

Where Music Meets Canvas: Bellagio Gallery of Fine Art Celebrates Jazz & Abstract Art in American Duet

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LAS VEGAS (November 13, 2024) — [Bellagio Gallery of Fine Art](#) (BGFA) is unveiling its newest exhibition, *American Duet: Jazz & Abstract Art*, on display November 15 through early 2026. Curated from the Petrucci Family Foundation Collection of African American Art, the exhibition explores the relationship between jazz music and abstract art, comprised of over 61 works by 34 modern and contemporary artists who showcase the convergence of these genres through a medley of visual mediums.

American Duet emphasizes the shared creative spirit of jazz and abstract art, highlighting their similar expressive, vibrant and improvisational qualities. Jazz as a musical genre, and abstract art as an artistic movement, simultaneously emerged to prominence throughout the 20th century with African American artists and musicians at the forefront. Synchronically intertwined, these experimental frameworks developed a dialogue between the expressive visual language of the abstract artist and the complex rhythmic compositions of the jazz musician. This new creative exchange integrated jazz into American artistic culture, inspiring artists to translate sound to color, note to line and silence to void.

“Las Vegas has a rich jazz heritage, from the days of the Moulin Rouge and the Rat Pack to the contemporary sounds of The Pinky Ring by Bruno Mars at Bellagio Resort and Casino,” said MGM Resorts Director of Art and Culture Demecina Gray. “We are honored to celebrate that legacy by showcasing an extraordinary collection from diverse artists whose works embody the deep connection between jazz and abstract art. Partnering with the Petrucci Family Foundation has allowed us to bring these dynamic voices and stories to our community and we are thrilled for guests to experience them through this exhibition.”

Guests are welcomed into *American Duet* by a color-field of amorphous shapes in hues of purples, greens, blues and yellows, inspired by Herbert Gentry’s *Carnival* (1983). This colorful backdrop offers a striking photo opportunity, paired with a neon-lit moment inside the exhibition entryway. To the left, guests can engage in a collaborative experience that invites them to interpret sound as color, selecting hues that correspond to various musical samples. To the right, they can enjoy a curated playlist that complements the exhibition. This fourth iteration of Bellagio Gallery of Fine Art’s gateway installation celebrates the innovative spirit of the musicians and artists who shaped jazz and abstract art by experimenting, dissecting and exploring the boundaries of their genres.

The pieces in *American Duet* capture the dynamic qualities of jazz within abstract art, creating a visual symphony of harmonies, colors, skats, bops, strokes and riffs. The featured artists hail from diverse backgrounds and artistic approaches, each contributing to the evolution of abstract art in the United States. Artist highlights include:

- **Al Johnson**, an African American expressionist, is recognized for his cosmic abstractions and multimedia works. He exhibits globally at locations such as the Tokyo Metropolitan Museum and the Guangzhou International Art Fair. Johnson’s piece *Here’s To Life* (2024) was painted live at Bellagio Gallery of Fine Art and is featured in the exhibition.
- **Richard Mayhew** was a jazz singer and expressionist painter who channels his interior moods into rendered imaginary landscapes. His paintings, termed “mindscapes,” are often painted using harmonious tones and are imbued with a sense of spirituality drawn from his African American and Native American roots.
- **Beauford Delaney**, an influential figure from the Harlem Renaissance who became one of the most prolific painters of his generation, leaves a legacy in major art collections.
- **John Dowell**, a printmaker whose *White Paintings* (1976-1990) initially appear all white, but upon a closer look, reveals a coursing field of white activated marks that flow and pulse like reeds in the wind. These marks are interlaced with brilliant strokes of color, which represent the rhythms of jazz in visual form.
- **Mavis Pusey**, who shifted from fashion design to printmaking, gained recognition in major U.S. museums while teaching at esteemed institutions.
- **Mickalene Thomas**, an instantly recognizable and widely celebrated painter, is best known for her masterful, elaborate mixed-media paintings, photographs, films and installations. Utilizing rhinestones, acrylic and enamel materials, her works command space eloquently while dissecting the complexities of black and female identity within the Western canon.
- **Sam Gilliam**, an artist celebrated for his innovative use of draped, unsupported canvases, whose works evolved from the Washington Color School to a vibrant, jazz-inspired collage series in the 1970s.
- **Sam Middleton**, who transitioned from social realism to abstract expressionism after studying in Mexico, later became a prominent figure in the European art scene with work exhibited nationally and internationally.
- **Xenobia Bailey**, who studied ethnomusicology at the University of Washington, is best known for her eclectic crochet hats and large-scale crochet mandalas. These works consist of colorful concentric circles and repeating patterns with undertones of the 1970’s funk aesthetic.

