

Boscoe Holder | Geoffrey Holder

Exhibitions: 1 June–27 July 2024

Special preview for London Gallery Weekend: Friday 31 May 2024, 10am–6pm

16 Wharf Road, London N1 7RW



LEFT: Geoffrey Holder, *Woman on Man's Shoulders*, Late-1970s
Oil on canvas
152.4 x 101.6 cm / 60 x 40 in
© Geoffrey Holder. Courtesy the Geoffrey Holder Estate and James Fuentes
RIGHT: Boscoe Holder, *Green Background*, 1996
Acrylic on board
57.7 x 48.1 cm / 22 3/4 x 19 in
© Boscoe Holder. Courtesy the Boscoe Holder Estate and Victoria Miro

‘Two boys and all they want to do is to dance and paint.’ – Geoffrey Holder

Victoria Miro is delighted to present exhibitions by Boscoe Holder and Geoffrey Holder. Shown in tandem for the first time, exhibitions by Boscoe (1921–2007) and his younger brother Geoffrey (1930–2014) foreground the siblings as painters against the significance of their achievements in theatre, dance and film.

Born in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, Boscoe and Geoffrey Holder were true polymaths whose groundbreaking careers in the visual and performing arts led them individually to the UK, where Boscoe settled in 1950, and the US, where Geoffrey made his home in 1953, and wider international acclaim. Throughout their careers, both regarded the impulse to paint as being intrinsic to their broader creative drive, an embodied painting informed by and informing their accomplishments as choreographers and performers.

On view across the two spaces of our London gallery, these exhibitions consider for the first time the siblings as painters in parallel. Created in New York from the late-1970s into the 2000s, selected works by Geoffrey move from the quiet intimacy of domestic scenes to the lively energy of nightclubs. Equally tender and strong, these paintings display his deeply intuitive understanding of colour, used powerfully to describe emotion as much as form. Works by Boscoe are drawn principally from the 1990s, made in Trinidad where he resettled in 1970. A focus of these paintings, characterised by their quiet intensity, is the male nude, a significant aspect of Boscoe’s work though one that was rarely exhibited during his lifetime.

Together the exhibitions draw connections and invite conversations around expression, representation and style, the similarities and contrasts of brothers who, sharing creative passions, remained distinct though equally compelling characters throughout their lives.

New writing by Trinidad-born writer Atillah Springer accompanies the exhibitions.

The Geoffrey Holder exhibition is presented in collaboration with James Fuentes and the Geoffrey Holder Estate.

The Boscoe Holder exhibition is presented with thanks to Christian Holder, Executor of the Boscoe Holder Estate.

About the artists

A painter, designer, dancer, choreographer and musician, **Boscoe Holder** (1921–2007) was born in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. A child prodigy, he began painting seriously and playing the piano professionally from a young age. He later formed his own dance company, the Boscoe Holder Dancers, and in 1947 visited New York for the first time, teaching dance at the prestigious Katherine Dunham School of Dance and exhibiting his paintings. Returning to Trinidad the following year, he married his leading dancer, Sheila Clarke. In 1950 they travelled to London, which was to become their home for the next twenty years. They formed the dance troupe Boscoe Holder and his Caribbean Dancers, performing at the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953. Holder spent the next two decades touring Europe and further afield. Later in the 1950s he produced, choreographed and costumed shows at the Candlelight Room at The May Fair Hotel, where he also formed and led his own band. Film and television roles during this time included *Sapphire* and *The Saint*. He continued to paint throughout this period, exhibiting his work at venues including the Redfern Gallery, the Commonwealth Institute, the Royal Watercolour Society Galleries and the Leicester Galleries.

Holder returned to Trinidad in 1970, where he focused on painting until his death in 2007. He showed regularly in Trinidad and throughout the Caribbean. In 1973, in recognition of his contribution to the Arts, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago awarded him the Hummingbird Medal (gold) and named a street after him. He also received awards for his achievements from the governments of Venezuela and France, as well as various institutions in the US. Posthumous presentations of his work include the group exhibitions: *In the Company of Alice* at Victoria Miro, London, UK, in 2010 and *Self-Consciousness*, curated by Hilton Als and Peter Doig, at VeneKlasen/Werner, Berlin, Germany, in 2010. A new book, *Boscoe Holder: Travels in Rhythm, A life of art and dance* by his son Christian Holder is published by Rosenstiels in spring this year.

Geoffrey Holder (born 1930, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago; died 2014, New York, USA) was a painter, photographer, choreographer, director, costume designer, dancer, actor and composer. Following the lead of his older brother, Boscoe, Geoffrey made his debut appearance with the Boscoe Holder Dancers at the age of seven. In 1953, invited by choreographer Agnes de Mille, he relocated to New York City, where from 1955–1956 he performed as a principal dancer for the Metropolitan Opera Ballet before embarking on a career in film, which included roles in *Doctor Dolittle* and the Bond movie *Live and Let Die*, and later television. His first solo exhibition in New York was held in 1954. By 1956 his work as a painter was recognised with a Guggenheim Fellowship. In New York, Holder found a muse in his wife-to-be, the distinguished dancer, actress, and choreographer Carmen de Lavallade. The couple married in 1955, travelling the world – including a period spent in Paris working with Josephine Baker – eventually settling in Lower Manhattan. During the 1970s Holder won two Tony Awards for his direction and costume design for the Broadway musical *The Wiz* and received multiple awards for his direction, costume design, and choreography.

Solo exhibitions have been held at venues including James Fuentes (2024: curated by Erica Moiah James, Los Angeles, USA; 2022: *Pleasures of the Flesh*, curated by Hilton Als, New York, USA); New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, USA; Mexican Cultural Institute, Washington, DC, USA; National Arts Club, New York, USA; Far Gallery, New York, USA; Griffin Gallery, New York, USA; and Randolph Gallery, Houston, USA, among others. His work has been featured in institutional group exhibitions at the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, USA; the California African American Museum, Los Angeles, USA; DuSable Museum of African American History, Chicago, USA; Nasher Museum of Art, Durham, USA; Museum of the City of New York, USA; National Gallery of Art, Washington DC, USA; and the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, USA, among others. Holder's works are in permanent collections including the Barbados Museum, Bridgetown; Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, USA; Columbia University, New York, USA; and Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, USA.

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