Large print
exhibition text

THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE AND TRANSATLANTIC MODERNISM

THE MET

THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE AND TRANSLATLANTIC MODERNISM

The Harlem Renaissance emerged in the 1920s as one of the era's most vibrant modes of artistic expression. The first African American–led movement of international modern art, it evolved over the next two decades into a transformative moment during which Black artists developed radically new modes of self-expression. They portrayed all aspects of the modern city life that took shape during the early decades of the Great Migration, when millions of African Americans left the segregated rural South in search of freedom and opportunity in Harlem and other expanding Black communities nationwide.

This exhibition explores how artists associated with the "New Negro" movement—as the Harlem Renaissance was originally known, after influential writings by the philosopher Alain Locke and others—visualized the modern Black subject. It reveals the extensive connections between these artists and the period's preeminent writers, performers, and civic leaders. At the same time, it reconstructs cross-

cultural affinities and exchanges among the New Negro artists and their modernist peers in Europe and across the Atlantic world, often established during international travel and expatriation.

This complex, multilayered story unfolds through portraits, scenes of city life, and powerful evocations of Black history and cultural philosophy. Highlights include seldom-seen works from historically Black colleges and universities and culturally specific collections. Across its broad sweep, opening with founding ideas and concluding with activist imagery made on the cusp of the civil rights era, it establishes the critical role of the Harlem Renaissance in the history of art as well as the period's enduring cultural legacy.

#MetHarlemRenaissance
Hear artists and scholars reflect on key works in the exhibition:

metmuseum.org/HarlemRenaissance

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THE THINKERS

Harlem Renaissance artists actively engaged with the period's leading Black writers, performers, and composers. At neighborhood literary salons, they often debated conflicting ideas about how best to portray the modern Black subject. One particularly influential forum was the 306 Group, named after the building on West 141st Street where Aaron Douglas, Charles Henry Alston, Jacob Lawrence, and other artists maintained studios where they hosted open houses and gave classes. Visitors to these events included prominent poets, critics, and philosophers such as Langston Hughes, W. E. B. Du Bois, and Alain Locke as well as the writer-composer James Weldon Johnson and orchestra leader Duke Ellington. Similar circles formed around the art school of Augusta Savage while gatherings in midtown Manhattan drew an interracial mix of artists and kindled enduring collaborations and friendships.

The portraits in this gallery represent some of these distinguished thinkers. At the same time, they demonstrate, through their distinct aesthetic

approaches, the intense debate and synthesis of ideas and creative practices that helped define the movement.

Winold Reiss
American, born Germany, 1886–1953
Langston Hughes, 1925
Pastel on illustration board

National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.; Gift of W. Tjark Reiss, in memory of his father, Winold Reiss

The acclaimed poet and novelist Langston Hughes was a close associate of New Negro artists such as Aaron Douglas and Jacob Lawrence, who illustrated many of his books. Hughes embraced jazz and the blues as the definitive creative expressions of Black modernity, giving voice to the experiences of racial oppression and the big-city aspirations that inspired the Great Migration as well as the daily realities of life in Harlem and beyond. Here, Hughes appears in a pose of dreamlike reverie, framed by a montage of sheet music and city views rendered in the Art Deco style that became emblematic of the urbane Jazz Age in New York.

“These writers were grappling with the world in very new and radical ways.”

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IN CENTER OF GALLERY, CLOCKWISE FROM GALLERY ENTRANCE

Alain Locke

American, 1885–1954

The New Negro, 1925

Collection of Walter O. and Linda Evans

This anthology of cultural criticism, poetry, literature, and artists' illustrations became a definitive text of the Harlem Renaissance. Locke's seminal essay "The Legacy of the Ancestral Arts" exhorted New Negro artists to embrace African aesthetics and avant-garde pictorial strategies to forge a distinctive new visual style for the representation of all aspects of modern Black life and culture.

James Weldon Johnson

American, 1871–1938

illustrations by Aaron Douglas

American, 1899–1979

God's Trombones: Seven Negro Sermons in Verse, 1927

Published by Viking Press, New York (fourth printing, January 1929)

Thomas J. Watson Library, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Zora Neale Hurston
American, 1891–1960
Their Eyes Were Watching God, 1937
Published by J. B. Lippincott, Philadelphia

Collection of Walter O. and Linda Evans

Langston Hughes
American, 1902–1967,
illustrations by Jacob Lawrence
American, 1917–2000
One-Way Ticket, 1949
Published by Alfred Knopf, New York

Thomas J. Watson Library, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Hughes evoked the ethos of the Great Migration throughout his career. In *One-Way Ticket*, a collaboration with the artist Jacob Lawrence, he recapitulated the theme with poetry that stresses the nationwide reach of the migration into cities other than Harlem.

LEFT TO RIGHT FROM GALLERY ENTRANCE

Winold Reiss

American, born Germany, 1886–1953

Alain Leroy Locke, 1925

Pastel on illustration board

National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.; Purchase funded by Lawrence A. Fleischman and Howard Garfinkle with a matching grant from the National Endowment for the Arts

With his 1925 book *The New Negro,* an illustrated anthology of cultural commentary, Alain Locke set forth the foundational principles of the African American–led artistic and literary movement later known as the Harlem Renaissance. In this portrait by the book's principal illustrator, Locke personifies the quest for new and modern portrayals of Black subjects. A Howard University professor with a PhD in philosophy from Harvard, he meets the viewer's gaze with the slightly furrowed brow of an intellectual poised for debate. The complex power of his ideas is suggested through attentive modeling of his face and hands set against the sketched-in backdrop of his three-piece suit. The avant-garde aesthetic conveys

the radical modernity of Locke's call for authentic and autonomous modes of Black self-expression.

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Laura Wheeler Waring
American, 1887–1948
James Weldon Johnson, 1943
Oil on canvas

National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.; Gift of the Harmon Foundation

This posthumous portrait commemorates James Weldon Johnson's influential career as a poet, lyricist, and activist. His 1927 book *God's Trombones: Seven Negro Sermons in Verse* was illustrated by Aaron Douglas, who also developed a series of paintings inspired by it. Johnson also composed the lyrics to "Lift Every Voice and Sing," which is often referred to as "The Black National Anthem."

Here, the artist depicts Johnson in the naturalistic style of academic portraiture that traditionally bestowed sitters with a sense of gravitas. The portrait was commissioned by the Harmon Foundation for the exhibition *Portraits of Outstanding Americans of Negro Origin,* which opened at the Smithsonian Institution in 1944 and went on to tour the United States for ten years as a rebuttal to racism.

Aaron Douglas
American, 1899–1979
Miss Zora Neale Hurston, 1926
Pastel on canvas

Fisk University Galleries, Nashville

Douglas's portrait of his friend Zora Neale Hurston, a prominent writer and anthropologist, captures her characteristically flamboyant yet enigmatic mode of self-presentation. Face framed by her signature floppy felt hat, perched at a rakish tilt, and a luxuriant fur collar, Hurston adroitly declines to meet the viewer's gaze. While Hurston's best-known fiction, including the 1937 novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God,* is set in rural Southern communities like her native Eatonville, Florida, recent research has drawn attention to earlier short stories such as "Muttsy" and "The Book of Harlem" that chronicle the social and economic fates of migrants from the South who sought to build new lives as city dwellers.

"[She seems like] she is relaxed and thinking and in the company of a friend."

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EVERYDAY LIFE IN THE NEW BLACK CITIES

Artists associated with the New Negro movement shared a commitment to portraying all aspects of everyday African American life in accordance with cultural values established by the Black community itself. This radical vision asserted the freedom to depict not only the affluence and refinement of the rising Black middle class but also subjects such as gambling parlors and orphan street bands. It centered ordinary people with a blend of admiration and critique that rejected stereotype and oversimplification, defying conventional beliefs, as eloquently stated by the poet Langston Hughes in 1926:

We younger Negro artists who create now intend to express our individual dark-skinned selves without fear or shame. If white people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, it doesn't matter. We know we are beautiful. And ugly too. . . . If colored people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, their displeasure doesn't matter either. We build our temples for tomorrow, strong as we know how, and we stand on top of the mountain, free within ourselves.

Whether portraying scenes set in Harlem, South Side Chicago, or the American heartland, these artists embraced the urbane demeanor, joyful camaraderie, and vivid styles of the era while also capturing poverty and morally ambiguous behavior across class lines.

TO RIGHT, LEFT TO RIGHT

Archibald J. Motley, Jr.
American, 1891–1981
The Plotters, 1933
Oil on canvas

Collection of Walter O. and Linda Evans

Five men sit together in the compressed space of a room whose only decoration is a cropped image of a Black boxer facing off against a white opponent. The mood here is much more solemn than in similar works by Motley, such as *The Liar*, shown nearby, or the artist's outdoor street scenes set in Chicago's Bronzeville neighborhood, with their bright colors and jovial atmosphere. The central figures review and discuss the pages on the table with a conspiratorial air that is intensified by sharp contrasts of light and shadow.

James Van Der Zee
American, 1886–1983
Luncheon Party, Harlem, 1927
Tea Time at Madam C. J. Walker's Beauty Salon, 1929
Gelatin silver prints

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Gift of James Van Der Zee Institute, 1970 (1970.539.10, .11)

The celebrated entrepreneur Madam C. J. Walker made a fortune from her patented hair-care products for Black women. For this portrait, Van Der Zee posed the sitters taking tea in the reception area at her townhouse on West 136th Street, which housed the Walker Hair Parlor and Lelia College of Beauty Culture. The interior decoration reflects the establishment's famed elegance. In *Luncheon Party, Harlem*, a group of socially prominent Black women sits around a lavishly decorated table. The architecture of the room bears a close resemblance to rooms on the upper floors of the Walker townhouse, where the family hosted dinners, soirées, and other entertainments.

Palmer Hayden
American, 1890–1973
Nous Quatre à Paris (We Four in Paris),
ca. 1930
Watercolor and graphite on paper

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Purchase, Joseph H. Hazen Foundation Inc. Gift, 1975 (1975.125)

In a closely cropped interior filled with billiards, pool players, and partially filled glasses (reminiscent of Cubist themes), four men in colorful suits play cards around a table. Their heads, in profile, angle out in different directions. Hayden purportedly depicted himself as one of the players together with fellow artist Hale Woodruff and writer Countee Cullen, both acquaintances. Created after Hayden moved to France, this painting remains controversial owing to its evocation of the era's racialized minstrel stereotypes, such as the exaggerated physical features, which caricatured members of the Black working class and associated them with a seedy underbelly of society.

Archibald J. Motley, Jr.
American, 1891–1981
The Liar, 1936
Oil on canvas

Howard University Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

Hale Woodruff
American, 1900–1980
The Card Players, 1930
Oil on canvas

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; George A. Hearn Fund, 2015 (2015.223)

Painted during Woodruff's long expatriation in Paris, this composition drew inspiration from multiple sources, including primitivist-inflected Cubism and Cézanne's celebrated canvases on the same subject. In contrast to Cézanne's muted palette and restrained technique, Woodruff emboldened his card players with vibrant hues, vigorous brushwork, and two-dimensional forms. Thick outlines accentuate the wooden aspect of these figures, whose faces blend human features with those of African sculpture. As the players closely guard their cards, their masklike, blank demeanors function as visual metaphors for the focused intensity of a "poker face."

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Archibald J. Motley, Jr.
American, 1891–1981
Picnic, 1934
Oil on canvas

Howard University Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

Beneath a verdant tree, several men and women cluster around a table for a lively gathering, a rare scene of friendship, gaiety, and urbane leisure. Among Motley's modernizing interventions was the extensive use of non-naturalistic color—here, the natural browns of the skin tones and the massive tree trunk take on soft mauve and purple-black hues—which complicated his ostensibly illusionistic aesthetic.

William H. Johnson
American, 1901–1970
Street Life, Harlem, ca. 1939–40
Oil on plywood

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.; Gift of the Harmon Foundation

Under a crescent moon, a fashionable couple stands on a Harlem street dressed for a night out, perhaps at a local venue such as the Savoy Ballroom, where they might enjoy the swing jazz and jitterbug that were becoming popular around the world. Their flamboyantly colorful style—captured by Johnson using the bold, flat aesthetic of the modernist avant-garde—was embraced by many habituées of Harlem nightlife. “While whites try to achieve restraint,” wrote Zora Neale Hurston, “we strive to pile beauty on beauty, and magnificence on glory . . . the common run of us love beauty, color and poetry so much that there can never be enough of it.”

