Afro-art: a learning packet

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Afro-art: A learning packet

by

Ruth Eleanor Osborn

A Thesis Submitted to the
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MASTER OF ARTS

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Signatures have been redacted for privacy

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INTRODUCTION

The significant contributions made by Afro-American artists tend to be invisible to most Americans; not only to the White majority but to Blacks themselves. Elsa Honig Fine, in her book, *The Afro-American Artist*, quoted a young, Black artist, David Hammons, saying:

I never knew there were 'black' painters, or artists or anything until I found out about him...[Charles White at the Otis Art Institute]. There is no way I could have got the information in my art history classes. It's like I just found out about Negro cowboys, and I was shocked about that (Fine 1973, 204).

No one can deny that the contributions of Afro-American artists have been left out of the art history books. Oakley N. Holmes reports in his *Resource Guide to Black American Art*, that a book entitled *Three Hundred Years of American Painting*, included only two Black artists, Horace Pippin and Jacob Lawrence (Holmes 1978, 9). Why is it necessary to point this out? After all, an artist is an artist. Why should his or her race even be an issue? Because, according to Eugene Grigsby in *Art and Ethnics*, "inclusion of contributions made by all members of a society is a duty when such inclusive titles as *American Folk Art* are used. To do otherwise is to castrate a group and to deny them any knowledge of their ancestors" (Grigsby 1977, 117). Young people need role models in order to develop self-esteem. Not only do minority youth need to know the heroes of their heritage, but all Americans need to be enriched by awareness of the ethnic diversity that is so often ignored in our educational programs.

What are the reasons for the exclusion of Blacks from the annals of American art? The fault lies in a dual failure of our society to nurture
Afro-American talent and to recognize the art produced by that talent. Most Blacks could not afford the luxury of a career at which only a fortunate few succeed in earning a living. Being an artist has never been a reliable means to escape poverty. Michael Chinn, a Black art professor at Iowa State University, reports that very few Black students enroll in his classes, and those who do are pursuing careers in commercial art (Chinn 1987). Racism at art schools has thwarted some aspiring artists in the pursuit of their goals. Consider the experience of Charles White, who in 1936 won an art scholarship in a nationwide contest but was denied admission to art school because of his race (Fine 1973, 170). Moreover, his work has been exhibited in museums where he was not permitted to see it (Fine 1973, 172). Granted, there have been changes in recent years, and few Black artists today face such overt discrimination. Nonetheless, one cannot deny that racism has contributed to the failure to recognize and nurture Afro-American talent.

Another factor contributing to the exclusion that Black artists face is that those who choose a career in art often have difficulty getting their work exhibited and recognized.

There are still few museums and galleries dedicated to the work of Black artists, even in urban areas with large, Black populations (Gordon 1975, 66). A notable exception is the Studio Museum in Harlem, which provides not only significant exhibitions but community activities and studio space for artists-in-residence. The same can be said for the DuSable Museum in Chicago.
Allan M. Gordon has pointed out that there has also been a lack of "a discerning audience" for Black art (Gordon 1975, 66). The pervasive problem in Western society of art being separate from daily life is also present in the Black community. Although art is an integral part of traditional African society, it tends to have a lower priority among Afro-Americans, reflecting their severance from the cultural milieu of their ancestors (Gordon 1975, 66). David Driskell says in *Two Centuries of Black American Art*:

> No viable aesthetic was developed among Black artists between 1930 and 1950 because Black leaders and intellectuals did not take the artists nor their art seriously.... It was assumed that art was trivial, peripheral, while politics, economics and religion were of cultural importance (Driskell 1976, 78).

Another important factor is that Blacks have not been placed in positions of influence to serve as educators and role models for young people. Brenda Jones, another Black art professor at Iowa State University, feels that having Blacks in teaching positions is as important as curricula that include the art of Black Americans (Jones 1987).

What can be done to remedy the omissions of the past? Some of the solutions have already been implied. More Black art educators are needed in positions where they can serve as role models for youth. Efforts need to be made to relate art to daily life, particularly in the urban, Black community. The contributions of Black artists must be included in art history texts and in art classes to raise awareness of America's Black artistic heritage. Presented here is a learning packet designed to provide information about Black artists and their work which can be incorporated into the school curriculum. An important objective is to
present a broad range of Afro-American artists in order to prevent a stereotypical view. A special effort is made to include female artists, as they have faced double discrimination. Although the '70s brought a spate of exhibitions of women's art, Black women were omitted, while exhibitions of Black artists often excluded women (Yassin 1981, 5). It is hoped that links of commonalty can be established between students and the artists they study, thus encouraging them to create from their own cultural background. David Hammons' experience, noted earlier, illustrates the importance of exposing young people to the achievements of members of their ethnic group. Edna Lewis, founder of the Boston National Center for Afro-American Arts, whose family were followers of Marcus Garvey's "Back to Africa" movement of the '20s, expressed this concept eloquently:

...the Garveyism in which I was raised, gave me a terrible sense of the effect of people's culture upon that people's psyche.... You've got to see yourself as a person of substance in the world and you've got to understand your heritage 'in total' (Korzenik 1982, 26).

This project aims to contribute to that "in total" understanding.

The components of this packet include: A historical overview of the major time periods or movements which influenced work by Afro-Americans, a slide set providing visual exposure to a representative sample from this body of work, a set of mini-biographies on index cards to expose students to the lives of Black artists, and a series of learning strategies designed to relate Black art history to students' own creative experience. The strategies are planned for use at the secondary level because the teen years seem to be the most self-critical period of development, during
which students are seeking identity and forming goals. This is not to say that their use should be limited to secondary students. A number of them might work well at the elementary level with a few adaptations. It is not expected that all the strategies will be used together. Selections can be made according to the material being covered by a particular class. Black History Month or Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday, as well as other times during the school year, might be appropriate for selections from these strategies. It is hoped, however, that these plans can be interspersed along with those focusing on other ethnic groups, in an integrated curriculum approach, throughout the school year. Iowa State University's New Art Basics format, developed by Dennis Dake and John Weinkein (1986), is followed in formulating these strategies. One of the premises of that model is that "Art is an integral part of human socialization," which expresses very well the focus of this project. The strategies also include references to objectives listed by the State of Iowa Department of Public Instruction in Visual Arts in Iowa Schools (VAIS) in order to facilitate their integration with existing curricula in Iowa schools.

Historical Overview

The history of African-American art, for the purpose of study, can be divided into groups representing major time periods during which Afro-American art was produced. The groups that have been selected for discussion are: Pre-Civil War arts, 19th Century art, the Harlem Renaissance, Depression era art, protest art, modern-day folk art, and contemporary art.
Pre-Civil War arts

The institution of slavery in the Americas not only robbed Black people of their freedom, it also cut them off from their culture. For this reason, only a few connections have been established between the arts and crafts produced during the slave era and the traditional crafts of West Africa; metalwork, sculpture, and weaving.

Many Blacks became skilled ironworkers before the Civil War. In fact, much of the ornamental ironwork in southern cities such as Charleston and New Orleans was the work of free, Black artisans or slaves (Grigsby 1977, 117) (see page 49). This traditional craft continues to this day, practiced by a few Black artisans such as Phillip Simmons of Charleston, who learned his skills as an apprentice to a past master of the art (Vlach 1983, 301). Blacks also became outstanding builders and cabinetmakers. Parallels have been drawn between houses built by slaves and traditional Central and West African indigenous architecture (Driskell 1976, 43, 44) (Fig. 1). Most widely recognized of the furniture makers was Thomas Day, whose earliest dated piece was marked 1820. He apparently became quite wealthy and taught his skills to both Black and White apprentices (Grigsby 1977, 117). Slaves were also involved with making utilitarian pottery, using European methods taught them by their masters. However, by 1820 there emerged in Georgia and the Carolinas a unique tradition of face vessels made by Black men. They have been called by various names including: "ugly jugs," "monkey pots," and "grotesque jugs" because of their arresting, stylized features characterized by large, protruding eyes and bared teeth (see page 63). Similarities have been
Figure 1. Eighteenth-century Bamileke houses in Cameroon (top) and African House, Melrose Plantation, Natchitoches, Louisiana (bottom) (Driskell 1976, 31)
noted between these and the wooden masks and figures produced by the BaKongo people of West Africa (Hammond 1982, 12) (Fig. 2). The art of some modern day folk artists such as the chewing gum heads of Nellie Mae Rowe and the wood sculpture of William Dawson display similar characteristics (Livingston and Beardsley 1982, 126, 76) (Figs. 3 and 4).

Another traditional craft still alive among Black folk artists is that of quilting. Harriet Powers, a quilter who was born a slave in 1837, used her art to record historical events. Two of her quilts have been preserved. Called Bible quilts because of their subject matter, they also record astrological phenomena such as dark days, cold waves, and falling stars (Hammond 1982, 12). One of the Bible quilts is in Boston’s Museum of Fine Arts and the other is in the Smithsonian Institution. The free-floating figures on the quilts, which are placed at various angles, have been compared to the applique work of the Fon people of Dahomey (Benin) where the work is traditionally done by men and depicts events in the Fon kingdom (Hammond 1982, 12) (Fig. 5). Quilting has continued to be an important folk art among Afro-American women. Black quilters have used a method of joining strips of fabric in an improvisational manner not common in Euro-American quilts (Fig. 6). This has been compared to the West African textile technique of sewing narrow strips of woven material together (Ferris 1983, 81) (Fig. 7).

A number of Blacks became self-taught portraitists or limners by the 19th Century. It is said that the well-known American portraitist, Gilbert Stuart, was first inspired by watching a Black slave artist, Neptune Thurston, at work (Fine 1973, 23). Best known of the
Figure 2. Figure on Dog, Zaire (Bakongo tribe), 19th century, carved wood, 10" high (Livingston and Beardsley 1982, 30)

Figure 3. William Dawson, Gorilla, 1977, carved and painted wood, varnish, 10½x5½x2" (Livingston and Beardsley 1982, 31)
Figure 4. Two-Faced Head (recto and verso), 1980, painted gum and mixed media, 5½x4½x4½" (Livingston and Beardsley 1982, 126)
Figure 22a. Detail of Figure 21. Fon appliquéd symbol of Houegbadja (1654-1685), 17th-century king of Dahomey.

Figure 22b. Detail of Harriet Powers' Quilt [43].

Figure 5. Detail of Fon appliquéd symbol of Houegbadja (1654-1685), 17th-century king of Dahomey (top); detail of Harriet Powers' Quilt (bottom) (Vlach 1978, 51)
Figure 6. Ida Magwood, *Quilt* (Vlach 1978, 71)
Figure 7. Men's Weave Textile, Ghana (Vlach 1978, 72)
Afro-American limners is Joshua Johnston, born in 1765, who painted the portraits of wealthy Baltimoreans from 1780 to 1825. He may have started his life as a slave and later bought his freedom (Fine 1973, 27). His clients were aristocratic Whites, but at least one of his subjects was Black, as seen in Portrait of A Cleric (Fig. 8). Details such as hair and lace were exquisitely executed by Johnston. His work has been compared to that of the famous family of portraitists headed by Charles Willson Peale (Fine 1973, 27). Other Black limners of the era were G. W. Hobbs, A. B. Wilson, and Julien Hudson of New Orleans. It is interesting to note that two-dimensional figurative painting is virtually absent in African tradition (Wolff, 1988).

