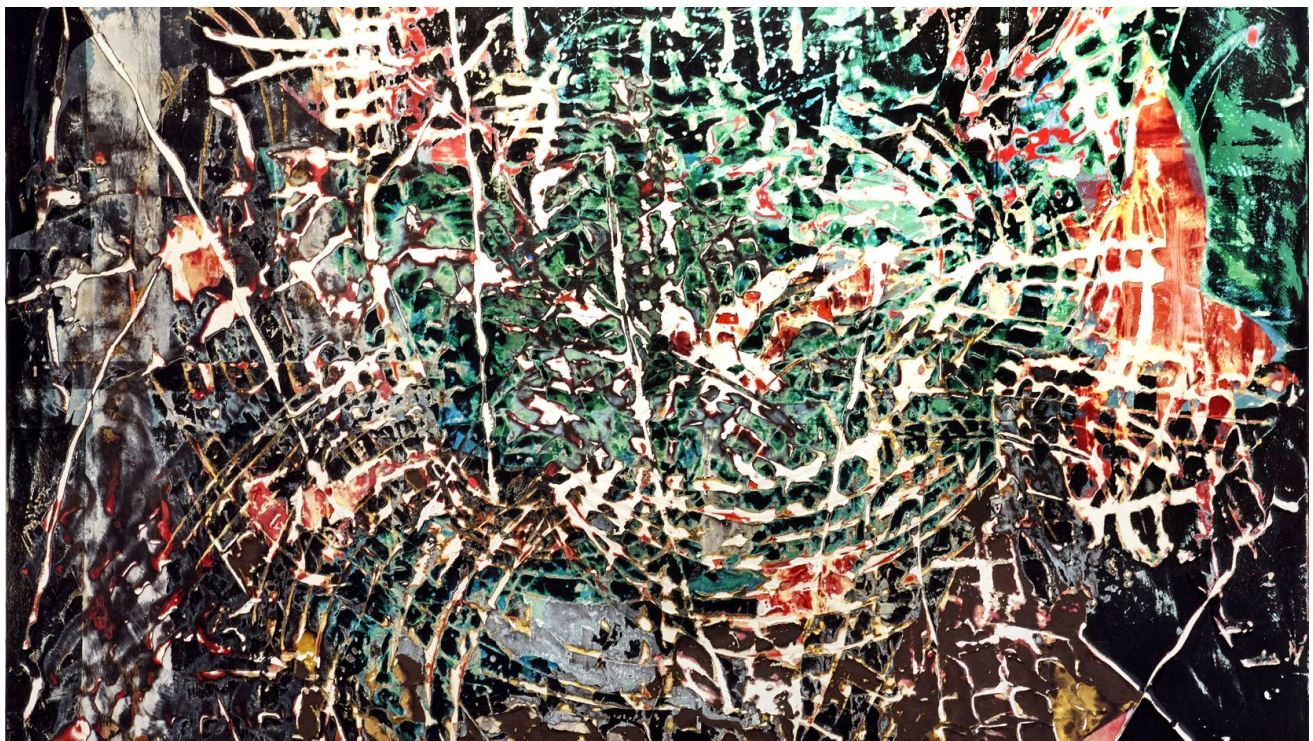


ARTS ENTERTAINMENT > VISUAL ARTS

# Dallas' Green Family Art Foundation makes a splash with 'Black Abstractionists'

The first large show in the new space features 38 artists whose careers span decades.



Mark Bradford's "Q2," a 2020 mixed-media-on-canvas work, is featured in "Black Abstractionists: From Then 'Til Now." The show runs at the Green Family Art Foundation through Jan. 29. (Chad Redmon / Green Family Art Foundation)



By [Danielle Avram](#)

5:00 AM on Jan 6, 2023



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Until last year, [the Green Family Art Foundation gallery](#) made its home in the Design District's River Bend development, an enclave mainly frequented by artists and art patrons.

In the fall, the foundation moved to a new space in the heart of the Arts District, minutes away from both the Dallas Museum of Art and the Nasher Sculpture Center.

The shift to a more publicly visible and walkable location furthers the foundation's commitment to providing access to works by both established and emerging LGBTQ and BIPOC artists. The increased space also allows for two shows at once — a larger, primary exhibition, and a secondary spotlight on an emerging artist.

The first large exhibition in the new space is “Black Abstractionists: From Then ‘Til Now,” and the first spotlight show is “Oh, Man!,” featuring works by Bernadette Despujols.

Curated by Dexter Wimberly, “Black Abstractionists” brings together 38 artists whose careers span the early years of modernist abstraction through the present day.

