

THEY'VE ALL GOT PAINTING: FRANK BOWLING'S MODERNITY AND THE POST-1960 ATLANTIC¹

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And my exit from Guyana was via Captain McKenzie I was a passenger on his boat, to Trinidad. And left Guyana.

Q: *So you went from Guyana, from Georgetown? Georgetown.*

Q: *On the Booker ship. The Booker ship, to Port of Spain.*

Q: *To Port of Spain. And then I joined a French boat, the name of which I can't remember, to travel to England in May 1953.*

Q: *From the Port of Spain. From Port of Spain.*

Q: *Not from Trinidad? Port of Spain, Trinidad.*

Q: *Of course, I beg your pardon. From Port of Spain.²*

Mel Gooding's life story interview with Frank Bowling

In art history, and its related areas of object study, visual culture and material culture, the first voice to explicate an oceanic connection among Africa, Europe and the Americas was Robert Farris Thompson. Thompson outlined the concept of a '[black Atlantic](#) world', in which the traces of African visual matter had a direct outlet via the Atlantic Ocean. He coined the term '[black Atlantic](#) visual tradition', describing 'the rise, development, and achievement of Yoruba, Kongo, Fon, Mande, and Ejagham art and philosophy fused with new elements overseas, shaping and defining the [black Atlantic](#) visual tradition'.³ Thompson's text put forth two simultaneous and related ideas. The first is that the seeming rootlessness of the world's African descendants, and their cultural products, was predicated on the circumstances of their dispersal. Thus rootlessness (despite its numerous antecedents) was generative. The second important idea that Thompson launched was that this (African) circulation of objects, way of seeing, process of making, and visual tropes formed a continuous flow of visual matter that superseded the dominance of other traditions, namely European. In the vocabulary of the time, one might have called this a discovery of *African retention* in art, just as Thompson's ideas were unselfconsciously *afro-centric*. This is not, nor was it ever, an uncomplicated discourse, and the last several decades have not untangled its root predicaments, but it must be understood for what it was: the first attempt to name and contextualise art of the black [diaspora](#), if not all objects in contact with the circumference of the Atlantic. Thompson places this art into art history and leads us to the other side of Picasso's appropriation of African forms, so that we understand

that the contact between Europe and Africa produced the decisive moment in modern art and modernity, resulting in the idea of a connection as opposed to the one-sided sense of contact.⁴ Yet this moment had almost never been narrated from the African, much less a trans-cultural, perspective. As Thompson explained,

the richness of detail, moral elaboration, and emblematic power that characterize the sacred art of the Yoruba in transition to Brazil, Cuba, and the United States, as sampled in this volume, is but an introduction to a wider universe of interlocking forms that will require future books fully to explore and explain.⁵

Some ten years later, Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* explored another side of the Atlantic, one in which black cultural writers and thinkers gave voice to a duality born out of their special circumstances.⁶ As with Thompson, Gilroy finds out that the Atlantic is constitutive. It is a powerful force that disruptively brings black writers into and out of contact with world thought and each other. Gilroy's modernity is set against tradition not simply as progress but as a clash that propels. In response to Britain's Cultural Studies terrain and the fields of African-American Studies or Black Studies in the United States, he writes from an intentionally anti-nationalist position, wherein he seeks 'to develop the suggestion that cultural historians could take the Atlantic as one single, complex unit of analysis in their discussions of the modern world and use it to produce an explicitly transnational and intercultural perspective'.⁷ The Atlantic is now mined philosophically for its diasporic traces that reveal themselves to be not a shadow of the white, Western world, but its absolute. It is of note that interspaced among these examples are a few that would seem out of place, were it not for the iconography of the Atlantic. To this end, Gilroy writes that

the idea of the [black Atlantic](#) can be used to show that there are other claims to it which can be based on the structure of the African [diaspora](#) into the western hemisphere. A concern with the Atlantic as a cultural and political system has been forced on black historiography and intellectual history by the economic and historical matrix in which plantation slavery – 'capitalism with its clothes off' – was one special moment.⁸

This is, after all, the [Black Atlantic](#), not the dark sea.

