

The Museum of Modern Art

Just Above Midtown: Changing Spaces
October 9, 2022—February 18, 2023

Section texts

50 West 57th St. (1974–79)

Just Above Midtown opened its first home in 1974, on the fifth floor of an office building located in a predominantly white commercial gallery district. With the help of friends and colleagues, Goode Bryant transformed the space, installing wood floors, painting the walls white, and bringing in plants. Over the course of the next five years, JAM organized more than fifty exhibitions (a selection of which are represented by some of the works on view here) and published one of the first books about Black Conceptual art, *Contextures* (1978).

As JAM staff member Horace Brockington recalls, “Linda created a forum and a dialogue among artists, but also with people outside the art world.” Distinct from its neighboring galleries, JAM welcomed a broad public, helping launch a childcare cooperative for Black creatives, hosting five-dollar informational lunches about collecting art geared toward Midtown professionals, and encouraging experimentation with nontraditional art materials. Although bills accumulated, the community worked together to keep the space alive and open to all, relocating to Tribeca after its first eviction.

Corridor

Goode Bryant saved hundreds of bills, past due statements, and eviction notices related to JAM, moving them from one space to the next over the last half-century. Organized chronologically across the wall, these financial records function as a window into the behind-the-scenes of the gallery’s operations.

While the gallery often did not bring in enough money through sales or grants to pay its rent and utilities, it used its resources to advocate for artists. JAM offered artists material support by helping secure the acquisition of their work by museums or writing grant applications. This support was reciprocal: JAM relied on its staff and volunteers to keep afloat, demonstrating the efficacy of mutual aid and the value of indebtedness—not to financial institutions but to one another.

178–180 Franklin St. (1980–84)

“It is essential that all of us work collectively to assure the continued operations of JAM,” Goode Bryant stated in an invitation to the 1980 reopening of the gallery downtown, in a renovated storefront in Tribeca. Previously populated by meatpacking plants and slaughterhouses, the neighborhood had become the center of New York’s alternative arts scene, which comprised nonprofit organizations fostering experimental and communal artmaking.

Continuing the work they’d done in Midtown, Goode Bryant and her collaborators put on programming that was focused on, but not exclusive to, artists of color. Increasingly bringing together artists across disciplines, the Franklin Street location featured performance, video, and events ranging from film screenings to workshops to open rehearsals. Staff organized sprawling group shows with evocative titles like *Dialogues* (1980), *What I Do for Art* (1982), and *A Love Story* (1983), from which select artists have works on view here. While rising debt and late-night noise complaints from neighbors led to the gallery’s second eviction and move, JAM’s avant-garde spirit flourished as artists pitched in to “keep the energy going.”

503 Broadway (1984–86)

After their second eviction, in 1984, JAM relocated for a final time, to a large, 25,000-square-foot loft on Broadway in SoHo with major renovation needs. There, the organization’s program evolved, specializing in performance and new technology in film, video, animation, and sound. It also shifted its focus from organizing exhibitions to providing artists with studio space and the financial support to create new work. As JAM staff member Tony Whitfield described, “We moved farther and farther away from being a place to go and buy things.”

Aiming to generate funds for operations and artist stipends, Goode Bryant began setting up subsidiaries of JAM, including the Corporation for Art and Television (CAT). Conceived as a for-profit production facility that would capitalize on the recent expansion of film and television production in New York, CAT was never fully realized: a dispute with the landlord led to JAM’s eviction from Broadway in 1986. Although the physical location shuttered, JAM would shape the dance, theater, and musical arts ecosystem for generations to follow.

Extended Label Texts

Title Wall

Page from *The Call and Post*, featuring “Columbus Native Awarded Rockefeller Art Grant,” an article about Linda Goode Bryant, September 22, 1973. Collection Linda Goode Bryant, New York

“If art belongs to the people, then it ought to get out of musty-dank-but-spotless museums and spend some time with people,” declared Goode Bryant in 1973 in the *Call and Post*, a Black newspaper in Ohio. Pictured seated with her two kids, brother, and parents, she was twenty-four and visiting family in Ohio before traveling to New York to begin an educational fellowship at the Metropolitan Museum. Designed to train “the new breed of museum staff members,” the program was part of a post-Civil Rights wave of efforts to racially integrate public goods and services in the United States. Goode Bryant resigned after four months and later opened her own gallery, in 1974.

