

# Gallery 32

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EMERSON READY V BUCH	106	EMERSON READY V BUCH	106
ERICKSON JAMES	107	ERICKSON JAMES	107
FRANKLIN JAMES	108	FRANKLIN JAMES	108
GARY JAMES	109	GARY JAMES	109
GEORGE JAMES	110	GEORGE JAMES	110
GRACE JAMES	111	GRACE JAMES	111
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OFFICE  
Information  
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LABANDARTGALLERY

Gallery 32 and Its Circle  
January 25–March 22, 2009



# Gallery 32 and Its Circle

**January 25–March 22, 2008**  
**Laband Art Gallery, Loyola Marymount University**

Gallery 32 and Its Circle was curated by Carolyn Peter, director and curator of the Laband Art Gallery, and Damon Willick, assistant professor of modern and contemporary art history, Loyola Marymount University.

THE EXHIBITION IS FUNDED IN PART BY A GRANT FROM THE NORTON FAMILY FOUNDATION  
ON BEHALF OF EILEEN HARRIS NORTON.

Image on front cover:

Greg Edwards, *Annie Bianucci, George Evans, and Suzanne Jackson in the courtyard of the Granada Building, home of Gallery 32*, 1969, gelatin silver print, 8 x 10 inches, Suzanne Jackson Collection.

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**Loyola  
Marymount  
University**



Bob Heliton, *Timothy Washington in front of Gallery 32*, 1969, gelatin silver print, Courtesy of the Bob Heliton Archive.

**Laband Art Gallery  
Fritz B. Burns Fine Arts Center  
Loyola Marymount University  
1 LMU Drive  
Los Angeles, CA 90045**

**Gallery hours:**  
**Wednesday through Sunday,**  
**noon to 4 p.m.** (*The gallery be closed*  
*March 11–15 for LMU's Spring Break*)

**Parking and admission are free.**

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT  
[HTTP://CFA.LMU.EDU/LABAND](http://CFA.LMU.EDU/LABAND)  
OR CALL (310) 338-2880

**Gallery 32 and Its Circle**  
Carolyn Peter and Damon Willick

In late 1968 a very young Suzanne Jackson opened an art gallery west of downtown Los Angeles in unit number 32 of the Granada Building, at 672 North Lafayette Park Place. She called it Gallery 32 in homage to Alfred Stieglitz's Gallery 291 from earlier in the century. Rather than bringing European modernism to New York audiences, as Stieglitz did, Jackson introduced the work of young, relatively unknown L.A. artists to a broad West Coast audience. Significantly, Gallery 32 was one of just a handful of local arts organizations—along with the Brockman Gallery, the Black Arts Council, and the Watts Towers Art Center—that supported and exhibited the work of Los Angeles's emerging African American artists in the late 1960s and 1970s. Though never exclusively a “black gallery,” Gallery 32 evolved into a particularly dynamic venue where many of Los Angeles's young African American artists could experiment and take chances. Jackson welcomed a diverse group of artists working in a wide range of media, including watercolor, drawing, painting, engraving, assemblage, sculpture, and jewelry. The themes and styles of the art on display were equally varied. The gallery strove to maintain a sense of openness, and its artists were free to

address the aesthetic and political issues that concerned them. As a result, it often became a site for artistic innovation and community activism. While it closed after only two years, the history of Gallery 32 offers a glimpse into the vibrancy of the Los Angeles art scene of the period.

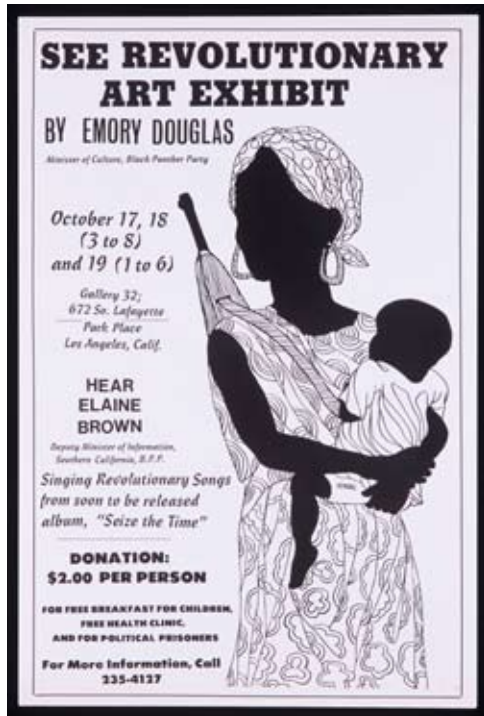
Suzanne Jackson opened Gallery 32 while taking drawing classes from Charles White at Otis Art Institute. For \$150 a month, she rented a one-thousand-square-foot, two-story space to house her studio and modest living quarters. It was just around the corner from Otis and Chouinard Art Institute, a site overlooking the hustle and bustle of MacArthur Park. She decided to sacrifice her spacious downstairs studio in order to exhibit many of the talented artists enrolled in White's courses who were seeking venues to display their work. White viewed art as a vehicle for social activism and change, and Jackson envisioned a gallery that embodied many of his ideals. Issues of aesthetics, race, politics, and society were questioned within this forum. She explained: “It was a place where people could come to and talk. . . . You never knew what was going to happen at Gallery 32. It

