

**FOR
IMMEDIATE
RELEASE**



350 Spelman Lane
Box 1526
Atlanta, GA 30314

museum.spelman.edu

The only museum in the nation emphasizing art by and about women of the African Diaspora

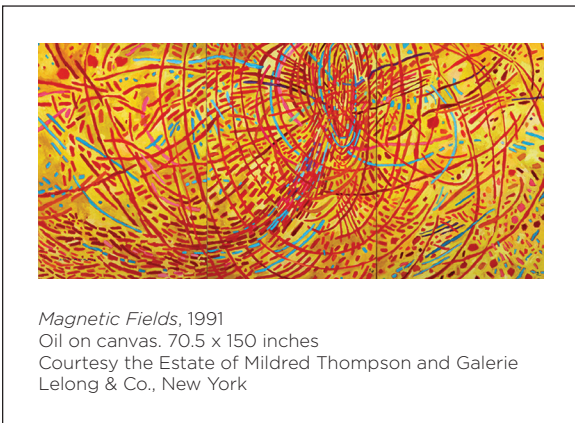
MEDIA CONTACTS

JAZMYN D. BURTON
404-270-5892
jburton8@spelman.edu
T: [@SpelmanMedia](https://www.instagram.com/SpelmanMedia)

WYATT PHILLIPS
404-270-5606
wphillips@spelman.edu
T: [@SpelmanMuseum](https://www.instagram.com/SpelmanMuseum)
FB: [facebook.com/spelmanmuseum](https://www.facebook.com/spelmanmuseum)

August 27, 2019

Artist Mildred Thompson Headlines Fall Exhibition at the Spelman College Museum of Fine Art



Magnetic Fields, 1991
Oil on canvas, 70.5 x 150 inches
Courtesy the Estate of Mildred Thompson and Galerie
Lelong & Co., New York

Mildred Thompson September 11 – December 7, 2019

(ATLANTA) The Spelman College Museum of Fine Art will launch its 2019-2020 exhibition season with *Mildred Thompson: The Atlanta Years, 1986 – 2003* (Wednesday, Sept. 11 through Saturday, Dec. 7, 2019). This original exhibition, curated by Andrea Barnwell Brownlee, Ph.D., C'93, director of the Spelman College Museum of Fine Art, and Melissa Messina, curator of the Mildred Thompson Estate, is the artist's first large-scale, interdisciplinary solo exhibition in the city.

American abstract artist Mildred Thompson (b. Jacksonville, FL, 1936; d. Atlanta, GA, 2003) spent much of her early career in Germany and France in response to the racial and gender discrimination she faced in the United States. In 1986 she accepted an invitation to be an artist-in-residence at Spelman College. She lived in Atlanta for the remainder of her life where her practice of abstraction flourished. This period marks a particularly prolific time in the artist's career during which she was a professor at several area colleges, associate editor of *Art Papers* magazine, and a practicing visual artist, writer, and musician.

This exhibition honors Thompson's life-long commitment to creating a universally resonant abstract visual language. The over 30 paintings, drawings, and prints on view demonstrate her affinity for exploring the rhythms and patterns of science and music and interpreting the workings of the cosmos and other natural phenomena. This selection of works represents the scale, complexity, dynamism, and energy of Thompson's unique visual vocabulary, as well as her ability to translate these concepts across media.

Throughout her artistic career, Mildred Thompson sought to find meaning in the world through abstraction. Thompson, an artist committed to affirming humankind's common bond to the systems of the universe, explored space, sound, and other elements that were not visible to the naked eye through shapes, color, lines, forms, and patterns. Figuration and narrative



Radiation Explorations 12, 1994
Oil on canvas. 97.25 x 107.5 inches
Courtesy the Estate of Mildred Thompson
and Galerie Lelong & Co., New York

representation were—and arguably still are—the primary modes of expression for African American artists. Thompson was often excluded from exhibitions and, as a result, did not receive critical attention during her lifetime. Thompson, along with other Black abstract practitioners of her generation, is now receiving long-overdue recognition.

“Thompson, an expansive thinker and a force of nature who knew no boundaries, made an indelible imprint on Atlanta,” Dr. Brownlee stated. “The timely opportunity to present her work at Spelman—the institution that invited her to establish a relationship with the city—and examine the breadth of her work and the evolution of her career is particularly rewarding.”

Messina stated, “As the accomplishments of Black female abstract artists are being revitalized today, so too is the late Mildred Thompson’s work prompting renewed appreciation. We are very pleased to be working with Dr. Brownlee and Spelman

College to bring Thompson’s work to a broader public and to the Atlanta community.”

In homage to Thompson’s many influences and other creative contributions, the exhibition will also feature a selection of objects and ephemera from the artist’s papers on loan from Emory University and the Estate’s collection, including books, photographs, music and writings.

The Museum’s 2019 - 2020 exhibition season is made possible by the Wish Foundation and the LUBO Fund. Additional support provided by the Massey Charitable Trust.

For more information, visit museum.spelman.edu or @spelmannmuseum on Instagram and Twitter.

RELATED EVENTS

Opening Program

Mildred Thompson Remembered

Wednesday, September 11, 2019

6:30 p.m.

Please join us for a conversation with exhibition curators Andrea Barnwell Brownlee, Ph.D., director, Spelman College Museum of Fine Art, Melissa Messina, curator of the Mildred Thompson Estate, and Donna Jackson, Thompson’s partner of 17 years and executor of the Thompson Estate. Invited comments from artists, friends, and colleagues, including Wes Cochran, Kerry Davis, and Karen Comer Lowe, will enliven the conversation. A reception follows.

