



The Month in African American Art: Here's What Happened in February 2018

by [VICTORIA L. VALENTINE](#) on Feb 28, 2018 • 11:58 pm [1 Comment](#)



Kara Walker and her crew install "The Katastwóf Karavan" at Algiers Point in New Orleans. | Photo © Ari Marcopoulos by via Prospect New Orleans

BLACK HISTORY MONTH was rife with notable moments in art history, chief among them, the unveiling of the Obama portraits at the National Portrait Gallery on Feb 12. Washington collector Peggy Cooper Cafritz, co-founder of the Duke Ellington School of the Arts and a passionate supporter of young artists, died Feb. 18, just as "[Fired Up! Ready to Go!](#)," a beautifully illustrated book documenting her life and art collections, was published. And in the final days of February, the [1-54 Contemporary African Art Fair](#) staged its first edition on the continent of Africa (Feb. 24-25), and the fourth edition of Prospect New Orleans came to a close. Among the highlights of "[Prospect.4: The Lotus in Spite of the Swamp](#)" was the long-awaited debut of Kara Walker's "The Katastwóf Karavan" (being unveiled above). The public artwork was on view along the banks of the Mississippi River at Algiers Point from Feb. 23-25.

The following review of February 2018 presents a snapshot of the latest news in art by and about people of African descent:

[APPOINTMENT](#) | Philadelphia Contemporary, a new free-standing arts organization established in 2016, [names Yolanda Wisher](#), curator of spoken word. Wisher was the city's 2016-17 poet laureate.

ACQUISITION | On Feb. 1, the Knoxville Museum of Art announces the purchase of 12 works by **Beauford Delaney** (1901-1979) who was born in Knoxville, Tenn. The acquisition includes paintings, drawings, and a selfportrait.



Feb. 1: Carter G. Woodson Google Doodle illustrated by Shannon Wright

MEDIA | Google begins Black History Month with a tribute to Carter G. Woodson illustrated by Virginibased **Shannon Wright**. A historian and prolific author, Woodson established the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History and started Negro History Week, which eventually became Black History Month. The Feb. 1, Google Doodle celebrating Woodson was developed in collaboration with Black Googlers, an employee resource group.

FASHION | On Feb. 4, Malcolm X's five daughters launch a line t-shirts, sweatshirts and hats called Malcolm X Legacy at Harlem Fashion Week.

NEWS | Project Row Houses announces its 25th anniversary with programming spanning April through October. The nonprofit arts organizations in Houston's Third Ward was founded with "a mission to be the catalyst for the transformation of community through the celebration of art and African American history and culture."



IMAGE: Above, Elizabeth Alexander. | Courtesy Andrew W. Mellon Foundation

APPOINTMENT | The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, a major funder of the arts and humanities, names Elizabeth Alexander (right) president, effective March 2018. The writer, poet, and Yale scholar delivered a poem at President Obama's 2009 inauguration. Known for developing academic and cultural programs, departments and institutions, Alexander is serving as director of the Ford Foundation's journalism and arts and culture initiatives when the appointment is announced on Feb. 7.

APPOINTMENT | On Feb. 7, Arts for LA, which advocates for arts access, education, and investment throughout the city, names new board members— **Jamilah Hunter**, senior VP at ABC Comedy, and **George Davis**, executive director of the California African American Museum in Los Angeles.

AWARD/HONOR | **Amy Sherald** is named recipient of the 2018 David C. Driskell Prize. Sherald, who was commissioned to paint First Lady Michelle Obama's official portrait for the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery, will be honored at an April 27 dinner at the High Museum of Art in Atlanta.

AUCTION | Phillips London announces its March 8 auction will feature "Helter Skelter" (2007) by **Mark Bradford**. The 32-foot long painting being sold by tennis champion John McEnroe is estimated at \$6.8 million to \$9 million, which would be an auction record for the artist.



From left, KEHINDE WILEY, "Barack Obama," 2018 (oil on canvas). | © 2018 Kehinde Wiley, National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution; AMY SHERALD, "Michelle LaVaughn Robinson Obama," 2018 (oil on linen). | National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution. Lead support for the Obama Portraits was provided by: Kate Capshaw and Steven Spielberg; Judith Kern and Kent Whealy; Tommie L. Pegues and Donald A. Capoccia

NEWS | The official portraits of President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama are unveiled at the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery at a Feb. 12 ceremony in Washington, D.C. The first black President and First Lady continued their groundbreaking support of the arts by choosing African American artists for the official commissions, a first for such portraits at the Smithsonian museum. Painted by **Kehinde Wiley** and **Amy Sherald**, respectively, the contemporary images of the Obamas spark a wide range of opinions about their symbolism, likeness, and artistic success.

MAGAZINE | "The Butterfly Effect," by London-based, French illustrator **Malika Favre** is featured on the Feb. 12 and Feb. 19 double issue of The New Yorker. The image of a tuxedo-clad black woman raising a monocle to her eye reference the magazine's first cover in 1925, an image of its dandy icon Eustace Tilley.



