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Ernie Barnes, *City Ball* 1986



**ARTIST**

Ernie Barnes (1938-2008)

**TITLE**

City Ball 1986

**MEDIUM**

Acrylic on canvas

**DATE**

1986

**SIZE**

48 x 24 in : 121.9 x 60.6 cm

**FRAMED SIZE**

52 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 28 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in : 134.0 x 73.0 cm

**PROVENANCE**

Acquired from the artist, 1986  
Private Collection, Pennsylvania  
Private Collection, Massachusetts

**REFERENCE**

AC24-46

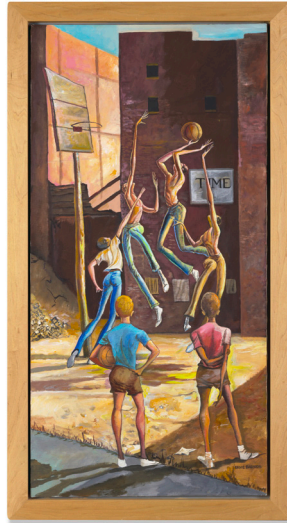




## Ernie Barnes

Ernie Barnes (1938–2009) was an American painter, professional football player, and artist known for his dynamic, elongated figures and depictions of African American life. Born in Durham, North Carolina, Barnes studied art at North Carolina College (now North Carolina Central University), although he initially pursued a career in professional football, playing in the NFL for several teams during the late 1950s and early 1960s. After retiring from sports, he focused on painting full-time, developing a unique style that used exaggerated, elongated forms to convey a sense of rhythm and movement.

His most recognised works capture scenes from Black communities, often portraying everyday activities with a sense of vitality and celebration. "The Sugar Shack" (1976), featured on the cover of Marvin Gaye's album *\*I Want You\** and in the TV show *\*Good Times\**, is one of his best-known pieces, illustrating a dance scene with dynamic, expressive figures. Barnes described his work as "neo-mannerist" and drew inspiration from his experiences and observations of African American cultural life. He remains influential for his ability to merge realism with stylised, kinetic forms, exploring themes of community, spirituality, and social commentary.



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