PRESTEL
MUNICH · LONDON · NEW YORK

HAUS DER KUNST

Frank Bowling

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Mappa Mundi

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Mappa Mundi: Frank Bowling's Cognitive Abstraction

Okwui Enwezor

Where are your monuments, your battles, martyrs?
Where is your tribal memory? Sirs,
in that grey vault. The sea. The sea
has locked them up. The sea is History.[1]

Open Sea

In 1953[2] when Frank Bowling, at age nineteen, set sail for England from his native New Amsterdam in colonial British Guiana, he initiated a journey that, by 1970, would take more than half a million citizens of the British colonies in the West Indies to Britain[3], as a great historical shift was reshaping its far-flung empire. Traveling on a Booker boat[4] from Guiana, Bowling's trans-Atlantic crossing took him through passages in Trinidad, Martinique, and Spain, before landing in Portsmouth on the south coast of England. From Portsmouth he made his way to London by train, disembarking at Waterloo Station where he was met by his maternal uncle, Basil Franklin, with whom he lodged for several months in a flat off Finchley Road in West Hampstead, one of the city's suburbs. The last leg of this long journey from South America was by the London Tube. Inside the moiling train, the provincial Bowling, mesmerized by the new impressions of the great metropolis, no longer paid attention to his relative. Marveling at the surroundings and at the sheer energy of the heaving crowd, he soon lost himself in the packed, bustling sights of euphoric, postwar London, in the midst of "coronation fever."[5] However, the raucous and festive scene of revelers in the Tube station that summer afternoon belied the struggles of a city and country still deeply scarred by and emerging from the disasters of war.[6]

The end of the war had also precipitated other changes in politics, economics, and culture. In art, modernism's once brisk flag, though long rooted in European avant-garde traditions, flew at half-mast, as the winds of artistic change shifted towards the American shores.[7] The windy gust was even more powerful in geo-political terms, especially in colonial relationships.[8] As Britain rebuilt, its empire was slowly disintegrating. There were pressing demands for self-rule in Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean. This put the Empire on the back foot, as pressure for decolonization accelerated the reduction of its colonial holdings.[9] Short of a labor force necessary to rebuild the country, Britain turned to its colonies in the Anglo-Caribbean – which it flooded with advertisements – for workers who were offered free passage to the "mother country" in exchange for the promise of decently remunerated employment. The flow of labor from the Caribbean brought thousands of West Indian men and women to Britain in an epic story of postwar black migration to Europe. The first group of recruited workers arrived on June 22, 1948 in Tilbury Docks, on the steamship *Empire Windrush* fig. 1.[10] A decade of migration, powered by the wave of guest workers, began to alter Britain's cultural, ethnic, and social composition. The population of immigrants who settled in various British cities contributed to the creation of a permanent West Indian presence in postwar Britain, and, as Kennetta Hammond Perry writes, did so "in ways that subsequently transformed notions of citizenship and ideas of what it means to be British."[11] In an article recalling this period in the *Guardian* newspaper, Neil Spencer writes that a new society was being created with the arrival of those first immigrants, and with it "the seeds of multicultural Britain were duly sown."[12]

Britain was a full five years into its recruitment of guest workers when Bowling arrived in London. On the Tube journey that summer afternoon, Bowling would have seen a cross section of people – black, white and brown. The visible presence of West Indians, Africans, and Asians in the city depicted the new social composition of cosmopolitan London. Intertwined as notions of citizenship and multiculturalism were at the time, migration and the new settlers were not necessarily well received by the native population. As the postcolonial migration was transforming the face of Britain, it was also straining the relationship between hosts and guests, natives and immigrants.[13] Racial hostility and violence was rewriting the cosmopolitan brief of Britain, and consequently altered the nation's ethnic and class relations.[14] Indeed, Bowling's arrival was at a moment of cultural and political crosscurrents that impacted thousands of postcolonial strivers who joined this milieu. Despite experiences of racial antagonism in the city, for Bowling, being in London and seeing himself as part of its contemporary social composition represented its proper cultural currency. The journey from New Amsterdam was not intended to be to just any city in Britain. The specific cosmopolitan romance of it all was linked directly to London. As he described it to Mel Gooding: "the moment I arrived in London, I knew I was home." It was a feeling he shared with a multitude of other postcolonial aspirants: "… we always saw London as the place …."[15]

It is in this sense that Bowling laid claim to London. But if he spoke of London from the perspective of a new arrival to an exciting and bewildering metropolis, his was not a unique sentiment. Scenes of West Indian arrivals throughout the 1950s underscore the emphasis on London as the place to be. The great

fig. 1
The *Empire Windrush* arriving from Jamaica, 1948

the allegory of the swan. But the subtle climate of Bowling's later work, its abstract turn, for example in the patchy "swirl and swell" of *Dan with Map* (1967) fig. 8, a painterly sign of the entire peripatetic shift of mapping journeys, began to strain the recognition of imagery. Here, metaphor is substituted with allegory. However, Bowling's critical importance in this current discourse – like his contemporaries such as Jack Whitten and Sam Gilliam – extends beyond the formal inventiveness of his painting practice. The reading of his work demands the recognition of its transnational and intercultural perspective. In fact, such a perspective underscores the uniqueness of Bowling's artistic enterprise within modernism. Like Shabine riding the crest of the white waves of the Caribbean Sea in "The Schooner *Flight*," Bowling's paintings on the theme of memory, dislocation, and absence not only reveal, but also triangulate, the vital scenes of experience in which his art was to be situated, across and between modernism, location, and identity (painter, British, and black).

Here, yet another triangle emerges. It traverses and connects those cities (New Amsterdam, London, and New York, the erstwhile New Amsterdam) and continents (South America, Europe, and North America) where the lineaments of his practice took shape. Bowling's critical project became fully realized in the artistic milieu of Manhattan at a time when post-minimalist sculptors such as Robert Smithson, Walter de Maria, Michael Heizer, and others were developing the ideas of site-specificity. Such work, though largely abstract, was neither devoid of cultural context nor content. It might even be possible to perceive within these broad abstract vistas of earth works an undercurrent of whiteness and the artistic imagination so productively explored in Toni Morrison's reading of American literature.[69] The sublime visions of America's vast Western landscape and its rugged natural environments, so integral to works such as *Spiral Jetty* (1970) fig. 9, *Lightning Field* (1977) fig. 10, and *Double Negative* (1970), required a type of somatic disciplining. These works are in themselves not free of the haunting presence of America's colonial imagination. These are specifically American works of art, by white artists with the means, sponsorship, and audacity befitting their status within a certain *color-blind* ethic of modernism, a contrivance freed of any colonial unconscious. Bowling's magisterial appropriation of the dense flatlands of Guyana and of the continental expansiveness of South America and Africa in his mammoth paintings – the two paintings *False Start* (1968) p. 66–7 and *False Start* (1970) fig. 11 are good examples – announces and anticipates the material and somatic shifts in visual experience on a flat plane contemporary to the giant earth works of Smithson, De Maria, and Heizer. The scale of the two paintings transcends the conventional pictorial experience of easel painting and that of the minimalist object in space. The first *False Start*, at just over seven meters in its span, makes a bid for the epic. But the visual cognates it depicts, the cascading vertical poles (reminiscent of Jackson Pollock's *Blue Poles* (1952) fig. 12, and the swirling lines crossed by coruscating white diagonals that cut across the even bisection of the painting's pinkish red and bleached and oxidized horizontal surfaces, knit together agitated temporal and spatial projections. The second *False Start* articulates a more tenuous relationship to space. In it, Bowling orchestrates a visual event of slow time, a sensuous amplitude within the calm dreamscape of the painting's absorbent chalky pink surroundings and dry smudged whites, with intervals of appearance and disappearance of marks, shapes, and form upon which almost indecipherable outlines of the South American and African continents float. The continental features within this painting are not aberrations. They represent both coded and uncoded representational systems, marked and unmarked visual signs.