It is of note that both of these texts emerge out of what I call the post-1968 moment. For Thompson, writing principally from the Americas and Africa, the decades following the sixties revealed deep fissures in the nation-state that had been ripped open, and were only beginning to reform in the early 1980s. Chicago, Detroit and Los Angeles still bore the wounds of their 1960s' riots, while Birmingham, Montgomery and Selma were fast becoming living memorials. By the same token, Havana, Asmara and Port-au-Prince were oft-disputed projects-in-formation over which East and West banded.

For Gilroy, the legacy of 1968 in Europe spread the theories of social uprising and reform across the British Isles. Importantly, Britain's 1968 happened in the art

schools, where students, tutors and working artists demanded reform of the curriculum and, in the process, sought to gain control of contemporary art.⁹ It was a movement of object-centred populism that coincided with the after-effects of decolonisation. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Britain succumbed to a financial crisis, urban unrest in the form of Irish Republican Army terrorism and riots centred around black communities in all of its major cities.¹⁰ To use a shorthand formulation, Brixton became the Bronx, making a comparative look across the ocean not only common sense but also inevitable. By the early 1990s, and the publication of *The Black Atlantic*, Britain now shared the American trait of a large, fluid population of foreign-born citizens. As Gilroy rightly points out, the nationalistic presumption that 'England ceaselessly gives birth to itself, seemingly from Britannia's head', had been all but destroyed by the close of the twentieth century.¹¹ It is from this perspective that I would argue for a view of the 1960s as a cross-Atlantic turn for the latter part of the twentieth century, wherein history rears its head in the present, particularly the visual present.

So, back to this question of modernity. Thompson assumes for his readers a modernity that brushes up against a canonical approach to art rooted in European painting and sculpture. As an art historian, he takes for granted that we understand the fine art tradition that he is writing against. Gilroy is more explicit in foregrounding a specific either/or binary, largely due to his construction of writers and thinkers who are circulating in the frame of European modern thought and its attendant national racialised ambiguities. Throughout the text, his references to art, specifically painting and painters, are acute. The first, and most pronounced, is to J.M.W. Turner's *Slave Ship (Slavers Throwing Overboard the Dead and Dying, Typhoon Coming On)* 1840, a work that circulated through London, via John Ruskin, before being sold to America.¹² The work carries with it a narrative about a slave ship lost in a typhoon from which the ship's captain off-loads its human cargo to benefit from his insurance policy. In its time, the painting roused British feeling against the sheer cruelty of slavery. In art-historical terms, the painting's dramatic abstraction set in motion Britain's visual modernity. Here, the modern makes itself known as a violent sweep of sea and sky under the guise of a morality tale about greed, hubris and the vengeance of the natural world. Gilroy's invocation of Turner's *Slave Ship* places us firmly within a discussion of art, artists, modernity and the ways in which the slippage, or fissure, between figuration and abstraction in painting will be a defining question for the latter third of the twentieth century, at least in the work that criss-crosses the Atlantic. Knowingly or not, Gilroy hits upon a key fact of modernism: painting is the medium by which modernism in art is articulated.¹³ In the late twentieth century, the values of painting become modern art; so inseparable were the two that when America's art market surpassed France's (and Britain is pushed into a derivative corner) it was largely a fact of the shift in the making of and marketing of painting to New York at the expense of Europe.¹⁴

Following Gilroy's model, I want to take the Atlantic as a motive force for the painter Frank Bowling. Moreover, I want to use Bowling as a model to consider the period from the sixties to the present in much the same way that Gilroy shapes the structure of modernity through individuals like W.E.B. Du Bois, Richard Wright, or

the lesser known Martin Robinson Delany. In the discourse of Atlantic exchange, Bowling's early professional life charts the course of how late modern, supra-national art functioned – for a black artist. Like Gilroy, Bowling weaves together Europe, the Americas and Africa. Further, as a writer about art, Bowling sought to define and describe a phenomenon, 'Black Art', which he initially viewed from the position of an ex-pat in New York and which he then began to write about, bringing it to the awareness of London and the rest of America. His discourse on the subject, credited or not, continued to inform the way in which artists of African descent functioned in the world of contemporary art. Like Gilroy's case-studies, Bowling lived the [transnationalism](#) (and its consequences) that he painted in and wrote about. As an artist, Frank Bowling is where both propositions (Thompson and Gilroy) of modernity and the Atlantic meet.

