

SPECTRUM: A CELEBRATION OF ARTISTIC DIVERSITY



Jacob Lawrence (1917 - 2000), *Builders #3*, 1974 Ed. 83/150, Lithograph, 30 x 22 in. (76.2 x 55.9 cm), courtesy of ACA Galleries

January 13 - February 6, 2020
LOIS & DAVID STULBERG GALLERY in the Richard and Barbara Basch Visual
Arts Center

ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

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ABOUT THE EXHIBITION:

This exhibition shines a bright light on the spectrum of African-American artistic practices from the early 20th century to present day. We invite you to explore the stylistic evolutions powerfully expressed in the works of these 23 African-American artists. Including vibrant paintings, quilts, prints, sculpture, and drawings, this exhibition is a unique opportunity to view historical reflections and contributions of cultural importance.

Featured artists include: Benny Andrews, E.M. Bannister, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Romare Bearden, Ernest Crichlow, Joseph Delaney, Robert S. Duncanson, Gaye Ellington, Gale Fulton-Ross, Frederick Jones, Lois Mailou Jones, Ronald Joseph, Jacob Lawrence, Richard Mayhew, Eleanor Merritt, Charles Ethan Porter, Faith Ringgold, Aminah Robinson, Therman Statom, James Van Der Zee, and Charles White.

Ringling College of Art and Design is grateful to partner with the ACA Galleries in bringing these exceptional works to Sarasota. We would also like to thank Mr. Warren R. and Marie E. Colbert, Mrs. Carol Camiener, and Dr. Lisa Merritt for the generous loan of artworks for this exhibition. Special thanks to Melanie S. Thomas, Greatness Beyond Measure, Newtown Alive, Sarasota African American Cultural Coalition, and Marie Selby Botanical Gardens for their support and partnership.

Exhibition Sponsors:



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Benny Andrews (November 13, 1930 – November 10, 2006) was a notable African-American painter, teacher, author, activist, and advocate of the arts.

Born to sharecroppers in Plainview, Georgia, Andrews' artistic talent was nurtured early on by his parents, who taught him the importance of creativity and education. Although education past the seventh grade was severely discouraged in the sharecropping system, Andrews' mother, determined that her children would make it through high school, worked out an arrangement in which Andrews would attend school when it was not possible to work in the fields. He was the first in his family to graduate from high school in 1948, despite a rough time in early education. He attended two years of Fort Valley State College, before enlisting in the US Air Force, where he served for the entire duration of the Korean War, attaining the rank of Staff Sergeant and receiving an honorable discharge in July 1954. With funding from the GI Bill, Andrews enrolled at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Andrews later recalled that his arrival at the Art Institute was revelatory because it was both his first time in an art museum, and his first time in a city or cultural facility without segregation.

With no formal training, he began to develop his Figurative style by observing those around him. He was inspired by artwork at the Art Institute of Chicago and by the people he saw on the streets and in the jazz clubs. His work shows the influences of the dominant movements of the 1950s, abstract expressionism and surrealism, as well as realism from the 1930s and early 1940s. Expression was very important in his work, and was emphasized in his sketches. During this period Andrews experimented with collage both as a way to incorporate a three-dimensional element in a two-dimensional medium and in an effort to create rawness and tension within his work. The artist earned his BA in 1958, and moved from Chicago to New York City, after much rejection of his work in showcases.

Andrews found great success in New York City and became an established artist. His work was accepted for exhibition in New York; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Detroit, Michigan; and Provincetown, Rhode Island. His first solo exhibition at the Forum Gallery in New York received favorable reviews in the *New York Times* and other big-name papers. He became part of the art scene, where he met and befriended other figurative expressionists, including Red Grooms, Bob Thompson, Lester Johnson and Nam June Paik. He frequented local bars, jazz clubs, and coffee shops, drawing and painting his surroundings.

In 1965, Andrews was awarded a John Hay Whitney Fellowship and returned to Georgia. His *Autobiographical Series* of paintings was inspired by this trip, and it established his affinity for producing several works unified by a theme. Subsequent series include *Bicentennial*, *Women I've Known*, *Completing the Circle*, *Southland*, *America*, *Cruelty and Sorrows*, *Revival*, *Music*, *Langston Hughes*, and *The Migrants*. Andrews experienced great success as his pieces were shown internationally. He began lecturing at colleges and teaching at Queens College of the City University of New York, where he would work for 29 years.

Andrews became a leading spokesperson for artists whose works were not considered for exhibition in the large public institutions in New York. He was a cofounder of the Black Emergency Cultural Coalition in 1969 and led both protests and negotiations in order to bring awareness and inclusion of work by minority and women artists into major collections and exhibitions. Andrews wrote articles, curated exhibitions, and established an art program in the New York state prison system, which served as a model for other similar programs throughout the country. He and his second wife, the artist Nene Humphrey, established the Benny Andrews Foundation, which aims to introduce art to as vast and diverse an audience as possible.

Andrews began his final major series in 2004. Titled the *Migrant Series*, he intended to represent three moments of mass displacement in US history. Between 2004 and 2006, he took three separate trips for this series: following the routes taken by Dust Bowl migrants during the Great Depression, along the path of Cherokee people force-marched from their Mississippi homeland in 1838 on what became known as the Trail of Tears, and to New Orleans and the Gulf coast to study areas devastated by flooding in the wake of Katrina. He completed *The Trail of Tears* in 2005 before dying of cancer the following year.

Andrews was the recipient of numerous awards and accolades, including election into the National Academy in 1997. His work is represented in over fifty public collections including the Art Institute of Chicago (Chicago, IL); Brooklyn Museum (Brooklyn, NY); Chrysler Museum of Art (Norfolk, VA); Detroit Institute of Arts (Detroit, MI); High Museum of Art (Atlanta, GA); Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution (Washington, DC); The Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York, NY); Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego (La Jolla, CA); Museum of Fine Arts (Boston, MA); Museum of Modern Art (New York, NY); National Museum of African American History & Culture, Smithsonian Institution (Washington, DC); Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts (Philadelphia, PA); Smithsonian American Art Museum (Washington, DC); The Studio Museum in Harlem (New York, NY); Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art (Hartford, CT); and Whitney Museum of American Art (New York, NY).

Edward Mitchell Bannister (November 2, 1828 – January 9, 1901) was a Black Canadian-American Tonalist painter. Like other Tonalists, his style and predominantly pastoral subject matter were drawn from his admiration for Millet and the French Barbizon School.

Bannister was born in St. Andrews, New Brunswick and moved to New England in the late 1840s, where he remained for the rest of his life. By 1850 Bannister had moved to Boston with the intention of becoming a painter, but because of his race he was unable to find an established artist who would accept him as a student. He worked at a variety of jobs to support himself and by 1853 was a barber in the salon of the successful African-American businesswoman Madame Christiana Carteaux, whom he married in 1857.

Bannister continued to study and paint, and he began winning recognition and patronage in the African-American community. In 1854 he received his first commission for an oil painting, from African-American physician John V. DeGrasse, titled *The Ship Outward Bound*. In the mid-1860s Bannister began to receive greater recognition in the Boston arts community. Sometime between 1863 and 1865 he received his only formal training, studying in the life-drawing classes given by physician and artist William Rimmer at the Lowell Institute. Bannister took a studio in the Studio Building from 1863 to 1866, where he was exposed to William Morris Hunt's promotion of the French Barbizon painters, and his paintings began receiving favorable notices from Boston critics.