Bartica-Born: Unraveling Mythic Memories

Richard Sheridan Patrick Michael Aloysius Franklin (Frank) Bowling was born in Bartica, in the county of Essequibo, British Guiana, on February 26, 1934,[70] the first son and the second of four children. The country, whose Amerindian name means "land of

fig. 9
Robert Smithson, *Spiral Jetty,* 1970
Great Salt Lake, Utah mud, salt crystals, rocks, water, 457 m long and 4,5 m wide

fig. 10
Walter De Maria, *The Lightning Field,* 1977
Long-term installation, western New Mexico

Fig. 11
Frank Bowling, *False Start,* 1970
Acrylic and spray paint on canvas, 223 x 534 cm

fig. 12
Jackson Pollock, *Blue Poles,* 1952
Oil, enamel, aluminum paint, glass on canvas, 212.1 x 488.9 cm

intermediary zone between figuration and abstraction occupied by inchoate material as it exists in a state of signifying potential prior to being given distinct form or bounded shape. Coincidentally, Bowling traveled to Guyana in 1968 to film a program in the BBC's Monitor arts series (which went unrealized), just as Rivers toured Ethiopia, Kenya, Zaire, and Nigeria with French film-maker Pierre Gaisseau to make a documentary shown on NBC's Experiments in Television in 1968. Being responsive to world-turning events, as Bowling's early paintings of Patrice Lumumba p. 35 had been, was never mutually exclusive to experimental trial and error that investigated the material properties of color in water-soluble pigment.[10] With regard to this figural element, Bowling's photo-generated silkscreen templates are highly important too.

fig. 4
Frank Bowling, *Who's Afraid of Barney Newman*, 1968
Acrylic on canvas, 236.4 × 129.5 × 2.7 cm

To notice that the colonial house with palm fronds in *Cover Girl,* and other figurative works such as *Barticabather* p. 30 and *My Guyana* (both 1966–67) p. 30, carry over into the abstract color field of *Where is Lucienne?* (1971) p. 87 is to acknowledge the permeable membrane through which formal concerns about art's ontology were brought into contact with turbulent historical events within the two-way traffic of Bowling's visual thinking. Knowing the image is of the artist's family home in New Amsterdam on the Berbice River makes it a mnemonic inscription of the past, in a moment where Bowling's diasporic "routes" gave him a home in several places, not just "roots" in one. Moreover, we can also see that the figural element's almost illegible quality is of decisive importance for Bowling as it is a painterly manifestation of what Jacques Derrida called the *trace*. Whereas formalists wanted autonomous artworks to be wholly self-sufficient and thus fully present to the beholder—"presentness is grace" as Fried put it[11]—post-structuralists understood all sign systems to generate meaning through "differ*a*nce," spelled with an "a," which meant that, far from being either–or opposites, presence and absence are always interwoven in textual structures of deferral and delay whereby every signifier is haunted by "something other than itself," and thus comes to be traced both by what is left behind and what is yet to come.[12]

The figural silkscreens in *Mother's House with Beware of the Dog* (1966) p. 29, and *Plus Mother's House* (1968) p. 71, like the child whose portrayal is just about readable in *Bartica* (1968–69) p. 76 and *Middle Passage* (1970) p. 81, inscribe something memory-like that can be said to survive the necessary losses through which every self must leave home to acquire a life of its own. But as it is technologically mediated, rather than rendered by hand—thus withdrawing any expressive authorship from the scene—the trace structures among the dripping, pouring, and staining are always markings of differ*a*nce that are also open toward a futurity not yet present in the world. Interweaving absence and presence, such moves amount to a late-modernist intervention that introduces double-voicing into a hybrid text of recombinant elements, drawing us to understand loss not as a terminal ending but as a letting-go in which winning freedom from past constraint carries dispossesive force, which is exactly what was at stake in the concept of the sublime.

Oceanic Interspaces

Who's Afraid of Barney Newman? (1968) fig. 4 reads as art-about-art whose mischievous wit seems, at first sight, closer to post-modern pastiche than high-modernist self-seriousness. But it asks a question about who 1960s art was addressed to, while showing that color rarely exists in a state of purity sealed off from meaning. Alluding to Barnett Newman's series of four paintings begun in 1966, *Who's Afraid of Red, Yellow and Blue?*, the work signifies on the hierarchy in Newtonian optics between primary colors (which are indivisible) and secondary ones (which are mixtures). It ques-

tions the idea that scientific knowledge guarantees unchangeable truth by performing a substitution that highlights the contingent happenstance whereby the Ethiopian tricolor, established in 1897, began to proliferate as African and Caribbean nations won independence from 1957 onward, when red, yellow, and green became the signifiers of Pan-African identification, which was in turn further disseminated in the visual culture of Rastafari.