19th Century art

During the period preceding the Civil War and the turmoil that followed, few Black artists were able to pursue artistic careers. Some who did followed the accepted pattern of the day, attending art school and spending time in Europe. The style of their work conformed to the time and reflected European trends as did that of White artists. The Black artists who distinguished themselves as landscapists or genre painters were males, while several female Afro-Americans emerged as sculptors (Yassin 1981, 5). Once again, this represents a departure from African tradition, in which men are the sculptors. The most notable of these female sculptors are Edmonia Lewis and Meta Warrick Fuller. Lewis’ work, as in Old Indian Arrowmaker and His Daughter (Fig. 9), reflected her Ojibwa (Chippewa) Indian heritage on her mother’s side as well as the Afro-American heritage of her father, as in Forever Free (Yassin 1981, 5)
Figure 8. Joshua Johnston, Portrait of a Cleric, 1805-10, oil on canvas, 28x22" (Fine 1973, 28)

Figure 9. Edmonia Lewis, Old Indian Arrow Maker and His Daughter, 1872, Marble, height 27" (Fine 1973, 64)
(Fig. 10). Meta Warrick Fuller's work showed the strong influence of Auguste Rodin, whom she met in Paris. Edward Bannister, a landscape artist with West Indian and Canadian heritage, was a member of a group of artists who started the Rhode Island School of Design. An expatriate Black artist who spent most of his life in France was Henry Ossawa Tanner, from a middle class Philadelphia family. He was a student of Thomas Eakins, and was influenced by him toward genre painting. In 1893 he created *The Banjo Lesson*, now a very popular work (Fig. 11). Discouraged by the unfavorable racial climate of his home country, he moved to Paris and painted Biblical themes. This disappointed Afro-American leaders such as W. E. B. DuBois and Alain Locke, who urged Black artists to portray African subject matter.

The Harlem Renaissance

Alain Locke was the author of *The New Negro*, published in 1925, which became the manifesto of a flowering of Black achievement known as the Harlem Renaissance or New Negro Movement. The era followed the mass migration of rural southern Blacks to the northern urban centers. More a literary movement than one of the visual arts, the creative climate in the Harlem of the '20s nonetheless inspired a number of Afro-American artists. The "official" artist of the Harlem Renaissance was Aaron Douglas, who illustrated the works of Harlem writers and followed Locke's advice to draw from his African roots. His flat, dramatic figures reflect his interest in African art (Fig. 12).

Romare Bearden, a younger artist of that period, criticized the work of the Harlem artists as "hackneyed and uninspired" (Campbell 1987, 49).
Figure 10. Edmonia Lewis, *Forever Free*, 1867, marble (Fine 1973, 64)
Figure 11. Henry O. Tanner, The Banjo Lesson, 1893, oil on canvas, 4'11" x 3'11" (Fine 1973, 39)

Figure 12. Aaron Douglas, Aspects of Negro Life, 1934, oil on canvas, 6'1" x 6'8" (Fine 1973, 86)
Part of the problem, as he saw it, was the interference of White philanthropies such as the Harmon Foundation, which established an annual competition and exhibition of the work of Black artists. The first gold medal winner was the janitor of the Harmon Foundation, Palmer Hayden (Campbell 1987, 38). The competition did, however, stimulate effort by Black artists from all over the world. Only 19 entered the first competition in 1926 but in its last year, 1933, 400 entries were accepted (Campbell 1987, 39). Some of the winners were sculptors Augusta Savage, Richmond Barthe’, Sargent Johnson, Selma Burke, and Meta Warrick Fuller. Among the painters who received the award were, William Johnson, Archibald Motley, Lois Mailou Jones, Hale Woodruff, Palmer Hayden, and Aaron Douglas (Campbell 1987, 39). Archibald Motley, the 1928 winner, captured the spirit of the times in his lively street scenes showing prosperous Blacks enjoying the pleasures of the city (Fig. 13).

**Depression era art**

The Great Stock Market Crash of 1929 created hard times for almost everybody in America, especially Blacks. Franklin D. Roosevelt’s program of government sponsorship for artists allowed thousands of painters, sculptors, muralists, and photographers to earn a living wage. The Federal Art Project of the Works Progress (later Projects) Administration (WPA/FAP) enabled many Black artists to begin or continue their careers. In New York, the Harlem Arts Workshop was created with WPA/FAP funds. It was directed by Augusta Savage, who had already been opening her studio to students (along with such artists as Charles Alston and Aaron Douglas). Under the sponsorship of the WPA/FAP, Charles Alston created murals for
Figure 13. Archibald Motley, *Chicken Shack*, 1936, oil on canvas (Fine 1973, 112)
the Harlem Hospital depicting primitive and modern medicine (Fig. 14). Savage helped the young Jacob Lawrence apply for WPA/FAP sponsorship and he went on to become one of the nation’s best known Black painters (Berman 1984, 85).

In Chicago, a similar center for the arts was formed in 1941. Called the Southside Community Art Center, it sponsored theater performances and an annual gala, "Artists and Models Ball," which raised money for the project. It brought together such artists as Charles White, Margaret Burroughs, and Archibald Motley. Although the WPA ended with World War II, the art center continues today to play an important role in the cultural life of Chicago (Stewart 1978, 4).

Protest art

During the years following the war, the issues of Civil Rights came to a head, culminating in the March on Washington in 1963. Other movements which gained momentum in that period of unrest were the anti-Vietnam War protests and the Feminist Movement. Much of the art produced at that time became the art of protest. Imagery such as the American flag, heroes, monuments, African motifs and metaphors composed the vocabulary of these artists. With subject matter taking precedence, a lot of the art created was little more than propaganda and did not survive the era. However, major artists did emerge, some continuing illustrious careers begun before those turbulent times. Among these were Romare Bearden, Melvin Edwards, Benny Andrews, Raymond Saunders, David Hammons, and Barbara Chase-Riboud.
Figure 14. Charles Alston, Magic and Medicine, panels in the Harlem Hospital, 1930s, oil on canvas (Fine 1973, 140-41)
Some protest art was collective. A series of Black Power murals was created in major U.S. cities. The first of these was the Wall of Respect (1967), on an abandoned building in the inner city of Chicago (see page 53). William Walker and members of the Organization of Black American Culture (OBAC) painted figures of Black heroes along with African symbolism. The inauguration became a celebration of Afro-American arts. Many Black leaders were present, including musicians, artists, and writers. Among them were Nina Simone, James Baldwin, and John Killens. The Wall of Respect was followed by the Wall of Truth, also in Chicago (1969) and the Wall of Dignity in Detroit by Dana Chandler and Gary Rickson, who went on to paint more walls in Boston. Most of the murals fell into disrepair and no longer exist (Campbell 1985, 57). Coalition groups were formed, such as AFRI-COBRA (Coalition of Black Revolutionary Artists, later African Commune of Bad Relevant Artists). One of the members, Jeff Donaldson, wrote at the time of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination on April 4, 1968:

> And the dreamer's dreamer had his balloon bursted on a Memphis motel balcony, And that was the last balloon. And it was Chicago again and Harlem again and San Francisco and D.C. and Cleveland and everywhere and COBRA was born. And Law and Order. And off the pig. And we angrily realized that sleepers can die that way. Like Fred and Mark and very legally. And COBRA coiled angrily. Our coats were pulled. And the anger is gone and yes, Imamu, it's Nation Time (Campbell 1985, 57).

AFRI-COBRA was instrumental in establishing the Studio Museum in Harlem in 1967. Two other inner city institutions which also began in the late '60s
are the National Center of Afro-American Artists in Boston and the DuSable Museum in Chicago (Campbell 1985, 58).

As mentioned earlier, though exhibitions of Black artists' works proliferated between the mid-'60s and mid-'70s, female artists were often excluded (Campbell 1985, 56). Two artists who make powerful statements about their female identity as well as their heritage are Betye Saar and Faith Ringgold. Both weave fragments from their past experiences into their art, like the historical images of Harriet Powers' quilts. Faith Ringgold has used the American flag as ironic commentary. David Hammons also used the flag in conjunction with his body prints. The Aunt Jemima image, that smiling, passive matron, is replaced with a new and angry identity on the canvases of several Black artists.

Works commemorating Black heroes such as those of Barbara Chase-Riboud entitled Monument to Malcolm X (Fig. 15), Howardena Pindell's Homage to Martin Luther King, Jr. and Charles White's Homage to Sterling Brown, 1972, are typical of that era. Sometimes the hero is an anonymous symbol of the struggle, such as the boxer in Benny Andrews' The Champion, 1968 (Fig. 16). Perhaps Mohammed Ali is the prototype for this recurring image of the prizefighter (Campbell 1985, 62).

Modern-day folk art

The boxer image also appears in a painting by an American folk artist named Sam Doyle who "has never dialed a phone or driven a car" (Tully 1983, 32) (Fig. 17). Despite his lack of formal education and, indeed, contact with high-tech society, Doyle and other unschooled artists are being celebrated around the country with exhibitions in galleries and
Figure 15. Barbara Chase-Riboud, Monument to Malcolm X, No. 2, 1969, bronze and wool, 6'x3'4" (Fine 1973, 263)
Figure 16. Benny Andrews, *Champion*, 1968, oil and collage, 4'2" square (Fine 1973, 252)
Figure 17. Sam Doyle, Abe Kane, 1970s, oil on plywood, 30-1/8 x 48” (Livingston and Beardsley 1982, 6).
museums. These artists, who are primarily from the south, often feel a spiritual calling to produce their art. Some did not start to create until late in life, often after retiring from other jobs or having to slow down because of illness or injury. Elijah Pierce, a barber, converted his shop in Columbus, Ohio into the Elijah Pierce Art Gallery to house his wood carvings. His work also includes prizefighters (Fig. 18), along with a variety of other images, many with historical content. James "Son Ford" Thomas, who has made a living primarily as a blues guitarist and composer, makes unfired clay heads with corn kernel teeth which are reminiscent of the Afro-Carolinian face vessels mentioned earlier (Fig. 19). Sister Gertrude Morgan, who dresses all in white since she became "the bride of Christ," uses religious imagery with written messages in her paintings, filling large areas with a bold, dynamic script (Livingston and Beardsley 1982, 100) (see page 67).

Writing is the medium for another contemporary group of artists who, in contrast to most of the southern folk artists, are young and urban. These are the graffitists who roam the subways of New York, spraying trains and walls with quick-drying paint. Graffiti, with its origins in defiant acts of vandalism, is seen by some as "an authentic folk art" (Hart 1984, 52). To become a graffiti "master" a writer must become as visible and prolific as possible and develop a distinctive style. Fat caps, nozzles taken from spray starch cans, have enabled graffiti artists to create a fine mist, producing new background effects and shading. Standard nozzles are used for outlining. The first exhibition of graffiti art was held in Milan in 1979. Since then graffiti-festooned canvases
Figure 18. Louis vs. Braddock, c. 1950, carved and painted wood, 21½x23" (Livingston and Beardsley 1982, 121)
Figure 19. James 'Son Ford' Thomas (Livingston and Beardsley 1982, 129)
have sold for as much as $6,500. A graffiti writer who calls himself Rammellzee uses elements resembling comic strips and science fiction in his large creations (deAk 1983, 92). Futura, another graffitist, uses no images but clouds of color, with straight or zigzag lines and circles (Nadelman 1982, 77). Graffiti-inspired designs such as those by Keith Haring, decorate T-shirts, album covers, and coffee mugs. Some of Paloma Picasso's jewelry features graffiti motifs (Hart 1984, 52). The fact that many graffiti artists are young and Black is apparent in Junius Secundus' epic poem, The Sohoiad; or, The Masque of Art. A small excerpt from this satire appears below:

In this fat piping time of cultural plenty
Art sheds its bloom when it is over twenty:
Whiteness is staleness: connoisseurs, behold
Th' apotheosis of the Twelve-Year-Old!
My Noble Savages, on sneakered feet,
Flock to the doors of Fifty-Seventh Street:
The infant dauber, whom MAYOR KOCH appalls,
Now sprays on Belgian Flax instead of walls;
The matrons twitter and the cash-Bell rings,
I serve Hawaiian Punch and Chicken-Wings,
The fame of my invention spreads afar--
Part day-care center, part Bateau-Lavoir
(Secundus 1984).

Contemporary art
Raymond Saunders, an artist-in-residence at the University of California at Hayward, uses graffiti-like script in many of his paintings. He feels that "racial hangups are extraneous to art. No artist can afford to let them obscure what runs through all art---the living roots and the ever-growing aesthetic record of human spiritual and intellectual experience" (Fine 1973, 262). In his work Saunders uses script with abstract images to express that experience. African precedent can be
found for the importance of words in these artists' works. In Africa, words, both spoken and written, may carry a magical significance (Wolff, 1988).

