

Currents 39

LATOYA M. HOBBS

CARVING

OUT TIME

Unparalleled in its size and technique, LaToya M. Hobbs’s monumental series *Carving Out Time* shows the artist balancing her many priorities. Its five scenes depict Hobbs, her husband, artist Ariston Jacks, and their two children managing household tasks and enjoying family time together. The narrative culminates with a self-portrait of Hobbs in her studio during the hours she has devoted to creating new work. Through this glimpse into a typical day in Hobbs’s life, the series addresses universal themes of identity and representation, legacy, and parenthood.

Hobbs made the scenes nearly life-size to “present the everyday as triumphant.” Immersive and intimate, they powerfully elevate the subject of Black family life. “Representation really matters,” says Hobbs, explaining the importance

of including her children so they would feel comfortable accessing museums in the future. Hobbs also references works by artists who impacted her career, highlighting their contributions to expanding who is included in art history.

Hobbs originally created *Carving Out Time* as a set of carved wooden panels. She then printed the panels to produce a version of the series in woodcut. This exhibition celebrates the Museum’s recent acquisition of the woodcuts. It also presents the prints and panels together for the first time, offering the opportunity to marvel at Hobbs’s artistry in two forms.

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FROM PANELS TO PRINTS

TECHNIQUE AND PROCESS

LaToya M. Hobbs made *Carving Out Time* by using chisels to cut into 15 panels of 8-by-4-foot cherry plywood. She varied the size and density of her cuts to produce light and dark areas. This allowed her to create a sense of depth. The floor in *Scene 3: Dinner Time*, for example, appears to extend into the distance because the tiles are darker in the background. Hobbs also used different types of marks to convey textures. She rendered fluffy slippers, stuffed toys, and plush towels with short, irregular lines and door handles, chairs, and other smooth objects with longer, more even lines.

When Hobbs finished carving the panels, she and her husband, artist Ariston Jacks, made woodcut prints from them. They collaborated with the workshop BIG INK, which brought a press to Hobbs's studio.

The team applied ink to the raised areas of the panels and then ran each one through the press with a sheet of paper on top. The high pressure transferred the ink to the paper, creating a mirror image of the panel. Hobbs printed three impressions, or copies, of the full series.

The woodcut technique carries metaphorical significance for Hobbs. She has described cutting into the wood as an act of carving away negative stereotypes to reveal more truthful representations.

ART MOTHERS

LEGACY AND REPRESENTATION

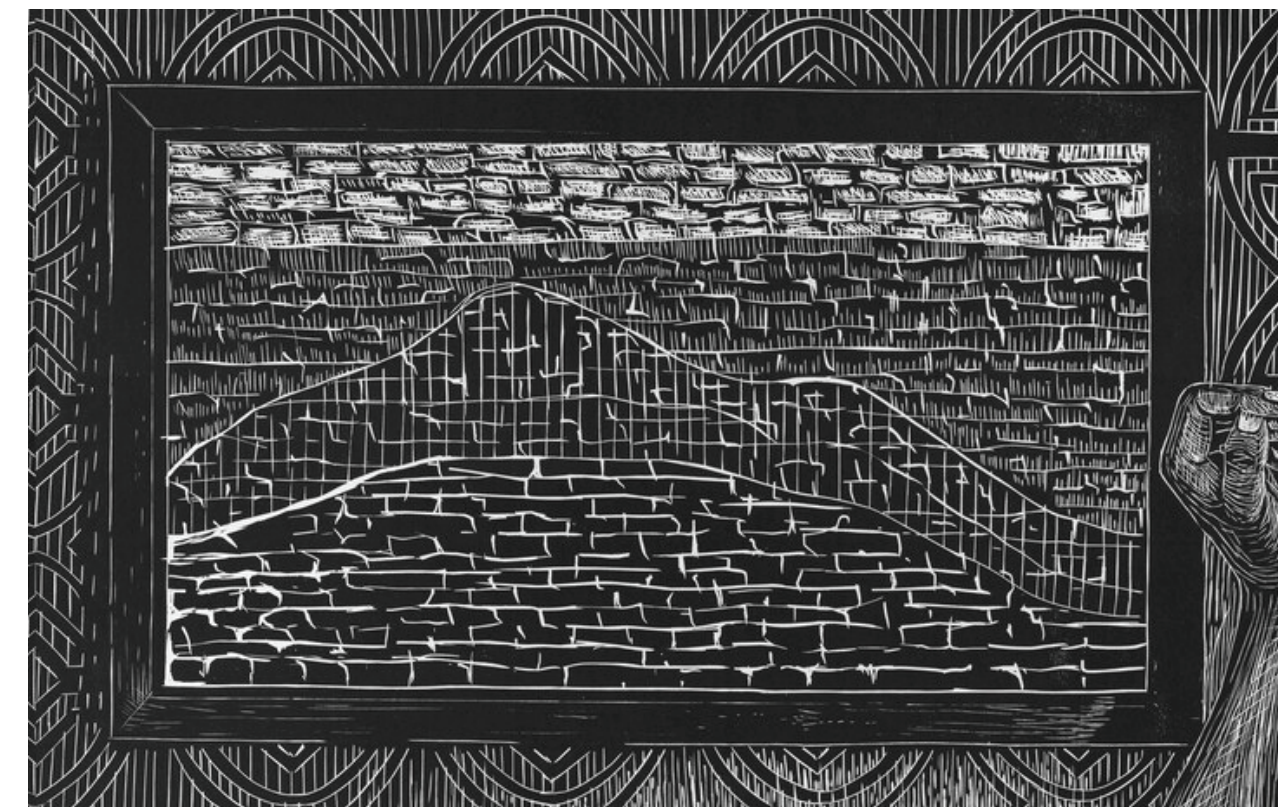
Carving Out Time addresses themes of representation, as well as family and artistic legacies. Hobbs felt it was important to include her two sons in the series, and she asked them to participate in shaping how she would depict them. They picked out the pajamas they are wearing and the toys on the floor. They also chose some of their drawings to be taped on the wall in *Scene 4: Bedtime for the Boys*. Their sketches appear between works by their father, Ariston Jacks, and Jean-Michel Basquiat, an artist they admire, situating the boys in an artistic and familial lineage.