Bowling's tongue was firmly in cheek, yet amid the uptown/downtown partitions of the New York art world, his double-voicing addressed *both* the exclusionary tendencies of high-modernist discourse *and* the defensive mindset whereby "black art" activism seemed afraid to pass judgments among African American artworks. "It is as though what is being said is that whatever black people do in the various areas labeled art is Art — hence

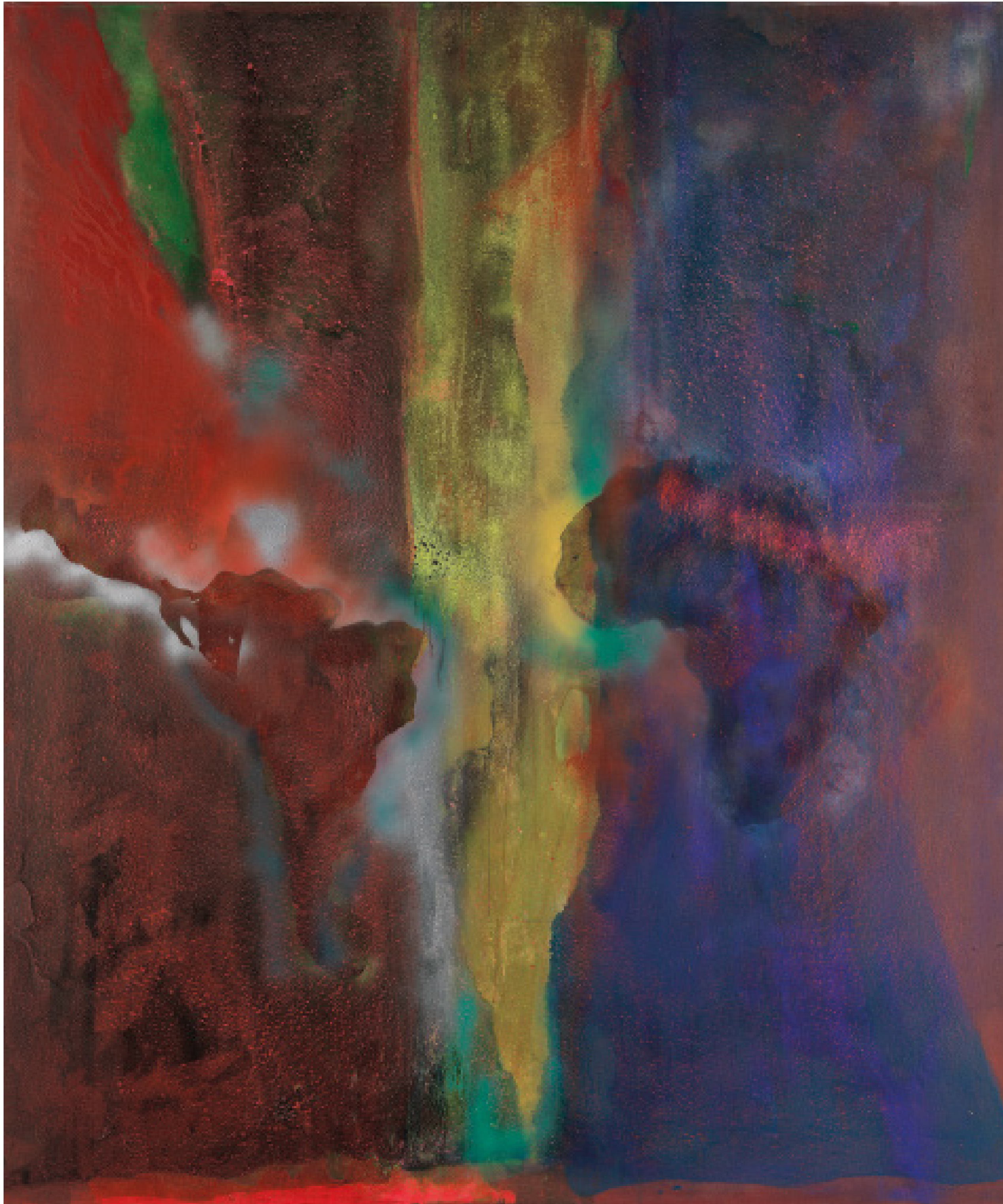
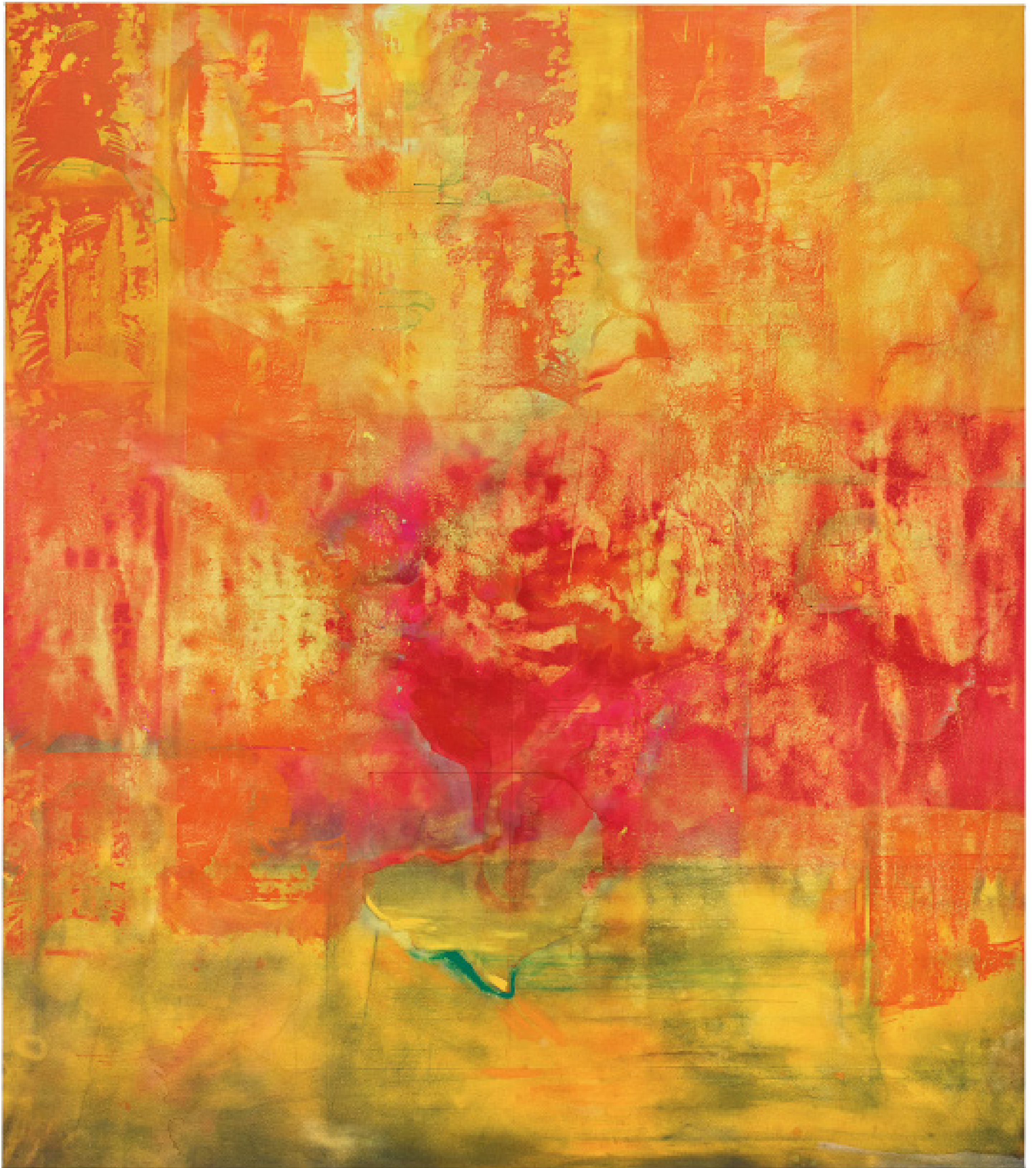
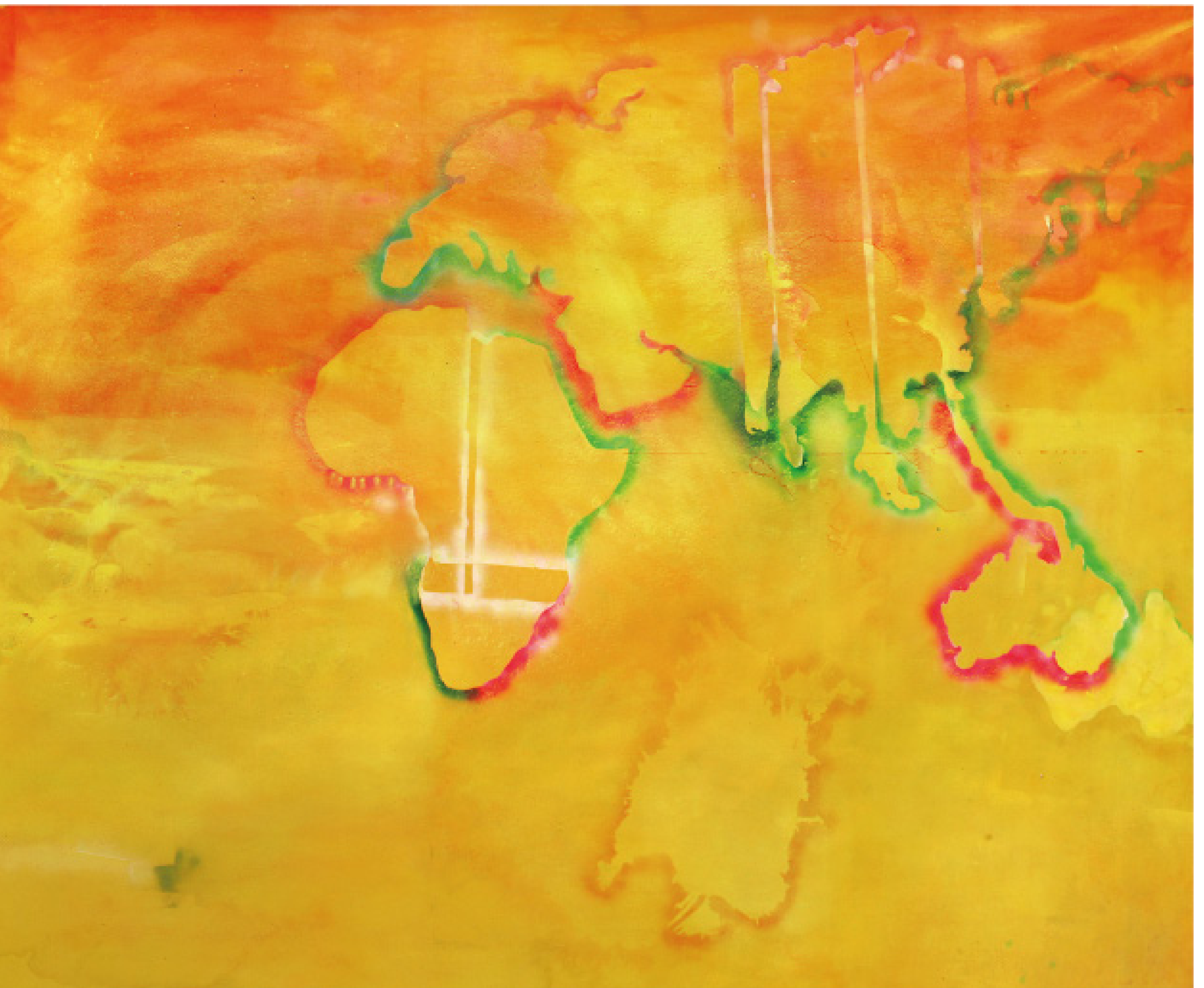


