stretches back to European colonialism in the African continent—which used forced labor to extract raw natural rubber—through the production of synthetic rubber in early twentieth-century American factories that relied on Black laborers.

From afar, *Quality Time* looks like a tire mark on a street, but a close look reveals the intimate characteristics of a 1980s urbanscape. Booker takes up the repeated image of a little girl surrounded by tires and milk cartons. What happened to this girl? What was her childhood like? What were her fears? Given the complex relationship of rubber to Black communities locally and globally, as well as the material's multisensorial qualities, *Quality Time* suggests the layered imageries, histories, and feelings of Black life.

Peter Bradley
United States, born 1940
Isom Dart I
1972
Acrylic on canvas
Purchased with the aid of funds from the National Endowment for the Arts
(selected by the Committee for the Acquisition of Afro-American Art)
1972.86

Abstract artist and curator Peter Bradley recently summarized his thoughts on the politics of race and art: "I just wanna paint and step outside of the politics behind art. The politics are always there, but I don't want it to be the subject of my work." The title of this painting references African American history. It invokes Ned Huddleston, also known as Isom Dart, a Western cowboy, rodeo rider, accused cattle rustler, and rancher who was born into

slavery in 1849 in Arkansas and murdered in 1900 near his cabin at Brown's Hole, Utah.

Erica Deeman
United Kingdom, born 1977
Untitled 08
From the series *Silhouettes*
2014
Digital chromogenic print
Gift of Jamie Lunder 2016.140

Forming part of Erica Deeman's photographic series *Silhouettes, Untitled 08* depicts a Black woman in profile against a stark white background. By manipulating the contrast of the image, Deeman engages with a mode of representation that blurs the boundaries between silhouette and individualized portrait. In doing so, the photographer strategically positions her work in dialogue with the portrait-silhouette, used by Swiss philosopher Johann Kaspar Lavater in the late eighteenth century as part of a physiognomic pseudoscience that attempted to link individual character with facial appearance, often with explicitly racist references. Deeman appropriates and reworks the silhouette to adjust the viewer's gaze and establish new terms of visibility.

Charles Gaines
United States, born 1944
Unfinished Drawing
1974
Pen and ink on paper
Gift of Daisy Addicott 2014.56

In the early 1970s, Charles Gaines began drawing grids as a means to systematize artistic production. "The ego is limiting," he explains, "we gravitate toward things we know and can't imagine things we don't know. Through 'systems' I could go where the imagination couldn't and bring things that otherwise would not be thought about to light. Out of this I began using the grid." This emphasis on a set of arbitrary rules in his work reveals the arbitrariness built into the institutions that manage our lives. Gaines, who grew up with the Jim Crow South's violent systems of segregation, recalls his childhood as a time and place "where a whole set of terms and conditions were attached to me, what was permissible as a Black

person and what was not permissible . . . I realized that those rules equaled my identity. And I realized that it was a construction.” Just as the rules that govern his work betray and exceed their own construction, his grids ask us to question how we create the rules that govern our lives.

Dan Halter
Zimbabwe, born 1977
South Africa/Zimbabwe Border Fence
2013
Handwoven archival inkjet print
Promised gift of Diane and Charles Frankel

White Zimbabwean artist Dan Halter currently lives in South Africa. He was born in the final years of Zimbabwe’s white minority rule and at the end of apartheid in South Africa. Halter’s work reflects turbulent sociopolitical scenes of displacement. Standing along the Limpopo River boundary between South Africa and Zimbabwe, the wire fence in this photograph was constructed by South Africa’s apartheid regime in the 1980s. Originally intended as a racial barrier against the immigration of Black Zimbabweans, the fence incorporated razor wire and electric-shock mechanisms that were often lethal. The local people called it the “Snake of Fire.”

As part of Halter’s larger body of work, *South Africa/Zimbabwe Border Fence* references a complex discourse on borders as well as ephemeral experiences of xenophobia throughout the continent and beyond.

