

# 'Sugar Shack,' an iconic painting featured on a Marvin Gaye album cover, sells for \$15.3 million

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Credit: NDZ/STAR MAX/IPX/AP

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A painting that served as the cover for one of legendary soul singer Marvin Gaye's albums has sold at auction for almost \$15.3 million.

Ernie Barnes' joyous depiction of a frenetic scene in a dance hall, titled "The Sugar Shack," sold to [Bill Perkins](#), a hedge fund manager and entrepreneur, after 10 minutes of bidding by more than 22 bidders, confirmed Christie's auction house.

According to Christie's, the final sale price for "The Sugar Shack" was 27 times higher than the most expensive Barnes work to sell before it. It also blew past its estimated sale price of \$150,000 to \$200,000.

Barnes, who died in 2009, was born in North Carolina in 1938 and often drew upon his own experiences growing up in the American South during the Jim Crow era in his depictions of social moments and images of quotidian Black life.

In a [2002 interview](#), in which the Oakland Tribune described Barnes as the "Picasso of the Black art world," the artist said he got the idea for "The Sugar Shack" from reflecting on his childhood and "not being able to go to a dance I wanted to go to when I was 11."

"The Sugar Shack" has become a widely recognized image -- thanks in part to its appearance on Gaye's 1976 "I Want You" album and to its use across four seasons of the sitcom "Good Times," which centered around the lives of a poor family in the Chicago housing projects.

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Barnes was a professional American football player before becoming a painter and many of his artworks depicted sporting scenes, such as basketball and football games. Barnes told the Oakland Tribune in 2002: "I paint when ideas come and I see a vision of what I want from our common humanity."

Barnes' work appeared on other album covers over the years including a 1984 cover for the The Crusaders and B.B. King's 2000 album "Making Love is good for you."



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