fig. 5
Frank Bowling, *Night Journey*, 1968–69
Acrylic on canvas, 328 × 269 cm

Middle Passage, 1970, acrylic and silkscreened ink on canvas, 321 × 281 cm

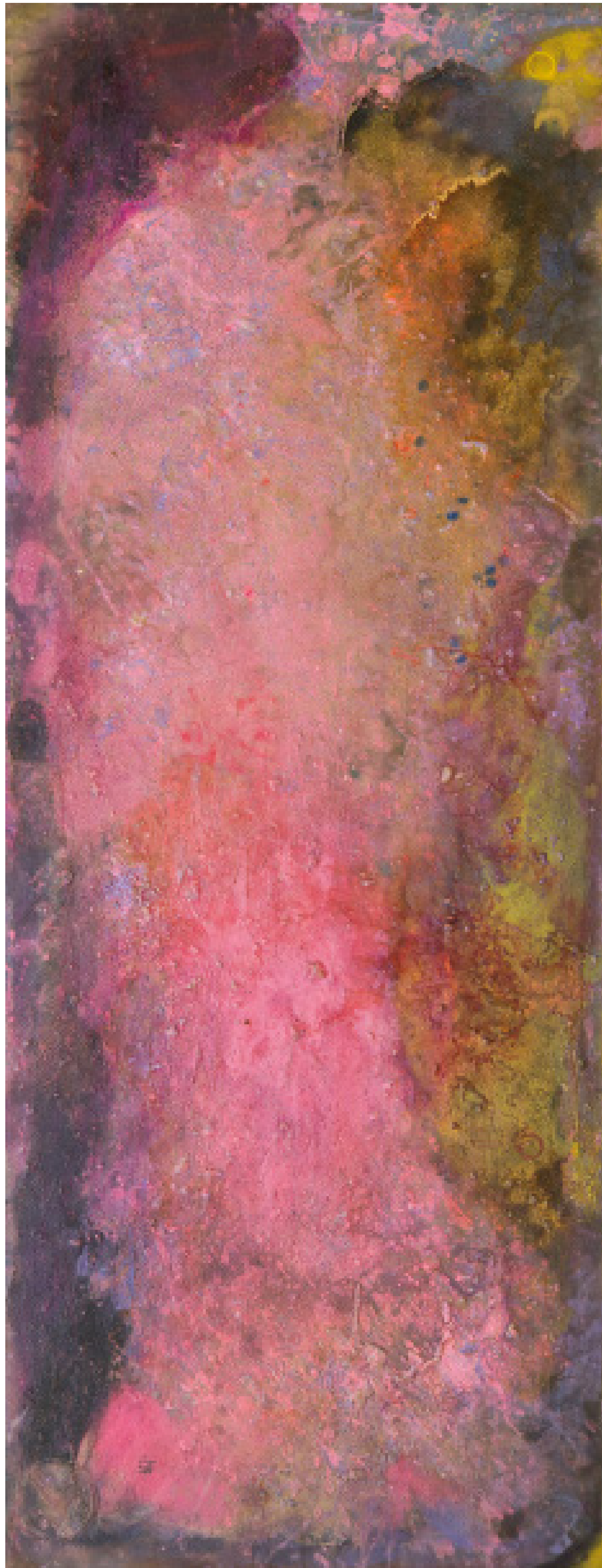


Australia to Africa, 1971, acrylic and spray paint on canvas, 280 × 712 cm

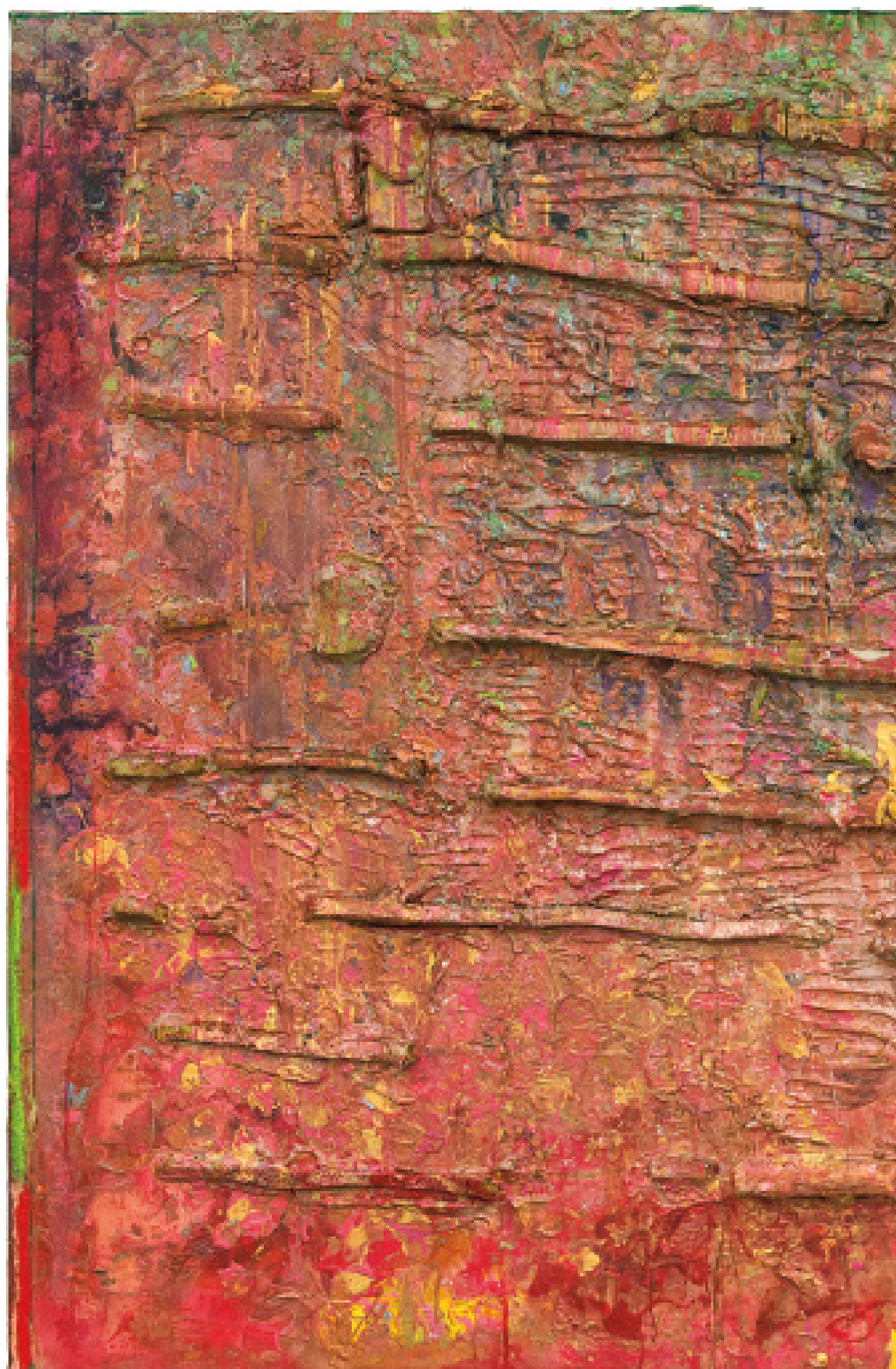


Bartica Bressary, 1978–79, acrylic on canvas, 178 × 71 cm

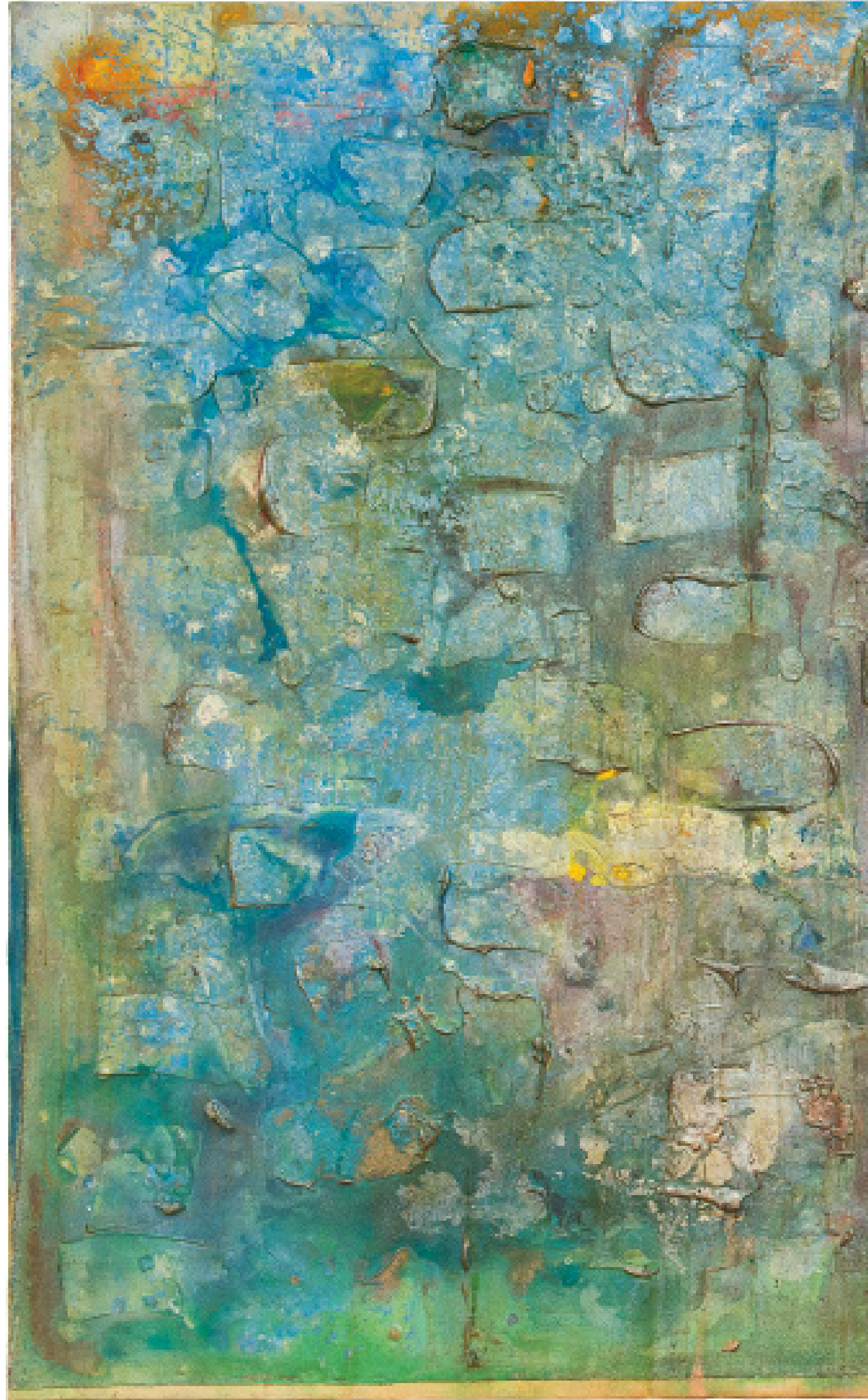
Mazarunitankfeat, 1979, acrylic on canvas, 178 × 63.5 cm



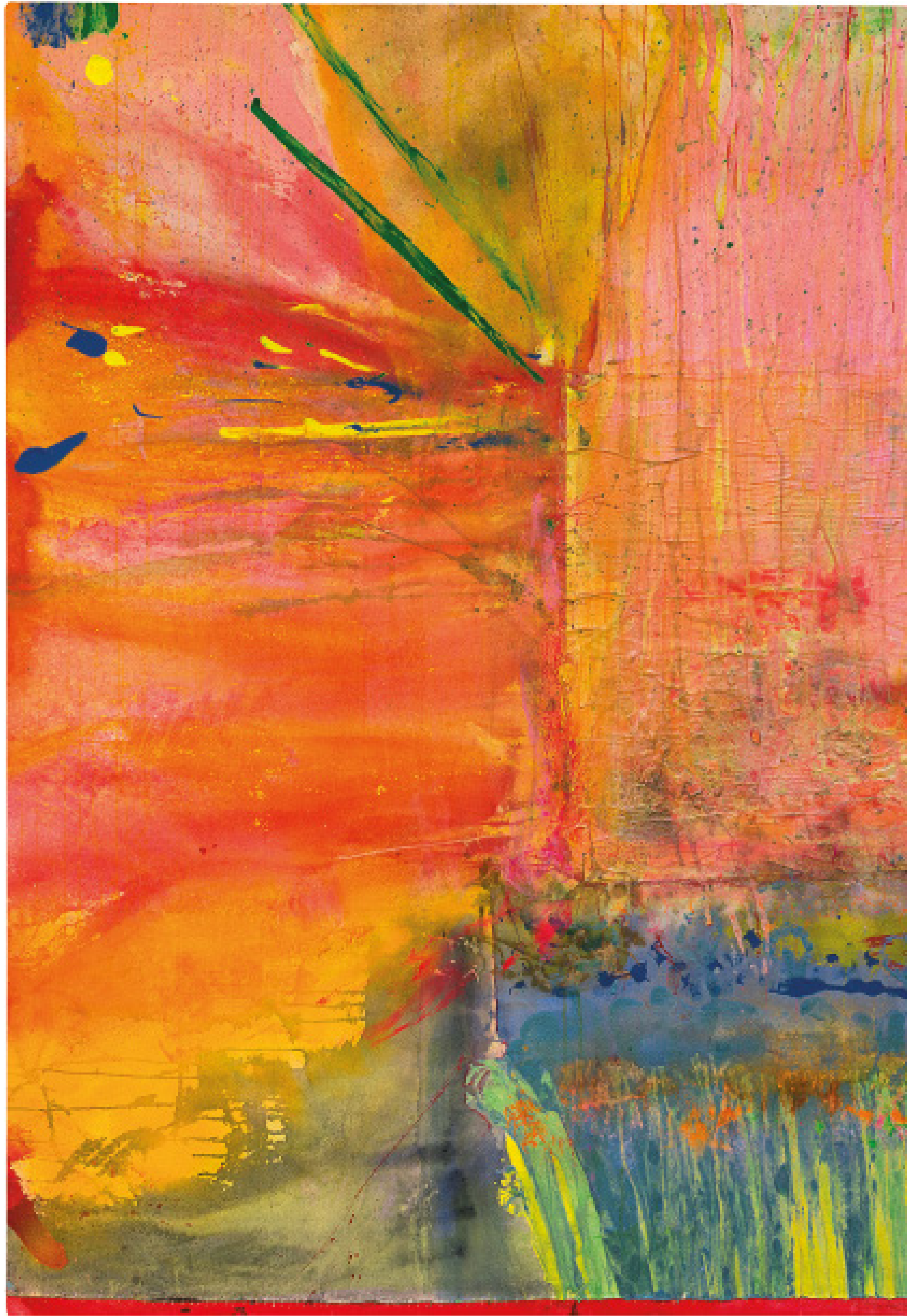
Devil's Sole, 1980, acrylic on canvas, 183 × 71 cm



Alluviumwold, 1985, acrylic paint, acrylic gel, foam, and mixed media on collaged canvas, 184.2 × 337.8 cm



Great Thames III, 1989, acrylic paint and acrylic gel on collaged canvas, 181.6 × 321.3 cm



Mappa Mundi, 2015, acrylic paint, acrylic gel, and mixed media on collaged canvas, 175.3 × 302.3 cm

Selected Writings 1969–1993

Frank Bowling

Letter from London
Caro at the Hayward

Going back to London fills me with such dread that I have to plan my stay nowadays. At first I used to think it was that long nerve-racking air journey, then I found that London itself—the people, the Art scene—puts the cold hand of fear on my heart.

