

# Harlem Renaissance

The background is a complex abstract composition. At the top, a large, stylized purple hand reaches down towards the center. Below the hand, a vibrant rainbow arches across the middle of the frame. In the lower center, a dark silhouette of a person stands with their head tilted back, looking up at the hand and rainbow. The background is filled with various shades of yellow, green, and grey, featuring large, overlapping circles and several small, five-pointed stars in purple and yellow.

**DOCENT/EDUCATOR RESOURCE GUIDE**

# Harlem Renaissance

Dates: February 5 – April 19, 2009

Organizer: The Oklahoma City Museum of Art  
Alison Amick, Exhibition Curator and Associate Curator,  
OKCMOA

Source: 107 paintings, prints, photographs, and sculptures. Lending institutions include the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library; National Portrait Gallery, Washington, D.C.; National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Museum of Modern Art, New York; among others. This exhibit includes works by artists such as Richmond Barthé, Aaron Douglas, Palmer Hayden, William H. Johnson, Malvin Gray Johnson, Jacob Lawrence, James VanDerZee, and others.

Objective: This exhibition will:

1. Explore African American art of the 1920s, 1930s, and its lasting legacy.
2. Examine themes that developed and were explored during this period, including portraiture and portrait “types;” religion and folk culture; the South; African American history; and daily life.
3. Explore the diversity of influences upon the period, including European modernism, African art, African American culture, and history.
4. Explore the continuation of Harlem as a metaphorical “race capital” and the lasting legacy of the period of the Harlem Renaissance and Jazz Age.
5. Feature photographs highlighting Oklahoma City’s “Deep Deuce” and African American community during this period.

# Harlem Renaissance

The interwar years represent a unique period in American art history. From the Roaring Twenties and Jazz Age to the Great Depression and federal relief programs, it was a time that saw the international and local, modern and anti-modern take center stage. This exhibition will examine the period now termed “Harlem Renaissance,” focusing on the themes that emerged in African American art during the nineteen-twenties and thirties as well as the lasting artistic legacy of the era.

Harlem and ideas related to African American culture and achievement were closely wedded together by the early 1920s. Though emancipation and the Civil War (1861-1865) had brought an end to slavery, African Americans continued to face widespread discrimination, particularly in the South. During the first half of the twentieth century, hundreds of thousands of Americans migrated to northern industrial and urban centers, in search of employment and better living conditions. Termed the “Great Migration,” this movement brought numerous African Americans to Harlem in Northern Manhattan. Harlem was originally a Dutch settlement that had been overdeveloped by real estate speculators at the turn of the twentieth century. The lack of readily available urban transportation discouraged residents from moving to some areas of Harlem. Sensing opportunity, African American real estate developer Philip A. Payton began purchasing properties and leasing them to tenants. It was only a matter of time before African American businesses, churches, and other communal organizations moved to Harlem, forming a “Negro metropolis.” By the 1920s, Harlem became a symbol of pride and achievement, and also a place of opportunity and fantasy. Jazz, cabarets, and Prohibition-era speakeasies brought numerous whites to Harlem, many fascinated with African American culture and their notions of the “primitive” and “exotic.” White “patrons,” such as Carl Van Vechten, author, critic, and avid photographer, encouraged the “vogue” of Harlem.

Though it served as a creative stimulus of sorts, this external interest in Harlem represents only one aspect of the period; it is also the era of the “New Negro.” In use since the turn of the twentieth century, the term “New Negro” came to epitomize the quest for self-identity and desire to move beyond the stereotypes that remained from the era of slavery. Critics such as Alain Locke and W.E.B. Du Bois urged artists and writers throughout the United States to explore themes of African American life and culture and to look beyond caricature and stereotyping in their works. Artists were also encouraged to explore African art as a source of inspiration. Many artists chose to study abroad, where they received direct exposure to various currents of European modernism. Artists of the twenties and thirties invigorated traditional subjects—portraiture, landscape, historical, and

religious painting—with a new aesthetic and vision that reflected their experiences as African Americans, while contributing to larger movements in American art. As time passed, artists began to look back to the period of the Harlem Renaissance as a source of artistic inspiration. Artists such as Jacob Lawrence, Romare Bearden, and Faith Ringgold depicted the twenties and thirties and the locale of Harlem as a subject. The cultural and artistic climate of the Harlem Renaissance also paved the way for later developments, such as AfriCobra and the Black Arts movement of the sixties, which prioritized an expression of the African American experience, African heritage, racial pride, and the black image (including slogans such as “Black is Beautiful”), as well as racial politics. The lasting legacy of the Harlem Renaissance lies in the continued interest in exploring, modernizing, and visualizing the African American experience, both contemporary and historical.

# Harlem: Mecca of the New Negro

In 1925, Alain Locke, a leading African American philosopher and cultural critic, published an important anthology - *The New Negro*. This publication was an expanded version of a March 1925 volume of *Survey Graphic* that Locke had edited, titled *Harlem: Mecca of the New Negro*. In *The New Negro*, Locke included essays discussing art, music, and literature. He incorporated numerous illustrations of African Americans by the German-born artist Winold Reiss and African-inspired drawings and motifs by Reiss's student Aaron Douglas. Locke also featured photographs of African art from the Barnes Foundation Collection in Merion, Pennsylvania. In addition, *The New Negro* included poetry by Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, Claude McKay, and others, and essays by authors and critics such as James Weldon Johnson and W.E.B. Du Bois.

Though not invented by Locke, the term “New Negro” captures the quest for self-identity and self-visualization that characterizes much of the art from this period. Contrasting the “Old Negro” with the “New Negro,” Locke urged artists to look beyond the negative depictions of African Americans that existed in popular culture. He wrote that “The day of ‘aunties,’ ‘uncles,’ and ‘mammies’ is ...gone. Uncle Tom and Sambo have passed on....” while Du Bois urged artists to “see beauty in black.” Throughout the United States, artists such as Reiss, Archibald J. Motley Jr., and Sargent Claude Johnson explored African American physiognomy in their works. Johnson expressed the desire “to show the natural beauty and dignity in that characteristic lip and that characteristic hair, bearing and matter” and to “show that beauty not so much to the white man as to the Negro himself.”

During the Harlem Renaissance, Harlem served as an important cultural and literary center. Numerous poems and publications sought to capture real and imagined life in Harlem. Artists and writers also turned to themes related to folk culture, religion, and the South in their works. Published in 1927, James Weldon Johnson's *God's Trombones: Seven Negro Sermons in Verse* sought to capture the manner of speaking associated with a Southern religious sermon and was accompanied with illustrations by Douglas. His illustration *The Prodigal Son* captures the excitement of a Harlem nightclub, while *The Creation* suggests an African-inspired landscape. Douglas created numerous illustrations for publications such as *Opportunity* and *The Crisis* and was one of the most prolific artists of the period. His style reflects diverse influences, from Art Deco, to cubism, to African art.

