

# Clarence Major, *painter*

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Clarence Major art Web Sites:

[www.explodingheadgallery.com](http://www.explodingheadgallery.com)

[www.clarencemajor.com](http://www.clarencemajor.com)

[www.phoenixsac.com/clarencemajor](http://www.phoenixsac.com/clarencemajor)

[www.yourart.com/clarencemajor](http://www.yourart.com/clarencemajor)

[www.artvitae.com/clarencemajor](http://www.artvitae.com/clarencemajor)

<http://www.saatchi-gallery.co.uk/yourgallery/artist/details.php?id=7254>

[www.art-avisen-avk.com/m.asp](http://www.art-avisen-avk.com/m.asp)

## *Biographical Information*

Clarence Major grew up in Chicago where he took private art lessons from Gus Nall and attended drawing and lecture classes at the Art Institute. His teachers were Addis Osborne, Cynthia Bollinger and others. He later earned a Ph.D. in both fine arts and literature from Union Graduate Institute and University/Vermont College. His paintings have been featured in many solo and group shows, and are in many private and several public collections. The University of North Carolina Press published an illustrated book about his paintings and writing, *Clarence Major and His Art* in 2001. He also teaches poetry and other subjects at the University of California, Davis.

## **Artist Statement**

“Painting for me is about discovering a plastic reality of composition through lines, color and texture. I’m often interested in painting what I feel about what I see rather than what I think I see or remember or imagine. And, yes, I pay attention to ‘push and pull’ as I apply the principle to my representational efforts. I want an art that will both give me contentment and at the same time challenge me – a dynamic art. I go through periods when my work is figurative, then all landscapes or interiors or still lifes – often in a neo-expressionist mode. I like to think that I am speaking (through paint) from the depths of my humanity and creativity. I want to make paintings that seem to look back at you with intensity (Rilke). My work is well within the Euro-American Tradition. Painting is the most important activity in my life.”

## *Exhibition History*

### **Solo Exhibitions:**

"Twenty Oil Paintings," Sarah Lawrence College Library, Bronxville, New York, spring, 1974.

"New Works on Paper," First National Bank Gallery, Boulder, Colorado, January 3-17, 1986.

"Double Consciousness: The Paintings of Clarence Major," Kresge Art Museum, East Lansing, Michigan, September 4-October 28, 2001.

"Figures in Full," 35 paintings on a 5-at-a-time rotating display for a year, previewport.com, 2002.

"It's Raining Art," Schacknow Museum of Fine Art, Plantation, Florida, April-May, 2003.

"A Festival of Figures," Exploding Head Gallery, Sacramento, California, April 2003.

"Impressions of Yolo County," The Main Street Gallery, Winters, CA., August 5-31, 2004.

One-person show, Golden Valley Financial, Sacramento, CA., Feb.0March, 2006.

[Solo show] Hamilton Club Gallery, Paterson New Jersey, October-November 2006.

### **Group Exhibitions:**

Oil painting entry, Carnegie Institute Gallery, Pittsburgh, Pa., 1950. [National exhibition of the best works by high school art students].

Oil painting entry, Montgomery Ward Department Store Gallery, Chicago, 1952. [National exhibition of the best works by high school art students].

Two paintings on display for sale. Gayle Gallery, Chicago, 1957.

Three paintings on display for sale. Gayle Galley, Chicago, 1958.

Two paintings on display for sale, Gayle Gallery, Chicago, 1959.

"Winds Over the Rockies" exhibition, National Center for Atmospheric Research, Boulder, Colorado, 1979.

Five paintings: "Banjo," "Five Figures," "Four Figures," "Rest," and "Gas Station," Poet Jazz Paint Exhibition, Porter Troupe Gallery, San Diego, California, April 2001.

[Five paintings on display] "Spirit Made Visible," John Natsoulas Gallery, Davis, California, May 9-June 7, 1992. Show also curated by Clarence Major, included works by Robert Colescott, Raymond Saunders, Oliver Jackson, and Mary Lovelace O'Neal.

"Birds," Families First, Davis, California, July 1992. [A John Natsoulas sponsored exhibition].

"All Creatures Great and Small," John Natsoulas Gallery, Davis, California, 1993.

