



Linda Day Clark, *Nigeria, Image No. 1, Iesha*, 1994, Photograph/color print, 16" x 20"

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foreword

Weaving Lives – Lifting Spirits: *Centering the Self*

In the early dawn of human history women walked the Earth out of Africa and ultimately across the world, making their mark in history through visible and invisible acts of extraordinary genius and artistry. Women have always had to be innovative, improvisational and creative. Long before there was a written language to describe the images, objects and activities which have come to be defined as artistic forms of expression, the first women – Lucy and, now Ardi, were actively involved with creating the earliest complex systems, objects and symbols that have become crucial to how humans interpret and interact in the world. Women have been essential to the developmental process of human evolution and invention – yet, history has not provided this legacy with a balanced understanding of the enormous contribution women played, not just in childbearing, and family structure, artistic but in the construction of a cultural legacy uniquely crafted through their own eyes and intellect.

Throughout history untold numbers of women, whose names have been masked, negated, lost and camouflaged, were victims of benign neglect and selective amnesia. It was not until the Feminist Movement of the 1970's that women – mothers, daughters, sisters and the personal sense agency – began to assert and reveal this exceptional history and global presence. The exhibition, *Our Common Bond: Mother, Daughter, Sister, Self* uses the occasion of the Transformations – New Directions in Black Art conference at Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA) to contemplate the remarkable artistry of Maya Freelon Asante, Elizabeth Catlett, Linda Day Clark, Oletha DeVane, Kenyatta A.C. Hinkle, Margo Humphrey, Martha Jackson-Jarvis, Valerie Maynard, Evangeline J. Montgomery, Annie Phillips, Delilah Pierce, Joyce Scott, Renee Stout, Evita Tezeno and Joyce Wellman.

Each of these women represent different phases in their political, social, spiritual and intimate development as women and as artists. Elizabeth Catlett stands as the elder states woman who matured during World War II to give shape, meaning and focus to female subjects as the central theme in her body of sculpture. She stands as a model and icon of excellence to which all the

artists in this exhibition mirror the same strength, passion and elegance.

The range of media, personal vision, technical process and philosophical intent is animated with rich meaning and purpose. Each artist in this exhibition is at once, all of the personifications of womanhood – mother, daughter, sister, and self. These factors, in and of themselves, are enormous. The burden and challenge for each of these artists has been to find a sense of their own particular reality and passion for life in spite of the myriad of obstacles that each person sought to transcend in the quest to define their own sense of aesthetic purpose and vision.

The stories they relate through the narratives or disposition of their images and symbols are an endless source of social, political, and spiritual fascination and education. Each woman is very different in the approach to materials and personal life experiences. Each artist is in search of their own sense of beauty, pride and power. The Harlem Renaissance, New Negro, Migration – Depression culture writer and anthropologist Zora Neal Hurston believed that originality was based on the “modification of ideas”... in short, nothing is new. Hurston's research asserts that it was through the “exchange and re-exchange of ideas between groups” that a new art world would foster a civilized world.

In the last three decades global cultures have witnessed increased energy and production as women artists of color move forward to create a new leadership of visual thinking and criticality imperative to the world of the Twenty First Century. *Our Common Bond: Mother, Daughter, Sister, Self* celebrates and establishes the primacy of these artists and the centrality of their artistry and aesthetic voices for future generations.

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