Lyle Ashton Harris
United States, born 1965
San Francisco Is the Only City Where You Can Spend a Million and Still Feel Like Shit
1993
Duraflex photograph
Gift of Penny Cooper and Rena Rosenwasser 2000.49.4

This photograph belongs to the *Ektachrome Archive* (1986–2000), a collection of portraits and candid photographs of Lyle Ashton Harris’s family, friends, and lovers that documents both the artist’s life and his developing sense of self as a queer Black man. The personal collides with the political throughout the archive as intimate scenes from Harris’s life unfurl alongside cultural milestones for the Black, transatlantic academic community and the

second generation of AIDS activism. The series reflects a need to find and sustain pleasure and joy in daily life, despite the HIV pandemic's constant reminder of death. Harris is the subject in this archival photograph, which captures the pleasure of looking and the prospect of seduction. Reflecting on the marginalization of Black and queer bodies within historical and cultural representation, Harris's reclining pose and makeup allow him to inhabit a gender-fluid role that subverts the art historical trope of the odalisque as a nude, white, female object of desire. Harris moves uninhibited through this intimate space, free to perform, pose for a friend, wear makeup, lounge on a bed, and eat pizza.

Mildred Howard

United States, born 1945

Safe House

2005–15

Mixed-media installation with welded steel frame, vintage silver objects, and steel knives

Gift of the artist 2015.29

Oakland-based artist Mildred Howard's mixed-media assemblages and installations of often evoke memory and engage autobiography. Howard's mother Mable was involved in politics and activism in Berkeley during the 1960s—she was instrumental in forcing BART underground in South Berkeley—and instilled in her daughter the importance of community and home. Responding to the more recent gentrification and demographic changes in the East Bay, Howard asks the provocative question: "What happens to a community when all the color leaves?" *Safe House* disrupts feelings of belonging and security by constructing a home that is schematic, open, and littered with feelings of love and pain. Here, Howard calls attention to both internal and external forces that threaten the home and family. Spilling beyond the metal framework, a river of silver leads to an unsettling wall of knives. What makes the home a place of safety? We could think of each of the 130 knives as a different force—ongoing cycles of displacement and racial and gender-based violence, to name a few—that threatens to unsettle the home, the family, and a community.

Margo Humphrey

United States, born 1942

James Brown's Sounds of Escape-Ism

1972

Color lithograph

Margo Humphrey

United States, born 1942

Crying ain't gonna help none, baby

1972

Color lithograph

Purchased with the aid of funds from the National Endowment for the Arts and the H. W. Anderson Charitable Foundation (selected by the Committee for the Acquisition of Afro-American Art) 1973.16, 1973.17

Margo Humphrey, who was born in Oakland, made these works while studying printmaking at Stanford University. Humphrey elevates the domestic space to one of transcendental significance. Both works here allude to the tradition of the blues in African American life. The figures in *Crying ain't gonna help none, baby* are printed in bright blue. Sorrow is released in a puddle of tears that flows out from the figure. These teardrops echo the shapes emitted from the record player in *James Brown's Sounds of Escape-ism*. In the blues, music offers release through the collective sharing of pain.

Julie Mehretu

United States, born Ethiopia, 1970

Local Calm

2005

Sugar-lift aquatint with color aquatint, spit-bite aquatint, and soft- and hardground etching and engraving, printed on gampi paper chine collé
Gift of Tecoa and Tom Bruce 2013.7.1

Collapsing time, space, and history into a single plane, *Local Calm* offers a layering of extreme weather phenomena on personal and collective scales. One of three etchings in Julie Mehretu's *Heavy Weather* series, *Local Calm* was created after Hurricane Katrina. Mehretu processed the natural disaster through her own contemporaneous crossing of the Drake Passage during stormy weather. She recalled that she watched an albatross soar unaffected above their ship, calmly persevering through the storm, as she traveled the notoriously tumultuous strait between Cape Horn and Antarctica. She imagined the bird as an omen of survival for herself and for the communities of color that were disproportionately affected by Hurricane Katrina. For Mehretu, the bird "is an image that I call up from time to time as a counterbalance to the news of the day: war, terrorism, famines, hurricanes."

Both the storms and the albatross are present in *Local Calm* in the chaotic interplay of forms and lines, reminiscent of schematized birds and diagrams of adverse meteorological conditions. As you look at the etching, consider: Where are you, the viewer, within the storm? Are you watching from elsewhere or inside it?

Kamau Amu Patton
United States, born 1972
Light Bar, Blue
2011

Painted metal and LED strip
Collectors' Circle purchase: Bequest of Phoebe Apperson Hearst, by exchange, with additional support from Elizabeth and James Adams
2012.20

Kamau Patton investigates and dissects technology to question our relationship to our environment and to each other. Working across media from performance to video, Patton produces art that invites the spectator's interaction. *Light Bar, Blue* fills the room with blue light, inviting the viewer to become aware of the exhibition space. The light transforms the white walls of the museum, casting them as blue and thereby calling into question the common use of white paint for gallery walls, which we've come to accept as natural. What would it be like to take this insight out of the gallery? What other "natural" conditions might we see to be merely the consequence of habit and convention?