[Five paintings] Kiln Theo Studio and Gallery, Winters, California, 1999.  
[Paintings on display for a year]

Three paintings: "Baseball," "Blue Vase," and "Two Figures," The Charles Rowell Collection Exhibition, Texas A & M University Art Museum, College Station, Texas, June 2002.

"Sweet Betty," John Natsoulas Gallery, October 2002.

[8 paintings] "Figuratively Speaking," The Exploding Head Gallery, Sacramento CA., August 2004.

[22 paintings] "Small Works, Small Prices, The Main Street Gallery, Winters CA., November-December, 2004.

"Waiting," and "The Mirror," Poetry and its Arts: Bay Area Interactions 1954-2004, California Historical Society Museum, San Francisco, December 11 2004-April 16 2005.

[Landscapes] Blue Hills Gallery, Winters, CA., April-June, 2005.

New Artists Show, Phoenix Gallery, Sacramento, CA. March, 2006

"Art by Writers," Paterson Art Museum, Paterson, New Jersey, April-May, 2006.

[Group Show] Phoenix Gallery, Sacramento, July, 2006.

"Urban Landscape," The Exploding Head Gallery, July, 2006.

## ***Bibliography***

### **Books:**

"Self Portrait," *Book People Picture Themselves* edited by Burt Britton, New York: Random House, 1976.

*Emergency Exit* by Clarence Major, New York: Fiction Collective, 1979. [Novel contains b & w reproductions of 23 paintings].

Cover art: reproduction of "Self Portrait," *My Amputations*, a novel by Clarence Major, New York: Fiction Collective, 1986.

Cover art: reproduction of the painting "Birds," *Configurations: New and Selected Poems 1958-1998*, by Clarence Major, Port Townsend, Washington: Copper Canyon Press, 1998.

*Clarence Major and His Art: Portraits of an African-American Postmodernist* edited by Bernard W. Bell, Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001. [Contains color plates of CM's paintings].

Four ink drawings, each beginning a section of the book, *Necessary Distance: Essays and Criticism* by Clarence Major, Minneapolis: Coffee House Press, 2001.

*Conversations with Clarence Major* edited by Nancy Bunge, Peggy Whitman Prenshaw, Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2002. {Extensive discussion of the relationship between painting and poetry}.

Cover art: *Waiting for Sweet Betty*, poems by Clarence Major, Port Townsend, Washington: Copper Canyon Press, 2002.

Cover art "Ball": *Such was The Season*, a novel by Clarence Major, Louisiana State University Press, 2003. [Republished edition from the 1987 edition].

### **Periodicals:**

Reproduction of fragment of a painting, *Coercion # 2*, 1959. [Art and literary magazine edited by Clarence Major for a brief time in the '50's].

Reproductions of five paintings, *par rapport: a journal of the humanities* (winter, 1979). Rpt. in *Emergency Exit*.

Reproductions of four paintings, *Black American Literature Forum* (Volume 13, Number 2, 1979).

"Self Portrait," *The Literary Review*, Volume 25, Number 4 (summer, 1982), 550.

Cover art: "Saturday Afternoon," *African-American Review*, Volume 28, Number 1 (spring 1994).

"The Double Vision of Clarence Major, Painter and Writer," essay by Lisa C. Roney, *African-American Review*, Volume 28, Number 1 (1994).

Cover art: "Saturday Afternoon," (detail) *Brilliant Corners: A Journal of Jazz & Literature* (1998).

"Painter of Words, Author of Art," "Country Boogie," "In Love," "Saturday Afternoon," "Beachball," "Black & White," "Truck," "On That Evening," "Family Feeling, *UC Davis Magazine*, Volume 16, Number 3 (spring 1999). Four page spread with added details from the paintings.

Cover Art: "Blue City," *African-American Review*, Volume 34, Number 4 (winter 2000).

Cover art: "Two Figures," *Callaloo: A Journal of African-American and African Arts and Letters*, Volume 24, Number 3 (summer 2001).

[1 painting] *Art News* Volume 101, Number 7 (Summer) 2002, p. 191. ("Waiting").

[Listing] *Art in America Annual* (2004-2005 Guide to Museums, Galleries and Artists/Sourcebook to the U. S. Art World), 96.

[1 painting] *Art News* Volume 103, Number 11 (December 2004), p. 158. ("Daydreaming").