Born in 1936 in Bartica, Essequibo, in the then British Guiana (Guyana), Frank Bowling moved to London in the early 1950s. As a teenager, he was fascinated by the sights and sounds of the city. After completing his national service in the Royal Air Force, he entered the Regent Street Polytechnic in 1955 to study painting. In 1959, he was granted admission to the Royal College of Art. Though his name is often cited along with Aubrey Williams' as one of a generation of Caribbean artists in London, Bowling was only loosely affiliated with Caribbean art circles. He was not, for example, a member of the Caribbean Artists Movement (CAM), nor did he participate in any of CAM's exhibitions.¹⁵ Williams, also from Guyana, was known to him through his younger brother, not as an artist contemporary.¹⁶ Bowling, unlike Williams, was not involved in any of the Caribbean and Commonwealth exhibitions at the Commonwealth Institute or the Africa Centre, such as the well-known *Commonwealth Artists of Fame 1952–1977* show in which many other immigrants participated.¹⁷

Instead, Bowling's set was made up of art students from the Royal College and the Slade School of Art. Bowling's first few years in London were unremarkable, save for the fact that he circulated in a group of artists who were being pitched against the past and the present. There was the tradition of British painting that extolled figuration and there was the call of something very new outside of Britain, American abstract art. For Bowling, who was mentored by Francis Bacon and Carel Weight and educated alongside David Hockney and R.B. Kitaj, representation was clearly something to play with, even expand, but not to depart from completely.¹⁸ Called by any of its names – Abstract Expressionism, New York School painting or American action painting – the abstract painting made in New York was easily reduced to two things for Bowling: a break from representation and a move away from London. Heeding this call, Bowling travelled to New York for the first time in the summer of 1961.¹⁹

In New York, Bowling was introduced to the aesthetic and social aspects of abstraction. The allure of the Cedar Tavern mingled with daily visits to the Museum of Modern Art, studio visits with Franz Kline, socialising with James Rosenquist and the dealer Dick Bellamy, who bought some of his work.²⁰ Upon Bowling's return to London in the autumn, to complete his last year at the Royal College, New York hung

like a weight around his paintings, despite his having taken an RCA travel scholarship to South America and the Caribbean after graduation in 1962. Whereas his previous work stood firmly in line with his training, new paintings such as *Mirror* 1963–64 staged his battle with representation and abstraction, London and New York. In the vertical, rectangular composition, three bodies in varying degrees of figuration descend a spiral staircase into a lower space that consists of several geometric partitions of colour. The painting is a double portrait of Bowling and his first wife, Paddy Kitchen (the middle figure), who, along with the staircase and a Charles Eames-type Eifel chair, are the only fully representational components in the picture. The painting's ambivalent style suggested Bowling's state. Should he stay in London, a dormant art market in which he had to contend with being excluded from significant exhibitions?²¹ Or should he move to New York and join in the excitement of a robust art market, with new colleagues and a seemingly more cosmopolitan art scene? In a later conversation with fellow painter Bill Thomson, he described his decision to leave London for New York as one of need, stating, 'I left because I needed N.Y.'²²

The need that pushed him across the Atlantic found him altered at the other end. If Bowling had been construed as a Commonwealth immigrant in London, he was now, strangely and inexplicably, British, South American and black in New York.²³ What is significant about Bowling's decision to move to New York in 1966 is that he dropped himself squarely into abstract painting and the social politics of New York's art world. As a newcomer he pushed his quasi-South American and quasi-European perspective by experimenting in his own method of abstraction and by being both a painter and a writer. Here is Bowling in another set of circumstances by way of migration, one that posited him as a very different type of outsider than he had been in London. In New York, Bowling mixed in disparate sets, such as that of established American Pop artist Larry Rivers. One of his paintings from the year that he moved, *Bowling's Variety Store* 1966, references his multiple personal and formal perspectives. Geometrically abstract, *Bowling's Variety Store* also incorporates text in the style of American Pop art. The text, 'Bowling's Variety Store', neatly legible on the flat, planar lines of the painting's surface, references his mother's business in Guyana. It is also a word-play on the variety and scope of his own practice.