“They’re contemporary actors in modern life and they are dressed the part.”

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Jacob Lawrence
American, 1917–2000
Pool Parlor, 1942
Watercolor and gouache on paper

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Arthur Hoppock Hearn Fund, 1942 (42.167)

A prizewinner in the 1942 Artists for Victory competition, *Pool Parlor* was the first work by Lawrence to enter The Met collection. The painting acknowledges and satirizes some of the stereotypes surrounding pool halls, a dominant feature of recreational life among Black men during the Harlem Renaissance period. Lawrence placed all the figures—players, spectators, and gamblers alike—in exaggerated poses as they focus on the game at hand. Lit but untouched cigarettes sit on the edge of pool tables as their smoke rises to meet the low-hanging lights that penetrate the composition.

Malvin Gray Johnson
American, 1896–1934
Elks Marching, 1934
Oil on canvas

Amistad Research Center, New Orleans

Parades by the Elks fraternal organization were a common occurrence in Harlem in the early twentieth century. The racially segregated “Negro Elks” maintained five lodges in Harlem, which regularly paraded through the neighborhood, advocating for educational programs and community service and offering help finding jobs, housing, and entertainment. Here a group of twenty smartly dressed men marches alongside a band that is beginning to move out of view. The artist elected to show less of the crowds typically drawn to such events in favor of focusing on the members of the order.

Malvin Gray Johnson
American, 1896–1934
Jenkins Band, 1934
Oil on canvas

Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Arts and Artifacts Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations

Johnson made several paintings that capture the irrepressible spirit of the processionals and marching-band performances that were frequent events during the Harlem Renaissance era. This canvas features the Jenkins Orphanage Band, whose members were residents of the orphanage founded by the Reverend Daniel Jenkins in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1891. By 1910, the band's street performances had gained a following in cities up and down the Eastern Seaboard. Johnson shows them playing in a tight cluster on a city street as curious onlookers pause to listen.

James Van Der Zee
American, 1886–1983
Couple, Harlem, 1932
Gelatin silver print

James Van Der Zee Archive, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Gift of Donna Van Der Zee, 2021 (2021.446.1.2)

On a quiet street in Harlem lined with brownstone townhouses, an elegant young couple sporting long fur coats and stylish hats poses alongside their car. Of the many images created by the famed studio and portrait photographer James Van Der Zee in the early twentieth century, this photograph is perhaps one of the most widely circulated. The couple's attire exemplifies the urbane aspect of the New Negro movement, as does their car: a limited-edition Cadillac V-16. Representing a new material reality for a select few in the Black community, they reflect a moment of upward social and economic mobility and an overall reimagining of Black American identity that rejected expectations set by widespread racist stereotypes.

Hear about the fashion choices in this photograph.

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James Van Der Zee
American, 1886–1983
Parade, Harlem, 1920s
Soldiers on Parade, Lenox Avenue near 134th Street, Harlem, ca. 1920
Gelatin silver print

James Van Der Zee Archive, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Purchase, Louis V. Bell, Harris Brisbane Dick, Fletcher, and Rogers Funds and Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, Alfred Stieglitz Society Gifts, Twentieth-Century Photography Fund, Ann Tenenbaum and Thomas H. Lee Gift, Joyce F. Menschel Fund, and Ford Foundation Gift, 2021 (2021.443.54, .402)
Conserved with support from the Bank of America Art Conservation Project

Van Der Zee, the preeminent portrait photographer in Harlem during the 1920s and 1930s, helped cast the neighborhood as a spiritual and emotional center for many African Americans. One important aspect of civic life in Harlem involved parading, in which Black Americans could reclaim their neighborhood's streets for themselves. Some of the most frequent parades were held by the community's largest fraternal lodge, the Benevolent and Protective Order of the Elks, depicted here. The Elks offered an expansive social and professional networking opportunity. Likely an Elk

himself, Van Der Zee photographed several of the group's gatherings throughout his career.

James Van Der Zee
American, 1886–1983
Family Group, 1934
Group of Women, 1940
Gelatin silver prints

James Van Der Zee Archive, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Purchase, Louis V. Bell, Harris Brisbane Dick, Fletcher, and Rogers Funds and Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, Alfred Stieglitz Society Gifts, Twentieth-Century Photography Fund, Ann Tenenbaum and Thomas H. Lee Gift, Joyce F. Menschel Fund, and Ford Foundation Gift, 2021 (2021.443.252, .359)

Van Der Zee often retouched negatives to achieve the most engaging likenesses for his sitters. In *Group of Women*, he used thinly drawn lines to add volume to the coiffures of the figures in the back row. The necklace worn by the woman at center is likewise a Van Der Zee addition, as is the bracelet on the bare arm of the woman at far right. He drew in bracelets for all the sitters in the front row except the woman at far left, who wears her own. In contrast, the multigenerational and matriarchal portrait *Family Group* received little retouching, as most of the sitters are wearing their own accessories. The exception is the elder woman seated at center, for whom Van Der Zee added a pinky ring.

James Van Der Zee
American, 1886–1983
The Barefoot Prophet, 1929
Gelatin silver print

James Van Der Zee Archive, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Gift of Donna Van Der Zee, 2021 (2021.446.1.6)

Made in 1929 and printed later, *The Barefoot Prophet* features an early example of the photographer's innovative retouching techniques. Most of Van Der Zee's portraits were posed in his studio, where he relied on props and intricate backdrops to create atmospheric specificity. Here, he drew long, diagonal lines directly on his original negative to represent light cast from the candles onto a bible. The sitter is believed to be Elder Clayhorn Martin, a mystical preacher, born into enslavement, who was known for preaching barefoot on the streets of Harlem.

James Van Der Zee
American, 1886–1983
Funeral Portrait with Sheet Music, 1932
Gelatin silver print

James Van Der Zee Archive, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Purchase, Louis V. Bell, Harris Brisbane Dick, Fletcher, and Rogers Funds and Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, Alfred Stieglitz Society Gifts, Twentieth-Century Photography Fund, Ann Tenenbaum and Thomas H. Lee Gift, Joyce F. Menschel Fund, and Ford Foundation Gift, 2021 (2021.443.45)
Conserved with support from the Bank of America Art Conservation Project

Before cameras and film became widely accessible, professional studios provided the few photographs that could be made of a person in their lifetime, and in some cases after their death. Van Der Zee, known for his retouching skills, which often included adding color, could imbue a funerary portrait with an ethereal energy. Here, he carefully superimposed the sheet music for “Goin’ Home,” a section of Dvorák’s *New World Symphony* (first performed at Carnegie Hall in 1893) that was lyricized by William Arms Fisher in 1922. The music envelops the subject without disrupting the dignity of the portrait. Ever conscious of the

composition, Van Der Zee added his signature on the back of the leftmost chair, outside the retouched area.

James Van Der Zee
American, 1886–1983
Bride, 1937
Gelatin silver print

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Gift of James Van Der Zee Institute, 1970 (1970.539.4)

Jacob Lawrence
American, 1917–2000
The Photographer, 1942
Watercolor, gouache, and graphite on paper

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Purchase, Lila Acheson Wallace Gift, 2001 (2001.205)

Along a busy street in Harlem, a construction worker descends into a manhole while a finely dressed businessman with a briefcase hurries to work. A horse-drawn cart carries a brass bed frame, perhaps a sign of new arrivals to the neighborhood. The movement in the scene is accentuated by Lawrence's frequent use of diagonal lines and angular shapes. In the midst of this colorful urban maelstrom, a photographer snaps a group portrait of a well-dressed family.

CASE IN CENTER OF GALLERY, CLOCKWISE FROM GALLERY ENTRANCE

Winold Reiss
American, born Germany, 1886–1953
Roland Hayes, cover of **Survey Graphic**, March 1925
edited by Alain Locke and Charles S. Johnson

Thomas J. Watson Library, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

The editors of *Survey Graphic*, a social-work journal, invited Alain Locke and Charles S. Johnson (editor of *Opportunity* magazine) to develop this special issue on Harlem, which features the young opera singer Roland Hayes on the cover. Inside, James Weldon Johnson refers to Harlem as the largest Black city in the world, while Locke describes it as a “mecca for blacks fleeing white supremacy and domination” and “a place to be themselves and reinvent their identity at the same time.”

Bert Hurley
American, 1898–1955
Pages from **Loose Nuts: A Rapsody in Brown**, 1933
Pen and black ink, brush and black ink, crayon, watercolor, and graphite

Speed Art Museum, Louisville; Gift of Dr. Wade Hall and partial purchase

Across 125 handwritten pages, authored and lavishly illustrated by Hurley, a little-known artist from Louisville, Kentucky, a fictitious satire unfolds in the city's historically Black West End neighborhood. The novella's scenes of a newsroom, a pool parlor, and an elegant picnic mirror those in paintings set in big cities such as New York and Chicago, presenting an engaging manifestation of the urbane New Negro as a nationwide phenomenon.

Bert Hurley

American, 1898–1955

Pages from **Loose Nuts: A Rapsody in Brown**, 1933

Pen and black ink, brush and black ink, crayon, watercolor, and graphite

Speed Art Museum, Louisville; Gift of Dr. Wade Hall and partial purchase

PORTRAITURE AND THE MODERN BLACK SUBJECT

Art must discover and reveal the beauty which prejudice and caricature have obscured and overlaid. . . . All vital art discovers beauty, and opens our eyes to beauty that previously we could not see.
—Alain Locke, The New Negro (1925)

Through portraiture we glimpse some of the divergent stylistic approaches and philosophies employed by the New Negro artists nationwide. While many Harlem-based artists blended the refined aesthetics of African sculpture and the compelling figural expressiveness of the European avant-garde with African American folk motifs—an approach encouraged by Alain Locke, the movement's founding philosopher—some of their peers in Chicago, Philadelphia, and other communities employed the graceful naturalism of academic tradition to bestow sitters with dignity and interiority.

Nonetheless, these artists were united by their shared objective to bring modernizing nuance to their portraits of Black workers, professionals, and elites, establishing a presence for subjects historically deemed unworthy

of a central place in fine art. While many artists explored these philosophies through charged self-portraits, others, including the photographer James Van Der Zee, lavished attention on details of attire, furnishings, and interiors to emphasize social and economic roles.

LEFT TO RIGHT

Charles Henry Alston
American, 1907–1977
Girl in a Red Dress, 1934
Oil on canvas

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Purchase, Lila Acheson Wallace Gift and George A. Hearn Fund, 2021 (2021.25)

Art historian Richard Powell has described *Girl in a Red Dress* as an exemplary portrayal of the New Negro woman who is "defiantly black, beautiful, and feminine, yet also unsettled, mysterious, and utterly modern." Alston, a foundational figure of the Harlem Renaissance, depicts the subject in a way that synthesizes the aesthetics of African art (in this case Fang reliquary busts) and modernist pictorial flatness. Her graceful, elongated neck and sculptural face, together with her stylized modern attire and contemplative gaze to the side, convey an enigmatic affect in which she seems oblivious to the viewer.

Hear how this painting reflects the aesthetic ideals of the New Negro movement.

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Laura Wheeler Waring
American, 1887–1948
Girl with Pomegranate, ca. 1940
Oil on canvas

Collection of Madeline Murphy Rabb

This rarely seen portrait by Waring, a painter and graphic artist who illustrated several early covers of the NAACP's *Crisis* magazine, conveys some of her varied artistic and activist interests. While the visage of the unnamed sitter is captured with portraitlike specificity, her dress is more loosely sketched. The backdrop covers all but a fragment of a watercolor, possibly inspired by the artist's travels in the south of France. Waring's careful attention to the pomegranate points to the fruit's multivalent symbolism as an emblem of prosperity, fertility, and sensuality in Greek myth and biblical and ancient Egyptian texts. As such, it also appears in a number of paintings by other New Negro artists and in the writings of Zora Neale Hurston.

Elizabeth Catlett

American and Mexican, 1915–2012

Head of a Woman (Woman), 1942–44

Oil on canvas

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Purchase, Gift of Continental Group, by exchange, 2018 (2018.157)

One of only a handful of known oil paintings by Catlett, this work perfectly encapsulates the artist's wide-ranging influences, from Western and Eastern European modernism and pre-Colombian sculpture to traditional West and Central African masks. Catlett, who worked primarily in sculpture and printmaking, produced this painting early in her career while teaching art at the George Washington Carver School in Harlem, whose adult students were mainly domestic servants, janitors, elevator operators, and garment-industry workers. Like many of her Black female contemporaries and predecessors, Catlett spent much of her career as an arts instructor, working throughout the United States and Mexico at a time when many other Black American expatriate artists opted for Paris.