“Gallery 32 offered a space where people could express an independent voice in their work and not be labeled. Gallery 32 was never a black gallery, a women's gallery, or a men's gallery; it was a gallery about artists who came through with something to say.” —SUZANNE JACKSON



Gloria Bohanon, *Roots*, c. 1970  
Oil on canvas, 14 1/2 x 16 1/2 inches  
Collection of Suzanne Jackson

“It was a place where people could come to and talk. . . .  
You never knew what was going to happen at Gallery 32. It was according to the ideas that came out  
of a lot of discussions.” —SUZANNE JACKSON



Emory Douglas, *Gallery 32 Poster for Emory Douglas Exhibition*, October 17–19, 1969, 1969  
Screenprint, 24 x 16 inches  
Collection of the Center for the Study of Political Graphics

was according to the ideas that came out of a lot of discussions.”<sup>2</sup> Artists such as Gloria Bohanon, Senga Nengudi, John Riddle, Dan Concholar, John Outterbridge, and David Hammons would frequently come together to eat and talk late into the night upstairs in Jackson’s studio/living area. She recalls that they often returned to the question of “was there such a thing as ‘Black Art,’ and if so, how was it defined?”<sup>3</sup> Though they never came to any definite consensus on this question, their inspired conversations fueled their artistic productions and their lives.

The gallery hosted many significant group exhibitions and fund-raisers that addressed particular community issues and needs. It held a Christmas exhibition to benefit the Black Arts Council, a group that had evolved out of protests over the Los Angeles County Museum of Art’s refusal to exhibit contemporary African American artists. Gallery 32 also exhibited works made by children at the Watts Tower Art Center to raise funds for their programs. The Los Angeles chapter of the Black Panther Party even held a three-day exhibition of Emory Douglas’s pastel paintings of party leaders, posters,

and mock-ups for his powerful *Black Panther* newspaper illustrations as a fund-raiser for its children’s breakfast program. This exhibition was organized by Yvonne Carter, the widow of the Panther leader Alprentice “Bunchy” Carter, who had recently been shot dead on the UCLA campus. The show was so well attended that the Black Panthers approached Jackson about turning over the gallery to the party for its own purposes. Jackson declined the offer, however, explaining that “it was more beneficial to have a gallery space where people from all parts of the community, working-class, middle-class people, people who normally would not go to a Panther event, would come and see an exhibition and not be afraid to come in or be admonished by the police.”<sup>4</sup> In actuality, the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) had tried to deter the public from visiting the Emory Douglas show by stopping people on the street before entering the gallery, only fueling interest in what would be found inside.

Amid the tumult of the late 1960s, it is perhaps not surprising that Gallery 32 drew the attention of law enforcement. Particularly after the Emory Douglas show, the LAPD and

FBI consistently visited the gallery to monitor its activities. The surveillance was not veiled or covert. Jackson remembers a man, who obviously worked for either the FBI or CIA, often attending openings with five or six cameras around his neck; he selectively posed groups in order to document the patrons and artists associated with the gallery.<sup>5</sup> Jackson also received a bomb threat while installing Elizabeth Leigh-Taylor’s politically charged charcoal drawings of single figures. Some highlighted American countercultural leaders such as Angela Davis, while others critically attacked the fascist regime in Greece. The harassment extended beyond the gallery to many of its African American artists, who felt individually targeted by the police; Jackson, for example, spent a weekend in jail for uncollected parking tickets, and Hammons was stopped numerous times by the police for seemingly no reason other than his color and unconventional appearance.