This repository of skill placed Bowling in an odd space relative to other painters. From his home in the Chelsea Hotel and his downtown studio, Bowling met established artists such as Jasper Johns through Rivers' introduction.²⁴ He came into contact with Norman Lewis, whose work he knew from the 1966 First World Festival of Negro Art in Dakar, where Bowling had won the grand prize. He also began to meet a younger set of black American artists, including Melvin Edwards, Daniel Johnson, Al Loving, Jack Whitten, and William T. Williams. It would be easy to configure the appearance of one of Bowling's central motifs, the map, as an outward sign of mobility. The outline of South America in a series of paintings from the late 1960s into the 1970s occurs just as Bowling is working through the full possibilities of abstraction. At first, South America appears as a stencilled outline, then morphs into an apparition before becoming the focal point of the composition. In dialogue with Barnett Newman's *Who's Afraid of Red, Yellow and Blue II* 1967, *Who's Afraid of*

Barney Newman? 1968 features the map as a fragmented ghost emerging from the Newman-like colour-zip that divides the canvas from top to bottom. The loose contours of the chalky, shadowy South America outline slide up, down and between the opposing colour fields of red and green, creating a third, lower zone of depth between the divided halves. Naming Newman points to the way in which Bowling's conversations in New York were invested in a first-generation abstract formalism that melded with his friendship with Clement Greenberg and his social sphere.²⁵ Yet he was also in contact with New York Pop (Rivers and Rosenquist), as well as with British Pop via classmates Hockney and Derek Boshier and the critic Lawrence Alloway, who had relocated to New York. The trace register of South America points to both of these currents (abstraction and Pop) as a new space, not as a geographic locator. The map is not about his relationship to South America or Guyana *per se*; rather, South America, a continent, is a place-holder for the enormous task of bridging a stylistic divide in painting at a time when few voices outside formalism were being heard, let alone supported by museums or collectors.

Contemporary with Bowling's pursuit of a modernist painting idiom in New York, America was involved in social upheaval throughout the 1960s, whose repercussions were felt for at least another decade. Warhol, another artist whom Bowling met after settling in New York, described the era as

one confrontation after another, till eventually every social obstacle had been confronted. I'm convinced that the attitudes behind the mass confrontations in the last part of the sixties came from these minor scuffles at the doorways to parties. The idea that anybody had the right to be anywhere and do anything, no matter who they were and how they dressed, was a big thing in the sixties.²⁶

The party analogy is an appropriate one for Bowling, whose success in the art world – a Guggenheim fellowship in 1967 and a solo exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art in 1971 – was incongruent with his role as a witness to, and sometimes a participant in, the burgeoning issue of Black Art. It was a discourse that he moved into and out of as a black ex-pat, using his platform at *Arts Magazine* to craft the debate for a wider audience.²⁷ In essays such as 'New York Classicism' he introduced a nationalist agenda to the structure of art criticism, explaining that

the term classical has been used in criticism, since the emergence of the New York School, before but, using the term as I do now, I am using it to describe the situation. Classicism, or the classical one might say, is that which the French and Paris lost. To paraphrase Gide: Classicism would seem to me so completely of the New World, America, or New York, that I would make the two synonymous – Classical and America – for it is. That the first could lay claim to exhausting American genius in its cultural search and had romantic expressionism not succeeded in making its home also America, at least it would be in its classical art that the American genius has been most fully manifested.²⁸