William H. Johnson
American, 1901–1970
Man in a Vest, 1939–40
Oil on canvas

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.; Gift of the Harmon Foundation

Laura Wheeler Waring
American, 1887–1948
Girl in a Green Cap, 1930
Oil on canvas

Howard University Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

William H. Johnson

American, 1901–1970

Woman in Blue, ca. 1943

Oil on burlap

Clark Atlanta University Art Museum, Permanent Loan from the National Collection of Fine Art

Woman in Blue exemplifies Johnson's signature portrait style, in which a monumentalized figure is placed within a tightly cropped pictorial space defined by flat expanses of bold, thickly applied color. Here the unnamed sitter returns the viewer's gaze with a cool self-assurance, establishing her as both an observer and the observed. She nonetheless maintains a masklike inscrutability through which she asserts her own terms of engagement. This painting is a larger, more firmly rendered resolution of the expressionist strategies Johnson realized in an earlier study of the subject. *Woman in Blue* received careful conservation in recent months in order to close large surface cracks and to stabilize its unusual medium of oil paint on burlap.

Image caption:
William H. Johnson, *Woman Beside Yellow Chair,* ca. 1939–40. Tempera on paper. Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.; Gift of the Harmon Foundation. Image: Art Resource, NY

Archibald J. Motley, Jr.
American, 1891–1981
Portrait of a Cultured Lady (Edna Powell Gayle), 1948
Oil on canvas

Courtesy Michael Rosenfeld Gallery, New York

Through subtle variations in saturated purples and pinks, Motley portrays Edna Powell Gayle, his gallerist, as a stylish sophisticate within an elegantly appointed interior. Motley was among the New Negro artists who often elected to employ pictorial means drawn from academic tradition, such as naturalistic figural modeling and the inclusion of still life and cityscape elements to signify a subject's social status. These paintings can nevertheless be seen as radical reinventions because they infused the genre with portrayals of the socially and economically autonomous modern Black subject, who until this time had received no sustained artistic attention.

CASE IN CENTER OF GALLERY

Richmond Barthé

American, 1901–1989

Boxer, 1942

Bronze

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Rogers Fund, 1942 (42.180)

This sculpture commemorates the Cuban lightweight prizefighter Eligio Sardiñas Montalvo (1910–1988), whose nickname was “Kid Chocolate.” Recalling that he “moved like a ballet dancer,” Barthé depicted Montalvo twisting in two directions while perched on the balls of his feet. The artist alluded to his own identity as a gay man by imagining the boxer as a sensuous nude, a means of self-expression during a time of circumspection for many in the gay community.

FROM GALLERY ENTRANCE, RIGHT TO LEFT

Samuel Joseph Brown, Jr.
American, 1907–1994
Self-Portrait, ca. 1941
Watercolor, charcoal, and graphite on paper

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Gift of Pennsylvania W.P.A., 1943 (43.46.4)

Brown, an accomplished watercolorist, here used the medium to present his own image through flattened forms and matte surfaces. Enveloped by the deep blue tonalities of an indistinct interior, he conveys a pensive mood as he gazes into a mirror, setting up an echo chamber of dualities. We see the artist, implausibly, in both profile and three-quarter views, a seeming visualization of the “double consciousness” described by W. E. B. Du Bois as an aspect of the African American psyche, in which Black people struggle to offset the racialized gaze of white people with their own quest for self-knowledge.

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Samuel Joseph Brown, Jr.
American, 1907–1994
Smoking My Pipe, 1934
Watercolor over graphite on cream wove paper

Philadelphia Museum of Art, Public Works of Art Project, on long-term loan to the Philadelphia Museum of Art from the Fine Arts Collection, U.S. General Services Administration, 1934

Samuel Joseph Brown, Jr.
American, 1907–1994
Girl in Blue Dress, 1936
Watercolor on paper

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Gift of Pennsylvania W. P. A., 1943 (43.46.13)

Winold Reiss
American, born Germany, 1886–1953
The Actress, 1925
Pastel on illustration board

Fisk University Galleries, Nashville

Samuel Joseph Brown, Jr.
American, 1907–1994
Mrs. Simmons, ca. 1936
Watercolor and pencil on paper mounted on paperboard

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.; Transfer from General Services Administration

Edwin Harleston
American, 1882–1931
Aaron Douglas, 1930
Oil on canvas

Carolina Art Association/Gibbes Museum of Art, Charleston

Horace Pippin
American, 1888–1946
The Artist's Wife, 1936
Oil on linen

Harmon and Harriet Kelley Foundation for the Arts

Self-Portrait II, 1944
Oil on canvas, adhered to cardboard

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Bequest of Jane Kendall Gingrich, 1982 (1982.55.7)

Contemporary artist Kerry James Marshall has described Pippin's self-portrait as a "monumental statement of self-confidence." In this small painting, tightly cropped at bust length, Pippin gazes confidently at the viewer, his firmly drawn likeness reflecting a well-disciplined hand. Pippin portrayed his wife, Jennie Ora Fetherstone Wade Giles, at three times the scale of his own image, but he unified the two paintings by using a similar palette. Jennie's blue dress is echoed in the background of his portrait, while the background of her portrait is picked up in the artist's tie and button-down shirt.

James Van Der Zee
American, 1886–1983
Self-Portrait with Gaynella Greenlee, 1920s
Gelatin silver print

James Van Der Zee Archive, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Purchase, Louis V. Bell, Harris Brisbane Dick, Fletcher, and Rogers Funds and Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, Alfred Stieglitz Society Gifts, Twentieth-Century Photography Fund, Ann Tenenbaum and Thomas H. Lee Gift, Joyce F. Menschel Fund, and Ford Foundation Gift, 2021 (2021.443.31)
Conserved with support from the Bank of America Art Conservation Project

Gaynella Greenlee was Van Der Zee's studio manager; they worked together and were married for nearly fifty years.

Archibald J. Motley, Jr.
American, 1891–1981
Self-Portrait, 1920
Oil on canvas

The Art Institute of Chicago; Through prior acquisitions of Friends of American Art Collection; through prior bequest of Marguerita S. Ritman

Motley believed that the visual arts could improve interracial understanding by helping to dispel stereotypes. He painted this self-portrait as a newly trained artist shortly after the 1919 race riots in Chicago. Cutting an elegant, self-assured figure—with pomaded hair, a trimmed mustache, and a dark suit jacket accented with a horseshoe pin—Motley grasps the tools of his profession in his immaculately manicured hands. The vivid colors on his palette reflect the often bright tonalities of his most renowned works.

Palmer Hayden
American, 1890–1973
The Janitor Who Paints, ca. 1937 (repainted after 1940)
Oil on canvas

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.; Gift of the Harmon Foundation

Hayden's painting speaks to the struggle to pursue a passion while also meeting financial obligations. Sitting at an easel, an artist holds his palette in a cartoonishly large hand as he paints the mother and child before him. The title alludes to a double life that is expressed through the composition's split fields: on the left is a bright and colorful home life, complete with a sleeping cat, while the right side is darker in tone and displays the tools of the artist's day job. Hayden, who once worked as a janitor, referred to this painting as a form of protest against his own economic and social standing and that of his fellow African Americans.

Malvin Gray Johnson

American, 1896–1934

Self-Portrait, 1934

Oil on canvas

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington D.C.; Gift of the Harmon Foundation

William H. Johnson
American, 1901–1970
Triple Self-Portrait, 1944
Oil on board

Hampton University Museum Collection, Virginia

Johnson conceived the inventive format of this self-portrait to convey the stages of mourning following the death of his wife. Using a horizontal format more typical for landscapes, he centered an almost incorporeal personification of the spirituality through which he sought transcendence—symbolized by the white shirt—between two embodiments of his worldly self, both in colorful striped shirts. Through a “laying on” of hands, the flanking figures seem to offer the center one the nurturing support that sustained the artist on his solitary journey of emotional pain.

DEBATE AND SYNTHESIS: AFRICAN AND WESTERN AESTHETICS

The New Negro artists and their Black European peers sought to forge a self-affirming visual language within the context of modern art. Central to this quest was the issue of whether and how to engage with the aesthetics of African art. The topic became the subject of vigorous debates that unfolded on the pages of the most influential Black-led publications, which commissioned original works of art as cover illustrations. The journal *Opportunity*, edited by Charles S. Johnson and published by the National Urban League, became an intellectual base for a younger generation influenced by Alain Locke's call to embrace the ancestral legacy of African sculpture. In contrast, W. E. B. Du Bois, editor of the NAACP's monthly magazine *The Crisis*, often supported imagery that was more infused with an academic tradition that had historically commanded respect.

While some of the works on view reflect clear-cut choices in terms of influence and affinity—from sub-Saharan Africa and ancient Egypt to the European

avant-garde—others synthesize disparate visual sources. Together, they open a window onto the diverse cultural and intellectual perspectives that were foundational to the period.

CASE BY GALLERY ENTRANCE

Ronald Moody

British, born Jamaica, 1900–1984

L'Homme, 1937

Wood

Leeds Museum and Galleries (Leeds Art Gallery), Presented by the Ronald Moody Trust, 2018

L'Homme conjures the meditative, otherworldly presence of ancient Egyptian funerary masks that riveted Moody, a dentist and self-taught artist, during visits to London's British Museum. He later sought to re-create the unseeing eyes and slightly parted lips of those memorial visages. Following successful gallery shows across Europe, Moody was the only foreign artist to be featured in an historic 1939 Baltimore Museum of Art exhibition conceived by Alain Locke.

TO LEFT

Hale Woodruff
American, 1900–1980
The Art of the Negro: Artists (Study), 1945
Oil on canvas

Detroit Institute of Arts; Museum Purchase, W. Hawkins Ferry Fund, Richard and Jane Manoogian Foundation, and Friends of African and African American Art

While the New Negro movement produced several iconic murals of African American history, *The Art of the Negro*, a suite of six monumental canvases, is unique in its focus on the history of art. Woodruff sought to inspire students and other visitors with an appreciation for their African heritage and to portray the cross-cultural sources of African American modern art. In this study for *Muses*, the sixth panel, a symbolic gathering of leading Black artists and writers is surmounted by personifications of Africa, the largest figure, and Europe and Asia, which flank it from behind. After extended discussions with donors, the final composition was revised to include just the African and European muses, of equal size and seated side by side.

Image caption:
Hale Woodruff, *The Art of the Negro: Muses*, 1950–51. Oil on canvas. Clark Atlanta University Art Collection.

Palmer Hayden
American, 1890–1973
Fétiche et Fleurs, 1932–33
Oil on canvas

Museum of African American Art, Los Angeles

Fétiche et Fleurs drew critical praise for its nuanced juxtaposition of Western and African aesthetics when it was displayed in a Harmon Foundation exhibition in 1933, shortly after the artist returned to New York after living in Paris for five years as a landscape painter. The placement of a vase of luxurious flowers beside the concave face of a Fang reliquary mask is the most overt comparison. The contrast between the African sculpture and the carved chair against the wall is heightened by their shared color and material, similar to how the geometric design of a Congolese raffia cloth is set off against the adjacent curtain. A half-smoked cigarette situates the viewer alongside the artist, perhaps replicating his pause as he contemplated this remarkably balanced composition.

CASE TO RIGHT, LEFT TO RIGHT

Laura Wheeler Waring
American, 1887–1948
The Strength of Africa, cover of **The Crisis**, September 1924

Collection of Walter O. and Linda Evans

Aaron Douglas
American, 1899–1979
Cover of **Fire!!**, November 1926
edited by Wallace Thurman

Collection of Walter O. and Linda Evans

Written and edited by some of the leading writers of the Harlem Renaissance, *Fire!!* explored controversial issues in the Black community of the time, from homosexuality and interracial relationships to color prejudice. The cover, with its vibrant red hue and ancient Egyptian symbolism, served as a visual manifesto, evoking a fervor for creative autonomy and societal transformation through the intersection of art and activism.

Laura Wheeler Waring
American, 1887–1948
Egypt and Spring, cover of **The Crisis**, April 1923

Collection of Walter O. and Linda Evans

Waring contributed several cover illustrations for *The Crisis,* the monthly NAACP publication edited by W. E. B. Du Bois. She shared the New Negro artists' interest in ancient Egyptian and African imagery, though she rendered this scene with an elegant sense of academic naturalism. Surrounded by flowers, vines, and swooping birds, a graceful Egyptian figure plays a harp ornamented with the profile head of a pharaoh.