Faith Ringgold
United States, born 1930
The Sunflower Quilting Bee at Arles
1996
Color lithograph
Gift of Moira Roth 2017.109

Faith Ringgold often blends visual art forms like painting and printmaking with quilting techniques. In this lithograph, she presents a scene that places historical Black women, including Sojourner Truth, Ida B. Wells, Fannie Lou Hamer, Harriet Tubman, and Rosa Parks in front of Impressionist artist Vincent Van Gogh, who produced many paintings in Arles, France. In addition to disrupting the ways in which women of color have traditionally been viewed as objects in artistic practice, the use of quilt-making also

brings a sense of collaboration and belonging across time and space. The converging colors and identities seen with the field of sunflowers creates a bridge between quilt-work and European art traditions.

Betye Saar
United States, born 1926
The Long Memory
From the National Women in the Arts 10th Anniversary Print Portfolio
1998
Color serigraph
Gift of Lorrie and Richard Greene 2014.58.4

Betye Saar came to prominence in the 1970s for work that addressed racism and sexism through the appropriation of stereotypical figures such as Aunt Jemima and Black Sambo. Raised in a home of mixed religious traditions, Saar has always had an interest in the metaphysical, and she describes the process of making the work itself as a ritual, collecting and repurposing everyday objects. "Recycling junk is a way of showing that you can make art out of anything . . . There's power in the changing uses of a material, another kind of energy that is released." Combining forms from folk religions and personal artifacts, Saar's assemblages suggest an African diasporic worldscape.

Raymond Saunders
United States, born 1934
About Things Loved
1986
Folding screen with paint, ink, and graphite on paper and newspaper with collage and color print reproductions
Gift of Penny Cooper and Rena Rosenwasser 2002.41.a-c

"Racial hang-ups are extraneous to art . . . Can't we get clear of these degrading limitations and recognize the wider reality of art, where color is the means and not the end?"

—Raymond Saunders, "Black is a Color," 1967

In the hands of Raymond Saunders, black is not a racial marker, but a compositional element, a splash of paint or rhythmic brushstrokes. Taking elements from his surroundings, *About Things Loved* is a collage of detritus Saunders collected during his wanderings through the diverse city streets of the Bay Area. Painted on a torn Japanese folding screen, the unexpected juxtaposition of Japanese calligraphy (the red character 風 *kaze* means “wind” and the purple character 雄 *osu* means “hero” or “male”), Chinese street signs, scribbled marks, an illustrated recipe, a chessboard, and other drawings does not conjure up a fixed narrative. The question of belonging lingers: Who do these objects belong to: past, present, future? Spontaneous yet inclusive, the work’s displacement of images, texts, drawings, and objects suggests the experience of migration, exile, and cross-cultural encounters.

Lorna Simpson

United States, born 1960

III

From the Peter Norton Family Christmas Art Projects

1994

Offset ink on wood box, waterless lithograph on felt, with ceramic, rubber, and bronze wishbones

Gift of Chancellor Chang-Lin Tien 1994.37

Lorna Simpson’s *III* presents three wishbones placed in a wood box, accompanied by a drawing of a wishbone with the phrases “wish #1,” “wish #2,” and “wish #3”. Wishbones—the fused clavicles of birds—have been considered lucky since ancient Roman times. Scholars believe the Pilgrims began the tradition in which two people compete to crack off the larger portion of the dried bone and win a wish. Made of ceramic, rubber, and bronze, Simpson’s wishbones juxtapose the promise of a wish against the material and physical properties of each bone.

Lorna Simpson

United States, born 1960

Counting

1991

Photogravure and screenprint

Gift of John Bransten 1993.3

Lorna Simpson often photographs figures turned away or tightly cropped, as in the top image of *Counting*, to present what art historian Huey Copeland has called “anti-portraits.” The corresponding text reads like a timecard, but the hours coil around an imaginary clock, distorting the passage of time and revealing a labor schedule both impossible and endless. Below is an image of an unidentified structure described ambiguously by “310 years ago” and “1575 bricks.” This cylindrical brick smokehouse is part of Boone Hall. First settled in 1681 (310 years before Simpson made *Counting*), Boone plantation used enslaved workers to produce bricks, many which were used to build the city of Charleston. At the bottom of the work, Simpson presents a coil of hair resembling the Gullah “fanner” baskets made in the Sea Islands, included in this exhibition. Together with representations of the passing of time and the invocation of ancestors, *Counting* reads as a cosmogram of the African diasporic experience.