Intro Gallery

Valerie Maynard (American, 1937-2022). *The Artist Trying to Get It All Down*. c. 1970. Linocut on paper, composition: 12 × 9 in. (30.5 × 22.9 cm); sheet (irreg.): 19 1/4 × 14 1/4 in. (48.9 × 36.2 cm). Courtesy the artist

A printmaker and sculptor, Maynard has described her process of creating as being in a trancelike state in which everything she’s seen, from social injustices to interesting faces, spill out of her, back into the physical world. “I am a medium . . . Consciously seeking the essence of everything in my experience,” the artist has said. In *The Artist Trying to Get It All Down*, she depicts a hunched-over woman committedly transforming experience into art, surrounded by swirling spectral figures.

Linda Goode Bryant (American, born 1949). *Are we really that different?* 2021. 1 min. excerpt. Video (color, sound). Featuring Linda Goode Bryant at Dia Art Foundation, Beacon, New York. Collection the artist.

This video shows Goode Bryant and a group of artist friends breaking into a former box-printing factory—which had just been acquired by Dia Art Foundation—while scouting locations for a fictional film about the art world. The film was intended to take place at a gala at a dilapidated version of MoMA but was never realized.

57th Street (1974-79)

Palmer Hayden (American, 1890–1973). *Harlem Window*. n.d. Watercolor, 15 × 12 1/2 in. (38.1 × 31.8 cm). Collection Dr. Harold McDaniel and Jeanette McDaniel

As the only nonliving artist on JAM's roster, Hayden, who was active from the 1920s until his death in 1973, was an outlier. Yet his work fit squarely with the gallery's resistance to expectations of the type of art Black artists should make. When Hayden was alive, some critics saw his Black figures, such as those in *Harlem Window*, as having exaggerated facial features, and considered them demeaning caricatures. After his death, JAM staff worked with his widow, Miriam Hayden, to recontextualize his work within Black people's struggle with self-imagery amid an abundance of racist depictions—retroactively celebrating his commitment to portraying a variety of Black lives.

JAM inaugural exhibition *Synthesis* (1974)

True to its title, JAM's inaugural exhibition broke through stylistic, generational, and geographical divides. *Synthesis* included both abstract and representational works by established and emerging New York artists, as well as works by a younger generation of artists based in Los Angeles.

Houston Conwill (American, 1947-2016). *Drum*. 1975-80. Molded latex and wood. The Studio Museum in Harlem. Gift of Senga Nengudi; Documentation of performance and site-specific artworks by Houston Conwill. c. 1970-1980s. Just Above Midtown Records, Collection Linda Goode Bryant, New York.

Raised Catholic in the American South, Conwill (1947–2016) merged personal mythology, African American folklore, and African spiritualities to explore the presence of African practices in Black cultures around the world. In his performance *Notes of a Griot*, Conwill assumed the role of griot—a West African musician and storyteller who performs tribal histories. He recited an invocation inspired by narratives he created, as well as by *Imani*, or “faith,” one of the seven principles of Kwanzaa. He was joined by the artists Ed Fletcher, Al Jackson, Diana Wharton, who played music and chanted, and David Hammons, who performed a knife dance around the gallery.

Suzanne Jackson (American, born 1944). *MaeGame*. 1973. Acrylic wash on canvas, 82 × 82 × 6 in. (208.3 × 208.3 × 15.2 cm). Private collection. Courtesy Ortuzar Projects, New York

“It’s political to make an artwork about peace and beauty. I wanted people, especially Black people, to see the beauty,” Jackson once stated. “People need beauty. It’s a way to get people to think or consider some other ways of being.” This conviction found mystical expression in her work, including *MaeGame*, which the artist made by applying thin, delicate washes of acrylic paint on canvas. She painted a landscape merging trees, plants, birds, and human figures.