It is difficult to determine what is happening currently in the history of Afro-American art. A quintessential "postmodern" artist named Robert Colescott irreverently uses images such as heroes and the American flag as well as Aunt Jemima and other Black stereotypes to satirize not only the world of High Art but American History, which excludes Black heroes (Sims 1984, 57) (Fig. 20). Some contemporary artists can be described as "mainstream," such as Alvin Loving, who assembles box-shaped canvases along a wall for a three-dimensional effect. He is convinced that "Even a box can be a self-portrait" (Fig. 21). Richard Hunt, a well-known Chicago sculptor, who works with welded steel, feels that "his blackness is irrelevant to his art" (Fine 1973, 233). Open, linear pieces with names from Greek mythology (see page 57) give way more recently to solid, closed forms. A sculptor named Mel Edwards does monumental outdoor sculpture. Earlier, he created a Lynch Fragments series from rubble salvaged in the wake of the Watts riots in Los Angeles (Fig. 22). Ben Jones has transferred the African tradition of body decoration to plaster life casts of arms, legs, and faces (see page 59). He is concerned with not only the quality of his art but with hopes to "give my people an awareness and inspiration for changing their lives" (Fine 1973, 271).

Obviously, it is not possible to formulate a definition of "Black Art" which would apply to every Afro-American artist. We can only say that African-American artists have labored in undeserved obscurity in the
Figure 20. Robert Colescott, George Washington Carver Crossing the Delaware, 1975 (Artforum March 1984, cover)
Figure 21. Alvin Loving, WWO...Time Trip I, 1971, synthetic polymer on canvas, $12'3"\times27'$
(Fine 1973, 234)
Figure 22. Melvin Edwards, Some Bright Morning (Lynch Fragment Series), 1963, steel, $14\frac{1}{2}\times5\frac{1}{2}$" (Campbell 1985, 52)
universal struggle to express what it means to be human. It is hoped that the wide variety of philosophies, styles, and techniques presented here will expose students to the unlimited possibilities open to them, whatever their ethnic origins, as creative human beings, and inspire them to use that creativity to enhance their personal growth and self-esteem.
PART I. AFRO-ART: SCRIPT FOR SLIDES

This set of 40 slides with commentary and identification, is designed to introduce students to the works of Black artists from the pre-Civil War period to the present. The slides are numbered to correspond with their descriptions in the script. Identifying information on each work follows the commentary. The narrator may choose to give all the information provided or to give only the title of the work after the commentary. It is intended that the introduction be read just before the first slide is shown. A concluding statement follows the final slide.
INTRODUCTION: The history of Afro-American art goes back to before the Civil War. Historians have tried to find connections between the arts produced during the time of slavery and the traditional crafts of West Africa; metalwork, sculpture and weaving.

1. Many Blacks became skilled ironworkers before the Civil War. In fact, much of the ornamental ironwork in southern cities such as New Orleans and Charleston was the work of Black artisans both freedmen and slaves.


2. Another example of early southern ironwork.

   Wrought-iron overthrow. City Hall, Charleston. 19th Century. (Vlach 1978, 115)

3. By 1820 there emerged in Georgia and the Carolinas a unique tradition of face vessels made by Black men. They have been called by various names including "ugly jugs," "monkey pots," and "grotesque jugs" because of their arresting, stylized features.

   Face Vessel
   Stoneware. ca. 1860. (Vlach 1978, vii)

4. A traditional craft still alive among Black folk artists is quilting. Two early quilts by Harriet Powers, who was born a slave, are preserved at the Smithsonian Institution and the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. They depict Biblical stories as well as local events. The applique work is very similar to that done by the Fon people of Benin (Dahomey) in Africa.

   Harriet Powers
   Bible Quilt
   88-1/2" x 73-3/4". ca. 1886. (Hammond 1982, 19)

5. During the late 19th century a number of Black men became successful portrait painters while several women distinguished themselves as sculptors. One of the most famous of the self-taught portraitists or limners was Joshua Johnston, who painted portraits of wealthy people in Baltimore.

   Joshua Johnston
   Benjamin Franklin Yoe and Son
   Oil on canvas. 36" x 29-3/8". ca. 1810. (Fine 1973, 55)
6. Edward Bannister, who was born in Canada, distinguished himself as a landscape painter. He won a first-place medal at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition in 1876.

Edward Bannister
Fishing
Oil on canvas. 30" x 50". 1881. (Driskell 1976, 86)

7. Reproductions of this painting, The Banjo Lesson, are seen in many homes and offices today. It was painted by Henry Ossawa Tanner, who was from a middle-class Philadelphia family. Discouraged by the racial climate of his home country, he settled in Paris and painted mostly Biblical themes.

Henry Ossawa Tanner
The Banjo Lesson
Oil on canvas. 4-1/2' x 3'11". 1883. (Fine 1973, 89)

8. A sculptor who was able to study in Rome was Edmonia Lewis. Her father was Black and her mother was Chippewa Indian. She became an outstanding sculptor doing marble figures in a neo-classical style.

Edmonia Lewis
Forever Free
Marble. 1867. (Hammond 1982, 9)

9. Another outstanding female sculptor was Meta Warrick Fuller, who studied in Paris and met the French sculptor, Auguste Rodin. Her work reflected his influence.

Meta Warrick Fuller
Talking Skull
Bronze. 42" x 30" x 18". 1939. (Campbell 1987, 116)

10. During the '20s there was a great migration of southern Blacks to northern cities in search of a better life. A large Black community grew in Harlem, New York City. It became the center for a flowering of creativity. The most notable artist of that era was Aaron Douglas. His flat, dramatic figures reflected his interest in African Art.

Aaron Douglas
Aspects of Negro Life: Song of the Towers
1934. (Campbell 1987, 24)

11. Another artist who captured the spirit of the Harlem Renaissance, as it was called, was Archibald Motley. He depicted people enjoying the pleasures of the city.
Archibald Motley
Parisian Street Scene
Oil on canvas. 23-3/4" x 28-1/2". 1929. (Fine 1973, 107)

12. A sculptor who was supported by the Federal Art Project during the Depression was Augusta Savage. She encouraged other young artists by giving lessons at her studio. Once she saw a charming little boy on a Harlem street. She coaxed him to pose for this sculpture. It is one of her best known works.

Augusta Savage
Gamin
Bronze. 16" x 18-1/4" x 6". 1930. (Bontemps 1980, 124)

13. Jacob Lawrence, who grew up in Harlem during the Depression, went on to become one of the nation's best known Black painters (Berman 1984, 85). He painted a series in 1940 on the Great Migration of Blacks to northern cities. This more recent painting shows the Munich Olympics.

Jacob Lawrence
Munich Olympic Games
Gouache on paper. 35-1/2" x 27". 1971. (Seattle Art Museum [postcard] 1986)

14. Charles Alston was the young Jacob Lawrence's first art instructor at Utopia House, a community center in Harlem. Alston was one of the many artists who were supported during the Depression by Franklin Roosevelt's Federal Art Project. He was paid to paint murals at the Harlem Hospital showing the history of medicine.

Charles Alston
Family Group
Oil on canvas. 4'-1/2" x 2'-3/4". 1955. (Fine 1973, 127)

15. In 1936 Charles White won a nationwide sketching contest for high school students resulting in a scholarship to art school. However, when he appeared at the school, he was rejected because of his race. He went on to get another scholarship to the Art Institute of Chicago and became an outstanding draftsman and a faculty member at the Otis Art Institute in California.

Charles White
Preacher
Ink on cardboard. 21-3/8" x 24-3/8". 1952. (Fine 1973, 170)

16. Like Augusta Savage, Selma Burke, another sculptor, devoted much time to teaching others. One of her works is familiar to everyone, but few Americans know it was she who designed the Roosevelt dime. The
original bronze plaque can be seen at the Recorder of Deeds Building in Washington, D.C. The next slide shows another one of her works.

Selma Burke  
Roosevelt Dime Design  
1945. (National Sculpture Conference Poster 1986)

17. Selma Burke  
Falling Angel  
Pear wood. 78" x 32" x 15". 1958. (Bontemps 1980, 62)

18. Hale Woodruff is a great educator as well as a painter. He started an annual exhibit to showcase the work of Black artists at Atlanta University.

Hale Woodruff  
Vignettes  
Oil on canvas. 40" x 45". 1966. (Fine 1973, 109)

19. A sculptor who captures the figure in motion is Richmond Barthe*. In order to get the correct position, he tries it out himself in front of a mirror.

Richmond Barthe*  
African Dancer  
Plaster. 42-1/2. 1933.

Richmond Barthe*  
The Blackberry Woman  
Bronze. 34-1/8. 1932. (Fine 1973, 131)

20. Hughie Lee-Smith's figures, against desolate urban backgrounds, convey the loneliness and isolation of modern society. A city boy himself, Lee-Smith's art experiences began at Karamu House, a community center in Cleveland.

Hughie Lee-Smith  
Man With Balloons  
Oil on canvas. 36" x 46". 1969. (Fine 1973, 128)

21. Romare Bearden is not only a prominent artist but a writer as well. He has written a great deal on Black artists. His recent works are done with a collage technique suggesting documentary film. He uses parts of photographs and other materials along with paint in his collages.

Romare Bearden  
The Prevalence of Ritual-Baptism  
Collage, paper, synthetic polymer paint on composition board. 9" x 11-7/8". 1964. (Fine 1973, 164)
22. Elizabeth Catlett is one of the best known contemporary Black sculptors. She has the distinction of having earned the first Master of Fine Arts degree awarded by the University of Iowa. She now lives and works in Mexico.

Elizabeth Catlett
Black Unity (front and back views)
Walnut. 21" x 23". (Lewis 1971, 110)

23. Following World War II, the issues of civil rights came to a head, culminating with the March on Washington and Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech in 1963. A number of murals were created by groups of Black artists, often depicting Black heroes and African symbolism. They helped to build racial pride in the Black communities of several major U.S. cities.

Twenty-one Black Artists
Wall of Respect
Chicago. 1967. (Cockcroft et al. 1977, 1)

24. Benny Andrews's painting of The Champion is symbolic of the struggle for basic human rights.

Benny Andrews
The Champion
Oil, collage on canvas. 50-1/2" x 50-1/2". 1968. (Campbell 1985, 15)

25. The American flag was a frequent image in the protest art of the '60s and '70s. David Hammons uses the flag image for its symbolic and shock value along with his body prints. First he coats himself with margarine, presses himself against an illustration board, separates himself carefully, and then sifts powdered paint on the board. Additional forms are silk-screened in.

David Hammons
Pray for America
Silk screen and body print. 6'8" x 3'4". 1969. (Campbell 1985, 15)

26. Again the American flag is used as a symbol of protest. In 1970 Faith Ringgold and other artists were convicted for desecrating the flag on their canvases in an exhibition called the People's Flag Show.

Faith Ringgold
Flag for the Moon: Die Nigger
Oil on canvas. 3' x 4'2". (Fine 1973, 209)
27. More recently Faith Ringgold has used fabric and other materials to create soft sculpture portraits of family, friends, and neighborhood characters she has known in Harlem, where she was born and raised.

Faith Ringgold
Little Joe, Nat, Moma, Daddy and Tina
Soft sculpture. 1978. (Wallace 1984, 8)

28. Betye Saar uses items from her past to make collages and assemblages. When her aunt died, she left her trunks of scarves, hankies, and gloves which she uses in her art. She feels that the objects carry the energy of their former owners.

Betye Saar
El Diablito
Mixed media, collage. 11-1/2" x 12". 1981. (Phillips 1981, 233)

29. A group of artists who have only recently begun to be recognized in exhibitions around the country are the folk artists who create art intuitively without formal training in art. One of these, a barber named Elijah Pierce, has turned his shop into an art gallery. In his painted woodcarvings, Pierce depicts heroes and historical events.