It is important to note that Gallery 32’s programming was never limited to African American artists. Its inaugural exhibition was a three-person show that included two white artists, Gordon Dipple and David



◀  
Bob Heliton, *John Stinson in Front of His Mail Truck*  
(Gallery 32 announcement card for John Stinson exhibition opening, February 7, 1970), 1970  
6 1/2 x 8 3/4 inches (closed)  
Collection of Suzanne Jackson



Elizabeth Leigh-Taylor, *Sharona*, 1967  
Ink on paper, 12 x 9 3/4 inches  
Collection of Suzanne Jackson

Swanson, alongside Timothy Washington, an African American. The diversity of the artists and their work—Dipple was a jewelry maker, Swanson an abstract painter, and Washington a multidimensional draftsman and assemblagist—testifies to the gallery’s openness. Gallery 32’s audiences were equally integrated, with professors and students from Otis and Chouinard, actors and dancers, city employees, political activists, and friends of the artists of all races and backgrounds coming to openings and buying works.

One of the gallery’s best-attended exhibitions featured the abstract paintings of John Stinson. Many visitors were drawn to the show by the announcement card, which showed Stinson in his postal uniform posed in the doorway of his mail truck. Bob Heliton’s photograph spoke to the artist’s working-class background, with Stinson proudly displaying the day job that undoubtedly funded his art practice. The opening reception’s large crowd included many politicians, government workers, and fellow mail carriers, who lined up along the balconies and on the street to enter the gallery. Once inside the gallery, visitors were treated to a selection of paintings by



Stinson, who brought a delicate touch to the gallery's list of artists. These were not socially or politically motivated paintings, but rather small, finely executed pencil and watercolor explosions of gesture and color. Jackson herself missed the opening because she had taken a job dancing at a local nightclub to make ends meet and keep Gallery 32 up and running.

Gallery 32 provided artists with a space where they could take risks and experiment with new media and forms of expression. Its exhibitions were always varied and challenging. Ron Moore, for example, created an entire exhibition of intricately detailed drawings of phalluses. John Uomoto painted a series of four-part paintings that addressed the large number of innocent infants killed in the atomic bombings at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Washington, one of the most active participants in the gallery, drew with engraving needles on metal, and instead of then using the plates as a print matrix, he simply added colored pigments in the lines and presented them as unique drawings. He also created dramatic large-scale metal assemblage sculptures that addressed spiritual and religious themes.



John J. Stinson, Untitled, 1970  
Mixed media on board, 7 x 8 inches  
Collection of Bernie Casey



Timothy Washington, *Stabilized Warrior*, 1969  
Engraving on aluminum with added color  
36 x 36 inches, Collection of Tammy Washington

David Hammons, who had been especially encouraging of Jackson's plans to open the gallery, exhibited his first body prints at Gallery 32. The process involved coating parts of his body in butter and powdered ink pigment and then pressing them against a piece of paper or glass to create an imprint. As an indication of the free-flowing nature of the gallery, Hammons felt comfortable walking into his own opening reception and hanging a fresh new work on the wall. Betye Saar exhibited some of her first assemblages at Gallery 32 as well. Many of the gallery's circle of artists experienced breakthroughs in their artistic practices during this time

This openness allowed the gallery to tap into other contemporary American concerns, such as women's rights and women's art. One of Gallery 32's last exhibitions was the groundbreaking *Sapphire, You've Come a Long Way Baby*. Organized by Betye Saar, *Sapphire* was the first survey of Los Angeles's African American women artists and included the works of Saar, Gloria Bohanon, Yvonne Cole Meo, Senga Nengudi (then Sue Irons), Eileen Abdulrashid, and Suzanne Jackson. The group decided to mount the exhibition

## Although Gallery 32 closed after only two years, it left a legacy that reverberates today, forty years later.

— JACKSON, INTERVIEW WITH CAROLYN PETER.

after growing increasingly frustrated over the frequent exclusion of African American women artists from both the mainstream contemporary art scene and the rising African American and feminist art movements of the time.<sup>6</sup> Just as it was difficult to define one specific type of "black art," the wide range of art exhibited in *Sapphire* made it clear that "feminist art" also defied strict categorization. Nengundi's minimalist Water Compositions were made of thick vinyl filled with pigmented water, while Saar exhibited intricate assemblages made from found photographs and other objects that explored her identity and heritage. *Sapphire* was one of the few shows at Gallery 32 in which Jackson exhibited her own work, and her lyrical figurative paintings with uplifting themes of peace and love contributed to the multiplicity of works on display.