In 1869 the Bannisters moved to Providence, Rhode Island, where Bannister was immediately recognized by its growing art community. His first exhibit included *Newspaper Boy* (1869), one of the earliest depictions of working-class African Americans by an African-American artist, and a portrait of abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison. Bannister was also admired within the wider East Coast art world. He won a bronze medal for his large oil *Under the Oaks* at the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial.

As his career matured, Bannister accumulated many honors, several from the Massachusetts Charitable Mechanics Association. His two biggest support systems were his mother, who was the catalyst from the very beginning for his passion for the arts, and his wife, who also was an activist. Both strong supporters of abolition, wife Christina lobbied for equal pay for black soldiers during the Civil War and also organized the soldiers' relief fair in 1864. In 1880, Bannister joined with other professional artists, amateurs, and art collectors to found the Providence Art Club to stimulate the appreciation of art in the community. Bannister was the only major African-American artist of the late nineteenth century who developed his talents without the benefit of European exposure.

Although primarily known for his idealized landscapes and seascapes, Bannister also executed portraits, biblical and mythological scenes, and genre scenes. An intellectual autodidact, his tastes in literature were typical of an educated Victorian painter, including Spenser, Virgil, Ruskin and Tennyson, from whose works much of his iconography can be traced. His work reflected the composition, mood, and influences of French Barbizon painters Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot, Jean-François Millet, and Charles-François Daubigny. He had an affinity for Native American thought.

Bannister died of a heart attack in 1901 while attending a prayer meeting at his church, Elmwood Avenue Free Baptist Church. He is buried in the North Burial Ground in Providence.

Jean-Michel Basquiat (December 22, 1960 – August 12, 1988) was an American artist of Haitian and Puerto Rican descent. Basquiat first achieved fame as part of SAMO, an informal graffiti duo who wrote enigmatic epigrams in the cultural hotbed of the Lower East Side of Manhattan during the late 1970s, where rap, punk, and street art coalesced into early hip-hop music culture. By the 1980s, his neo-expressionist paintings were being exhibited in galleries and museums internationally. The Whitney Museum of American Art held a retrospective of his art in 1992.

Basquiat's art focused on dichotomies such as wealth versus poverty, integration versus segregation, and inner versus outer experience. He appropriated poetry, drawing, and painting, and married text and image, abstraction, figuration, and historical information mixed with contemporary critique.

Basquiat used social commentary in his paintings as a tool for introspection and for identifying with his experiences in the black community of his time, as well as attacks on power structures and systems of racism. Basquiat's visual poetics were acutely political and direct in their criticism of colonialism and support for class struggle. He died of a heroin overdose at his art studio at the age of 27. On May 18, 2017, at a Sotheby's auction, a 1982 painting by Basquiat depicting a black skull with red and black rivulets (Untitled) set a new record high for any American artist at auction, selling for \$110.5 million.



Romare Bearden (September 2, 1911 – March 12, 1988) was an African-American artist and writer, renowned for his collages and photomontages. Born in Charlotte, North Carolina, Bearden grew up in a middle-class African-American family that moved in 1914 to the Harlem neighborhood of New York City. Bearden was raised against this vibrant cultural backdrop in the 1920s; his mother was a reporter for a leading black newspaper, and his home life was marked by the social and intellectual gatherings of well-known musicians, writers, and artists such as Duke Ellington and Langston Hughes. These encounters were foundational for Bearden's life and art and cultivated interests in visual art, music, history, and literature.

Bearden's career as a painter was launched in 1940 with his first solo exhibition in Harlem and then another, four years later, at the G Place Gallery in Washington, DC, while he was serving in the Army. In 1945, shortly after his discharge, he joined the Kootz Gallery on 57th Street, and exhibited there for the next three years. He then traveled to Paris on the G.I. Bill in 1950 where he studied philosophy at the Sorbonne.

Although he experimented with numerous artistic styles and techniques throughout his career, Bearden's principal medium was collage: a richly textured fusion of fabric, painting, and magazine clippings. His socially conscious work largely focused on African-American life and the progression of black rights, depicted in images of Harlem life infused with memories of the South. Bearden was an equally important arts writer, activist, and spokesman, and a founding member of the Harlem Cultural Council and Black Academy of Arts. He was elected to the National Institute of Arts and Letters in 1972. Bearden's collages appeared on the covers of *Fortune* and *Time* magazines in 1968.

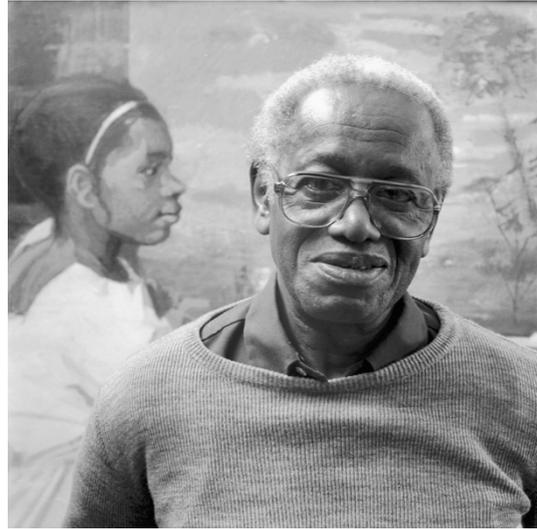
Bearden was the author or coauthor of several books. He also was a songwriter, known as co-writer of the jazz classic "Sea Breeze", which was recorded by Billy Eckstine, a former high school classmate at Peabody High School, and Dizzy Gillespie. He had long supported young, emerging artists, and he and his wife established the Bearden Foundation to continue this work, as well as to support young scholars. In 1987, Bearden was awarded the National Medal of Arts. He died in New York City in 1988.



Ernest Crichlow (June 19, 1914 - November 10, 2005) was an African-American social realist artist.

Crichlow was born in Brooklyn, New York in 1914 to Caribbean immigrants. He studied art at the School of Commercial Illustrating and Advertising Art in New York and New York University. In the 1930s, Crichlow started work as an artist at the Harlem Artists Guild and worked alongside Jacob Lawrence, Charles Alston, and Aaron Douglas. The Artists Guild was sponsored by Works Progress Administration's Federal Art Project, which provided employment for many artists during the Depression.

His first exhibition was in 1938 in the Harlem Community Center in Harlem, New York. Depression-era social justice themes were a hallmark of Crichlow's career, most notably in works such as *Lovers* (1938), an ironically named lithograph that featured a black woman on the lap and in the grasp of a hooded Klansman.



Many of his later paintings offered stark commentaries on the civil rights struggle. *Waiting* (1965) showed a black girl staring through a barbed-wire fence. His 1967 painting *White Fence* showing a young white girl being separated by a fence from five black girls was the most notable from his later career along with a 25-panel mural at Boys and Girls High School in Brooklyn.

More plaintive pieces such as *Woman in a Blue Coat* (1948) and *The Balcony* (1980) emphasized strong brushwork and a quality of nobility. They characterized what one admirer told the "St. James Guide to Black Artists" was Mr. Crichlow's focus on the "indomitable inner strength, intrinsic beauty, dignity and essential humanity that exists in the African-American community."

Other highlights of his long and distinguished career include a one man show as guest artist at the Afro-American Artists Museum in Philadelphia in 1969 and exhibitions at the Boston Museum of Fine Art, Newark Museum, New York World's Fair and the Institute of Modern Art, Boston. He was one of 10 black artists from the National Conference of Artists honored at the White House during the Carter Administration. The artist is a former director of the Society for American Culture and a co-founder, along with Romare Bearden and Norman Lewis, of the Cinque Gallery, an opportunity gallery for young artists from disadvantaged background, which opened in 1969. He was a member of the Black Academy of Arts and Letters and held membership in a number of professional and civic organizations.