JAM exhibition *In Recognition* (1976)

In Recognition featured works on paper, photographs, and “small constructions” by six Black and two white women artists: Valerie Maynard, Suzanne Jackson, Senga Nengudi, Howardena Pindell, Barbara Chase-Riboud, Betye Saar, Shelley Farkas, and Wendy Wilson. The exhibition was conceived to address that in contemporary art, as elsewhere, “the American female, particularly the Black American female, has not been given her just recognition,” as the show’s press release declared. Thanks to the efforts of JAM staff, the exhibition received coverage in publications like *Arts Magazine*, helping provide a platform for these artists when such opportunities were few for women.

Video footage shot at Just Above Midtown, Fifty-Seventh Street, and at artists’ studios. c. 1974–79. Video (Digitized Sony videotape, ½ in. black and white, sound). Just Above Midtown Records. Collection Linda Goode Bryant, New York

As an artist-educator at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, Randy Williams had access to a half-inch videotape recorder—a new technology that Sony had donated to the museum. Driven by the urge to self-document, Williams borrowed the camera to record everyday life at the gallery and to conduct interviews, often collaborating with Linda Goode Bryant and the artist David Hammons. Here, selections from that footage provide context for several of the works on view, and reveal how JAM developed into a space to assemble informally, prioritizing the open-ended process of playing with materials and ideas.

Documentation of Body Print-In held in conjunction with David Hammons’s exhibition *Greasy Bags and Barbeque Bones*, Philip Yenawine’s house, May 19, 1975. Photographs by Jeff Morgan. Just Above Midtown Records. Collection Linda Goode Bryant, New York

Hammons’s body prints—made by oiling his body or that of another person and pressing it on paper—were some of the artworks the gallery most often

sold to collectors and as fundraisers. Inspired by the sit-ins, teach-ins, and love-ins of the 1960s, Hammons staged “Print-Ins” at JAM, during which audience members could create their own body prints with his assistance (as documented in the photos here). In a press release, Goode Bryant pitched them as affordable gifts for loved ones during a period of “recession, depression, and general lack of money.” By hosting events like Hammons’s “Print-Ins,” JAM involved its community as active participants.

JAM publication *Contextures* (1978)

For the gallery’s fourth anniversary, Linda Goode Bryant and the art historian Marcy S. Phillips produced *Contextures*, a self-published and self-funded book. In it, Goode Bryant and Phillips coined the term “Contextualism” to describe a movement of artists making noncommercial and for the most part nonrepresentational, abstract work. “*Contextures* looked at artists who used materials in inventive ways, especially everyday materials that everyone would know and have a relationship with,” explained Randy Williams, one of several artists featured. Contextualists used familiar materials like hair, pantyhose, and socks in their work, whose new settings redefined them as art even as these types of materials would continue to be used within their original contexts.

Cynthia Hawkins (American, born 1950). *Heirog Inner Marks #1*. 1974. Pencil and graphite stick on paper, 20 × 25 in. (50.8 × 63.5 cm). Collection the artist; *Moving Box*. 1975. Oil paint and oil stick on paper, 50 × 60 in. (127 × 152.4 cm). Collection the artist.

Hawkins used the language of abstraction to depict astrological phenomena, placing her work within the context of the larger universe. In the mid-1970s, she developed a visual vocabulary of basic signs: crosshatches, semicircles, right angles, arrows, and x’s. To make this painting, she used oil sticks to apply clouds of color—jubilant blues, pinks, and oranges—into which she incised repeated marks and lines moving in various directions, imbuing the work with vibrant energy.

Photograph of Linda Goode Bryant’s son, Kenneth Goode Bryant, age five, at Just Above Midtown, Fifty-Seventh Street, c. 1974. Collection Linda Goode Bryant, New York

On Saturday mornings, a group of women who worked in creative industries hung out at JAM with their children. Together they founded the Sunshine Circle Preschool, which operated in West Harlem from 1975 to ’76. Goode Bryant’s son, Kenneth, seen here playing at the gallery, was one of some twenty students. The teacher Suzette Wright was hired to run classes; she prioritized activity-based learning, approached various subjects through an art lens, avoided gendered language, and assembled children of different ages in a single classroom. Wright appears in one of David Hammons’s body

prints, a process that is documented in the photographs on display nearby.

