



GALLERY GUIDE

CARL E. MOORE

**THE REVOLUTION
HAS BEEN TELEVISED**

with exhibition essay by:
Dr. Adrian Duran

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Carl Moore: Revealing Revolution

Knowing where to start is always difficult. This is especially true when there are so many directions to go, so many places where this all might lead, if there is a destination or conclusion at all. This is the paradox of Carl E. Moore's work, not only in *The Revolution Has Been Televised*, but throughout his career. The work is wildly seductive, drawing us in through clarity of form and composition, harmonies of color, and an instinctive urge to decipher the goings on within and the fortunes of our protagonists. Where we go from there is precisely the question.

I would suggest that we go backwards to go forwards. The most obvious thing to me is that Carl is a storyteller in the spirit of painting's great storytellers and its centuries-long tradition of using works of art as mirrors to reflect and refract, as sites of contention and consideration, of possibility and promise. Moore has long pointed to Jacob Lawrence as an inspiration, a guide to recording the changing landscape of Black America. Lawrence's efficiency of form contrasts his complexity of narration, providing an initial foothold for what will always prove a complex path. It is this example that we follow first, but it is hardly the only or earliest.

When we speak of Modern Art, or Modernism, we draw our attention first to the Twentieth Century. Rightly so, but this chronology obscures the true depth of history with which we are dealing, one centuries deep. This broader view, that leads us from Francisco Goya to Eugene Delacroix to Edmonia Lewis to Henry Ossawa Tanner, reminds us that one of the primary goals of art making in the modern world has been to look more closely at this very same world to map its patterns and reveal its truths...to ask difficult questions of it and challenge it to move beyond its present to a better, more just future...to ask questions of why and what if.

Of course, the Twentieth Century was a period of constant and rapid change. Those who observed this most acutely were the artists. Picasso's *Guernica* is the canonical example, but others saw it just as clearly. The Constructivist marriage of abstraction and politics was a precedent, as were the subversions of bourgeois apathy that erupted out of Dada and Surrealism. Artists like Aaron Douglas, Archibald Motley, Elizabeth Catlett, Hale Woodruff, and Romare Bearden ensured that the Black American voice was clearly heard. By the middle of the century, exploration and questioning had become more important than dogma and tradition. The work of art was less a conclusion than a proposition. Authoritative declarations were the tools of totalitarianism and

reality had proven far too complex, too local, and too fugitive to fix forever in one place.

At much that same time, we all were pulled into the bottomless vortex of the mass media. The written word began to give way to the visual image. What was once fixed became ephemeral. The constant clattering of the idiot box demanded idiocy of us all, in the guise of entertainment and information, but instead gave us insight and a means by which to see things that were otherwise unseeable and unseen. Space races, assassinations, and wars became constants in our lives, beamed into the comfort of our homes far from any actual presence of danger or death. But we were becoming increasingly uncomfortable, unsettled in a world that had changed so much in the decades prior that we never could have imagined the decades to come. Marshall McLuhan and Guy Debord noticed, reminding us that the medium was the message and that ours had become a society of the spectacle.

Over the last half-century, this bombardment of images and information has metastasized, becoming the compulsive doom scrolling of social media. That time swiftly became this time, our time. What had once been a single device, the centerpiece of the appliance-happy postwar nuclear family home, had become an infinity of devices and screens in which authorship can no longer claim authority because we all occupy some bandwidth somewhere, we have all become producers and prognosticators. Everything is news and everything is noisy. This is how Carl Moore's work makes its first impact on us. It offers us an opportunity for pause, for focus, and for meditation amidst this chaos.

Moore's aesthetic pulls us in with its crisp compositions and judicious palette. Even the most eruptive scenes are contained by tight contour linework and flattened use of color. His method of creating images from collected and collaged sources, gridding them to scale, and carefully working them to finality quiets the tensions of their content. Rather than instantaneous outrage, shock, or shame, we are offered space and time. The works are less declarations than provocations. They are points of entry into conversations already underway, conversations that for many are long overdue.

Our current mediascape cultivates amnesia. So much information leads to too little retention. Events are instantaneously replaced by other events and the cycle propels itself to infinity. We never have enough time to process before another headline or image comes along to move us along. Overload is inevitable, at least until it becomes overwhelming and we breakdown like a pinball machine that goes tilt. Only when we are stopped dead in our tracks do we realize that other paths are available.

Moore's works are the interruptions that we so badly need, so desperately require to make any sense out of the world around us and the histories from which it was birthed. And we have indeed witnessed a world that defies sense. Living memory is full of trauma, of repetitive cycles that have not been successfully broken, of those trying with all their might to do so. We have watched the struggles for Civil Rights, the economic uncertainties of the 1970s, Stonewall, the ominous endgames of the Cold War and the global realignments that have ensued, the emergence of personal computing and the internet, the turn of a new millennium, America's global War on Terror, the Arab Spring, Black Lives Matter, the shifting sands of alternative facts, and an incessant stream of deep fakes, fake news, and conspiracy theories. We have watched death, murder, trials, acquittals, and, finally, convictions. Names fly by in sequence, forming a choir of mourning and horror—Trayvon, Eric, Michael, Tamir, Philando, Breonna, George, and this is just in the last decade, and just the most immediately recognizable. It has become nearly impossible to keep up and yet the news keeps streaming and the disorientation leaves us evermore vertiginous.

Moore's focus has always been the Black American experience. But the work resonates beyond the individual person or place. His art challenges us to reflect on all acts of persecution, oppression, injustice, and reckoning. The artist's bold, direct style guarantees that this challenge arrives at an instant but lingers. That one moment begets deep immersion into and reflection upon the works themselves and, by extension, ourselves.

It has been a half-century since Gil Scott-Heron told us that the revolution would not be televised. And, in that time, we have often forgotten what he told us next. That it would be live. Moore's work guides us toward that life: live and lived.

Adrian R Duran, PhD
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Adrian R. Duran is a Professor of Art History at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. He has written extensively on mid-20th century Italian painting and ceramics and is the Chair of UNO's ArteLatinx biennial. Duran taught at the Memphis College of Art from 2005-12 and holds a BA from the University of Notre Dame and an MA and PhD from the University of Delaware.

About the Artist:

Carl E. Moore received his BFA and MFA from the Memphis College of Art. He is the recipient of the *Emmett O’Ryan Award for Artistic Inspiration* and the *2019-20 CECA Tennessee Artist Fellowship* award. He has exhibited in various galleries and museums throughout the country. He has also curated and organized numerous exhibitions in small galleries, non-profits, alternative and independent spaces, as well judged local and national exhibitions.

His work deals with identity and color, by comparing social ideologies about race, stereotypes, and personal beliefs to everyday colors and the perception of these colors in our environment.

Carl E. Moore currently lives and works in Memphis, Tennessee.

You can learn more about his work at: www.carlemoore.com and on Instagram at: [@carle.moore](https://www.instagram.com/carle.moore)

Associated Events:

Artist Lecture:

February 1, 6 p.m., AD120

Reception/Gallery Talk:

February 2, noon-1:30 p.m., The New Gallery

Curator/Gallery Director: Michael Dickins

Gallery Assistants: Katie Boyer, Rheanne Bouchard, Sarah Roach