Elijah Pierce
Pearl Harbor and the African Queen
Carved and painted wood. 23-3/4" x 26-3/4". 1941. (Livingston and Beardsley 1982, 118)

30. Another folk artist is Sister Gertrude Morgan, who feels called by God to preach and uses her art to carry religious messages. The written words are an important part of her paintings.

Sister Gertrude Morgan
Revelation, 7th Chapter
Acrylic on wood. 32-1/2" x 15-3/8". 1965-75. (Livingston and Beardsley 1982, 99)

31. Another group who have been called folk artists are the graffiti writers who roam the subways of New York, spraying trains and walls with quick-drying paint. The works of several talented graffiti artists have been exhibited in galleries and sold for high prices. Graffiti-inspired designs appear on T-shirts and record albums. Some jewelry designs feature graffiti motifs as well.

Futura 2000
Futura
Spray enamel on canvas. 48 x 84". 1982. (Moufarrege 1982, 91)

32. It is difficult to determine what is happening currently in the history of Afro-American art. One contemporary artist, Raymond
Saunders, who teaches at the University of California, uses words and numbers in his paintings, in a manner reminiscent of graffiti.

Raymond Saunders
Marie's Bill
Oil on canvas. 6'9" x 4'6". 1970. (Fine 1973, 256)

33. Sam Gilliam drapes his canvases instead of stretching them on a frame. He pays a great deal of attention to hanging them and arranging the folds.

Sam Gilliam
Mazda
Acrylic on canvas. 12'1" x 9'7". 1970. (Fine 1973, 218)

34. A painter who is "a natural colorist," Alma Thomas creates "geometric abstractions composed of mosaic-like patterns" (Bontemps 1980, 132).

Alma Thomas
Wind and Crepe Myrtle Concerto
Synthetic polymer on canvas. 35" x 52". 1973. (Bontemps 1980, 133)

35. In this satirical painting, Robert Colescott protests the exclusion of Black heroes from American history. He uses the famous painting of Washington crossing the Delaware by Emmanuel Leutze, substituting the famous Black scientist, George Washington Carver, who distilled many uses from the common peanut.

Robert Colescott
George Washington Carver Crossing the Delaware
1975. (Sims 1984, 56)

36. Richard Hunt is a well-known Chicago sculptor who works with welded steel. Some of his pieces are inspired by Greek mythology.

Richard Hunt
Arachne
Welded steel. 30" x 18-1/2" (base). 1956. (Leiberman 1971, cover)

37. Some of Mel Edwards' welded steel wall sculptures were created from debris collected after the Watts Riots in Los Angeles. Lately, he has done large, outdoor pieces.

Mel Edwards
Lynch Fragment Series, Here-Hear
1980. (Hammond 1982, 49)

38. This work by Ben Jones is influenced by the African tradition of body decoration for ceremonies and rituals. Life casts of arms, legs, and faces were decorated with fluorescent paint and gold leaf.
Ben Jones
Black Face and Arm Unit
Fluorescent acrylic on plaster. 1971. (Hammond 1982, 27)

39. Much of Howardena Pindell’s work is based on her personal experiences and travels to places such as India and Africa. This piece incorporates postcards from her travels.

Howardena Pindell
East West: Bamboo Forest
Gouache, tempera, and postcards. 27” x 21” x 4”. ("Fifteen Leading Black Artists” 1986, 52)

40. Winifred Owens’ ceramic sculpture reflects “the African presence in the new world. Much of her work utilizes African forms and symbols” (Bontemps 1980, 109). The other side of this double-faced figure is decorated with markings like the body scarification in African tradition.

Winifred Owens
Initiations: African American
Stoneware slip decoration. 26-1/2” x 10” x 39”. 1978. (Bontemps 1980, 109)

CONCLUSION: Obviously, there is no single style of Black art. As we have seen, there are many interesting Black artists, with widely differing techniques and philosophies. African-American artists have often labored in undeserved obscurity in the universal struggle to express what it means to be human. It’s important that we continue to learn about the significant contributions they have made to America’s artistic heritage.

Bibliography for Slides


PART II. STRATEGIES

The following section contains ten learning strategies with activities for students based on the works of selected Black artists. It is hoped that the students' interest in and appreciation of these artists will be enhanced by using some of their ideas and techniques. It is also hoped that through these activities students will discover common ground with the artists and will be encouraged to draw on their own cultural roots for creative inspiration.
The craftsmanship of early Black ironsmiths is the inspiration for wire designs using scrap wire from electrical cables.

**PLAN**

1. View examples of ornamental ironwork done by Black ironsmiths.
2. Discuss the linear quality of wire and how it can be used to "draw in space."
3. Follow blacksmith Phillip Simmons' procedure of visualizing the design and sketching the ideas that come to mind (C-scrolls, S-scrolls, bars, plant, or animal motifs may be elements of the design).
4. Try to achieve a balance of "openness and closed-ness" (Vlach 1978, 116). The key to the process is to be improvisational, loose, open-ended, and experimental.
5. When a satisfactory design is achieved, make a larger drawing with chalk or marker and use this as a template for the metal piece.
6. Jigs may be made by pounding large nails into wooden blocks. These facilitate bending wire into desired shapes.
7. Scrap metal or tire rims can be used as anvils to flatten wire with hammers.
8. Clamp-on bench vices may be shared by small groups.
   (Students will need plastic goggles to protect their eyes during this project.)
9. Discuss similarities and differences between the students' work and the metalwork of the early ironsmiths.
FOLLOW UP ACTIVITIES

Wire creations may be hung in window areas to create "drawings in space." A more advanced project involving soldering metal parts together might follow with older students.

MATERIALS

Brass or aluminum wire from electric cable scraps
Jigs, anvils (improvised)
Safety goggles
Bench vises

VOCABULARY

Jig
Anvil
Pliers
Vise
Hammers

BIBLIOGRAPHY & RESOURCES


VISUAL


Detail of window grill at "Eagle Nest."

Illustrations from Vlach
p. 228 (above)
p. 230 (right)

Phillip Simmons
The Finished Divider.
# CLASSROOM EXPERIMENT FORM

**TITLE**  
The Fabric of Life

**STRATEGY NUMBER**  
CL-65

**TO PROMOTE (SPECIFIC THOUGHT PROCESS OR CONCEPT)**  
Culture is inseparable from who we are.

**STRATEGY**  

**DESIGNED BY**  
Ruth Osborn

**TIME**  
Three 45-minute periods

**AGE LEVEL**  
Grades 7-12

**DESCRIPTION**  
Students will gather fabric and other found objects such as buttons (sewing, political, etc.), jewelry, or lace which represent their own heritage. These will be assembled in a collage-type work—a sort of cultural self-portrait of the artist.

**PLAN**

1. Show pictures of Betye Saar's works in which she used objects from her family's heritage.
2. Students collect fabric scraps, trim, found objects with family connections.
3. Demonstrate some techniques which students may wish to use in their projects such as appliqué and other stitching techniques (couching, cross-stitch, blanket stitch).
4. A fabric scrap from the family ragbag or cotton canvas may be stretched in an old picture frame or an embroidery hoop.
5. Students experiment with various arrangements of the elements of the fabric collage. Thumbnail sketches may record ideas.
6. When a satisfactory arrangement is achieved, students use appliqué and other stitchery techniques to attach the elements to the background. Stress careful workmanship here.
7. A discussion session should follow the completion of this project, giving each student the opportunity to explain how the selected elements represent his/her family and cultural heritage.
FOLLOW UP ACTIVITIES

Discuss Betye Saar's ritual spaces. In small groups, students could create ritual spaces with elements of significance to group members.

MATERIALS
Wooden frames (these could be old frames from the students' families, garage sales, etc.)
Embroidery hoops
Needles, thread

VOCABULARY
Heritage
Appliqué, reverse appliqué
Couching
Assemblage

BIBLIOGRAPHY & RESOURCES


Illustration from Woelfle, p. 56.
Heritage Heroes

Culture is inseparable from who we are.

Students research prominent members of their own ethnic group or an ethnic group being studied. These are depicted, along with symbols of their achievements, on a wall, fence, or other large surface.

- Show slide and pictures of the Wall of Respect and the Wall of Dignity. Discuss the heroes included in these works.
- Decide on what kinds of heroes the mural will commemorate. They could be members of the students' own ethnic groups, resulting in a multi-cultural mural or members of a particular group being studied.
- Assign two or three students to research and work on a particular hero or symbols of his/her achievements.
- Paper for students' sketches should be marked off on a 1" grid so that the drawings can be enlarged on the mural.
- Prepare surface to be used for the mural such as a wall, fence, or cardboard-backed paper. Divide mural surface into a grid marked off in pencil to define students' work areas.
- Assign each small group to a squared-off area of the mural.
- Allow individual students to choose whether to work on figures or symbols or details such as clothing or tools used by heroes as some may be less confident about drawing people.
- Have students sketch their ideas before working on the mural itself.
- Preliminary drawing on the mural may be done in pencil or light-colored chalk.
- Using paints appropriate to the surface, plan with the group where colors will be used.
- At the end of each session, discuss what remains to be done and solutions for problems.
Follow-up Activities

Students could devise a questionnaire or trivia game in which the members of the student body could find answers by looking at the mural.

Materials
Brown wrapping paper or butcher paper
Large sheets of cardboard for backing
Chalk
Tempera, acrylic or wall paint
Brushes, rollers, etc.

Vocabulary
Mural
Social realism
Public art
Ethnic

Bibliography & Resources

Visual


(Illustration: Fine, p. 202)
TITLE Larger than Life

TO PROMOTE (SPECIFIC THOUGHT PROCESS OR CONCEPT) VAIS 3 B11
Form and meaning are interdependent in art expression. Commonalities exist among all humans cross-culturally. Individual differences exist among people within each group.

DESCRIPTION
View pictures and slide of the work of Charles White and discuss the emotional impact of the drawings. Discuss ways in which a life drawing, though not necessarily large, can have an impact beyond its physical dimensions.

PLAN
1. Divide the class into groups of four and have each student take a turn posing for the others.
2. Provide students with large sheets of drawing paper, charcoal, or conte crayon.
3. Discuss "body language" and how certain poses can portray certain feelings.
4. Discuss the emphasis of particular features, such as eyes or hands for achieving a desired effect.
5. Suggest that students think of something from nature that the character of the subject suggests, such as an animal, flower, tree, etc. Have them think of ways to express these characteristics in their drawings. (See MT-2)
6. Display work in a public area for students to discuss. What emotions have been successfully conveyed?

Iowa State University, College of Design, Department of Art & Design, Ames, Iowa.
FOLLOW UP ACTIVITIES

A three-dimensional project could follow this, such as a clay or fabric sculpture project, using the same principles.

MATERIALS
Large sheets of drawing paper
Conté crayon or charcoal

VOCABULARY
Life drawing
Exaggeration
Content
Body language

BIBLIOGRAPHY & RESOURCES
Demery, Marie. "Sharing Black History Month Through Xerography and Visual Literacy." (Tyler, Texas: Texas College, 1985) Project Description (141). ERIC ED 261 927 S0 016 777

Illustration from Fine, p. 175.
Metamorphs

Symbolizing and creating metaphor is a uniquely human quality.

Ruth Osborn

Three 45-minute periods

Grades 7-12

Students use ideas from Richard Hunt and the African folk hero, Anansi (Spider-Man) to create three-dimensional assemblages from scrap materials which show the process of transformation. (Animal-person, natural-man-made, etc.)

1. Students use works of Richard Hunt to discuss the idea of transformation or metamorphosis from one form to another as in the Greek myths of Icarus (Bird-Man) and Arachne (Spider-Woman). The person-turned-into-spider can be further explored through the African folk tale Anansi (Spider-Man). Relate this also to the contemporary comic strip character, Spiderman.
2. Students research myths or stories for ideas, then make thumbnail sketches.
3. Collect scraps and found objects which can be used as metaphors for something else (such as an old bicycle bell as the basis for a turtle or ladybug).
4. With a square of plywood as a base, use wire or glue to join elements of the assemblage together.
5. When assemblages are finished, put them on display and have students tell the origins of their ideas.
FOLLOW UP ACTIVITIES

Make charcoal or conté crayon drawings combining something from nature with something manmade (such as a tree and a tower or a caterpillar and a locomotive).