Senga Nengudi (American, born 1943). *Swing Low*. 1977/2014. Nylon mesh and sand, tacks, 30 × 60 × 65 in. (76.2 × 152.4 × 165.1 cm). Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond. Gift of Mrs. Alfred DuPont, by exchange, and Arthur and Margaret Glasgow Endowment

About making these works, Nengudi wrote: “After giving birth to my own son, I thought of black wet nurses suckling child after child—their own as well as others—until their breasts rested on their knees, their energies drained.” Elastic and moveable, the abstract sand-and-pantyhose sculptures are reminiscent of both breasts and testicles. Nengudi posed inside them and manipulated the sagging appendages during performances. When the series showed at JAM, some visitors took the title (the French acronym for “please respond”) literally. On a legal pad provided by the gallery to gather feedback and encourage engagement, one person replied, “we all begin + end organically.”

Vivian Browne (American, 1929–1993). *Untitled (Man in Mountain)*. 1974. Oil on canvas, 43 1/2 × 40 in. (110.5 × 101.6 cm). Courtesy RYAN LEE Gallery, New York, and Adobe Krow Archives, Los Angeles

Browne was fascinated by the shapes and colors she saw during travels across Africa in the 1970s. She began incorporating patterns in her work after her first visit, such as in this jewel-toned painting, in which a man wearing a pink collared shirt emerges from a mountain. “I deliberately avoided the realistic mode. . . . Instead I chose the suggestiveness of abstraction,” Browne explained. “You can feel Africa in those paintings, but it is in the color, in the design. It is symbolic rather than representative, and that means [these works] can speak to all people everywhere.”

JAM exhibition *Statements Known and Statements New* (1976)

This invitation for the 1976 exhibition *Statements Known and Statements New* paired two works on paper, now on view together once again: a Hammons body print, which he made by oiling his body, pressing himself on paper, and then applying powder pigments, and Johns’s *Hatteras*, named after an island in North Carolina that had served as a refuge for fugitive enslaved people during the Civil War. Linda Goode Bryant described the exhibition as “a forum that presented Afro-American artists on the same platform with other established artists,” bringing together a mostly younger generation of artists of color with widely recognized white artists.

Noah Jemison (American, born 1943). *Black Valhalla*. 1976. Encaustic on canvas, 76 1/4 × 52 1/8 in. (193.7 × 132.4 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. George A. Hearn Fund; Acapulco Gold. 1976. Two

watercolors on paper, each: 11 3/8 × 7 3/4 in. (28.9 × 19.7 cm). The Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller Empire State Plaza Art Collection

Often utilizing techniques seen in children's art, Jemison experimented with tools, materials, and application methods, as seen in the black-and-white video footage in this gallery.

For *Black Valhalla*, Jemison used encaustic, a technique in which a mixture of molten wax and pigment is poured onto canvas. At the time it was created, the Vietnam War had been over for one year. Its title references the heavenly palace to which soldiers killed in combat were sent in Norse mythology. *Acapulco Gold* takes its name from a strain of cannabis popular in anti-war countercultural circles in the 1960s.

Mallica "Kapo" Reynolds (Jamaican, 1911–1989). Roberta Flack. 1970. Oil on canvas, 24 1/2 × 20 1/2 (62.2 × 52.1 cm). American Folk Art Museum, New York. Gift of Maurice C. and Patricia L. Thompson; *There She Go Satan*. 1974. Oil on canvas hardboard, 13 3/16 × 18 15/16 in. (33.5 × 48 cm). The National Gallery of Jamaica Larry Wirth Collection

Kapo was a well-known preacher of Revivalism, a religious practice that combined Christian Evangelicalism and African traditions. Moved by a divine vision to start making art in the 1940s, he was one of several self-taught Jamaican artists that were celebrated as symbols of an emerging national identity following the country's independence from British rule in the 1960s. Kapo's 1975 exhibition at JAM was funded by the singer Roberta Flack, one of several celebrities who purchased work from the gallery. This painting was part of a series of portraits he made of female figures with their faces half in shadow.

