

# HYPERALLERGIC

## The Met Museum Nets Major Collection of Outsider Art from the South

by Benjamin Sutton  
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The Metropolitan Museum has just received gift of 57 works by African American artists from the southern United States from collector William Arnett's Souls Grown Deep Foundation. Among the pieces joining the Met's collection are 10 by Thornton Dial, whose work Arnett has collected and promoted for decades, and 20 quilts by the women of Gee's Bend, a community of female artists that's been active in remote Alabama since the 19th century. Also included in the trove are pieces by artists Nellie Mae Rowe and Joe Minter. Selections from the gifted works will be showcased in an exhibition at the Met in the fall of 2016 curated by Marla Prather, a curator of modern and contemporary art at the museum.

Arnett, a collector and curator based in Atlanta, has been a champion of self-taught African American artists since the early 1970s. His Souls Grown Deep Foundation, founded in 2010, collects and promotes the works of those artists through publications, museum loans, gifts, and exhibition. Though it doesn't have a permanent exhibition space of its own, the Foundation's holdings include works by more than 150 artists, including Purvis Young, Bessie Harvey, and Sandy Hall.

"In high school I wanted to know about religion but never found the perfect answer. In college I wanted to know about truth, and I looked all over the world for it and found it in art," he told Folk Art Messenger in 2011. "The omission of this Southern African American artistic phenomenon is absolutely the greatest failing of the art history we are taught. Isn't that enough of a reason?"



Thornton Dial, "Out of the Darkness, the Lord Gave Us Light" (2003), carpet, cloth, Splash Zone compound, enamel, and spray paint on canvas on wood



Thornton Dial, "African Athlete" (1998), pencil, charcoal, and pastel on paper