Implicitly he situates himself as an observer of the turn in (New World) American art. And to cite America as the New World positions him as an informed observer, if not also a member, of the Old World (Europe in general, Britain specifically). He writes a

series of articles for *Arts Magazine* in which both British and American audiences are given a window onto New York's Black Art debate. From his outsider perspective, and with the view that art in America is intrinsically nationalist, if not parochial, Bowling describes the predicament of black artists as being neglected, through a conspiracy of art world 'guilty secrets'.²⁹ These secrets of a 'Black Art', Bowling argued, were a reaction (or direct action, as it were) to the 'evolutionary, revolutionary forces stretching its possibilities'.³⁰ Yet he was not content with the declaration of race and the fight for civil rights as a claim for a distinct aesthetic. It was an issue that he struggled with in his own writing and in his choice to participate in exhibitions that grouped artists by race, as opposed to style, medium or subject. The question that he set out to answer in May 1969 – 'Why have black artists, given their historical role in art, contributed so little to the mainstream of contemporary styles or better still, why have they contributed so little to the great body of modern or modernist art?' – became a defining point in his texts and in his relationship to the art world, both black and white. As Kellie Jones notes, Bowling's interrogation of black group shows led him back to Robert Farris Thompson, who argued for the recognition of African creativity in the Americas during his symposium lecture on the burgeoning field of Black Studies at Yale University in 1969.³¹

In 1975, heeding family pressures and secure in his New York success, Bowling returned to London. Over the next several years, he re-established his London studio and travelled back and forth to New York, where he kept a studio. If one of the aims of this essay is to see the trajectory of Bowling's work through to the present, it can be done in two ways. After leaving New York, few of the major strides that he made institutionally bore fruit for future black artists. In many ways, the parochial dynamic of 'Americanness' that he wrote against won out, with black artists being shown in largely race- (or ethnicity-) based exhibitions and being cultivated within a discourse of identity and persona. The complicated success of Jean-Michel Basquiat in the 1980s is perhaps the best example of this. The multi-lingual and multi-referential scope of his painting was largely undervalued, set against the proposition of his singular stardom.³²

Similarly, the work of black artists (here African, Asian, and Caribbean) in the 1970s and 1980s, like Sutapa Biswas, Zarina Bhimji, Sonia Boyce, Chila Kumari Burman, Eddie Chambers, Lubaina Himid, Claudette Johnson, Keith Piper, Donald Rodney, Marlene Smith and others forced conversations about access and aesthetics in Britain's art institutions that was then broadcast internationally. Yet, they too became engulfed in a racialized rhetoric that often ignored the objects that they made. In 1982, after Bowling was back in London, he was invited to a now well-known conference on black art, the First National Black Art Convention to Discuss the Form, Functioning and Future of Black Art, which was held in October in Wolverhampton. Though some of this history has been rehearsed in other places, what is little known is that Bowling attended the convention, thereby forming a link between his generation and theirs and mirroring, in reverse, his transit between American and British art.³³ For many Americans, the existence of black British artists in the 1980s ignited discourse about the visibility of [post-coloniality](#),

cosmopolitanism and the global economy, issues that defined late twentieth-century art and shaped its exhibition practices.

Bowling's model might also lend perspective to the way in which the contemporary art market in South Africa was 'introduced' in the 1980s, a proof less of a reframing of the race idiom (it was, on the face of it, multi-racial) than of a re-branding of a market concept. South Africa's market led to a focus on contemporary African art, both on the continent and beyond it, throughout the 1980s and 1990s. With it came the idea of a transnational African artist, one defined by his or her mobility. In practice, this meant that an artist had access to Europe in the way that Bowling had first moved to London. The space of the transnational artist was twinned with the rise of various art markets or centres. One could be mobile only within the restricted boundary of one's market scope. After all, Bowling moved to New York for abstraction and the market that grew up around it, not unlike those who now seem to float from London to New York to Miami to Beijing. This is not a criticism of the market; rather it is a way to properly describe what we now easily codify as transnational. Interestingly, transnational's tandem term, '[post-black](#)', first identified by Thelma Golden in 2001, is generally synonymous with American black artists who have some international renown.³⁴ So, for example, if Yinka Shonibare, Chris Ofili, Tracey Rose and Wangechi Mutu are transnational, then Glenn Ligon, Kara Walker, Ellen Gallagher or William Pope L. are [post-black](#). What this list (or any other that I could have constructed) proves is nothing. A by-product of art history's preoccupation with biography and a conundrum from the nineteenth century that we cannot pry apart, race is an ineffective way of situating aesthetic practices. Bowling's pronouncement of and indictment of this truth did not affect the ways in which it continues to function. What we call transnational or [post-black](#) is what Bowling called Black Art. Neither would constitute Gilroy's and Thompson's concept of the [Black Atlantic](#), though there are overlaps (misunderstandings) among all of the terms. Even if unintentionally, these terms facilitate the same reductive rhetoric for black artists that formed Bowling's argument against Black Art. But, again, the problem is not the concept, it is what we do with it.