The exhibition reflects MGM Resorts' commitment to displaying works by underrepresented artists. The full list of artists featured in the exhibition includes Xenobia Bailey, McArthur Binion, Robert Blackburn, Moe Brooker, Charles Burwell, Adger Cowans, Beauford Delaney, John Dowell, Herbert Gentry, Sam Gilliam, Bernard Harmon, Felrath Hines, Ed Hughes, Bill Hutson, Al Johnson, Femi Johnson, Paul Keene, G. Farrel Kellum, MaPó Kinnord, Norman Lewis, Alvin D. Loving Jr., Ulysses Marshall, Richard Mayhew, Tim McFarlane, Sam Middleton, Mavis Pusey, Charles Searles, Merton Simpson, Anthony Smith Jr., Vincent D. Smith, Nelson Stevens, Mickalene Thomas, Pheoris West and Michael Kelly Williams.

American Duet is on display daily at Bellagio Gallery of Fine Art from November 15, 2024 through June 1, 2025, open from 10 a.m. – 6 p.m. Last admissions are sold 30 minutes prior to closing time. Daily docent-led tours are held at 11 a.m. for an additional fee.

Tickets are \$19 for adults; \$17 for hotel guests, seniors 65 and older, students, teachers, and military, and \$15 for Nevada residents, with a valid ID. Children five and younger are free. Tour add-ons are \$10 per ticket.

For additional information, call (702) 693-7871 or (877) 957-9777 or visit bellagio.com/bgfa.

Image Credits: ©Herbert Gentry, *Carnival* (1984). Courtesy of Petrucci Family Foundation Collection of African American Art.

About Petrucci Family Foundation Collection of African American Art

Founded in 2006, The Petrucci Family Foundation (PFF) actively responds to the needs of the communities it serves. The PFF mission is to support education and create opportunities for Americans at every stage and station of life. In 2012, The Petrucci Family Foundation began to collect the works of Black Artists in the belief that we cannot truly understand American history without understanding African American history. Acting on this belief, the Foundation lends works from the Collection to museums and campus-based galleries for exhibitions and projects that engage audiences in meaningful conversation.

Now home to more than 500 works of art in all media, the PFF Collection continues to grow with new additions selected on the advice of professional educators, curators, and artists, emphasizing projects whose goal is to inspire the next generation of storytelling and cultural literacy in America. The Foundation actively partners with host institutions in forging connections with surrounding communities, assisting with publications and programs associated with these exhibitions, and providing the entire collection online.

About Bellagio Gallery of Fine Art

An intimate, 2,600 sq ft experience, Bellagio Gallery of Fine Art is Las Vegas' premier exhibition space, located in the heart of Bellagio Resort & Casino in the pool promenade. Since opening in 1998, the gallery has presented exhibitions of artworks and objects drawn from internationally acclaimed museums and private collections, including: *From Grain to Pixel: Contemporary Chinese Photography*; *ICONS of Contemporary Art*; *In Bloom*; *Ase: Afro Frequencies*; *Yayoi Kusama*; *Primal Water: An Exhibition of Contemporary Japanese Art*; *Samurai: Armor from the Ann and Gabriel Barbier-Mueller Collection*; *Town and Country: From Degas to Picasso*; *Fabergé Revealed*; and *Warhol Out West*.

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