Corridor

Janet Henry (obscured) and Linda Goode Bryant at Just Above Midtown, Fifty-Seventh Street. December 1974. Photograph by Camille Billops. Courtesy the Hatch-Billops Collection, New York; Gylbert Coker and David Hammons at Just Above Midtown, Fifty-Seventh Street. December 1974. Photograph by Camille Billops. Courtesy the Hatch-Billops Collection, New York

These photographs document a meeting Linda Goode Bryant had with the artists Janet Henry and David Hammons and the curator Gylbert Coker at JAM's Fifty-Seventh Street office, confronting the gallery's accumulating debt only one month into existence. These images were made by Camille Billops, an artist who also showed at JAM and photographed many exhibitions and gatherings of Black artists across the city from the 1970s until her death. Billops preserved photos like these in an archive she and her

husband kept in their SoHo loft.

Interviews with Benny Andrews, Nancy Spero, David Hammons, Lowery Stokes Sims, and Marcia Tucker. 1981–82. Outtakes from *The Business of Being an Artist* (1983), directed by Dieter Froese and produced by Linda Goode Bryant. Video (color, sound). Just Above Midtown Records. Collection Linda Goode Bryant, New York

Between 1978 and 1983, JAM ran a professional development program called the Business of Being an Artist (BBA). The BBA consisted of two parts: reviews of individual artists' work by JAM staff and a thirty-three-week course. Guest speakers presented on topics such as "Housing and Workspace," "Artists Rights," and "The Art Market: Patronage and Collecting." In 1982, seeking to support artist communities beyond New York and to generate revenue for the gallery, Goode Bryant and the video artist Dieter Froese produced a film about the BBA, interviewing artists, gallerists, curators, and cultural workers on their insider knowledge of the contemporary art market.

178-180 Franklin St. (1980–84)

Janet Olivia Henry (American, born 1947). *The Studio Visit*. 1983. Mixed-media installation with "the artist" (doll of Lieutenant Uhura from *Star Trek*), "the curator" (doll of Spanky from *Our Gang* with a 1960s Barbie wig), and miniatures of easel, two wooden melon crates, stretching canvas instructions, sousaphone, bottle of Evian water, goblet, corkscrew, wine bottle, lamp, loaf of bread, wooden kitchen cabinet, rice cooker, folding chair, kitchen sink, vegetables, fruit, red shelves, paper towels, cans, bottles, kente cloth rug, nightstand, radio, frog, hair dryer, dictionary, juju box with brass light bulb, hand mirror, perfume bottle, plastic red bra, flash light, bracelets, espadrille shoe, wire hangers, futon, clothes, book, trunk, pillow, a stack of newspapers, hen, wooden refrigerator, straw fruit basket, wood-burning stove, kettle, frying pan, coffee table, kerosene lamp, ashtray, tumbler, Barcelona® couch, sneakers, and oil pastel and colored pencil drawings on brown rice paper, 14 × 19 7/16 × 21 7/16 in. (35.6 × 49.4 × 54.5 cm). Collection the artist

What and whom does an artist surround themselves with in their studio? Can it be a space of refuge and comfort as well as a space for creativity and risk-taking? In *The Studio Visit* Henry explores these questions through a scene inspired by her work as an artist and key staff member at JAM. Reimagining her world in miniature, Henry used materials she collected at department stores, mom-and-pop toy stores, secondhand shops, flea markets, and yard sales to depict a Black artist in her workspace being visited by a white curator.

Rosemary Mayer (American, 1943–2014). *October Ghost*. 1980/2022. Glassine, cellophane, plastic, wood, paint, ribbons, cord, and linen thread, 7 × 7 × 7 ft. (213.4 × 213.4 × 213.4 cm). Estate of Rosemary Mayer

Mayer became known in the 1970s for her ethereal, diaphanous sculptures constructed from carefully balanced and draped materials. She showed *October Ghost* at JAM in *Dialogues*, a 1980 group exhibition organized with neighboring downtown alternative arts organizations, including the Women's InterArt Center, which Mayer represented. Just as *Dialogues* was an exhibition about collaborating with your neighbors, *October Ghost* materializes the relationship of responding to, leaning on, and depending on one another. Mayer passed away in 2014; *October Ghost* was installed here with the guidance of the artist's estate, who reconstructed it in response to this exhibition.