# Key Works

**Title:** *The New Negro*

**Editor:** Alain Locke, ed.

**Date:** 1925

**Medium:** Bound book with printed illustrations

**Lender:** National Portrait Gallery

- This is the definitive text of the Harlem Renaissance.
- The term “Negro” was not considered derogatory or offensive at this time. The term dates to the turn of the twentieth century and represented a moving forward from past stereotypical forms of representation.
- The book was edited by Alain Locke, who taught at Howard University and was one of the leading cultural critics, along with W.E.B. Du Bois.
- *The New Negro* included poems, writings, and art from the leading African American writers and artists of this time.
- However, it was illustrated predominantly by a German immigrant, Winold Reiss, and his student, the African American artist Aaron Douglas.
- The book will be opened to a page featuring Countee Cullen, an important writer and poet of the time.



**Title:** *God's Trombones: Seven Negro Sermons in Verse*

**Author:** James Weldon Johnson

**Date:** 1927

**Medium:** Book opened to Aaron Douglas's illustration of **The Prodigal Son**

**Lender:** Amon Carter Museum Library

- This book is another important text of the Harlem Renaissance.
- It contains sermons/biblical stories written in the vernacular (every day language – usually tells a story).
- The image the book is open to is Aaron Douglas' *The Prodigal Son*.
- Notice in the illustration the representations of money, Gin, music, trombones and cards. It serves as a warning against such “vices”.
- Here we see Aaron Douglas's signature style which uses flat, angular imagery and reflects the influence of Art Deco and African art (slit eyes of figures, abstracted forms of bodies).

# Key Works



**Title:** *The Creation*

**Artist:** Aaron Douglas

**Date:** 1935

**Medium:** Oil on Masonite, based off of an illustration in *God's Trombones: Seven Negro Sermons in Verse*

**Dimensions:** 48 x 36 in.

**Lender:** Howard University Gallery of Art

- This work is rendered in an African-inspired setting with God's hand extending from the top of the composition.
- Aaron Douglas's flat, abstracted style was influenced by sources including Art Deco, African Art, and Cubism.
- Douglas often used varying hues of a single color in his works.
- Notice the pyramids hinting to the "idea" of Africa.
- The painting is based on an illustration in *God's Trombones: Seven Negro Sermons in Verse* and is one of a series created for the book.
- Douglas became known as "THE" artist of the Harlem Renaissance.

**Title:** *Harlem Girl (1)*

**Artist:** Winold Reiss

**Date:** ca. 1925

**Medium:** Pencil, charcoal, and pastel on board

**Dimensions:** 21 7/8 x 14 7/8 in.

**Lender:** Museum of Art & Archaeology, University of Missouri - Columbia

- Winold Reiss was a German immigrant invited by Locke to create illustrations for *The New Negro*.
- Aaron Douglas was his student for several years in New York.
- Reiss was concerned with portraying his sitters not as individuals, but as "types." His thoughtfully rendered dignified portraits won him acclaim.
- Reiss did not use names, but did use real models.
- He usually chose non-whites because he believed that by documenting the variety and diversity of humanity he could promote harmony among peoples.
- In 1925 he exhibited 37 portraits of "black leaders and Harlem residents" at the 135th Street branch of the New York Public Library. It was the first major showing of such work.



# Key Works

**Title:** *Postman*

**Artist:** Malvin Gray Johnson

**Date:** 1934

**Medium:** Oil on canvas

**Dimensions:** 30 x 30 in.

**Lender:** Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture,  
The New York Public Library

- In 1912, Malvin Gray Johnson moved to New York from North Carolina. He was 16 and moved to attend NYC's National Academy of Design.
- He was an artist working in Harlem and was known for choosing sitters of his own class.
- The books in the background on the right indicate that the sitter is a member of the educated middle class.
- Johnson created dignified portraits like Winold Reiss.
- These works (*Postman* and *Negro Soldier*) are considered some of his best works.
- The Cézannesque artistic device of tilting the top of the table reflects his interest in European modernism.



**Title:** *Negro Soldier*

**Artist:** Malvin Gray Johnson

**Date:** 1934

**Medium:** Oil on canvas

**Dimensions:** 38 x 30 in.

**Lender:** Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture,  
The New York Public Library

- Malvin Gray Johnson served in World War I with the 184th Brigade, 92nd Division in France, so it's no surprise that he portrayed a negro soldier. He received an enthusiastic reception in the U.S. after the war.
- By 1925, he had probably met Alain Locke, but he was not included in *The New Negro* because the work he submitted did not represent a racial "type."
- His genre portraits of 1933 and 1934 include *Sailor*, *Postman*, *Domestic*, and *Negro Soldier*.

## Lesson Plan: Poetry of the Harlem Renaissance



Winold Reiss, Illustration of Countee Cullen  
from *The New Negro*, 1925

Above we see an illustration of Countee Cullen by Winold Reiss. One of the poems Countee Cullen wrote, “Tableau,” represents what many African Americans were feeling during the Harlem Renaissance and their strong desire for racial harmony and equality.

### **Tableau**

Locked arm in arm they cross the way  
The Black boy and the White,  
The Golden Splendor of the day  
The Sable Pride of Night.

From lowered blinds the dark folk stare  
And here the fair folk talk,  
Indignant that these two should dare  
In unison to walk.

Oblivious to look and word  
They pass, and see no wonder  
That lightning brilliant as a sword  
Should blaze the path of thunder.

Teachers: Either discuss the following questions relating to the poem, “Tableau,” as a group or have your students answer the questions in essay form. You may adjust or edit the questions according to the grade level you teach.

- Does this poem use imagery? Can you see pictures in your head of what the poet, Countee Cullen, is writing about? What tools does Cullen use to create that imagery? Does he use simile, metaphor, personification, etc.?
- Is there a sound that the poem makes? What is the rhythm like? What tool does Cullen use to create the rhythm or sound? For example, does he use rhyme, alliteration, etc.? T. S. Eliot said poetry is “perfection of form united with a significance of meaning.
- “What is the meaning of this poem?

After you have finished discussing these three topics, have your students create a drawing or painting based on the poem. Explain to your students that they may either create a work that depicts what is going on in the poem or their feelings about what is described in the poem. Even an abstract creation is fine.

After everyone is finished, have a sharing time where each student stands up and describes his or her work and how it relates to the poem.

