

# The Collective

The Collective is an historic, Los Angeles Arts Organization, formally in existence from 1999 through 2006. The Collective is significant to the rich history of Los Angeles artists, arts organizations and arts activism, and specifically to the history of black artists and arts professionals working in the City and County of Los Angeles, and black-owned galleries and community spaces of that time. Because 2019 marks the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the organization's inception, former members reunited in Spring 2019:

1. To gather documents, photos, videos, exhibition materials, and other items within its organizational archives and within member-collections. These archives not only reflect the art, aesthetics and activism of its members, but also reflects the mentorship and inspiration that they received from important artists such as John Outterbridge and Noah Purifoy.
2. To make proposals for The Collective to donate its gathered archives to a Los Angeles institution that will insure the proper preservation and cataloging of these materials within its institutional archives for perpetuity.
3. To propose two exhibits celebrating its 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary -- the first consisting of art works created by members created during 1999-2006 and the second consisting of works by members who continue to maintain an active presence in the ongoing contributions of west coast art. (The first exhibition has been scheduled at Residency, an Inglewood gallery. A venue for the second exhibition is currently being sought.)
4. To propose and develop an exhibition catalog with a foreword by several established writers, historians and/or curators.

A more detailed narrative concerning the organization is summarized below:

## Historical Narrative

In February 1999, a group of artists met and discussed the state of the arts in the African American community. The group realized the need to address two closely related issues 1) respond to the lack of opportunities by creating our own and 2) creating a change in how art is viewed in our community by exhibiting in non-traditional spaces with an emphasis on including artist talks, panels, lectures and educational events. To acknowledge the varying forms of art, our membership intentionally included curators, producers, writers, art administrators, gallery owners, and arts advocates. The L.A. Collective existed as a focal point of artistic & cultural expression committed to the growth and development of people of African descent. As a group, we sought to naturally express ourselves as black artists in all of its various forms by providing holistic support and encouragement to one another not only as creative individuals but as fellow human beings.

Founding members include Vida Brown, Kenneth Carnes, June Edmonds, Michael Massenburg, Roland McFarland, Ethel Powers and Bobbee Zeno (deceased). Advisory Board members included Los Angeles arts activist and historian, Cecil Fergerson, artist John Outterbridge, arts administrator Vida Brown (currently a curator at CAAM), and Roderick Sykes (co-founder of St. Elmo's Village).

Almost immediately following the initial meeting in February 1999, the group was invited to participate in "The Big Shoot", a family photo of sorts, taken on March 21, 1999 in front of the California African American Museum. This photo, taken by the late Bob Douglas, with assistants, Salongo Lee and MonaLisa Whitaker, contained more 145 African American painters, dancers, sculptors, writers, actors, filmmakers, photographers and other artists. The event was organized by the late Joseph Beckles of Studio Naidu and the National Conference of Artists. After the photo was taken, founding members of the group met again to begin formalizing details for the eventual organization.

Meetings were held monthly in various creative spaces around the Los Angeles area. We shared opportunities with each other (exhibition, teaching artist, public art, commission, etc.). During the meetings, suggestions for exhibitions were made by members which were then acted upon. Exhibitions included non-traditional spaces such as nonprofits, churches and other community based organizations. Additionally, several members were gallery owners with connections to larger art shows in which members participated and sold work nationally (New York, Chicago, Portland), thus, exposing us to a larger audience.

Meeting places included Cafe Future & Gallery, the Studio of John Outterbridge, St. Elmo's Village, and BackStreet Gallery. Exhibition spaces and additional meeting places included Maxine Waters' Community Build, member Deborah McDuff's Museum of Cultural Diversity; member Beau Laney's BackStreet Gallery (now closed), member Greg Pitts' Triangle Church of Religious Science, Pearl C. Woods Gallery; WLCAC Cecil Fergerson Gallery; FDG Gallery & Cultural Arts Center located in West Adams (now closed). Collective members also exhibited their works through Collective member, Salongo Lee's MooBoo Gallery at national black fine art expos in New York and Chicago.

While the gathering of documents and photos is ongoing, attached are lists and samples of materials within The Collective archives.

- a. Organizational foundation documents (Mission Statement/ByLaws, Member Brochure and Original Letterhead)
- b. Archive List (still in compilation)
- c. Membership List including Founding Members and Advisory Members
- d. Samples of digitized photos, exhibition announcements and other materials
- e. CVs/Resumes of current artists, writers and other members who are participating in this project

*For immediate release*

For Further Information contact:

Residency Art Gallery  
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**Untold story of the Los Angeles African American artists  
leading us into the 21 Century**

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Founding member and artist, Michael Massenburg stated " This organization was unique in that we form a lifetime bond that went beyond the norm. We became a family. It shows in our continued relationships and expands into our art and community activism. "

Please join us for a night of the untold stories through art and history.

Opening reception:  
Saturday, December 14th, 2019  
7 to 10pm  
Residency Art Gallery  
310 Queen St. Inglewood CA 90301

The exhibition runs December 14th 2019 to January 25th 2020  
Open Fridays & Saturdays / Noon to 6pm & by appointment

Sharon Barnes, Angela Briggs, David Glenn Brown, Kenneth Carnes, June Edmonds, Edward Ewell, Mira Gandy, Gary Green, Paul Houzell, Ronda Kelley, Amarpal Khanna, Salongo Lee, Michael Massenburg, Richard May, Deborah McDuff, Roland McFarland, Willie R. Middlebrook, Glynnis Reed, Darryl Smith, Robin Strayhorn, MonaLisa Whitaker, Bryan Wilhite