Rolando Briseño (American, born 1952). *American Table*. 1994. Acrylic on tablecloth, framed: 51 × 31 1/2 × 3 in. (80 × 129.5 × 7.6 cm). Collection the artist

For Briseño, a Mexican American artist from Texas, how we feed ourselves represents wider cultural values. "I grew up in a very tight family, we'd eat together two or three times a day every day," Briseño once reflected. "And then when I went to college I joined the real American society, and people didn't sit down together anymore." Here, he paints directly on a tablecloth, setting this American table with a meal-for-one and two televisions. The everyday rituals that form community and culture were central to Briseño's work when he showed at JAM in the 1980s, and he would continue to explore these themes throughout his career.

Randy Williams (American, born 1947). *AIDS Not So Holy*. 1982. Ronald Reagan postcard, wood, metal, acrylic paint, plexiglass, paper, condom, and books, 18 × 30 × 5 in. (45.7 × 76.2 × 12.7 cm). Collection the artist

Here, Williams brings together a bible, a condom, perforated metal, and a postcard of former United States president Ronald Reagan. These seemingly disparate objects take on new meanings—even uses—when placed together, just as the work is informed by the context in which it was made. This context is explicitly pointed to by the multiplication of the word "aids," which Reagan refused to say until 1985, when the epidemic had already impacted tens of thousands of people in the US, including Williams's artistic community. He reflected: "It was something which affected me very personally, because I had so many friends that had died from aids very early on."

George Mingo (American, 1950–1966). *Zebra Couple*. c. 1983. Oil on canvas, 48 × 64 in. (121.9 × 162.6 cm). Hudgins Family Collection, New York

JAM was not alone in its mission to facilitate cross-racial exchanges in an otherwise highly segregated New York art world. In 1983 the artist Lorraine O'Grady curated *The Black and White Show* at Kenkeleba Gallery, a Black-owned space on the Lower East Side. Half of the participating artists were Black and half were white, a requirement that extended to the artworks on view, all of which were done in grayscale. The only exception was this work by Mingo (who was also active at JAM), which was installed in the final room of the exhibition. "Its black-and-white-in-living-color made the perfect coda," O'Grady wrote.

G. Peter Jemison (Enrolled member of the Seneca Nation of Indians, Heron Clan, born 1945). *Hunger on Reservations While Children in Africa Starve*. 1981. Gouache, crayon, marker, pen, colored pencil, and cut-and-pasted paper and board on printed brown paper bag, 19 5/16 × 11 3/4 × 6 3/4 in. (49 × 29.8 × 17.2 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York

Jemison was inspired to work with bags after noticing them while commuting. "The common denominator for those of us who traveled on the subway from Brooklyn to Manhattan every day was that we carried some kind of bag—a plastic bag, a shopping bag, a briefcase, a handbag, a lunch bag." Recycling paper bags, he painted images referencing nature, personal stories, perceptions of Indigenous peoples in North America, and Haudenosaunee history and art practices like quillwork and beading. These works raise questions like: How are Indigenous peoples thought of in the popular culture of the United States? When are we inspired to transform existing materials into something new?

Senga Nengudi (American, born 1943) with Cheryl Banks-Smith (American, born 1953) and Lawrence D. "Butch" Morris (American, 1947–2013). *Air Propo*. 1981. Performance organized as part of Nengudi's exhibition *Vestige, Just Above Midtown, Franklin Street*. Video (color, sound), duration variable. Collection Linda Goode Bryant, New York

This video documents the performance *Air Propo*, created as part of a series of collaborations among artists working in different mediums. In it, the musician Morris is seen playing a cornet before cutting to Nengudi, who is seen standing in an installation of bamboo crosses covered in a gauzy fabric. She exhales in short, sharp breaths, an act she later described as a way of "allowing the self to be gone and . . . [allowing] this other spirit to come in."

The video then cuts back to Morris, around whose legs we see the dancer and choreographer Banks-Smith perform an improvised dance.

