

2023 Distinguished Service to the Visual Arts Award



Shirley Pooler Kinsey grew up in St. Augustine, FL. The major influence in her life was her paternal grandmother, Mrs. Susie Plummer Pooler, who raised her and lived her life doing whatever she could to be in service to others. Although she didn't have much materially, she willingly shared what she had, her wisdom, her heart, and her time. This was passed on to Shirley, as well as the desire to excel in education as a way of doing well by doing good. Other important influences in Shirley's life were her sister and role model Barbara Richardson Johnson, her uncle Mr. James A. Webster (also principal of her elementary school), as well as her mentor and high school counselor, Mrs. Rosalie R. Gordon-Mills.

Growing up, Shirley developed an early interest in books, art, travel, and focused on academic excellence. She was valedictorian of her graduating high school class, leading to a scholarship to Florida A&M University in Tallahassee, Florida. Attending FAMU during the height of the civil rights movement of the 1960s,

Shirley participated in student protests and demonstrations, and was arrested during a sit-in at the local movie theater. Upon her release, she met Bernard Kinsey, an upperclassman who was on the support committee assisting students through the experience. She pledged Delta Sigma Theta and received her BA in English. Shirley and Bernard were wed in 1967 and moved to California with \$26 and a job after graduation. In the early 1970s, Shirley was an elementary school teacher in Compton, California which led her to pursue and receive a master's degree in Multicultural Education from Pepperdine University. She has enjoyed accomplished careers in education, Corporate America and the Arts, but considers her most important roles in life to be wife, mother, sister, cousin, aunt and friend.

Shirley and Bernard's 56-year marriage and partnership represents an alliance based on love, respect and the importance of family and friends. They strive to live their lives on two simple principles: "To whom much is given, much is required" and "A life of no regrets". Together they have helped raise over 30 million dollars for charitable and educational institutions, including Florida A&M University. Through their philanthropy they have assisted in sending over 150 students to college. They believe in the idea of "social capital" that utilizes their broad network of friends and associates around the country to expand the notion of giving. It has been said that "Together they have formed an outstanding partnership in their cultural, business, and educational endeavors. They represent the best of our community, a willingness to give and to share".

The couple have become known for their collection of art, books, artifacts, and ephemeral objects that document the remarkable achievements and contributions of African Americans from 1595 to the present, considered to be one of the largest of its kind. Since 2006, The Kinsey African American Art & History Collection – Where Art and History Intersect", has been on

national tour and seen by over 15 million visitors to date. The collection has exhibited in nearly 40 venues, including the Smithsonian National Museum of American History, Epcot at Walt Disney World, Hong Kong University and now SoFi Stadium in Inglewood, California where it debuted during Super Bowl LVI and is on view through February 2023. In 2008, Shirley co-founded the Kinsey Foundation for the Arts and Education to promote broader awareness and understanding of African American history and culture. The foundation has educational partnerships around the country and abroad, assisting with the development and implementation of curriculums and public programs.

The Kinseys have traveled extensively and reside in Pacific Palisades, California. They are the proud parents of their son Khalil who is the COO and Chief Curator of the Kinsey African American Art & History Collection.

ArtTable's Distinguished Service to the Visual Arts Award acknowledges and celebrates remarkable leadership in the arts. Its recipients exemplify ArtTable's dedication to the lasting impact of the visual arts on our shared cultural life. Past recipients include Carol Cole Levin, Barbara Tober, Susan Unterberg, Estrellita Brodsky, Marian Goodman, Lowery Stokes Sims, Marieluise Hessel, Raymond Leary and Melva Bucksbaum, Marguerite Steed Hoffman, Patricia Phelps de Cisneros, Patricia E. Harris, Marieluise Hessel Artzt, Kathan Brown, Mary Schmidt Campbell, Anita Contini, Alice Denney, Helen W. Drutt English, Elizabeth Easton, Sharon Helgason Gallagher, RoseLee Goldberg, Thelma Golden, Marian Goodman, Kathy Halbreich, Lila Harnett, Ann Sutherland Harris, Alana Heiss, Mary Jane Jacob, Leslie King-Hammond, Ruby Lerner, Susana Torruella Leval, Barbara Luderowski, Margo Machida, Ann Philbin, Lisa Phillips, Joan Rosenbaum, Linda Shearer, Roberta Smith, Susan Sollins, Susan Fisher Sterling, Marion Boulton Stroud, Paula Wallace, Yoko Ono, Toby Devan Lewis, Vishakha N. Desai, Elizabeth A. Sackler, Elizabeth C. Baker, Linda Nochlin, Iris Cantor, Paula Cooper, Marcia Tucker, Lucy Lippard, Stephanie French, Joan Mondale, Dianne H. Pilgrim, Emily Rauh Pulitzer, Agnes Gund, and Kitty Carlisle Hart.

In 2003, as a special gesture to ArtTable and the leading women it honors, Louise Bourgeois created an unnumbered, cast bronze edition to represent the award for Distinguished Service to the Visual Arts. EYE (cast bronze and silver nitrate with a polished patina) is cast each year in commendation to our awardee.