MATERIALS
Scrap materials
Found objects
Wire
Glue
Plywood for bases

VOCABULARY
Metamorphosis
Metaphor
Myth
Assemblage

BIBLIOGRAPHY & RESOURCES


Illustrations from Fine, pp. 230, 232
### CLASSROOM EXPERIMENT FORM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>Painted People Parts</th>
<th>STRATEGY NUMBER</th>
<th>CL-67</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DESCRIPTION</td>
<td></td>
<td>TO PROMOTE</td>
<td>(SPECIFIC THOUGHT PROCESS OR CONCEPT) VAIS 3 All 1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The aesthetic choices we make are largely cultural ones.</td>
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<tr>
<td>DESIGNER</td>
<td>Ruth Osborn</td>
<td>TIME</td>
<td>Three 45-minute sessions</td>
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<tr>
<td>AGE LEVEL</td>
<td>Grades 7-12</td>
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<tr>
<td>PLAN</td>
<td></td>
<td>1. View slide or pictures of Ben Jones' work and discuss.</td>
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<td>2. Discuss how masks and body decoration are used in various cultures.</td>
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<td>3. Cut plaster gauze into 3&quot; x 3&quot; strips. Put on protective clothing and cover hair if face cast is being done.</td>
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<td>4. Apply petroleum jelly on all skin to be covered with plaster.</td>
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<td>5. Dip strips in water, squeeze out excess water.</td>
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<td>6. Apply strips to face or arm, starting at edges. (Leave openings for eyes, nostrils, etc. Apply folded edges around eyes and mouth.)</td>
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<td>7. Smooth surface.</td>
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<td>8. Allow plaster to set--5 minutes.</td>
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<td>9. Wrinkle skin to loosen mask and remove slowly.</td>
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<td>10. Allow cast to dry. Clean off jelly and stray fragments.</td>
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<td>11. Decorate with acrylic paint, using flat colors for the base coat and fluorescent colors for embellishments.</td>
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Iowa State University, College of Design, Department of Art & Design, Ames, Iowa.
The finished pieces might be hung along a hallway wall with heads above and appendages beneath. They would be particularly appropriate for display in conjunction with a theater or dance production in an area where audiences could view them.

**MATERIALS**

- Plaster gauze (one roll makes 4 masks)
- Petroleum jelly
- Protective clothing (old shirts, bathing cap, scarf)
- Acrylic paints (flat and fluorescent)

**BIBLIOGRAPHY & RESOURCES**

- "The Magic of Masks." Iowa State University Cooperative Extension Services AD 419, 1980. (A leader's guide, filmstrip, and audio tape are also available from (515) 294-8707, two to three weeks in advance.)
- Videocassette: Jones, Ben. *Ben Jones: A Portrait of the Artist*. Produced and directed by Jane Steuerwald. 30 min. Department of Media Arts, Jersey City State College, 1987. (Available from Media Resources Center, Iowa State University.)

**VOCABULARY**

- Life mask
- Appendages
- Plaster gauze
- Ritual
- Scarification
- Fetish

FORM AND MEANING ARE INTERDEPENDENT IN ART EXPRESSION. COMMONALITIES EXIST AMONG ALL HUMANS CROSS-CULTURALLY WITHIN GROUPS.

STUDENTS WILL CREATE SOFT SCULPTURE PORTRAITS OF PERSONS FAMILIAR TO THEM (FAMILY MEMBERS, NEIGHBORS, FRIENDS, TEACHERS, CELEBRITIES). THESE MAY BE 12-15" HIGH ON 6" X 6" BASES.

1. Show slide of the soft sculpture figures done by Faith Ringgold (Little Joe, Moma, Daddy, and Tina, 1978)
2. Students begin by making a preliminary sketch (photographs may be used for this step). Discuss details which contribute to the personality of the subject.
3. Demonstrate techniques useful in making the figures, such as stuffing nylon hose for head and body, making narrow tubes to stuff for appendages.
4. Experiment with various scrap and found materials to discover how they can be used to represent hair, clothing, and accessories (i.e., pipe cleaners for glasses).
5. Demonstrate stitching to create features in the nylon hose head. Demonstrate clothing construction.
6. Demonstrate procedure to attach figures to base with wire.
7. Exhibit figures in the school library, public library, or other public area.
FOLLOW UP ACTIVITIES

Relate these three-dimensional portraits to caricature. Display examples of caricature from the media. Discuss the techniques used and the effectiveness of each.

MATERIALS
Sewing machines
Nylon hose
Polyester stuffing (from old pillows)
Needles and thread
Fabric scraps and trim (fake fur, brocades, ribbons, lace)

VOCABULARY
Soft sculpture
Portrait
Caricature

BIBLIOGRAPHY & RESOURCES
Buttons, sequins, beads
Plywood squares for bases, wire coat hangers


Visual

CHEE CHEE, TINA, MARIAM, MOHAMMED, HAPPI, AND BILL, 1978-79

Illustration from Campbell, p. 30.
BASICS
ART
NEW

CLASSROOM EXPERIMENT FORM

TITLE: Personified Pots

STRATEGY NUMBER: CL- 68

TO PROMOTE (SPECIFIC THOUGHT PROCESS OR CONCEPT): VAIS 3 A11 1, 1 A1 3

The aesthetic choices we make are largely cultural ones. Symbolizing and creating metaphor is a uniquely human quality.

DESIGNED BY: Ruth Osborn

TIME: Four 45-minute sessions

AGE LEVEL: Grades 7-12

DESCRIPTION:

Students use wheel-throwing or hand-building techniques to create a vessel with human features. The effigy pot or Afro-Carolinean face vessel can be the prototype for this idea.

PLAN:

1. Show slide of Afro-Carolinean face vessel along with Initiation: Afro-American by Winifred Owens.
2. Discuss how many cultures make pottery with anthropomorphic features, which have no apparent practical use. (Some of the Afro-Carolinean vessels were only about 4" high [Livingston and Beardsley 1980, 33]). While not a vessel, the Owens piece has some of the same qualities. Some students may wish to make a double-faced Janus vessel.
3. Students make drawings of vessels with features representing ancestral prototypes, self-portraits, or hero portraits. They may work from photographs or do life sketches of friends or relatives, modifying them into pots.
4. Students may choose to use a wheel-thrown pot as a basis for the vessel or use hand-built structures.
5. Students experiment with surface decoration, adding various glazes or slips before firing.
6. After vessels are completed, students name their pieces and share the origins of the names with the class.

Iowa State University, College of Design, Department of Art & Design, Ames, Iowa.
FOLLOW UP ACTIVITIES

These pots would make a good display set along the tops of bookshelves in the school library, with name labels.

MATERIALS
Clay for pots to be fired
An assortment of glazes
Kaolin for eyes, teeth, etc.
Kiln

VOCABULARY
Stoneware
Kaolin
Janus
Effigy
Prototype

BIBLIOGRAPHY & RESOURCES


VISUAL


72. Face Vessel, South Carolina.

Figure 31. Face Vessel. Stoneware. Kaolin. ca. 1860. H. 4 inches. South Carolina.
CLASSROOM EXPERIMENT FORM

TITLE
The Rhythms of Ritual (Photo-Collage)

STRATEGY NUMBER
CL-69
(See CL-25)

TO PROMOTE (SPECIFIC THOUGHT PROCESS OR CONCEPT)
VAIS 3 Alll 2
Culture is inseparable from who we are (Rites of Passage, Ritual).

STRATEGY
DESIGNED BY
Ruth Osborn

TIME
Three 45-minute periods

AGE LEVEL
Grades 7-12

DESCRIPTION
Students use the documentary-film type collage techniques of Romare Bearden to make an autobiographical statement about ritual (a universal concept all can share).
(See CL-25)

PLAN
1. Discuss the role of ritual in everybody's life (personal rituals, family rituals, religious rituals, and rites of passage).
2. Students select and photocopy family photographs which represent rituals of their own background. Appropriate pictures from media can also be included. Images can be enlarged or reduced to aid in composition.
3. Discuss the formal, rhythmic elements in Bearden's collages, which were influenced by such artists as Brueghel, Picasso, and Mondrian to assist students in focusing on composition.
4. Experiment with various arrangements of collage elements until a satisfactory composition is achieved.
5. Details may be added with acrylic paint, repeating colors to enhance the rhythm of the composition.
6. Upon completion of the project, each student may explain to the class the ritual depicted in his/her work.
FOLLOW UP ACTIVITIES

The class may group their collages for display in categories such as Rites of Passage, religious rituals, family celebrations, etc. Note how these categories overlap. This could be reflected in the arrangement.

MATERIALS
Composition board
Photocopies of family photos
Acrylic paints
Cloth scraps
Scrap paper in various colors and textures

VOCABULARY
Composition
Collage
Ritual
Rhythm

BIBLIOGRAPHY & RESOURCES

VISUAL
Illustration from Fine, p. 164.

Collage of paper and synthetic polymer paint on composition board, 9 x 11".
Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.
STRATEGY NUMBER

TO PROMOTE (SPECIFIC THOUGHT PROCESS OR CONCEPT) VAIS 3 B11
Symbolizing and creating metaphor is a uniquely human quality.

DESCRIPTION
Students incorporate written script in a composition along with other images, using it as a visual and content element.

PLAN
1. Show slides of the work of folk artist Sister Gertrude Morgan (Revelation) and contemporary Black painter, Raymond Saunders (Marie's Bill) and graffiti artists.
2. Discuss the power of using the written word as part of the imagery.
3. Students select a written passage (poetry, scripture, an important letter, the Constitution, or anything else that has a message which is personally meaningful). Key words or phrases can be abstracted for use in the painting.
4. Make a preliminary drawing incorporating appropriate imagery with the written message.
5. Critique the finished works and discuss the impact of the words included. What images/meanings do they elicit?

(Note: For Black History Month or Martin Luther King's birthday, a M. L. King quote or passages from works of Black poets might be selected for this activity.)
Discuss the relationship of the work of these two artists and graffiti artists.

**MATERIALS**
- Drawing paper
- Tempera paint or acrylic paint

**VOCABULARY**
- Script
- Symbolism
- Folk art

**BIBLIOGRAPHY & RESOURCES**

Illustration from Livingston and Beardsley, p. 99. Illustration from Fine, p. 256.

Sister Gertrude Morgan
*REVELATION 7, Chap. c. 1965-75.*
Acrylic on wood, 32½x15-3/8"
PART III. MINI-BIOGRAPHIES

Part III consists of a collection of 30 mini-biographies (laminated on 5x8" index cards for student use). They are designed to introduce students to the lives of Black artists and give them a quick reference for information and resources for further study, class projects, or presentations. It is hoped that these brief compilations of biographical information will increase students' awareness of Black artistic achievement. Hopefully, students will also be encouraged to consider careers in art as possible goals for themselves.
Benny Andrews

Born: November 13, 1930, Madison, Georgia

Education: B.F.A. Art Institute of Chicago, 1958
Studied at the University of Chicago
U.S. Air Force
Studied at Fort Valley (Georgia) State College

Principal Medium/Technique: Painting, mixed media, collage. His works focus on contemporary, American culture, which he satirizes.

Teaching Experience: Associate Professor, Queens College, New York
New School For Social Research, New York
University of California, Hayward
Visiting artist at numerous universities

Achievements: Director of the Visual Arts Program, National Endowment for the Arts
Organized the Black Emergency Cultural Coalition
The Atlanta University Negro Art Collection
Award for "Educational Arts," 1971
New York State Council Creative Arts Program Award, 1971
John Hay Whitney Fellowship, 1965-1956
Quote: "Like jazz, and even poetry, we in the graphic arts are America's best chance for a unique American art, because we are the product of a unique American experience, the Black experience" (Fine 1973, 254).

