

Press Release

Destiny Is a Rose: The Eileen Harris Norton Collection

24 February – 16 August 2026

Hauser & Wirth Downtown Los Angeles

North Galleries



Los Angeles... Renowned for her generosity to artists and institutions, Eileen Harris Norton has built an inspiring art collection and forged a philanthropic legacy by focusing upon the work of women artists, as well as artists of color and of her native California. Marking fifty years since Harris Norton made her first acquisition—a print purchased in 1976 directly from Los Angeles artist and African American arts advocate Ruth Waddy—‘Destiny Is a Rose’ will present more than 80 works from Harris Norton’s holdings in an exhibition conceived to celebrate the connoisseurship and commitment to social justice and learning that she embodies.

Taking its title from a 1990 painting by Kerry James Marshall, ‘Destiny Is a Rose’ features paintings, sculptures and works on paper by Mark Bradford, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, David Hammons, Glenn Ligon, Marshall, Patrick Martinez, Beatriz Milhazes, Michael Norton, Catherine Opie, Yoshitomo Nara, Senga Nengudi, Lorraine O’Grady, Betye Saar, Amy Sherald, Lorna Simpson, Bob Thompson, Kara Walker and Carrie Mae Weems, among many others. In conjunction with the exhibition, Hauser & Wirth Publishers will release a fully illustrated catalogue with texts by Dr. Kellie Jones and exhibition curator Ingrid Schaffner.

The first to draw comprehensively on Eileen Harris Norton’s collection, this catalogue—and the exhibition that occasions it—builds on the concept that collections can be creative and intellectual constructions in their own right, and that visionary collectors are cultural treasures whose efforts provide beacons for wider cultural advocacy. ‘Destiny Is a Rose’ follows past gallery projects dedicated to such collectors, including major exhibitions devoted to the Helga and Walther Lauffs (2008), Onnasch (2014) and Sylvio Perlstein (2018) collections.



'I collected artists making the art of our time. They weren't investments; they were relationships—pieces to live with and be changed by.'
—Eileen Harris Norton

A third-generation Californian, Eileen Harris Norton grew up in sight of Simon Rodia's famous towers in the Watts neighborhood of Los Angeles. She was twelve years old when the 1965 riots transformed her working class neighborhood into a flashpoint of the American Civil Rights and Black Power Movements. A graduate of the University of Southern California and University of California Los Angeles, she taught public school elementary English as a second language before co-founding, with her former husband Peter Norton, the software company that they later sold to Symantec.

Since the 1980s, Harris Norton's reputation as a collector has developed in tandem with her philanthropy, providing direct support to a generation of museum curators—including Kellie Jones, Thelma Golden and Lowery Stokes Sims—who have all systematically changed who and how institutions collect. In 2014, she co-founded Art + Practice (A+P) with artist Mark Bradford and activist Allan DiCastro in Leimert Park, the historically Black Los Angeles neighborhood where Bradford grew up and first maintained a studio. Serving local youth transitioning from foster care and, through global partnerships, children experiencing displacement worldwide, A+P embodies her conviction that art can be a catalyst for care. Then, in 2019, she established the Eileen Harris Norton Foundation, extending her commitment to social and environmental justice through initiatives supporting education, families and the environment. These values—of access, care and sustained attention—resonate throughout this exhibition, where Harris Norton's collecting emerges as both an artistic and social act of stewardship.

About the exhibition

'Destiny Is a Rose' unfolds across the gallery's spaces through a series of chapters that together tell the story of Harris Norton's collecting. A devoted gardener in her personal life, she brings the same spirit of cultivation to her relationships with artists and ideas. Her approach as a collector is defined by care and constancy—nurturing practices over time, supporting growth and fostering creative ecosystems that continue to flourish. In this sense, Harris Norton stands among the great collectors who might be seen as constant gardeners: those who build something both beautiful and enduring, whose vision sustains across generations. The exhibition reveals the living landscape she cultivated—an interconnected field of artists united not by medium or movement, but by her intuitive understanding of their transformative potential.



The first chapter opens with Harris Norton's love of color and craft, as well as her embrace of the beauty of art in all its complexity, including its engagement with issues of race and gender. Presiding over this selection is Lorraine O'Grady's 'Mlle Bourgeoise Noire'—the performance persona the artist adopted in 1980 to address the subjects of her artistic and intellectual critique—embodied here by the avatar's original debutante gown (made of 180 pairs of white gloves), whip and beaded crown.

Successive chapters of the show trace Harris Norton's evolution as a collector chronologically, and, by extension, mirror key developments in contemporary art over the past several decades. The story begins in the 1980s and early 1990s, when, as a self-described neophyte living in Venice, California, Harris Norton began frequenting neighborhood studios and galleries, looking and learning with characteristic curiosity. From this formative period came foundational acquisitions from Los Angeles-based artists, including Alison Saar's monumental assemblage sculpture 'Bye Bye Blackbird' (1992), its wings feathered with the soles of worn shoes, and Charles Ray's enigmatic 1973 photograph of himself suspended in a tree.