Register now at <http://bit.ly/SpelMildredThompson>.

For more information about the Museum see museum.spelman.edu.

Yoga in the Museum

Mondays at noon

September 16 - December 2, 2019

Enjoy a yoga class surrounded by works of art and engage in a practice led by African American certified yoga instructors that emphasizes balance, focus, and strength. Yoga in the Museum is open to all with mats and props available on a first come, first served basis.

Artist Guides

Wednesday, September 18, 2019

6:30 p.m.

Artist Guides invite Black women cultural producers to lead public tours of the Museum’s current exhibition. Join us for an engaging walkthrough of *Mildred Thompson: The Atlanta Years, 1986 - 2003* with celebrated artist and scholar Tina Dunkley.

Community Day

Saturday, October 5, 2019

12:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Created for artists and art enthusiasts of all ages, join us for an afternoon of art-making activities, guided tours, and more.

Community Day is free, but registration is strongly encouraged. Please contact us at 404.270.5607, museum@spelman.edu, or [@spelmanmuseum](https://twitter.com/spelmanmuseum) for more information.

Homecoming Day Party

Friday, October 25, 2019

3:00 - 5:00 p.m.

Celebrate homecoming and join alumni from the Atlanta University Center in the Museum for this annual gathering. Enjoy interactive tours of *Mildred Thompson: The Atlanta Years, 1986 - 2003*, music, food, and so much more.

This program is organized in collaboration with the Spelman College Office of Alumnae Affairs.

When, Where, and How We Enter: Honoring the Legacies of Black Women Abstract Painters

Thursday, November 7, 2019

6:30 p.m.

Camille Olivia Hanks Cosby, Ed.D., Academic Center Auditorium

Join us for a landmark conversation with women curators who are leading the charge to increase the visibility of Black women abstract artists. Panelists include Valerie Cassel Oliver, Sydney and Frances Lewis Family Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Lauren Haynes, Curator of Contemporary Art, Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Melissa Messina, Curator of the Mildred Thompson Estate, and Hallie Ringle, Curator of Contemporary Art, Birmingham Museum of Art. Andrea Barnwell Brownlee, Ph.D., Director, Spelman College Museum of Fine Art will moderate the conversation.

Surrender at Fort Negress: A Repossession Performance

Sunday, December 1, 2019

3:00 p.m.

In observance of Day With(out) Art*, Spelman College associate professor of Dance Performance & Choreography, T. Lang will explore the process through which individuals fundamentally shift how they conceptualize, strategize around, and tactically address struggles related to complex inequalities that affect their everyday lives. Through movement, and process-based community research with alumnae at Spelman College and Clark Atlanta University, Surrender at Fort Negress physically unpacks the questions of physical, social, economic, and political survival in moments of crisis and extreme distress.

*On December 1, 1989, Visual AIDS organized the first Day Without Art program. Led by a committee of cultural workers (curators, writers, and art professionals), a charge was sent out for "mourning and action in response to the AIDS crisis" that would celebrate the lives and achievements of lost colleagues and friends; encourage caring for all people with AIDS; educating diverse publics about HIV infection; and finding a cure. Learn more at visualaids.org.

ABOUT SPELMAN COLLEGE MUSEUM OF FINE ART

The Spelman College Museum of Fine Art, which was established in 1996, inspires and enriches the Spelman College community and the general public primarily through art by women of the African Diaspora. In "Six Reasons to Love Atlanta," CNN.com praised the Museum for its "fantastically curated exhibitions." As the Museum's 25th anniversary approaches in 2021, it is even more focused on its priorities: continuing its legacy of presenting thought-provoking exhibitions such as *Amy Sherald* (organized by the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, 2019), *PRESENCE: Meditations on the Spelman College Collection* (2019), *Zanele Muholi: Somnyama Ngonyama, Hail the Dark Lioness* (organized by Autograph London and curated by Renée Mussai, 2018), and

Deborah Roberts: The Evolution of Mimi (2018) that have garnered critical and popular attention; organizing dynamic and empowering programs; and expanding its relevant collection.

The Museum's milestones include being selected as the first institution from the United States that jointly, along with the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, represented the United States at the 2012 Havana Biennial in Havana, Cuba. In 2015, with support from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Museum, in collaboration with the Department of Art & Visual Culture, launched a Curatorial Studies Program, a pilot initiative to prepare and develop the next generation of curators. With enthusiastic support from the Walton Family Foundation, this program has expanded and in 2018, Spelman College established the Atlanta University Center for the Study of Art History & Curatorial Studies, currently supported by the Alice L. Walton Foundation. For more information about the Museum, visit museum.spelman.edu.

ABOUT SPELMAN COLLEGE

Founded in 1881, Spelman College is a leading liberal arts college widely recognized as the global leader in the education of women of African descent. Located in Atlanta, the College's picturesque campus is home to 2,100 students. Spelman is the country's leading producer of Black women who complete Ph.D.s in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). The College's status is confirmed by U.S. News and World Report, which ranked Spelman No. 51 among all liberal arts colleges and No. 1 among historically Black colleges and universities. The Wall Street Journal ranked the College No. 3, nationally, in terms of student satisfaction. Outstanding alumnae include Children's Defense Fund Founder [Marian Wright Edelman](#), Starbucks Group President and COO [Rosalind Brewer](#), former Acting Surgeon General and Spelman's first alumna President [Audrey Forbes Manley](#), global bioinformatics geneticist [Janina Jeff](#) and authors [Pearl Cleage](#) and [Tayari Jones](#). For more information, visit www.spelman.edu.