More than an antidote to the white, male, midcentury artists who typically dominate abstract painting, the show is a historical dive into the unique complexities that Black artists — particularly those of the pre-21st century — have faced as abstractionists in a world that expects them to regurgitate a prescribed “Black experience” through figurative and representational imagery.

As Wimberly writes in a curatorial essay: “Black American artists were at the forefront of aesthetic debates, but unlike their white counterparts, they also had to contend with an art world that saw them first as Black, and second as artists.”

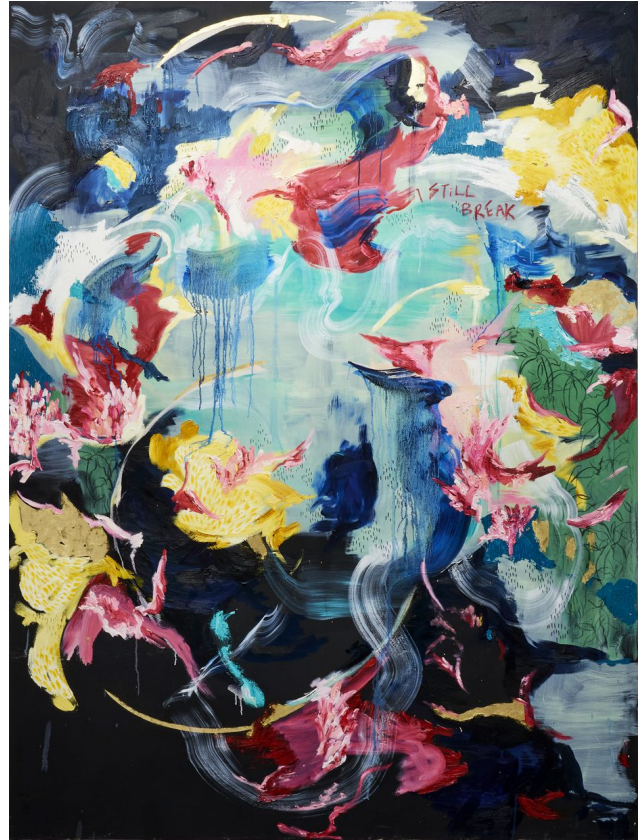
These artists also received pushback from Black activists, who found abstraction too aligned with traditional Western ideologies, and too unconcerned with racism or

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any sort of depiction of a shared “Black experience.”

“Black Abstractionists” demonstrates how myopic and misguided these rationales were. The urban lyricism of early artists like Alma Thomas and Charles Alston; the dreamy innovation of Sam Gilliam and Jack Whitten; the grounded mysticism of Glenn Ligon, Mark Bradford and Theaster Gates; and the self-possessed mythologies of burgeoning artists Oscar Murillo and Michaela Yearwood-Dan. All showcase the immediacy, individuality and experimentation that can be achieved without figurative representation.



Michaela Yearwood-Dan's "Beyond the veil of the mythical super woman" is a 2021 work featuring oil, acrylic, ink and gold leaf on canvas. (Chad Redmon / Green Family Art Foundation)

**Related:** Green Family Art Foundation is planning a fall opening of a new space in the Dallas Arts District

Weeks after viewing the show, I am still haunted by the delicacy of Whitten's colorwork, the single fleck of orange paint disrupting an otherwise pristine Daniel LaRue Johnson canvas and the devastating ferocity of a Ligon painting devoid of his signature text, ghostly language hovering in a mist of shimmering coal dust. Abstraction can capture each artist's energy, yet also exude a universality that transcends the need for didacticism.



Bernadette Despujols' "Rafael y Sigfredo," a 2022 oil-on-canvas work, is featured in "Oh, Man!" at the Green Family Art Foundation through Jan. 29. (Chad Redmon / Green Family Art Foundation)

Next to "Black Abstractionists" is a suite of paintings by the Venezuelan artist Despujols. Despujols' paintings depict men in her life in various domestic

backdrops. Through layering, scratching and otherwise manipulating the paint, she suspends her subjects in states of magical realism, enmeshing them in their environments.

Their bodies are absorbed into each other and intertwined with both furniture and plant life. Captured in various states of repose, these men defy conventional masculinity. They leisurely lean into one another, and several are wearing shirts with slogans supporting abortion rights. Despujol's works suggest dreamlike world of comfort and compassion that thrives on the positive vibes of its inhabitants.

## Details

"Black Abstractionists: From Then 'Til Now" and "Oh, Man!" run through Jan. 29 at the Green Family Art Foundation, 2111 Flora St., Suite 110, Dallas. Wednesday through Friday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturday through Sunday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Free. For more information, visit [greenfamilyartfoundation.org](http://greenfamilyartfoundation.org) or call 214-274-5656.

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