Howardena Pindell, (detail), 1977
reframed in a new context."

part, Studio Museum director Thelma Golden, who has organized such shows as "Energy/ Experimentation: Black Artists
painters. "There's a wonderful group of collectors who are more receptive to the work of black abstract painters now," says

from "Black in the Abstract."

helped him navigate his path as an abstract artist. Because his family fled the civil war in Nigeria when he was a baby and


for the work of black abstract painters now, says Odita. "Once people started making geometric paintings in which shards of vibrant colors zigzag and abut in compositions that suggest colliding

painters such as Helen Frankenthaler and Kenneth Noland, Odita got a job at Kenkeleba House in New York, owned by the

"As they read more and look, they see the need to open up their collections. The writings and exhibitions of black

"If it's truly cosmopolitan, it doesn't end in that trope. Then people start engaging with other things that are occurring—texture, color, the

Robert Motherwell and Lewis's friend Ad Reinhardt and held at Studio 35 in New York, where the artists present debated

"Any kind of formal invention in the work of black artists was seen as, if not second rate, then something done the second

Dilemma," bristled at the tendency to critique work by blacks on "sociological rather than esthetic" merits. His extensive

manifesto with the Black Arts Movement that you did work that reflected the beauty of that community in no uncertain

We are a nation of many cultures, and the artists who present themselves as "black artists" are themselves cosmopolitan in their

painting, titled

in which a newspaper photograph of a confrontation in

evenende, in which a newspaper photograph of a confrontation in

"I felt that abstraction, coming

The 74-year-old artist, who grew up in Alabama and moved to New York in 1960 as an art student, revered the Abstract

The Changing Complex Profile of Black Abstract Painters

framed in a new context."

"As they read more and look, they see the need to open up their collections. The writings and exhibitions of black

"Loved because for the first generation, every opinion and culture is open. It's not true that black culture is about. As that

with the Black Arts Movement. The first comprehensive overview of his career opens in

"It took a lot of integrity and a lot of courage for an African American artist to be an abstractionist in the 1950s, '60s," says Michael Rosenfeld, who organized "Subtlety: African American Abstraction, 1925–1990," at

paintings that had acoustic panels attached to the canvases. Strips of fluorescent color painted on the edges of the canvases

"Any kind of formal invention in the work of black artists was seen as, if not second rate, then something done the second

"Fred Sandback can make this beautiful line

painters included in "Black in the Abstract."

"So I think it's there, and I think it is about what is coming, and what is in a sense, what is the process that brings the world

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