

eric firestone gallery

Judy Bowman (b. Detroit, MI, 1952) is a collage artist whose practice centers on exalting Black American culture. Her use of vibrant hues, textured paper, and acrylic paint illuminates narratives that move beyond institutional racism and disparaged perspectives of the Black experience—a view that too often limits the full picture of life for Black Americans. Considering herself a visual griot, Bowman tells stories through her mixed-media works on canvas that reflect her coming-of-age experiences in Detroit's Eastside and Black Bottom neighborhoods. Scenes in her lively collages depict love, community, and fellowship—the type that resides in jazzy nights, the sway of young Black women, the swag of young Black men, church on Sundays followed by family dinner, family outings, and cultural dignity and richness.

As Bowman has explained: “Working primarily in figurative collage, my technique style is intuitive. After finding the right papers, colors, and textures to create moments in time that give off a feel-good elixir reminiscent of Black Bottom and the Harlem Renaissance era, I begin with the eyes and allow my subconscious to connect with a rhythm and freely let the story play out on the canvas.”

After retiring as principal of the Detroit Academy of Arts and Science in 2008, Bowman rebooted her career as an artist. She lives in Romulus, MI and works throughout Metro Detroit.

Bowman's work is found in collections such as the Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit, MI; Hubert Humphrey Federal Building, Washington, D.C.; United States Department of State, Art Bank Program, Washington, D.C.; The Booth Family Center for Special Collections, Georgetown University Library, Washington, D.C.; Sarasota African American Cultural Coalition, Sarasota, FL; Flint Institute of Arts, Flint, MI; and the R.W. Norton Museum, Shreveport, LA, among others.

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