

JAM: Just Above Midtown at Frieze New York 2019

Franklin Sirmans (Director, Pérez Art Museum Miami) pays homage to the pioneering non-profit New York arts organization **Just Above Midtown (JAM)** and its founder **Linda Goode Bryant**.

Formerly the Director of Education at the Studio Museum in Harlem, Bryant founded JAM in 1974. JAM pioneered the early work of now world-renowned African American contemporary artists, providing a much-needed platform for these artists to show and sell their work in New York during that time.

In acknowledgment of JAM's contribution to the history of art, an entire room was devoted to Just Above Midtown in the widely acclaimed museum exhibition "Soul of a Nation – Art in the Age of Black Power".

The *JAM* section at Frieze New York features eight solo presentations by artists from Bryant's original programming, through the support of invited galleries:

Dawoud Bey (Rena Bransten Gallery, Stephen Daiter Gallery)

Bey's photographs presented at Frieze document several performative moments and actions by fellow artist David Hammonds, created in New York during the early 1980s.

Norman Lewis (Michael Rosenfeld Gallery)

Presented with JAM in the early 1970s, and created during the last decade of Lewis' life, these paintings and works on paper reflect two distinctive elements of the artist's abstract expressionist practice – calligraphic and atmospheric abstraction.

Senga Nengudi (Thomas Erben Gallery, Sprüth Magers)

Absorbing influences from feminism, African and Japanese dance, music, and religious rituals, Nengudi's sand-filled, stretched and knotted nylon tights sculptures experiment with movement and performance.

Lorraine O'Grady (Alexander Gray Associates)

Working in conceptual and performance art, O'Grady was an active voice within the alternative New York art world during the 1970s and '80s, addressing feminist concerns and tackling cultural perspectives that were underrepresented.

Howardena Pindell (Garth Greenan)

Exploring the intersection of art and activism, Pindell's signature painting style embodies the connection between identity and art making, dealing with hidden histories – both those related to her own life and the lives of others – through a blend of figuration and abstraction.

Lorna Simpson (Hauser & Wirth)

Simpson's photographic and multi-media work seeks to challenge cultural and historical conceptions of gender and race, while exploring themes of desire and identity.

Ming Smith (Jenkins Johnson Gallery)

Smith's works from the 1970s and '80s, capture the artist's impressions of her world with intimacy and wonder. Smith responds to the struggles of city living, while also celebrating the community and pride produced by it.

Sirmans said: "Linda Goode Bryant's gallery and its experiments with art and artists is the stuff of legend. What she did for the discussion on art and conceptualism in particular is remarkable but it's her acknowledgment of genius in the work of the artists she worked with that has paved the way for so many artists today. She gave a home to artists now considered to be part of the canon when they had nowhere else to present their work. If she only showed and worked with Hammons, Piper and O'Grady it would be a remarkable existence to celebrate but as it is we add so many more names to that list, evidence of the great history she created. Most exciting is the fact that she has segued her concerns for creating a space in which art can thrive and equally a place for people to come together and share ideas in the name of humane progress into her new endeavor which shares the same concerns and more. The Active Citizen Project 'initiates critical public discourse and creates opportunities for diverse people to pursue their mutual well-being.' Simply put ACP does what a good museum does and I am excited about the prospect of working with Linda around shared goals and ideals that recognize the power of art in public discourse."

A portion of the fees from the galleries in this section will be donated to support Bryant's current non-profit initiative, Project Eats: a neighborhood- based urban agricultural partnership and social enterprise that creates sustainable food production and equitable distribution of those resources within and between communities. For more details, visit projectseats.org.