His work is in numerous private and public collections all over the world. The list includes the Brooklyn Museum, the Hewitt Collection, the actors Morgan Freeman, Ossie Davis and Lena Horne.

Joseph Delaney (1904 – November 21, 1991) was an African-American artist, poet and essayist who became a part of the New York art scene at the time of the Harlem Renaissance.

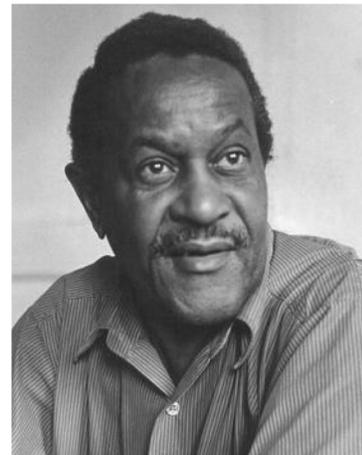
Delaney was born in Knoxville, Tennessee, one of ten children of a Methodist minister. He was the younger brother of Beauford Delaney, with whom he shared an interest in drawing. In his late teens and early 20s, Delaney spent a period of years without a settled home before joining the Eighth Infantry Regiment, Illinois National Guard.

In 1930, Delaney moved to New York City, where he enrolled in the Art Students League. His first teacher was Alexander Brook. He studied human anatomy under Thomas Hart Benton and experimented with the expressive line. He later cited Benton as a major influence, saying, "Benton will be with me always." During his free time, Delaney sketched the people and places around him.

During the Great Depression, he was employed by the Works Progress Administration (WPA). He taught children's art classes, collaborated on public murals, illustrated archival inventories and eventually joined the easel division. Around the time that the WPA ceased to operate, Delaney was awarded a grant from the Julius Rosenwald Fund. From the summer of 1942 until January 1943, he used the grant to travel the eastern seaboard and create a series that documented the lives of black laborers.

Over the next three decades, Delaney created what would become his signature works: urban scenes that celebrate the landmarks and liveliness of the city. Delaney lived and worked in New York until 1986, showing his work in New York's Washington Square for decades. In 1986 he returned to Knoxville to become an artist-in-residence at the University of Tennessee, a position he held until his death in 1991. Throughout his life, Delaney was committed to opposing racial discrimination, and his work reveals a "deep concern for the lives of common people."

In 1968, he published a pamphlet which summarized his experience as an artist in New York entitled, *Thirty-six Years Exhibiting in the Washington Square Outdoor Art Show*. Joseph Delaney's works can be found in the nation's premier museums, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Chicago Art Institute, and National Academy of Design among others.



Robert Seldon Duncanson (1821 – December 21, 1872) was a nineteenth century American artist of European and African ancestry known for his contributions to landscape painting. Inspired by famous American landscape artists like Thomas Cole, Duncanson created renowned landscape paintings and is considered a second-generation Hudson River School artist.

Duncanson was born in 1821 in Fayette, New York. His family later moved to Monroe, Michigan where he learned the family trade of house and ornamental painting, as well as carpentry. He left Michigan around 1840 for Cincinnati, Ohio, to pursue a career as an artist.

Duncanson spent the majority of his career in Cincinnati, Ohio which was a thriving hub of artistic expression. Located on the Ohio River, Cincinnati was on the border with the Southern states at a time in American history when the abolition of slavery was an important issue. Upon his arrival, Duncanson settled in Mount Healthy, an area northwest of the city known for its abolitionist sympathies and home to a tightly knit group of African Americans.

Throughout the 1840s, he traveled between Cincinnati and Detroit painting portraits and landscapes. His career received a major boost in 1848 when he was commissioned by abolitionist Charles Avery to paint the landscape, *Cliff Mine, Lake Superior*. The association led to lifelong relationships with those who wanted to support black artists. Among those interested in Duncanson was Nicholas Longworth (1783–1863), the city's greatest patron of the arts. In 1850, Longworth commissioned Duncanson to create a series of eight landscape murals for his home, Belmont (now in the Taft Museum of Art).

Between April 1853 and June 1854, Duncanson made the "Grand Tour" of Europe, visiting London, Paris, and Florence. He was the first African American to have such an opportunity. After returning to Cincinnati, Duncanson continued to paint landscapes in addition to portraits of local citizens, including Longworth. The Hudson River School painters, as well as Worthington Whittredge (1820–1910) and William L. Sonntag (1822–1900) with whom he went on painting excursions in the Ohio Valley, influenced his style of landscape painting. With the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861, Duncanson traveled through the northern United States and Canada, hoping to escape the turmoil of the fighting and anti-African-American fervor. In the summer of 1865, Duncanson returned to Europe and traveled to Scotland where he earned international acclaim.

By 1867 Duncanson had returned to this country and began exhibiting works directly inspired by his European travels. He made a final trip to Scotland in the years 1870 to 1871, and completed a number of paintings during his stay. On his return to the United States in the summer of 1871, Duncanson exhibited his Scottish paintings with remarkable success. Unfortunately, when his career seemed brightest, his health was failing. He died in Detroit, Michigan on December 21, 1872.



Gaye Ellington (b.1947) is an African-American painter and sculptor. She is the granddaughter of the famous jazz musician Duke Ellington.

Ellington is a colorist who principally works with acrylic paint on canvas. While studying at Howard University, she came under the influence of the Washington Color School and its exploitation of color as an expressive medium. Returning to her native New York after college, Ellington developed her signature style while studying at CUNY. At the Art Students League of New York, she studied with the well-known watercolorist Timothy J. Clark.

In Ellington's paintings, a kaleidoscopic palette is employed to create imagery that, although partly abstract, resonates with representational phantoms. Ellington's renderings appear as a series of flamelike brushstrokes that animate the canvas surface. On closer examination, semblances of human faces and figures emerge to draw observers into the artist's labyrinthine compositions. Ellington's subjects often include vaguely discernible still-lives, street scenes, figures and portraits that have the effect of lighting passing through stained glass.

Ellington has long been inspired by the music of jazz. Many of her works are visual translations of the orchestral arrangements of her grandfather, Duke Ellington, and her father, Mercer Ellington, as well as of Billy Strayhorn. The artist's *The Blues Ain't* grew out of her grandfather's 1963 recorded stage performance of the same name. The emotional and orchestral highs and lows of the musical composition become lights and darks in the painting.

Her works may be found in numerous private and public collections, including the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC.

Gale Fulton Ross (b. 1947) is an African-American visual artist who lives in Los Angeles, California. Primarily a painter, she also practices portraiture, printmaking, and sculpture.

Gale Fulton Ross was born in Medford, Massachusetts, in 1947, the oldest of nine children.

She studied at the Massachusetts College of Art in Boston, where she explored a wide variety of styles and media including sculpture. She continued her art education at the California College of Arts and Crafts in San Francisco, concentrating in the study of Fine Arts and art history. In addition to formal academic training she has studied under the guidance of established artists, including Melvin Johnson, at the Vesper George School of Art, Boston; Cleveland Bellow, of the DeYoung Museum, Oakland California; and Pierre Parsus, of France, while a resident at the La Napoule Art Foundation.



Initially trained as an art curator, Fulton Ross traveled extensively throughout Africa, Europe, and as far east as China, in order to study and paint. She was a participant in the second World Festival of Black Arts in Lagos, Nigeria in 1977. In 1984, she was an artist in residence in Bellagio, Italy and produced an exhibition for the Rockefeller Foundation in Bellagio, and in 1993 was the recipient of an award to work and study in the People's Republic of China.

