

parrasch heijnen

Alonzo Davis
Blanket Series

November 12 - December 17, 2022

If Kerouac found the essence of America in the musical cultures and general textures of Black America, the Davis brothers were seeking something much more specific: African American artists who validated their own vision of themselves.

- Kellie Jones, *South of Pico*, 2017

Parrasch Heijnen is pleased to present the gallery's first solo exhibition with Maryland-based artist and seminal gallerist Alonzo Davis (b. 1942, Tuskegee, AL).

Davis' six-decade-long career has explored a wide range of media and methods, from mural to print, painting, sculpture, performance, and installation.

As co-founder of the Brockman Gallery, the first major Black-owned contemporary art gallery in Los Angeles (1967 - 1990), Alonzo Davis sought to champion Black artists including David Hammons, Suzanne Jackson, Betye Saar, Senga Nengudi, Noah Purifoy, and John Outterbridge, among many others, in a time when white, male art was prevalent. Davis' appreciation and promotion of Black artists and cultural references collected on trips all over the world are often referenced in his own work.

The *Blanket Series* (c. 1970s - 1990s) follows Davis' evolving process of weaving painted strips of paper and canvas. The expressive hanging forms represent shrouds of protection, spirit catchers and artifacts of communal belonging. Every piece is composed of exposed layers, allowing the work's own history to appear in its final form.

Each emotionally vibrant stroke or mark is highly visible, almost ingrained into the medium as a second skin. In *Crescent Moon Over Memphis* (1993), Davis imbues graphic symbolism with painterly nuance, weaving together acrylic on paper strips in a fibrous interplay of primary and pastel colors. A segmented diagonal form divides the picture plane, disrupting the light, iridescent border. This gesture of energy accentuates the artist's use of a red cross, crescent moon, star, and pointing arrow. The composition suggests textile traditions yet



Crescent Moon Over Memphis, 1993
acrylic on woven paper, 35-1/2 x 25-1/2 inches



finds its own narrative through Davis' lexicon of symbols.

Using self-referential iconography, the artist often employs arrows; the direction indicating a path or trajectory, reflecting a philosophical interest in direction, be it political and societal, personal, or cosmic. Shimmering in pale golds and pinks, *King's Peace Cloth* (1985) includes a directional arrow as well as a sacred heart suspended above waves. The muted palette is indicative of Davis' view of this work as either a shroud or protective cloth in honor of the late Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

In the summer of 1966, Alonzo Davis and his brother Dale Brockman Davis began a cross country cultural tour from Los Angeles to the Northeast by Volkswagen Beetle. The two visited artist studios throughout the country in an effort to rewrite the overwhelmingly western and white art history education they received at university. Civil rights protests were forming across the nation and the Davis brothers took an active role, participating in the James Meredith March dubbed the "March Against Fear"- a 21-day solitary march down U.S. Highway 51 from the Peabody Hotel in Memphis, TN, to the Mississippi State Capitol in Jackson. The journey would have an indelible impact on Alonzo Davis, exposing him to myriad visual traditions practiced by Black and Indigenous communities. Davis weaves this dialogue of personal and communal narrative into his paintings, drawing from cultural histories encountered throughout his travels. Through an accumulative process, Davis situates himself within the visual and lineal knowledge embedded into the fabric of his work.

Alonzo Davis and Dale Brockman Davis co-founded the influential Brockman Gallery in 1967, named after their maternal grandmother, in Leimert Park, a neighborhood in South Los Angeles. The Davis' commitment allowed many artists to fo-



Alonzo Davis in front of unknown work from Blanket Series, undated.

cus on experimentation as the gallery eventually grew to include studio and living spaces, as well as a nonprofit branch. Their program created a nurturing environment to encourage talent and provide visibility within all communities.

An advocate for public art, Davis first consulted Robert Fitzpatrick, director of the Olympics Arts Festival, to commission a series of public murals to celebrate the 1984 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles. This endeavor resulted in works by ten artists, including Judy Baca, Frank Romero, and Richard Wyatt Jr. Davis' own contribution was the iconic *Eye on '84*,



located on the 110 South Freeway at 3rd Street, which incorporated the Olympic Rings into compositions of hearts, eyes, and arrows.