### **Vocabulary:**

**Simile** – A figure of speech comparing two unlike things, often introduced with the word “like” or “as”.

**Metaphor** – A comparison of two things without using the terms “like” or “as”.

**Personification** - An ontological metaphor in which a thing or abstraction is represented as a person.

**Rhyme** - A repetition of similar sounds in two or more different words and is most often used in poetry and songs.

**Alliteration** - The repeated occurrence of the same consonant sound at the beginning of several words in the same phrase.

### **Helpful Websites**

- <https://www.msu.edu/~miazgama/aapoets3.htm> - African American Poets Unit
- <http://www.teachingamericanhistory.org/library/index.asp?document=174>  
– Information on W.E.B. Du Bois’ “Talented Tenth”

## Life Abroad

During the twenties and thirties, many African American artists studied abroad. Paris remained an important international artistic center and attracted painters and sculptors from throughout the United States. While living abroad, African Americans experienced a sense of freedom not found at home, where lynchings, race riots, and Jim Crow segregation remained harsh realities. They also received direct exposure to various currents of European modernism. William H. Johnson was particularly influenced by the expressionistic style of Chaime Soutine, whose work he saw while in Paris. Johnson had been urged by an instructor at the National Academy of Design to spend time abroad, where he could pursue a career without racial limitations. Palmer Hayden and Hale Woodruff also traveled to the City of Light. Both had received monetary awards from the Harmon Foundation, a philanthropic organization dedicated to the promotion of African American art, among other causes. Archibald J. Motley Jr. traveled to Paris on a Guggenheim fellowship, desiring to study the effects of natural and artificial lighting, while sculptor Augusta Savage received support from the Rosenwald Fund and Carnegie Corporation. Once in Paris, artists studied independently or at academies, such as the Académie Scandinave, Académie de la Grande Chaumière, and the École des Beaux Arts. Their works were exhibited in Parisian salons or sent back to the United States for sale or for inclusion in annual exhibitions organized by the Harmon Foundation. Alain Locke and W.E.B. Du Bois also visited Paris and maintained contact with artists living abroad. Hayden's watercolor *Nous Quatre à Paris (We Four in Paris)* references the community of African American artists and writers living abroad.

# Key Works

**Title:** *Nous Quatre à Paris (We Four in Paris)*

**Artist:** Palmer Hayden

**Date:** ca. 1930

**Medium:** Watercolor and pencil on paper

**Dimensions:** 21 ¾ x 18 1/8 in.

**Lender:** The Metropolitan Museum of Art

- Palmer Hayden created his works with distinct folk sensibility. He was largely self-taught and had taken a correspondence drawing course after leaving home at 16 years of age. Hayden's said to be a "mainly self-trained artist."
- Palmer Hayden left home when he was 16 years old to work as a circus roustabout and a house cleaner, before later joining the army. After he left the army, he worked as a janitor and an artist.
- Hayden won the first Harmon Foundation Gold Award for Painting. This award, along with additional funds from friends and patrons, enabled him to travel and study abroad. He studied in France from 1926-1932.
- Nous Quatre à Paris* may depict Hayden and three of his friends playing cards in a café, perhaps the back room of the café, "La Dôme," a popular meeting place for Americans, including Hemingway, Man Ray, Albert Alexander Smith, and others. Notice the Cézanne inspired perspective of the tables, which look to be leaning..



**Title:** *The Janitor Who Paints*

**Artist:** Palmer Hayden

**Date:** ca. 1930

**Medium:** Oil on canvas

**Dimensions:** 39 1/8 x 32 7/8 in.

**Lender:** Smithsonian American Art Museum

- Hayden stated that his work, *The Janitor Who Paints*, is based on the life of his friend and the artist Cloyd Boykin: "It's sort of a protest painting. I painted it because no one called Boykin the artist. They called him the janitor."
- Hayden was often criticized for his portrayal of African Americans which drew upon caricature. Critics said he was presenting figures as caricatures for a white audience.
- Hayden considered his works a "symbolic reference to comedy, tragedy, and pleasure of a black lifestyle" and considered himself a "modernist who depicted modern society."

## Key Work

**Title:** *Jockey Club*

**Artist:** Archibald J. Motley Jr.

**Date:** 1929

**Medium:** Oil on canvas

**Dimensions:** 26 x 32 in.

**Lender:** Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library

- Archibald J. Motley Jr. was born in New Orleans in 1891 and moved to Chicago in 1892. He and his family were considered “old settlers” because they arrived in Chicago before WWI.
- Motley identified himself as Creole.
- He studied at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago between 1914 and 1918 and was one of the first African Americans to graduate.
- In 1929, Motley won a Guggenheim Fellowship to study in Paris. His application for the fellowship was supported by W.E.B. Du Bois. In an interview he said, “I loved Paris, yes. It’s a different atmosphere, different attitudes, different people. They act differently; they don’t act like Americans.”
- In this work, Motley explores the effects of natural and artificial lighting. Jontyle Theresa Robinson, a scholar on Motley, writes that it is also “...a statement about French racism and the politics of exclusion. The black doorman, although at the center of the composition, remains outside of the activity of the scene.”
- Notice that the doorman is the only black person in the painting.



## African Heritage

During the Harlem Renaissance, many African American artists explored African art as a source of inspiration. From the depiction of masks, to the use of African-inspired design motifs, to abstracted renderings of the human form, artists turned to Africa, and the idea of Africa, in a number of manners. By the 1920s, European modernists such as Matisse, Picasso, Derain, Modigliani, and Guillaume, had “discovered” African art and were incorporating its aesthetic into their art works. One notable example is the inclusion of masks in Picasso’s *Les Femmes d’Alger* (1907). Critics such as Alain Locke and W.E.B. Du Bois urged artists to explore African art and to draw upon it as their artistic heritage. At this time, Africa, and in particular Ethiopia and Egypt, also took on a symbolic significance. In *Ethiopia* (1921), sculptor Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller portrays a mummified woman removing her wrappings. Fuller’s incorporation of an Egyptian headdress on a figure titled “Ethiopia” suggests a broad, symbolic interest in the continent. Similarly, Nancy Elizabeth Prophet’s romanticized sculpture *Congolais* (1931) portrays a Masai warrior from East Central Africa, rather than from the Congo, as the title indicates. Both sculptures directly reference Africa, while using it metaphorically. Despite the popularity of Africa and African art among some African American artists and poets, the continent remained a distant and alien memory. Countee Cullen posed the question “What is Africa to me?” in his poem “Heritage,” while Langston Hughes remarked “So long, So far away Is Africa” in his later poem “Afro-American Fragment.”