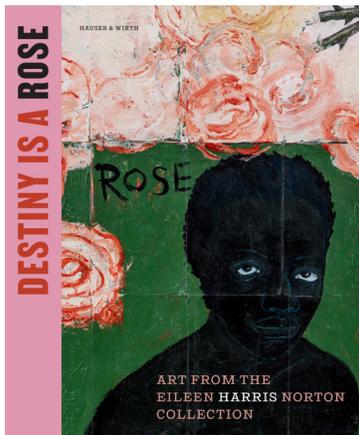
The next chapter follows Harris Norton into the 1990s and 2000s, as her outlook expanded alongside that of an increasingly global art world. With the encouragement of a growing circle of artists and curators, her collection took on a transnational dimension, incorporating canonical works by Mona Hatoum, Isaac Julien, Byron Kim, Yinka Shonibare and others. Engaging themes of gender, identity, postcolonial histories and multiculturalism, these works reveal the depth and reach of a collector attuned to the evolving cultural landscape of her time.

The exhibition's final chapter centers on Harris Norton's enduring commitment to artists of African descent—a defining principle of her vision from the outset. Here, seminal works by David Hammons confront and complicate notions of Blackness, while the abstractions of Frank Bowling and Jack Whitten embed questions of race and representation within layered, luminous surfaces. Powerful breakthroughs in figuration by Noah Davis, Lynette Yiadom-Boakye and others underscore the vitality and range of her collecting voice. Among these works, a radiant abstraction by Alma Thomas—herself an avid gardener—serves as a fitting crescendo. In her canvas, concentric fields of color pulse with rhythm and joy, evoking both the natural cycles that inspired her and the living heart of a collection that continues to grow in its influence.

Learning

In response to 'Destiny Is a Rose,' a comprehensive learning program, interactive events and additional resources will be developed in conjunction with the exhibition and the gallery's community partners. Including an 'Education Lab,' the Education Lab is part of Hauser & Wirth's commitment to inclusive learning programs that instigate a dialogue between art, artists and diverse audiences. Located at our galleries in Menorca, Somerset and Downtown Los Angeles, as well as at Chillida Leku, each Education Lab is a collaboration with a local community group, school or university. Further details to be announced in February.

Hauser & Wirth Publishers



Destiny Is a Rose: Art from the Eileen Harris Norton Collection

English

Hardcover

26.7 x 23 cm; 172 pgs

\$60.00 / £52.00 / €58.00

February 2026

Edited and with text by Ingrid Schaffner. Text by Dr. Kellie Jones.

Accompanying the exhibition of the same name, this catalogue celebrates fifty years of Harris Norton's remarkable collection. Texts by art historian Dr. Kellie Jones and curator Ingrid Schaffner delve into the critical role that education and philanthropy, representation and identity, and personal relationships with artists and curators have played in shaping Harris Norton's visionary collecting practice. Offering deep insight into the act and impact of collecting, 'Destiny Is a Rose' is a tribute to Harris Norton's ongoing role as a vital agent of change and growth within the contemporary art world.

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Caption and courtesy information:

Kerry James Marshall
Destiny Is a Rose
1990

Acrylic and collage on canvas in painted wooden frame
87.6 × 87.6 × 3.2 cm / 34 1/2 × 34 1/2 × 1 1/4 in

© Kerry James Marshall
Courtesy the artist and David Zwirner
Photo: Joshua White

David Hammons
African American Flag
1989

Canvas and grommets
245.7 × 153.7 cm / 96 3/4 × 60 1/2 in

© 2026 David Hammons / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York
Photo: Keith Lubow

Lorraine O'Grady
Mlle Bourgeoise Noire
1980 – 1983

180 pairs of white gloves, beauty pageant sash, seed-pearl crown, white rope cat-o'-nine tails

Dimensions variable
© 2026 Lorraine O'Grady Trust / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York
Courtesy of Alexander Gray Associates, New York
Photo: Charles White

Cover of 'Destiny Is a Rose: Art from the Eileen Harris Norton Collection'
Courtesy Hauser & Wirth Publishers

Alison Saar
Bye Bye Blackbird, 1992
Mixed media and neon

Case, 52.7 × 61.6 × 24.1 cm / 20 3/4 × 24 1/4 × 9 1/2 in;
Wings, 111.8 × 131.4 × 26 cm / 44 × 51 3/4 × 10 1/4 in

© Alison Saar
Courtesy the artist and L.A. Louver, Venice, CA
Photo: Joshua White

Alma Thomas
Untitled
ca. 1968

Acrylic and graphite on canvas
90.8 × 95.6 cm / 35 3/4 × 37 5/8 in
© 2025 Estate of Alma Thomas/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

Courtesy of the Hart Family
Photo: Joshua White

Mark Bradford
Half a Man
2009

Mixed media on canvas
152.4 × 182.88 cm / 60 × 72 in

© Mark Bradford
Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth
Photo: Keith Lubow