

After using his first washboard in 2012, friends continued to bring him additional washboards resulting in a larger series. Again, Washington is abstracting the human form by rendering it as a household object. The two washboards “Liberty” and “Unauthorized” in particular, refer to Washington’s freedom to interpret materials in any manner he wishes. The washboard form became especially significant when Washington created “Sitting Duck” (2013) in reference to the tragedy of Trayvon Martin’s death and George Zimmerman’s resulting trial. Washington symbolically chose the form to put forward the hope that the truth would “come out in the wash.”



The series of spoon “portraits” was created in one intense working period upon scheduling a collectors’ visit to his studio. Washington decided to make an affordable artwork that could be portable. Focusing on creating individual faces that resemble masks, he gave each spoon its own personality, crafting teeth

from chopsticks and employing the same round searchlight eyes that are found in his graphic works.

Through his forty-year trajectory, Washington has continued to engage with multiple art media; but a strong interest in the human figure has remained a constant unifying thread. *Timothy Washington: Love Thy Neighbor*, Washington’s first solo museum exhibition, highlights this figurative trend and the rich materiality of his prolific body of work. He currently lives and works in the Leimert Park neighborhood of Los Angeles.

Timothy Washington’s work has been included in museum exhibitions such as *Three Graphic Artists: Charles White, David Hammons, Timothy Washington and Los Angeles, 1972: A Panorama of Black Artists*, both at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in 1971 and 1972; *19 Sixties: A Cultural Awakening Re-evaluated 1965-1975* in 1989 and *Inside My Head: Intuitive Artists of African Descent* in 2009, both at the California African American Museum, Los Angeles.

ARTIST TALK WITH TIMOTHY WASHINGTON

Sunday, March 16 | 3:00pm
Free with museum admission



Liberty, Timothy Washington, mixed media assemblage, 2012. Photo: Noel Bass

Unauthorized (detail), Timothy Washington, mixed media assemblage, 2012. Photo: Noel Bass



TIMOTHY WASHINGTON: LOVE THY NEIGHBOR

JANUARY 26 – APRIL 27, 2014

This first solo museum exhibition of Los Angeles artist Timothy Washington examines the artist’s evolving treatment of the human form and highlights his unique and technically unorthodox use of materials. From mixed media drypoints to towering assemblage figures, Washington’s artworks are vessels that carry messages of humanism, while also bearing witness to significant social and historical moments over the last forty years. Washington’s work is distinctive in that it has been informed by the discontent and upheavals of the post-Civil Rights Era, but is also situated in the ideologies of love and compassion derived from his spiritual upbringing. Though Washington is a well regarded

member of Los Angeles’ groundbreaking Black assemblage art movement of the 1960s and 1970s, his constant reinvention of the human form does not exclusively reference the Black experience; instead, it solidifies a collective human identity that encompasses people of all cultures and beliefs.

Timothy Washington (b. 1946) was born in Watts and raised in the communities of South Los Angeles, where he spent time collecting discarded objects, drawing influence from Simon Rodia’s monumental Watts Towers (1921–54). He attended Dorsey High School before earning a scholarship to Chouinard Art Institute where he received his B.F.A. degree in 1969.

Washington began exhibiting almost immediately after his graduation from Chouinard, both in galleries and local museums. He was a frequent exhibitor at legendary art spaces Gallery 32 in MacArthur Park and Brockman Gallery in Leimert Park, which cultivated the careers of Black artists in Los Angeles. Washington's work was often shown alongside prominent artists such as Charles White, David Hammons, John Outterbridge, and Betye Saar. He was also the subject of a 1971 Emmy Award-winning documentary for NBC called "Renaissance in Black: Two Artists' Lives."

With his versatile background in painting, drawing, and sculpture, Washington initially gained recognition for his graphic skills. Not wanting to be known strictly as a graphic artist, he moved on to associate himself with other art practices, including a long tradition of folk art assemblage that pertains to Black heritage and spirituality. Though he cites African arts, Simon Rodia's Watts Towers, and other folk traditions as influences, Washington has always spoken with an individual voice, creating monumental work that is both personal and socially engaged.

MIXED MEDIA DRYPOINTS

Washington's impactful mixed media drypoint works were featured in the first contemporary exhibition of Black artists at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) in 1971, *Three Graphic Artists: Charles White, David Hammons, Timothy Washington*. Washington's work was labeled as original, technically excellent, and he was chosen for his "awareness of man in relation to society and the role of community in relation to man himself."

Washington first began utilizing this technique while he was still a student at Chouinard, when he was assigned the task of making a very personal artwork. It was the very same day that he received notification that he had been reclassified as 1A military status, indicating that he could be drafted at any time to serve in the Vietnam War. Washington knew that he wanted to work on a substance that was cold and hard, reflecting his feelings about going to war.



The technique Washington employed up until 1994 remained largely the same. Washington would spray a sheet of sanded metal, usually aluminum, with black auto primer then scratch through the auto primer into the metal sheet with a needle tool. Traditionally, drypoint is a printmaking process created by scratching an image into a metal plate, then wiping ink into that image and printing it on paper—but that was not Washington's intention. Attracted to the metal's texture and luminosity, he wanted to maintain its dynamic material presence in the final work. According to the artist, "The plate said so much more to me because it had me within it." In many pieces, Washington also attached or embedded found objects to the metal sheet.

A lingering and almost haunting characteristic of several of his mixed media drypoints is the inclusion of

1A, Timothy Washington, drypoint and auto primer on aluminum, leather saddlebag, draft card, 1972. Photo: Noel Bass

faces featuring saucer-like eyes. These are meant to function like a searchlight, attracting the viewer to the figure and imprinting the image of the eyes on the observer's mind. Currently, Washington is making drawings on silver foam-core, using a similar method and incorporating many of the same figurative details, with fewer socio-political references.

ASSEMBLAGE WALL WORKS

Washington stopped working with mixed media drypoints in the 1990s and began focusing on sculptural assemblage wall works. These rectangular and circular wall pieces were the first incarnation of large-format assemblage sculptures that incorporated his proprietary composite of glue and cotton as a structural material. This technique has come to define his recent repertoire of human-scale figurative sculpture. The object-encrusted wall works reflect Washington's belief that even inanimate objects have a life and possess relationships with each other. Washington has always been an intuitive artist who has become increasingly sensitive to the ways in which his sculptures come together in a similar manner.

These wall works reveal the development of the process by which Washington arrived at his most recent monumental figurative sculptures. These works also represent Washington's enjoyment in working with new and challenging forms. For instance, the works "Black & White Oxfords" and "The Energy Source: Second Warning" are notable as his first experiments with incorporating sound into his sculptures.

FIGURATIVE SCULPTURE

The human form has continued to occupy Washington's practice throughout his career, most notably in his large-scale figurative sculptures. For Washington, the human form is the most easily relatable artistic

device, as it pertains to all people and cultures. The earliest figurative sculptures on view from the late-1960s are towering male and female forms composed of metal, automotive parts, and found materials from the local scrap yard that he and his peers would frequent.



His most recent body of figurative forms is derived from the assemblage wall works, demonstrating another kind of technical unorthodoxy—the use of a glue and cotton composite that covers a wire armature made from coat hangers. This glue and cotton medium serves like mosaic grout to cement symbolic found objects into place, creating a narrative rich with possibility for interpretation. These methodically assembled works demand viewers look closely and make meaning from the messages conveyed by the countless embedded elements in juxtaposition with each other.

WASHBOARDS AND SPOONS

Found washboards are the basis for a series of recent works that presented a different challenge for Washington.