IMAGE: Above, A collection of pins in support of Davis and her causes, including her exoneration and presidential run. | Kevin Grady/Radcliffe Institute

ACQUISITION | Harvard University acquires the papers of **Angela Davison** Feb. 13. Radcliffe's Schlesinger Library will house 150 boxes of papers, letters, photos, buttons, and other materials documenting the life of the scholar and political activist, which will be archived and made available for research in 2020.

LIVES | **Lerone Bennett Jr.**, ranking editor at Ebony magazine where his half-century tenure spanned the Civil Rights Movement to the presidency of Barack Obama, died Feb. 14. He was 89. Bennett began his journalism career at the Atlanta Daily World, then worked at Jet magazine for a year before joining Ebony in the mid-1950s.

APPOINTMENT | Photographer, curator, and author **Deborah Willis** is appointed to the Smithsonian American Art Museum's Board of Commissioners on Feb. 14. Willis, chair of the Department of Photography & Imaging at the Tisch School of the Arts at New York University, is also on the Scholarly Advisory Committee of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture.



Installation view of MARK BRADFORD, "150 Portrait Tone," 2017, at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art | Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth, © Mark Bradford

ACQUISITION | Jimmy Iovine and Liberty Ross [donate](#) “150 Portrait Tone,” (above) by **Mark Bradford** to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA). The [monumental work](#) features excerpts from the Facebook video made by Diamond Reynolds during the 2016 police shooting that killed her boyfriend Philando Castile. Bradford and his gallery Hauser & Wirth loaned the painting to LACMA where it was installed in 2017. With funds provided by Iovine and Ross it will enter the museum’s permanent collection.

AWARD/HONOR | On Feb. 15, Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation names 30 artists awarded \$20,000 unrestricted grants from its biennial awards program. Recipients include **Nina Chanel Abney, Abigail DeVille, Juliana Huxtable, Kahlil Joseph, Titus Kaphar, Ebony G. Patterson, and Sondra Perry.**



IMAGE: Above, Kapwani Kiwanga, 2016. | Photo by Bertille Chérot

AWARD/HONOR | **Kapwani Kiwanga** (right) is selected as the first recipient of the Frieze Artist Award and will present an outdoor installation “exploring freedom of movement and architectures of exclusion” at Frieze New York in May. Inaugurated to showcase the work of emerging artists, the 2018 award is overseen by curator Adrienne Edwards.

AWARD/HONOR | On Feb. 16, the Harvard Foundation for Intercultural and Race Relations names **Solange** Artist of the Year. The Grammy-winning singer-songwriter whose latest album, “A Seat at the Table,” topped charts, will be honored at a March 3 ceremony.

EXHIBITION | Cincinnati-based FotoFocus Biennial announces more than 140 participating artists including **Derrick Adams, Renée Cox, LaToya Ruby Frazier, Lyle Ashton Harris, Isaac Julien, Deana Lawson, Zanele Muholi, Xaviera Simmons, Bayete Ross Smith, Mickalene Thomas, and Carrie Mae Weems**. Dozens of curators and educators are also collaborating on 2018 programming across more than 70 museums museums and galleries in Greater Cincinnati, Northern Kentucky, and Dayton and Columbus, Ohio. The theme for the Oct. 4-7 biennial is Open Archive, “emphasizing the centrality of photography and lens-based art to modernism, and examining our fundamental need to preserve photographs and to tell stories through their collection, organization, and interpretation.”



Toyin Ojih Odutola and Solange grace the February/March 2018 cover of Cultured magazine in an image by Awol Erizku; The Feb. 12 & Feb. 19 Anniversary issue of The New Yorker features an illustration by Malika Favre.

MAGAZINE | A conversation between **Toyin Ojih Odutola** and **Solange** is published in the February/March issue of Cultured magazine. The cover image and photographs that illustrate the feature are by **Awol Erizku**. During the exchange about sound, art, and architecture, Odutola says: "...as a black woman creator—or just as a creator in general—we should be involved in the presentation of the work, not leave it at the mercy of the standard white cube. If you have an intimate relationship with the making of the work, you should have a relationship with how it's presented."

TELEVISION | "Pioneers: Reginald F. Lewis and the Making of a Billion Dollar Empire" documentary premieres on PBS. The legacy of Lewis, who made a fortune acquiring TLC Beatrice, includes the Reginald F. Lewis Museum in Baltimore, which explores the history, art, and culture of African Americans in Maryland .

LIVES | **Peggy Cooper Cafritz**, the Washington, D.C., art collector and education activist who just published a book about her life in art, dies Feb. 18. She was 70.

AWARD/HONOR | Multimedia artist **Ebony G. Patterson** receives 2018 Stone & DeGuire Contemporary Art Award (Feb. 21). Alumni of the Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Arts at Washington University in St. Louis are eligible for the honor, which includes \$25,000 to help support their studio practice.

APPOINTMENT | **Adrienne Edwards** is joining the Whitney Museum of American Art as Curator of Performance. Edwards, who was been a curator at Performa since 2010, officially begins her new appointment in May.



