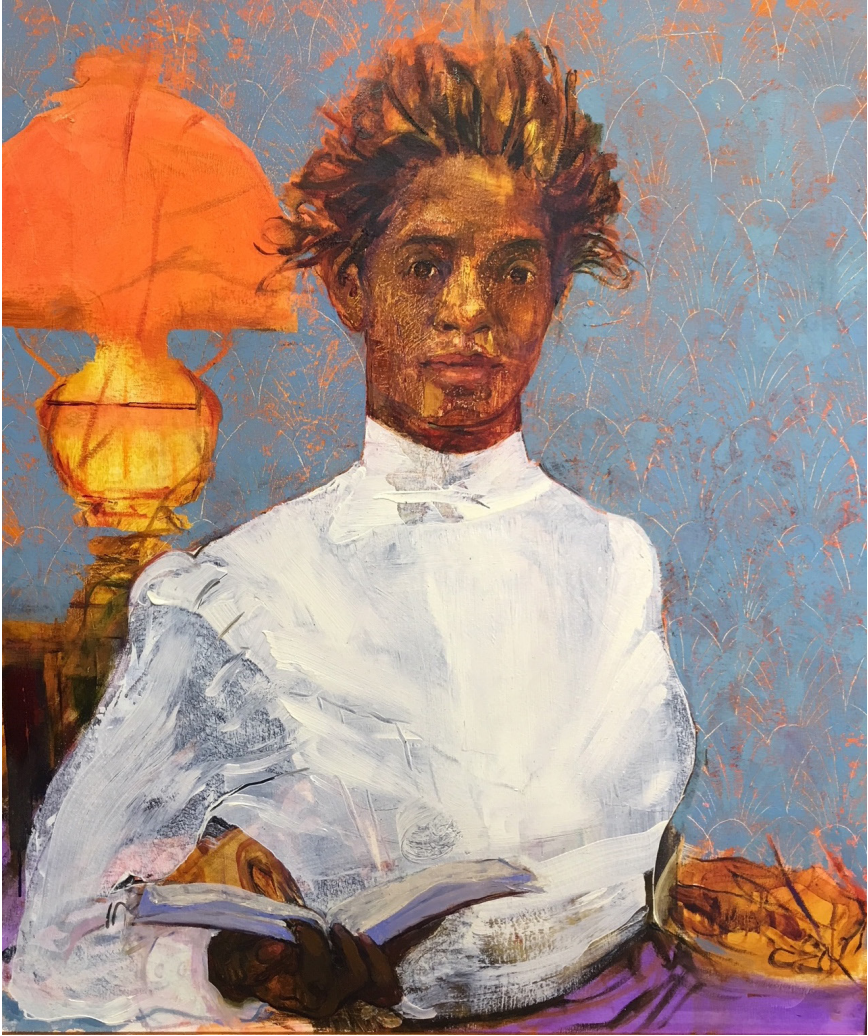


Commemorating Otelia Cromwell, Ph.D. 1926



Jennifer Packer, *Otelia Cromwell*, 2018, oil on canvas, 32 x 38"

About the Artist, Jennifer Packer

Jennifer Packer lives and works in New York. She received her B.F.A. from the Tyler University School of Art at Temple University in 2007 and her M.F.A. from the Yale University School of Art in 2012. Before becoming an assistant professor of painting at the Rhode Island School of Design, she was artist in residence at The Studio Museum in Harlem and a visual arts fellow at The Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, MA. She received a Rema Hort Mann Grant in 2013. Her work has appeared in more than a dozen solo and group exhibitions in the United States and Europe and is housed in multiple collections.