Hervé Télémaque
France, born Haiti, 1937
Othello #1
1960
Oil on canvas
Anonymous gift 1967.56

Hervé Télémaque’s *Othello #1* integrates traditional Haitian iconography, Anglophone literary references, and a French surrealist preoccupation with dreams. Referencing Shakespeare’s play about a Moorish general, the repeated iconography of vines and masks suggests the entanglement of African diasporic culture within European modernity. Télémaque’s work functions in and between the Haitian and French cultures in which he was raised, employing a visual “double language” he claims to have constructed from his *métis*, or biracial, heritage. *Othello #1* was likely painted in New York, where the artist lived during the height of Abstract Expressionism from the late 1950s to the early 1960s. Télémaque left New York for Paris, frustrated with the pervasive racism he encountered in the United States, and subsequently shifted his attention to engage directly with prevailing political conditions, saying in 2015, “Even today, I’m still an ‘angry’ Black man. I have expressed my rebellion against American imperialism time and again . . . I stay close to my origins while always maintaining a critical distance.”

Unidentified Photographer
Untitled
c. 1873–1884
Albumen print

Unidentified Photographer
Untitled
c. 1881–84
Albumen print

William K. Ehrenfeld M.D. Collection 2005.3.2, 2005.3.1

The transatlantic slave trade formally ended in 1807; the British abolished slavery in 1833; and the French abolished slavery, for the second time, in 1848. Yet, these photographs demonstrate a continuation of the forced migration, transport, and sale of people on the eastern coast of Africa. The enslaved were sequestered onto large sailing vessels known as dhows and shuttled between Zanzibar, Mozambique, and the Comoro and Seychelles islands. Depicted in these photographs, the H.M.S. (Her Majesty's Ship) Undine and London scoured the waters of the Indian Ocean to intercede in the transport of enslaved peoples. The ships took the survivors to Zanzibar, where British missionaries cared for the children who were presumed to be orphans. The sale of photographs such as these financially supported the missionaries, and their widespread publication in the form of engravings served to propagandize Britain's global interventions. The fact that the people in these images were typically identified as "slaves" in contemporary reproductions points (perhaps unconsciously) to the fact that, despite having been "rescued," they were often forced to re-enter lives of limited freedom and indentured labor. Despite the widely held belief that these ships were engaged in a morally driven project of emancipation, their captains and crew were paid "prize" money for each enslaved human and dhow captured.

Kara Walker
United States, born 1969
Freedom: A Fable
From the Peter Norton Family Christmas Art Projects
1997
Artist's book
Gift of James Elliott 1998.52
Gift of the Steven Leiber Trust 2017.21.25

Kara Walker's signature cut-paper silhouettes, presented here in a pop-up-book format, narrate the story of N—, a soon-to-be emancipated enslaved woman in the nineteenth-century United States. The use of laser-cutting technology allows for detailed illustrations, in which N— deals with continuous oppression in her everyday life and dreams about her "New World" with no racial divisions. Evoking the format of a children's book, Walker's *Freedom: A Fable* pops up into the reader's space and collapses historical distance in order to critique historical injustices that remain with us today.

Carrie Mae Weems
United States, born 1953
Hush of Our Silence
From *2003: In the Year Three* (Exit Art Benefit Print Portfolio)
2003
Chromogenic print
Gift of Charles and Naomie Kremer 2007.29.2.5

Carrie Mae Weems
United States, born 1953
The Shape of Things
From the series *Africa*
1993 (printed 1996)
Photogravure
Gift of Sandra J. Springs in constant memory of Marian C. Chapman
2010.34.1

As a graduate student in folklore at UC Berkeley, Carrie Mae Weems began to explore diasporic cultures and the concept of place. This research inspired her to trace, locate, collect, and photograph the African presence within various groups and geographic sites. In her *Sea Island* series, for example, Weems trained her camera on landscapes and structures that evoke the amalgamation of African and New World cultures on the islands off the coasts of Georgia and South Carolina. She later traveled to the slave coasts of West Africa—to Ghana and Senegal—and to landlocked Djenné, Mali, where she took the photographs in this triptych. Weems used her square-format photographs to focus on the divisions of space. She explains: "But what was deep was the gender specificity of the architecture, particularly in Djenne, Mali. The idea that space is 'gendered'—you know, male and female

space . . . It was so clearly presented in the structure of the buildings—beautiful.”

