

Kendal Hanna

Painter



photograph by Melissa Alcena

- Born in 1936 in Nassau, The Bahamas
- Considered one of the first Bahamian abstract painters
- He went to New York City in early adulthood to study fine art, but had to return to take care of his mother, never fully realising his dream
- In 2011, a major retrospective of his work was shown at the NAGB
- He was selected to exhibit at Volta Art Fair in NYC in 2015

Artist Statement

“Art has always played a central role in the investigation of life and of nature itself. Art even questions itself, its purpose and meaning. We might even say that an image symbolises a view conveyed through passion and emotion all linked together in the image.”

Kendal Hanna’s *Rainbow Explosion*: Finding self through abstraction

February 13, 2017

by Natascha Vazquez

Kendal Hanna, a Bahamian artist and forerunner of abstract painting, brilliantly captures energetic expression and emotion through the intense repetition of line exemplified in *Untitled (Rainbow*

Explosion). Hanna has masterfully engaged in his medium, stretching its ability to exist both boldly and lightly, from heavy black in the foreground to a luminous yellow in the background. Splatters surrounding the composition and within provide insight into the craftsmanship of the work, leaving signs of active brushwork –one may imagine Hanna physically engaging with the paper, paintbrush and paint with high energy, working confidently as his subconscious mind expresses itself on the paper.



Untitled (Rainbow Explosion) (1993), Kendal Hanna, Watercolour on paper, 13 x 16. Part of the National Collection.

Hanna was also widely influenced by artist John St. John, an American abstract painter whose works of cities, mountains, trees and sea were carried from reality through to abstraction, to almost non-objectivity. St. John primarily worked with a painting knife, constructing chaotic compositions

with highly dynamic gestural marks and colour. Many describe his work as capturing the feeling of light while conveying a sense of space. *Untitled (Rainbow Explosion)* similarly displays a harmony with colour and space. Although non-objective, one may imagine a foreground and a background suggested through high contrasted color, providing a sense of order within chaos, and perhaps a sense of reality within non-reality.

At the top left of the painting, the viewer may experience a series of vertical repeated lines in black, rapidly leading the eye from left to center. Orange and blue sit quietly between each heavy line, complimenting each other as they do, providing a contrast against the heaviness that is black. The eye is interrupted halfway through with a circular, organic form that feels quickly constructed through its imperfection– it is not fully filled in nor is it perfectly circular– one may imagine a moment where Hanna had paused and allowed the paint to seep into the paper, leaving evidence of the intermission. It rests the eye until it continues again to the right of the painting, where a diagonal line intervenes and leads us down towards the center of the work.

[Click here to read more: Kendal Hanna's "Rainbow Explosion"](#)

The role of the arts in addressing climate change

April 15, 2019

by Blake Fox

Currently on display through June 2, 2019, at the National Art Gallery of The Bahamas (NAGB), the Permanent Exhibition “Hard Mouth: From the Tongue of the Ocean” focuses on how both verbal and visual language have shaped us as a country. One could argue that The Bahamas is a phonocentric culture, meaning speech is given precedence over written or visual work. Because of this emphasis on speech rather than written or visual work, it is no doubt that The Bahamas has a very rich oral culture. While Bahamians rely heavily on oral communication to pass down culture and traditions, visual and written works are just as crucial in communicating cultural beliefs and

values in societies. This exhibition highlights Bahamian artwork that serves as a conduit to bridge the gap between our visual and oral culture in The Bahamas.

As the 2019 hurricane season approaches, Kendal Hanna's *Environmental Force* (2005) has a certain resonance for The Bahamas. Hanna uses oil paint to create a turbulent surface by the use of aggressive brushstrokes that evoke a sense of movement and chaos often associated with severe weather. The muddy blues and greens along with the stark flashes of yellow and red are vaguely reminiscent of a hurricane satellite image—with the yellow circle in the centre of the painting perhaps representing the eye of a hurricane.



Environmental Force (2005), Kendal Hanna, oil on masonite, 47 x 35 in. Part of the National Collection acquired from the NE3.

[Click here to read more: Kendal Hanna explores the environment through abstraction](#)

