



THE CHOICE Robert Freeman 1983 oil on canvas 52" x 62"

Robert Freeman [b.1946] is much admired for his bold brushwork and figurative paintings of well-heeled African-Americans at sophisticated gatherings. Characterized by overlapping shapes, energized lines and strong gestures, his subjects crowd to the front and edges of his paintings, taking on an aggressive, in-your-face stance with the viewer.

Born in Brooklyn, New York, Freeman received his BFA and MFA degrees from Boston University, and he now resides in that area where he is a prominent artist and respected teacher. He was artist-in-residence at Noble and Greenough School from 1981 until his recent retirement, and a lecturer and instructor at Harvard from 1988 to 1994.

Freeman's art is widely collected and his paintings have been exhibited at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, the Newport Art Museum, Zenith Gallery and in galleries in New York, Georgia, Florida, Illinois, Michigan and beyond.

Richard Varde [b.1939] is one of America's great watercolorists, recognized for his ability to produce large-scale works of brilliant color in a mercurial medium. A professor of art at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst since 1990, the Boston-bred and raised artist paints city and African-American city dwellers, reflecting his personal experience.

Known for images that range from evocative to lyrical, from portrait studies to complex figurative compositions, Varde has painted a variety of subject matter including famous black personalities and his acclaimed Harlem Savoy Ballroom installation. Sometimes he entices us into private worlds, rich with abstract patterns and monochromatic planes, and at other times he offers tantalizing snatches of time and action.

Varde's paintings are owned by many prestigious institutions, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Boston's Museum of Fine Arts, the Utah Museum of Fine Arts and the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston. His works have also been shown in museums and galleries in Paris, New York City, Boston, San Francisco, Atlanta, Hartford and other metropolitan cities.

THE ERSKINE HAWKINS BAND Richard Varde 1983 watercolor on paper 42" x 70"



RIBBON DANCE Benny Andrews 1997 collage and gouache on paper 49" x 44"

The Freedom Place Collection is dedicated to Constance Brown and Jane Shapiro, owners of the 17 Wendell Street Gallery.

This exhibition at Zenith Gallery is presented by the Zenith Community Arts Foundation (ZCAF) with sponsors Stuart Marshall Bloch and Ambassador Julia Chang Bloch, and Congressional Bank.

Additional pieces from the collection will be displayed at Congressional Bank, 2101 K Street NW, Washington, through December during banking hours.

ZCAF, established in 2000 by Margery E. Goldberg, is committed to arts advocacy, collaboration and using art to benefit community. Among ZCAF's most successful projects is its annual FOOD GLORIOUS FOOD show and calendar, which benefit the Capital Area Food Bank.



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MORNING OF THE RED BIRD 1975 Romare Bearden collage and mixed medium 14" x 18"



THE FREEDOM PLACE COLLECTION

September 6–30, 2007

never before seen in Washington

ROMARE BEARDEN BENNY ANDREWS ROBERT FREEMAN ALMA THOMAS RICHARD VARDE

THE FIVE ARTISTS REPRESENTED IN THE FREEDOM PLACE COLLECTION SPEAK WITH THEIR OWN ARTISTIC STYLE, VOICE AND VISION, YET ROMARE BEARDEN, BENNY ANDREWS, ROBERT FREEMAN, ALMA THOMAS AND RICHARD YARDE ARE LINKED BY THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN EXPERIENCE AND HERITAGE THAT HAS INSPIRED, NURTURED AND ENRICHED THEIR ART.

THE FREEDOM PLACE COLLECTION

Presented by ZCAF
The Zenith Community Arts Foundation

When Stuart and Julia Chang Bloch and I began talking about unveiling The Freedom Place Collection, the most logical place was Washington, DC for many reasons, not to mention that this is their home and was that to artist Alma Thomas for seven decades.

The Blochs began collecting African-American art 35 years ago, never imagining that they would one day amass a valuable body of more than 50 works by artists who would become pre-eminent in their time, and also become the Blochs' friends. Their first purchase was a Bearden collage ("Memories of High Cotton") for \$800.

