



EFA Robert
Blackburn
Printmaking
Workshop

The Only Thing That Lasts:

An Oral History of Robert Blackburn's Printmaking Workshop interview with Otto Neals

Otto Neals was born in 1931 in South Carolina and moved to Brooklyn at a young age. Aside from his time studying printmaking at the Robert Blackburn printmaking shop, and his brief attendance at the Brooklyn Museum Art School, Neals is a self-taught artist.

Neals has been commissioned to execute several major public works over his career, and is the recipient of the New York City Art Commission's Award for Excellence in Design. Neals has been a member of the Weusi Art Collective since the 1960s, and is a founding artist of the Fulton Art Fair—the oldest Black visual arts event in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn.

In this excerpt, Neals reflects on being introduced to Blackburn through the Weusi Artist Collective, and the many artists he encountered at The Printmaking Workshop

**Interview conducted by Camille Crain Drummond
November 3, 2023**

Otto Neals:

One of the WEUSI artists was a young artist, her name was Kay Brown. And it was Kay Brown that introduced me to Bob. She kept asking me to, you know, "Come down to the printmaking workshop and you can do some printing and so on." And I kept putting it off, but finally one day I decided to give in and I came in and I met Bob. And it was one of the best moves I've ever made. I mean, to be involved in the printmaking workshop, and learning the art of etching and lithography, and studying with Krishna Reddy—I studied this technique called viscosity printing—and Mohammad Khalil and Roberto de Lamonica, those are the three teachers that I had when I joined the workshop. And I mentioned Mohammad Khalil—he came from Morocco, and I think it was Bob that helped to establish a workshop, a printmaking workshop, in Morocco. I think it was in a place called Asilah. And I have to mention that one year—I think it might have been about 1985—I was on my way to Egypt, my second trip to Egypt, and I was at the airport at JFK and I looked up and who should I see? Bob Blackburn. Bob was heading to Morocco to the workshop there, and I was heading to Cairo. So the plane had stopped in Casablanca first, and Bob got off and I continued onto Egypt, and it was really strange.

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Camille Crain Drummond:

Who else did you meet in the shop? Like, do you remember doing collaborations with anybody, or what was the kind of social element in the shop?

Otto Neals:

Well, I met a number of artists. Vivian Brown, Cortor—Eldizer Cortor, Mavis Pusey. In fact, there's a book on printmaking in which there's a photograph of Mavis Pusey, Vivian Brown, myself, and Bob Blackburn, in this book. I thought that the workshop might have it, it's a book on printmaking, I can't remember the title. But there's a photograph of the four of us in that magazine.

Camille Crain Drummond:

We'll have to find it.