



EyeMinded: Living and Writing Contemporary Art

By Kellie Jones

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A daughter of the poets Hettie Jones and Amiri Baraka, Kellie Jones grew up immersed in a world of artists, musicians, and writers in Manhattan's East Village and absorbed in black nationalist ideas about art, politics, and social justice across the river in Newark. The activist vision of art and culture that she learned in those two communities, and especially from her family, has shaped her life and work as an art critic and curator. Featuring selections of her writings from the past twenty years, *EyeMinded* reveals Jones's role in bringing attention to the work of African American, African, Latin American, and women artists who have challenged established art practices. Interviews that she conducted with the painter Howardena Pindell, the installation and performance artist David Hammons, and the Cuban sculptor Kcho appear along with pieces on the photographers Dawoud Bey, Lorna Simpson, and Pat Ward Williams; the sculptor Martin Puryear; the assemblage artist Betye Saar; and the painters Jean-Michel Basquiat, Norman Lewis, and Al Loving. Reflecting Jones's curatorial sensibility, this collection is structured as a dialogue between her writings and works by her parents, her sister Lisa Jones, and her husband Guthrie P. Ramsey Jr. *EyeMinded* offers a glimpse into the family conversation that has shaped and sustained Jones, insight into the development of her critical and curatorial vision, and a survey of some of the most important figures in contemporary art.

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EyeMinded: Living and Writing Contemporary Art By Kellie Jones Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #146434 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Duke University Press Books
- Published on: 2011-05-27
- Released on: 2011-05-27
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.25" h x 1.32" w x 6.13" l, 1.75 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 528 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

“*EyeMinded* is an impressive collection of essays by Kellie Jones, a much sought after scholar, prolific writer, and extraordinary curator whose works I have admired for many years. She began her career in the mid-1980s, uncovering and recovering African and African American artists by organizing exhibitions, writing essays, and lecturing on some of the then lesser-known artists. I believe that she was instrumental in introducing to a larger and contemporary public the works of black artists of the African diaspora, including some of the most noted artists working today.”—**Deborah Willis**, author of *Posing Beauty: African American Images from the 1890s to the Present*

“Kellie Jones, supported by a remarkable family of artists and intellectuals, has provided a plethora of razor-sharp insights and creative testimonials to the greater arts and scholarly communities for years. As this important book makes amber clear, Professor Jones’ astute observations and in-depth analyses of African American art are invaluable resources to contemporary studies and, arguably, equivalent to the notable essays of art history’s earlier, admired critics and chroniclers.”—**Richard J. Powell**, author of *Cutting a Figure: Fashioning Black Portraiture*

“This extraordinary collection reveals Kellie Jones as a discerning architect of the multicultural art landscape of the last few decades. Informed by her keen eye and incisive intellect, Jones’s definitive takes on artists, including Lorna Simpson, Martin Puryear, and David Hammons, make this book a must-read for anyone interested in American art from the 1980s forward. And then, on top of Jones’s own shimmering intellectual accomplishment in these pages, *EyeMinded* is something else as well: a conversation between an American family of arts and letters as illustrious as the Lowells or the Jameses. This book will stand apart for that reason alone, for few American families have contributed so richly to the arts, letters, and sounds of their generations as the Joneses. Here comes Dr. Kellie Jones, ‘eye-minded,’ and she’s bringing her people with her.”—**Elizabeth Alexander**, Yale University

“*EyeMinded* is compelling testimony to the ways in which Kellie Jones was able to both contribute to, and comment on, the astonishing quantum shifts in art and curatorial practices that the 1980s and 1990s gave rise to. . . . [A] major contribution to aspects of art history that too often are relegated to the periphery within both the academy and contemporary art criticism. In this regard, we have much to thank Jones for, as this volume will be an indispensable aid to students, professors, and general audiences, many of whom might not have easy access to Jones’s writings, in their original form and assorted contexts.”

(Eddie Chambers *Journal of American Studies*)

“*EyeMinded* is at the top of my summer reading list.”

(Lauren Haynes *Studio Magazine*)

“Kellie Jones has had a fascinating life in art. This collection of essays offers vivid glimpses into the childhood and professional experience of this noted art historian and curator. . . . Everything Kellie Jones and her brilliant family have to say on art and life is both welcome and stimulating.”

(Michele Wallace *International Review of African American Art*)

"Kellie Jones' superb book, *EyeMinded*, traces the relationship between the visual and the social in contemporary art and, by so doing, teaches us how to see. . . . The book is a must-read for art historians and museum curators, just as for those within the field of cultural studies who aspire to an interdisciplinary approach."

(Liana Giorgi *New York Journal of Books*)

"Scholarly but also deeply personal, it shows the particular way Jones conceives, or reconceives, the undertaking of art history. *EyeMinded* was not so much written as curated, an assemblage of reviews, interviews, essays, photographs—and, most interesting of all, essays by Jones' parents, sister and husband."

(Rand Richards Cooper *Amherst Magazine* 2017-02-13)

About the Author

Kellie Jones is Associate Professor in the Department of Art History and Archaeology at Columbia University. She is the author of several books and exhibition catalogues, including *Energy/Experimentation: Black Artists and Abstraction, 1964–1980*; *Basquiat*; and (with Thelma Golden and Chrissie Iles) *Lorna Simpson*.

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