
Online Form Submittal: 2025 Winston-Salem Arts, Culture and Entertainment Memorial Walk of Fame Nomination Form

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To Susan Spainhour <susans@cityofws.org>; Catalina Stewart <catalinas@cityofws.org>

2025 Winston-Salem Arts, Culture and Entertainment Memorial Walk of Fame Nomination Form

Nominations and Election Procedures

Starting January 1, the Arts, Culture, and Entertainment Memorial Walk of Fame Committee will accept nominations for election to the Arts, Culture, and Entertainment Memorial Walk of Fame (Walk of Fame).

Nominations will be accepted through February 28, 2025: at which time the Walk of Fame committee will review the nominations.

A total of up to five nominees will be recommended to the city of Winston-Salem's City Council Community Development/Housing/ General Government Committee. The Council Committee will consider the Walk of Fame Committee's recommendations and submit the slate of nominees to the Mayor and City Council for final approval and election.

Those not selected for the current year are encouraged to resubmit during the next year's nomination period. The decisions of the committee are final and entirely within the committee's discretion. Nomination and selection procedures, forms, and qualifications are guidelines only, and entirely within the committee's discretion, and are subject to change at any time, without notice.

The ceremony to unveil the stars around the Benton Convention Center will take place in August 2026.

Criteria

- The nominee(s) exhibited sustained excellence in his or her field for at least five years.

- The nominee(s) made distinguished contributions to the community and civic-oriented participation.
- The nominee(s) is deceased (must provide copy of death certificate or obituary).
- The nominee(s) was a resident of Winston-Salem for at least five years.
- The nominee(s) made a significant contribution to the arts or entertainment industry in one or more of the following areas: music, dance, theater, writing, visual arts, motion pictures, television, or radio.

A “significant” contribution would be iconic in terms of renown and the impact on the artistic disciplines or popular culture.

Nominee's Stage Name	James Thackeray Diggs, Jr. “T”
Nominee's Given Name	James Thackeray Diggs, Jr
Date Range of Winston-Salem Residency (ex: 2015-2020)	1915-1989
Arts, Culture & Entertainment Category	Visual Arts

Required Documentation

- Attach nominee's performance/accomplishment biography which must include at least 5 years of accomplishments in the arts, culture, or entertainment field.
- Attach a list of nominee's civic/community involvement.
- Attach a copy of nominee's death certificate or obituary.

Nominee's Professional Accomplishments/Biography	JT Diggs Jr.pdf
Nominee's Civic/Community Involvement	IMG_0771.jpeg
Nominee's Death Certificate or Obituary	IMG_0772.jpeg

(Section Break)

Nominator Information

First Name	T Janifer
Last Name	Diggs-Claytor
Address	6715 S Winnipeg Circle, Apt 106
City	Aurora
State	Colorado

ZIP Code	80016
Phone Number	(202)841-7300
Email Address	Tjc713@gmail.com
Did you personally know the nominee?	Yes
Do you have contact information for nominee's family or a close friend?	Yes
First Name	T. Janifer
Last Name	Diggs Claytor
Phone Number	(202) 841-7300
Email Address	Tjc713@gmail.com

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James Thackeray Diggs, Jr. July 1915-April 1989

James Thackeray Diggs, Jr., affectionally known as “T”, was a distinguished artist, educator, philosopher, architect, photographer and mentor. Over a career spanning more than 40 years at Winston-Salem State University (WSSU), Professor Diggs made significant contributions to the fields of art and education, enriching the lives of his students and his community.

Professor Diggs believed that art was a liberating form of expression and a vital medium of communication. This philosophy was central to his teaching, inspiring generations of students to explore their creativity. Renowned for his work on Cubism, Surrealism and Expressionism, he mastered various techniques, including monotype, lithography, etching and silkscreen. His distinctive style was influenced by African American artists of the Federal One era during President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal, as reflected in his paintings, watercolors, prints and drawings.

Contributions to WSSU and The Art Community

Professor Diggs served as chairman of the Winston-Salem State University Art Department for several years, playing a pivotal role in the shaping of the university’s art curriculum and programs. He was instrumental in the architectural designs of several campus buildings, showcasing his multidisciplinary talents. Among his most enduring contributions was the design of the Winston-Salem State University’s official seal working in collaboration with two of his students. This seal remains a cherished symbol of the university’s identity.