Gallery 32's final public performance was Jackson's wedding to Pete Mhunzi on August 30, 1970. The gallery's circle of artists and friends took part in what Jackson describes as a happening—a day of creative expression with music, poetry, and a feast in Mococahuenga Canyon at Griffith Park. The gallery closed soon after. Jackson would continue pursuing

her art and poetry, publishing the books *What I Love* (1971) and *Animal* (1978) and exhibiting her own art widely. She also carried on as an arts administrator, organizing San Francisco's Black Expo in 1972 and sitting on the California Council for the Arts from 1976 to 78.

Although Gallery 32 closed after only two years, it left a legacy that reverberates today, forty years later. In fact, the majority of the young artists who showed at Gallery 32 are still producing art. In their artistic practices and their teaching, they have espoused Charles White's concept of the artist's social responsibility. Many years have passed, the artists have gone in divergent directions, but the ideals and the ties that were forged in the setting of Gallery 32 certainly remain strong today.



David Hammons, *The Door [Admissions Office]*, 1969  
Body print, glass, and wood, 79 x 48 x 15 inches  
Collection of the California African American Foundation; courtesy of the California African American Museum

### NOTES

1. SUZANNE JACKSON, INTERVIEW WITH CAROLYN PETER, JUNE 5, 2008.
2. QUOTED IN "AFRICAN-AMERICAN ARTISTS OF LOS ANGELES ORAL HISTORY TRANSCRIPT, 1992: SUZANNE JACKSON," INTERVIEWED BY KAREN ANNE MASON (LOS ANGELES: UCLA ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM, 1998), 67.
3. JACKSON, INTERVIEW WITH CAROLYN PETER.
4. *IBID.* 5. *IBID.*
6. JACKSON REMEMBERS BEING PARTICULARLY DISCOURAGED WHEN ONLY ONE WOMAN ARTIST WAS FEATURED IN AN EXHIBITION OF WORK BY AFRICAN AMERICAN ARTISTS SPONSORED BY CARNATION MILK COMPANY (*IBID.*).



Artists Who Exhibited at Gallery 32

Eileen Abdulrashid  
Annie Bianucci  
\*Gloria Bohanon  
\*Nathaniel Bustion  
\*Dan Concholar  
Gordon Dipple  
\*Emory Douglas  
\*Greg Edwards  
*(did not show at Gallery 32, but photographed the artists)*  
George Evans  
\*David Hammons  
\*Bob Heliton  
*(did not show at Gallery 32, but photographed the artists)*  
\*Ernest Herbert  
\*Suzanne Jackson  
\*Elizabeth Leigh-Taylor  
Leon Leonard  
Yvonne Cole Meo  
Ron Moore  
\*Senga Nengudi *(then Sue Irons)*  
\*John Outterbridge  
\*John Riddle  
*Roho and his brothers (performed at Gallery 32)*  
Alison Saar  
\*Betye Saar  
\*Arenzo R. Smith Jr.  
\*John J. Stinson  
David Swanson  
Roderick Sykes  
John Uomoto  
\*Joe Van Ramp  
\*Timothy Washington  
John Whitmore  
\*Charles White *(did not show at Gallery 32, but inspired many of the artists)*

\*Indicates artists represented in this exhibition

Exhibition-Related Programs

**Artists’ Conversation**  
Wednesday, January 28, 2009, 7:30 p.m.  
**Getty Center**  
In collaboration with the Laband Art Gallery, the Getty Research Institute hosts a conversation with Gallery 32 founder Suzanne Jackson, artist Betye Saar, and co-curator Carolyn Peter. The event is free, but registration is required.

PLEASE VISIT [HTTP://WWW.GETTY.EDU](http://www.getty.edu) FOR MORE INFORMATION.



Senga Nengudi, Untitled [Water Compositions], 1970  
Vinyl plastic and colored water, 12 x 36 inches  
Collection of the artist

**Real Talk:**  
**The Academy, the Arts, and the Community. An Evening of Art, Discourse, Music, and Poetry**  
Thursday, February 26, 2009, 7 p.m.  
**Laband Art Gallery and Murphy Recital Hall at LMU**

In an era when the intelligentsia and the arts often get a bad rap for being separated from the greater community, this program will explore how and where they intersect with the grass roots from a political, creative, and racial perspective. We will explore how this played out in the 1960s as well as today. Panelists and performers include Edgar Arceneaux, Wanda Coleman, Half-Empty, Theresa Lenihan, Holli Levitsky, and Roderick Sykes. This evening is coproduced with *The Truth about the Fact: International Journal of Literary Nonfiction*.