# Key Works



**Title:** *Ethiopia*

**Artist:** Meta Warrick Fuller

**Date:** 1921

**Medium:** Plaster full figure, bronze cast

**Dimensions:** 67 x 16 x 20 in.

**Lender:** Schomburg Center for Research In Black Culture, The New York Public Library

- Though Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller never lived in Harlem, she has been credited as being one of the first African American artists to depict black themes.
- Meta was born in 1877 in Philadelphia, to a wealthy, upper-middle class African American family. Her family was educated and influenced by Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Du Bois. The young Meta Warrick grew up in an atmosphere of aspiration and promise.
- Meta studied in Paris and was briefly mentored by Auguste Rodin.
- Here we find one of Fuller's iconic sculptures, *Ethiopia*. Though titled "Ethiopia", it is an image of a female Egyptian figure, removing the wrappings of a mummy. This represents the African American rising out of the wrappings of slavery and the past towards a new black consciousness and renewed cultural identity.
- Ethiopia is also a symbol of Africa, which was a constant source of inspiration to artists of the Harlem Renaissance.

<http://www.negroartist.com/negro%20artist/Meta%20Warrick%20Fuller/index.htm>

**Title:** *Negro Masks*

**Artist:** Malvin Gray Johnson

**Date:** 1932

**Medium:** Oil on canvas

**Dimensions:** 28 1/8 x 19 1/8 in.

**Lender:** Hampton University Museum

- This work is one that is found in the background of Malvin Gray Johnson's *Self-Portrait*, shown on the following page.
- Many artists, such as Picasso with his work *Les Femmes d'Alger*, began to look to Africa for artistic inspiration. African masks were a symbol of the art from the continent and could be found in other artists' work as well.
- For Johnson, it was not just about artistic inspiration. The masks also represented racial pride.
- *Negro Masks* is also included in the exhibit.



## Key Work



**Title:** *Self-Portrait*

**Artist:** Malvin Gray Johnson

**Date:** 1934

**Medium:** Oil on canvas

**Dimensions:** 38 ¼ x 30 in.

**Lender:** Smithsonian American Art Museum

- *Self-Portrait* incorporates *Negro Masks* in the background.
- Theresa Jontyle Robinson comments, “Hence, might we consider Johnson’s rendered visage a mask-like abstraction and bring the number of face coverings in this painting to a total of three?”
- Notice how *Negro Masks* line up with the artist’s head.
- This piece was subtitled *Myself at Work* and features Malvin Gray Johnson sitting in his studio.

## African Masks



Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger (O.J. Version O)* (1907)  
Museum of Modern Art, New York  
(This work is not included in the exhibition)

### Background:

Harlem Renaissance artists were not the only ones looking to Africa for inspiration. Pablo Picasso and other European artists had also been referencing Africa in their works. In *Les Femmes d'Alger (O.J. Version O)* of 1907, Picasso shows the furthest woman to the left in a stance, much like early Greek or Egyptian statues. Notice her stiff position, with one leg in front of the other. But in contrast, the woman at the far right is sitting and wearing an African mask. Picasso went through a “Negro” period the following year, 1908, where he referenced African prototypes in depicting his subjects.

African masks can be traced to before Paleolithic times. They are made of different materials such as wood, fabric, metal and leather. They can represent gods, spirits, animals, ideas, fertility, youth, ancestors, rulers, mythological beings, the dead, and much more. The masks have been worn for ceremonies and rituals and sometimes are believed to be the dwelling place of the spirits they represent.

**Procedure:**

- For this lesson, have your students pick an animal that best represents them. Have your students write a paragraph or more about why they chose the animal they did and how it relates to them.
- When they have finished with the writing assignment, have them create a mask representing them and their animal.
- There are many ways to create an African Mask.
  - For paper masks see this website: <http://www.princetonol.com/groups/iad/lessons/elem/papermask.htm>
  - For paper mache masks see this website: <http://www.princetonol.com/groups/iad/lessons/elem/papermask.htm>
  - You may also choose to use scraps and other items you already have. Have the students create a basic mask out of poster board and then glue the other items on to the mask.
  - The important thing to remember is that there should be something symbolic about everything they glue to their masks.

Some helpful websites about African masks are:

- <http://www.zyama.com/> - African Art Museum – On-line reference to the artistic styles of Africa
- [http://edsitement.neh.gov/view\\_lesson\\_plan.asp?ID=314](http://edsitement.neh.gov/view_lesson_plan.asp?ID=314) – EDSITEment – The Meaning Behind the Mask

## Life in the Jazz Age and Beyond

The 1920s were a vibrant period in American culture, an age of material excess, as well as a period of heightened awareness of racial and cultural differences. Many artists and intellectuals were exploring and questioning the uniqueness of the American heritage. In the 1920s, African American poets, artists, and musicians instigated “an unusual outburst of creative expression” and a new “racial awakening” now termed the Harlem Renaissance. This newfound racial awareness and concern with portraying and recording the African American experience is demonstrated in the poetry of Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, and Claude McKay, among others, the paintings of Aaron Douglas and Archibald J. Motley Jr., as well as in the popularity of musical forms such as the blues and jazz. The twenties were also, as Langston Hughes later observed, “the period when the Negro was in vogue.” During the twenties and thirties, African American artists began to explore themes of daily life, religion, and the South. Archibald J. Motley Jr. explored the cabarets and streets of Chicago’s “Black Belt,” known as Bronzeville. William H. Johnson returned to the South in 1930, where he painted expressive works such as *Jacobia Hotel* and *Sun Setting, Florence, South Carolina*, which reflect his interest in European modernism. Poets and writers, including James Weldon Johnson, turned to the South and to religious folk traditions in publications like *God’s Trombones: Seven Negro Sermons in Verse*, seen earlier in this exhibition. Aaron Douglas’s *Rise, Shine for Thy Light has Come* (ca. 1927) demonstrates the increased popularity of the spirituals. During this period, artists also continued to paint landscapes and other traditional subjects, as seen in Palmer Hayden’s *Battery Park* (1934).

## Key Work

**Title:** *Saturday Night*

**Artist:** Archibald J. Motley Jr.

**Date:** 1935

**Medium:** Oil on canvas

**Dimensions:** 32 x 40 in.

**Lender:** Howard University Gallery of Art

- Here we find another of Motley's cabaret paintings.
- Cabarets were places where whites and blacks would go to dance and hear this new music called Jazz.
- Zora Neale Hurston would have referred to such a location as a "jook joint," noting that "Jook is the word for a Negro pleasure house. It means a bawdy house...where the men and women dance, drink and gamble."
- Motley's cabaret paintings represent the freedom people found in Jazz.
- Jontyle Theresa Robinson observes that even though this painting relates "...to the iconography of Motley's Chicago paintings"...it was probably inspired by scenes in Washington, D.C. when Motley was an instructor at Howard University.