Hobbs references her own artistic development in the series, paying homage to artists who influenced her, such as Elizabeth Catlett, whom she calls her “art mother.” Through her ambitious work, Hobbs contributes to the legacy of Black artists who have shaped art history.

SCENE 01



Elizabeth Catlett
American, active in Mexico, 1915–2012
Roots, 1981
Screenprint



Alma Thomas
American, 1891–1978
Apollo 12 "Splash Down" (detail), 1970
Acrylic and graphite on canvas

SCENE 02

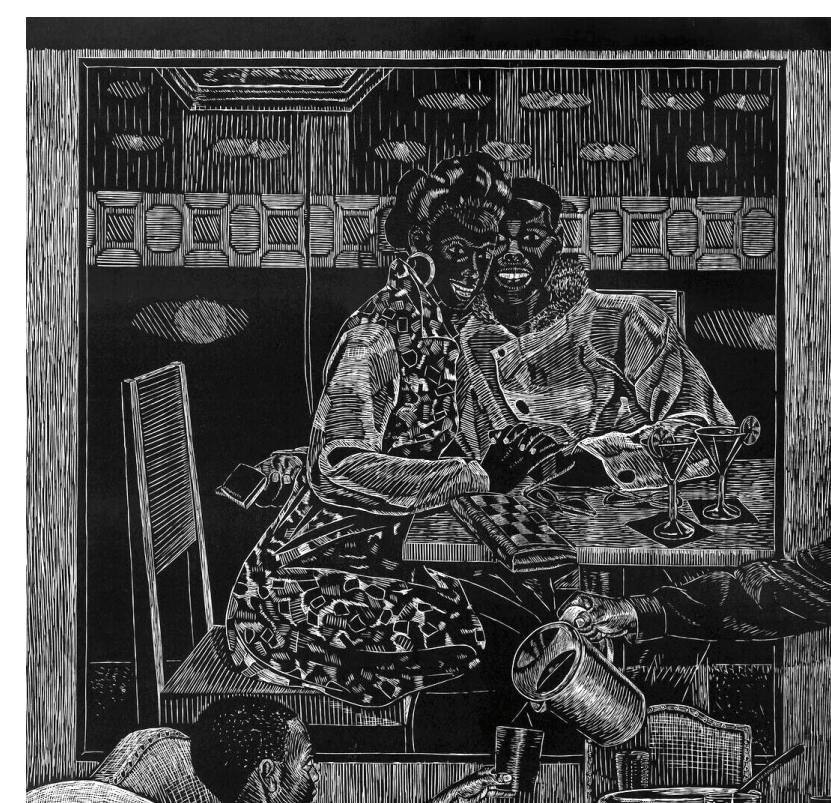


Margaret Taylor Burroughs
American, 1915–2010
Mother Africa, n.d.
Linocut



Elizabeth Catlett
American, active in Mexico, 1915–2012
Seated Woman, 1962
Mahogany

SCENE 03



Kerry James Marshall
American, b. 1955
Untitled (Club Couple), 2014
Acrylic on PVC panel



Valerie Maynard
American, 1937–2022
Senoufo, 1981
Screenprint

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