Amid the earliest part of his tenure at Winston-Salem State University, he not only taught art but various other subjects... English, mathematics, geography, history, health and statistics. In addition he was director of the summer school program and faculty chairman. Professor Diggs had a wealth of knowledge and had an insatiable appetite for reading and learning as much as possible. He was committed to the mastery of art and teaching and had a deep understanding and experience in his surroundings as it related to art and education.

During the segregated period, Professor Digg's work transcended boundaries, fostering unity throughout the art community. He was a founding member and officer of organizations such as Associated Artists of Winston-Salem and the Associated Artists of North Carolina. He was a member of the Eastern Arts Association, the National Committee of Art Education, and the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. Additionally, he co-established the Winston-Salem Gallery of Fine Arts, known as the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art (SECCA).

Beyond his contributions to Winston-Salem State University, he served on the Governor's Council on Art and Humanities, gallery owner and curator, and exhibited his work extensively. He was a proud member of the Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity and lectured across North Carolina and the nation, sharing his insights and passion for art.

Early Life and Education

James Thackeray Diggs, Jr., the second of six siblings, was born on July 13, 1915 in Maryville, Tennessee to James Thackeray Diggs, Sr. and Mable Kennedy Diggs. He began his college education at Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte, North Carolina before transferring to Winston-Salem Teachers College (now Winston-Salem State University), where he graduated in 1934 at the age of 18 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Education. Following his graduation, he launched his career as educator, teaching at the elementary and high school levels in North Wilkesboro, Jonesville and Hamlet, North Carolina.

After three years, he returned to Winston Salem State University, where he served in various roles, including assistant to the registrar, secretary to the dean, secretary to the President, art instructor and coach for basketball, football and tennis.

Military Service and Advanced Studies

From 1943 to 1946, Professor Diggs served as a First Sergeant in the US Army's Chemical Warfare Service during World War II. He was stationed in the European Theater and earned a Unit Citation and five battle stars for his service. While in England, he studied art at the Southern College of Art in Portsmouth.

Returning to the U.S. briefly in 1943, he married Mary Louise Moss. After the war, he attended the Art Students League in New York City, studying under Harry Sternberg and Nahum Tchabasov, and pursued sculpture and serigraphy. In 1947, he earned a Master of Arts in Art Education from Teachers College, Columbia University.

Supported by a Z. Smith Reynolds Fellowship, he furthered his studies toward a doctorate in art education at Columbia University, attending summer sessions through 1959.

Legacy and Recognition

Professor Digg's dedication to art and education enriched countless lives. His students, colleagues, and community members remember him as kind, generous and a beloved individual with an infectious personality and a great sense of humor.

In 1979 he retired from Winston-Salem State University and in 1983, in recognition for his exceptional service to the university, he was honored with the title of Professor Emeritus of Art. In 1989, the university further honored his legacy by naming the campus gallery after him...the Diggs Gallery.

Personal Life and Passing

Professor Diggs passed away on April 4 1989, leaving behind his wife, Mary Louise Moss Diggs (who passed in March 2011), their only child, Janifer Diggs Claytor, two grandchildren, Natalie Claytor-Minoli and Eric L. Claytor, four great-children born after his death, Mary A. Claytor, Alessandro J. Minoli, Odin H. Claytor , Noelle L. Claytor and his sister, Gloria Diggs Banks.

Conclusion

Professor Diggs was a Renaissance man whose life embodied the values of creativity, education and service. His contributions to Winston-Salem State University and the art community continue to inspire and shape generations.

Nomination

Professor Diggs lifelong commitment to art, education and service exemplifies the qualities deserving of the Arts, Culture, Entertainment Memorial Walk of Fame. His work as an artist, educator, community leader and veteran has left a legacy of creativity, excellence and inclusion that continues to resonate today. With that in mind, I proudly nominate James Thackeray Diggs, Jr. for this honor ensuring that his life and contributions are celebrated and remembered for generations to come.

