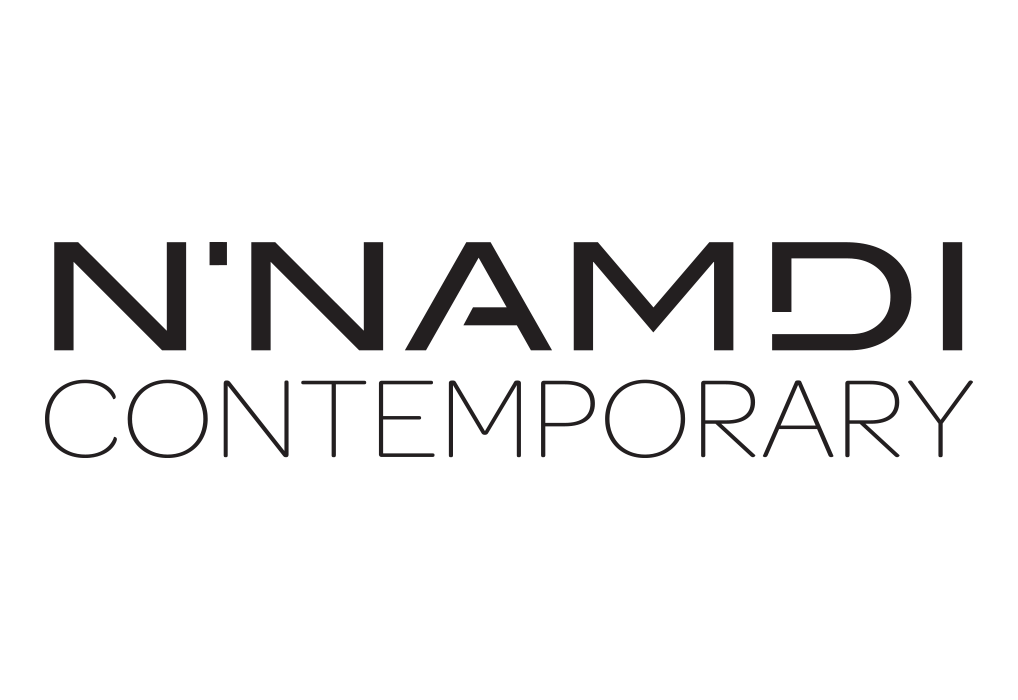
Herbert Gentry

American, b. 1919, Pittsburg, PA, d. 2003, Stockholm, Sweden

Gentry moved to New York with his mother in 1924 when he was six years old. At the height of the Harlem Renaissance, the young man was surrounded by the growing African-American cultural scene. His mother was an original member of the famous Ziegfeld showgirls and is credited by the artist as being his guiding influence. Her social circle was full of lively characters such as her close friend, jazz-musician, Duke Ellington, and dancer, Josephine Baker.

In this painting, Gentry used biomorphic shapes and color planes to create a largely abstract composition. However, he also employed subconscious and surrealist sources. These emergent images can be deduced upon closer inspection: a large face, a black cat, and the ominous claw stretching out from an ambiguous form in the background. The Claw was exhibited in Explorations in the City of Light: African-American Artists in Paris 1945-1965 at the Studio Museum in Harlem in 1996. The collector, George N’Namdi, considers this painting the artist’s most significant work.

Gentry’s paintings institutions such as the National Museum in Stockholm, Sweden, the National Museum of Modern Art in New Delhi, India, El Museu d’Arte Expanyol Contemprani in Madrid, Spain, and The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.



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