



Sylvia Snowden: Select Works, 1966 - 2020

November 13 – December 18, 2021

Opening reception will be held on Saturday, November 13, 4-6p

“The first painting I ever did was a social statement.”
- Sylvia Snowden

Parrasch Heijnen is pleased to present the gallery’s first exhibition with Washington, D.C.-based artist Sylvia Snowden (b. 1942 Raleigh, NC). This solo exhibition features work from throughout Snowden’s expansive career, including examples from eight separate series of work ranging from 1966-2020, touching upon the complexity of the human condition across class, race, and gender. *Sylvia Snowden: Select Works, 1966 - 2020* is concurrently on view with *Sylvia Snowden: The M Street Series, 1982 - 1988* at Franklin Parrasch Gallery (New York, NY).

Known for her use of abundantly thick, layered paint, Snowden has developed a visual language in which gems of color and texture emerge from densely-worked underlayers. From dark and earthy tones to the vibrant and artificial, Snowden’s command of chromatic range is the fuel of her expressionistic style. Over the course of her more than five-decade-long career, in which she has always painted in series, Snowden developed an adroitness with her medium. She initially employed oil paint and pastels then moved toward acrylic—a less toxic and faster-drying alternative—after having children. Snowden paints sculpturally, her compositions range from larger-than-life to portrait-sized. Her process allows visible evidence of constructed layers and employs impasto that interacts with her bold figures caught in motion with physical weight.

Snowden’s voluminous bodies, often contrapposto, are surrounded by peaks of shifting chroma in a physical manifestation of feeling; she depicts the tension and intensity of life, and the troubled, optimistic, and dramatic elements of our sublime existence. Snowden encapsulates the

psychological essence of her subjects—some of whom were unhoused and transient, displaced by gentrification, others with whom she had intimate or long-term relationships—their triumphs, paranoia, agony, and anger are all visible; these works convey an emotionally turbulent environment. Snowden's expressive paintings reference the immediate lives of these individuals, and act as interpretations of each subject's psyche. As a serial painter, Snowden alternates between representation and abstraction, exhausting her emotional self between each mode as she articulates the struggles and successes of humanity.

Sylvia Snowden was born in Raleigh, NC, but spent her childhood in New Orleans, LA. At the age of 14, she and her family moved to Washington, D.C. Snowden's parents encouraged her artistic pursuits, which led to her enrollment in the art department at Howard University. There, she studied under James Porter, Lois Maillou Jones, James Wells, and David C. Driskell, receiving her B.A. in 1963 and her M.A. in 1965.

Shortly after graduating, Snowden moved to Dover, DE to teach at Delaware State College. On the recommendation of her close friend and mentor E.T.C. White, Snowden went to Australia for a year-long residency in 1975. There, she explored more calligraphic techniques using oil pastel, ink, and acrylic over masonite, with the repetitive and gestural line as a main component.

In the late 1970s, Snowden moved to M Street in Washington's Shaw neighborhood, where she currently resides. It was here that she painted her *M Street* series, depicting the resilience of the people she encountered in the wake of gentrification. Beginning in the 1980s, Washington, D.C. experienced a surge in violent crime and homicides leading it to be named the murder capital of the U.S by the early 1990s. In 1993, the artist's son, Malik, was shot and killed near their home. In the aftermath, she produced a series of paintings and sculptures addressing Malik's life which were exhibited at the Corcoran Gallery (Washington, D.C.) in 2000.

Sylvia Snowden holds both Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts degrees from Howard University (Washington, D.C.). She received a scholarship to Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture (Skowhegan, ME), and has a certificate from Académie de la Grande Chaumière (Paris, France). Snowden has taught at Cornell University (Ithaca, NY), Howard University (Washington, D.C.), and Yale University (New Haven, CT), and has served as an artist-in-residence, a panelist, visiting artist, lecturer/instructor, and curator in universities, galleries, and art schools in the United States and internationally. In 2018, Snowden's work was notably featured in the landmark exhibition *Magnetic Fields: Expanding American Abstraction, 1960-Today* at the National Museum for Women in the Arts (Washington, D.C.) alongside fellow Howard University alumnae Mildred Thompson, Alma Thomas, and Mary Louise Lovelace. Snowden has also exhibited at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Montclair Art Museum, Montclair, NJ; Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore, MD; Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art at Cornell University, Ithaca, NY; The Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C.; Heckscher Museum of Art, Huntington, NY; and the National Archives for Black Women's History (NABWH) of the Mary McLeod Bethune Council House

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National Historic Site (MAMC), Washington, D.C.. Her works have been shown globally in Chile, the Netherlands, Ethiopia, Australia, the Bahamas, France, Mexico, Italy and Japan.

Sylvia Snowden: Select Works, 1966-2020 will be on view at Parrasch Heijnen, 1326 S. Boyle Avenue, Los Angeles, from November 13 – December 18, 2021. A forthcoming catalogue will be published and released in spring of 2022 including: all works in the concurrent Parrasch Heijnen and Franklin Parrasch Gallery exhibitions accompanied by essays by curator **Gavin Delahunty** and art historian **Rebecca VanDiver**, and a lively conversation between Sylvia Snowden and **Nathaniel Mary Quinn**.

An opening reception will be held at Parrasch Heijnen on Saturday November 13, 4-6p. The gallery has secure, private parking onsite. Proper face coverings and social distancing are currently required while inside. Gallery staff are available to guide you through our exhibitions virtually via Zoom upon request. A 360° VR Tour can be found on our website to view from your desktop computer or mobile device. For more information, please contact the gallery at +1 (323) 943-9373 or info@parraschheijnen.com.