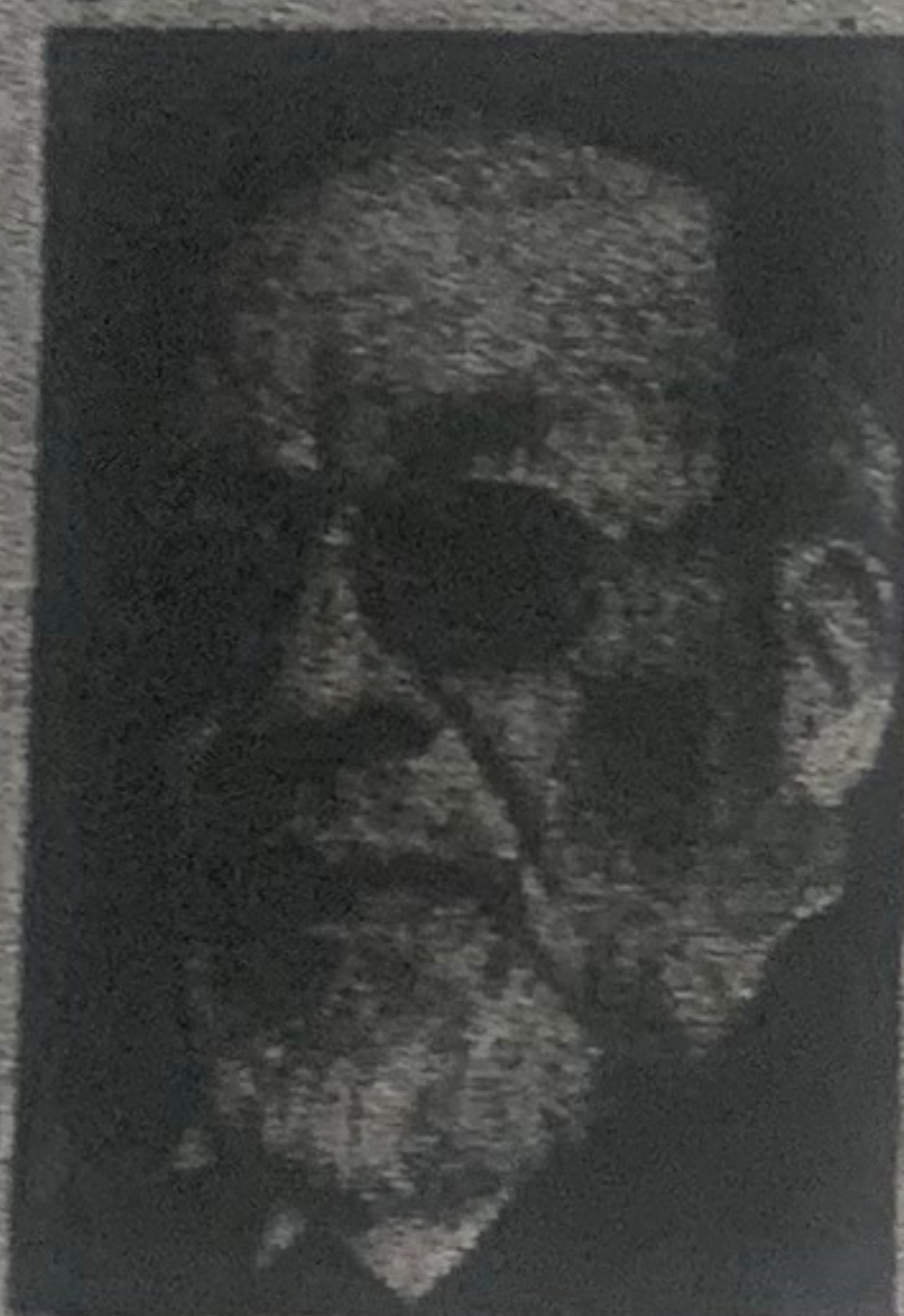
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James T. Diggs, Art Professor Emeritus, Dies

Frank Tural
STAFF REPORTER

James T. Diggs Jr., an artist who helped shepherd the growth of his beloved Winston-Salem State University, died Tuesday. He was 73.

Diggs was admitted to Forsyth Memorial Hospital two weeks ago, his wife, Mary Louise, said last night. His art had stopped coming when he arrived at the hospital, she said. Doctors got it started again. He never regained consciousness, she said. An autopsy will be performed to determine the



JAMES T. DIGGS

cause of death. Known simply as "T" to his friends, Diggs taught art for 42 years at Winston-Salem State and was chairman of its art department for much of that time. He used to say that the school was his home, and he meant it literally.

Diggs, born in Maryville, Tenn., moved to Winston-Salem when he was a child and lived in various houses on what is now the Winston-Salem State campus. One house was where the Kenneth R. Williams Auditorium is today. He went to elementary school and high school on land that is now part of the university. As did his parents and four of his five siblings, Diggs graduated from the school, which then was a teachers college.

"I guess I've been here all my life," he said in an interview in 1983.

