

# Sylvia Snowden: Venus of M Street & Men on M Street

13 October – 12 November 2022

Opening reception | Thursday 13 October 6-8pm



Franklin Parrasch Gallery is thrilled to co-present an exhibition of paintings by acclaimed Washington, D.C.-based artist Sylvia Snowden (b.1942, Raleigh, NC) for the inaugural Gallery-in-Residence program at Edel Assanti, London. Included are six paintings on paper dating from 1999-2001 from the artist's *Venus of M Street* and *Men on M Street* series. This marks Snowden's first exhibition in London.

Within each of these two series presented, Sylvia Snowden's images stir the brimming tension of sexuality, eliciting the struggle of gender and identity through gesture and expressive activity. Whorled limbs push urgently against the bounds of the picture plane, establishing a sense of physical space and containment in an exploration of the sensuality, virility, voluptuousness, and vulnerability of the artist's subjects.

The drama of Snowden's subjects, and the sheer grace of their ability to survive and thrive, references the strength and delicate beauty in the human figure that her art celebrates. From dark and earthy tones to the vibrant and artificial, Snowden's command of chromatic range is the fuel of her expressionistic style. She encapsulates the psychological essence of her subjects, all of whom she encountered in her Shaw neighbourhood in Washington, D.C.: their deliberations, triumphs, angst, and joy are all laid bare.

Surrounding each figure are aura-like passages of voluminously applied, often frenetic color, which lend further visual insight into the artist's interpretation of their circumstances and individualism. Snowden's process engages visible evidence of constructed layers, employing über-impasto that interacts with bold figures caught in motion. Her love of paint is the connective tissue between her motive and technical prowess as an artist and her vast spiritual empathy toward her subjects.

As Snowden has described:

*My work gives a spirit of humanity to all subject matter through the implementation of subjective feeling toward objective reality... Choice of color, which represents symbols of experience, is deeper than appearance... The lush use of color and paint defines the essence of subject matter and gives it depth of spirit.*

Sylvia Snowden was born in Raleigh, North Carolina in 1942, but spent her childhood in New Orleans, Louisiana. At the age of 14, she and her family moved to Washington, D.C.. Snowden's parents encouraged her artistic pursuits at a young age, which led to her enrollment in the art department at Howard University (Washington, D.C.). There, she studied under James Porter, Lois Maillou Jones, James Wells, and David C. Driskell, receiving her B.A. in 1963 and her M.A. in 1965.

Snowden has a certificate from Académie de la Grande Chaumière (Paris, France, 1963), and received a scholarship to Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture (Skowhegan, Maine, 1964). On the recommendation of her close friend and mentor E.T.C. White, Snowden went to Australia for a year-long residency in 1975. There, she explored calligraphic techniques using oil pastel, ink, and acrylic, with the repetitive and gestural line as a main component.

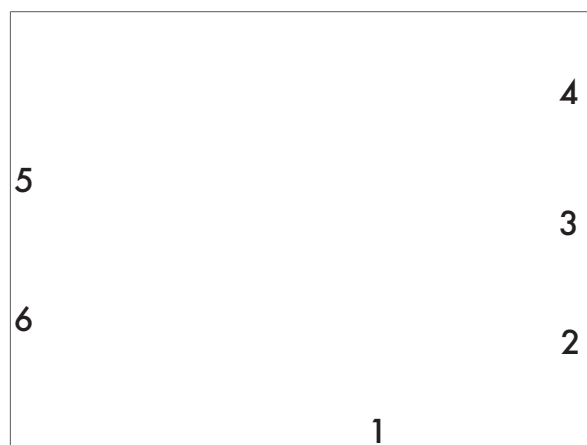
In the late 1970s, Snowden moved to M Street, where she currently resides. It was here that she painted her seminal *M Street* series, depicting the resilience of the people she encountered in the wake of displacement, migration, and gentrification.

Snowden has taught at Cornell University (Ithaca, NY), Howard University (Washington, D.C.), and Yale University (New Haven, CT), and has served as an artist-in-residence, a panelist, visiting artist, lecturer/instructor, and curator in universities, galleries, and art schools in the United States and internationally.

In 2018, Snowden's work was notably featured in the landmark exhibition *Magnetic Fields: Expanding American Abstraction, 1960-Today* at the National Museum for Women in the Arts (Washington, D.C.) alongside fellow Howard University alumnae Mildred Thompson, Alma Thomas, and Mary Louise Lovelace. Snowden has also exhibited at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Montclair Art Museum, Montclair, NJ; Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore, MD; Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art at Cornell University, Ithaca, NY; The Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C.; Heckscher Museum of Art, Huntington, NY; and the National Archives for Black Women's History (NABWH) of the Mary McLeod Bethune Council House National Historic Site (MAMC), Washington, D.C.. Her works have been shown globally in Chile, the Netherlands, Ethiopia, Australia, the Bahamas, France, Mexico, Italy, and Japan.

Snowden's work from her *Shell; Glimpses* series will be prominently featured in the inaugural exhibition of Rubell Museum DC (Washington, D.C.), opening on October 29, 2022.

Edel Assanti's Gallery-in-Residence programme is a collaborative project welcoming gallery colleagues across the world to share our space for short exhibitions.



1. *Venus of M Street: Clarene Martin, 2001, Acrylic and oil pastel on paper, 114.9 x 85 cm, 45 1/4 x 33 1/2 in.*

2. *Venus of M Street: Dorothy Rich, 2001, Acrylic and oil pastel on paper, 99 x 71.1 cm, 39 x 28 in.*

3. *Venus of M Street: Julia Shepherd, 2001, Acrylic and oil pastel on paper, 114.9 x 85 cm, 45 1/4 x 33 1/2 in.*

4. *Venus of M Street: Victoria Goode, 2001, Acrylic and oil pastel on paper, 109.2 x 79.6 cm, 43 x 31 3/8 in.*

5. *Men on M Street: George Brown, 1999, Mixed media on paper, 115.5 x 84.7 cm, 45 1/2 x 33 3/8 in.*

6. *Men on M Street: Willie Golden, 1999, Mixed media on paper, 115.5 x 84.7 cm, 45 1/2 x 33 3/8 in.*