Sources:


Richmond Barthé

Born: January 28, 1901, Bay St. Louis, Missouri

Education: Art Students League, New York, 1931
(Studied under Charles Schroeder)
Art Institute of Chicago, 1924-1928
(Sponsored by a New Orleans Catholic priest, Rev. Harry Kane)

Principal Medium/Technique: Sculpture, painting.
The figure in motion is a central theme in his work. He had "an almost uncanny ability to imitate nature" (Fine 1973, 132).

Achievements: The only Black artist whose work was represented in an exhibit sent to England after World War II - 1944
Award-winning work The Boxer purchased by the Metropolitan Museum - 1943
Received the first of two Guggenheim Fellowships - 1941
A pieta-type piece, Mother and Son was exhibited at the New York World's Fair. (It was later destroyed.) - 1939
Quote: "'Bernadette' and the 'Black Madonna' are two of my favorite pieces. When I unveiled the 'Black Madonna' in Jamaica to some American tourists--White--they said 'Oh, she is so beautiful!' I looked at them and thought, 'I wish you were Black saying that'" (Hammond 1984, 18).

"All of the dance figures I've done--and I've done many--I do them in front of the mirror. I don't do my body, but if I can get the position, feel the position with my body, I can do it with my fingers" (Hammond 1984, 24).

Sources:


Romare Bearden

Born: 1914, Charlotte, North Carolina

Died: March 1988

Education: La Sorbonne, Paris, 1950-1951
Columbia University, 1943
Art Students League, New York
(Studied with George Grosz)
American Artists School
University of Pittsburgh
B.S. New York University

Principal Medium/Technique: Painting, mixed
media. Recent works employ collage
techniques reminiscent of documentary
film.

Publications:
Six Black Masters of American Art, 1972
Biography of Henry O. Tanner
The Artist's Vision
The Painter's Mind
Achievements:

His works have been featured on covers of Time, Fortune, and The New York Times magazine.

Has been represented in every major exhibition of the works of Black artists.

Grant, Urban Center, Columbia University with Norman Lewis and Ernest Crichlow.

Founded the Cinque Gallery in New York.

Quote: "To paint the life of my people as passionately or as dispassionately as Brueghel painted the life of the Flemish people of his day...because much of that life is gone and it had beauty. Also I want to show that the myth and ritual of Negro life provide the same formal elements that appear in other art, such as a Dutch painting by Pieter de Hooch" (Fine 1973, 156).

Sources:


Selma Burke

Born: December 31, 1900, Mooresville, North Carolina

Education: M.F.A., Columbia University, New York, 1941 (Assistant to Malderelli)
R.N., St. Agnes School of Nursing (St. Augustine's College), Raleigh, North Carolina, 1924
Studied with Maillol, Paris, France, 1937
Studied with Povolney, Vienna, Austria, 1933-34
Studied with Han Reis in New York
Studied at Cooper Union, New York
Studied at Sarah Lawrence College, Bronxville, New York

Principal Medium/Technique: Sculpture (Marble and Wood). Has worked in both traditional and modern styles.

Teaching Experience: Taught at Harvard, Livingstone, and Swathmore
Founded the Selma Burke Art Center in Pittsburgh, to introduce more Black young people to art, 1968
Founded the Selma Burke School of Sculpture in New York
Achievements: Her numerous honorary degrees include the following:

Ph.D., Moore College of Art, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Fine Arts, 1979
"Award for Outstanding Achievement in Visual Arts" presented by President James Carter, Washington, D.C., 1979
Ph.D., University of North Carolina, Durham, Fine Arts, 1977
City of Pittsburgh Proclamation: July 20 as Selma Burke Day, by Governor Milton Shapp, 1975
Ph.D., Livingstone College, Salisbury, North Carolina, 1955
Portrait Plaque of Franklin D. Roosevelt, now seen on the face of the dime, 1944 (Unveiled by President Harry S. Truman, September 24, 1945)

Quote: "Her stone surfaces are smooth and elastic while her wood sculptures retain the texture and path of the chisel" (Bontemps 1980, 61).

Sources:


Elizabeth Catlett

Born: April 15, 1919, Washington, D.C.

Education: Studied at the Taller de Gráfica Popular, Mexico City, 1948
Studied with Ossip Zadkine, New York City, 1943
Studied at the Art Students League, New York City, 1942
Studied at the Art Institute of Chicago (ceramics), 1941
First recipient of an M.F.A. from the University of Iowa, 1940 (Studied under Grant Wood)
B.A. (cum laude, Art), Howard University, 1937

Principal Medium/Technique: Sculpture and printmaking. Figurative works with attention to craftsmanship.

Teaching Experiences: Prairie View College, Texas
Dillard University, New Orleans, 1941
George Washington Carver School, Harlem
National Autonomous University of Mexico, Mexico City, 1958-1976
Achievements: Rosenwald Fellowships, 1945-1947
Member: Taller de Grafica Popular, Mexico
Numerous awards in the U.S. and Mexico
Catlett lives and works in Mexico.

Quote: "Art is, and always has been, an expression of the historic conditions of people and should be a part of humanity's cultural wealth" (Hewitt 1987, 31).

Sources:


Barbara Chase-Riboud

Born: June 26, 1939, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Education: M.F.A., Yale University, 1960
B.F.A., Temple University, 1956

Principal Medium/Technique: Sculpture (bronze aluminum, steel, and mixed media). Uses lost-wax technique and braided and knotted fibers, reminiscent of the raffia attachments on African masks, which cover the wearer's body.

Achievements: At age 15 she won a Seventeen magazine painting prize for one of her prints, later purchased by the Museum of Modern Art.
John Hay Whitney Fellowship, 1957-58
First American woman to visit Mainland China since the 1949 Revolution, May 1965
State Department tour and lecture conferences, Senegal, Mali, Ghana, Tunisia, Sierra Leone, 1975
She has lived and worked in Paris since 1961.
Quote: "African connotations, especially if one considers how the African dancing mask (wood) is always combined with other materials: raffia, hemp, leather, feathers, cord, metal chains or bells. Each element has an aesthetic as well as a symbolic and spiritual function. My idea is to reinterpret the aesthetic function in contemporary terms, using modern materials (bronze and silk, bronze and wool, steel and synthetics, aluminum and synthetics) (Fine 1973, 265).

Sources:


Aaron Douglas

Born: 1899, Topeka, Kansas

Education: Studied under Othon Freeze, Paris, 1931
L'Academie Scandinave, Paris, 1925-27
M.A., Colombia University Teachers College,
New York
B.F.A., University of Nebraska, 1922

Principal Medium/Technique: Painting, printmaking, mural painting, using African-inspired motifs.

Teaching Experience: Chairman of Department of Art Education at Fisk University, 1937-39
Teacher of art at Lincoln High School, Kansas City

Achievements: Was called the "official" artist of the Harlem Renaissance (Campbell 1987, 13)
Created four large-scale murals for the Countee Cullen Branch of the New York Public Library, 1934, sponsored by the W.P.A.
Rosenwald Grants, 1931, 1938
Barnes Foundation Fellowship, 1929
Quote: (Describing the search for Black talent during the Harlem Renaissance):
"Harlem was sifted. Neither streets, homes nor public institutions escaped. When unsuspecting Negroes were found with a brush in their hands they were immediately hauled away and held for interpretation" (Fine 1973, 85).

Sources:


Mel Edwards

Born: May 4, 1937, Houston, Texas

Education: B.F.A., University of Southern California, Los Angeles, 1960
Attended Los Angeles City College for two years

Principal Medium/Technique: Sculpture-welded steel and large-scale outdoor sculpture. His Lynch Fragment series used metal scraps collected after the Watts Riots in Los Angeles.

Teaching Experience: Chairman of Art Department, Livingston College, Rutgers University
University of Connecticut, Storrs

Achievements: John Hay Whitney Fellowship
National Endowment for the Arts and Humanities, 1970
Santa Barbara Art Association Award, 1969
Long Beach Museum of Art Award, 1967

Quote: "Whatever public art is, it's a creation of people. It's the idea that you are trying to make a better human space for humans to live and function in" (Hines 1987, 47).
Sources:


Meta Warrick Fuller

Born: June 9, 1877, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Died: March 13, 1968

Education: Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, 1907
Met and was encouraged by Auguste Rodin in Paris
Ecole des Beaux Arts, Paris, 1899
Academic Colarossi, Paris, studied under Injalbert and Rollard
Pennsylvania School of Industrial Arts, 1894

Principal Medium/Technique: Sculpture in bronze and clay. Her realistic works reflected social concerns and the strong influence of Rodin. Her work was often inspired by African folktales or songs of Black Americans.

A work entitled Peace Halting the Ruthlessness of War won second prize in a Women's Peace Party competition, 1915
Completed a group for the New York State Emancipation Proclamation Commission, 1913
Achievements: (Continued)
Commissioned to do a tableau representing the advance of the Black by the Jamestown Tercentennial Exposition, 1907

Quote: Rodin is said to have told her: "Mademoiselle, you are a sculptor; you have a sense of form" (Fine 1973, 75).

Sources:


Sam Gilliam

Born: November 30, 1933, Tupelo, Mississippi

Education: B.A., M.A. (1961), University of Louisville

Principle Medium/Technique: Painting and draping canvases. Although he applies paint freely, great attention is paid to draping. Sometimes stitches are used to hold folds in place.

Teaching Experience: Corcoran School of Art, Washington, D.C.
Instructor of Painting, Maryland Institute

Achievements: Guggenheim Fellowship, 1971
Was one of four artists selected to represent the U.S. at the 36th Venice Biennale, 1970
One of his watercolors is owned by the Museum of Modern Art Washington Gallery of Modern Art Fellowship, 1968-70
National Endowment for the Arts, 1966
Allen R. Hite Scholarship, Louisville, 1955
Quote: "Underneath, what's important to me is to do what I want to do. The more you live, the more art and life, aesthetics and politics tend to merge. You're less concerned with success and more concerned with the quality of your existence as an artist, how things look outside your own window" (Fine 1973, 225-26).

Sources:


David Hammons

Born: 1943, Springfield, Illinois

Education:
- Otis Art Institute (under Charles White)
- Chouinard Art Institute
- Los Angeles Trade Technical College
- Los Angeles City College

Principal Medium/Technique: Painting, body prints:
He coats himself with margarine, presses himself against an illustration board and sprinkles it with powdered pigments. Additional elements are screen-painted. The American flag is a repeated image in his work.

Achievements: His work is in the collection of the Oakland Museum and has been in numerous exhibitions including a one-man show at Brockman Gallery in Los Angeles.

Quotes:
"I never knew there were 'black' painters or artists, or anything until I found out about him...(Charles White). There's no way I could have got the information in my art history classes. It's like I just found out a couple of years ago about Negro cowboys, and I was shocked about that" (Fine 1973, 204).

"I feel it my moral obligation as a black artist, to try to graphically document what I feel socially" (Lewis 1969, 101).
Sources:


Richard Hunt

Born: September 12, 1935, Chicago, Illinois

Education: Studied in England, France, Spain, Italy
B.A., Art Institute of Chicago, 1957
Spent time at the Tamarind Lithography Workshop, L.A.

Principal Medium/Technique: Sculpture, welded steel,
linear open forms. Recent works are closed,
solid forms in cast aluminum. Has also done printmaking.

Teaching Experience: Visiting artist at Yale, 1964, and 13 other universities
Instructor at Art Institute of Chicago, 1960-1961

Achievements: Appointed to National Council of the Arts, 1968
Guggenheim Fellowship, 1962
His work is seen in 16 museums in the U.S. and abroad
His sculpture Arachne was purchased by the Museum of Modern Art
when he was only 20 and still a student
Quotes: Hilton Cramer wrote: "Hunt is one of the most gifted and assured artists working in the direct-metal, open-form medium and I mean not only in his own country and generation, but anywhere in the world" (Fine 1973, 229-30).

"I see my work as forming a kind of bridge between what we experience in nature and what we experience from the urban, industrial, technology-driven society we live in. I like to think that within the work that I approach most successfully there is a resolution of the tension between the sense of freedom one has in contemplating nature and the sometimes restrictive, closed feeling engendered by the rigors of the city, the rigors of the industrial environment" (Lewis 1986, 25).