She developed a reputation early in her career as a portrait artist, and has created likenesses of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Justice Thurgood Marshall, A. Philip Randolph, Arthur Ashe, and Governor Michael Dukakis, among others. In 2009, she was selected to paint a portrait of Lord Andrew Lloyd Webber.

Fulton Ross has cited several classical artists as influences on her work, including Michelangelo, Da Vinci, and Rembrandt, as well as modern-day African-American masters such as Elizabeth Catlett, Charles Wilbert White, Beauford Delaney, and Romare Bearden. Her style incorporates both the figurative and the abstract, as reflected in her eclectic creations. She believes that artists are the humanistic conscience of a materialistic society. Her visual expressions most often depict poignant images of people, especially African American women, reflecting her philosophy that it is the depth and variety of human feelings that motivates art, and indeed, that she must become a more sensitive human in order to be a better artist.

In that regard, she has dedicated considerable time to mentoring and creating opportunities for younger artists as the founder of the Fulton-Ross Fund for Visual Artists of Sarasota County, which provides a supportive environment and awards competitive grants to those just beginning their careers.

Frederick D. Jones (1913-1996) was a prolific, Chicago artist whose career spanned more than five decades. Over his career he developed a lushful and sensitive style of drawing and painting.

Frederick D. Jones was born in 1913 in Raleigh, North Carolina and spent the majority of his early childhood in Georgetown, South Carolina. At a very young age, he began doodling, emulating the tourist artists who sketched and painted local harbor scenes. In the 1920s, Jones' father, a pharmacist, decided to move the family to Atlanta so that he could open a new pharmacy.

By the 1930s, Atlanta had become a thriving African-American business and professional community and was also thriving as a regional center for higher education and culture. This cultural climate presented good opportunities for young Jones to develop as an artist. Jones studied with Hale Woodruff, the noted landscape watercolorist turned abstractionist, at Spelman College in Atlanta. He admired Picasso and Chagall, but soon his own style emerged, a slightly abstract, neo-romantic vision, usually of modern black men and women.

After high school, Jones relocated to Chicago to study at the Art Institute of Chicago. One of only a few African-American students at the Art Institute, Jones began to establish his own style as he learned more about colors and composition. While in Chicago, Jones learned both from the instruction he received at the Art Institute and the South Side Community Art Center. There he worked alongside some of the most prominent African-American artists of the time, including Charles White, Eldzier Cortor, Charles Sebree, Margaret Burroughs and Gordon Parks. His studies at the Art Institute were interrupted from 1943 to 1946 by his service in the U.S. Navy. After the war, Jones returned to Chicago to complete his studies in 1947 and to help direct the Southside Community Center. On his departure from the South Side Community Art Center, Jones continued working for Coca Cola as a laborer at the Chicago plant and painted in the evenings and on the weekends until he retired in 1973 to pursue his art full time.

His artwork was exhibited and marketed across the country and was widely collected. Works of the artist are reported to be in many prominent collections, including those of the DuSable Museum of African-American Art, the South Side Community Art Center, IBM, Amoco Oil, Standard Oil, Walter O. Evans, Larry and Brenda Thompson, Darrell Walker, Clark D. Baker, III, Carnetta and Norm Davis, the Belgium Embassy in Washington, D.C., James T. Parker, and Donnell Walker. In 1988, Jones was chosen by the Smithsonian Institute to participate in the American Oral Art History Program through which he helped contribute to the little-documented history of African-American artists. The artist passed in 1996.

Lois Mailou Jones (November 3, 1905 – June 9, 1998) was an influential artist and teacher during her seven-decade career. Her works reflect a command of widely varied styles, from traditional landscape to African-themed abstraction.

Jones was born in Boston, Massachusetts in 1905. During her childhood, Jones' parents encouraged her to draw and paint. She attended the High School of Practical Arts in Boston, winning scholarships for special classes at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, which she attended after school and on Sundays. She enrolled in the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. She finished with honors and continued her education, receiving a master's degree in textile design.

Jones began a successful career in textiles before deciding to focus on fine arts. In 1928, Jones was hired by Palmer Memorial Institute, a historically black prep school in Sedalia, North Carolina and subsequently founded and chaired the art department. Two years later she was recruited to teach at Howard University in Washington, D.C. Jones taught design and watercolor painting at Howard for the next forty-seven years.

In 1937 Jones received a year-long fellowship that took her to Paris to live and work. This was a defining moment for the young black artist who experienced—for the first time in her life—the complete freedom to live as she wished without the indignities of segregation that she felt in the United States. Here, she painted street scenes, still lifes, and portraits in an impressionist and post-impressionist style.

Jones was one of the most notable figures to attain notoriety for her art while living as a black expatriate in Paris during the 1930s and 1940s. Jones looked towards Africa and the Caribbean and her experiences in life when painting. As a result, her subjects were some of the first paintings by an African-American artist to extend beyond the realm of portraiture. Jones was influenced by the Harlem Renaissance movement and her countless international trips. Lois Mailou Jones' career was enduring and complex. Her work in designs, paintings, illustrations, and academia made her an exceptional artist that continues to receive national attention and research.



Ronald Joseph (1910-1992) was an African-American artist, teacher, and printmaker.

Ronald Joseph started his artistic career in Harlem, New York City at the Harlem Community Arts Center, where he was one of the youngest pupils. Joseph studied lithography and other printmaking techniques with Riva Helfond, who taught him many aspects of the process based on simple techniques, including how to operate the press, and how to prepare the stones. Helfond played a significant role as a teacher of lithography at the Harlem Art Center. Joseph produced his first lithographs under her supervision, and this was at a time when she was just beginning to learn the medium herself.

At the Harlem Community Arts Center Joseph met Robert Blackburn, who was his classmate. In 1937 Ronald Joseph depicted Blackburn in one of his most famous works that is now located at The Metropolitan Museum collection. Experimenting with lithography and etching, as well as woodblock and silkscreen printing, Joseph explored the techniques of printmaking alongside his friend Robert Blackburn. Joseph described the Harlem Art Center as a "healthy and lively" place, where he had made wonderful friends. In the late thirties, he also served as a teacher at the Harlem Community Arts Center. There Joseph met younger artist Jacob Lawrence and Gwendolyn Knight. They formed a friendship, where they enjoyed conversations and visiting museums together.

In the 1930s, Joseph became chairman of the Harlem Artists Guild and represented it in Washington with Stuart Davis and Hugo Gellert. Ronald Joseph was also a participant in the mural section of WPA and a representative of the Harlem Artists' Guild to the New York World's Fair (1939-1940).

Joseph's early oil paintings were influenced by Picasso, Braque and other European artists while most of his contemporaries focused on social realism. By 1943, he was hailed by art historian James Porter as New York's foremost African-American abstractionist painter. His pastels and gouaches from the late forties and early fifties showed a highly structured abstraction combined with a studied spontaneity. Ronald Joseph's finely tuned abstractions often incorporated representational elements along with apparently "purer" forms. His works from the 1950s employed both still life and landscape as pretexts for masterly exercises in nearly abstract pictorial construction related to cubism and fauvism.

During World War II, Joseph was drafted. After the war he formed a group with fellow artists Robert Blackburn, Charles White, Larry Potter, and Reginald Gammon and made woodcuts. In 1948, after he received fellowships he traveled to Peru and then to Paris, where his work grew increasingly abstract. When he returned to New York, he lived in Greenwich Village and continued to paint, but with little recognition. In 1956, feeling discouraged about his place in the art scene in the US, Ronald Joseph left the US for Brussels, where he continued his artistic career.