# Lesson Plan: Oklahoma Jazz and Geography

## **Background:**

Jazz is said to have originated in New Orleans because it was a major port city where people of all races and cultures were blending together. To simplify the explanation, when the African rhythms and forms were blended with European melodies and musical theory, jazz was born.

In the 1890's, two styles of music came to New Orleans: ragtime and blues. Ragtime came out of African songs, Minstrel songs and syncopation. The blues came with the refugees from the Mississippi delta that migrated to New Orleans. The blues were a way of expressing the sadness the people felt, dealing with it, and then getting rid of the blues. It can be about anything, but performers of the blues were expected to tell a story.

In New Orleans, musicians began to play the blues on their instruments. There were times in each song when musicians would need to fill space between phrases. This is where jazz really got its start. Musicians improvised in order to fill the time; improvisation is a major characteristic of jazz. Over the next century the blues would influence every other musical form in America.

New Orleans wasn't the only place affected by jazz. After the end of slavery, many black Americans were migrating north to an environment of greater acceptance. With them, they took their musical traditions and songs. They traveled in mass to Chicago and on to New York. There were many communities between New Orleans and New York where jazz musicians would stop to play, and they were already traveling throughout the country, playing for audiences.

Oklahoma is a state with a great jazz history. Not only did musicians come through and play on their way North, but many great jazz musicians originated here.

## **Procedure:**

- Below you will find a list of names. Have each student research these musicians and give a presentation on their chosen person in character. They may have to choose two in order for all of the towns to be represented.
- After each person gives their presentation, have them put a pin on the Oklahoma map on the city where their character came from.

## **Oklahoma Jazz Musicians:**

|                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Ardmore -</b>     | Alva Lee “Bo” McCain, Sr. – tenor saxophone<br>Howard Smith – piano/composer                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Beggs -</b>       | George James – saxophone/clarinet                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Bessie -</b>      | Elmer Reuben “Moe” Schneider – trombone                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Boley -</b>       | Claude Jones – trombone                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Bristow -</b>     | Joe Lee Wilson – vocals/composer                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Calumet -</b>     | Dempsey Wright – guitar                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Dougherty -</b>   | Kay Strarr – vocals                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Eagle City -</b>  | Edward “Big Ed” Lewis – trumpet                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>El Reno -</b>     | Sam Rivers – saxophone                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Enid -</b>        | Pat Moran – piano                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Fort Gibson -</b> | Lee Wiley – vocalist/composer                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Guthrie -</b>     | Harold Breeden – clarinet/saxophone                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Idabel -</b>      | Hadley Coleman – saxophone/clarinet/flute                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Haskell -</b>     | John Jacob Simmons – trumpet/bass                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Kingfisher -</b>  | Elmer Crumley – trombone/vocalist                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>McAlester -</b>   | Berta Leah “Lea” Mathews – vocalist                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Muskogee -</b>    | Samuel Aaron Bell – bass/piano/trumpet<br>Carlos Wesley “Don” Byas – tenor saxophone<br>Barney Kessel – guitar<br>Clarence Love – alto saxophone/bandleader<br>Jay “Hootie” McShann – bandleader/piano<br>Joseph “Joe” Thomas, Jr. – composer/tenor saxophone<br>Walter Purl “Foots” Thomas – tenor/saxophone/flute/composer<br>Claude Williams – violin/guitar |

|                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Oklahoma City -</b>             | Buddy Anderson – trumpet/piano<br>Abe Bolar – bass<br>Henry Bridges – tenor saxophone<br>Donald E. “Don” Cherry – trumpet<br>Charlie Christian – guitar<br>Theodore “Ted” Donnelly – trombone<br>Wardell Gray – tenor saxophone<br>Lem C. Johnson – saxophone/clarinet/vocals<br>Marilyn Moore – vocals<br>James Andrew “Little Jimmy” Rushing – piano/vocals<br>Stanley Wrightsman – piano |
| <b>Okmulgee -</b>                  | Oscar Pettiford – bass/cello/bandleader                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Sapulpa -</b>                   | Marshal Royal – clarinet/alto saxophone                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Tulsa -</b>                     | Earl Bostic – alto saxophone/composer<br>Jim Keltner – drums<br>Cecil McBee – bass<br>Howard McGee – trumpet/composer<br>Harold “Hal” Singer – clarinet                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Unknown Town -<br/>of Birth</b> | Charles Brackeen – saxophone<br>Laura Rucker – piano/vocals                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Valiant -</b>                   | drums                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Wynnewood -</b>                 | Roy Milton – vocals/drums/bandleader                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Yale -</b>                      | Chesney “Chet” Baker – trumpet/singer                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |

(This list was taken from the book, *Via Oklahoma: And Still the Music Flows*, Mabel Hovdahl Alexander, Oklahoma City: Oklahoma Heritage Association, 2004, p. 80)

### **Helpful Jazz Websites:**

- <http://www.pbs.org/jazz/index.htm> - “Jazz: A Film by Ken Burns” website
- <http://www.pbskids.org/jazz/> - Kids page to accompany Ken Burns’ Jazz Videos
- <http://www.pbskids.org/jazz/lesson/index.html> - Lesson plans for Ken Burns Series
- <http://www.pbs.org/jazz/classroom/> - More lesson plans for Ken Burns Series
- <http://firstgradejazz.com> – A curriculum of jazz exposure for primary grade children
- <http://school.discoveryeducation.com/lessonplans/activities/jazztalk/> - Jazz lesson plans from the Discovery Channel
- <http://www.artofthemix.org/FindAMix/getcontents.asp?strMixID=35161> – American Geography through Jazz (This is a list of songs)
- [http://www.town.hall.org/radio/Kennedy/Taylor/bt\\_geo.html](http://www.town.hall.org/radio/Kennedy/Taylor/bt_geo.html) - Excerpts from Billy Taylor’s lectures at the Kennedy Center – Jazz Geography

## Through the Lens: Photography During the Harlem Renaissance

Photography played an important role in capturing the “New Negro” during the Harlem Renaissance. As with painting, photography documented African Americans and their lives and was used to counter the negative images of African Americans that existed in popular culture. James VanDerZee, perhaps the most noted photographer of the period, opened a studio in Harlem in 1917. Specializing in portraits and group photographs, VanDerZee recorded the Harlem of the twenties and thirties. He also photographed events outside of the studio, such as parades and funeral processions. In 1924, VanDerZee served as photographer for Marcus Garvey, founder of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), who was known for his flamboyant dress and love of ceremony. VanDerZee was also known for touching up his portraits and for removing any flaws or blemishes in his subjects, desiring to present them in the best light possible. His work was largely forgotten until the 1969 exhibition *Harlem on My Mind* at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

James Latimer Allen also photographed Harlem’s elite and, like VanDerZee, operated a successful portrait studio in Harlem. He photographed a number of Renaissance figures, including Countee Cullen, Langston Hughes, Alain Locke, and A’lelia Walker, calling his works “Portraits of Distinction.” Described by one historian as the “undisputed prince of Harlem,” author, critic, and Harlem Renaissance “patron,” Carl Van Vechten developed an interest in photography during the thirties. He photographed numerous luminaries, including Langston Hughes, Bill Bojangles Robinson, and Billie Holiday. Van Vechten’s photographs often incorporated patterned backdrops and figures presented in profile or three-quarter view. Outside of Harlem, photographers established studios and documented the lives and achievements of African Americans. In Washington, D.C., Addison Scurlock and the Scurlock Studios captured the citizens and activities of the capitol city. Prentice Herman Polk photographed Mary McCloud Bethune, Eleanor Roosevelt, and George Washington Carver while serving as photographer at Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. In Oklahoma City, a number of anonymous photographers preserved the heritage of “Deep Second,” or “Deep Deuce,” the city’s African American district.