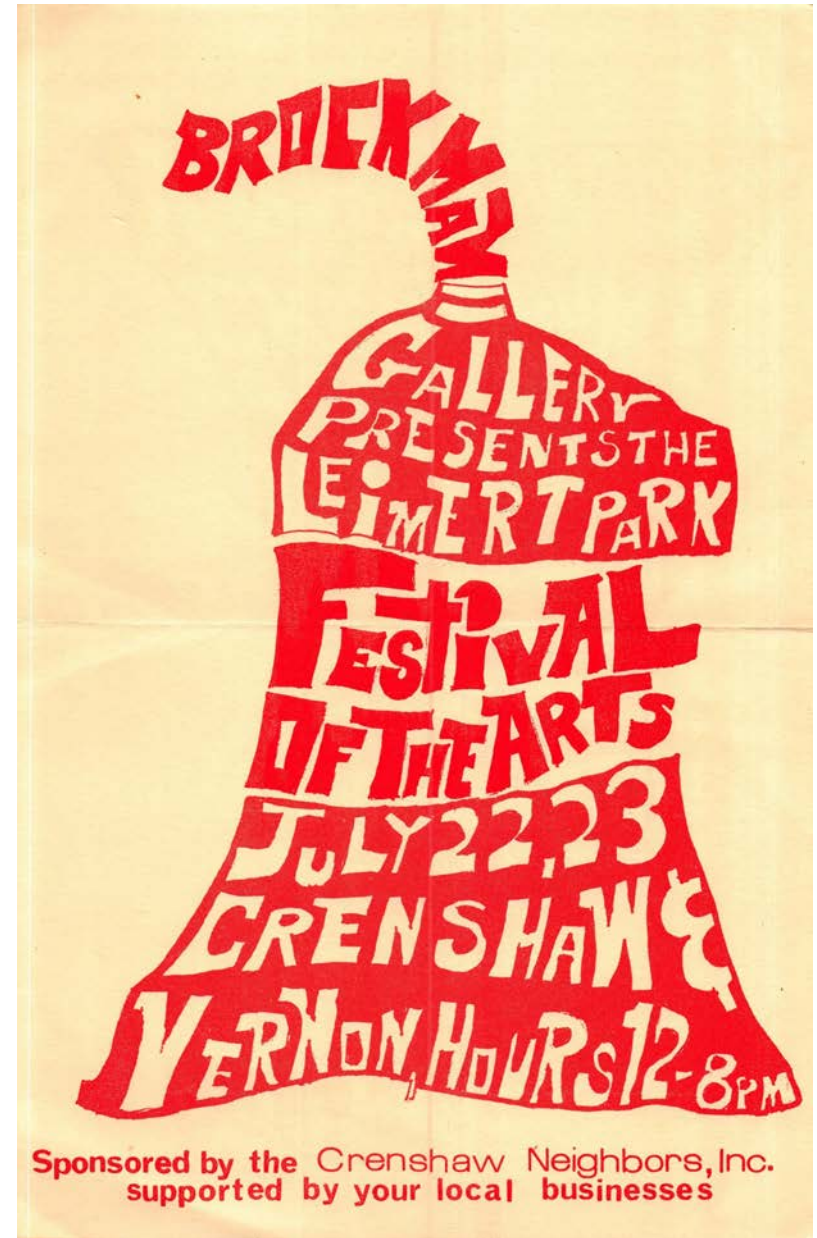
Alonzo Davis received a BA from Pepperdine University, Los Angeles, CA (1964), a BFA (1970) and MFA (1973) from Otis Art Institute, Los Angeles, CA. Select solo exhibitions include Just Above Midtown Gallery, New York (1975); Modern Nordisk Konst, Göteborg, Sweden (1979); and Watts Tower Arts Center, Los Angeles, CA (1981). Davis has also been featured in the landmark exhibition *Now Dig This! Art and Black Los Angeles, 1960–1980*, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA; MoMA PS1, New York, NY; and Williams College Museum of Art, Williamstown, MA (2012 - 2013); in addition to *Eleven from California*, The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York (1972); *Synthesis*, JAM (Just Above Midtown), New York, NY (1974); Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC (1994); and *L.A. Object and David Hammons Body Prints*, Tilton Gallery, New York, NY; Roberts & Tilton Gallery, Los Angeles, CA (2006). Davis' work resides in the permanent collections of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA; Blanton Museum of Art, Austin, TX; National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.; and the Saint Louis Art Museum, Saint Louis, MO.

Alonzo Davis: Blanket Series will be on view at Parrasch Heijnen, 1326 S. Boyle Avenue, Los Angeles, from November 12 – December 17, 2022 with an artist reception on Saturday, November 12, 5-7p. Gallery staff are available to guide you through our exhibitions virtually via Zoom upon request. A 360° VR Tour of the exhibition 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.

Brockman gallery team c. 1970s, including Alonzo and Dale Davis.



Exhibition announcement for Brockman Gallery group exhibition featuring David Hammons and Noah Purifoy, undated.



Leimert Park Festival of the Arts event announcement, organized by Brockman Gallery, undated.