I have to confess that this time I got a shock. My moment was the Anthony Caro show at the Hayward galleries on the South Bank. This was the real event for me in London. As a student, one didn't think of Anthony Caro as a major artist, and indeed he wasn't in the sense of stature alongside other young artists. (Somebody like Elizabeth Frink whose recent drawing show at the Waddington Galleries was one of the high water marks of my recent three week visit. The show was a complete success.) Nor did the fuss they were making at St. Martin's School of Art make much sense to me (perhaps that is saying more about me than about what actually was happening) because the Caro works I admired, if at all, were those compact lumpy and largely witty sculptures like *Man Smoking* or *Smoking Heads*. They were lighthearted and English in the same proportion that Giacometti's work seemed profound and universal. But this exhibition was something of a revelation. Caro's work has been bracketed with the work of people like David Smith and Kenneth Noland in painting. It is my contention that Caro is a "gent" alongside these people. The persistent feeling one got from the Hayward Gallery show was one of frolic and gaiety. Here was a man who enjoyed what he was doing in a different sense and is presumably doing it for different reasons. Now this is a very special quality, very English.

I remember sitting on a jury with Frank Auerbach—a comprehensive showing of whose work, it is rumoured, is due fairly soon at the Marlborough Fine Arts—at about the hottest moment of the Pop Art thing. He rather passionately rejected the work of a friend I had encouraged to submit. The work got past the jury. It in fact fitted amply with the show and the mood of the London scene at the time. But perhaps knowingly, what Frank was attacking was my friend's attitude which came out blatantly in the work. It wasn't so much that he was an old Etonian dabbler but that art for him was something one enjoyed doing and with whatever one pleased. John has since written a long, loving, and complicated treatise on flying saucers having given up painting and the Mosley fascist party as uninteresting.

This quality of inordinate fun pervades some of the best English artists. Be it Roger Hilton's having no reverence for his major prize winning painting at the John Moore Exhibition a few years ago or the major part of Caro's work at the Hayward. I can't imagine Caro working through a tough self conscious autobiographical phase like David Smith: as discussed by Lawrence Alloway in the last issue of the magazine. This is a joy exhibition in the real sense. Caro is no amateur. In fact he must be a strict professional to do quite as much work and teach. I would say that with William Turnbull and a very few others in London, he really is committed. However the element of the fanciful is so strong, it is impossible to remove the game/fantasy aspect of the works and take them seriously. Caro breaks all the rules, I suspect, without taking any of them into consideration. I mean much as he must know what a rectangle is all about, it doesn't bother him, he just uses it and be damned. So with color, so with ready made material, R.S.J. tubular stuff, etc. Anthony Caro's work is not difficult and demanding as say Turnbull's. On first confrontation this work looked (perhaps I mean to the uneducated eye) like a lot of metal of the "found" type, bars, plates, nuts, and bolts, and so on, carefully but rather haphazardly put together and carefully painted bright colours. The opportunity provided by the Hayward Gallery on the South Bank to see this work at its most advantageous is truly commendable. The show takes up all the space there is and rather splashes and lavishes its way into the open air sculpture courts.

The Caro breakthrough or "revolution" which completely passed me by as a student was suddenly revealed. For one thing that uncomfortable feeling one gets of objects (especially those cumbersome freestanding sculptures in gallery rooms) competing with one for space (making one immediately take up a rather aggressive, superior, and rigidly critical stance—you go up and touch it as though fondling, abstractedly, a girl or give it the once over to see what the possibilities are) is almost totally missing in this exhibition. The galleries are filled with works but "look" remarkedly open and unconstricting. Quite the contrary one felt one could approach the whole thing unimpeded the way one would pass other such structures in the real world. Added to this is the complete extraction of the menace (that lamppost which looms as you sit in the passenger seat of a motor car, the sudden realization with its attendant vertigo, that that massive bridge is only supported by the seemingly flimsiest of structures) from my identifications with the modern industrial landscape by the actual choice of painting in sweet or candy colours and the free associations of "inside" the studio and outside in this world. The gestures of these sculptures are distinctly accommodating. One walks along or past these works almost saying to oneself "well, it's a bit of all right isn't it" suppressing a chuckle. One would like to get acquainted. Suddenly Caro's work has that universal touch.

After this, I had to admit that London was different. The place is changing or do I mean it has changed. For instance Norman Stevens had a successful show at the Hanover Gallery. Norman is an exact contemporary of David Hockney. They are the same age and started Art School in Bradford at the same time. It is my opinion that Norman is a very good painter and there is a real respect and admiration for what he does in that underground esoteric sense for which art scenes are notorious, whereas David is a star. Norman's work is not characteristically English in that it is not involved with grey and understated. It is bold, precise, matter of fact—painted in bright, crisp colours. In a sense, his is a very private surrealistic world whose only connection with the English thing is that spiky (prickly?) uncomfortable feeling one has come to expect from Graham Sutherland. However, in Norman Stevens' paintings, one feels it is not forced and aggressive but rather delicately balanced and poetic with more than a touch of sly humour.

Frank Bowling — An Annotated Biography

Anna Schneider

Frank Bowling's mother Agatha Chrissie Bowling.

Bowling's Variety Store, the view used by Bowling in the screenprint *Mother's House*, 1953.

Childhood in British Guiana (1934–1953)

Frank Bowling was born on February 26, 1934 in Bartica, in the administrative district of Essequibo, British Guiana, the eldest son of Agatha Elizabeth Franklin Bowling and Richard Sheridan Bowling. He had two brothers and one sister. Since his childhood, a degree of uncertainty has surrounded the question of his precise date of birth, and this has long contributed to the magical quality of a biography for which both local identity and cosmopolitanism have remained central.

The name Bartica is derived from the language of the region's original native inhabitants and means "red earth." The small trading town is set at the mouth of three rivers: the Essequibo, the largest river in British Guiana, the Mazaruni, and the Cuyuni. The landscape is characterized by bodies of water, wetlands, and the surrounding tropical forest. By virtue of its proximity to the river, the little town—which was founded in 1842 by Anglican missionaries—served as a major access route into the interior of the country.

Frank Bowling's father was a qualified accountant, who worked for a time as a teacher before moving to the police service, where he was a paymaster. Police service involved the obligation to perform a term of duty in each of Guiana's three administrative districts. After living in Bartica, the Bowling family moved first to Georgetown, before settling finally in New Amsterdam, Berbice, in 1938. It was here that Frank Bowling spent the greater part of his childhood and youth.

Bowling's father Richard Sheridan Bowling.