# Key Works



**Title:** *James Weldon Johnson*

**Artist:** Carl Van Vechten

**Date:** 1932 (printed 1983)

**Medium:** Photogravure

**Dimensions:** 8 ¾ x 5 7/8 in.

**Lender:** National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution

- Carl Van Vechten was a white patron of the arts during the Harlem Renaissance.
- He was the author of the controversial novel *Nigger Heaven*, which was published in 1926.
- James Weldon Johnson believed this book was an accurate portrayal of life in Harlem during this time.
- James Weldon Johnson was an American author, politician, diplomat, critic, journalist, poet, anthropologist, educator, lawyer, songwriter, early civil rights activist, and prominent figure in the Harlem Renaissance.
- Van Vechten photographed many Harlem notables and in these photographs, the viewer has the opportunity to see the artists in the way the patron sees them.

**Title:** *Bessie Smith*

**Artist:** Carl Van Vechten

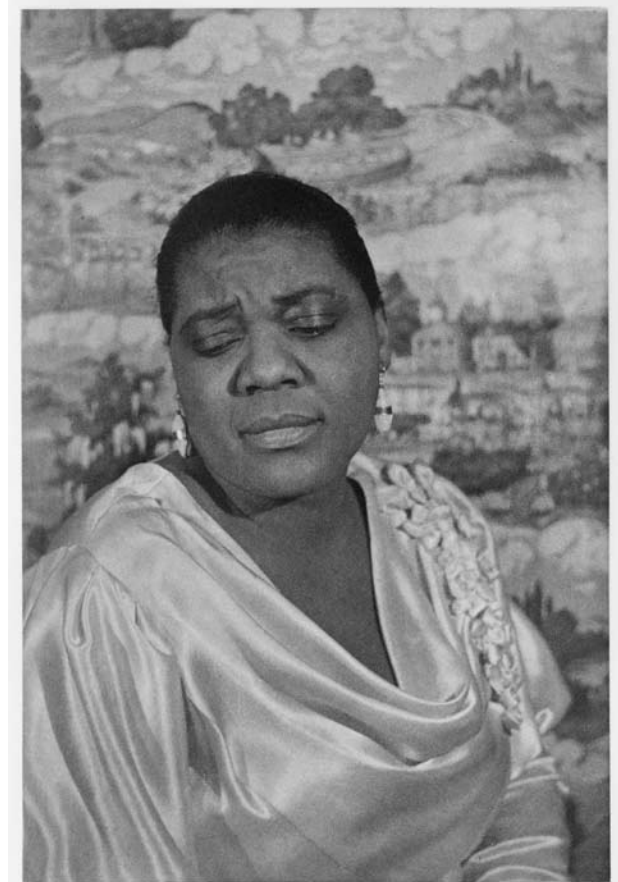
**Date:** 1936 (printed 1983)

**Medium:** Photogravure

**Dimensions:** 8 13/16 x 5 7/8

**Lender:** National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution

- Van Vechten became Gertrude Stein's literary executor at her death and made sure that her unpublished writings were brought to print.
- Van Vechten's portraits are frequently busts or half-length poses, in front of bold backdrops.
- His most famous book was *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*.
- Bessie Smith was the most popular female singer of the 1920s and 1930s.
- Smith was also a Broadway performer and film star.
- Others Van Vechten photographed include Frida Kalo, Diego Rivera, Mahalia Jackson, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Marc Chagall, Georgia O'Keefe, Gore Vidal, Marlon Brando, Orson Wells, Ella Fitzgerald, Billie Holiday and Gertrude Stein.



# Key Works

**Title:** *Langston Hughes*

**Artist:** James Latimer Allen

**Date:** No date

**Medium:** Gelatin silver print

**Lender:** The Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale

- James Latimer Allen was a professional photographer who worked in Harlem.
- His work appeared in *Opportunity* (The official monthly publication of the Urban League, and *The Crisis* (The monthly publication for the NAACP).
- This photograph depicts a young Langston Hughes. Hughes was a novelist, playwright, columnist, and poet during the Harlem Renaissance.
- First published in *The Crisis* in 1921, the verse that would become Hughes's signature poem, "The Negro Speaks of Rivers", appeared in his first book of poetry *The Weary Blues* in 1926.



**Title:** *Marcus Garvey & Garvey Militia*

**Artist:** James VanDerZee

**Date:** 1924

**Medium:** Gelatin silver print

**Dimensions:** 9  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 7  $\frac{3}{4}$  in.

**Lender:** Los Angeles County Museum of Art

- James VanDerZee was the most prominent photographer in Harlem.
- He photographed well known members of the Harlem community.
- He often photographed people in his studio with props, but sometimes went out to specific sites.
- He took many photographs of Harlem military enlistees. He photographed Marcus Garvey's UNIA (Universal Negro Improvement Association) in the spring and summer of 1924, particularly the Fourth International Convention, which was held at the organization's Liberty Hall in Harlem. This was during the period of Garvey's greatest notoriety.
- Marcus Garvey was born in Jamaica and led a "Back to Africa" movement. In 1914, he organized the UNIA and wanted to unite all black people in one autonomous black country in Africa.

## Key Work

**Title:** *Untitled [Dancing Girls]*

**Artist:** James VanDerZee

**Date:** 1928

**Medium:** Vintage gelatin silver print

**Dimensions:** 5 ½ x 9 15/16 in.

**Lender:** Spencer Museum of Art,  
University of Kansas

- This work represents another instance of James VanDerZee going out into the community to photograph.
- He would often have his subjects pose and capture their activities of every day life.
- His images were usually very positive and popular.
- While photographing in his studio, VanDerZee would have fine clothing for men and women available. As Deborah Willis has observed, “In the studio the client was offered the opportunity to construct alternative realities to the social roles determined by the exigencies of class and race.”