December 11-2004-April 16 2005.

[ 1 painting] *American Art Collector*, Volume 2, book 1, July 2005 ("The Garden").

***Documentary Films and Motion Picture:***

“Juxtaposition: Clarence Major and His Art,” by Charlie Carroll with original music, “Unusual Textures,” composed by John Moyer, 1991. About 30 minutes.

“Double Consciousness: The Paintings of Clarence Major,” Kresge Art Museum, East Lansing, Michigan, September 4-October 28, 2001. About 30 minutes.

[Tribute to Clarence Major’s Paintings] *Shackles*, a motion picture starring D. L. Hugely, directed by Charles Winkler, produced by Irwin Winkler, Sony Pictures Studios, 2005.

KVIE-TV-Sacramento, Annual Art Auction, September 2005. (“Woman in White”) [Sold to Bill Hobbs, see below]

***Private and Public Collections (selected list)***

The Thurston Moore Collection, Northhamptom, MA (“Woman in Mask”)

The Byron Coley Collection, Florence, MA. (“Lamp”; “Masked Men”)

The Jeffrey Maser Collection, Berkeley, Ca. (“The Balcony”)

Tequia Burt, Chicago. Ill. (“Night Walk”)

The Dr. Shelley Blanton-Stroud Collection, Sacramento, CA. (“White Dove”; “Bananas and Plums”; “Alfresco”)

The Dr. Charles H. Rowell Collection, College Station, Texas (“Baseball”; “Blue Vase”; “Two Figures”)

The Jerry Sobel Collection, *Arttext*, New York NY (“Women and Children”)

The Bert Bruijne Collection, Brussels, Belgium (“Blue Woman”; “Carnival 1”; “Blue Nude”; “Blue Trunk”; “Carnival Mask 2”; “Cat Mask”; “Ceramics”)

The Melvin Reeves Collection, Oakland, CA. (“The Embrace”)

The Dr. Laurie Duesing Collection, Benicia, CA. (“Interior 1”)

The Prof. Yusef Komunyakaa Collection, Princeton, New Jersey  
("Standing Figure"; "Composition in Orange"; "Bus Station")

The Prof. Sandra McPherson Collection, Davis CA ("Night Trees")

The Dr. Abraham Jacob Collection, Willmett, Illinois, ("Trees and Houses")

The Dr. Bernard Bell Collection, College Park, Pa. ("Landscape")

Susan Johnson, Woodland, CA. ("Face" drawing; "Figure in a Landscape.")

Charles Wright, New York, N. Y. ("Figure")

The Prof. Mary Crow Collection, Fort Collins, Colorado ("Face")

The Prof. Charles Johnson Collection, Seattle, WA. ("Landscape")

The Russell Banks Collection, Princeton, New Jersey ("Figure")

Inez Ming, Chicago, Ill. ("Landscape" & "Figures")

The James DenBoer, Sacramento, CA. ("Red and Green")

The Schacknow Museum of Fine Arts, Plantation, Fla. ("Mother and Child")

The Mary Zeppa, Sacramento, CA. ("Daydreaming")

The Jodi de Fries Collection , Sacramento, CA. ("Palm trees Landscape")

The Bob Thompson Collection, West Lake Village, CA. ("Figure"  
"Madonna and Child")

The Margaret and Robert Eldred Collection, Davis, CA. ("Putah Creek--  
from memory")

The Marion Hamilton and Robert Hamilton Collection, Winters, CA.  
("Covell Street Overpass at F Street")

The Michelle Weiss and David Bunch Collection, Davis, CA. (“View of Putah Creek from a Bridge” “Still Life with Peppers” “Red and Green Fruit”)

Heather Lee Collection, Berkeley CA. (“Waiting” –also known as “Girl with Knees Together”)

The Giovanna Oettinger Collection, Davis CA. (“African Face Mask”)

The Bill Hobbs Collection, Sacramento, Ca., (“Woman in White Dress”)

The Shailesh Saigal Collection, Ann Arbor, Michigan (“Mother and Child”)

The J. Heady Collection, Woodbridge, Ca., (“Bike Path through the Green Belt”) [Sold at auction, American Association of University Women, January, 2006]

The Morrow Collection, California (“Back Road”)

The S. DeWitt Collection, Sacramento, Ca, (“Waiting)