Sources:


Ben Jones

Born: May 26, 1942, Paterson, New Jersey, one of 15 children

Education: M.F.A., Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, N.Y., 1983
M.A., New York University, 1966
B.A., Paterson State College, Wayne, N.J., 1963

Principal Medium/Technique: Painting, sculpture, serigraphy, mixed media. Makes plaster life casts of faces, arms, legs, and paints them as ritual art. He is also a dancer and has designed costumes for the Chuck Davis Dance Company and the Sulaimaan Dance Company.

Teaching Experience: Professor of Art at Jersey City State College since 1967

Achievements: He has traveled extensively in Africa, Brazil, Cuba, the Caribbean, France, Spain, USSR, Canada, and the USA. His work has been exhibited in a number of major galleries and museums, including the Museum of Modern Art, 1972, the Studio Museum in Harlem, 1982, and the Newark Museum, 1969–1984.
Purchase Award, National Afro-American Art Exhibition, Atlanta, Georgia, 1982–83.
Grant, National Endowment for Artists, 1974–75.
Presently, my work is not primarily concerned with just form and visual perception but spiritual, social and psychological content. I hope my work is of the calibre to give my people an awareness and inspiration for changing their lives. (Fine 1973, 271).

Sources:
Lois Mailou Jones

Born: November 3, 1905, Boston, Massachusetts

Education: A.B., Howard University (Art Education), 1945
Academie Julian, Paris, France, 1937-38
Boston Museum School of Fine Arts
School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 1923-27

Principal Medium/Technique: Painting. Her early works were influenced by French impressionism. Later African and Haitian colors and patterns were reflected in her work.

Teaching Experience: Professor of design and watercolor painting at Howard University

Achievements: A retrospective exhibition at Howard University, 1972
A 40-year retrospective exhibition at Museum of the National Center of Afro-American Artists, Boston, 1972
Has exhibited in most Afro-American art shows
Achievements: (Continued)

Has received numerous awards and fellowships

110 of her works were reproduced in a book, Peinteures, published in France in 1952

Quote: "That these works portray the 'Black experience' or 'heritage' or are purely abstract is immaterial, so long as they meet the highest standards of the modern art world. The major focus is to achieve for Black Artists their just and rightful place as 'American Artists'" (Fine 1973, 39).

Sources:


Jacob Lawrence

Born: 1917, Atlantic City, New Jersey

Education: American Artists School, 1937-39
           Harlem Workshop, 1932
           Studied at the Art Workshop with
           Charles Alson

Principal Medium/Technique: Painting in a unique
                           style involving application of each
                           color to all the paintings in a series
                           or group before going on to the next
                           color. This sequential format allows
                           him to examine his characters in depth.

Teaching Experiences: University of Washington, Seattle
                     Pratt Institute, Brooklyn
                     California State College, Hayward
                     New School for Social Research, New York
                     Brandeis University
                     The Art Students League
                     Black Mountain College, North Carolina, 1947
                     (Invited by Josef Albers)
Achievements: NAACP's Spingarn Medal, 1970
Only Black artist included in 1948 Venice Biennale
Guggenheim Fellowship— to complete War Series, 1946-47
Rosenwald Fellowship— to complete John Brown Series, 1945
Rosenwald Fellowship— to complete Migration of the Negro Series, 1940
Employed as an easel painter by President Roosevelt's W.P.A.
program during the Great Depression, 1938-40

Quote: "If I have achieved a degree of success as a creative artist, it is
mainly due to the black experience which is our heritage—an experience
which gives inspiration, motivation, and stimulation" (Fine 1973, 150).

Sources:
Cederholm, Theresa Dickason, ed. Afro-American Artists: A Bio-bibliographical
Fax, Elton C. Seventeen Black Artists. New York: Dodd, Mead and Company,
1971. (Photo, pp. 82-83)
Hughie Lee-Smith

Born: 1914, Eustis, Florida

Education: As a youth, studied at Karamu House, Cleveland
John Huntington Polytechnic Institute
B.S., Wayne State University, Detroit, 1953
Studied at the Cleveland Institute of Art

Principal Medium/Technique: Painting. Captures the loneliness and alienation of urban life in a Surrealist style.

Teaching Experience: Artist-in-residence, Howard University, 1970
Teacher of Art, Claflin University, Orangeburg, South Carolina, 1939-40

Achievements: First Purchase Prize, American Society of African Culture, 1960
Academy of Design, Allied Artists Prize, 1958
Academy of Science, Arts and Letters, 1956
Winkleman Foundation Prize, oil, 1955
Detroit Institute of Art, Anthony Maivello Prize, oil, 1951
Achievements: (Continued)

   Worked on History of the Negro in the Navy
   Organized an exhibit of Negro Artists in the Midwest, 1943
   His paintings are in many collections including Howard and
   Atlanta universities and the Lagos Museum, Nigeria.

Quote: "Lee-Smith's penetrating, but quietly painted, statements on urban
desolation and transition are so true of city life anywhere in the West
that he must be regarded as an artist of world significance" (Dover
1960, 48).

Sources:

Cederholm, Theresa Dickason, ed. Afro-American Artists: A Bio-bibliographical


Edmonia Lewis

Born: c. 1843, upstate New York
(Of a Chippewa Indian mother and a Black father. Indian name: "Wildfire")

Died: c. 1911

Education: Went to Rome where she was influenced by Harriet Hosmer and Hiram Powers, 1865
Studied under Edmund Brackett in Boston
Studied at Oberlin College, Ohio, 1859-62
(Sponsored by her brother and several abolitionists)

Principal Medium/Technique: Sculpture: Portrait busts and figurative symbolic groups in a Neoclassical style. Many of her works were carved in marble.

Achievements: A work entitled The Death of Cleopatra won an award at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition, 1876
Established a studio in Rome, winter of 1865-66
Achievements: (Continued)

Financed her passage to Rome by the sale of plaster copies of a portrait bust of Colonel Robert Gould Shaw and her Medallion portrait of John Brown

Considered the first important Black sculptor in America

Quote: "Mother (a Chippewa Indian) often left her home and wandered with her people, whose habits she could not forget, and thus we, her children, were brought up in the same, wild manner. Until I was twelve years old, I led this wandering life, fishing and swimming...and making moccasins" (Rubinstein 1982, 207).

Sources:


Sister Gertrude Morgan

Born: April 6, 1900, Lafayette, Alabama
Died: July 8, 1980, New Orleans, Louisiana
Education: Self-taught

Principal Medium/Technique: Painting, using script along with religious imagery.

Achievements: In 1934 she felt called by God to preach the Gospel. She went to New Orleans in 1939 to do missionary work and street preaching.

With two other women she started an orphanage and chapel in the Gentilly section of New Orleans. It was destroyed by Hurricane Betsy in 1965.

In 1976 she felt divinely inspired to become the bride of Christ. She dressed all in white after that, and painted her house and furniture white also.

Her work was exhibited in 1983 at the Black Folk Art show at the Corcoran Gallery. (Her paintings were exhibited in a room painted white!)
Achievements: (Continued)
Her works have been widely exhibited including at the La Jolla, California Museum of Contemporary Art (1970) and at the Museum of American Folk Art, New York (1973).

Quotes:
"God warned Noah 'bout the rainbow sign. Said no more water but the fire next time."

"Satan is always just below your feet, looking for his chance, and you got to say, Get back! You low-down crawling devil. Get back! You biting thing!" (Livingston and Beardsley 1980, 101).

Sources:

Archibald Motley

Born: 1891, New Orleans, Louisiana

Education: Studied at the Art Institute of Chicago under Karl Buehler

Principal Medium/Technique: Painting—powerful, hard-edge images.

Achievements: Was subsidized by the WPA/FAP (mural and easel division) during the Depression
- Guggenheim Fellowship, 1929
- Harmon Collection Gold Medal, 1928
- Frank J. Logan Medal, 1925
- J. N. Eisendrath Prize, 1925

Quote: Motley "captured the spirit of the twenties and thirties in Harlem and Paris—the two playlands of the Western world. Classified in the 'social comment' category, they stop just short of caricature" (Fine 1973, 112).
Sources:


Winifred R. Owens

Born: July 15, 1949, Washington, D.C.

Education: M.F.A., Howard University (ceramics), 1974
B.F.A., Philadelphia College of Art (crafts), 1971

Principal Medium/Technique: Ceramic sculpture.
She uses wheel thrown and hand built shapes. She incorporates African (Nigerian) pottery techniques, often using African forms and symbols.

Teaching Experience: Assistant Professor of Art, Howard University, Washington, D.C., 1976-present

Achievements: Citation, Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture, Lagos, Nigeria, 1977
National Endowment for the Arts (Individual Craftsman Fellowship Grant), 1976-77
Haystack Mountain School of Crafts Grant, 1974
Quotes: Acklyn Lynch said of her work, that it reflects "the African presence in the New World" (Bontemps 1980, 108).

"My African-American women series is in constant transition. This series is a search series. I'm trying to understand the link, and explain what I perceive in the visual sense...my visual statements speak of what is, what was and what [I think] should be...for women of color" (Bontemps 1980, 108).

Source:

Elijah Pierce

Born: 1892, near Baldwyn, Mississippi

Education: Age 16 - Was given his first barbering job as an assistant to an elderly White barber in Baldwyn. (When the elder barber died Pierce took over the shop.) Self-taught as an artist.

Principal Medium/Technique: Carved and painted wood sculpture. Religious themes, sports, historical events are his subject matter.

Achievements: Established the Elijah Pierce Art Gallery in his barber shop in Columbus, Ohio
Received First Prize at the International Meeting of Naive Art in Zagreb, Yugoslavia, 1973
His work has been widely exhibited.

Quote: "My carvings look nice, but if they don't have a story behind them, what's the use of them? Every piece of work I carve is a message, a sermon" (Livingston and Beardsley 1982, 120).
Howardena Pindell

Born: 1943, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Education: M.F.A., Yale, 1967
B.F.A. (cum laude), Boston University

Principal Medium/Technique: Painting, collage, and three-dimensional works using such elements as postcards.

Teaching Experience: Professor at State University of New York, Stonybrook

Achievements: She has had her work included in over 200 exhibitions and in more than 35 collections, including the Metropolitan Museum in New York.
Traveled to India in 1984
Received a U.S.-Japan Friendship Grant, 1982
Traveled to a number of African countries
Was associate curator of prints at the Museum of Modern Art, N.Y.
Quote: "It's hard to say what traditions I put my work into. I grew up in Philadelphia and had an education in Boston in traditional figurative art. Then I was trained in Abstract Expressionism at Yale. But my work is mostly based on my traveling and personal experiences. I want to become a role model because there were no role models for me when I was a student and growing up artistically" (Center Gallery 1985, 36).

Sources:


Faith Ringgold

Born: October 8, 1930, Harlem Hospital, New York City

Education: M.F.A., The City College of New York, 1959
           B.S., The City College of New York, 1955

Principal Medium/Technique: Sculpture (mixed media, painting, performance). A feminist artist who works with fabrics and comes from a quilting heritage. Her mother, Willi Posey, a fashion designer, collaborated with her in making quilted works and costumes for performances and fabric frames for her paintings based on Tibetan tankas.

Teaching Experience: Wilson College (Artist in Residence), 1976
                     Bank Street College, Pratt Institute, Wagner College, 1970
                     New York City Public Schools (Art), 1955
Publications:

Achievements:
Wonder Woman Award from Warner Communications for Upstream Women's Project, 1983
Appears on the cover of Ms. Magazine, with a picture of family inside, 1979
National Endowment for the Arts Award for sculpture, 1978
Co-founder of Where We At, Black women artists' group, 1971
CAPS Grant to do mural for the Women's House of Detention, 1971
Joins Ad Hoc Women's Art Group demonstrating against the Whitney Museum for the exclusion of Black women artists, 1970

Quote: "In making quilts I am able to communicate ideas I would not be able to communicate in any other way. They are a platform for mixing art and ideas so that neither suffers" (Gouma-Peterson 1987, 64).

