

## Press Release...

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The Eubie Blake National Jazz Institute and Cultural Center

### Features Abstractionist Eugene R. Coles

in an Exhibition Titled “Fragments”

**BALTIMORE** – Bodacious and bold best describes the collection of surreal abstractionist mixed image works of Eugene R. Coles in a new exhibition, *Fragments*, featured at the Eubie Blake National Jazz Institute and Cultural Center. The exhibition, which is free and open to the public, is on display at 847 North Howard Street in Baltimore from Thursday, September 4 to Saturday, September 27, 2008; with an opening reception on September 4 from 7 to 9 p.m.

Each work in *Fragments* is the result of a creative process in which Coles has enacted a balanced arrangement of lines, shapes, colors or textures within the large-scale work. The materials used range from oil paints on canvas to white pencil on black paper. An intense and highly expressive use of deep and rich color, vibrant texture and an inventive range of imagination characterize Coles’ works of abstract and collage.

“*Fragments* investigates and rejoices in the continuing vitality of the dynamically adventuresome and highly unique artistic expression of surreal abstraction in each art work – the quintessential development of form and shape in modern art – as it adapts to the 21st century,” said Coles.

During the early years of Abstract Expressionism in post-World War II America, gifted trailblazers like Hale Woodruff, Norman Lewis and Harlan Jackson demonstrated – contrary to the opinions of certain scholars and critics – that artists of color could indeed use abstraction in art as a viable means for conveying the depths of human intelligence and emotion. Although they may not have received the recognition that they deserve during their careers, their displays of courage, commitment and artistic integrity have continued to inspire succeeding generations of artists – including many of the second- and third-generation abstract artists who follow.

Still, the works presented in *Fragments* hold fast to characteristics at the core of abstraction, which has more than a 100-year history – a desire to describe the world free of narrative and representational imagery. “As a field that relies almost exclusively on form, color, and material to represent ideas and convey feelings, its history is built upon looking to new structures, new elements, and new dimensions for inspiration,” said Coles, whose contemporary abstraction is marked by adventurous use of materials, hybridization of media, subtle humor and compulsion to engage the viewer’s entire sensorial responses.

A native of New York, Coles graduate of Morgan State University’s fine arts program, Coles also gained formal training earning three certificates in painting, education and design from the internationally recognized Ecole des Beaux Fontainebleau, located southeast of Paris. During his career, which spans more than four decades, Coles has presented his work in numerous exhibitions. His work is also featured in two books, including Samella Lewis’ reference volume *Art African American and Artists*.

Additionally, Coles has completed three album covers for saxophonist Gary Barts; spoken word poet Gil Scott Heron; and singer Edwin Birdsong.

The Eubie Blake National Jazz Institute and Cultural Center is open Wednesday through Friday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.,

Saturday from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., and Sunday by appointment.

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For more than three decades, the Eubie Blake National Jazz Institute and Cultural Center has sought to bring creative expression and urban consciousness to Baltimore through visual and performing arts education and development opportunities for children, youth and adults in our community.