There is another way to situate Bowling in the post-1968 moment. In 2005, Bowling was elected to the Royal Academy of Art, making him the first black Royal Academician, an accolade that came later than similar accolades had for Basquiat, but not as late as they had for Norman Lewis.³⁵ His election followed a spate of international success for younger black artists. Chris Ofili was selected to represent Britain at the Venice Biennale in 2003, in the same year that Fred Wilson represented the United States. The prominence of these accomplishments was underscored by the way in which a black Atlanticism flowed effortlessly through each of their pavilions. Where Wilson investigated the history of a complex, multi-national and multi-purpose black presence (evidenced by the inclusion of Quattrocento and Cinquecento paintings with black subjects) in *Speak of Me as I Am*, Ofili pursued a semi-futuristic utopia with a suite of five paintings inhabited by a pair of black lovers. In a pared-down sense, both artists sought to give us, their viewers, a space of contemplation outside the contemporary understanding of black subjectivity, yet within a recognition of an African-influenced aesthetic practice. That

each of these, in very different ways, occurred within an expanded notion of painting, and its relationship to modernity, cannot be discounted. It is in this way that Bowling's intervention into criticism is retained by artists who have worked to secure more refined understandings of modernity. Bowling got this in the 60s and ushered it into his writing and practice for several years. In the interview published with his Whitney Museum exhibition, Bowling is asked by curator Richard Doty if the map of South America suggests a microcosm. To this question, Bowling answers:

The question refers to some kind of 18th-century idea of a little (small) man in a little situation, very mechanical and small in scale; the world of black art. I don't believe, as a painter, in the idea of black art; but it's obvious the black experience is universal. The more I think about it the more I feel... yes, and no because obviously, in a way the whole idea of a microcosm, as opposed to a macrocosm, is something that I'm about in this sort of harassing situation. Yet, I felt reticent about committing myself totally to the idea; simply because over and above everything else, I feel very political about a lot of issues, and I'm certainly political about what it means to be an artist, an artist who happens to be black, as such, and I think a lot of the things which have gone down makes what I'm doing a reflection of a much wider spectrum.³⁶

By any other name, that 'wider spectrum' would be the Atlantic Ocean.

¹ The title refers to Bowling's concern over Black Art in the article 'It's Not Enough to Say "Black is Beautiful"' *Art News*, 70, April 1971, p. 53. It is worth quoting him at length: 'Much of the discussion surrounding painting and sculpture by blacks seems completely concerned with notions about Black Art, not with the works themselves or their delivery. Not with a positively articulated object or set of objects. It is as though what is being said is that whatever black people do in the various areas labeled art is Art – hence Black Art. And various spokesmen make rules to govern this supposed new form of expression. Unless we accept the absurdity of such stereotypes as "they've all got rhythm..." and even if we do, can we stretch a little further to say they've all got painting? Whichever way this question is answered there are others of more immediate importance, such as: What precisely is the nature of black art? If we reply, however, tongue-in-cheek, that the precise nature of black art is that which forces itself upon our attention as a distinguishing mark of the black experience (a sort of thing, perhaps, only recognizable by black people) we are still left in the bind of trying to explain its vagaries and to make generalizations. For indeed we have not been able to detect in any kind of universal sense The Black Experience wedged-up in the flat bed between red and green: between say a red stripe and green stripe.

