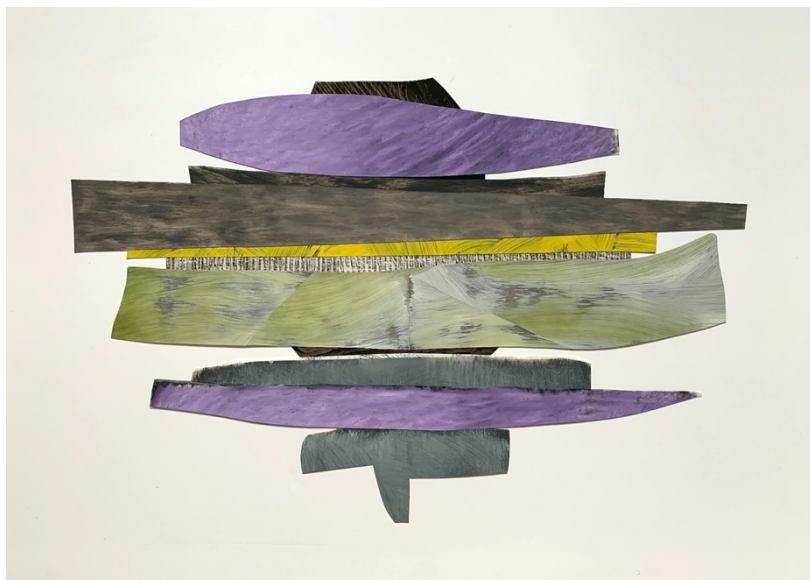


Generations of Color

January 16 – February 28, 2021



Nanette Carter | **Cantilevered #55**, 2020

The exhibition **Generations of Color** at MoCA LI opens during a momentous era in US history. Kamala Harris will be sworn in as the first woman of color to hold the office of Vice President, and we have just witnessed the remarkable Stacey Abrams of Georgia turning personal defeat into nation-changing- activism. **Generations of Color** presents six female African American artists spanning three generations and was first conceived in 2019 during the publication of the *1619 Project* for which Nikole Hannah-Jones received a Pulitzer Prize in March of 2020. Upon its publication, I listened to numerous journalists and historians discussing our nation’s history and heritage.

There were many voices, women, men, black and white but I noticed a preponderance of

commentary coming from women of color. The idea for this exhibition began to form from a panel discussion about the wisdom traditions of the African American matriarchy. Thus **Generations of Color** was conceived.

Coming from a strongly matriarchal family, **Stephanie Dinkins** in her autobiographical essay *“Why I do what I do”* captures the essence of this exhibit. She writes: *“I am an artist because my grandmother, Bernice Curry, had an agile artist’s mind. She expressed it in her home, her garden and her interactions with the communities she intersected. Creativity and ingenuity were central to the life she built for herself and family.”* Later, discussing her grandmother’s interaction with her community through this garden she concludes, *“It attracted people from around the neighborhood. They would walk by, admire the garden and eventually talk to her. I now realize the garden was a form of social practice. She seduced even her most trenchant white neighbors with the garden’s beauty. Her work in that garden—her joy really—helped make black families living in the area safer and more comfortable. The garden was a space of social practice that built alliances. That garden was her solace and entry into the community. That garden was vital*



Stephanie Dinkins | **Untitled UV(Arms, Face, Torso & Legs)**, 2020



Ramona Candy | *Mahvynnee Betsch, Ann Cole Lowe, Lena Walker, and Dorothy*

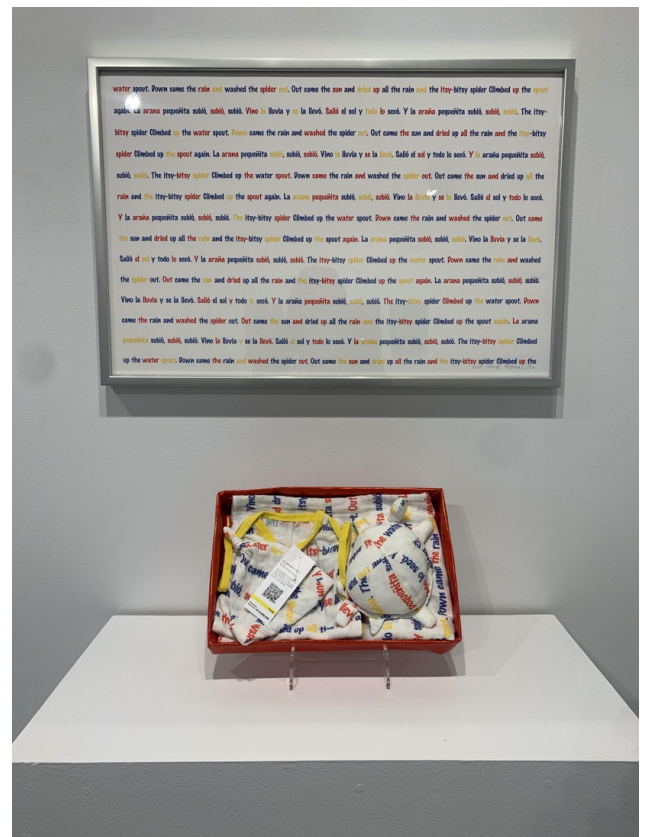
to the way I think art as well as how I think about working in and building community.” Clearly Bernice Curry was a wise woman who passed that wisdom on to subsequent generations.