# Key Works: The Oklahoma Connection through Photographs

**Title:** *Charlie Christian at Ruby's Grill*

**Lender:** Oklahoma Historical Society

- Charlie Christian was a guitarist/musician who grew up in Oklahoma City.
- Charlie Christian attended Douglass High School in Oklahoma City and was influenced by many different styles of music while he was there.
- He is probably the greatest of Jazz guitarists.
- Ruby's Grill was located in "Deep Deuce" in Oklahoma City's black community.
- In 1939 he joined the Benny Goodman sextet.
- Christian is considered either the founder or precursor to Bebop music.
- Christian died at age 25 in a car accident. Who knows how Charlie Christian could have influenced the music world had he lived longer?



**Title:** *First Band at Langston University*

**Lender:** Oklahoma Historical Society

- Langston University is located in Langston, Oklahoma. It is the only historically black university in the state and is the westernmost historically black university in the United States.
- The university was named for John Mercer Langston, a civil rights activist. He was also the first African American member of congress from Virginia. He founded Howard University's Law School and was American consul-general to Haiti.
- The school was founded in 1897.



# Lesson Plan

## Quilting and History: Piecing it All Together

### Background:

Quilting originated in China and Egypt. There have been quilts discovered in these areas that are over 20,000 years old, but few have survived because fabric and textiles art deteriorate unless they are preserved very carefully. Quilting was also around during slavery. Female slaves would sometimes sit and quilt alongside the lady of the house, creating blankets from old scraps of fabric and even old clothing. These quilts were used until they fell apart. In the North, women would make quilts to be sold to support the abolitionist movement. These Northern women even inscribed their needle cases with the phrase “May the work of our needles prick the conscience of the slaveholder.” Quilt patterns associated with the abolitionist cause include, the Underground Railroad, Jacob’s Ladder, North Star, and Slave Chain. It is said that quilts hung on the line designated a safe stop on the Underground Railroad.

### Procedure:

- For this lesson, your students will create a quilt after researching famous black Americans of the Harlem Renaissance. You may choose from the list of names below or create your own list. Each student should have at least one name to research and depending on your class size, maybe two.
- You will need enough 11 x 14 sheets of inexpensive cloth or muslin for each student, thread and needles. (You’ll want to plan out how many sheets you’ll need to finish the quilt based on your class size and ability.)
- For each person being researched, students should find a picture of that historic person and write at least five facts about them. Once each student has finished with their research, they should type the facts and insert the picture into a single page Word document. They may also present their research to the class at this time.
- Once every document is created, print these pages out on iron-on transfer paper (using a t-shirt making software.) This will ensure that the file is printed backwards. Then iron each one onto the sheets of muslin or cloth. When each sheet is complete, either have the class sew them all together or you, the teacher, may do so. You may wish to add a border to finish it off.
- When the quilt is finished, either hang it in your classroom or in the hall so the rest of the school can appreciate all of your students’ hard work.

**Name Bank (Lists are not comprehensive):**

**Writers, Poets and Philosophers:**

- Alain Locke
- W.E.B. DuBois
- Countee Cullen
- Zora Neale Hurston
- James Weldon Johnson
- Langston Hughes
- Claude McKay
- Rudolph Fisher
- Jean Toomer
- Anna Julia Cooper

**Artists:**

- James Latimer Allen
- Charles Alston
- Richmond Barthé
- Romare Bearden
- Selma Burke
- Aaron Douglas
- Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller
- Palmer Hayden
- Wilmer Angier Jennings
- Malvin Gray Johnson
- Sargent Johnson
- William H. Johnson
- Jacob Lawrence
- Archibald J. Motley Jr.
- Prentice Herman Polk
- Nancy Elizabeth Prophet
- Winold Reiss
- Faith Ringgold
- Augusta Savage
- Addison Scurlock
- Morgan and Marvin Smith
- James VanDerZee
- Carl Van Vechten
- Hale Woodruff

**Jazz Musicians and Performers:**

- Louis Armstrong
- Lil Armstrong
- Josephine Baker
- Duke Ellington
- Dizzy Gillespie
- Bessie Smith
- Billie Holiday
- Charlie Parker
- Nora Douglas Holt Ray
- Count Basie
- Eubie Blake
- Fats Waller
- James P. Johnson
- Noble Sissle
- Earl “Fatha” Hines
- Jelly Roll Morton
- Fletcher Henderson
- Mamie Smith
- Ivie Anderson
- Lena Horne
- Royland Hayes
- Ella Fitzgerald
- Lucille Bogan
- Bill Robinson
- Ma Rainey
- The Will Mastin Trio
- The Dandridge Sisters
- Victoria Spivey
- Cecil Scott
- Fess Williams
- McKinney’s Cotton Pickers
- Cab Calloway
- The King Cole Trio
- Thelonious Monk

## Looking to History

During the Harlem Renaissance, a new importance and emphasis was given to displaying African American achievements and contributions to American history. African American history had been relatively neglected as an artistic subject and artists including Charles Alston, Richmond Barthé, Malvin Gray Johnson, and Jacob Lawrence turned to such themes in the nineteen thirties and beyond. At this time, many artists were also employed by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and artists such as Alston and Augusta Savage were active in community art centers in Harlem. Completed in 1936, Alston's murals for the Harlem Hospital examine the themes of *Magic in Medicine* and *Modern Medicine*. *Magic in Medicine* illustrates traditional African medicinal practices, while *Modern Medicine* highlights technological advances and the new black physician. During the Great Depression, artists such as Alston and Hale Woodruff were inspired by the work of Mexican muralists Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco, and David Alfaro Siqueiros. Woodruff's painting *Negroes with Jackson at New Orleans* (ca. 1934) reflects this new interest in African American history and highlights a battle from the War of 1812.

The Haitian hero Toussaint L'Ouverture was portrayed on numerous occasions by artists including Barthé, Johnson, and Lawrence. As leader of a successful slave rebellion, Toussaint became a hero for persons of African descent worldwide. In 1938, Lawrence completed a series of forty-one paintings highlighting the life of Toussaint L'Ouverture. Some fifty years after painting the Toussaint cycle, he created prints based on these paintings, among them *Toussaint at Ennery*. Lawrence painted a number of historical cycles, featuring the Great Migration as well as the lives of prominent African Americans, such as Frederick Douglass and Harriett Tubman.