² Cited in Frank Bowling, British Library Sound Archive, National Life Stories.

³ Robert Farris Thompson, *Flash of the Spirit: African and Afro-American Art and Philosophy*, New York, Vintage Books, 1983, p. xiv.

⁴ To be clear, Thompson does not name Picasso in *Flash of the Spirit*. He does not have to. Instead he demonstrates that African art has generally not been constituted as an active source for modernism. We, the readers, can make the connection for ourselves.

⁵ Thompson, *Flash of the Spirit*, p. xv.

⁶ Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1993.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ For a longer discussion of Britain's art school conflicts in 1968, see Lisa Tickner, *Hornsey 1968: The Art School Revolution*, London, Frances Lincoln, 2008.

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- ¹⁰ For two British perspectives on the 1970s into the 1980s, see *The Empire Strikes Back: Race and Racism in 70s Britain*, London, Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies/Hutchinson, 1982, and Andy Beckett, *When the Lights Went Out: Britain in the Seventies*, London, Faber and Faber, 2009.
- ¹¹ Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, p. 14.
- ¹² Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, pp. 13–14. For a longer discussion of the painting’s provenance, see Andrew Walker, ‘From Private Sermon to Public Masterpiece: J.M.W. Turner’s “The Slave Ship” in Boston, 1876–1899’, *Journal of the Museum of Fine Arts*, Boston, 6, 1994, pp. 4–13. In addition to Turner, Gilroy mentions other painters. In his discussion of W.E.B. Du Bois’ novel *Dark Princess*, he includes the novel’s use of Kandinsky, Picasso, Matisse and Wyndham Lewis (*The Black Atlantic*, p. 141). In relation to Edward Wilmot Blyden’s roots in St Thomas, he mentions Camille Pissarro, who was born in the same community as Blyden (p. 210).
- ¹³ This point is made over and over with each copy of the paperback edition of *The Black Atlantic* which features *Building More Stately Mansions* 1944, one painting from Aaron Douglas’ cyclical and mural works held at Fisk University.
- ¹⁴ For a longer discussion of the transposition of these art markets, see Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1985.
- ¹⁵ Despite Edward Brathwaite’s overtures to Bowling regarding CAM, Bowling never joined the group, owing, perhaps, to his residence in New York during the height of CAM’s London activities. See letter from Edward Brathwaite to Colin Rickards, 6 February 1967, George Padmore Institute, London. For a longer discussion of visual artists active in CAM, see Anne Walmsley, *The Caribbean Artists Movement 1966–1972: A Literary and Cultural History*, London, New Beacon Books, 1992.
- ¹⁶ Bowling, British Library Sound Archive, National Life Stories.
- ¹⁷ *Commonwealth Artists of Fame 1952–1977*, held at the Commonwealth Institute’s gallery from 1 June to 3 July 1977, was a major exhibition that featured many artists who are now often linked to Bowling, including Avinash Chandra, Ben Enwonwu, Ronald Moody, Francis Newton Souza, and Williams. This tenuous tie between Bowling and these artists (equally tenuously connected as a group) came not from professional or social relationships but probably from Bowling’s participation in 1989’s *The Other Story: Afro-Asian Artists in Post-war Britain* at the Hayward Gallery. In the late 1950s, Bowling initiated an exhibition group of young Commonwealth artists, composed of artists from the “Old” and “New” Commonwealths. This group was not connected to the more established activities of the Commonwealth Institute.
- ¹⁸ Bacon’s pictorial influence on Bowling was noted early in his career. In a review of the *Young Commonwealth Artists* exhibition, David Sylvester described Bowling and the other artists in the show as ‘Baconians’, due to their emulation of the senior painter’s style. David Sylvester, ‘No Baconians’, *New Statesman*, 20 April 1962, p. 573.
- ¹⁹ Bowling made this trip with Royal College students David Hockney and Billy Apple. During the summer, he travelled west, seeing various modern architectural sites and museums. His first New York summer has been documented in several interviews, exhibition catalogues and reviews, including *Bowling at the Center for Inter-American Relations*, 28 November 1973–13 January 1974.
- ²⁰ Bowling, British Library Sound Archive, National Life Stories.
- ²¹ *The New Generation: 1964* exhibition at the Whitechapel Art Gallery was the first significant group show in which Bowling was not included alongside his Royal College friends and contemporaries Derek Boshier, David Hockney and Allen Jones.
- ²² ‘Frank Bowling and Bill Thomson: A Conversation between Two Painters’, *Art International*, Dec. 1976, p. 61.
- ²³ For example, he was eligible for a John Simon Guggenheim fellowship because he was born in British Guiana, then considered part of the fellowship’s Americas remit. Yet he knew many of the British art world ex-pats from London, such as Lawrence Alloway, who related to him as a Briton. He also had a solo show in 1973 at the Center for Inter-American Relations (now the Americas Society), an exhibition space under the mandate of Latin American, Caribbean and Canadian interests. In 1969 he took part in the Whitney Annual and in 1973 their biennial, both exhibitions dedicated to showing contemporary art in the United States.

