



FIRST RETROSPECTIVE OF BOUNDARY-PUSHING ARTIST JACK WHITTEN OPENS IN MAY

CAREER-SPANNING EXHIBITION HIGHLIGHTS FIVE DECADES OF WORK BY THE GROUNDBREAKING PAINTER

“Celebrates...a career dedicated to infusing abstraction with political and social content.”—ARTNews

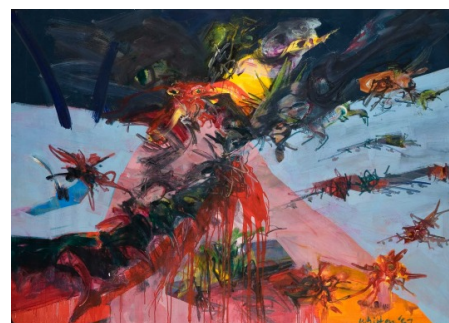
Columbus, OH—January 22, 2015 (updated April 30, 2015)—***Jack Whitten: Five Decades of Painting***, the first career-spanning retrospective of the groundbreaking artist, goes on view at the Wexner Center **May 16–August 2, 2015**.

Featuring more than 60 canvasses by the dynamic African American artist, the exhibition traces the trajectory of Whitten’s restless formal experimentation from the mid-1960s to the present, with paintings that, while abstract, often contain cultural, political, and social references.

Says Wexner Center Director Sherri Geldin, “We’re thrilled to bring this extraordinary exhibition to Ohio. It’s fair to say that for nearly 50 years, Whitten’s achievements have been known and appreciated primarily by art-world ‘insiders.’ This expansive survey of his life’s work reveals to a larger public the stunning originality, depth, and power of his practice. Whether collaged, inlaid, chiseled, laminated, or poured, Whitten’s paintings are a hybrid medium solely of his own conception, and they are riveting.”

The works in this retrospective “bristle with triumphant life” (*ARTNews*), and date back to Whitten’s earliest paintings in the 1960s. This tumultuous era provided the artist with ample inspiration for his potent and poignant works that respond to the civil rights movement, the Vietnam War, and the work of Martin Luther King Jr. In the ensuing decades, Whitten’s shape-shifting style transformed and evolved, encompassing abstract and highly textured canvases; paintings with surfaces “processed” by rakes, squeegees, and other tools; and mosaic-like, mixed-media compositions that incorporate paint compounds transformed into tiles. Today, Whitten continues to respond to current events and pay homage to friends and public figures in his highly personalized yet incredibly approachable manner of abstraction.

The exhibition is organized by the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego.



Jack Whitten, *NY Battle Ground*, 1967
Oil on canvas
60 x 83 7/8 in. (152.4 x 213.1 cm)
Courtesy the artist, Alexander Gray Associates,
New York; Zeno X Gallery, Antwerp
© Jack Whitten

Also on view May 16–August 2, 2015 is the exhibition [*Catherine Opie: Portraits and Landscapes*](#), an exhibition of approximately 50 recent works by the influential American photographer.

ABOUT JACK WHITTEN

Born and raised in Bessemer, Alabama, Whitten moved to New York City (where he is still based) in 1960 to attend the Cooper Union.

Whitten's work has been exhibited in the Whitney Annuals of 1969 and 1972, the landmark exhibition *Contemporary Black Artists in America* (1971) at the Whitney Museum of American Art; *Energy/Experimentation: Black Artists and Abstraction 1964–1980* at the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York; MOCA, Los Angeles; Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond; and *High Times Hard Times: New York Painting 1967–1975*, organized by Independent Curators International; as well as in the Wexner Center's 2013 presentation of *Blues for Smoke*.

EXHIBITION-RELATED EVENTS

Whitten will share the stage for the first time with photographer Catherine Opie in a [free talk](#) moderated by acclaimed art critic Tyler Green, host of the *Modern Art Notes Podcast*. This dynamic conversation takes place **Friday, May 15 at 5 pm**. After the talk, an [exhibition preview](#) will be held from 6 to 9 pm. [Walk-in tours](#), free with gallery admission, will be available throughout the run of the exhibitions beginning May 23.

VISITOR INFORMATION

Jack Whitten: Five Decades of Painting will be on view **May 16–August 2, 2015** at the Wexner Center for the Arts, 1871 N. High St. (at 15th Avenue) on the campus of The Ohio State University in Columbus. Gallery hours are 11 am–6 pm Tuesday, Wednesday, and Sunday, and 11 am–8 pm Thursday–Saturday. Galleries are closed Mondays. Admission is \$8; free for Wexner Center members, college students, and visitors 18 and under; free Thursdays from 4 to 8 pm and the first Sunday of the month. Also on view is [*Catherine Opie: Portraits and Landscapes*](#).

More info on bus routes, parking, and other visitor information:

<http://wexarts.org/visit/location-and-directions> or (614) 292-3535.

EXHIBITION SUPPORT

Jack Whitten: Five Decades of Painting is organized by the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego and made possible by generous lead underwriting support from Dr. Paul Jacobs and corporate support from RBC Wealth Management.

Additional funding has been provided by The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, the National Endowment for the Arts, LLWW Foundation, and proceeds from the 2014 Biennial Art Auction. Institutional support of MCASD is provided by the City of San Diego Commission for Arts and Culture and the County of San Diego Community Enhancement Fund.

Free and low-cost programs at the Wexner Center are presented with support from **Huntington Bank** and **Cardinal Health Foundation**.

The Wexner Center receives general operating support from the **Greater Columbus Arts Council, The Columbus Foundation, Nationwide Foundation**, and the **Ohio Arts Council**. Generous support is also provided by the **Corporate Annual Fund of the Wexner Center Foundation** and **Wexner Center members**.

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