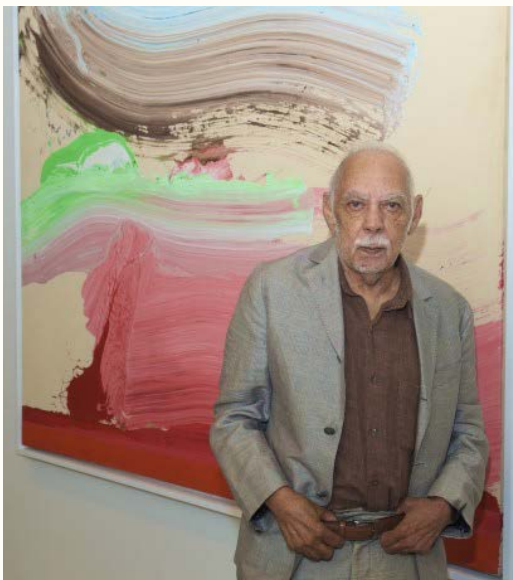


Artist Resources – Ed Clark (American, 1926-2019)



Clark, 2015
Photography: Addison Smith

[Clark at Hauser & Wirth](#)

Clark Papers at the [Smithsonian Archives of American Art](#).

“You abstract things. It’s up to you...Once I could do the self-portrait, I figured I could do everything. I got that out of my system...So then, I’m abstract,” [Clark told BOMB Magazine in 2011](#) in a candid discussion that included Clark’s heritage and family history, the Air Force and studying on the GI Bill, travel, racial prejudice in the art market, and artistic influence. “It’s a vocabulary that’s beyond rational words. When you get abstract eyes, even saying that is abstracted conversation. I’m trying to make something that’s visual and attractive but not to the point of being pretty. When I’m painting, it’s my end.”

[ArtPulse Magazine](#) interviewed Clark in 2013 about his influences, racism, and his education in Chicago and Paris as Clark prepared for a retrospective at [N’Namdi Contemporary, Miami](#). Clark explained about the influence of travel in his work: “When I knew I was that sensitive without thinking about it, I started going to different places to paint. I decided to go to Nigeria, then, I went to Martinique. Later on I did series in Bahia, Morocco and Paris...and Mexico. When I go someplace, unconsciously it gets different.”

“Movement is the energy of the work, and letting accident happen...I learn from it, it gets ahead of yourself,” explained Clark [in a gallery tour at N’Namdi](#). “I can’t do that again, it’s spontaneous and stamped forever...You have to know when to stop and it’s all unconscious.”

Clark’s daughter, Melanka, joins the director, chief curator, and gallerist of the [Pérez Art Museum Miami](#) for a discussion on her father’s life, career, and impact in 2017. “There’s nothing precious about [the work],” Melaka explains, “it’s so material, and real, and part of the everyday experience.” The artist joins in for Q&A from the audience at the end.

In their second exhibition of Clark’s work, the [Tilton Gallery in New York](#) displayed a suit of the artist’s celebrated horizontal paintings from the 1980s through 2000.

Clark’s passing in October 2019 was marked by a bloom of reverent obituaries, including from the [The New York Times](#) and [The Guardian](#).

In 2019, [Hauser & Wirth](#) commemorated the [gallery’s representation](#) of the Clark’s estate with an exhibition of paintings made between 2000 to 2013. They followed in 2020 with [a showcase of the artist’s pioneering era in abstraction](#) from the 1960s through the 1980s.



Clark, ca. 2012

Photography: An Liping

Ed Clark (American, 1926-2019)

Untitled, 1975

Acrylic on canvas

Private Collection Los Angeles; L2020:100.2

Only recently receiving prominent recognition for his prolific seventy-year career as a painter, Ed Clark was pivotal to the development of post-war American abstraction in New York. Clark reached a creative nexus in 1957 after serving in the Air Force during WWII and attending the Art Institute of Chicago and L'Academie de la Grande Chaumière in Paris, where he stayed for five years as a successful working artist. Interested in developing techniques to break the limitations of a traditional painting practice, he became the first American artist to work with shaped canvases and to utilize a push broom to sweep paint across unprimed canvases situated on the studio floor. The resulting strata of color encompass Clark's large supports in vibrant horizons of texture, mood, and graphic impact. In the 1970s, Clark expanded on his horizontal vistas with subtle explorations of defined forms, such as the ovular curves in this untitled work. As he remarked at the end of his career, "I began to believe that the real truth is in the stroke...The paint is the subject. The motions of the strokes give the work life."

On view February 24 – May 30, 2021





Ed Clark (American, b. 1926-2019)

Untitled, 2000

Acrylic on canvas

Private Collector; L2019:114.1

African American abstract artist Ed Clark began his career at The Art Institute of Chicago after serving in the Air Force in Guam during World War II. After the Art Institute, he continued training and working in Paris—a more open environment for black painters than the United States after the war—and moved to New York in the 1950s. Clark, who passed away this October, is remembered as a central member of the second generation of Abstract Expressionism, alongside contemporaries such as Helen Frankenthaler. Ardent individuality and an endless spirit of experimentation define his oeuvre, which includes shaped canvases and chromatic compositions inspired by travels throughout Europe, South and Central America, Africa, and China. **Untitled** demonstrates Clark's sensitive consideration of color, brushwork, and the dynamic interplay between action and tranquility. He began using a push broom to apply and manipulate paint (the first American artist to do so) in New York in 1956. Often able to show his work only at the whim of white gallery owners, and staunchly opposed to being labeled a "Black artist," Clark has only recently started to receive the attention fitting his prolific, influential, and innovative seventy-year career.

On view January 29 – May 3, 2020