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- 24 Interview with Frank Bowling, 25 November 2008. Bowling's first studio in New York was on Beekman Street. Later, he moved to 535 Broadway, just north of SoHo.
- 25 For a longer discussion of Bowling's and Greenberg's friendship, see Bowling, British Library Sound Archive, National Life Stories, and The Clement Greenberg Papers, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.
- 26 Andy Warhol and Pat Hackett, *POPism: The Warhol '60s*, New York, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980, p. 43. Warhol made this statement in relation to an anecdote about getting into the opening of the Marcel Duchamp exhibition at the Pasadena Art Museum in 1963.
- 27 Bowling was a correspondent for and contributor to *Arts Magazine* from 1969 to 1972, though he wrote for other periodicals before, during and after this period.
- 28 Frank Bowling, 'New York Classicism', *Arts Magazine*, 47, Dec. 1972/Jan. 1973, p. 63.
- 29 Frank Bowling, 'Discussion on Black Art', *Arts Magazine*, 43, Apr. 1969, p. 16.
- 30 Frank Bowling, 'Silence: People Die Crying When They Should Love', *Arts Magazine*, 45, Sept. 1970, p. 31.
- 31 Bowling sites Thompson in a comparison of the *African Art* exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum with the *Afro-American Art: New York and Boston* held at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. Frank Bowling, 'The Rupture – Ancestor Worship, Revival, Confusion, or Disguise', *Arts Magazine*, 44, Summer 1970, pp. 31–34. Thompson's text, 'African Influence in the Art of the United States', is included in Armstead L. Robinson, Craig C. Foster and Donald H. Ogilvie (eds.), *Black Studies in the University: A Symposium*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1969. Kellie Jones cites the intersection of Bowling and Thompson in 'It's Not Enough to Say "Black is Beautiful": Abstraction at the Whitney 1969–1974', in Kobena Mercer (ed.), *Discrepant Abstraction*, London, Institute of International Visual Arts/Cambridge, MA, MIT Press, 2006. Jones notes that Bowling's continued interest in Thompson's theories is demonstrated in his essay 'It's Not Enough to Say "Black is Beautiful"', pp. 53–5, 82–4.
- 32 Recent scholarship and exhibitions, such as the Brooklyn Museum's Basquiat exhibition in 2005, have worked to prove Basquiat's skill outside the cult of his persona.
- 33 Interview with Frank Bowling, November 25, 2008.
- 34 See Thelma Golden et al., *Freestyle*, New York, The Studio Museum in Harlem, 2001. While the term has gained currency over the decade, it has also been widely misused. Golden's original thesis is useful to return to as a corrective. There is also the term [Afropolitan](#), a synonym of transnational. One of its earliest citations was made by Taiye Tuakli-Wosornu in *The Lip* 5, March 2005.
- 35 I insert Basquiat and Lewis to acknowledge that this essay, like Gilroy's multiple-subject studies, could easily have been framed around either of the two of them.
- 36 Exhibition brochure, *Frank Bowling*, Whitney Museum of American Art, 4 November–6 December 1971, unpaginated.