Hock E Aye Vi Edgar Heap of Birds (Cheyenne and Arapaho Nations, born 1954). *Understanding the Uniqueness of an Ethnic Identity*. 1980. Commercially produced die-cut paper board and acrylic paint on homisote wall board, 66 in. x 6 ft. 3 ½ in. (167.6 × 191.8 cm). Gochman Family Collection and Forge Project

The American Indian Community House presented this work in *Dialogues*, an exhibition organized at JAM in collaboration with fifteen other alternative spaces. Consisting of two columns, it resembles a bilingual dictionary. However, instead of offering English translations of the Cheyenne words at left, which are terms for various animals, Heap of Birds paired them with words that reference stereotypes of Indigenous people. He has described *Understanding the Uniqueness* as an “expression of deception” made in response to a museum’s request that he create a didactic to explain his work to a non-Native audience. (He did not include a label at the JAM show.)

Artwork slides sent to Just Above Midtown. 35mm slides and slideshow. Just Above Midtown Records, Collection Linda Goode Bryant, New York

From the 1960s to mid-1990s, 35 mm slides were the most affordable way for an artist to document and show images of their work. JAM staff regularly reviewed artists’ slides, providing them a unique level of access to curators. A selection of hundreds of slide images from the JAM records are on view here.

503 Broadway (1984–86)

Sandra Payne (American, 1951–2021). Twelve untitled drawings from the series *Most Definitely Not Profile Ladies*. 1986. Ink on colored paper, each: 10 × 8 in. (25.4 × 20.3 cm). Sandra M. Payne Trust

“I am interested in remembering the unseen, the untouched, the unexpected,” Payne once wrote. For JAM’s final exhibition at 503 Broadway, Payne made drawings of feminine figures in profile as black silhouettes on empty backgrounds. Fleshy and oozing, their shapes at times look more like monsters, vegetables, or microbes than humans. Payne’s friend and fellow artist Lorraine O’Grady described them as “joyously sexual and sublimely spiritual.” [66 words]

Excerpts of performances produced by JAM including: Blondell Cummings, Senga Nengudi, and Yasunao Tone, *Blind Dates* (1982); Martha Wilson, *The State of the Art Union Address* (1983); Meg Eginton, *Wind Shear* (1985); Harry Whittaker Sheppard, *Retakes* (1985-86); JAM

Presents: Graham Haynes and No Image, Spirit Ensemble, and Olu Dara (1989)

Beginning in 1978, JAM increasingly supported live performance, bringing artists from different disciplines together, offering them time and space to collaborate, and encouraging audience participation through process-oriented programs. After the gallery's closure, JAM staff continued programming under the auspices of JAM Presents and Catconcerts at venues throughout Manhattan. A selection of excerpted archival footage documenting JAM-produced performances is on view [here](#).

Lorraine O'Grady (American, born 1934). *Announcement Card 1 (Banana-Palm with Lance)*. 2020. Fujiflex print, 60 × 40 in. (152.4 × 101.6 cm). Edition: 10. Courtesy Alexander Gray Associates, New York; *Announcement Card 2 (Spike with Sword Fighting)*. 2020. Fujiflex print, 60 × 40 in. (152.4 × 101.6 cm). Edition: 10. Courtesy Alexander Gray Associates, New York

In 1980 O'Grady arrived at a party at JAM wearing a tiara and an evening gown and cape made from white dinner gloves. She then lashed herself with a whip while reciting a poem, at one point exclaiming, "Black art must take more risks!" With this performance, O'Grady introduced Mlle Bourgeoise Noire, a fictional persona generated out of the artist's anger at the racism and sexism then prevalent in the art world, and her own complex relationship to race. Forty years later, she announced a new avatar, the Knight. In *Announcement Cards 1* and *2*, the Knight, atop whose helmet a Caribbean palm tree grows, appears ready for battle. What might her call-to-action be today?

Linda Goode Bryant (American, born 1949). *Project EATS (Randall-Wards Island Farm)*. 2022. Timelapse video. Collection the artist.

Despite closing in 1986, JAM's energy lived on in projects like those documented in this video—including Project EATS, a system of neighborhood-based farms throughout New York City, which was founded by Goode Bryant in 2008. Self-described as "art that feeds," Project EATS fosters collaboration and creative thinking in underserved communities through farming. Centering the need for both personal and physical nourishment, Project EATS provides open-ended time and space to create for working-class and low-income people.