

**BARRY L. MASON — Artist**

*“Barry Mason states that he sees himself as a “composer” when he constructs his large shaped and sculpted abstract paintings, which are also vehicles for expressing that inner intersection where his admiration for Renaissance grandeur and aspects of his Afro-American identity merge in a potent personal synthesis. In this regard, given their vigor and symphonic sweep, Mason’s paintings with their brilliant colors, dynamic irregular formats, and forms that (for their often, angular symmetry) hint at African folk motifs, can be compared to the music of the great American composers like Ellington and Mingus, who achieved an exquisite balance of jazz improvisation and classical composition”*

**–J. Sanders Eaton, Gallery & Studio Magazine**

*“He has been called this generations Basquiat.”*

**–Danny Simmons, Our Time At Home Magazine**

As a young boy growing up in Snow Hill, I felt an attraction to the awesomeness of the farmlands, the natural lines of farm buildings and the rich stories of my ancestors who lived in this historic area. “I was immersed in the vast scenic landscapes, the beaches and islands along the Eastern Shore. It all seemed like an artwork in itself although I did not call it that at the time. I just remember always having a desire to create, to construct and to draw. Looking back, I realize that there were spirits guiding me along the way. Now, 40 plus years later, art and those impressions still fuel my creative process.

I see myself as a “composer” when I construct my large shaped and sculpted abstract paintings.

As I’m creating, I feel an ancestry spirit pulling me far back to an ancient African trail. I hear their chant and it motivates me to extend my creative reach and change the boundaries thru my love of shapes - Altering the traditional 45 degree angle of a rectangle or square canvas to multiple forms, degrees, and dimensions.

The chanting takes me in various directions depending on the inspiration of the moment. A barrage of conscious and un-conscious elements begin to emerge thru linear/non-linear lines, forms, colors & backward writing, all weaving in and out the layered painted surface to create a story that may sometimes extend beyond even my conscious. As I’m guided by the spirit, ***I embrace the journey.***

I was first introduced to abstract expressionist and many other forms of art at Indiana State University. As one of ISU’s student staff photographers, I documented campus life and sports activities (photographing fellow students like basketball great Larry Bird and gymnast Kurt Thomas.) It was the beginning of my foray into photo documentation which manifested itself in future works such as the “African Burial Ground” (National Historic Landmark), President Barack Obama and other noted political officials and entertainers; and more than 20 years of photo placements in hundreds of newspapers across the United States. Here (ISU) is where I also created my first abstract and large-scale works on canvas.

One of my highest achievements of all awards and mentions, was in the late 1970’s when as a student at The Corcoran School of Art in Washington, DC., I exhibited at “The White House”. A few years later, I created my first shaped painting, ***“Carry Not Any Burdens”***.

During the early 1980’s, I continued to shape, stretch and sculpt my canvasses and wood frames with the purpose of the final piece appearing to float in the air as opposed to positioned on the wall. This has been as integral to my creative process as the canvas painting content itself. I received my BFA in 1982 from The Corcoran School of Art and upon graduation, moved to New York where I have continued to create from my Mount Vernon studio.

My works have been exhibited in numerous galleries, venues and local museums.

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