

PHILIP MORTON GALLERY

Meet The Artist: HUMBERT HOWARD

Humbert Howard of Philadelphia, born in 1905, is an important figure among contemporary African-American artists. Howard was educated at Howard University in Washington, D.C., the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, and the Barnes Foundation in Merion, Pennsylvania. He was also art director of the Pyramid Club, a popular and respected black cultural center in Philadelphia. His integrationist approach to art broke down traditional boundaries that often had separated black and white artists. As director of the club's art exhibitions, he selected works by both black and white artists for display.

In the late fifties, because of changing politics within the organization, Howard's involvement with the Pyramid Club waned. At that time, he began studies at the Barnes Foundation, which he continued through 1961. The experience had a tremendous impact on him, revealed in the growing exaggeration, distortion, and abstraction of forms that became evident in his work of this period.

Although Howard enjoyed success as an artist, he worked as a mail carrier to "further of my favorite pastimes - eating." By the time he retired in 1971, he had developed a loyal following of collectors and dealers in the Philadelphia area. In the eighties, he became increasingly involved with younger members of the local art scene. Often called the "dean of Philadelphia's black artists," he hosted meetings of the local chapter of the National Conference of Black Artists in his Hamilton Street living room.

At the time of his death in 1990 Humbert Howard had become a mentor to emerging black artists. Ernest Berry, a long time friend and collector of Howard's work, said, "He was not just a painter. He was a person who believed in sharing his feelings with people through his painting. He was the kindest friend I had ever had in the art world."

Mr. Howard's paintings are part of the permanent collection of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Art, the Museum of the Philadelphia Civic Center and the Philadelphia Afro-American Museum.

Studied:

Howard University; Washington, DC
University of Pennsylvania; Philadelphia, PA
Barnes Foundation; Merion, PA

Books:

1996, Moore College of Art Humbert Howard - Philadelphia Painter, 39 pages (color),
Exhibition Catalog
1969, School District of Philadelphia Art Dept. and Civic Center Museum Afro-American
Artists, 1800-1969, Exhibition Catalog
1967, NYU, Harlem Cultural Council, and Urban League The Evolution of the Afro-
American Artist, 1800-1950
1956, Philadelphia Pyramid Club Second Annual Fall Review of Paintings and Sculpture -
New York, Washington, and Philadelphia at the Pyramid Club, Exhibition Catalog
1956, Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts Living Philadelphia Artists Included In The
Permanent Collection, Exhibition Catalog

Museums:

Documentary Smithsonian Institute, Washington, District Of Columbia
Pennsylvania Academy Of Fine Art, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Philadelphia Afro-American Museum, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Philadelphia Museum Of Art, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
William Penn Memorial Museum, Harrisbury, Pennsylvania

Exhibition Record (Museums, Institutions and Awards):

1970, International Academy of Arts and Letters, Honorary Degree & Silver Metal for
painting

1979, American Museum of Natural History, NYC, Special Honor

Memberships:

The Pyramid Club, 1950s, Art Director
Philadelphia Art Alliance, 1960 - 1990, Member
Peale Club, 1970s, Member

Dealers or Representatives:

Philadelphia Museum Of Art -- Art, Sales, and Rental Gallery; Philadelphia, PA
Howard Heartsfield Gallery -- Philadelphia, PA
Newman Gallery -- Philadelphia

Artist Statement:

Speaking about his subject matter, Humbert once said:

*"..I paint the people I know, the places I see, the thing I touch. it's the people and the
environment of the cities I love-tall buildings, streets, parks, the dancer, the teen-ager, the
stenographer, but I paint them in terms of my culture, times, and personal feelings.."*

Review of Artist's Work:

For a 1979 Exhibition at the Gross McCleaf Gallery in Philadelphia, Dr. Burton Wasserman; Critic, Scholar, Teacher, and Artist, wrote the following:

" HUBERT HOWARD, one of the most widely celebrated Painters, is holding forth this month with his latest oils, watercolors and sculpture."

"A free-swinging painter who works in the Expressionist tradition, Howard knows how to make a brush seem to fly with apparent abandon while he is actually exerting a carefully disciplined rein over what he does. The net effect of this approach is an art in which colors melt and glow on the picture surfaces with unmeasurable power, richness, and resonance."

" To see Howard's work is to recapture the vision of the eternal child who sees the world without the jaded spoilage that all too often comes to most of us with "Growing Up."

"IN A HOWARD painting, the appearance of a human being, the shape of the Sun above a landscape, or the color of the overhead Sky is still a source of Wonder, Discovery, and sheer excitement. To look at his pictures is to become aware of how fortunate people are to have the gift of sight."

"The Ultimate reality of Howard's Work is his concentrated feeling for design. What makes this so memorable is the way he unveils the essence of a given subject and then transforms it into a complex of reverberating lines and tones. They will endure for years to come, lasting long after the moments that first stimulated the artist to creative action are lost and gone."