

**alma w. thomas**



My earth paintings are solely inspired from nature. The display of the designs formed by the leaves of the holly tree that covers the bay window in my home greets me each morning. These compositions are framed by the window panes with the aid of the wind as an active designer. The rays of the sunrise flickering through the leaves add joy to their display.

Man's highest inspirations come from nature. A world without color would seem dead. Color is life. Light is the mother of color. Light reveals to us the spirit and living soul of the world through colors.

Spring delivers her dynamic sermon to the world each year, drenching one's thoughts with its magnificent outburst of light hues of colors to darker ones as the weather grows warmer. Autumn, with the aid of Jack Frost, gives overwhelming, luscious, strong colors to the earth to enrich man's soul, seemingly relieving him of the hardships he encounters in life.

I have always enjoyed the progressive creativeness of the artist as he releases himself from the past. He gives new, exciting expressions through experiences from this rapidly changing world of science, economics, religion, society, and new materials, etc. I think that is the reason that I evolved to this type of statement in my present paintings. The irregular strokes give an interesting free pattern to the canvas, creating white intervals that punctuate the color stripes. There is a rhythmic movement obtained, too. I do not use masking tape. Sometimes a few pencil marks are employed to prohibit my becoming too involved in the stripes. The large circular canvasses, however, are freely designed.

My earth paintings are inspired by the display of azaleas at the Arboretum, the cherry blossoms, circular flower beds, the nurseries as seen from planes that are airborne, and by the foliage of trees in the fall.

My space paintings are expressed in the same color patterns as my earth paintings, with the white canvas forming intriguing motifs around and through the color composition.

I was born at the end of the 19th century, horse and buggy days, and experienced the phenomenal changes of the 20th century machine and space age. Today not only can our great scientists send astronauts to and from the moon to photograph its surface and bring back samples of rocks and other materials, but through the medium of color television all can actually see and experience the thrill of these adventures. These phenomena set my creativity in motion. Although I was unable to experience the thrill of witnessing a blast-off at Cape Kennedy, the enthusiasm of my friend, Selma Stein who did, inspired the development of two of my paintings, "The Launching Pad" and "The Blast Off."

When Apollo was put into orbit, Peanut's Charlie Brown left Snoopy spinning around to enjoy the unbelievable. This inspired the following 7 canvasses of the sun rising upon the world and Snoopy becoming aware of the planet Mars:

Snoopy Gets a Glimpse of Mars

Snoopy's Vision of Mars

Early Sun Display on Earth

Sunrise on Earth

Day Breaks on Earth

Sunrise Creeps on Earth

Earth Wrapped in the Sunset

With the success of Apollo 11, man accomplished his greatest achievement. Emerging from the Eagle, our astronauts were the first men to walk upon the surface of the moon. This motivated the paintings:

The Eagle Has Landed

The Lunar Surface

Man Walks On the Moon

Before selecting the site upon which to set the Yankee Clipper, Apollo 12, the broadcast of the astronauts describing what they saw induced my painting called "The Fantastic Sunset," and their return to earth inspired "Apollo 12 Splash Down."

As I watched the return to earth of Apollo 13 on the television, I was fascinated by the rescue procedures of the astronauts. Three parachutes lowered the space ship Odessa into the Indian Ocean at dawn. Frog men, swimming around the landed ship placed a collar around it to keep it afloat until the astronauts were hoisted up to the rescue helicopter. The painting "Splash Down of Apollo 13" was the result.

To conclude my space Series, I painted the "Eclipse" which occurred March 8, 1970.

A.W.T.

## Alma W. Thomas

Born in Columbus, Georgia, 1895.

Studied at Howard University, (first and only graduate of that art department), B.S., 1924. Columbia University, M.F.A., 1934. Studied with Summerford, Gates, and Kainen, American University, Washington, D.C., Creative painting, 1950-1960. Tour of art centers in Europe under auspices of Temple University, 1950. Taught art at Shaw Junior High School, Washington, D.C., until retirement, 1960.

Numerous one-woman exhibitions including the Dupont Theatre Art Gallery, Washington, D.C., 1960-1962; Howard University Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; 1964; Franz Bader Gallery, Washington, D.C., 1968-1970; Carl Van Vechten Gallery of Fine Arts, Fisk University, Nashville, Tenn., 1971.

Represented in over 70 group shows including Art In Embassies Program; The White House, Washington, D.C., 1969-70; *Twelve Afro-American Artists*, Lee Nordness Gallery, New York, 1969; *Dimensions in Black*, La Jolla Museum of Art, 1970; *Afro-American Artists, Boston-New York*, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 1970; *Contemporary Black Artists in America*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 1971.

Awards include a Purchase Prize, Howard University, Washington, D.C., 1963.

Represented in many permanent collections including Howard University, Washington, D.C.; Barnett Aden Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.; George Washington University Gallery, Washington, D.C.; National Collection of Fine Arts, Washington, D.C.; The Fisk University Collection of Afro-American Art, Nashville, Tenn.



### Catalogue

All paintings are acrylic and collage on canvas (except Numbers 9 through 14 which are acrylic on paper) and are lent by the artist.

All dimensions are in inches, height preceding width.

1. *Air View of Spring Nursery*. 1966. 48 x 48.
2. *Wind, Sunshine & Flowers*. 1968. 71 x 51.
3. *Apollo 12: Splash Down*. 1970. 71 x 51.
4. *The Eclipse*. 1970. 62 x 50.
5. *Snoopy Sees a Sunrise*. 1970. 48 x 48.
6. *Snoopy Sees Earth Wrapped In Sunset*. 1970. 62 x 50.
7. *Wind Dancing with Spring Fowers*. 1970. 48 x 50. (illustrated).
8. *Antares*. 1972. 66 x 57.
9. *Atmospheric Effect Number 6*. 1972. 31 x 24.
10. *Atmopsheric Effect Number 7*. 1972. 31 x 24.
11. *Atmospheric Effect Number 8*. 1972. 31 x 24.
12. *Atmospheric Effect Number 9*. 1972. 31 x 24.
13. *Atmospheric Effect Number 10*. 1972. 31 x 24.
14. *Atmospheric Effect Number 11*. 1972. 31 x 24.
15. *Cumulus*. 1972. 70 x 53.
16. *Grey Night*. 1972. 69 x 57.
17. *Mars Dust*. 1972. 69 x 57.
18. *Mars Reflection*. 1972. 67 x 53.
19. *Starry Night and the Astronauts*. 1972. 60 x 53.

April 25-May 28, 1972

### Whitney Museum of American Art

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