Jacob Lawrence (September 7, 1917 – June 9, 2000) was an African-American painter known for his modernist portrayal of everyday life as well as his epic narratives of African-American history and historical figures.

Born in New Jersey, he grew up in Harlem, and it was Harlem, specifically, that prepared him for his career, technically and thematically. Lawrence referred to his style as "dynamic cubism", though by his own account the primary influence was not so much French art as the shapes and colors of Harlem. He brought the African-American experience to life using blacks and browns juxtaposed with vivid colors.

Lawrence is among the best-known 20th-century African-American painters. He was 23 years old when he gained national recognition with his 60-panel *Migration Series*, painted on cardboard. The series depicted the Great Migration when hundreds of thousands of African Americans moved from the rural South to the North after World War I and showed their adjusting to Northern cities. It was exhibited in New York at the Museum of Modern Art, and brought him national recognition. A part of this series was featured in a 1941 issue of *Fortune*. The collection is now held by two museums: the odd-numbered paintings are on exhibit in the Phillips Collection in Washington, D.C., and the even-numbered are on display at MOMA in New York.



At the outbreak of World War II, Lawrence was drafted into the United States Coast Guard. He was assigned to be the Coast Guard artist aboard a troopship, documenting the war experience as he traveled around the world. During this time, he produced close to 50 paintings but all ended up being lost.

During the 1950s and 60s, Lawrence's work was characterized by stylistic experimentation and everyday imagery. In the late 1960s, he returned to a more straightforward style and optimistic outlook. In the 1970s, he concentrated on the Builders subject. For a half a century, he intermittently painted a comprehensive and cohesive series of paintings on the theme of builders. The subject of building developed into an obsessive desire to show African Americans engaged in the process of building—not constructing something specific, identifiable, but building as a communal activity of planning and making, an ongoing intellectual and physical endeavor. The metaphor was not of pulling oneself up by one's bootstraps, but of cooperative civil action, of working together for a people's advancement.

Lawrence taught at several universities. He continued to paint until a few weeks before his death at the age of eighty-two. Shortly before his death the artist stated, "...for me, a painting should have three things: universality, clarity and strength. Clarity and strength so that it may be aesthetically good. Universality so that it may be understood by all men."

Lawrence's works are in the permanent collections of numerous museums, including the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum, the Phillips Collection, Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Brooklyn Museum, Reynolda House Museum of American Art, and the Museum of Northwest Art.

Richard Mayhew (born April 3, 1924) is an Afro-Native American landscape painter and arts educator. His abstract, luminous landscapes are inspired by his African-American/Native-American identity, improvisational jazz, the performing arts and Abstract Expressionism.

Born in 1924 and raised in Amityville, New York, on Long Island's south shore, Richard Mayhew's passion for painting was sparked by watching the artists who summered in Amityville and painted its scenic shoreline. Inspired by these artists, young Mayhew used brushes and paints from his father's sign painting business to copy what the artists were doing. One of the summer artists, James Wilson Peale, appreciated Mayhew's talent and began teaching the aspiring painter the basics of drawing and painting. Throughout his teenage years, Richard Mayhew made several trips into New York City to study the works of the European and American masters on view at The Metropolitan Museum of Art.



In 1951 Mayhew enrolled at the Brooklyn Museum of Art, studying painting with such teachers as Ruben Tarn, Edwin Dickman, Hans Hofmann, Gregorio Prestopino, and Mex Beckman. Mayhew later attended the Art Students League and the Pratt Institute, and earned an art history degree from Columbia University. At the same time, he got jobs singing with jazz combos and performing with theater groups.

Mayhew held his first solo exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum in 1955. Two years later he held a second solo show at the Morris Gallery in Greenwich Village. Critics admired his work, particularly his use of color, light and form. Reviews compared Mayhew's work to that of Monet and Winslow Homer. After studying at the MacDowell Colony in New Hampshire in 1958, Mayhew was awarded a John Hay Whitney fellowship, which he used to study painting at the Accademia in Florence, Italy. He remained in Europe for three years, traveling around the continent to view works of the great masters.

Mayhew was especially drawn to the work of the Impressionists. He studied their use of color, texture, line, and tone, and also explored the dynamics of atmospheric perspective. He received special permission to study in the archives of the Louvre, the Prado, and the Rijksmuseum. He enjoyed the arts culture in Europe, feeling that he had a clear identity there as an artist. When he returned to the United States in 1962, however, he felt more like an outsider in a culture that lacked this artistic tradition.

The early 1960s was a time of profound social unrest. The Civil Rights Movement had begun to challenge the entrenched racism in American culture, and artists joined the cause. Mayhew continued to paint and began teaching art courses at the Brooklyn Museum and the Pratt Institute. In 1963 Mayhew and several other artists helped to form the Spiral Group, an organization that met weekly to discuss art and political engagement. The group, founded by painters Romare Bearden and Norman Lewis, also included Hale Woodruff, Charles Alston, James Yeorgans, Felrath Hines, Alvin Hollingsworth, Merton Simpson, Emma Amos, and Reginald Gammon. The group's name refers to the outward and upward movement of the spiral—a direction the artists hoped they could help their own society to take.

Mayhew's work has been featured in several solo and group exhibitions in New York City, Los Angeles, Detroit, San Francisco, San Jose, and Santa Clara. His paintings are represented in the collections of several museums, including the Whitney Museum, the National Museum of Art, Brooklyn Museum of Art, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and Minnesota Museum of Art.

Mayhew is equally respected as an educator. He has taught at the Brooklyn Museum, the Art Students League, Smith College, and Pennsylvania State University, where he retired as Professor Emeritus in 1991 after fourteen years at the school. During his Penn State years, Mayhew travelled across America. He was deeply affected by the color, shapes, drama and spirituality of the American west. Upon his retirement from teaching, Mayhew and his wife moved to Santa Cruz, California, where he continues to paint.

Eleanor Merritt (Aug 17, 1933 - January 16, 2019) was one of the “Grand Dames” of Sarasota, “Ellie” was deeply involved in the greater Sarasota arts community. She was an early member of and represented by the Art Uptown Gallery for three decades, and served as chairman of the Sarasota Public Art Committee and on the board of the Arts & Cultural Alliance of Sarasota County. She was Board Member Emeritus of the John & Mabel Ringling Museum of Art where she served as a Docent for twenty-five years, was a board member and former President of the Venice Art Center, Sarasota Arts Council board member; chair of the Art in Public Places Program, and board member of Art Center, Sarasota. She continued teaching in the area and was a popular lecturer with the Sarasota Pierian Spring Academy for life-long learning.

Eleanor’s engagement in the arts community was not limited to Sarasota. She was a long-standing member of The Florida Artists Group, the Pen Women, and helped found and was a member of the Sarasota Chapter of Women Contemporary Artists. She was an early supporter of State College of Florida Family Heritage House Museum. Nationally, she served on the Board of Women’s Caucus for Art, was a charter member of the National Museum of Women in the Arts. She was also an early supporter of UNIFEM, the United Nations Development Fund for Women.

Among the many awards she was proud to have received were the National President’s Award in 1996 and Lifetime Achievement Award from the Women’s Caucus for Art in 2005 after her significant contribution to the nationally acclaimed women of color slide project. She also was recognized with a Women of Impact Award from Sarasota County Commission and Education Foundation Sarasota /Edge of Excellence Award in 1997 and received the Sarasota Arts Council Arts Leadership Award in 2006. The Sarasota-Manatee Chapter of the National Council of Jewish Women recognized her as one of their 2015 Women in Power honorees. In 2017, Merritt was honored by The Ringling Foundation.