The inspiration for The Freedom Place Collection was Stuart's Harvard Law School classmate, Fred Brown, whose wife, Constance, and her partner, Jane Shapiro, had just opened the 17 Wendell Street Gallery in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The Blochs credit Constance and Jane, and their recommendations over the years, for making the collection what it is today.

The Zenith Community Arts Foundation is honored to present select pieces from The Freedom Place Collection at Zenith Gallery. Those and many other works from the collection will be shown at Meridian House International during Black History Month in February 2008, and then be available for touring.

We are all very fortunate that Stuart Marshall Bloch and Ambassador Julia Chang Bloch want to share their wonderful collection with the Washington community and others.

Margery E. Goldberg
Founder, Zenith Community Arts Foundation (ZCAF)

Romare Bearden (1911-1988) is considered to be one of the most creative and original visual artists of the 20th century. A prolific talent of broad range and imagination, Bearden was a cartoonist, draftsman, painter and watercolorist. He is best known, however, for his richly textured collages, two of which were on the covers of Fortune and Time magazines in 1968.

Born in North Carolina, raised in Pittsburgh and Harlem, Bearden infused his art with visual metaphors from his life, using compositional themes such as the rural south, religious subjects and ritual practices, jazz clubs and brothels, as well as history and literature.

A graduate of New York University in education, Bearden was a social worker with the New York City Department of Social Services from the mid-1930s through the 1960s, working on his art at night and on weekends. He had his first solo show in Harlem in 1940 and his first mainstream gallery solo show in Washington, DC four years later.

During his lifetime, Bearden exhibited throughout the United States and Europe, and today his art is in important collections at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Whitney Museum, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Boston's Museum of Fine Arts, The Studio Museum in Harlem and many others. He received the National Medal of Arts in 1987 and other awards, and was honored posthumously with a retrospective show at the National Gallery of Art in 2003.

The Freedom Place Collection includes some of Bearden's most innovative and expressionistic works, created between 1970 and 1985. His "Morning of the Red Bird" was featured in Newsweek following his death.



MEMORIES OF HIGH COTTON Romare Bearden 1977 collage with ink 12" x 13"



TWILIGHT Benny Andrews 1981 oil and collage on canvas 47" x 50"

Benny Andrews (1930-2006), one of 10 children in a Georgia sharecropper's family, began scratching pictures in the dirt with nails and sticks when he was young, and went on to tell stories about people, places and things through drawing, painting and collage in a figurative style that earned him distinction in the art world.

Raised during the Depression, Andrews attended school when he wasn't working in the cotton fields. The first high-school graduate in his family, he earned his BFA at the School of the Chicago Art Institute through the GI Bill, and was a professor at Queens College of the University of New York from 1968 to 1997. Andrews served as director of the Visual Arts program at the National Endowment for the Arts from 1982 to 1984.

While Andrews drew on his southern roots for subject matter, he also depicted the urban world he inhabited. No matter the source, he imbued his subjects with grace, dignity and a searing universal humanity that transcended specifics.

Andrews' works can be seen in major galleries in the United States and abroad, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern Art, the Art Institute of Chicago, Atlanta's High Museum of Art, the Hirshhorn Museum and the O'Hara Museum in Tokyo.

Alma Woodsey Thomas (1891-1978) enjoyed her first solo show at age 68, and was later recognized at the National Gallery of Art, the White House and in retrospectives at the Corcoran Gallery of Art, the Smithsonian American Art Museum and the Whitney Museum, where she was the first African-American woman to have a solo exhibit.

Raised in Georgia, Thomas moved with her family to Washington, DC and into the house where she lived for 70 more years. In 1924, she was the first woman to earn a degree in fine arts from Howard University, and then taught art at Shaw Junior High School for 36 years until retiring in 1960 to paint full-time. In 1943, Thomas helped found the Barnett-Aden Gallery, which was Washington's first gallery to show works by white and African-American artists together.

Thomas is best known for her large canvases filled with dense patterns and bright color. While her mature work has been compared to Byzantine mosaics and Seurat's pointillism, today many associate her with the Washington Color School. By Thomas' own account, she was inspired by natural phenomena, such as hollyhock shadows, cherry blossoms and the atmospheric effects of light.



SNOOPY SEES A DAYBREAK ON EARTH Alma Thomas 1970 acrylic on canvas 50" x 48"