The artists of **Generations of Color** are Ramona Candy, Nanette Carter, Cheryl McBride, Stephanie Dinkins, Harper Bella and Marie St. Cyr

Ramona Candy describes herself as “a motivational artist, curator, arts administrator, accidental historian and occasional blogger” who “credits her late mom, Carmelite Candy – a resourceful, innovative, creative single mother of four - for her talent.” She is multitalented having begun professional dancing in the early 1970’s and gone on to choreography. Much of her work has been based on her vibrant Caribbean background and its subsequent expression in Brooklyn. The four portraits in this exhibition come from her ongoing series **Our History, Our Pride: Hindsight is 20/20** which introduces “noteworthy yet under-appreciated contributions to this country by Black Americans.” Referencing the “Ghanaian principle of Sankofa, literally translated ‘it is not taboo to fetch what is at risk of being left behind,’” she seeks to inspire and instill a sense of pride in the African American community.

Nannette Carter began her art career at age 6 with lessons at Montclair Art Museum. While completing her bachelor’s degree, she studied in Italy and traveled extensively throughout Europe and North Africa, travels that continue to inspire her to this day. Her early art education coincided with the popularity of abstraction or nonobjective art which is an important part of her practice. Because nonobjective art has no specific subject, it can address profound issues in a general way, leaving much room for interpretation. The challenge for Ms. Carter is in addressing contemporary issues in an “abstract vocabulary of form, line, color and texture.” Working in simultaneous series she addresses information overload (especially pertaining to social justice) in **The Weight**. In **Afro-Sentinels**, she creates guardian figures “to protect all black and brown people of the world from social injustices.” Two works from the **Cantilevered** series **#55** and **#49** are in this exhibit. **Cantilevered** balances social injustice with personal and familial responsibilities.

After art school, **Cheryl McBride** entered the fields of animation graphics and graphic design. Graphic designers are commissioned to use their skills to visualize a client’s ideas, often for economic or political purposes. After a career as a graphic designer and educator in the field, she



Cheryl McBride | *Child Abuse Rates in New York, 2020*

has turned her “love of data, social justice issues and graphics” into making personal statements. Citing W. E. B. DuBois, “who put together a groundbreaking exhibit about African Americans for the 1900 World's Fair in Paris,” McBride emulates his use “of colorful charts, graphs and maps to help bring attention to the circumstances of the American negro at that time”. Her “work brings attention to different race, gender and social inequalities which currently exist (in our country).” In **Incarceration Rates in the USA**, Ms. McBride compares the demographics of the general population with that of the prison population. She colors the words of 1994 Crime Bill to match the rates of imprisonment. The text of the prison population is significantly printed as ‘strike throughs’. Each piece has a QR code that leads to an audio tape that is read by a former student who had once been imprisoned.

After early training in photography, **Stephanie Dinkins** has spent the past two decades working in the most advanced technologies available to artists. To date this includes artificial intelligence and crowd sourcing. She advocates for a greater involvement for people of color in these new technologies “warning of the dangers to members of minority groups that are absent from the creation of the computer algorithms that now affect their lives”. (Thackara, Tess, 2018, “Human Biases Are Built into AI—this Artist Is Helping to Change That”. Artsy). For **Generations of Color**, Ms. Dinkins turns the technology down a notch and offers four dye-sublimated prints on metal. The images are very visceral, each containing portions of a black body, head, arms, torso and legs. The figure is offered as fractional body parts, objectifying it into quantitative

commodities. The work reminds us of a time when a black person could be bought or sold and was considered quantifiably only a fraction of a person. Printed on metal they gain a sense of preciousness once associated with the bronze cast portraiture of Benin Oba’s (princes) and as such defines the degradation of a once flourishing culture.



Harper Bella | **Flower of Honor: Talia**, 2020

The youngest members of the exhibition are Harper Bella and Marie St. Cyr. **Harper Bella** studied Advertising and Marketing Communications before discovering her love of photography. She has studied abroad and visited 25 countries on four continents. Her works center on the cultural lives of the people she encounters. Her series **Hair** examines the processes of and relationships which are formed through the tending to of black women’s hair. In **Generations of Color**, Ms. Bella presents works from the series **Flower of Honor**. Each photograph acknowledges an African or Latino individual in New York who has worked through the Covid crises “continuously despite the risk.... maintain(ing) some form of normalcy within many communities.” The photographs depict the response of her subjects as they receive an award for their services. Each holds a golden rose created by the artist in appreciation of these heroes of the Covid pandemic. Even through their masks, one can sense their humility.

Although only in her mid-twenties **Marie St Cyr** has established herself as a formidable advocate of the arts. She has worked as an arts administrator and educator and has created a number of murals. While at FIT she studied painting in Florence. In 2019 she was awarded a Fellowship at the Jamaica Arts Center and a residency at the Haitian Cultural Exchange. **Ms. St Cyr** paints in the sun drenched colors remembered from her early years in Haiti. In 2019’s **Certainty Meets Uncertainty**,



Marie St Cyr | **Juju**, 2020

she depicts the characteristic free flow of space from interior to exterior of tropical homes. **Smile**, also from 2019, offers a cubist treatment of space found in many of her works.

The works in **Generations of Color** range from the positivity of **Marie St. Cyr** and pride in **Ramona Candy** and **Harper Bella** through **Nanette Carter's** formalism to the cries of pain in the works of **Stephanie Dinkins** and **Cheryl McBride**. A startling juxtaposition of intention can be seen in the works in the gallery window. **Marie St Cyr's** offers a young girl of color engaged in reading. The title, **Juju**, sums it up as there is magic to be had through the acquisition of knowledge. Perhaps this young girl will offer wisdom to a future generation. Alongside **Juju** is **Cheryl McBride's Suspension Rates in New York** which offer a chilling reminder of how seemingly innocent institutions can propagate systemic racism. Through adversity and encouragement wisdom grows and is passed on through the generations of people of color.

John Cino, curator, 2020

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