# Key Works

**Title:** *Magic in Medicine* and *Modern Medicine*, Studies for Harlem Hospital Murals

**Artist:** Charles Alston

**Date:** 1936

**Medium:** Graphite on paper

**Dimensions:** 16  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 13  $\frac{1}{2}$  in. (both)

**Lender:** Michael Rosenfeld Gallery

- Charles Alston was an artist, teacher, and also the first African American supervisor of a division within the Works Progress Administration Federal Art Project. (WPA/FAP)
- He grew up in New York City and met many Harlem Renaissance figures, including Alain Locke.
- Alston completed his first major art commission for the Harlem Hospital in 1936, assisted by Beauford Delaney.
- *Magic in Medicine: Study for Harlem Hospital Mural*, NYC illustrates the origins of medicine in Africa with a Fang reliquary statue from Central Africa surrounded by drums, statuary, and “an herbalist and spiritually possessed people.” In Africa illness was equated with spiritual imbalance. Sharon F. Patton, *African American Art*, 144)
- *Modern Medicine: Study for Harlem Hospital Mural*, NYC depicts medicine in western culture. It reveals Hippocrates, the “Father of Medicine,” with scientific objects and surgeons, including Dr. Louis Wright, the supervising physician of the hospital. “*Modern Medicine* symbolized reason over faith, science opposed to spirituality.” (Patton, *African American Art*, 144)



## The Legacy

As time passed, artists began to explore Harlem and the period of the Harlem Renaissance as an artistic subject. Artists such as Jacob Lawrence, Romare Bearden, and Faith Ringgold explored the twenties and thirties and the locale of Harlem in their works. In *Jo Baker's Bananas*, Ringgold references American performer Josephine Baker, who was known for dancing topless and wearing a banana skirt in her Parisian performances. The format—acrylic on canvas with a fabric border—recalls the folk tradition of quilting. In *Jazz (Chicago) Grand Terrace Ballroom – the 1930s* (1964), Bearden evokes and explores the legacy of the period through music. In addition to subjects with historic references, Bearden created a number of collages featuring Lenox Avenue, a prominent street in Harlem, including *Evening, 9:10, 461 Lenox Avenue* (1964). Works by these artists further canonize Harlem's status as a “race capital” and contribute to the legacy of the people and places associated with the Harlem Renaissance.

# Key Works

**Title:** *Patchwork Quilt*

**Artist:** Romare Bearden

**Date:** 1970

**Medium:** Cut-and-pasted cloth and paper with synthetic polymer paint on composition board

**Dimensions:** 35 ¾ x 47 7/8 in.

**Lender:** Museum of Modern Art, New York

- Romare Bearden was born in 1911 in Charlotte, North Carolina but moved to New York when he was young. He was an artist, writer, and a cartoonist.
- He was also a baseball player with the Negro Leagues at one time.
- His works are a synthesis of his past and include themes of literature and jazz.
- In the depiction of the figure, *Patchwork Quilt* reflects African art, and the folk art of quilting. It is also modern in his use of the medium of collage.
- “Growing up in the 1920’s in the midst of the writers and artists of the Harlem Renaissance, he underwent a broad, rigorous education, attending New York University, the University of Pittsburgh, the Art Students League, Columbia University and the Sorbonne.” (Driskell, *Hidden Heritage*, 75)



**Title:** *Jo Baker's Bananas*

**Artist:** Faith Ringgold

**Date:** 1997

**Medium:** Acrylic on canvas; painted and pieced border

**Dimensions:** 80 ½ x 76 in.

**Lender:** Blanden Memorial Art Museum, Ft. Dodge, Iowa

- Faith Ringgold is an artist, performance artist, mixed media sculptor, illustrator, writer and teacher. She was born 1930 in Harlem, where she was raised. She attended college and received her B.S. and M.A. degrees from the City College of New York. She has received 19 Honorary Doctorates and now lives and works in Englewood, New Jersey.
- Ringgold is best known for her painted story quilts.
- In this piece, *Jo Baker's Bananas*, we see a painted canvas with a pieced border to evoke quilting. Josephine Baker was an American singer, dancer and entertainer who became a French citizen in 1937. She had performed in Harlem before this time, but once she was in Paris, she was a huge success and didn't want to leave.
- Her famous banana skirt is a reference to her performance of the *Danse Sauvage* at the Folies Bergères.



# Elements of Art

(Taken from the Oklahoma *PASS* document – Visual Art)

The elements and principles of art may be considered the basic language of visual art. Understanding these concepts will provide a basic art vocabulary and ideas by which works of art can begin to be analyzed. They may be the focus of individual lessons or used as the theme for creating original works of art.

**Line:** The path of a moving point. A line may define the edge of a shape; repeated, it can create texture or value. It may be thick or thin, smooth or rough, short or long, light or dark.

**Value:** The degree of dark or light tones or colors. A value scale shows the gradual changing of a tone from the darkest to the lightest or white. Value may be created by simple shading, hatch marks (small repeated lines in the same direction), or crosshatching.

**Texture:** The surface quality or feel of an object. Texture may be actual (rough or smooth) or implied visually.

**Shape:** A two-dimensional area defined by an outline or change in color. Examples of types of geometric shapes include circle, square, rectangle, triangle, or oval. Other shapes may be free-form such as natural objects (i.e., leaves, flowers, clouds) or invented free-form shapes that might be created by doodling.

**Form:** A three-dimensional object with the qualities of length, width and depth. Examples of geometric forms include a cone, cube, sphere, or cylinder.

**Space:** Area within, around, between, above or below objects and shapes. Space or distance may be suggested in visual art by using perspective or other strategies such as placement of objects on the picture plane, overlapping of shapes, or objects closer to the viewer are made to appear to have more vibrant color and detail than objects further away. Variation of size or value and the use of converging lines are also used to suggest space.

**Color:** Hue (name of the color), value (how light a color is), and intensity (amount of brightness) produced through the reflection of light to the eye. Primary colors are the three colors from which all other colors may be made: red, yellow, and blue. Secondary colors are the result of mixing any two primary colors: orange, green, and purple.

# Principles of Design

(Taken from the Oklahoma *PASS* document – Visual Art)

**Balance:** The arrangement of the elements of art in a composition. Basic types of balance are symmetrical (mirror image), asymmetrical and radial (from a center point).

**Rhythm:** Regular repetition of lines, colors, shapes or pattern.

**Movement:** Use of lines, shapes or colors to lead the eye of the viewer from one direction to another.

**Center of Interest:** The accent or important area used to attract the viewers' attention; i.e., emphasis.

**Contrast:** Significant degrees of difference between lines, colors, shapes, values or textures. Pale yellow against charcoal black has a greater degree of contrast than yellow against white, for example.

**Variety:** Refers to the different elements of art used to create interest (difference).

**Unity:** Sense of oneness, of things belonging together and making up a coherent whole.

**Repetition:** Repeated use of an element such as color, shape or line within a work of art. Repetition creates pattern, which may be found in manufactured or natural objects.

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