The influence of James Thackery Diggs Jr., though, spread through the entire arts community of Winston-Salem. He was known for his eclectic tastes. His paintings ranged from realism to cubism to expressionism. He tried his hand at lithographs, etchings and silkcreens, and he took photographs for the *Journal's* "Negro Page" in the 1930s.

"Oh, he could do anything," said Edwin F. Shewmake, a retired art professor at Salem College who was one of Diggs' closest friends. "He helped me so much when I first started out with etching and aesthetics. He had a wonderful insight into art."

Diggs, Shewmake and 15 other local

artists formed the Associated Artists of Winston-Salem in 1956 and traveled around the Carolinas talking about art to anyone who would invite them. Diggs also helped start the Winston-Salem Gallery of Fine Arts, which became part of the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art.

Such restlessness didn't end when he retired from Winston-Salem State as a professor emeritus in 1979. He often stayed up all night, reading and watching television and

getting by on three or four hours of sleep.

Mrs. Diggs said: "I often would tease him and tell him he wasn't being fair to me. But he was a great husband and father."

After graduating from Winston-Salem State in 1934 with a degree in education, Diggs taught black elementary and high school in Hamlet, North Wilkesboro and Jonesville.

He returned to Winston-Salem State as a secretary to the registrar in 1938 and never left. He helped to design every building on the campus from 1938 to 1962.

Diggs also received a master of fine arts and fine arts education

from Columbia University in 1947. He continued his education at Columbia through the summers until 1959.

Diggs, though, seemed most proud of his one child, Janifer, and his two grandchildren, whose pictures covered a shelf in the living room of his house on East Third Street.

A memorial service will be held at 11 a.m. Saturday at St. Timothy's Episcopal Church.

Mrs. Diggs requests that, instead of sending flowers, people send contributions in memory of Diggs to the art gallery at Winston-Salem State.

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Reinvestments in the Community

Diggs Gallery exhibitions are enriching

By PATRICIA SMITH-DEERING
Community News Editor

In a city known nationally for its commitment to the arts, the Diggs Gallery, located on the campus of Winston-Salem State University, offers a contemporary showcase for some of the finest artistic works in the country.

The gallery was named for James Thackeray Diggs Jr., former chairman of the art department and a professor emeritus. He taught at WSSU for more than 40 years before his retirement in 1979.

Diggs, who died in April 1989, was also co-founder of the Associate Arts of Winston-Salem and helped establish what is now the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art, SECCA.

The first exhibition featured large pencil drawings by Glenda Wharton-Little, a Winston-Salem artist and sculptor. The drawings were created for an ancient African folktale she has illustrated, "The Children and the Sun: A Bushman Tale." Also featured were large color photographs from the Elison Archives at the Smithsonian Institution, depicting African tribal life. A

25-piece retrospective of Diggs's works was on display which included abstract paintings, landscape watercolors, etchings, and drawings.

Two historic exhibitions that recreated the history of the African-

"We've Come This Far By Faith: A Historical View of the Black Church in Forsyth County" was an exhibition curated by Winston-Salem Delta Fine Arts, Inc. Delta Fine Arts and the Diggs Gallery co-presented both exhibitions.

The current spring exhibition features the works of three well-known artists, two of them from Winston-Salem. "The Spirit of Myth" by Mark Rothko, early paintings from the 1930s and 1940s, is on loan to the gallery from the National Gallery of Art until June 30.

Sketches from the mural that John Biggers is designing for the Winston-Salem State University campus are on display. And "Geometric Nature of Life," the dramatic drawings and paintings of Jim Biggers, are on exhibition. The showings run through June 30.

At the gala gallery opening last October,

Mitzi Shewmake, a WSSU art professor and the gallery director, said, "It's taken nearly 20 years to see this become a reality and now that it is, the community and people from all over should take advantage of what we have here now and in future exhibitions." She added, "It's simply magnificent and an asset for the university."



Mary L. Diggs accepts tribute from arts patron, Gordon Hanes, at opening of gallery dedicated to her late husband, James Thackeray Diggs Jr.

American churches were featured from January 3-February 3. "Climbing Jacob's Ladder: The Rise of Black Churches in Eastern American Cities, 1740-1877" was an exhibition that examined the beginnings of African-American churches and was organized by the Smithsonian Institution's Anacostia Museum in Washington, D.C.

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"Reinvestments in the Community" is a weekly column appearing in API publications throughout the USA.