Sylvia Snowden is a internationally renowned artist based in Washington, DC. Her six-decade-long career includes teaching positions at Howard, Yale, and Cornell Universities, as well as exhibitions and major installations at the National Gallery of Art, National Museum of Women in the Arts, Montclair Art Museum, Baltimore Museum of Art, Rubell Museum in DC, The Phillips Collection, and the Mary McLeod Bethune Memorial Museum and National Archives for Black Women’s History, among others. In addition, her works have been shown in the UK, Chile, Ethiopia, Australia, France, Mexico, Italy, and Japan. Sylvia earned a BFA and an MFA from Howard University in Washington, DC, where she studied with distinguished artists such as James A. Porter and former Phillips trustee David Driskell. Recent attention has placed Sylvia firmly among the most important painters to have emerged in the past 50 years.

Sylvia’s art is expressionistic, fierce, and in almost any scale has a monumental sensibility. Her mastery of form, color, and texture in the thick application of paint, which she deploys almost as a sculptural medium, lends her creations a visceral power that taps into time-honored traditions of human expression. Sylvia rejects the implications of narrative; instead, she is invested in the humanistic enterprise to manifest a unique vision and visual language, one inspired by the relationships with the subjects of her paintings that she has forged throughout her life.

The Phillips Collection is thrilled to have recently acquired its first work by Sylvia Snowden for the permanent collection: George Chavis, 1984. For this special night, we have placed this painting in the galleries as the focal point of a compelling conversation with other artists in the collection.

“I have visited The Phillips Collection since the early 60s. It is an inviting, warm experience. It has charm and offers the visitor an opportunity to enjoy the works of art in an inclusive manner—it welcomes you. With warm open arms.

Care is given to the placement so that the art communicates with each other but also communicates to the visitor. A circle of communication. The joy of the collection is shared with the visitor who feels complete in the experience, one which is fulfilling.