

Eugene Martin painting in his studio, 2004  
Photo: Terri Fensel  
Estate of Eugene James Martin

*The Art of Eugene Martin* at the Ohr-O'Keefe Museum of Art, Biloxi, MS, (June 5–December 1, 2012). The first is the story of the artist himself, Eugene Martin (1938–2005), whose determination to be a global citizen of African descent, early in his career, meant mastering modes of European modernism to create a style wholly his own. His is the legendary story of the artist who sacrifices all of the security and comforts of a “normal” life—job, home, family—to dedicate himself totally to his art. After a difficult early life as a foster child, Martin studied at the Corcoran School of Art and Design in Washington DC where he copied the European masters. But he left the school in 1963 and moved from place to place. Sometimes he was homeless; sometimes he lived in group homes or with friends. Throughout his constant struggle to survive, drawing and painting in public places, Martin developed a strong signature style characterized by a melding of hard-edged geometric forms with free-flowing organic forms.

The second great story behind the show at is that of the love Martin eventually found (or, rather, that found him) and the legacy of that love.

In 1982, Suzanne Fredericq met Eugene Martin at the Washington, DC home of a mutual friend. It was a chance meeting but she was pleased to meet Martin because she had seen some of his drawings five years earlier and was fascinated by them. In 1988, after Fredericq completed graduate study, she and Martin married and lived together.



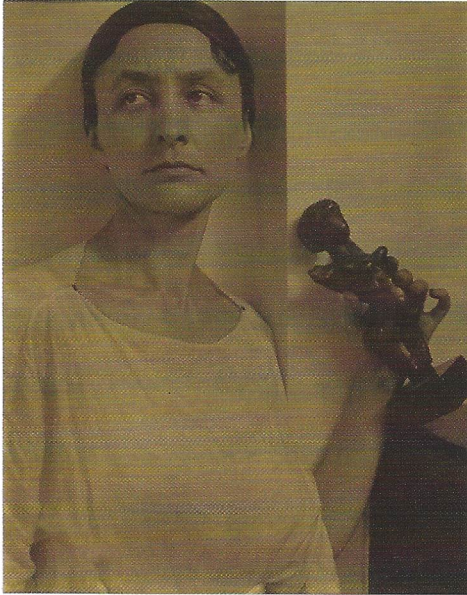
Eugene Martin  
*A Great Concept*, 1987  
Mixed media on paper, 14 x 11"  
Estate of Eugene James Martin

Finally Martin was able to work in an optimal, uninterrupted way in his very first studio which was located in their home. His production was prolific; he turned out hundreds of finely-executed, acrylic paintings on canvas. After a stroke in 2001 that left him partially paralyzed, Martin modified his style but continued to paint. After Martin's death, Fredericq has worked tirelessly to secure for Martin's huge

body of work, the recognition she feels it deserves. Her efforts include documenting Martin's works in 16 books containing large, full-color reproductions.

Martin's work was the masters thesis topic of Marie Vinouze who is now exhibition coordinator at the Louvre. Describing his way of working for the Masur Museum of Art's 2012 *Improvisations in Time* exhibition of





Alfred Stieglitz  
Georgia O'Keeffe with Matisse Sculpture  
1921  
Palladium print  
H. x W.: 9 $\frac{5}{8}$  x 7 $\frac{1}{16}$  in. (24.4 x 19.2 cm)  
The Metropolitan Museum of Art,  
Gift of Georgia O'Keeffe, through  
the generosity of  
The Georgia O'Keeffe Foundation  
and Jennifer and Joseph Duke,  
1997 (1997.61.64)  
© The Metropolitan Museum of  
Art

Martin's work, Vinouze wrote, "He had to be peaceful and detached from his ego. This kept his mind free of any intrusive ideas, like thinking about the way people responded to his work. . . . Artistic integrity was of the utmost importance to him, because he believed 'when you create something by pure motive, it generates a kind of energy that goes through the universe.'"

