





Walsh Library Gallery at
Seton Hall University
presents



**BLACK
BEAUTY,
IDENTITY AND
SPIRITUALITY:
THE ART OF
DON MILLER**



January 20–March 13, 1998

Opening Reception

Friday, February 6, 4:30–7:30pm

Gallery Talk at 4:30pm with
co-curators Dr. Judy Miller and
Victor L. Davson

*Co-sponsored by
the Office of the President
the Center for African American Studies
and the Office of the Dean for
Community Development*

Music by the Seton Hall
University Gospel Choir

Gallery hours
Monday–Friday 10:30–4:30
(973) 275-2033
Groups and weekends by
arrangement



◆ EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

Measurements are in inches

- 1 *King Portrait*, 1987, watercolor on paper, 34 x 26
- 2 *Tutu/Free Mandela*, ca. 1983, oil on canvas, 43 x 29
- 3 *Study For Triptych*, 1981, watercolor on paper, 7 1/2 x 18 1/2
- 4 *Return From The Funeral*, 1983, oil on canvas, 33 x 40
- 5 *Masai Maiden*, 1974, oil on canvas, 37 1/2 x 36
- 6 *Adjua*, 1974, oil on canvas, 18 x 23 1/2
- 7 *Sheba*, 1975, mixed media and scratch board, 26 1/2 x 22 1/2
- 8 *Nefertiti*, 1975, mixed media and scratch board, 24 x 21 1/2
- 9 *Yaa Asantewa*, 1975, mixed media and scratch board, 24 x 21 1/2
- 10 *Nzingah*, 1975, mixed media and scratch board, 24 x 21 1/2
- 11 *Frederick Douglas*, 1991, mixed media on board, 30 x 27
- 12 *Jokwe*, 1992, mixed media on board, 39 1/2 x 25
- 13 *Maiden Spirits*, 1992, mixed media on board, 30 x 40
- 14 *Gelede*, 1991, mixed media on board, 50 1/2 x 36
- 15 *Bustamante*, 1988, water color on paper, 24 1/2 x 17 3/4
- 16 *Madame C. J. Walker*, 1974, water color on paper, 14 x 24
- 17 *Jackie Robinson*, 1974, water color on paper, 14 x 24
- 18 *Olocun Priestess*, 1983, water color on paper, 19 3/4 x 13 3/4
- 19 *Julia Guitano*, 1951, Oil on canvas, 42 x 30
- 20 *Sacred Connections*, 1992, mixed media on board
96 x 48, 108 x 60, 96 x 48
- 21 *Self-Portrait*, 1990, water color on paper, 15 x 10
- 22 *Bishop Francis*, 1977, oil on canvas (size not available at publication)
- 23 *Jocko, A Legend of the American Revolution*, by Earl Koger, Sr., illustrated
by Don Miller, 1976.
1) Scratch board, 14 x 10 3/4 2) Reproduction, 18 x 24
- 24 *Eric and Iguana* (the artist's son), ca 1965, plaster cast, 19 x 12
- 25 *Craig* (the artist's son), 1966, plaster cast, 13 x 13

Illustrated:

Cover: #12 *Jokwe*

Invitation panel: #1 *King Portrait* and #6 *Adjua*

Design: *Aljira Design*

♦ JUDY MILLER ON THE ART OF DON MILLER

The Walsh Library Gallery is an ideal setting for *Black Beauty, Identity and Spirituality: The Art of Don Miller*. Seton Hall was home to me for twenty years as I directed the Black Studies Center/African American Studies. Don was also involved with Seton Hall students while teaching for the Center.

Don believed in the *beauty* of his people and was insistent on portraying them accurately and with dignity. This is evident in *Adua*, and the queens: *Sheba, Nefertiti, Yaa, Asantewa, Nzinga* and the *Olocun Priestess*. His portrait of me, done as a wedding present, is also included in his theme of Black beauty.

Early in his life Don became fascinated with Black history and its heroes. It was a vital part of his own *identity*. His first “one man” show at the age of eleven was dominated by portraits of Black historical figures. This culminated in his magnum opus *The King Mural* (7 feet by 56 feet) which chronicles King’s life, and is a history lesson resulting from my frustration with my students’ lack of knowledge of the Black struggle for justice.

Spirituality became a near obsession as a result of his experiences during his visits and stay in Africa. Don discovered his personal connection to Africa which climaxed in his painting the triptych *Sacred Connections*. There are many symbols in this work, from the fabric worn by people, to the prominence and meaning of the drum in the center panel. This work represented, for him, the ultimate connection to joy and purpose.

Don’s dream was an artist’s dream—that their work would continue to influence, inspire, and in his case instruct, long after they have departed.

Julia (Judy) Miller

Professor Emeritus, Seton Hall University

Judy Miller is the spouse of Don Miller

◆ REPRESENTING AFRICA

*The artists whose work I like best, think subject is the most important ingredient, subject and the way the artist feels about it... They show emotion, good composition and creativity, and they communicate it in a manner that people can understand.*¹ — Don Miller

By his own definition, the art of Don Miller is representational. It immediately locates the position from which he spoke. He was born into a lower middle class Jamaican family and quite early in his youth claimed the legacy of Africa and the African diaspora as his own. This legacy is the same source that shaped Black spirituality in the New World. It fueled the post colonial struggle, modern civil rights movement, and affirmed Black cultural identity. He was what Franz Fanon may have called a passionate researcher, continuously revising his narrative in pursuit of authenticity and accuracy.² His friend the historian Clement Alexander Price observes:

*Since so much of the history of Blacks in Africa and throughout the African diaspora suffers from modern distortion, he was compelled to labor as much as a researcher as a creative artist.*³

Black Beauty, Identity and Spirituality: The Art of Don Miller celebrates Don's contribution to the struggle of his generation. This work is his construction in visual terms of what he passionately believed to be our sacred connections, underlying unity and strength beyond the realities of our present condition.

Victor L. Davson

Executive Director, *Aljira*, a Center for Contemporary Art

1 Don Miller, Montclair, 1992

2 Stuart Hall, *Cultural Identity and Cinematic Representation*, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1990

3 Clement Alexander Price, *Painting the African Pageant, The Art of Don Miller*, Montclair State Art Gallery, 1992

Seton Hall University
Walsh Library Gallery
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South Orange, NJ 07079



B L A C K
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S P I R I T U A L I T Y :
T H E A R T O F
D O N M I L L E R



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