KARA WALKER (American, b. 1969), "The Katastwóf Karavan (maquette)," 2017 (painted laser-cut stainless steel, 9.125 x 14.625 x 5.5 inches, Edition 30 of 30). | Gibbes Museum of Art, Museum Purchase. Image courtesy of Sikkema Jenkins & Co.

NEWS | **Kara Walker** presents "Katastwóf Karavan" on the banks of the Mississippi River at Prospect.4 on the closing weekend of the New Orleans triennial (Feb. 23-25). Delayed by production, budget, and shipping issues, the "pioneer-style" wagon features racially charged plantation scenes—silhouettes executed in water-cut steel—and a steam-powered calliope that plays black protest songs. Walker created the public art installation in collaboration with steam-power enthusiast Kenneth Griffard and jazz composer Jason Moran, who performed live with the work over the weekend.

ACQUISITION | To help fund "Katastwóf Karavan" **Kara Walker** made maquettes of the work in an edition of 30. The small scale objects made of painted laser-cut steel measure 9 1/8 x 14 5/8 x 5 1/2 inches and, among others, were acquired by Gibbes Museum of Art in Charleston, S.C., Albright-Knox Art Gallery in Buffalo, N.Y., and New-York Historical Society where it will be featured in the fall 2018 exhibition "Black Citizenship in the Age of Jim Crow."

NEWS | Perez Art Museum Miami raises \$500,000 to support the PAMM Fund for African American Art and announces a new acquisition—a painting by **Tschabalala Self**, a 2018 Artist-in-Residence at Studio Museum in Harlem.

AWARD/HONOR | International Center of Photography announces recipients of 2018 Infinity Awards in a variety of categories, including **Samuel Fasso** (Art), **Alexandra Bell** (Applied), **Maurice Berger** (Critical Writing & Research), and Women Photograph (Online Platform and New Media). The winners will be honored at an April 9 gala in New York City.

ART FAIR | 1-54 Contemporary African Art Fair holds inaugural edition in Marrakech, Morocco, Feb. 24-25. With existing editions in London and Brooklyn, N.Y., it's the franchise's first fair on the continent of Africa.



Donald Glover. | Photographs by Awol Erizku for *The New Yorker* (March 5, 2018 issue). | via *The New Yorker*

MAGAZINE | The New Yorker commissions artist **Awol Erizku** to make photographic portraits of Donald Glover, to accompany the magazine's profile of the "Atlanta" creator. The second season of the FX series premieres March 1. Glover plays Earnest (Earn) Marks, the television show's central character. Here is an excerpt from the article by Tad Friend:

[Zazie] Beetz (who plays Van, Earn's ex-girlfriend and mother of his child) told me that she adored [Donald] Glover without beginning to understand him. "After the premiere of the show," she said, "I asked Donald how he felt, and he said, 'I'm a very complex person,' almost apologetically, and walked away." Glover explained, "The sound was all fucked up and the guy at the controls wouldn't let me touch it, so it didn't quite hit. Everyone else was super happy, but I couldn't be, and I felt really mad at myself, because I was ruining it for everyone else." He laughed. "To be honest, I was probably just high. I am complicated, though. People expect me to be one thing—'You're a musician!' 'You're a comedian!' 'You're a coon!'—and I was just feeling high and pinned down." He feels constantly watched but rarely seen.

AWARD/HONOR | The University of Virginia and Thomas Jefferson Foundation at Monticello announce recipients of the 2018 Thomas Jefferson Foundation Medals in Architecture, Citizen Leadership and Law on Feb. 26. **David Adjaye** will be honored with the architecture medal at an April 13 ceremony.

MAGAZINE | Vogue magazine introduces The VogueWorld 100, a "curated list of distinctive creative voices from around the globe." Portrait artist **Jordan Casteel** is featured, along with queer artists and activists in South Africa, Instagram artists, and Jamaican-Ethiopian artist **Gabrielle Tesfaye**, who is a painter, puppeteer, filmmaker, and animator.



Feb. 27: May Ayim Google Doodle illustrated by Berlin-based Laura Breiling

MEDIA | A Feb. 27 **Google Doodle** aimed at the platform's users in Germany pays tribute to **May Ayim**, the author, poet, and activist who is of Ghanaian-German ancestry. A key figure in the Black German Movement, she is responsible for envisioning Black German History as an academic discipline. A Berlin Street was named in her honor on Feb. 27, 2010.

MAGAZINE | Last month, New York magazine announced a public art campaign celebrating its 50th anniversary with a series of special artist-designed covers. The first wave included an image by Hank Willis Thomas. A new cover image by Kerry James Marshall draws on his Mastry comic series, depicting a scene at 125th Street and Lenox Avenue. Marshall's work is installed Feb. 27 at New York's Port Authority Bus Terminal and posters of the image are distributed to the public at the mid-town station and in Harlem. **CT**



Kerry James Marshall's special New York magazine cover design is part of the publication's public art campaign celebrating its 50th anniversary. An 8-foot by 12-foot version is on view inside the main entrance to the Port Authority Bus Terminal. | Courtesy New York magazine