Eye on '84, 1984
110 Freeway



Encapsulated within Davis' art is a spiritual triangle. You can get lost and found as you cross barriers created by the woven grid. The bound of unbound grid structure is made human by relations of colour. The patches, which also speak of appliqueing-another medium that has served human spiritual and physical needs, are occasionally fused with fierce lights and rigid clarity. Light is both illumined and caliginous-a duality incorporated in all human endeavor.

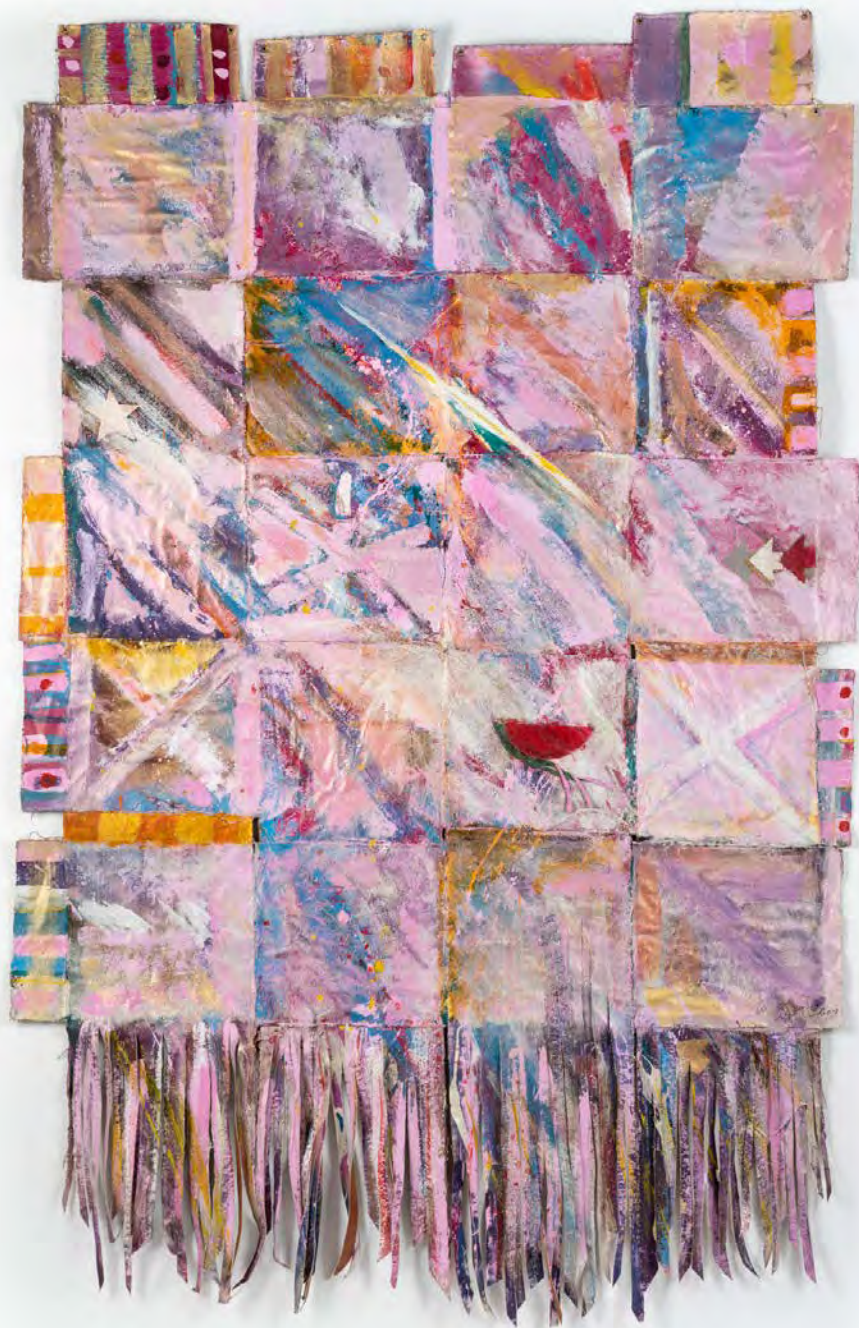
[...]

The sense of wonder is not diminished by the flirtatious labels we can read. Blanket Series holds within its folds its own historical connections and its contemporary textillian reality. The works are tangible and fixed.

These blankets will not cover your body.
They will enfold your spirit.