Winold Reiss
American, born Germany 1886–1953
Cover of **Opportunity: Journal of Negro Life**, February 1925
Collection of Walter O. and Linda Evans

metmuseum.org/689

A LANGUAGE OF ARTISTIC FREEDOM

Despite Alain Locke's early focus on new modes of portraying the Black body, by the late 1930s he acknowledged the importance of nonfigural work, including landscape and still life, as a viable option for Black artists, all in the name of artistic freedom. "There can be no question," he wrote, "in this freest of all human realms—art—of imposing upon the Negro artist a special, prescribed or limited field.

William H. Johnson, one of the leading portraitists of the Harlem Renaissance, developed his iconic folk art-inflected style only after spending a decade making primarily landscapes in France and Scandinavia. Similarly, Laura Wheeler Waring, known today for her commissioned portrayals of Black luminaries, worked in still life. Germaine Casse and Suzanna Ogunjami made portraits of their Caribbean and West African peers, but Casse also created numerous landscapes and Ogunjami still lifes. Often supported by faculty positions at historically Black colleges and universities, these and other artists reveled in the freedom to paint what was of interest to them.

RIGHT TO LEFT

Lois Mailou Jones
American, 1905–1998
Cauliflower and Pumpkin, 1938
Oil on canvas

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Gift of Max Robinson, 1981 (1981.535)

One of some forty paintings made by the artist in just nine months as a fellowship student at the Académie Julian, Paris, in 1937–38, *Cauliflower and Pumpkin* reflects Mailou Jones's skills as a painter and her recent study of Cézanne. Employing a traditional still-life arrangement, she achieved a poetic realism here that transcends the mundaneness of her props, using thick, painterly strokes and precise planes of color to suggest the smooth surfaces of both the pumpkin and the tabletop.

Laura Wheeler Waring
American, 1887–1948
Yellow Roses, undated
Oil on pressed paperboard

Collection of Roberta Graves

Better known for her portraits, Waring made subtle departures from academic convention in this vibrant still life, with its rich colors and meticulous detail. She modernized the traditional subject—yellow and blush roses in an expertly rendered vase—by including the brilliant blue and red tonalities as a luxe backdrop for the tabletop, which tilts forward in a nod to modernist abstraction.

Suzanna Ogunjami
active in New York 1928–34
Full-Blown Magnolia, 1935
Oil on burlap

Hampton University Museum Collection, Virginia

Ogunjami, who worked in a variety of media and genres, from portraiture to jewelry, received an MFA from Columbia University in 1929. She also made still lifes, some of which were exhibited in New York, including at a Harmon Foundation show in 1928. In this exquisite study, the velvety purples and blacks enhance the yellows and greens of the magnolia, which is endemic to the southern United States but widely cultivated around the world. The flower is an apt metaphor for the lived experience of the artist, who was probably born in Jamaica but identified with the Igbo (Nigerian) heritage of her husband.

William H. Johnson
American, 1901–1970
Flowers, 1939–40
Oil on plywood

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.; Gift of the Harmon Foundation

CASE IN CENTER OF GALLERY, LEFT TO RIGHT

Sargent Claude Johnson

American, 1888–1967

Mask, 1934

Copper and enamel

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; The John Axelrod Collection—Frank B. Bemis Fund, Charles H. Bayley Fund, and The Heritage Fund for a Diverse Collection

Mask harmoniously combines modernist geometric shapes and abstract forms in an exploration of African aesthetics. Johnson—a West Coast–based artist raised in Washington, D.C., by his aunt, the sculptor May Howard Jackson—played a pioneering role within the New Negro movement. In parallel with African-influenced works like this one, he created representations inflected by folk art as he sought to celebrate the “pure American Negro.”

William Artis
American, 1914–1977
Woman with Kerchief, 1939
Ceramic

Clark Atlanta University Art Museum; Edward B. Alford, Jr., Purchase Award, Sculpture

Winner of the first prize in sculpture at Clark Atlanta University's 1944 Atlanta Annual exhibition, this exquisite portrait of a young Black woman, like the French Realist sculptures that inspired it, is fully modeled in the round. The kerchief denotes the ordinary Black women whom the artist deemed no less worthy as subjects of portraiture than the elites who would have been more typical sitters.

CULTURAL PHILOSOPHY AND HISTORY PAINTING

A core objective of the Harlem Renaissance was to portray the history and cultural philosophy that gave shape to a specifically African American identity and worldview. The artist Aaron Douglas, whose monumental murals earned him acclaim as the period's foremost history painter, was also respected for his masterful use of biblical allegory to convey aspirations for freedom, equality, and opportunity.

Douglas first developed his signature silhouette figural compositions—derived in part from Cubism, Egyptian tomb reliefs, and American popular culture—for book and magazine cover illustrations in the late 1920s. He later elaborated this distinctive style in large-scale works for public projects and institutional commissions nationwide as well as at Fisk University in Nashville, where he established the art department and taught for thirty-eight years. Both Douglas and the sculptor Augusta Savage, founder of a Harlem community art school, created art inspired by the work of the author and composer James Weldon Johnson.

LEFT TO RIGHT

Aaron Douglas
American, 1899–1979
The Creation, 1935
Oil on Masonite

Howard University Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.

Douglas worked through each verse of the poem *The Creation* from James Weldon Johnson's book *God's Trombones: Seven Negro Sermons in Verse* (1927), picturing light and dark, sky and stars, hill and valley, water and vegetation. A single dark figure stands between a plant and a running river and looks up toward the extended hand of God, its color echoed in stars that lend the composition an ethereal quality.

Aaron Douglas
American, 1899–1979
Noah Built the Ark, 1935
Oil on Masonite

Fisk University Galleries, Nashville

Lightning strikes as pairs of animals move toward the hull of a ship, invoking the biblical flood narrative of Noah's Ark. A trombone player with horn pointed to the heavens signals that this work belongs to Douglas's series based on James Weldon Johnson's book *God's Trombones: Seven Negro Sermons in Verse* (1927). Inspired in part by Cubism and African sculpture motifs, the painting presents a modern take on a biblical past.

Aaron Douglas
American, 1899–1979
Let My People Go, ca. 1935–39
Oil on Masonite

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Purchase, Lila Acheson Wallace Gift, 2015 (2015.42)

Douglas was a towering figure of the Harlem Renaissance, well known as a muralist and graphic artist. This painting, featuring his flat, silhouetted style, revisits a design the artist made for James Weldon Johnson's book *God's Trombones: Seven Negro Sermons in Verse* (1927). The painting visually interprets the Old Testament story of God's order to Moses to lead the Israelites out of bondage in Egypt. The biblical narrative of Exodus has been adopted by enslaved people as well as antislavery and civil rights activists across time to allegorize the quest for freedom. The painting's title evokes "Go Down Moses," a traditional African American spiritual sung for religious expression, in solidarity, and as a form of coded resistance.

Aaron Douglas

American, 1899–1979

The Judgement Day, 1939

Oil on tempered hardboard

National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Patrons' Permanent Fund, The Avalon Fund

Aaron Douglas
American, 1899–1979
Aspects of Negro Life: From Slavery through Reconstruction, 1934
Oil on canvas

Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Art and Artifacts Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations

Widely acknowledged as the foremost history painter of the Harlem Renaissance, Douglas designed the mural series *Aspects of Negro Life* for display at the 135th Street branch of the New York Public Library, now the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. The four paintings were made under the sponsorship of the Works Progress Administration. Working on a monumental scale, Douglas populated the frieze-like format with his signature silhouetted figures and radiating tonal circles.

While the first panel imagines ancestral life in Africa, this painting depicts workers in a cotton field, some of whom turn to a speaker reading the Emancipation Proclamation and pointing to the proverbial city on the hill. Exultation among the newly freed is offset by

the entrance of hooded Ku Klux Klan figures on horseback and the departure of Union soldiers. The following panel evokes the Jim Crow era and the racist terror of lynching, while the final work envisions the Great Migration out of the segregated rural South.

Image caption:
Aspects of Negro Life: The Negro in an African Setting; *Aspects of Negro Life: An Idyll of the Deep South*; *Aspects of Negro Life: Song of the Towers*. Art and Artifacts Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library

metmuseum.org/691

Aaron Douglas

American, 1899–1979

Aspiration, 1936

Oil on canvas

Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Museum purchase, the estate of Thurlow E. Tibbs Jr., the Museum Society Auxiliary, American Art Trust Fund, Unrestricted Art Trust Fund, partial gift of Dr. Ernest A. Bates, Sharon Bell, Jo-Ann Beverly, Barbara Carleton, Dr. And Mrs. Arthur H. Coleman, Dr. and Mrs. Coyness Ennix, Jr., Nicole Y. Ennix, Mr. and Mrs. Gary Francois, Dennis L. Franklin, Mr. and Mrs. Maxwell C. Gillette, Mr. and Mrs. Richard Goodyear, Zuretti L. Goosby, Marion E. Greene, Mrs. Vivian S. W. Hambrick, Laurie Gibbs Harris, Arlene Hollis, Louis A. and Letha Jeanpierre, Daniel and Jackie Johnson, Jr., Stephen L. Johnson, Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Lathan, Lewis & Ribbs Mortuary Garden Chapel, Mr. and Mrs. Gary Love, Glenn R. Nance, Mr. and Mrs. Harry S. Parker III, Mr. and Mrs. Carr T. Preston, Fannie Preston, Pamela R. Ransom, Dr. and Mrs. Benjamin F. Reed, San Francisco Black Chamber of Commerce, San Francisco Chapter of Links, Inc., San Francisco Chapter of the N.A.A.C.P., Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity, Dr. Ella Mae Simmons, Mr. Calvin R. Swinson, Joseph B. Williams, Mr. and Mrs. Alfred S. Wilsey, and the people of the San Francisco Bay Area

Aspiration is the final panel of a series Douglas made in 1936 for the Texas Centennial Exposition in Dallas, designated for a “Hall of Negro Life.” Its representation of leaders was intended to highlight the tools of science and education in the transition from

enslavement, symbolized by the shackled hands below, to the prospect of liberty and prosperity. The five-pointed star may be read as a reference to Texas or to the distant cities Black Southerners reached by following the North Star.

Aaron Douglas
American, 1899–1979
Building More Stately Mansions, 1944
Oil on canvas

Fisk University Galleries, Nashville

Douglas's vision of African American aspiration broadened during the years of World War II, as manifested in this work commissioned for the International Student Center on the campus of Fisk University in Nashville. As described by the artist, his objective was to spotlight the contributions of exploited Black labor to great civilizations worldwide. He thus resituated African American history in a global context, in which the sphinx of Egypt appears together with the spire of a Western cathedral, the tiers of an Asian Buddhist pagoda, and a building crane extending over American skyscrapers, emblems of modernity meant to connote growth and possibility.

CASE IN CENTER OF GALLERY, LEFT TO RIGHT

Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller

American, 1887–1968

Maquette for **Ethiopia Awakening**, 1921

Painted plaster

Danforth Art Museum at Framingham State University, Massachusetts; Gift of the Meta V. W. Fuller Trust

This model captures the essence of Fuller's *Ethiopia* (or *Ethiopia Awakening*), widely considered the first sculpture by an African American artist to manifest the influence of African art. Commissioned by W. E. B. Du Bois for the Black section of *America's Making*, an exhibition held at New York's 71st Regiment Armory, the figure is an allegory for the rediscovery of ancestral heritage. "Here was a group," the artist wrote, "who had once made history and now after a long sleep was awaking."

Augusta Savage
American, 1892–1962
Lift Every Voice and Sing (The Harp), 1939
Bonded bronze

University of North Florida, Thomas G. Carpenter Library, Special Collections and Archives, Eartha M.M. White Collection

This model of sixteen-foot-high sculpture created for the 1939 New York World's Fair visualizes "Lift Every Voice and Sing," known as "The Black National Anthem." Twelve young singers, evoking the strings of a harp, stand on the hand of God, while a kneeling figure holds a plaque inscribed with an excerpt of the lyrics by James Weldon Johnson. Savage was unable to raise funds to make a bronze cast of the original plaster sculpture, and it was destroyed when the fair closed.

Image caption:
Full-size sculpture (now destroyed), New York World's Fair, 1939. Image: Paul Gillespie Collection of New York World's Fair Materials, New-York Historical Society

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ON MONITOR

Germaine Casse exhibition catalogue, U.S. press coverage, and portrait, 1922–28
Black-and-white, silent
Running time: 1 min., 25 sec.