**CAA Open House and Reception**  
Sunday, March 1, 2009, 1–4 p.m.  
**Laband Art Gallery at LMU and Ben Maltz Gallery at Otis College of Art and Design**  
The galleries will co-host receptions at both venues in conjunction with the College Art Association’s annual meeting in Los Angeles. Come meet some of the Gallery 32 artists. Everyone is welcome.

Gallery 32 Exhibition Chronology

March 15–April 5, 1969:  
David Swanson, Gordon Dipple, and Timothy Washington

May 17–June 8, 1969:  
*Three Black Artists: Nathaniel Bustion, Leon Leonard, John Whitmore* (works by David Hammons and Elizabeth Leigh-Taylor were added during the run of the exhibition)

June 14–July 3, 1969:  
Suzanne Jackson, Annie Bianucci, George Evans, Nathaniel Bustion, and Gordon Dipple

September 7–October 10, 1969:  
Dan Concholar‡

October 10–12, 1969:  
Roderick Sykes

October 17–19, 1969:  
Emory Douglas

October 25–November 15, 1969:  
Elizabeth Leigh-Taylor

December 5–13, 1969:  
*Black Arts Council Christmas Fundraiser*

January 16–31, 1970:  
Ron Moore‡

February 7–?, 1970:  
John J. Stinson

April 12–30, 1970:  
*The Structural Flow of Our Environment: Eileen Abdulrashid*‡

April 23–25, 1970:  
*Suns of Light Ensemble Presents Music, Poetry, Art* (in conjunction with Eileen Abdulrashid’s exhibition)

May 2–23, 1970:  
Arenzo R. Smith Jr.‡

June 14–26, 1970:  
Timothy Washington‡

June 26–July 3, 1970:  
Elizabeth Leigh-Taylor‡

July 4–9, 1970:  
*Sapphire: You’ve Come A Long Way Baby*, (works by Eileen Abdulrashid, Gloria Bohanon, Suzanne Jackson, Yvonne Cole Meo, Senga Nengudi [then Sue Irons], and Betye Saar)

July 12–18, 1970:  
Yvonne Cole Meo

August 30, 1970:  
Wedding of Suzanne Jackson and Pete Mhunzi, Ferndell Park, Mococahuenga Canyon, Griffith Park

‡These dates were gathered from listings in the *Los Angeles Times* and may not be exact.

►  
Dan Concholar, Untitled, c. 1970  
Oil and collage on canvas, 21 x 21 inches  
Collection of Mrs. Anne Marie Jackson



Nathaniel Bustion, *Handprints and Footprints on Your Ancestors*, 1970, Mixed media, 33 x 27 1/2 inches  
Collection of the artist





## **Acknowledgments**

We would like to thank Eileen Norton and the Norton Family Foundation for their generous support of this exhibition. We would also like to thank the lenders to the exhibition: Kristen Accola, Aurelia Brooks, the California African American Museum, Bernie Casey, the Center for the Study of Political Graphics, Dale Davis, Faith and Richard Flam, Alden and Mary Kimbrough, Channing Johnson, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Marguerite Ray, and Tammy Washington. In addition, we are grateful to Dr. Leon Banks, Mitchell Browning, Gail Buck, Dean Barbara Busse, Aria Juliet Castillo, Brynne Copping, Michael Datcher, James Eastman, Greg Edwards, Kelly Fite, Brian Forrest, Rosalind Goddard, Peter Gould, Helena Heliton, Nicole Hughes, Naima Keith, Garland Kirkpatrick, Kris Kuramitsu, Justin Manzano, Jenna Marshall, Jill Moniz, Christine Nangle, Rebecca Peabody, Nestor Pereira, Andrea Ryken, Jackie Ryan, Drew Talley, Alexandra Thomas, Princess Thomas, and La Monte Westmoreland. We are deeply indebted to the artists for sharing their art and stories with us. Lastly, this exhibition would not have been possible without the enthusiastic and gracious participation of Suzanne Jackson.

THIS EXHIBITION AND PUBLICATION ARE DEDICATED TO

GLORIA BOHANON, LEON LEONARD, RON MOORE, JOHN RIDDLE, JOE VAN RAMP, RUTH WADDY, CHARLES WHITE, AND JOHN WHITMORE.