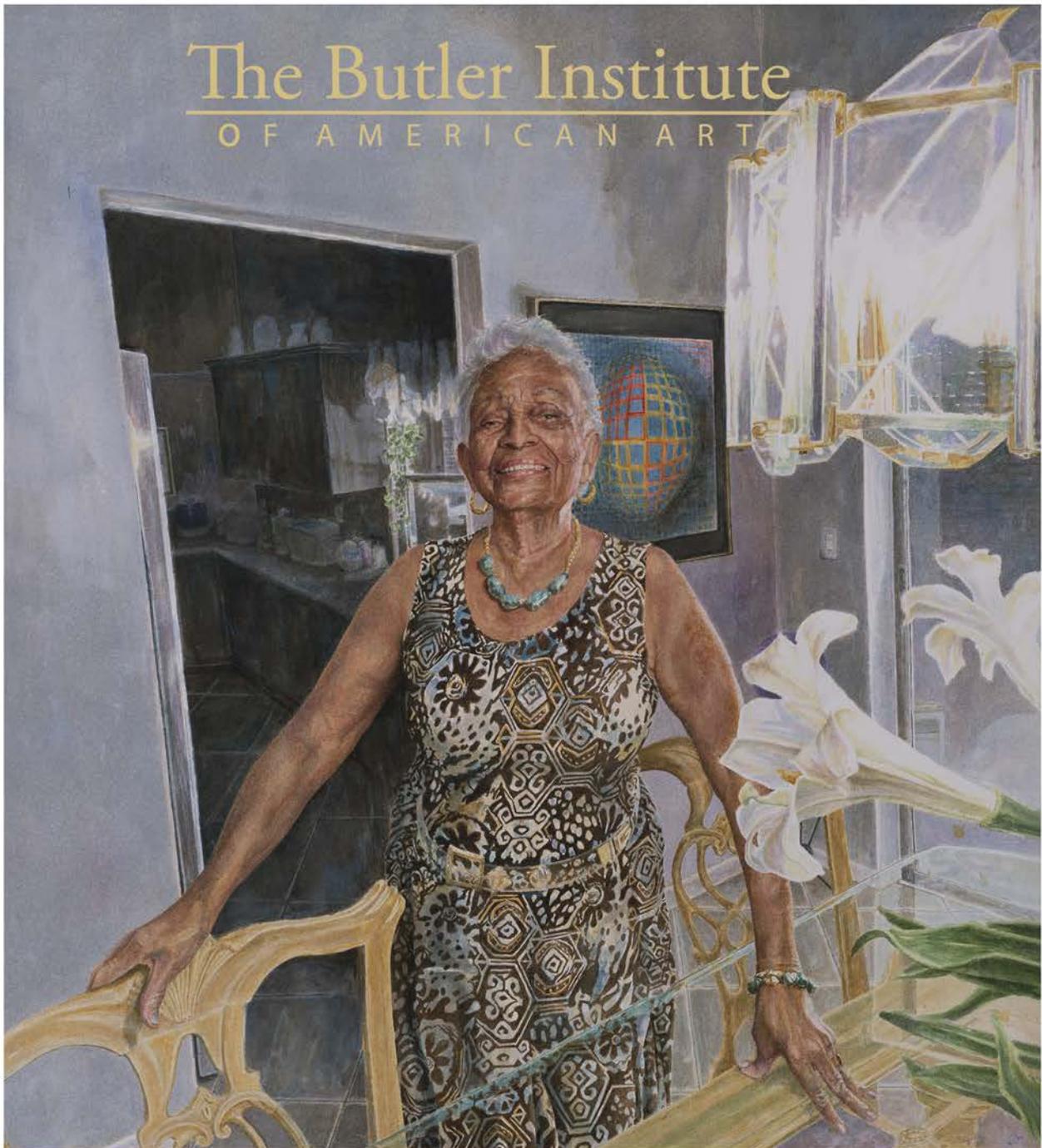


The Butler Institute
OF AMERICAN ART



Dialogues with Reality: Paintings by P. Smallwood

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Influence



Aretha, charcoal on paper

“The Influence of Frederick Smallwood, Jr.”

“My brother was a frontiersman. Oh, I don’t mean he rode into the sunset on a horse and buggy wearing cowboy boots. I mean he pursued new frontiers in the discovery and appreciation of life, and all of its possibilities.”

Those words from Philip Smallwood only begin to describe why his late brother Freddie had such a huge influence on his own life and, in turn, his art. Whether he knew it or not, Freddie -a decade older than his brother gave Philip his artistic sensibility. How do we know? Because Philip’s art

explores the same kind of light, hope, and passion that filled Freddie’s world. After finding a way out of his own inner darkness of addiction, Freddie co-founded one of the most innovative drug rehabilitation centers in the northeast. He was also an avid student of Eastern religion, philosophy, martial arts, universal truths ... He soaked up the world in his own way before being taken away by a tragic accident at the age of fifty-one.

“I didn’t know him long, but I knew him intimately,” Philip says. “He was my muse. He’ll never ride into the sunset, because he’s permanently on my palette” *P. Smallwood*



State of Affairs, 2021, watercolor on paper, 21" X 14"

"State of Affairs"

For people of color, the professional art world remains a delicate balance in which recognition and success depend on forces outside its own community in order to maintain fragile footing.

Philip Smallwood is an artist of great hope for the human condition and untiring advocacy for cultural expression, but he is also well aware that the art world, unlike the natural world, is not comprised of all the colors of the rainbow.

Currently only about 2% of the permanent collections in major U.S. art museums are works by African-American artists, and African-American art administration and representation barely show up on the professional radar.

"If given a chance, art can break down many barriers, but current situations suggest little movement of the major obstacles," Philip says.

Joel Samberg, Writer/Editor

“Have Mercy on Us”

Robert Stroud raised sparrows in *The Birdman of Alcatraz*. Andy Dufresne carved chess pieces from rock in *The Shawshank Redemption*. Both characters found meaning in their lives. Philip Smallwood knows that while prison movies wrap up neatly in two hours, the venomous effects of incarceration usually last a lifetime.

“In no way do I excuse the behavior of prisoners whose mistakes put them behind bars in the first place,” says the artist, whose work is a reflection of the buoyancy and social consciousness that fill

his heart. “You can’t escape the irony that because of policies and conditions, many of society’s predators become its prey.” The Covid pandemic has merely exacerbated the problem, with one in every five U.S. prisoners testing positive.

As in moviemaking, Philip’s vision is the light, his brush the camera, and his integrity the action. His portfolio does, in fact, take a few peeks through the bars. Can art really help the situation? “It can bring attention to it, and that’s always the critical starting point to solving any problem.” he says.

Joel Samberg, Writer/Editor



Have Mercy on Us, 2020, watercolor on paper, 13"X 20^{1/4}"