- Reihana MacDonald

Institute of Culture and Communication
East-West Center, Honolulu Hawaii, 1988



ALONZO DAVIS
Celebration with Melon, 1986
acrylic on woven canvas
82 x 54 inches



ALONZO DAVIS
King's Peace Cloth, 1985
acrylic on woven canvas
56 x 56 inches





ALONZO DAVIS
Twilight, 1986
acrylic on woven canvas
55 x 67 inches



ALONZO DAVIS
Black X, 1992
acrylic on woven canvas
37 x 38-1/2 inches



ALONZO DAVIS
Exclaim, 1992
acrylic on woven paper
36 x 30-1/2 inches





ALONZO DAVIS
Pyramid Room, 1992
acrylic on woven paper
30 x 22 inches





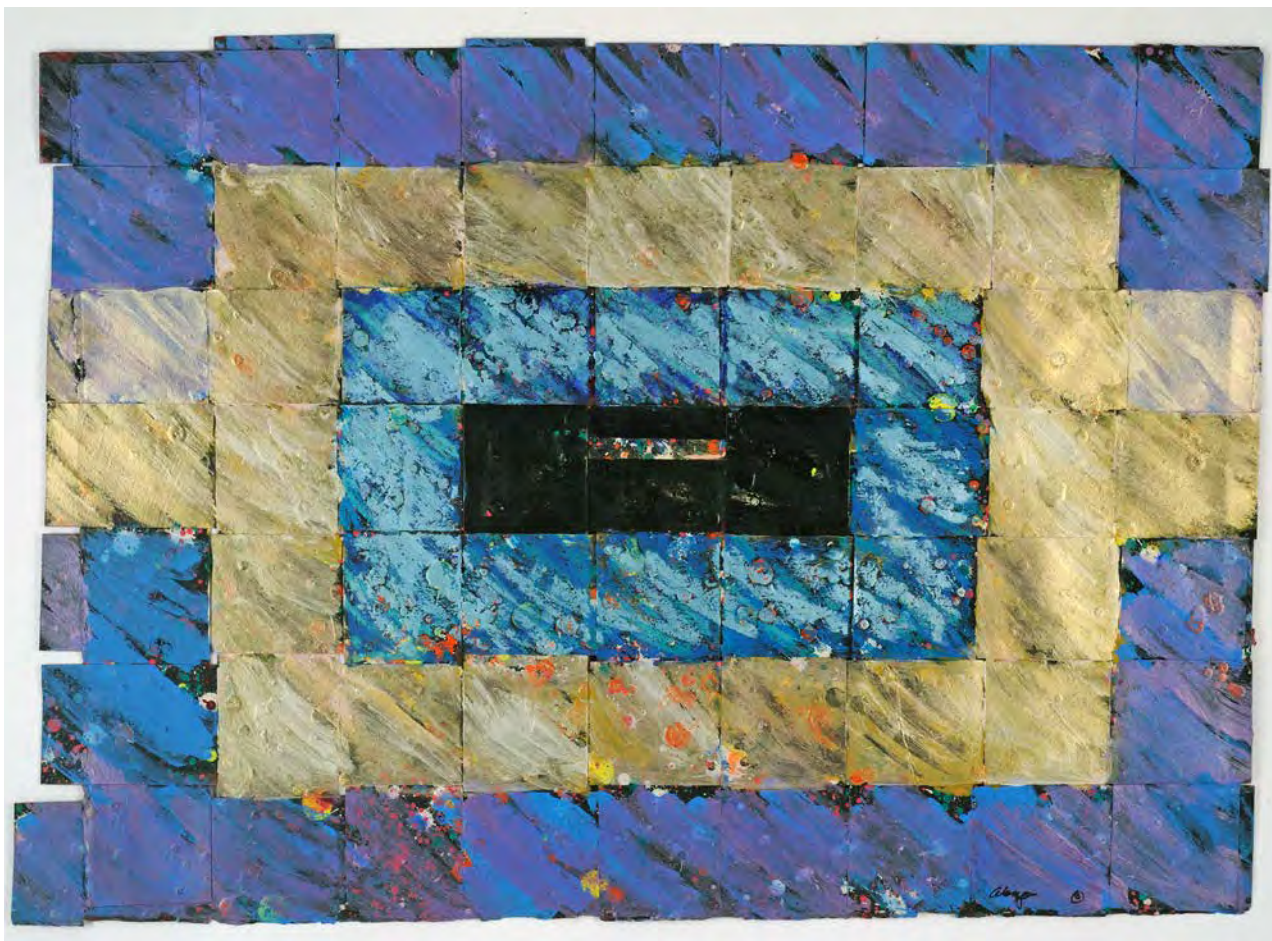
ALONZO DAVIS
Copper Flash, 1989
acrylic on woven paper
30 x 36 inches





ALONZO DAVIS
*Crescent Moon Over
Memphis*, 1993
acrylic on woven paper
35-1/2 x 25-1/2 inches





ALONZO DAVIS
Outside-In, 1992
acrylic on woven paper
21-1/2 x 30 inches



ALONZO DAVIS
Floatation Reflection, 1996
acrylic on woven paper strips
27 x 40-1/2 inches