Sources:
Betye Saar

Born: July 30, 1926, Pasadena, California

Education: American Film Institute, Los Angeles, 1972
California State University, Northridge, 1966
University of Southern California, Los Angeles, 1962
Graduate Studies, Long Beach State College, 1958–62
B.A., University of California, L.A., 1949

Principal Medium/Technique: Mixed media collages,
assemblages. Site installations. She often
uses "treasures" of the past such as gloves,
handkerchiefs, and scarves from her family to create ritual works.
Her installations create an environment which the viewer can enter.

Teaching Experience: Otis Art Institute, Los Angeles

Achievements: Her work has been exhibited at major art centers on both coasts.
Fellowship, National Endowment for the Arts, 1974, 1984
First Prize, Graphics, Watts Summer Festival, Los Angeles
Quote: "There is a lot of prejudice about fabrics. If men use it, it's art. When women use it, it's feminist commentary. I use it to make art" (Woelfle 1982, 56)

"One of the concerns that I feel is strongest in my work is mysticism, and that comes forth in a series of works—the ancestral work, the pre-history that comes from my imagination...." —Betye Saar at the Distinguished Artists Forum, San Jose State University, California, 1986, p. 33.

Sources:


California State University. The Arts in a Multicultural Society. San Jose, California: San Jose State University, 1986.


Film:

Raymond Saunders

Born: 1934, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Education:
- American Academy, Rome
  M.F.A., California College of Arts and Crafts, 1961
- Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts
  B.F.A., Carnegie Institute of Technology, 1960

Principal Medium/Technique: Painting, mixed media.
  Abstract expressionist style combined with graffiti, letters, Arabic calligraphy.

Teaching Experience:
- Artist-in-Residence, University of California, Hayward
- Artist-in-Residence, Dartmouth
- Artist-in-Residence, The Rhode Island School of Design
- Artist-in-Residence, High School of Music and Art, New York

Achievements:
- First Black artist to receive the Prix de Rome, 1964-65
- Ford Foundation Purchase Award, 1964
- Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, First Prize, watercolor, 1955
Quote: "Art projects beyond race and color; beyond America. It is universal, and Americans—Black, white or whatever—have no exclusive rights on it" (Fine 1973, 262).

"Pessimism is fatal to artistic development. Perpetual anger deprives it of movement.... For the artist this is aesthetic atrophy" (Fine 1973, 263).

Sources:


"Fifteen Leading Black Artists." Ebony 41 (May 1986): 46-54. (Photo, p. 54)

Augusta Savage

Born: February 29, 1892, Green Cove Spring, Florida

Died: March 27, 1962, New York City

Education: Grand Chaumiere, Paris, 1929-31
College Point Studio, New York, 1924-26
Cooper Union, New York, 1921-24
Tallahassee Normal School, Florida, 1919-20

Principal Medium/Technique: Sculpture (plaster, clay).
She worked realistically, capturing the humanity of her subjects.

Teaching Experience: Director of the Harlem Community Art Center
Private instruction in her studios
She devoted much time to helping young artists. Among her proteges are Jacob Lawrence and Norman Lewis, William Artis, and Ernest Crichlow.

Carnegie Grant, 1932 (to open an art gallery in Harlem)
Grand Prix Award, 1930, 1931
Achievements: (Continued)
First African-American elected to the National Association of
Women Painters and Sculptors, 1930
Julius Rosenwald Fellowship, 1929-31
Scholarship, Beau-Arts Institute of Design, Fountainebleau,
France, 1923
One of the principal organizers and second president of the
Harlem Artists' Guild

Quote: "I have created nothing really beautiful, really lasting, but if I can
inspire one of these youngsters to develop the talent I know they
possess, then my monument will be in their work" (Bontemps 1980,
124).

Sources:

Bontemps, Arna Alexander, ed. Forever Free: Art by African American Women
Henry Ossawa Tanner

Born: June 21, 1859, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
Son of a Bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church

Died: 1937, Normandy, France

Education: Julien Academy, Paris, France
(Studied under Jean-Paul Laurens, Benjamin Constant
Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art
(Studied under Thomas Eakins)
Settled in Paris in 1891 to escape the discouraging racial climate in his home country

Principal Medium/Technique: Painting—in an academic, mystical style.
Primarily Biblical themes.

Teaching Experience: Taught drawing at Clark University, Atlanta, Georgia for 2 years.

Achievements: Hall of Fame, Black Academy of Arts and Letters, 1970
National Arts Clubs Bronze Medal, New York City, 1927
Chevalier of the Legion of Honor by the French Government, 1923
Achievements: (Continued)

His works were exhibited at the Salon des Artistes Francais, Paris from 1895-1924 and won several medals.

Lippincott Prize, 1900

His early genre painting, The Banjo Lesson, 1893 is one of his best-known works.

After settling in France, his work began to reflect his strong religious background. His Biblical paintings such as Daniel in the Lions Den, 1896 and Raising of Lazarus, 1896 received wide acclaim.

Quote: "It has very often seemed to me that many painters of religious subjects forget that their pictures should be as much works of art as are other paintings of less holy subjects. Whenever such painters assume that because they are treating a more elevated subject than their brother artists they may be excused from giving artistic values or from being careful about the color harmony—they simply prove that they are less sincere than he who gives his subject his best attention" (Fine 1973, 72).

Sources:

Alma Thomas

Born: September 22, 1896, Columbus, Georgia
Died: 1978

Education: Miner Teacher's Normal School, Washington, D.C.
Tyler School of Fine Arts, Temple University, Philadelphia: European Tour of the Art of Western Europe, 1950
American University, Washington, D.C. (1950-60)
M.F.A., Colombia University, New York City, 1934
B.S., Howard University—The first graduate of the art department, 1924

Principal Medium/Technique: Painting—using an abstract style based on nature. Recent works have been inspired by space exploration and lunar landings. Her colorful abstractions have the quality of mosaics.

Teaching Experience: Shaw Junior High School, Washington, D.C.

Achievements: Vice President of Barnett-Aden Gallery, Washington, D.C. Selected from Corcoran area show for traveling exhibition
Achievements: (Continued)

Chosen for "Art in Washington" 1970 calendar
Works selected for the State Department's "Art for Embassies" program
Howard University Art Purchase

Quotes: "Alma Thomas, born in the era of the horse and buggy, has adjusted well to the technological age." --Elsa Honig Fine (1973, 153)

"I have sought to concentrate on beauty and happiness rather than on man's inhumanity to man" (Fine 1973, 153).

Sources:


Charles White

Born: April 2, 1918, Chicago, Illinois

Education: Esmalalda School of Sculpture and Painting, Mexico City
Taller de Grafica Popular, Mexico City
Hampton Institute, Virginia (Studied with Viktor Lowenfeld)
The Art Students League, New York, 1941
(Studied with Harry Sternberg)
Art Institute, Chicago, 1937

Principal Medium/Technique: Painter, sculptor, graphic artist. His works have an arresting monumental, sculptural quality. He uses a technique of alternating layers of conte or charcoal with fixative. Working lightly in the beginning he completes his works with a wide range of values.

Teaching Experience: Otis Art Institute, California, 1965
Workshop School of Art, 1950-53
Howard University, Artist-in-Residence, 1945
Southside Art Center, Chicago, 1939-40

Tamarind Fellowship, 1970
Gold Medal, International Show, Germany, 1960
National Institute of Arts and Letters Grant, 1952
Achievements: (Continued)
Julius Rosenwald Fellowship, 1941-43
Art Institute of Chicago Scholarship, 1937
While at Englewood High School in Chicago, he entered competitions for admission to art schools. He won two competitions (Chicago Academy of Fine Arts and Frederick Mizer Academy of Art) but was deeply discouraged when officials told him there had been "some mistake" when he reported to the schools (Fax 1971, 66).

Quote: "I use Negro subject matter because Negroes are closest to me. But I am trying to express a universal feeling through them, a meaning for all men.... All my life, I've been painting a single painting. This does not mean that I am a man without anger--I've had my work in museums where I wasn't allowed to see it--but what I pour into my work is the challenge of how beautiful life can be" (Fine 1973, 172).

Sources:
Hale Woodruff

Born: August 26, 1900, Cairo, Illinois

Education: Studied fresco painting with Diego Rivera, Mexico, 1936
           Studied with Henry O. Tanner in Paris, 1927
           Studied at Académie Moderne, Paris
           Harvard University
           Fogg Art Museum
           Studied at the John Herron Art Institute, Indianapolis, Indiana

Principal Medium/Technique: Painting, printmaking, mural painting.

Teaching Experience: Professor of Art Education, New York University, 1945-68
                     Art Director at Atlanta University, 1931-45
                     Instructor of Art, Atlanta University, 1931

Achievements: Honorary Doctorate, Morgan State College, Baltimore, 1968
              Great Teacher Award, New York University, 1966
              Julius Rosenwald Fellowship, 1943-45
Achievements: (Continued)
Initiated annual art shows for Negro artists at Atlanta University, 1941
Commissioned to do Amistad Murals for the Savery Library of Talladega College, Alabama, 1939
Bronze Medal, Harmon Foundation, 1926

Quote: "Africa was in the ’20s, and still is now, a major influence and a major source in my work. I have always admired and used African art, and I will continue to do so. African art has the high respect and regard of all the world because it s great art" (Walker, 1972, 43).

Sources:


Walker, Jim. "Hale Woodruff Has Paid His Dues." Black Creation 3 (Spring 1972): 43-45. (Photo, p. 43)
CONCLUSION

In the process of researching the lives and accomplishments of Black artists, it becomes apparent that since 1965 there has been increasing recognition of this group. Some excellent resources have been developed for the student of Afro-American art and a greater number of exhibitions from this body of work has been shown in recent years (Fine 1973, 286). In major cities such as New York, Boston, Washington, and Chicago, galleries and museums are being established to expose the work of Black artists to the public. There is, however, a continuing need for support, both from the Black community and the White art establishment.

Schools can play an important role in helping to create that informed and discerning audience necessary for raising awareness and appreciation of this aspect of America's heritage. An example of how this can be done is found in a reading series by Scott, Foresman Company in their Star Flight reader (Bearden and Henderson 1983, 188-94). Along with stories on many topics featuring various ethnic groups, a selection appears on Jacob Lawrence (excerpted from Six Black Masters of American Art by Bearden and Henderson). Many benefits can result when subject matter divisions are removed and art history can be found in a reading text!

The films listed in this packet can serve as excellent starting points for a unit on Black artists. It is suggested that teachers continually refer to current listings from the Area Education Agencies for recent additions to their film offerings dealing with Afro-American art. If the collections are deficient, which they no doubt may be, teachers should ask that such films be ordered.
The slide set in this packet is designed to be an overview, and as such, can also be useful in introducing a study or project on Afro-American art. Other subjects which might be enriched by this focus are American history, sociology, and anthropology. Slides might also be used selectively, when an activity based on the work of a particular artist or artists is initiated. For example, the slides of paintings by Gertrude Morgan, Raymond Saunders, and the graffiti artists may be shown to introduce a project using script as part of the imagery.

It is hoped that the mini-biographies will be used by individual students, perhaps each one selecting an artist to research and present to the class.

Hopefully, the recent interest in Afro-American art will be the beginning of an increasing integration of this topic throughout art curricula and that of other subjects such as reading and social studies. Only by special efforts to correct what has been overlooked in the past can we hope to get in touch and stay in touch with a part of our culture that is too important to ignore. The benefits to the minority student as expressed by Elsa Honig Fine, is that he or she "will no longer feel invisible. He will know that he, too, was there" (Fine 1973, 286). The other side of the coin is that the majority students will realize that they were not the only ones there, and are much better for it.
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Moufarrege, Nicolas A. "Lightening Strikes (Not Once but Twice): An Interview with Graffiti Artists." Arts 57 (November 1982): 87-93.

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Films


Videocassette

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