Exhibition catalogue (selections), Galeries Georges Petit, Paris, 1925

Article in *The Afro American* (Baltimore), May 19, 1928, profiling Casse as a French counterpart to the New Negro movement

Germaine Casse at home, Paris, 1922

Germaine Casse

French, 1881–1967

Poster for the first salon organized by the Société des Artistes Antillais, January 1924

Archives Nationales d'Outre Mer, Aix-en-Provence

In 1924 Casse established a society for artists of the Caribbean islands of the Antilles and organized a groundbreaking exhibition of modern art in Guadeloupe. Her design for the exhibition poster is a veritable manifesto of Antillean art and, more specifically, a call for women to contribute to artistic production on the islands. It personifies the society as a modern Black woman surrounded by the attributes of painting, sculpture, writing, and music. While the composition operates within the codes of assimilationist painting—madras, warm colors, landscape—it also critiques a society that for some three centuries had prevented the Black youth of Martinique and Guadeloupe from studying the fine arts. The poster served as an invitation to people of Black and multiracial heritage to organize an artistic rebirth in the Antilles.

OPPOSITE WALL, RIGHT TO LEFT

Aaron Douglas

American, 1899–1979

Still Life, undated

Watercolor and graphite on laid paper

Fisk University Galleries, Nashville

Germaine Casse

French, 1881–1967

Rade de Pointe à Pitre, 1920

Oil on canvas

Musée de Quai Branly—Jacques Chirac, Paris

Hale Woodruff
American, 1900–1980
Twilight, ca. 1926
Oil on pressed paperboard

The Art Institute of Chicago; Through prior bequest of Marguerita S. Ritman

Through a nuanced interplay of color and form, Woodruff's landscape masterfully captures the essence of transition. The dichotomy of twilight, neither fully dark nor light, is explored throughout the composition; it features colors ranging from the vibrant hues of sunset to the subdued tones of nightfall and a small grove of trees in states of both growth and decay. Though Woodruff painted this work in Indianapolis, the expressiveness, color palette, and spontaneity of the brushstrokes align it with European Post-Impressionist art.

Chaim Soutine
French, born Lithuania, 1893–1943
View of Cagnes, ca. 1924–25
Oil on canvas

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; The Mr. and Mrs. Klaus G. Perls Collection, 1997 (1997.149.2)

Soutine made his way to Paris in 1913, where he befriended other Jewish artists from Eastern Europe and gravitated to expressive styles of modern art. Like William H. Johnson's work nearby, this canvas was painted during a period spent away from the city—in this case, in the mountain village of Cagnes along the French Riviera. The color palette suggests the serene atmosphere of the region, while the swirling, energetic brushwork gives the village a distorted, pulsating quality.

William H. Johnson
American, 1901–1970
Vieille Maison at Porte, ca. 1927
Oil on burlap

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington D.C.; Gift of the Harmon Foundation

Johnson, while known as a portraitist, embraced landscape painting especially during periods of expatriation in Europe. As a young artist, he spent a year in Paris before moving to the south of France, where this work was made. The lively depiction of an old house in Chartres, with its thick strokes of pure color, shows his interest in French Impressionism and alignment with European modernists such as Chaim Soutine (whose work is on view nearby).

TO LEFT

THE NEW NEGRO ARTIST ABROAD: MOTLEY IN PARIS

Many Harlem Renaissance artists lived or worked abroad for extended periods of time, primarily in Paris but also in the south of France and northern Europe. Like other Americans, they saw study in Europe as an essential part of their artistic training. The artists associated with the New Negro movement also described feeling a sense of greater personal freedom in countries that, despite oppressive rule in overseas colonies, did not have legalized racial segregation within their own borders.

Archibald Motley is a case in point: While in Paris on a one-year Guggenheim Fellowship in 1929, he made several paintings—mostly scenes of café life by day and the dance club scene at night. Born in New Orleans, he delighted in being able to speak a version of Créole French with Black Parisians of Caribbean and West African heritage, and he became immersed in their nightlife rather than the American jazz club circuit. While Motley and other New Negro artists

regularly exhibited in European galleries and earned favorable reviews, their works rarely entered European museum collections.

LEFT TO RIGHT

Archibald J. Motley, Jr.
American, 1891–1981
Jockey Club, 1929
Oil on canvas

Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Art and Artifacts Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations

This scene of Parisian nightlife is set on the street just outside the Jockey Club, near the Montparnasse hotel where Motley stayed during his first weeks in the city. Murals with stylized figures that reflected European notions of the American frontier provide a backdrop for a variety of neighborhood denizens clustered around the club, their activities illuminated by the soft yellow light of a streetlamp and the fiery hues of the entrance. The position of the nonchalant Black doorman an image of a gun-toting cowboy and the Paris police officer gripping his baton—their stances echoing one another—adds an element of tension to the festive ambiance.

Archibald J. Motley, Jr.
American, 1891–1981
Dans la rue, 1929
Oil on canvas

Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Art and Artifacts Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations

This busy café terrace appears to be set on one of the winding streets of Montmartre, the hilly area of northern Paris where Motley moved to an apartment with studio space. The scene captures a range of neighborhood life, from the street sweeper to the priest with his small black book to the flower seller in the foreground. The vendor pulls a sprig from her bouquet, which the artist rendered with thick layers of color, as if to offer it to the couple passing by.

Archibald J. Motley, Jr.

American, 1891–1981

Café, Paris, 1929

Oil on canvas

Detroit Institute of Arts; Museum Purchase, Ernest and Rosemarie Kanzler Foundation Fund

Unknown artist
Lieutenant James Reese Europe Conducting in Paris, 1919
Gelatin silver print

Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Photographs and Prints Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations

The introduction of jazz to European audiences is often credited to the Paris performances of a band formed within the predominantly Black 369th Infantry Regiment, also known as the Harlem Hellfighters, which saw combat duty in World War I. In the aftermath of the war, they became one of the most famous military bands in Europe. The band included African American and Puerto Rican soldiers; here, we see them performing in Paris outside the Hotel Tunis, which had been converted into a hospital for wounded American soldiers. The bandleader James Reese Europe was a highly regarded composer-arranger-conductor before the war. Other notable members included singer-songwriter Noble Sissle.

Archibald J. Motley, Jr.
American, 1891–1981
Blues, 1929
Oil on canvas

Collection of Mara Motley, MD, and Valerie Gerrard Browne

Motley brings a Parisian dance hall to life in this dynamic scene depicting elegantly attired dancers swaying to the rhythms of a band. The vivid, energetic composition is constructed with verticals of dark suits and bright dresses, punctuated by musical instruments and round white tabletops. A smiling dancer gazes outward, drawing the viewer into the action. The New Orleans–born Motley stated in interviews that *Blues* is a misnomer; he chose to depict a Black club where Parisians of French Caribbean and West African heritage danced mainly to beguine and creole mazurkas, in contrast to the jazz played in venues near Montmartre.

EUROPEAN MODERNISM AND THE INTERNATIONAL AFRICAN DIASPORA

Alain Locke regularly traveled abroad to see exhibitions and urged the artists of the New Negro movement to explore affinities with their contemporaries in Europe—particularly those whose works evoked the aesthetics of African art and included modern portrayals of the Black subject. “I am committed to the less established position of emphasizing the Negro subject as an art theme,” he said. He named Henri Matisse, Pablo Picasso, Kees Van Dongen, and Jacob Epstein as among the European modernists he most admired, as he sought to “show the collaboration of the white artist in an ever-increasing penetration into the Negro types as subject matter.”

At the same time, he promoted the work of artists from the international African diaspora living and working in Europe. Close collaborations between artists and with sitters developed, often based on a shared interest in multiethnic society as an observed reality of modern life.

In the late 1930s, Locke became an influential adviser to some of the first exhibitions of the work of Black artists at major American museums. He believed strongly that future exhibitions and publications should feature a racially diverse roster of artists and break down segregation in the art world. These proposals were brusquely rejected as “conceptually flawed,” even by funders of his all-Black exhibitions. Although he was unable to realize his vision, it foretold what is now a more common practice.

RIGHT TO LEFT

Henri Matisse
French, 1869–1954
Woman in White (Dame à la robe blanche), 1946
Oil on canvas

Des Moines Art Center, Iowa

Matisse's four trips to New York in the 1930s included visiting Harlem jazz clubs almost nightly and seeing a Black play. He later demonstrated a stylistic affinity with the urbane New Negro aesthetic in a series of paintings of a Belgian Congolese neighbor, the journalist Elvire Van Hyfte. This richly decorative painting is replete with the visual language of modernism, from the model's delicately flattened, masklike face and broad shoulders to the bands of fuchsia that shape her dress. The seemingly boneless fingers, reminiscent of vegetation, entwined around her beaded necklace are an especially inventive detail.

Nola Hatterman

Dutch, 1899–1984

Louis Richard Drenthe/On the Terrace, 1930

Oil on canvas

Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam

After emigrating from Paramaribo, Suriname, to Amsterdam, Louis Richard Drenthe worked as a waiter in the city's first Surinamese restaurant and built a career as a model, jazz trumpeter, and bandleader. He performed with the American headliner Freddy Johnson and the Dutch Kid Dynamite as well as the Dutch St. Louis Rhythm Kings. Hatterman specialized in portraits of people from the former Dutch colony of Suriname, where she moved in 1953 and established an art school. This painting was retitled in recent years to reflect the sitter's name.

Image caption:
St. Louis Rhythm Kings, with Louis Drenthe on trumpet. Photo: Maja Drenthe. Drenthe Family and Special Collections, University of Amsterdam

Henri Matisse
French, 1869–1954
Asia (L'Asie), 1946
Oil on canvas

Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth

Alain Locke named Matisse as among the European modernists he admired for having "looked upon the African . . . countenance and discovered there a beauty that calls for a distinctive idiom of both color and modeling." This painting features the artist's neighbor, the Belgian Congolese journalist Elvire Van Hyfte, posed as a personification of Asia, an opulent tunic draped over a striped dress and necklace that resemble those she wears in *Woman in White* (on view nearby). Van Hyfte's social visits with Matisse to discuss books likely led to her sittings; she appears in four of his final easel paintings as well as several drawings.

Henri Matisse
French, 1869–1954
Aïcha and Lorette, 1917
Oil on canvas

Private collection

Aïcha Goblet, a Black habituée of the Montparnasse café scene, posed for Matisse on multiple occasions, including for this double portrait with the artist's frequent Italian model Lorette. A rare portrayal of Black and white women of socially equivalent stature, the composition veers decisively away from the nineteenth-century trope of depicting Black servants with their white employers. The models sit side by side, as if colleagues or friends. The modernity of the scene is reinforced by the sitters' flattened physiques and Aïcha's masklike visage, which evokes African aesthetics. The multiracial aspect of Parisian artistic circles, captured in numerous photographs of Aïcha with friends, was a reality that Matisse, himself a Montparnasse resident, likely observed during his daily neighborhood strolls.

Image caption:
Aïcha Goblet (center) at the Rotonde Cafe in Montparnasse, Paris

Margaret Taylor Goss-Burroughs
American, 1917–2010
Friends, 1942
Lithograph

Clark Atlanta University Art Museum; Third Atlanta University Purchase Award, Prints

Friendships across racial lines were a novel social development in the United States; the phenomenon evolved during the New Negro era as Black communities expanded in cities outside the legally segregated South. Most prominent Black artists and writers of the era had interracial networks of friends and patrons, as did professionals in education and social services. Chicago-based Margaret Taylor Goss-Burroughs often portrayed individuals with half black and half white faces. Here, she depicts two women in an identical pose, visualizing her belief that human commonalities transcend racial difference.

ON WALL TO RIGHT

Edvard Munch

Norwegian, 1863–1944

Abdul Karim with a Green Scarf, 1916

Oil on canvas

Munch Museum, Oslo

Sultan Abdul Karim met Munch while performing with the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus, which specialized in ethnographic displays, during its 1916 Oslo tour. Munch offered Karim work as a “servant, driver and studio model” and featured him in seven paintings. While at least one painting portrayed Karim in a racially stereotyped role as “Cleopatra’s slave,” several portraits, including this one, use broad flat blocks of color to depict him at three-quarters length in everyday attire enlivened by a bold, striped green scarf. Munch titled the painting with reference to this striking accessory, omitting the sitter’s name. In recent years the title was revised to recognize the work as an individualized portrait.