Packer paints portraits with attention to the complexities of representation and the responsibilities of viewership. She is quoted, “It’s not figures, not bodies, but humans I am painting.”¹ Packer’s portraits balance compositions that are expressive in brushstroke and controlled in palette. Her human subjects are rendered with careful balance too, often in a casual encounter that is introspective and complexly unknowable. As Beau Rutland writes in *Art Forum*, “Her work is not focused on identity alone, but also on registering the processes of becoming and undoing.”²

As Packer herself writes, “My only desire is that every painting feel that it has been created out of absolute necessity – that each work is genuinely cared for.”³

1 Lee Ann Norman, “‘Not Figures, Not Bodies, But Humans:’ Jennifer Packer in Conversation with Lee Ann Norman,” *Artcritical: The Online Magazine of Art and Ideas*, September 20, 2017, <http://www.artcritical.com/2017/09/20/lee-ann-norman-with-jennifer-packer/>.

2 Beau Rutland, “Jennifer Packer,” *Artforum International*, 56, no. 9 (May 2018): <https://www.artforum.com/print/201805/openings-jennifer-packer-75053>.

3 Norman, “‘Not Figures, Not Bodies, But Humans:’ Jennifer Packer in Conversation with Lee Ann Norman,” *Artcritical: The Online Magazine of Art and Ideas*.

About Otelia Cromwell (1874-1972)

Otelia Cromwell was born and raised in Washington, D.C. After graduating from high school, Otelia taught in the D.C. public schools while taking college courses at Howard University. In 1897 she transferred to Smith College. She graduated with a B.A. in 1900, becoming the College's first African American graduate. In 1910, she earned her M.A. in English from Columbia University.



In 1926, Otelia Cromwell became the first African American woman to earn a Yale Ph.D., and the fourth African American woman to earn a Ph.D. in this country. Her dissertation, *Thomas Heywood, Dramatist: A Study in Elizabethan Drama of Everyday Life*, was published by the Yale University Press in 1928. In 1930, after the Miner Normal School became a four-year college, she was appointed professor of the Division of English Language and Literature. Upon retiring in 1944, Otelia Cromwell began what was to be her major scholarly work, *The Life of Lucretia Mott* (Harvard University Press, 1958). At the seventy-fifth anniversary celebration of its founding, Smith College awarded her an honorary degree.¹ Her impact as teacher and scholar is still remembered. For example, poet and former Yale faculty member Elizabeth Alexander spoke about the respect her grandmother had for her “great teacher, Miss Cromwell.”²

1 Adelaide M. Cromwell, “‘Ambition For Place or Fame Is Not My Besetting Folly:’ Letters from Otelia Cromwell to John Wesley Cromwell Sr,” in *Unveiled Voices, Unvarnished Memories: The Cromwell Family in Slavery and Segregation, 1692-1972* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2007).

2 Elizabeth Alexander (lecture, Elizabeth Alexander in Conversation with Hilton Als, New York Public Library, New York, June 9, 2015), <https://www.nypl.org/events/programs/2015/06/09/elizabeth-alexander-hilton-als?nref=56896>.

About the Yale Women Faculty Forum

The Yale Women Faculty Forum (WFF) was established in 2001 as an outgrowth of a conference during Yale's Tercentennial year to highlight the presence of women at the University and the accomplishments of Yale alumnae. We are a university-wide organization of women that fosters gender equity and diversity through policy initiatives, research, and innovative programs. To learn more visit our website, wff.yale.edu.

In January 2014 the WFF commissioned the portrait of the first seven women to earn Yale Ph.D.s in 1894. This remarkable portrait, located in the nave of Sterling Library, is highlighted during the Yale tour and noticed by many. We are now proud to have commissioned this portrait of Otelia Cromwell, the first African American woman to earn a Yale Ph.D. Her life as a scholar and educator will be an inspiration for many young scholars today.

Images inspire, instruct, and change how we experience an institution. We recognize our responsibilities as researchers, advocates, and witnesses. We look forward to continuing to shape Yale's conception and portrayal of itself, as well as its composition: it matters who we honor, it matters who are on our walls, and equally, it matters greatly who are in our classrooms as students, researchers, and teachers.

Acknowledgments

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Serving on the selection committee were Carol Armstrong (Art History), Anoka Faruqee (Art), Erica James (Art History), Paula Kavathas (Chair), and Rochelle Feinstein (Art).

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