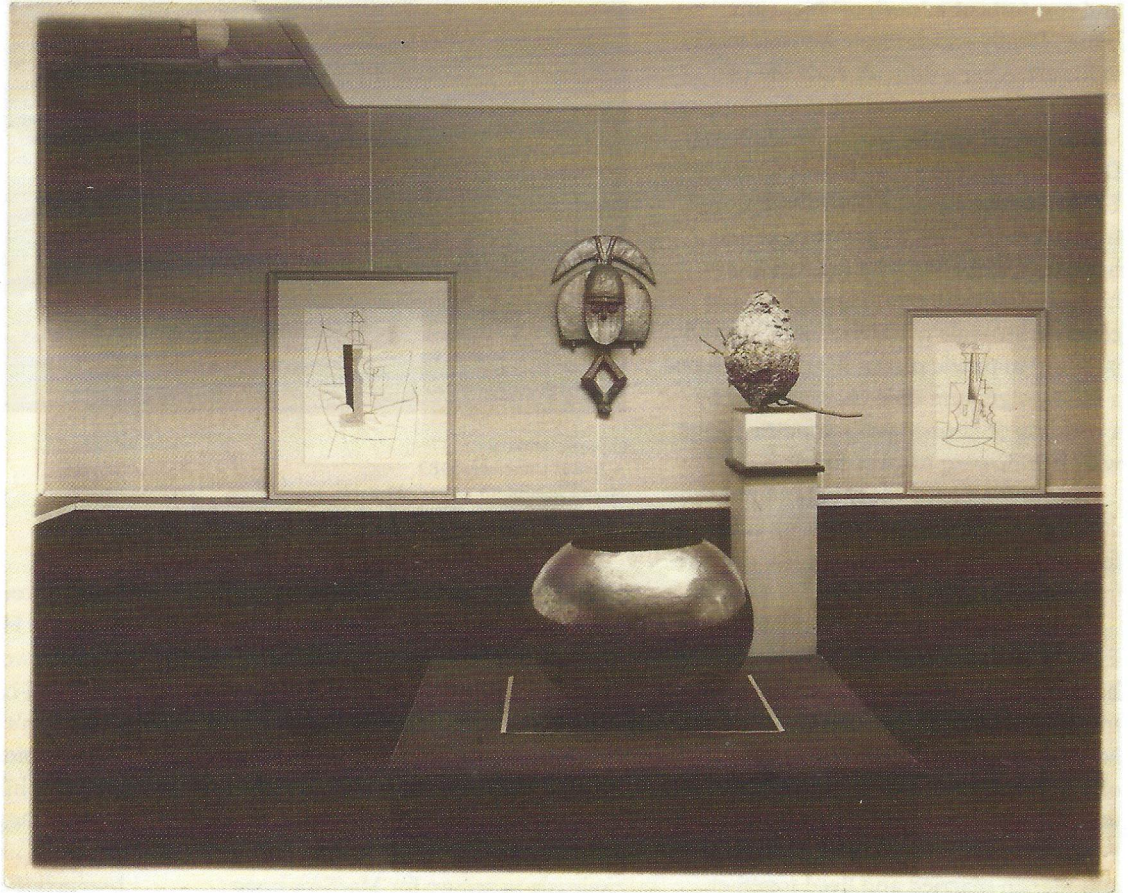
The Metropolitan Museum of Art's *African Art, New York, and the Avant-Garde* (December 4, 2012–April 14, 2013) commemorates the 100th anniversary of the renowned yet polarizing 1913 Armory Show in New York City which introduced African artifacts to American modernism through the ties of these objects to the European avant-garde. The exhibition follows their evolution from artifacts to becoming works of art coveted by collectors and inspiring a broad range of artists immersed in newer avant-garde

modernism.

The segment of the show documenting the African American response in this evolution includes a work borrowed from the Hampton University Museum's collection: Malvin Gray Johnson's 1932 *Negro Masks* painting which is exhibited with the masks from Congo and Nigeria that it depicts.

For many, these artifacts presented a new unfamiliar aesthetic but for African American artists such as Gray and scholar Alain Locke, the importance of these objects took on more personal meaning. These pieces were examples of an artistic, authentic cultural legacy that Locke felt needed to be inculcated, preserved and celebrated by people of African descent.

The widening ripples of impact from the Armory show included the 1914 exhibition of African Art at 291 gallery organized by photographer Alfred Steiglitz and the acquisition of



Alfred Stieglitz  
Photograph Based on the  
"Picasso-Braque" Exhibition  
at 291 Gallery, New York  
1915  
Platinum Print  
H. x W.: 7 $\frac{7}{8}$  x 9 $\frac{5}{8}$  in.  
(19.4 x 24.4 cm)  
The Metropolitan Museum  
of Art, Alfred Stieglitz  
Collection, 1949 (49.55.36)  
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Museum of Art