

# RICHARD SALTOUN

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Jan Wade: *COLORED ENTRANCE*

Dates: 2 May - 22 June 2024



Above: Portrait of Jan Wade & Mama Story (1996)

**NEW YORK, NY - Thursday, 2 May 2024** — Richard Saltoun Gallery New York will open its doors on the Upper East side at 19 E. 66th Street to coincide with NYC Frieze Week. The inaugural exhibition will be a solo presentation by African-Canadian artist **Jan WADE** (b. 1952), on view between 2 May - 22 June 2024.

The gallery will also present a parallel display of Jan Wade's works at the inaugural edition of Esther art fair, taking place at the Estonian House in NYC, 1-4 May 2024.

*COLORED ENTRANCE* will be Wade's first solo exhibition in the United States, on the occasion of the acquisition of her work, *Epiphany*, by the National Gallery of Canada, and her upcoming retrospective *Soul Power* opening at the Art Gallery of Hamilton, Ontario in June 2024. Previously touring from Vancouver Art Gallery (2022), this marked the first solo show by a Black woman artist in the museum's ninety-year history.

***"We couldn't be more excited to present Jan's works to a US audience, given the incredible wealth of connections and references to her Southern-American roots and the historic slave trade, and their resounding contemporary political***

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***relevance. This will be the first major showing of her work in America and coincides with her touring retrospective opening in June, in Hamilton, Ontario; we have selected both historic and new works to showcase the full breadth of her practice here.”***

- Niamh Coghlan, Director



Above: Jan Wade, *Epiphany* (1994 - 2012) and *Spirit House* (2021), Installation View at Soul Power, Vancouver Art Gallery, Canada, 2022.

Wade's practice explores Black identity in a post-colonial landscape from a deeply personal perspective, drawing from her heritage, African diasporic spiritual practices, and the history of Southern Slave Cultures. She was born in 1952 in Hamilton, Ontario, to a Black Canadian father with familial origins in the American South and a Canadian mother of European descent. Raised in a relatively segregated but close-knit community, Wade's formative years were heavily influenced by her local African Methodist Episcopal Church, Southern African-American culture and aesthetics from the perspectives of her paternal grandmother and great-grandmother. Although it stems from personal experience, Wade's work seeks to articulate a new understanding of her ancestors' traumas and the discrimination they themselves suffered.

### **Exhibition Highlights**

Highlights will include a new iteration of Wade's most iconic work *Epiphany* (1994-), an installation comprising crosses made of found pieces of wood and embellished with thrift store finds and objects connected African-American culture, acting as a monument to cultural survival and perseverance. Exhibited at the 1st Johannesburg Biennale AFRICUS (1995), and included in Wade's touring retrospective *Soul Power*, this will be

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the first time *Epiphany* is shown in the USA. A previous iteration of this work was recently acquired by the National Gallery of Canada for their permanent collection.



Also on view will be a new series of Wade's ongoing *Memory Jugs*, which she was inspired to make after seeing an archival photograph of memory jugs placed on Slave cemeteries in the American South. These funerary vessels were traditionally adorned with fragments—broken china, glass shards—and items beloved by the departed. Unlike historical memory jugs, Wade's pieces incorporate text as well as imagery in addition to found objects, rooted in the oral traditions of her African Methodist church.

To the left: Jan Wade, *Memory Jug*, 2016

***"Memory Jugs in particular have a fascinating history. Social Anthropologists believe they originated from BaKongo culture in Africa, which influenced slave***

***communities in America. Their origins come from the tradition of African mourning vessels and were used as a way of honoring family members and friends. They were placed in Cemeteries and used as grave markers. (...) They had a revival in the Victorian era and even in the 50's and 60's but the original function and meaning had by then been mostly forgotten. I am dedicating mine to.... BLACK LIVES MATTER....and all those through the ages who have suffered and died at the hands of injustice....only the cameras are new....."***

- Jan Wade

These vessels will be exhibited alongside early paintings such as *Mama Story* (1996), and *Women Cometh Forth Like a Flower* (1995) which illustrate Wade's enduring focus on the matriarchy of her family.

The show will also feature works from Wade's decade-long project *Breathe* (2004–2022), a series of 70 embroidered canvases in abstract patterns that are informed by traditional Southern American, Gee Bend quilting techniques, and dedicated to the Black Lives Matter movement. The series is titled after the last words of Eric Garner, who was killed in a prohibited chokehold by a police officer in 2014. The repetition echoes the relentless recirculation of the spectacle of Garner's death, which was captured on video, pointing to the ongoing pattern of injustice and anti-Blackness.

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Additionally on view will be Wade's pastel-coloured skull drawings titled *Boneheads* (2001–), which evolved out of her interest in both the iconographies of the African Methodist church and the Cuban diasporic religion of Santería, delving into universal themes such as death and grief alongside poignant contemporary issues around environmental and racial politics.

***“My “BONEHEAD” drawings emerged as a form of relief or an exploration of my own understanding that life and death are intertwined. Humor and vibrant colors play a significant role in my work, as they make it easier for me to delve into these images and explore my thoughts and emotions. In the midst of life, death is ever-present, as we witness in nature. When something or someone passes away, new life springs forth.”***

- Jan Wade

## About Jan Wade

Born in 1952 in Hamilton, Ontario, Jan Wade's work explores Black post-colonial identity, ethnicity, and spirituality. She produces paintings, textiles and mixed-media works that feature slogans and symbols that are made entirely from found or readymade objects, and recycled materials.

Wade studied at the Ontario College of Art and Design (1972–76). She moved to Vancouver in 1983 and became part of the underground art and music scene in the city, with its innovative performances, do-it-yourself art shows, anti-establishment ethos and spontaneous happenings. During this period, Wade began her research into African diasporic spiritual practices and made art that reflected her roots and identity, commencing her unique artistic journey marked by self-sufficiency, empowerment, hope and radical joy.

After three decades spent on the fringe of the cultural mainstream, Wade has received overdue acknowledgement for her unique contributions to Canadian art. *Jan Wade: Soul Power*—the landmark first solo exhibition by a Black woman in the Vancouver Art Gallery's ninety-year history—presented the artist's mixed-media assemblages, paintings, textiles, and sculptural objects from the 1990s to the present day.

## About the gallery

Founded in 2012, Richard Saltoun Gallery is based in Mayfair, London, Via Margutta, Rome and on the Upper East Side, 19 E. 66th Street in New York City. The gallery specialises in contemporary art, with an emphasis on Feminist, conceptual and performance artists from the 1960s onwards. It is guided by a strong art historical focus on rediscovering the work of important yet under-recognised artists through presentations at both its locations, online exhibitions, events and participation in art fairs around the world.

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