

Artist Resources – Jack Whitten (American, 1939-2018)

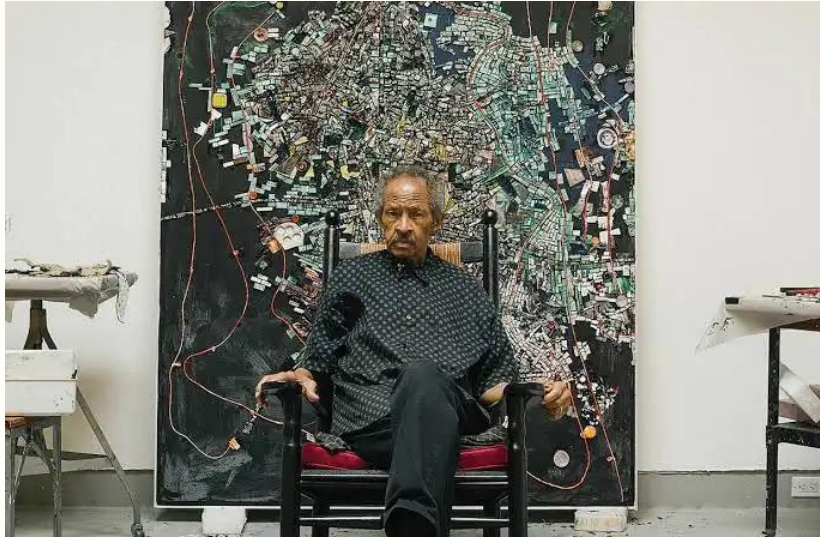
JORDAN SCHNITZER MUSEUM OF ART

[Whitten at Hauser & Wirth](#)

[Whitten on Art21](#)

[Whitten at MoMA](#)

[Whitten at the Studio Museum in Harlem](#)



Whitten, 2017
Photograph: Mark Hartman

Read a 1994 interview in [Bomb Magazine](#) with Kenneth Goldsmith and a 2007 interview in [The Brooklyn Rail](#) with Robert Storr.

Read transcripts or listen to an [oral history interview](#) with Whitten from 2009, available through the Smithsonian's Archives of American Art

In 2015, *Jack Whitten: Five Decades of Painting* was organized by the [Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego](#). The exhibition then traveled to the [Walker Art Center](#) and the [Wexner Center for the Arts](#). Read a review of the exhibition catalogue published by [CAA Reviews](#).

Whitten's debut solo exhibition with Hauser & Wirth gallery was in 2017, first at their [New York](#) location and later in [London](#). Read an article in [Cultured Magazine](#) by Scott Indrisek and in the [Wall Street Journal Magazine](#) in the artist's own words about the New York version. Another article in [The Paris Review](#) was published at the opening of the London edition.

Whitten passed away in 2018 at the age of 78. Read his obituary in the [New York Times](#) and a republished interview with [Crystal Bridges Museum of Art](#).

Odyssey: Jack Whitten Sculpture 1963-2017 was co-organized in 2019 by the [Baltimore Museum of Art](#) and the [Metropolitan Museum of Art](#), featuring his carved and assembled sculptures along with his entire *Black Monolith* series. The exhibition then traveled to the [Museum of Fine Arts, Houston](#). Read a review of the Met edition in [Nad Now](#) and [The New Criterion](#).

Hamburger Bahnhof – Museum für Gegenwart Berlin installed [Jack Whitten: Jack's Jacks](#) in 2019 as the artist's first solo exhibition in a European institution.

In 2022, [Jack Whitten: The Greek Alphabet Paintings](#) was at Dia Beacon as the first-ever exhibition to survey the artist's *Greek Alphabet* series created between 1975 and 1978. Read reviews in [The Brooklyn Rail](#), [The New York Times](#), and [Two Coats of Paint](#).

[Jack Whitten: The Messenger](#) was a major survey exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York installed in 2025 to wide acclaim, featuring his explorations of race, technology, jazz, love, and war. Read reviews in [The New Yorker](#), [Frieze Magazine](#), [The New York Times](#), [The Wall Street Journal](#), [Art News](#), [Artforum](#), and [Cultured Magazine](#).



Whitten in the studio, 2017
Photograph: Unknown



Jack Whitten (American, 1939-2018)

Alpha Group III, 1975

Acrylic on canvas

Collection of Lizzy and Ramtin Naimi; L2025:69.1

Jack Whitten was born and raised in segregated Alabama, where he first studied pre-med at the Tuskegee Institute. During a drill call, Whitten announced that he was leaving to become an artist. He moved to New York City in 1960, where he began to develop the experimental techniques that defined his career. **Alpha Group III** is part of Whitten's *Greek Alphabet* series from the mid-1970s. For each work, the artist poured acrylic onto canvas and raked the paint with a tool he called the "Developer," which he often modified with squeegees, blades, and combs. Whitten intentionally relied on gray tones for this series, once telling a curator: "I'm very much aware of the meaning of black and white in American society, which informs who I am as an African American. The formal reasons for black and white are one thing but there are also the reasons coming out of the political situation, and I wanted to see if I could combine them."

On view September 24, 2025 – January 4, 2026