ON WALL TO RIGHT, LEFT TO RIGHT

Henri Matisse
French, 1869–1954
Madagascar, 1943
Indian ink on paper

Fondation Dina Vierny—Musée Maillol, Paris

Henri Matisse

French, 1869–1954

Martiniquaise, study for Les fleurs du mal, 1946

Chine collé etching

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; The Pierre and Maria-Gaetana Matisse Collection, 2002 (2002.456.88)

In the mid-1940s Matisse created two dozen illustrations for a 1947 edition of Charles Baudelaire's influential poetry volume *Les fleurs du mal* (1857), rendered in the artist's signature single-line drawing style. The Haitian dancer Carmen Lahens was a principal model for the illustrations, including the frontispiece and this etching. Several images of Lahens's poses accompanied poems written in tribute to the biracial actress Jeanne Duval, Baudelaire's longtime companion, with whom he had a fraught relationship.

Image caption:
Henri Matisse studio session with the model Carmen Lahens at the Villa Le Rêve, Vence, 1946. Photo: Hélène Adant. © RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY

Pablo Picasso
Spanish, 1881–1973
"Negro, negro, negro . . . ," Portrait of Aimé Césaire, Laureate, from *Corps perdu* (*The Lost Body*), 1949, published 1950
Drypoint from an illustrated book with twenty engravings, ten aquatints (one with drypoint), one drypoint, and one etching (including wrapper front)

The Museum of Modern Art, New York; The Louis E. Stern Collection

Picasso's symbolic portrait of the Martinican writer Aimé Césaire appeared as a plate following the title page of Césaire's poetry volume *Corps perdu.* It depicts Césaire with a crown of laurel leaves in homage to his longtime leadership of the 1930s Négritude movement of Black French intellectuals who forged pan-African diasporic alliances in opposition to colonialism. Picasso and Césaire shared an interest in Surrealism and African art, which inspired them to explore dreams and the unconscious in their work. This portrait is one of Picasso's thirty-two illustrations for Césaire's book, a collaboration that began after the men met in Poland in 1948 at a Communist-led peace conference.

Pablo Picasso
Spanish, 1881–1973
Minotaur and Woman (Minotaure et femme), 1937
Oil on canvas

Private collection

Picasso's *Minotaur and Woman,* made in Mougins during the summer of 1937, is one of his numerous works depicting the minotaur—a half-bull, half-man figure from ancient Greek mythology—which is widely interpreted as the artist's avatar. Here, the creature is joined by a highly stylized female figure whose facial structure is similar to that of a Bobo sun mask from the Bwa peoples of Mali and Burkina Faso in West Africa, an evocation of Picasso's interest in African masks. The two figures stand before the railing of a small veranda outside Picasso's Mougins studio. A photograph by Man Ray of his companion the Guadeloupean dancer Adrienne Fidelin on this veranda may have been an inspiration for this enigmatic canvas. Man Ray and Fidelin were among the small group of friends who joined Picasso in Mougins in the summer of 1937.

Image caption:
Man Ray, *Adrienne Fidelin on Balcony*, 1937. Centre Pompidou, Paris. Image: © CNAC/MNAM, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY. Guy Carrard

Man Ray
American, 1890–1976
Adrienne Fidelin and Nusch in Martinican Costume, 1937
Gelatin silver print

Collection of Spike Lee/Filmmaker

Man Ray made hundreds of photographs of his companion, the Guadeloupean dancer and model Adrienne Fidelin, including those for her 1937 appearance as the first Black model in *Harper's Bazaar* magazine. He captures her here with Nusch Éluard, an artist and the wife of the poet Paul Éluard, as the women assume mirroring poses while clad in richly patterned Martinican attire—an overt reference to Fidelin's Antillean heritage. During the summer of 1937, Roland Penrose photographed Fidelin with women artists including his wife, Lee Miller, in a seeming nod to her stature as an important artists' model.

Roland Penrose
British, 1900–1984
Four women Asleep (Lee Miller, Ady Fidelin, Nusch Éluard, and Leonora Carrington), Lambe Creek, Cornwall, England, 1937
C-type digital print from scan of original transparency

Lee Miller Archives, East Sussex, England

Kees van Dongen
Dutch, 1877–1968
White Feathers (Plume blanches), 1910–12
Oil on canvas

Private collection

This portrait of an unnamed sitter is exemplary of the imagery that established high demand for Van Dongen, a Dutch portrait painter working in Paris in the years leading up to World War I. The artist depicted young, fashionable women wearing high-necked blouses, pearl necklaces, and elaborately plumed, wide-brimmed hats. The artist traveled to North Africa in 1910 and 1911, and while some of his early paintings treated Black subjects in exotic attire, as well as nude members of the demimonde, this work represents a decisive turn toward portraying members of his elite Parisian clientele. Alain Locke named Van Dongen among the European artists who depicted the “Negro subject” with “singular novelty and beauty.”

LUMINARIES

In the years between World War I and II, many leading African American performing artists from the worlds of opera, musical cabaret, and film were able to achieve stardom in Europe. The figures portrayed here found fame abroad at a time when Black performers in the United States faced career restrictions owing to widespread racial segregation of performance spaces, the film industry, and the casting of theatrical roles.

The era also saw collaborations among celebrated writers and editors across the international African diaspora. Black-led European journals published the work of authors from the New Negro movement, while profiles of Black European artists and writers appeared in African American newspapers and periodicals. These exchanges were part of a broad effort to promote Black self-expression amid pan-African struggles against colonial rule and racial discrimination.

CASE IN CENTER OF GALLERY, LEFT TO RIGHT

Sir Jacob Epstein
British, born United States, 1880–1959
Paul Robeson, 1928
Bronze

The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Gift of Fania Marinoff Van Vechten in memory of Carl Van Vechten

Epstein recounted socializing with his friend Paul Robeson in Harlem during an extended visit to New York in 1927 for an exhibition. This portrait of the internationally renowned singer and actor was composed at that time, and it remained an unfinished sketch when the artist returned to the United Kingdom. The textured bronze bust captures the dignified Robeson with an animated upward gaze.

Ronald Moody

British, born Jamaica, 1900–1984

Dr. Harold A. Moody, 1946

Bronze on wood plinth

Loaned by current owners, the London Borough of Southwark, London UK. With thanks to previous owners, London Missionary Society/Council for World Mission, for their kind assistance

Harold Moody was a physician and a leading activist for racial equality. In 1931 he founded the London-based League of Coloured Peoples, whose international membership included Paul Robeson. Ronald Moody's bronze portrait of his eldest brother, with its deep black patina that resembles ebony, depicts him with a furrowed brow and fleshy jowls that convey wisdom and the historic weight of his civil rights work.

RIGHT TO LEFT

Winold Reiss

American, born Germany, 1886–1953

W. E. B. Du Bois, 1925

Pastel on illustration paper

National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution; Purchase funded by Lawrence A. Fleischman and Howard Garfinkle with a matching grant from the National Endowment for the Arts

Reiss portrayed the visionary thinker W. E. B. Du Bois with a sideward gaze into the distance, combining painterly realism for the head with contour drawing for the upper body. Du Bois was best known for his book *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), in which he describes a racialized "double consciousness" as integral to the Black American psyche. He also traveled extensively abroad and wrote in *The New Negro* about the anti-colonial activism he encountered across Europe. As editor of the NAACP's *The Crisis* magazine, he profiled artists, writers, and activists of the international African diaspora, as well as the expatriate community of New Negro artists. He organized an influential display on Black America at the 1900 World's Fair in Paris and co-organized Pan-African convenings there and elsewhere.

Laura Wheeler Waring
American, 1887–1948
Marian Anderson, 1944
Oil on canvas

National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.; Gift of the Harmon Foundation

This monumental portrait of acclaimed opera singer Marian Anderson was part of Waring's *Outstanding Americans of Negro Origin* series, commissioned by the Harmon Foundation for an exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery. Anderson had become a celebrated star of the concert stage in Europe, where Waring first saw her perform in 1916. This portrait memorializes the singer's historic 1939 concert on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, made possible by the intervention of First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt after Anderson was denied the opportunity to perform at the nearby concert hall of the Daughters of the American Revolution on racist grounds. Waring portrays the gracefully poised Anderson with elegant academic naturalism. Three crosses atop a distant hill allude to the concert's occurrence on Easter Sunday.

Yves Brayer
French, 1907–1990
Ballet Dancers in the Attic Rotunda, Paris Opéra, 1942
Oil on canvas

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.1.2390)

Adolf de Meyer
American, born France, 1868–1946
Josephine Baker, 1925–26
Direct carbon print

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Ford Motor Company Collection, Gift of Ford Motor Company and John C. Waddell, 1987 (1987.1100.16)

Albert Alexander Smith
American, 1896–1940
René Maran, cover of **The Crisis**, May 1922

Collection of Walter O. and Linda Evans

This print depicts René Maran in the year after he became the first Black writer to win the French Prix Goncourt for his novel *Batouala*, a critique of French colonial practices in West Africa. Smith, a repeat cover illustrator for *The Crisis* and *Opportunity* who was also a Europe-based jazz musician, was unique among expatriate New Negro artists for working primarily as a printmaker.

Jan Adriaan Donker Duyvis
Dutch, 1887–1960
Anton de Kom, 1938
Pastel

Wereldmuseum, Rotterdam

Duyvis, a self-taught artist, portrays the writer Anton de Kom in monochromatic pastel, conveying a meditative mood with the sitter's downward gaze. De Kom also assumed this countenance in published photographic portraits. His book *We Slaves of Suriname* (1934) is known as the earliest anticolonial book by a Dutch Caribbean writer. De Kom shared the objective of New Negro writers, including W. E. B. Du Bois, to amplify Black voices, presenting research-based arguments against colonial oppression by writing from the perspective of the enslaved. News of the New Negro movement in Harlem reached the Dutch Caribbean through the accounts of writers such as Medardo de Marchena, who traveled regularly to New York as a merchant of Panama hats, which were Curaçao's biggest export.

ON MONITOR

Performances by Josephine Baker and Katherine Dunham, 1926–52
Black-and-white, silent
Running time: 2 min., 16 sec.

Josephine Baker at the Folies-Bergère, Paris, and dancing the Charleston, 1926
GP archives – Gaumont and Pathé collections

Josephine Baker in *Zouzou* (excerpt)*,* 1934
Directed by Marc Allégret

Katherine Dunham's dance company performing a West Indian ballet at the Cambridge Theatre, London, 1952
British Pathé

Josephine Baker became an icon of the international Jazz Age after her famed 1920s dance performances at the Folies-Bergère in Paris. Her style evolved as she starred in leading French films. Two decades later the dancer and choreographer Katherine Dunham staged acclaimed Caribbean dance performances at the Théâtre de Paris in Montmartre; she went on to tour versions of them throughout Europe.

Hear synchronized audio:

metmuseum.org/HarlemRenaissanceListening

NIGHTLIFE

Evening entertainments in a variety of social contexts, from private parties to public nightclubs and dance halls, feature prominently in the art of the Harlem Renaissance. Although some members of the Black middle classes were initially hesitant to embrace it, jazz was widely accepted by thinkers and writers as an original articulation of Black culture, and it came to define the era. “Jazz to me,” wrote Langston Hughes, “is one of the inherent expressions of Negro life in America.” He cited everything from “the blare of Negro jazz bands and the bellowing voice of Bessie Smith” to concerts by the renowned bass-baritone Paul Robeson, all of which he hoped might persuade the socially conservative to “catch a glimmer of their own beauty.”

As they had with other aspects of modern Black life, the New Negro artists adopted widely divergent approaches to capture the effervescence of the Jazz Age, from expressive depictions of couples in Harlem to sweeping panoramas of revelry on Chicago’s South Side. Solitary figures sometimes add a measure of levity to these portrayals or stand in as personifications of

contemplation and reflection, creating a mood of ambivalence and self-critique amid the spectacle.

ON MONITOR

Jazz music and dance performances, 1929–34
Black-and-white, silent
Running time: 3 min.