Eleanor Merritt was a civic minded visionary who by experience and example broke through barriers of race and gender. She believed that “Art can open a window in time – it speaks to the heritage of the past, but carries these traditions into the future.” She truly was a renaissance woman who leaves us with an extraordinary legacy - a beautiful body of work that allows her spirit to resonate in perpetuity in homes, museums, corporations and institutions across the globe.

The list of Eleanor Merritt’s one-woman, group, corporate and juried shows spans the eastern seaboard and westward. It includes colleges and universities, corporate offices, museums, galleries, libraries and art centers.



On the list are the University of Florida; the University of Connecticut Cultural Center; American International College; the Atlanta Life Insurance Company; the Carnegie Endowment Institute in NYC; the Contemporary Art Museum in Jacksonville, FL; as well as the Polk Museum in Lakeland to name only a few. During the past 45 years she has had over 25 one-woman shows and her works have traveled to California, Colorado, Texas and Shimoneski, Japan.

A native New Yorker, Ms. Merritt graduated from the High School of Music & Art, receiving her BA and MA degrees in Fine Arts and Education from Brooklyn College CUNY. She acknowledges the influences of her training with her instructors at Brooklyn College; Mark Rothko; Ad Rhinehart; James Ernst; Kurt Seligmann and Mark Dillion.

Charles Ethan Porter (1847 – March 6, 1923) was an African-American painter who specialized in still life painting. A student at the National Academy of Design in New York City, he was one of the first African Americans to exhibit there. He was the only African-American artist at the turn of the century who painted in still life.

Porter was his family's first child to attend high school, graduating in 1865. Porter left Rockville in 1868 to study painting in Wilbraham, Massachusetts, a town twenty miles north of Rockville. In 1869, after two years of art study at Wesleyan Academy (now known as the Wilbraham & Monson Academy), Porter enrolled at the prestigious National Academy of Design in October 1869, becoming the first African American admitted to the school.

Porter attended the art school until the spring of 1873. While at the school, and for the first time, Porter began exhibiting his work. A painting titled, *Autumn Leaves*, was shown in the school's summer exhibition. In May 1870, Porter was among eight art students whose drawings, as part of a large school exhibition, were given special mention in the *New York Times*. Porter received widespread praise and attention for his work during his four years at the National Academy, earning the support of prominent benefactors such as Frederic Edwin Church, and famous author, Mark Twain, who lived in Hartford.

In the fall of 1873, Porter studied art with Joseph Oriel Eaton for a year, a prominent portrait and landscape painter. Porter studied and painted in New York City from fall thru spring every year, but would return home to Rockville in the summer to paint and teach art classes. In 1878, Porter moved to Hartford, Connecticut and established a studio. In Hartford, Porter's traditional academic art education made him a standout compared to the many self-taught artists who had recently moved to Hartford. He was one of the few artists at the time, and the only man to specialize in still life painting.

While in Hartford, Porter spent a good deal of time outdoors. He was very interested in nature, which is reflected in his paintings at the time of butterflies, dead birds, insects and plants. In 1879, Porter's work gained the attention of influential artist Frederick Edwin Church. Church visited Porter, purchased a few paintings and declared Porter to "have no superior as a colorist in the United States".

In 1881, Porter traveled to France to study the works of the influential artists of Barbizon school of painting. He enrolled in the Ecole des Arts Decoratifs in 1881 and studied art until he ran out of money and returned to the Hartford in 1884. In early 1885, Porter returned to New York City and opened a studio. He exhibited his work at the National Academy of Design and continued to paint. By November 1886, Porter was back in Hartford again. He partnered with local artist Daniel Wentworth to hold auctions in 1887 and 1888, Wentworth contributing landscapes and Porter contributing primarily still lifes. The paintings sold for prices ranging from \$6 to \$100.

By 1889, spent most of the year in New York City and summers in Rockville, Connecticut until 1897 when he settled permanently in Rockville. The quality of Porter's work declined after 1900 and interest in his work subsided. Porter died, March 6, 1923, at the age of 75.

Faith Ringgold (born October 8, 1930) is a painter, writer, mixed media sculptor and performance artist, best known for her narrative quilts.

Faith Ringgold was born the youngest of three children on October 8, 1930, in Harlem Hospital, New York City. Her parents, Andrew Louis Jones and Willi Posey Jones, descended from working-class families displaced by the Great Migration. Being that her mother was a fashion designer and father an avid storyteller, Ringgold was raised in an environment that encouraged her creativity. After the Harlem Renaissance, Ringgold's childhood home in Harlem was left with a vibrant and thriving arts scene. Figures such as Duke Ellington and Langston Hughes lived just around the corner from her home.

In a statement she later made about her youth, she said, "I grew up in Harlem during the Great Depression. This did not mean I was poor and oppressed. We were protected from oppression and surrounded by a loving family." With all of these influences combined, Ringgold's future artwork was greatly affected by the people, poetry, and music she experienced in her childhood, as well as the racism, sexism, and segregation she dealt with in her everyday life.

Faith Ringgold is an American artist best known for her colorful abstractions which often depict themes from American history and politics. Often associated with her ties to feminism, postcolonialist critique, and activism, she addresses controversial subject matter through a variety of media, including painting, sculpture, performance, and quilt work, as seen in her works *Flag for the Moon* (1969) and *Who's Afraid of Aunt Jemima* (1983). The artist is also known for her children's books, which she writes and illustrates, such as *Tar Beach* (1991) and *We Came to America* (2016) and was awarded a Caldecott Medal in 1992.

Born October 8, 1930 in Engelwood, NJ, Ringgold enrolled at the City College of New York to study fine arts, however was rejected by the male-only program and instead studied education. During her time at City College, she independently studied alongside several emerging artists including Robert Gwathmey, Yasuo Kuniyoshi, and Robert Blackburn, who she later collaborated with on a series of prints. Soon after, Ringgold spent time in Europe and was inspired to create her series *French Collection of decorative quilts*, which included one of her most famous works, *Dancing at the Louvre*. In 1967, she gained critical attention for her painting *American People Series #20: Die*, which depicted race warfare in the style of Pablo Picasso's *Guernica*. Today, the artist's work is held in the collections of The Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Brooklyn Museum, and the Baltimore Museum of Art, among others. Ringgold lives and works in Englewood, NJ.



Aminah Brenda Lynn Robinson (February 18, 1940 – May 22, 2015) was an American artist. Robinson was born in 1940 and raised in Columbus, Ohio, within the close-knit community of Poindexter Village, one of the country's first federally funded metropolitan housing developments. Robinson received her formal art training at the Columbus Art School (now the Columbus College of Art and Design). She continued to live and work in Columbus. She attended the Columbus Art School from 1957 to 1960, then studied art history and philosophy at Ohio State University (1960 to 1963), Franklin University, and Columbus' Bliss College.

Robinson was christened "Aminah" (derived from Aamina, mother of the Islamic prophet Muhamad) by an Egyptian cleric during her visit to Africa in 1979. She changed her name legally to include the forename in 1980.

Her diverse body of work ranges from drawings and woodcuts to complex sculptures made from natural and synthetic materials, such as twigs, carved leather, music boxes, and "hogmawg," her own material composed of mud, grease, dyes, and glue. The artist's "Memory Maps" (multi-media constructions of appliquéd cloth panels) contain "the idea and symbols of Africa—as a reservoir of culture, as the abode of spirits and inspiration for form and meanings that have traversed the great transatlantic African Diaspora to the Americas."

