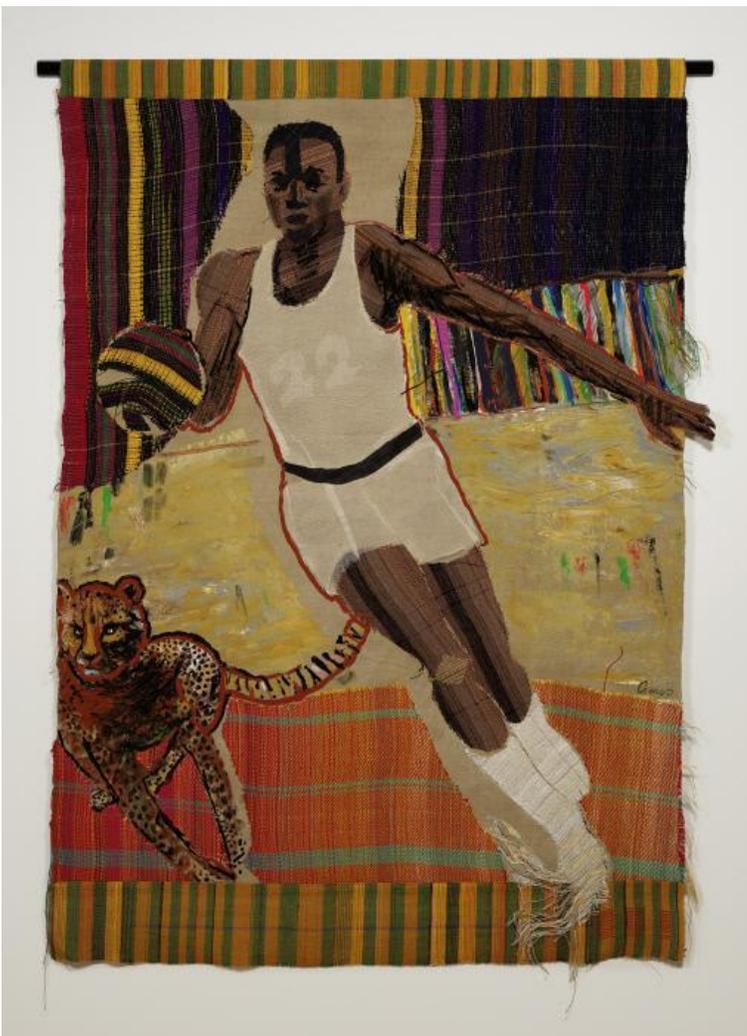


## FAMILY ART ACTIVITY – People and Patterns

**Emma Amos** (1937-2020) was a painter, printmaker, and weaver whose acclaimed high-color figurative paintings were often charged with racial and feminist politics. Her mixed-media work below, *22 and Cheetah*, is from a series of textile pieces that includes athletes and animals. The fabric's vivid colors and crisscrossing lines convey the sense of excitement and dynamism associated with basketball. Amos noted, "Cheetahs are with basketball players because of their speed, but we don't give either of them enough land to run."



**Emma Amos, *22 and Cheetah*, 1983**

Acrylic and hand woven African fabrics on linen, 84 x 62 inches (213.4 x 157.5 cm). Collection of the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University, Durham, North Carolina. Museum Purchase. 2018.17.1 © Emma Amos

### Activity:

**Emma Amos** used many different types of art making materials to create her large and colorful figurative works.

Search for images of people from today's pop culture in magazines, books or junk mail you have in your home. Use scissors to cut out a figure and paste it to a new piece of paper. Incorporate another image of an object or animal that relates or contrasts with the human figure.

Use other materials (crayons, markers, pen, pencil, collage) to add color and pattern around the figures.

What story does your image tell?

**Share a photo of your finished artwork online and tag #nashermuseum!**

## Biography:

Painter, printmaker, and weaver **Emma Amos** was born in 1937 and grew up in Atlanta, Georgia, where her parents owned a drugstore. She began painting and drawing when she was six. At age sixteen, after attending segregated public schools in Atlanta, she entered the five-year program at Antioch University in Yellow Springs, Ohio. She spent her fourth year abroad at the London Central School of Art, studying printmaking, painting, and weaving. After receiving a BA from Antioch, she returned to the Central School to earn a diploma in etching in 1959.

Amos's first solo exhibition was in an Atlanta gallery in 1960. In that same year she moved to New York, where she taught as an assistant at the Dalton School and continued her work as an artist by making prints. In 1961 she was hired by Dorothy Liebes as a designer/weaver, creating rugs for a major textile manufacturer. In 1964 she entered a master's program in Art Education at New York University. During this time Hale Woodruff invited her to become a member of Spiral, a group of black artists that included Romare Bearden, Norman Lewis, and Charles Alston. She was the group's youngest and only female member.

In 1974 she began teaching at the Newark School of Fine and Industrial Arts, and in 1977 she developed and cohosted (with Beth Gutcheon) *Show of Hands*, a crafts show for WGBH Educational TV in Boston, which ran for two years. In 1980, Amos was hired as an assistant professor at the Mason Gross School of Art, Rutgers University. She earned tenure in 1992, was later promoted to Professor II, and served as chair of the department from 2005 to 2007. She continued teaching there until she retired in June 2008.

Amos's work has been exhibited internationally and is included in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, the Wadsworth Atheneum, the New Jersey and Minnesota state museums, and the Dade County and

Newark museums. She won prestigious awards and grants, and served on the Board of Governors of Skowhegan and in the National Academy Museum.

Amos has received a surge in critical attention since 2016, due in part to her inclusion in major traveling exhibitions such as *Soul of a Nation: Art in the Age of Black Power* (Tate Modern, London; Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, AR; Brooklyn Museum, NY; Broad Museum, CA) and *We Wanted a Revolution: Black Radical Women 1965-1985* (Brooklyn Museum, NY; ICA Boston, MA, California African American Museum, Los Angeles).

She died in Bedford, NH, on May 20, 2020 of natural causes, after a long battle with Alzheimer's Disease.



Photo of Emma Amos © Becket Logan

## Label Text:

This mixed-media work is from a series of textile pieces by Emma Amos that includes athletes and animals. The fabric's vivid colors and crisscrossing lines convey the sense of excitement and dynamism associated with basketball. Amos noted, "Cheetahs are with basketball players because of their speed, but we don't give either of them enough land to run." Her series addresses issues related to the Black body, including displacement from the African continent, social and cultural hierarchies, and physical and political power.

Amos belonged to the art group Spiral, founded in New York City in 1963 by Romare Bearden, Norman Lewis, and Hale Woodruff. She was the only female member of the group, which included African American artists who met to discuss the place of the Black artist in the United States, as well as civil rights, social engagement, and current political issues.