Cab Calloway's Hi-De-Ho (excerpt), 1934
Directed by Fred Waller

Courtesy Cohen Film Collection, LLC

Early Lindy Hop performed by George Snowden and partner (credited as "Shorty Stump" and "Liza Underdunk") at the Savoy Ballroom, 1929

Duke Ellington Orchestra and Cotton Club dancers Bessie Dudley and Florence Hill, 1933

Hear synchronized audio:

metmuseum.org/HarlemRenaissanceListening

LEFT TO RIGHT

Teodoro Ramos-Blanco
Cuban, 1902–1972
Langston Hughes, 1930s
Plaster

Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Arts and Artifacts Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations

Carl Van Vechten
American, 1880–1964
Bessie Smith Holding Feathers, 1936
Gelatin silver print

Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Lisette Model
American, born Austria, 1901–1983
Lawrence Marrero, 1945–46
Gelatin silver print

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Purchase, Tianaderrah Foundation and Joseph M. and Barbara Cohen Foundation Inc. Gifts, 2021 (2021.84)

James Van Der Zee
American, 1886–1983
Identical Twins, 1924
Gelatin silver print

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Gift of James Van Der Zee Institute, 1970 (1970.539.2)

Archibald J. Motley, Jr.
American, 1891–1981
Black Belt, 1934
Oil on canvas

Hampton University Museum Collection, Virginia

metmuseum.org/693

Archibald J. Motley, Jr.
American, 1891–1981
Cocktails, ca. 1926
Oil on canvas

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; The John Axelrod Collection—Frank B. Bemis Fund, Charles H. Bayley Fund, and The Heritage Fund for a Diverse Collection

Motley's portrayal of stylishly attired women socializing over cocktails in an elegant interior, a butler at their service, captures the affluence of the Black upper class, which expanded in Chicago and other cities during the interwar years. The production and sale of alcoholic beverages was illegal during Prohibition, but these people evade the law by drinking in a private home. The scene suggests a commentary on moral impropriety, juxtaposing a possibly inebriated woman on the sofa with a painting depicting monks on the wall.

Archibald J. Motley, Jr.

American, 1891–1981

Nightlife, 1943

Oil on canvas

The Art Institute of Chicago; Purchased with funds provided by Mr. and Mrs. Marshall Field, Jack and Sandra Guthman, Ben W. Heineman, Ruth Horwich, Lewis and Susan Manilow, Beatrice C. Mayer, Charles A. Meyer, John D. Nichols, and Mr. and Mrs. E. B. Smith Jr.; James W. Alsdorf Memorial Fund; Goodman Endowment

Palmer Hayden
American, 1890–1973
Beale Street Blues, 1943
Oil on canvas

Palmer C. Hayden Collection, Museum of African American Art, Los Angeles

An expression of joy, movement, and color, *Beale Street Blues* depicts the many diversions found along the famous entertainment strip in Memphis, Tennessee. A dancing couple takes center stage, surrounded by vignettes of gambling, sports, drinking, music making, and socializing. Hayden took care to distinguish the varied skin tones of the people featured in his vibrant composition. Steamboats along the Mississippi River recall the lyrics of a popular 1917 blues song by W. C. Handy with the same title as the painting: “Goin’ to the river / And there’s a reason why / Because the river’s wet / And Beale Street’s done gone dry.” The work sits in a frame constructed from a wooden G. H. Mumm Cordon Rouge champagne crate from 1943.

Malvin Gray Johnson
American, 1896–1934
Harmony, ca. 1934
Oil on canvas

Fisk University Galleries, Nashville

Ernest Crichlow
American, 1914–2005
Anyone's Date, 1940
Gouache on linen

Collection of Harmon and Harriet Kelley

Crichlow's defiantly self-confident young woman in a scarlet dress greets the viewer with a forthright, businesslike gaze. With a cigarette clenched between rouged lips and arms crossed on a gingham tablecloth, she demands respect regardless of the nature of any impending interaction.

Archibald J. Motley, Jr.
American, 1891–1981
Carnival, 1937
Oil on canvas

Howard University Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

Archibald J. Motley, Jr.
American, 1891–1981
Brown Girl After the Bath, 1931
Oil on canvas

Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio; Gift of an anonymous donor (2007.015)

New Negro artists rarely depicted the Black female nude. The few examples typically convey a sense of circumspection, possibly to counteract the exploitative gaze that has been directed at this subject throughout history. Here, Motley presents a young woman, nude except for her stylish shoes and bathed with a golden yellow light, who sits before a mirror at her dressing table. It is overtly a scene of self-reflection. Yet the sitter gazes at the viewer rather than her own image, projecting a simultaneous directness and interiority that contrasts with the submissive demeanor of the typical historical female nude. While the furnishings suggest an upscale setting, the context of the scene is open to interpretation.

James Van Der Zee
American, 1886–1983
Nude, Harlem, 1923
Gelatin silver print

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Gift of James Van Der Zee Institute, 1970 (1970.539.27)

In perhaps Van Der Zee's most iconic nude photograph, a woman is surrounded by two backdrops, one depicting a fireplace and the other a staircase, which together create the illusion of a domestic environment. The model strikes a pose of contemplation as the flames of a painted fire suffuse her face with a warm glow. The scene is constructed to suggest a private physical and mental space, a respite from the busy Harlem streets.

"You can imagine feeling the warmth of this space that she's in."

metmuseum.org/692

William H. Johnson

American, 1901–1970

Jitterbugs II, ca. 1941

Screenprint

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Gift of Reba and Dave Williams, 1999 (1999.529.79)

William H. Johnson
American, 1901–1970
Jitterbugs V, ca. 1941–42
Oil on board

Hampton University Museum Collection, Virginia

Johnson created his lively *Jitterbugs* series of paintings and screenprints from about 1940 to 1942 while teaching at the Works Progress Administration's Harlem Community Art Center. After long periods spent abroad, the artist returned to the United States in 1938 to record the daily lives of African Americans in a manner akin to folk art. Here, a colorfully dressed couple dances at one of Harlem's popular nightspots. Artist Romare Bearden, who knew Johnson, recalled his own experiences at the time: "Three nights a week, we were at the Savoy Ballroom. Charlie Buchanan, who ran the place, liked artists to come to the Savoy. The best dancing in the world was there, and the best music. When we left the Savoy, we'd go to the after-hours spots. . . . They called us the Dawn Patrol."

FAMILY AND SOCIETY

From the inception of the New Negro movement, artists and writers were in the vanguard of portraying the complexity of modern family life and wider society. This included the paradox of depicting segments of the Black community that were at once engaged with the fight for racial justice and enforcers of conservative social values that prioritized assimilation over individuality and Black self-expression. These issues were explored in influential publications by leading writers and, more subtly, in exquisitely rendered artists' books. There was also a far more sublimated commentary within the movement about queer identity in Harlem, one of the three New York neighborhoods (along with Greenwich Village and Times Square) that had visible gay social networks.

At the same time, artists were motivated to portray venerated elders in the African American community with the dignity and interiority long denied them in popular visual culture. They likewise sought to depict children as emblematic of innocence, aspiration, and the future, at a moment when access to public education and healthcare were core activist issues.

TO LEFT, LEFT TO RIGHT

Richard Bruce Nugent
American, 1906–1987

Mrs. Herod, from the **Salome** series, 1930
Japanese dye on paper

Untitled (Two Women), from the **Salome** series, 1930
Japanese dye on paper

Self-Portrait, 1930
Pencil on paper

Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Art and Artifacts Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations

The writer and artist Richard Bruce Nugent, a Black gay man who participated openly in queer culture during the Harlem Renaissance, is perhaps best known for his transgressive illustrations. In his works from the *Salome* series, the figures appear in evocative poses and dazzling colors, their genitals highlighted with brightly hued triangles. Directly inspired by Oscar Wilde's 1893 version of the biblical

story of Salome, these heavily made-up, unconventional women are starkly unbiblical. A rebellion against status quo notions of sexuality, Nugent's *Salome* series as well as his *Self-Portrait* attest to the artist's approach to deconstructing gender norms and celebrating bodily autonomy.

CASE IN CENTER OF GALLERY

Richmond Barthé
American, 1901–1989
Féral Benga, 1935–36
Bronze (cast)

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

During a trip to Paris in 1934, Barthé saw a performance by the Senegalese dancer François Benga, who starred at the Folies-Bergère under his adopted stage name Féral (meaning wild or untamed). Shortly thereafter Barthé created a sculpture that is as suggestive as it is elegant. The work immortalizes a pivotal aspect of one of Benga's signature dances, combining his ineffable persona with a radical embrace of the Black male body.

LEFT TO RIGHT

Bert Hurley
American, 1898–1955
Pages from **Loose Nuts: A Rapsody in Brown**, 1933
Pen and black ink, brush and black ink, crayon, watercolor, and graphite

Speed Art Museum, Louisville; Gift of Dr. Wade Hall and partial purchase

Hurley's lavishly illustrated, handwritten book portrays middle-class behavior in the historically Black West End neighborhood of Louisville, Kentucky. *Loose Nuts* chronicles opulent socializing but also improper behavior that leads to a courtroom case tried before a Black judge. The nature of the imagery subtly alludes to social codes and class tensions.

Winold Reiss
American, born Germany, 1886–1953
Fred Fripp, Graduate of Penn School, Teacher, with Carol and Evelyn, 1927
Mixed media on illustration board

Fisk University Galleries, Nashville

The sitter looks away in introspection while his young daughters gaze outward, settled into the security of their father's steadying embrace. Reiss met Fred Fripp when he traveled to South Carolina to portray the Gullah-speaking Black residents of St. Helena Island, whose ancestors were among the last enslaved West African people forcibly brought to the United States. The luminous triple portrait, its triangular composition and gold leaf background reminiscent of Renaissance madonnas, celebrates Fripp as a teacher, scholar, and parent.

James Van Der Zee
American, 1886–1983
Children at Piano, 1932
Family Group with Newspaper, 1936
Gelatin silver prints

James Van Der Zee Archive, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Purchase, Louis V. Bell, Harris Brisbane Dick, Fletcher, and Rogers Funds and Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, Alfred Stieglitz Society Gifts, Twentieth-Century Photography Fund, Ann Tenenbaum and Thomas H. Lee Gift, Joyce F. Menschel Fund, and Ford Foundation Gift, 2021 (2021.443.267, .407); Conserved with support from the Bank of America Art Conservation Project

In these idealized depictions, each child is pristinely dressed. Siblings seated on a piano bench embrace while addressing the camera. Van Der Zee retouched his negative to conceal blemishes on the boy's chin and knee, and to offer a bracelet and ring to the boy's sister. He also gave a carefully drawn bracelet to the youngest child in the group portrait. Arranged in a balanced and harmonious triangular composition, the family group reads the newspaper in front of a painted backdrop that suggests a bucolic setting.

William H. Johnson

American, 1901–1970

Three Children, ca. 1940

Screenprint

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Gift of Reba and Dave Williams, 1999 (1999.529.82)

Allan Rohan Crite
American, 1910–2007
School's Out, 1936
Oil on canvas

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.; Transfer from General Services Administration

Dozens of students, mostly young Black girls, spill out of the gates of Everett Elementary School and onto the streets of Boston's South End in a scene that celebrates the joy and chaos of the final school bell. Crite painted this work during the Great Depression, but his panoramic view focuses on the energy of schoolchildren, emblems of optimism in a strong community.

William H. Johnson
American, 1901–1970
Mom and Dad, 1944
Oil on paperboard

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.; Gift of the Harmon Foundation

John N. Robinson
American, 1912–1994
Mr. and Mrs. Barton, 1942
Oil on canvas

Clark Atlanta University Museum, Second Atlanta University Purchase Award, Oils

The New Negro movement encompassed widely varying artistic approaches, as seen in these two depictions of family elders. Robinson, portraying the grandparents who raised him, drew on the conventions of academic painting to convey a sense of dignity and middle-class stability. Johnson, on the other hand, brought a folk art-inflected modernism—with flat geometric shapes and vibrant colors—to the picture of his mother in a simple interior with a portrait of his late father displayed on the wall behind her.

Archibald J. Motley, Jr.
American, 1891–1981
Uncle Bob, 1928
Oil on canvas

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Purchase, George A. Hearn Fund, The Ford Foundation and Lila Acheson Wallace Gifts, and funds from various donors, 2022 (2022.162)

Many artists were acutely aware that enslavement and abolition were a living memory within their extended families, and they sought to depict venerated family members with respect and empathy. Here, Motley portrayed his mother's half-brother, Robert White, who was born enslaved in 1850 but eventually owned his own farm. He sits comfortably on his porch in Arkansas beside a vase of flowers and a book, possibly a Bible. The grand painting of a Black elder—with the emblems of a gracious lifestyle and literacy achieved in adulthood—is a rebuttal of tropes of Black servitude, such as Uncle Remus and Uncle Tom, that were prevalent in the popular culture of the period.