Charles White

United States, born 1918–1979

Love Letter I (also known as Love Song Read)

1971

Color lithograph

Purchased with the aid of funds from the National Endowment for the Arts
(selected by the Committee for the Acquisition of Afro-American Art)

1971.17

Love Letter I responds to the 1970 arrest and imprisonment of civil rights activist and Black Panther associate Angela Davis. White depicts the subject with his typical realism and monochromatic palette, but unlike White's other works of the period, here the figure is only partially rendered, with fractured and overlapping planes in her body's stead. In the center of this space are two roses, conveying White's love and admiration for Davis and her work. The obstruction of the figure's body alludes to the fragmented and disorienting state of being that accompanies incarceration and the loss of one's freedom. In the spirit of the Black Arts Movement during the 1960s and 1970s, which deployed art to make political demands, this work was mobilized in efforts to liberate Davis from incarceration. In 1971, the National United Committee to Free Angela Davis and All Political Prisoners borrowed this image as part of a letter-writing campaign demanding Davis's release from prison. In 1972, Davis was acquitted of all charges. White's monumental love letter both conveys Davis's significant role in national and international Black liberation efforts and commemorates a moment in which the Black community's love and care manifested into justice for this iconic figure.

Fred Wilson

United States, born 1954

Wanderer

2003

Painted wood and printed paper

Purchase made possible by the Acquisitions Committee Fund, General Acquisitions Fund, and Norma H. Schlesinger, Andrew and Paul Spiegel Fund 2004.7

Since the early 1990s Fred Wilson has frequently unearthed and modified artifacts to comment on antiblack practices within museums. *Wanderer* incorporates a figurine of an African servant, which can still be commonly found in Venetian souvenir stores, hotel lobbies, and other public spaces. This work was originally included in Wilson's 2003 Venice Biennale exhibition, *Speak of Me as I Am*, which used Shakespeare's *Othello* as an entry point to explore the role of the African diaspora in Renaissance Venice. By replacing the painted wooden sculpture's head with a globe that traces African migratory travel routes to and through Venice, Wilson challenges the erasure and relegation of Black Africans to subservient roles throughout Venetian history, and the history of modernity more broadly. By exposing Venice's economic and cultural dependence on violent forced migrations, Wilson compels the audience to think about the relationship between the rise of capitalism, slavery, and land dispossession.

Untitled (Five-cent fractional currency note with "bronzing" around the image of George Washington)
United States, 1863
Ink and bronze on paper
Gift of Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby 2015.2.24

Paper currency has been in use globally for millennia, but standardized printed bills holding permanent value are a relatively new concept, first issued by the Bank of England in 1855 as a culminating step in the financing of Great Britain's colonial hegemony. Currency notes were introduced in the United States in 1861 as a means of financing the North's engagement in the Civil War. The controversy surrounding the replacement of coins with paper bills ran parallel to that war's conflict. Paper money became a symbol of abolitionism while metal coins evoked proslavery politics.

Hearst materials:

Gullah Household Basket
Female Maker unknown, Hilton Head Island, South Carolina
c. 1930

Coiled bulrush sewn with palmetto shrub
Phoebe Hearst Museum of Anthropology, gift of Berta Bascom and William
Russell Bascom, accessioned 1974 2-58327

Gullah basket designs of the South Carolina Lowcountry vary throughout the region, but can be identified by their coil pattern. Sea Island "fanners" were made and used by Africans and their descendants for rice processing on plantations from the late seventeenth century until the Civil War. Typically, these basket types begin with a bundle of bulrush that is coiled eight times around a base knot and then sewn together with split palmetto shrub. Among their other uses, coiled baskets possessed spiritual functions and may have been used to symbolize the cosmos. Baskets also aided the liberation of maroons (those who escaped enslavement), such as in one South Carolina community which was reported to have had success selling and trading baskets for food and other goods at market. After emancipation, the production of rice declined but the associated basket-making tradition continued to thrive as anthropologists, folklorists, and tourists sought baskets out as material evidence of African "survivals" in America.

