



GEORGE DUNBAR

reception october 3rd 6 - 9pm

GEORGE DUNBAR: ENVISIONING ABSTRACTION 1950s–2023

Callan Contemporary is pleased to present *George Dunbar: Envisioning Abstraction 1950s–2023*, an exhibition spanning more than seven decades of George Dunbar's sustained and evolving investigation of abstraction. Bringing together painting, collage, sculpture, clay, and precious metal leaf works, the exhibition situates Dunbar within the broader history of postwar American abstraction, revealing a practice distinguished by its persistent experimentation with gesture, structure, material, light, and color.

Dunbar's work resists a linear progression from gestural to geometric abstraction. Throughout his career, spontaneity and order, accident and intention, and organic form and geometry coexist within compositions that are at once rigorously structured and physically expressive. His early paintings and collages emerged during a formative period in American art, when Abstract Expressionism was reshaping the possibilities of painting. After studying at Temple University's Tyler School of Art and Architecture in Philadelphia and subsequently in Paris, Dunbar spent time in New York in the early 1950s, encountering the artists and ideas of the New York School. These formative experiences established an expansive understanding of abstraction that he would continually test and redefine over the course of his career.

Material became central to this inquiry. Clay, paper, linen, and precious metal leaf function as active elements within Dunbar's compositions. Gold, silver, and palladium transform the surface through their interaction with light, while incision, abrasion, texture, and relief introduce a tactile dimension to works that move freely between painting and sculpture. As writer and critic John Yau observes, "Rather than privileging physical form over color and light or vice versa, Dunbar wanted both to exist in a single work."

Dunbar's engagement with South Louisiana further expanded the possibilities of his abstract language. Rather than depicting landscape literally, he translated its colors, rhythms, organic forms, textures, and shifting light into formal and material relationships. As Yau notes, "Working abstractly and figuratively, he brought architecture and nature into his work." Place, in Dunbar's practice, is not a fixed subject but an experience absorbed into the work itself—one element within a broader investigation of perception, memory, nature, and material.

Across seven decades, Dunbar repeatedly reconsidered what abstraction could be: gestural and geometric, accidental and deliberate, luminous and tactile, planar and sculptural. *George Dunbar: Envisioning Abstraction 1950s–2023* highlights a career defined not by stylistic uniformity, but by sustained exploration and renewal. His work occupies a distinctive position within American abstraction, connecting the international language of modernism with an expansive and deeply personal understanding of material, place, and perception.

RECEPTION: SATURDAY, OCTOBER 3rd 6 - 9 PM

EXHIBITION DATES: SEPTEMBER 24th - OCTOBER 31st, 2026



George Dunbar in Paris c. 1950
Gelatin silver print, 6" x 6"



George Dunbar at his studio on Bayou Bonfouca, 1997
Photography by Glade Bilby II

The exhibition is co-curated by George Dunbar's colleague and friend, Doyle Gertjeansen.

Front Cover: *Katrina*, 1986, acrylic and file folder collage on canvas, 50" x 61"



Untitled Action Painting, 1966, oil and paper on canvas, 40" x 60"



Red M, 1959, acrylic and paper collage on panel, 50" x 47"



Las Gordas, 1988, egg emulsion over clay on panel, 49.5" x 62"



Action Painting Series No. 18, 2011, acrylic and paper collage on canvas, 20" x 30"

CALLAN CONTEMPORARY

518 Julia Street | New Orleans, LA 70130



Untitled Abstraction, c. 1940-50

Egg tempera and ink on panel, 14" x 14"

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504.525.0518 CALLANCONTEMPORARY.COM