Robinson had been the subject of nearly two hundred solo and group exhibitions before the 2002 retrospective, *Symphonic Poem: The Art of Aminah Brenda Lynn Robinson* at the Columbus Museum of Art.

She has shown at the Columbus Museum of Art, the Tacoma Art Museum, and the Brooklyn Museum. She died on May 22, 2015 of heart problems.



Albert Alexander Smith (September 17, 1896 - April 3rd, 1940) was one of the earliest and most important African-American printmakers of the 20th century. His works are significant for their social commentary on racism, their themes of global racial uplift, and their exploration of human types and stereotypes.

Albert Alexander Smith, the son of parents who immigrated from Bermuda, was born in New York City. From an early age, his parents encouraged his artistic talents, paying for music lessons. His formal training in art began in 1913 when he became the first African American to earn a scholarship to attend the High School for Ethical Culture, where he studied drawing, watercolor painting, poster design, sculpture and basket making. He later became the first African American to study at the National Academy of Design.

He enlisted in the Army in World War I and saw action overseas while serving in the 807 Pioneer Band. In 1919 he received an honorable discharge from the army and returned to the National Academy of Design, where he won prizes in painting and etching. His etching, 'Plantation Melodies', striking in its portrayal of southern black musicians as ordinary people performing for their own pleasure rather than as outlandish caricatures performing for whites, immediately won Smith acclaim. It was published in August, 1920, in the NAACP'S magazine, 'Crisis', a magazine for which he would become a regular contributor.

For the next twenty years, Smith lived and worked in the Montmartre district. He traveled throughout Europe, studying art in Italy, Spain and Belgium. Earning his living as a musician and cabaret singer, he taught himself how to play the banjo. He performed with other black entertainers on stage in Paris, at La Coupole, and in Rome, and Brussels. During this time, he managed to exhibit regularly in Paris and Brussels, and also sent works back to the United States for exhibition and sale.

Smith's choice of subject matter is fascinating, as he worked in several genres. While traveling Europe he produced etchings which he exhibited and sold back in the United States. Typically, these were images of bridges, churches, and other European landmarks. These works were shown in the New York Public Library in 1921 and 1922, and at the Tanner Art League Exhibition in Washington, DC in 1922, where he won a gold medal. While in Paris, Smith executed a series of portrait etchings of great black leaders. He also produced a number of drawings in the spirit of social activism the state of race relations in America. They were regularly reproduced in the magazines of the NAACP and the National Urban League.

He had found a patron in New York collector and dealer Arthur Schomburg, who ordered works from Smith for his own collection and for resale. Smith would also do research on art for Schomberg at the Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris, gathering information for him on African-American artists who lived and worked in Europe. Smith was not above producing stereotypical scenes of African-American country life, musicians and dancers for wealthy clients searching for images of an imaginary tranquil past where gentile whites were happily served by contented African-Americans.

Smith submitted his paintings to the Harmon Foundation in New York City, the foundation the leading sponsor of African Americans in the arts at the time. Smith felt an acute sense of rivalry with fellow artists such as Archibald Motley Jr., who won a Guggenheim fellowship, Palmer Hayden and Hale Woodruff, both of who won awards from the Harmon Foundation. Smith did win a bronze award from the foundation in 1929.

Smith died in Paris in 1940. In 1990 his atelier surfaced at auction in Paris, there were many paintings, drawing and etchings. The painting *Cabaret* was among this collection, this painting is strikingly similar to a photograph of Smith on stage in Brussels in 1932.

Therman Statom (b. 1953) sculptor, glass artist, and painter - is most notably known as a pioneer of the contemporary glass movement for his life-size glass ladders, chairs, tables, constructed box-like paintings, and small-scale houses; all created through the technique of gluing glass plate together. Sandblasted surfaces become a canvas for spontaneous vibrant colors and line work, which take nuances from Abstract Expressionism and concepts of Minimalism, while simultaneously incorporating a twist by using blown-glass elements and found objects.



Born in Winter Haven, Florida in 1953, Statom spent his adolescence growing up in Washington, D.C. His interest in the arts grew from a fondness of painting and he began to investigate ceramics at RISD. However, after an experimental glass blowing session with Dale Chihuly, he was soon hooked on the spontaneity of glass blowing and its limitless possibilities. Statom went on to pursue studies at Pilchuck Glass School during its inaugural year, completing a BFA in 1974 from RISD, and later studied at the Pratt Institute of Art & Design.

Throughout his career, public artworks have been permanently installed at prominent locations including the Los Angeles Public Library, Corning, Inc. Headquarters, the Mayo Clinic, San Jose Ice Center, the Toledo Museum of Art, and the Jepson Center for the Arts in the Telfair Museum, Savannah as well as several hospitals across the country.

His artwork appears in numerous exhibitions annually, including solo and group shows around the nation and internationally. Over the span of his career, he has completed over thirty large, site-specific installations. Most notably in recent years, his 2009 solo exhibition "Stories of the New World," at the Orlando Museum of Art, which spanned over 5,000 square feet, has been his largest installation to date. Exploring themes related to Juan Ponce de Leon's 1513 search for the fabled Fountain of Youth as a point of departure, the installation referenced historic and contemporary themes of hope, discovery, ambition, and destiny. Visitors traversed the gallery space consisting of a mirrored maze, panoramic glass wall mural, a room-size structure built entirely of glass, and video projections. In conjunction with the exhibit, Statom partnered with the educational department of the OMA and the Zora Neale Hurston National Museum of Eatonville to work with over eighty young students to create a work of art titled, "Glass House", which was a large, walk-through structure built from glass boxes designed by the children. The piece was later displayed at the annual summer community festival.

Much of the latter half of Statom's career has been focused on the importance of educational programming within the arts. He has taken a deep interest in employing workshops as a catalyst for social change and in affect, positively impacting a community. Working directly with the artist himself, adults and children alike share a combined experience of exploring art making via a hands-on experience. Inhibitions and limitations are left by the wayside, and the practice or act of "doing" becomes a journey of self-discovery, creating an opportunity for the participant to go to a new place within themselves.

Charles Wilbert White, Jr. (April 2, 1918 – October 3, 1979) was an American artist known for his chronicling of African-American related subjects in paintings, drawings, lithographs, and murals.

Charles Wilbert White was born on April 2, 1918 in Chicago. His parents never married and his mother raised him -- as she had no child care, she would often leave him at the public library. There White developed an affinity for art and reading at a young age. White's mother bought him a set of oil paints when he was seven years old, which hooked White on painting. White won a grant during the seventh grade to attend Saturday art classes at the Art Institute of Chicago.

After reading Alain Locke's book *The New Negro: An Interpretation*, a critique of the Harlem Renaissance, White's social views changed. He learned about important African-American figures in American history, and questioned his teachers on why they were not taught to students in school, causing some to label him as a rebel. White did not graduate from high school, having lost a year due to his refusal to attend class after being disillusioned with the teaching system. While he was encouraged by his art teachers to submit his art works and won various scholarships, these would later be taken away from him and claimed as an error and given to whites instead. He was admitted to two art schools, each then pulled his acceptance because of his race. White ultimately received a full scholarship to attend the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. While in art school, White identified Mitchell Siporin, Francis Chapin, and Aaron Bohrod as his influences.

