

Who Funds *the Culture*.

A field guide to how Black museums survive, and why it matters for every artist and collector.

When a painting in HMAAC's Clarence Heyward show was slashed and the museum chose to rehang it, damage and all, it pointed at something most people miss. The **Houston Museum of African American Culture is the only African American museum in a major American city operating without dedicated public funding**. Who funds a museum decides what it can show, whether it stays free, and whether it survives a single hard year. Here is how the money actually works.

FIVE WAYS A MUSEUM GETS FUNDED

- 1 Federal** The most secure tier, and the rarest. The **National Museum of African American History and Culture** is part of the Smithsonian, carried largely by Congress.
- 2 State** Backed by a state budget. The **California African American Museum** was the first Black art, history, and culture museum fully supported by a state.
- 3 City** Built or funded by a municipality. Philadelphia was the first major city to fund and build one. San Francisco paid for the Museum of the African Diaspora. Dallas built its museum with a city bond.
- 4 University** The oldest Black museums live inside HBCUs, carried by the school. The **Hampton University Museum** has been collecting since 1868.
- 5 Private nonprofit** No guaranteed public money. Survival runs on donors, members, admissions, and grants, year to year. **HMAAC keeps its doors free on private dollars alone.**

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

If you **make the work**, the museum that shows you has a funding reality, and a privately funded one takes more risk to show challenging work while depending on its community to stay open. If you **collect**, where you give, lend, and donate decides which culture gets preserved. Either way, these rooms are not guaranteed. They are kept.

FOUR WAYS TO KEEP THE DOORS OPEN

Visit

Attendance is both revenue and proof of demand.

Donate

Most are nonprofits. Recurring gifts keep the lights on.

Lend or gift

Collectors decide which culture gets preserved.

Share

Send their shows to your people. Reach is support.

DEAR GLORY

The Artist at *the Center.*

Whose work this was, and the gallery that backs him. Follow them, and the story stays with you.

THE ARTIST

Clarence Heyward

Painter. Born in Brooklyn, based in North Carolina.

Clarence Heyward paints Black people, often his own family, with **green skin**. He does it on purpose. Green is the color of a green screen, the blank backdrop film crews use to drop in any background they want.

His point is simple. The world treats Black people the same way, projecting whatever story it chooses onto them. The **camouflage** he often adds stands for the constant fight just to exist and be seen as you really are. The painting that was slashed at HMAAC was one of his.

Follow his work on Instagram [@clarenceheywardart](#)

HIS GALLERY

Richard Beavers Gallery

Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn. Contemporary Black art since 2007.

Clarence shows his work with **Richard Beavers Gallery**, a Black-owned gallery in Brooklyn that has championed contemporary Black artists since 2007. His 2025 solo show there was called **American Fiction**.

A gallery like this is the other half of the story. Museums keep the work safe for the public. Galleries help the artist earn a living, so they can keep making the work in the first place.

Follow the gallery on Instagram [@richardbeaversgallery](#)

A museum preserves the work. A gallery sustains the artist. Both are how the culture stays funded.

Where Black Art & *History Live.*

More than thirty museums to visit, support, and know, coast to coast.

★ marks museums with a primary focus on art.

WEST

★ California African American Museum	LOS ANGELES
★ Museum of the African Diaspora	SAN FRANCISCO
★ Museum of African American Art	LOS ANGELES
African American Museum & Library	OAKLAND

TEXAS & SOUTHWEST

★ Houston Museum of African American Culture	HOUSTON
Buffalo Soldiers National Museum	HOUSTON
Dallas African American Museum	DALLAS

MIDWEST

Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History	DETROIT
DuSable Black History Museum	CHICAGO
Natl. Underground Railroad Freedom Center	CINCINNATI
The African American Museum	CLEVELAND
Negro Leagues Baseball Museum	KANSAS CITY
The Griot Museum of Black History	ST. LOUIS
America's Black Holocaust Museum	MILWAUKEE

SOUTH

The Legacy Museum	MONTGOMERY
Birmingham Civil Rights Institute	BIRMINGHAM
National Civil Rights Museum	MEMPHIS
National Museum of African American Music	NASHVILLE
★ Hammonds House Museum	ATLANTA
APEX Museum	ATLANTA
Natl. Center for Civil and Human Rights	ATLANTA
Tubman Museum	MACON
International African American Museum	CHARLESTON
★ Harvey B. Gantt Center	CHARLOTTE
Mississippi Civil Rights Museum	JACKSON
Mosaic Templars Cultural Center	LITTLE ROCK
Whitney Plantation	WALLACE, LA

MID-ATLANTIC & DC

Natl. Museum of African American History & Culture	WASHINGTON, DC
African American Museum in Philadelphia	PHILADELPHIA
Reginald F. Lewis Museum	BALTIMORE
★ Hampton University Museum	HAMPTON, VA
Black History Museum & Cultural Center of VA	RICHMOND

NORTHEAST

★ The Studio Museum in Harlem	NEW YORK
★ Museum of Contemporary African Diasporan Arts	BROOKLYN
Weeksville Heritage Center	BROOKLYN
The Africa Center	NEW YORK
★ Gordon Parks Foundation	PLEASANTVILLE, NY