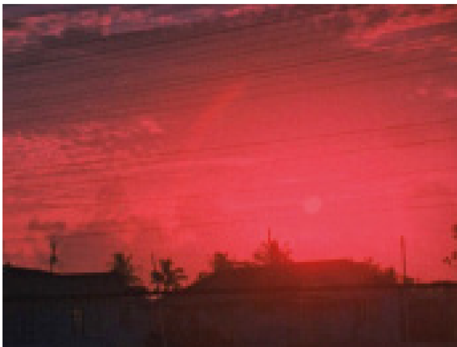
Frank Bowling describes his father as an uncommunicative, hardhearted, violent, unapproachable, irritable man with whom he did not have a good relationship. He sees his father as a victim of colonial power structures, which he on the one hand internalized, and which on the other excluded him from certain social spheres, and whose violence he himself perpetuated.

Bowling's mother, on the other hand, was a gifted and enterprising dressmaker and milliner who set up her own business shortly after the family settled in New Amsterdam; to begin with, a small dressmaker's shop in a side street (Pope Street), soon thereafter, in the mid-1940s, a larger shop with dry goods, saris, hats, and seamstress and dressmaking services on Main Street. Chrissie—as Bowling's mother was known to friends and family, having been born on Christmas Day—was a strong-willed, ambitious woman with a remarkable talent for organization. She had cared for her younger siblings after the death of her parents, and now devoted herself to providing for her own family: it was she who maintained control of finances. Her shop, known throughout the town, provided significant local employment; she trained seamstresses, made small loans, and was well known as a benefactress of the poor.

Not untypically for a child who has been exposed to extreme violence, Bowling was regarded as a difficult, refractory boy. There were frequent problems at school with this willful, lively, but also conspicuously bright child.

As a teenager, together with friends, he founded the "Young Rum Drinkers Club," whose name probably coincided with its program. He was also regarded as having prophetic powers, and neighbors often sought to make use of them. Moreover, the young Frank Bowling was the only member of his Anglican family who converted to the Catholic faith of his school friends with Portuguese origins. This desire gave rise to enormous conflicts within the family until he ultimately prevailed.

Berbice is a region along the Berbice River in Guiana where Bowling spent his childhood and early teens (film still).



His mother—herself far from squeamish when it came to corporal punishment—apparently knew that her freedom-loving son would be in danger if left alone with his father; she protected him by involving him early on in her commercial activities. She brought him along when making purchases and to business meetings, and he made himself useful when she would sew into the early morning hours. When he was ten or eleven years old, he began working in the shop, taking orders and making sales. When he was fourteen, he was given a bicycle in order to make deliveries to customers. These trips, which often took him many kilometers into the countryside, allowed him to earn money while at the same time enjoying a bit of freedom outside of the stressful domestic situation.

years, he worked on canvases mounted on stretchers, producing a series of white paintings. In 2006, he exhibited the cycle together with the early white landscapes; first at the Rollo Contemporary Art Gallery, which represented him at that point, and subsequently at Art Sway in the New Forest. The snow-covered landscapes of 1962 date from a time when he was awaiting the birth of his first son.

The beginnings of the rediscovery of Frank Bowling can be traced to his participation in the 50th Venice Biennale in 2003, where he exhibited in the project *Fault Lines: Contemporary African Art and Shifting Landscapes*, and where he was regarded simultaneously as an abstract and as a political artist. In her curatorial statement, Gilane Tawadros wrote: "One of the most important artists of his generation, Frank Bowling created map paintings in the late 1960s and early 1970s which combine his investigations into the formal properties of picture making with his political preoccupations."

Shortly thereafter, in 2004, Tate Britain presented his work in the group show *Art & the 60s: This Was Tomorrow* in the company of contemporaries such as David Hockney, Richard Hamilton, Peter Blake, and others.

Finally, in 2005, Bowling was the first black artist to become a member of the Royal Academy. He had been nominated by the sculptor Michael Sandle, who pushed hard for him to be elected. The process of his acceptance, however, did not run smoothly. Initially at least, the painting *Wintergreens* (1986) pp. 116–7, originally submitted as his diploma work, was rejected, despite the fact that Nick Savage, the head of collections, praised the work as a masterpiece in the tradition of Thomas Gainsborough and John Constable. Only during the second try was it accepted by the selection committee and accorded official acclaim. The art historian Mel Gooding has compared the painting to the large-format landscape paintings Constable had shown at the Academy. *Wintergreens* absorbs the beholders, submerging them in a dense swamp of organic material. In 2008, Bowling received a second official honor when he was awarded the title OBE (Order of the British Empire).

In 2011, when Paul Hedge began representing Bowling in the name of Hales Gallery, he finally enjoyed a long sought-after breakthrough on the art market. Hedge recognized the potential of an artist who had remained unrecognized for far too long. In subsequent years, he featured Bowling's work in a number of successful solo shows. In 2015, Bowling's exhibition with Marc Selwyn in Beverly Hills was completely sold out after a single week. On the institutional level as well, his work received increasing recognition. In 2012, Tate Britain included his series *Pourings* in a focus display *Drop, Roll, Drip ...*, and in 2014 the Spritmuseum in Stockholm gave him a solo show, entitled *Traingone*.

Mel Gooding has made an essential contribution to our understanding of Bowling's work. The poet, writer, and curator emerged from the same milieu as the artist, and has known him since the 1960s. A closer relationship between the two evolved only later, when Gooding began a more intense preoccupation with Bowling's oeuvre. Appearing in 2011 was a monograph and the *Artist Life Recordings* project (together with the British Library), which preserves the life stories of artists in the form of interviews. The conversations between Gooding and Bowling are a genuine treasure, and have continued up to the present.

In 2015, Bowling was able to take over an additional unit in Peacock Yard. Rose Jones, a photographer who has been a friend of Bowling's since the 1980s, began to assemble an archive documenting his oeuvre, which has now become an important center for scholarly examination of his work: last but not least this publication benefited greatly from the (re)discovered material in the archive. She is also working on a documentary film on the artist that includes numerous interviews with Bowling and the friends and companions who have accompanied him throughout his life, along with unpublished material from his trip to Guyana in 1968.

In 2017, Haus der Kunst in Munich is mounting the exhibition *Frank Bowling: Mappa Mundi*, curated by Okwui Enwezor with Anna Schneider, the first comprehensive presentation of works by the artist on such a large scale.

Frank Bowling still works every day in his studio in Peacock Yard. His powers of renewal and perpetual transformation remain extraordinary. His interest in life's complexities and its fundamental existential conditions is still uncompromising. His paintings seem to concentrate the very matter of life itself. Not unlike a diary, they testify to his daily experiences, to his memories, whether conscious or stored in his body and psyche, to his encounters in relationships with people, to the flux of life.

Frank Bowling at his studio at Peacock Yard, London 2012.