


BLACK HISTORY MONTH

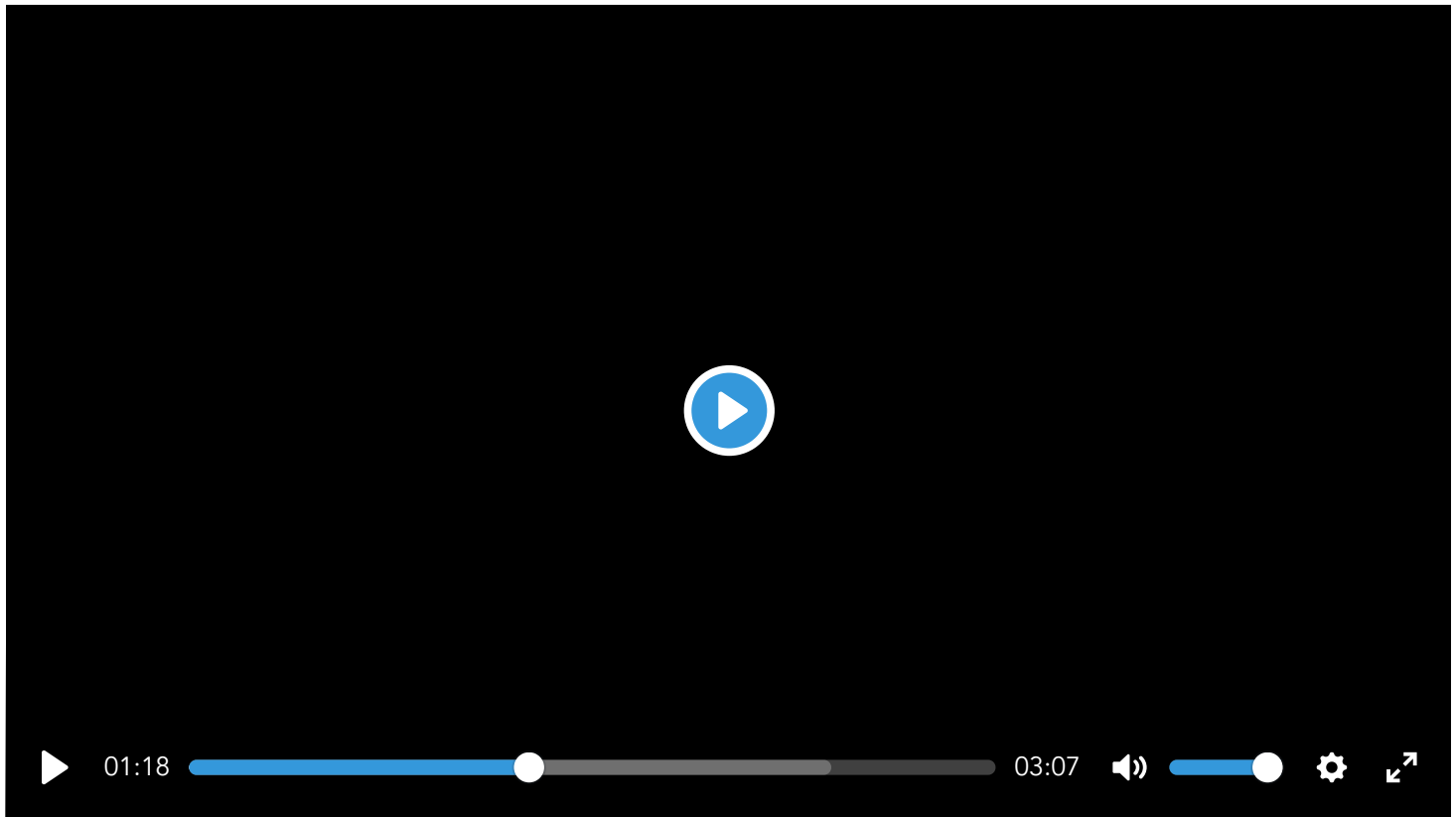
Black artist and activist John Outterbridge leaves lasting legacy

"He's an icon of black history," daughter Tami Outterbridge said.

 By Rachel Brown

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Nicknamed the Griot, renowned artist and activist, John Outterbridge told powerful stories through art.

LOS ANGELES (KABC) -- Nicknamed the Griot, renowned artist and activist John Outterbridge told powerful stories through art.

The late artist's works can be seen in exhibits across the country from New York City's Tilton Gallery to LACMA and the California African American Museum, where he was honored in 2011 alongside actor Sidney Poitier

His works of art are known to highlight social and political issues of the times and encourage ongoing dialogue to challenge them.

Outterbridge's own story began in North Carolina, back in 1933.

"He grew up in a very beautiful creative environment that some would have said was a junkyard," Tami explained.

Outterbridge grew up watching his father repurpose old machine parts to sell and trade.

He later dedicated a piece of artwork to each of his parents.

It was those early years when his love for mixed media blossomed. Outterbridge moved to LA in the early 1960s and quickly found a community of black artists.

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Illustrator Monica Ahanonu says she's always been inspired by the poetry of Audre Lorde, so the local artist was honored to be chosen to helm the Google Doodle dedicated to Lorde.

He would become a pillar of the assemblage arts movement, using found objects, passed off materials others viewed as junk, to make masterpieces.

"He describes the time period of the 60s as being a time when he learned that art was not just for his self expression, but that he could use it as a tool to begin to hold America accountable for what America said it wanted to be," Tami said.

From 1975 to 1992 Outterbridge served as the director of Watts Towers Arts Center.

He was also passionate about exposing children to art and worked to increase art funding in schools.

Outterbridge believed through art and education, real change can be achieved.

"Those stories that he was telling about African Americans and our common experiences, our tapestry, our history, will be with us for generations to come," his daughter explained.

John Outterbridge passed away in November at the age of 87.

Correction: A previous version of this report misstated the month in which John Outterbridge died. The article has been updated.

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