Attributed to William Rogers
United States, 1865–1952
Gullah Walking Cane
c. 1935
Carved wood, metal, and paint, with bead insets
Phoebe Hearst Museum of Anthropology, gift of Dr. Berta Bascom
Collected 1939, Accessioned 1989
2-71306

Catalog Cards (facsimiles)

Catalog Card 12-2698
UC Berkeley Museum of Anthropology, 1916

This catalog card lists an object accessioned by the University of California Museum of Anthropology (now the Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology) in June 1916. It was collected by the anthropologist Thomas Talbot Waterman, a curator at the museum and faculty in the Department of Anthropology. The card catalogs part of a set of four hair samples taken from four individuals. The names of only three of these people are recorded, including Waterman himself, who represented "Caucasian." This collection

reflects Waterman's ongoing interest in the classification of race. He was particularly interested in what he perceived to be the preservation of racial types, which is exemplified in a 1924 talk published in *American Anthropologist*, where he stated, "We ought to save out a few good Negro types before he becomes extinct." His interest in the specificity of racial taxonomy is highlighted in the card, which includes "(or less?)" as part of the description. Waterman attempted the impossible task of quantifying blackness. Until World War II, race was widely accepted as a biological rather than socially constructed category. Anthropologists believed that collecting hair, bone, and cultural artifacts for study and display confirmed the inherent difference of African-descended peoples from white peoples of Europe and the United States.

Catalog Card 3-16191
UC Berkeley Museum of Anthropology, 1956

Acquired in Haiti in 1950 by collectors Dr. and Mrs. Leroy Hahn, the drum in this photograph was donated by Mrs. Hahn to the University of California Museum of Anthropology in 1956. The painted black surface of the wooden drum, which stands twenty-eight inches tall, pulsates with swirls of green and orange in the form of reptiles and crabs. After being stored for sixteen years, the drum was stolen while on loan to the Oakland Museum in November 1971 for a two-day event, "Caribbean Holiday." At the time, this theft was considered a "serious blow" to the collection by curatorial anthropologist David Herod, because the stolen item was the only Caribbean drum in the collection with definite West African influence in its design and decoration. Its whereabouts remain unknown.

It is clear that an object was stolen from the museum, but not why or for what purpose. Was it valued for its sound, iconography, connection to Africa, monetary value, or something else entirely? Where and to whom does this drum belong?

Location Cards from the UC Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive

Peter Bradley, *Isom Dart I*, 1972
Romare Bearden, *Continuities*, 1969
Margo Humphrey, *James Brown's Sounds of Escape-Ism*, 1972
Charles White, *Love Letter I* (also known as *Love Song Read*), 1971

The UC Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive used cards to organize different kinds of information about objects before the adoption of a digital catalog. These cards tracked the movement of artworks around storage and exhibition spaces. They also provide clues to a forgotten history. As one reads here, in 1983 BAMPFA mounted an exhibition entitled **Black Art**. Yet, no other records of this exhibition remain within the museum's archive. In future research we hope to identify the exhibition curator and to consider the present exhibition as one moment within a longer history of waxing and waning attention to blackness.

CANE

Attributed to William Rogers

United States, 1865–1952

Gullah Walking Cane

c. 1935

Carved wood, metal, and paint, with bead insets

Phoebe Hearst Museum of Anthropology, gift of Dr. Berta Bascom

Collected 1939, Accessioned 1989 2-71306

William Rogers worked with soft cedar wood to shape functional and decorative sculptural objects such as canes, spoons and figurines. Most of his carvings share the compositional motifs present on this cane: low-relief ovals, human and reptilian forms. Reptiles are often associated with sickness in African American folk beliefs and may have been incorporated here to ward off illness. Some scholars link this symbolism with mythological and origin stories among West African groups. Like other African American folk or decorative arts, this cane was likely purchased by anthropologist William Bascom for its suggestion of African continuities or "survivals" in America, an economic exchange that made it a tool for both financial and physical mobility.

Weems, Hush of Our Silence

Carrie Mae Weems

United States, born 1953

Hush of Our Silence

From *2003: In the Year Three* (Exit Art Benefit Print Portfolio)

2003

Chromogenic print

Gift of Charles and Naomie Kremer 2007.29.2.5

Carrie Mae Weems has said of her varied artist practice: "I think the *how* is the most difficult and rewarding. Sometimes my work needs to be photographic, sometimes it needs words, sometimes it needs to have a relationship to music, sometimes it needs to have all three and become a video projection. . . . I've figured out a way of making pictures that suggests that something is being witnessed."