In 1938, White was hired by the Illinois Art Project, a state affiliate of the Works Progress Administration (WPA). His work received an extended showing at the Chicago Coliseum during the *Exhibition of the Art of the American Negro* which was part of an exposition commemorating the 75th anniversary of Thirteenth Amendment ending slavery. An important figure in what became known as the Chicago Black Renaissance, White taught art classes at the Southside Community Art Center. Following his first show at Paragon Studios in Cincinnati in 1938, White's work was exhibited widely throughout the United States, including, among many others, exhibitions at the Roko Gallery, the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, and the Whitney Museum of American Art. White also showed at the Palace of Culture in Warsaw and the Pushkin Museum. In 1976 his work was featured in *Two Centuries of Black American Art*, LACMA's first exhibition devoted exclusively to African-American Artists.

White moved to New Orleans in 1941 to teach at Dillard University. Beginning in that year, he was married briefly to famed sculptor and printmaker, Elizabeth Catlett who also taught at Dillard. He served in the US Army during WWII, but was discharged when he contracted tuberculosis (TB). White and Catlett moved to New York City and also studied together at an arts collective in Mexico City. While in New York City White learned lithography and etching techniques at the Arts Student League taking direction from renowned artist Harry Sternberg who encouraged him to move beyond "stylization to individuation in his figures." Taking Sternberg advice to heart White would go on to paint one of his best known works *The Contribution of the Negro to American Democracy* at Hampton University. Measuring around 12 feet by seven feet, the mural depicts a number of notable African Americans including Denmark Vesey, Nat Turner, Peter Salem, George Washington Carver, Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass, and Marian Anderson. White was elected to the National Academy of Design in 1972.

Printmaking enabled White to reach a wider public more directly and allowed him to bring together his social commitment and artistic practice. Although he had long been aware of art's social utility, with his lithographs and linocuts he was finally able to communicate with a large, cross-national community of black workers and socialist artists, as opposed to his paintings, which were generally tied to individual purchasers. He started providing political cartoons for the *Daily Worker* and, in 1953, he published in association with *Masses and Mainstream* a portfolio of six reproductions of his ink-and-charcoal drawings, entitled 'Charles White: Six Drawings'. Priced at only \$3, this portfolio aimed at getting art to the people, a main concern for progressive artists of the period.

In 1956, due to continued breathing problems (perhaps arising from the earlier case of TB) White was persuaded to move to Los Angeles for its drier, milder climate. From 1965 to his death in 1979, White taught at the Otis Art Institute in Los Angeles. On faculty at Otis, he was a beacon for African-American artists who came to study with him. Among those he taught were Alonzo Davis, David Hammons, and Kerry James Marshall. Later in life White moved to Altadena, California where he remained until his death in 1979.

White's works are in the collections of a number of institutions, including Atlanta University, the Barnett Aden Gallery, the Deutsche Akademie der Kunste, the Dresden Museum of Art, Howard University, the Library of Congress, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Minneapolis Institute of Art, the Oakland Museum, the Smithsonian American Art Museum, the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Syracuse University and the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts.

Ellis Wilson (April 20, 1899 – January 1977) was an African-American artist associated with the Harlem Renaissance whose work paved the way for later African-American artists and established the everyday lives of black people as a legitimate subject for art.

Wilson was born in 1899 in Mayfield, Kentucky in a segregated neighborhood known as “The Bottom.” Wilson attended the Mayfield Colored Grade School. He later attended the Kentucky Normal and Industrial Institute in Frankfort (which has since evolved into Kentucky State University) for two years, but was only allowed to take courses in agriculture and education. Interested in studying art, Wilson left school at 19 and moved to Chicago where he attended the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. He completed his art studies in 1923 and lived in Chicago for the next five years, seeking work as a commercial artist.

In 1928 Wilson moved to Harlem, New York, where he joined the Harlem Artists Guild and worked at a brokerage house. When Ellis first arrived in New York, black artists could not exhibit their work in mainstream galleries. He became an active member of the Harlem Renaissance, a collaborative effort to promote and exhibit the work of black artists. Ellis participated in many of the exhibitions associated with the movement.

Wilson worked for the Federal Art Project from 1935 to 1940. He was also commissioned to create triptychs for US Army and Navy chaplains. In 1944 he was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship and subsequently travelled through the southern United States. Wilson was very interested in Haiti and visited the country regularly beginning in 1952. His fondness for the country and its people is reflected in the vitality of paintings during that time period.

His major exhibitions include a Retrospective Exhibition at Fisk University, Nashville, 1971. His work can be found in the collections of many museums, including the Smithsonian's National Gallery of Art. Yet Kentucky-born artist Ellis Wilson remains relatively unknown in his hometown of Mayfield and in his home state. Ellis Wilson died in 1977. The exact date of his death and site of his grave are unknown.



James Van Der Zee (June 29, 1886 – May 15, 1983) was an African-American photographer best known for his portraits of black New Yorkers. He was a leading figure in the Harlem Renaissance. Aside from the artistic merits of his work, Van Der Zee produced the most comprehensive documentation of the period. Among his most famous subjects during this time were Marcus Garvey, Bill "Bojangles" Robinson and Countee Cullen.

Born in Lenox, Massachusetts, Van Der Zee demonstrated an early gift for music, initially aspiring to a career as a professional violinist. His other interest was photography. At the age of fourteen he received his first camera and took hundreds of photographs of his family and the town of Lenox. As one of the first people in the town to own a camera he was able to provide a rich early documentation of community life in small town New England. Van Der Zee moved to New York City in 1906 to work with his father and brother y. . as waiters and elevator operators. By now a skilled pianist and aspiring professional violinist, he was also the primary creator and one of the five performers in a group known as the Harlem Orchestra. In 1915 Van Der Zee moved to Newark, New Jersey where he was employed as a darkroom assistant and later as a photographer in a portrait studio. He returned to New York in 1916 and moved to Harlem just as large numbers of black migrants and immigrants were arriving in that section of the city. He set up his first portrait studio in his sister's music conservatory and two years later, with his second wife, Gaynella Greenlee, established the Guarantee Photo Studio in Harlem. Quickly Van Der Zee became the most successful photographer in Harlem.



By the early 1930s Van Der Zee's income from his photography work declined partly because of the strained economic circumstances of many of his customers and partly because the growing popularity of personal cameras reduced the need for professional photography. Van Der Zee responded by shooting passport photos, doing photo restorations, and taking other miscellaneous photography jobs, an approach he would employ for over two decades. In 1967 James Van Der Zee's work was rediscovered by photographers and photo-historians and he then received attention far beyond his Harlem community. Van Der Zee came out of retirement to photograph celebrities who in turn promoted his work in exhibits around the nation. His images were also the subject of books and documentaries. In 1993, the National Portrait Gallery exhibited his work as a posthumous tribute to his remarkable genius.



The Galleries program of Ringling College of Art and Design includes exhibitions and activities that celebrate the work and production of students, faculty and alumni. Our six on-campus galleries also host one person, group and thematic exhibitions that include locally, nationally and internationally known individuals. You will always find an exciting new exhibition, artist talk, lecture, or event to attend. Whether you're an aspiring artist or someone who is curious about new forms of creative expression, we welcome you to expand your perspective. Discover awe-inspiring work and thought-provoking insights from the art world.

Ringling College Galleries are free and open to the public. The Galleries on the campus of Ringling College of Art & Design provide a calendar of activities that supports the academic mission and curriculum of Ringling College.

For questions about an exhibition, gallery, or event contact us
at: [941.359.7563](tel:941.359.7563) or galleries@ringling.edu