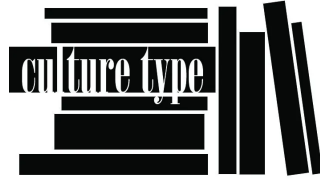


# MNUCHIN GALLERY



## On View: 'Betty Blayton: In Search of Grace' at Mnuchin Gallery in New York Explores Five Decades of Pioneering Abstract Artist

By Victoria L. Valentine  
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The exhibition "In Search of Grace" provides a rare opportunity to explore the work of Betty Blayton (1937-2016) across five decades. Known for her "spiritual abstractions," Blayton employed poetic palettes and often worked in a tondo format. Possessed with beauty and grace, her images speak to nature and invoke metaphysical themes. Paintings and works on paper dating from the late 1960s to 2014 are on view at Mnuchin Gallery.

A pioneering artist and institution builder, Blayton pushed back against norms throughout her life and career. She was born in Williamsburg, Va., where higher education institutions remained segregated after the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. Eschewing integration, Virginia opted instead to pay for African American students to attend out-of-state schools. Blayton took advantage of the opportunity, earning a degree in painting and illustration from Syracuse University (1959).

Living in New York City in the 1960s, she pursued abstraction when figuration was the expected form of expression for Black artists. When artists of African descent were largely shut out of exhibition opportunities at mainstream museums and galleries, Blayton helped establish the historic Studio Museum in Harlem. She also co-founded and served for 30 years as executive director of the Children's Art Carnival in Harlem (1968-98), an offshoot of a Museum of Modern Art education program, where her students included a young artist named Jean-Michel Basquiat.

The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalog authored by art historian Lowery Stokes Sims, a close friend of Blayton.



Installation view of "Betty Blayton: In Search of Grace"



Installation view of "Betty Blayton: In Search of Grace," Mnuchin Gallery, New York, N.Y. (Sept. 8 – Oct. 16, 2021). Courtesy of the estate and Mnuchin Gallery, New York, Photo by Timothy Doyon