William H. Johnson
American, 1901–1970
Mom Alice, 1944
Oil on cardboard

Howard University Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

Archibald J. Motley, Jr.
American, 1891–1981
Portrait of the Artist's Father, ca. 1922
Oil on canvas

Mara Motley, MD, and Valerie Gerrard Browne

Portraying his father, Motley used uncharacteristically dark tones reminiscent of the seventeenth-century Dutch portraits of city officials that he had admired as a student. He focused on the gimlet-eyed gaze of his stern but loving parent, a retired and partially disabled Pullman porter. With emblems of refinement such as the immaculate white collared shirt, open book, and art objects, the portrait conveys his father's status as an elder within his family and community despite his humble social position outside those circles.

Winold Reiss
American, born Germany, 1886–1953
Two Public School Teachers, 1925
Pastel and tempera on illustration board

Fisk University Galleries, Nashville; Gift of the Artist

This is one of a series of portraits commissioned by Alain Locke and published in the "Harlem: Mecca of the New Negro" issue of *Survey Graphic*. The artist captured the unnamed sitters' features with carefully modeled naturalism while simplifying details of their attire and attributes—Phi Beta Kappa keys and an open publication—using the broadly drawn lines of a sketch. This double portrait became a focus of debate during a community meeting in Harlem, with some characterizing it as an inappropriate representation of Black aspiration; one attendee claimed he would be afraid of these women if he met them in the street. The colorism and related class tensions behind these criticisms were the subject of subsequent publications by a number of leading writers, including Locke, Zora Neale Hurston, and Langston Hughes.

Archibald J. Motley, Jr.
American, 1891–1981
The Octoroon Girl, 1925
Oil on canvas

Courtesy Michael Rosenfeld Gallery, New York

This young woman, defined by the racialized title as a person of one-eighth Black heritage, gazes at the viewer with self-assurance. While Motley carefully detailed her delicate jewelry and embroidered hat, it is the bright reds of her cheeks, lips, and collar that stand out against the muted background. One of her perfectly manicured hands gently clasps a pair of gloves while the other rests on a table decorated with a small figurine of a mustached Union soldier, a possible clue as to her lineage. The sitter, whom Motley met in a supermarket, is positioned to suggest the complex set of social privileges and constraints that accompany people with mixed racial identities.

Miguel Covarrubias

Mexican, 1904–1957

Black Woman Wearing a Blue Hat and Dress, 1927

Oil on canvas

Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Laura Wheeler Waring
American, 1887–1948
Self-Portrait, 1940
Oil on paperboard

Collection of Roberta Graves

Waring left unfinished this depiction of herself in unidealized middle age. The artist's contemplative demeanor denotes the ongoing act of close observation that was central to her work as a portraitist.

Laura Wheeler Waring
American, 1887–1948
Mother and Daughter, 1927
Oil on canvas board

Collection of Roberta Graves

Mother and Daughter is perhaps the most direct engagement by a prominent Black artist of this era with the controversial topic of racially mixed families; its very existence was a disruption of the silence on the subject within certain segments of society. Waring experimented with some of the modernist pictorial devices favored by Alain Locke in her portrayal of a Black mother and her white-presenting daughter, rendering them not as specific individuals but as generic types emblematic of the omnipresence of racially mixed families. Flattening their near-identical facial features in profile, Waring established the true subject of the painting via the title and through the work's most prominent element: the divergent skin tones that point to the subjects' radically different paths through a social life defined by color lines.

Hear about colorism during the Harlem Renaissance.

metmuseum.org/695

Laura Wheeler Waring
American, 1887–1948
Girl in Pink Dress, ca. 1927
Oil on canvas

Collection of Roberta Graves

Waring's portrayals of Black women across the social spectrum often transcended class norms and disrupted prevalent stereotypes. Here, her young sitter is presented as an icon of the Jazz Age, with the sleek, bobbed coiffure and elegant drop-waisted flapper dress—exquisitely detailed and with nuanced tonal variations—that are emblematic of the period. The artist's skillful portraits of Black figures drew praise from an initially skeptical Alain Locke, who acknowledged the modernity of her choice of subject. Waring won first prize in the Harmon Foundation's 1927 exhibition, solidifying her stature as the foremost Black female portrait painter working at the heart of the New Negro movement.

ON MONITOR TO RIGHT

Excerpts from films directed by Oscar Micheaux, 1925–39

Black-and-white, silent

Running time: 5 min., 30 sec.

The Exile, 1931

Body and Soul (starring Paul Robeson), 1925

Lying Lips, 1939

The Exile courtesy Smithsonian American Art Museum

Hear synchronized audio:

metmuseum.org/HarlemRenaissanceListening

James Van Der Zee
American, 1886–1983
Person in Fur-Trimmed Ensemble, 1926
Gelatin silver print

James Van Der Zee Archive, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Gift of Donna Van Der Zee, 2021 (2021.446.1.25)

Hear about queer culture during the Harlem Renaissance.

metmuseum.org/694

Beauford Delaney
American, 1901–1979
Dark Rapture (James Baldwin), 1941
Oil on Masonite

Collection of Michael Rosenfeld and halley k. harrisburg

Delaney met the writer and civil rights activist James Baldwin in 1940. Finding common ground on multiple fronts—intellectual, social, and artistic—the two gay men began a friendship that would last thirty-eight years. *Dark Rapture*, the first of Delaney's several portrayals of Baldwin, presents the author in a thickly painted, expressive tonal study of reds, browns, and blues against a brightly hued landscape. Both introspective and joyous, *Dark Rapture* stands as a visual manifestation of queer camaraderie, identity, and the search for belonging in the modern world.

CASE IN CENTER OF GALLERY, CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT

Frank Waltz
Cover of **The Crisis: Children's Number**, October 1919

Collection of Walter O. and Linda Evans

Unknown artist
Cover of **The Crisis: Children's Number**, October 1926

Collection of Walter O. and Linda Evans

Augusta Savage
American, 1892–1962
Gamin, 1930
Bronze

Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Arts and Artifacts Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations

Laura Wheeler Waring
American, 1887–1948
Judy's Story, unpublished
Mixed media on paper

Collection of Roberta Graves

Waring created this visual spread to serve as the front and back cover of a children's book that captures the lives of a Black middle-class family in Philadelphia. Made for her niece, the unpublished story follows a father as he searches for his daughter and wife by retracing their daily stops in the neighborhood. The work is digitized and displayed in full on the adjacent monitor (running time: 2 min., 33 sec.).

ARTIST AS ACTIVIST

The artists of the New Negro movement consistently displayed a commitment to civic activism. Many created imagery that protested the racial segregation and terrorism of lynching that led to the Great Migration away from the rural South. James Van Der Zee and other photographers depicted some of the earliest mass protest marches by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP, founded 1909) as well as notable processionals like the Harlem Hellfighters' 1919 parade along Fifth Avenue, a response to the Black combat regiment's exclusion from the official World War I farewell parade. Artists also evoked the police violence and injustice that Black people continued to experience despite new opportunities as city dwellers.

In surveying this activist impulse, the works in this gallery also highlight the cultural, economic, and civic modernity that characterizes the Harlem Renaissance. While central to the development of international modern art, this period also situated the African American community and its allies, domestic and

abroad, on the cusp of the 1950s civil rights movement and the subsequent era of momentous social change that extends to the present moment.

Image caption:
Soldiers of the 369th Infantry Regiment parade up Fifth Avenue in New York City on Feb. 17, 1919. Courtesy National Archives

Aaron Douglas
American, 1889–1979
Scottsboro Boys, ca. 1935
Pastel on paper

National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., conserved with funds from the Smithsonian Women's Committee

After nine Black teenagers were falsely accused of raping two white women on a train in Scottsboro, Alabama, in 1931, the multiple court cases and appeals that followed mobilized protests across the world. Here, Douglas portrays two of the eight people sentenced: Clarence Norris, who was paroled in 1944 and eventually pardoned, and Haywood Patterson, who spent sixteen years in prison before escaping to Michigan, where the governor refused to extradite him to Alabama. Inspired by an activist flyer, Douglas rendered their youthful likenesses in pastel, the mood muted and tense.

William H. Johnson
American, 1901–1970
Moon over Harlem, ca. 1943–44
Oil on plywood

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.; Gift of the Harmon Foundation

Moon over Harlem protests the ever-present phenomenon of police violence by depicting it. The scene represents the aftermath of race-related riots and property destruction that took place in August 1943, following an encounter between a white police officer, a Black woman, and a Black solider who intervened. Parts of the painting are adapted from news accounts and photographs, including the bloodied woman at center, clothes ripped from a bared breast as she is arrested facedown by three officers, and the beating on arrest of suspected male offenders. Commentators linked the unrest of 1943 to the poverty, racial oppression, and segregation that coexisted with the flowering of creativity in Harlem.

Roy DeCarava
American, 1919–2009
Pickets, 1946
Seriograph

Clark Atlanta University Art Museum, Third Atlanta University Purchase Award, Prints

DeCarava's small but potently enigmatic print renders two male figures as emblems of an accelerating movement of African American civic activism. The work conveys his empathy, shared by many artists and writers in the New Negro movement, with organized protests against racial and economic oppression.

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James Van Der Zee
American, 1886–1983
Marcus Garvey in a UNIA Parade, 1924
Gelatin silver print

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Funds from various donors, 2018 (2018.96)

The Jamaican political activist Marcus Garvey founded the United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), which established a New York branch in 1917. The group organized parades like the one depicted here as a show of strength and a method of recruitment. Garvey regularly delivered speeches at Speakers' Corner, at 135th Street and Lenox Avenue, steps away from the studio of Van Der Zee, who served for a time as the organization's official photographer. Though he became a controversial figure, Garvey's calls for racial pride, economic self-sufficiency, and the formation of an independent Black nation in Africa drew wide audiences in the early 1920s.

Unknown artist
Silent Protest Parade on Fifth Avenue, New York, 1917
Gelatin silver prints

Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Photographs and Prints Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations

Harlem was the site of historic marches, parades, and processions in this era, one of the earliest of which was the Silent Protest Parade initiated by James Weldon Johnson and organized by the NAACP. Held on July 28, 1917, in the wake of mob violence and mass murder in East St. Louis, the event brought together thousands of Black Americans in a demonstration of resistance. As the participants marched down Fifth Avenue, silent except for the roll of drums and carrying banners condemning the long history of racial terrorism and discrimination in the United States, photographers used striking angles, geometry, and depth of field to create powerful records of the event.

CASE IN CENTER OF GALLERY

Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller
American, 1877–1968
In Memory of Mary Turner as a Silent Protest Against Mob Violence, 1919
Painted plaster

Museum of African American History, Boston and Nantucket

Fuller's sculpture, often described as her masterpiece, was inspired in part by the Silent Parade down Fifth Avenue in 1917, organized by the NAACP to protest racial violence. It memorializes Mary Turner, a pregnant woman murdered by a lynch mob in 1918. Through its compositional originality, the work presents a powerful evocation of the atrocities that contributed to the Great Migration away from the rural South by millions of African Americans.

Laura Wheeler Waring
American, 1887–1948
Cover of **The Crisis: Labor Number**, September 1919

Collection of Walter O. and Linda Evans

Aaron Douglas
American, 1899–1979
Cover of **Opportunity: Industrial Issue**, February 1926

Collection of Walter O. and Linda Evans

CODA: THE BLOCK

The Block is Romare Bearden's tribute to Harlem as he knew it in the decades immediately following the Harlem Renaissance. Each of the six panels presents an aspect of life that resonates with the portrayals of the neighborhood made decades earlier by Harlem Renaissance artists, from the evangelical church, barbershop, and corner grocery store to the processionals, children at play, and private moments glimpsed through windows.

In 1940 Bearden established his first studio in Harlem at 306 West 125th Street, in the same building as Jacob Lawrence and the poet and novelist Claude McKay. He was active in the 1940s as part of the 306 Group and was a member of the Harlem Artists Guild. Bearden's concern with social issues reflects the influence of the German émigré artist George Grosz, his teacher at the Art Students League. Exposure to European art during a year abroad in Paris, in 1959, likely inspired some aspects of Bearden's cut-paper collages—an original expression of midcentury modernism that reflects the culturally hybrid nature of African American identity and became the artist's signature medium.

Romare Bearden
American, 1911–1988
The Block, 1971
Cut-and-pasted printed, colored, and metallic papers, photostats, graphite, ink marker, gouache, watercolor, and ink on Masonite

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Shore, 1978 (1978.61.1–.6)

The Block is a tribute to Harlem, inspired by Lenox Avenue between West 132nd and 133rd Streets.

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EXIT GALLERY

Listen to *Harlem Is Everywhere*, a podcast that explores the immense cultural impact of the Harlem Renaissance.

metmuseum.org/HarlemIsEverywhere