



Profiles in Leadership: Visual Artists From the 20th & 21st Centuries

Materials:

- PowerPoint: **Visual Artists From the 20th & 21st Centuries**
- Lois Mailou Jones <https://sites.google.com/site/voicesoftheharlemrenaissance/harlem-renaissance/artists/lois-mailou-jone>
- Romare Bearden collage
https://video.search.yahoo.com/search/video;_ylt=A0geJaH2yDZgJoUAd1VXNyoA;_ylu=Y29sbwNiZjEEcG9zAzEEdnRpZAMEc2VjA3BpdnM-?p=Romare+Bearden+art&fr2=piv-web&fr=mcafee#id=5&vid=a81123e8dd94eb35b10957976581e5e9&action=view
- Jacob Lawrence, The Migration Series <https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/ap-art-history/later-europe-and-americas/modernity-ap/v/lawrence-migration-series>
- Faith Ringgold video.
https://video.search.yahoo.com/search/video;_ylt=A0geK.XQFTNgUE4AKaNXNyoA;_ylu=Y29sbwNiZjEEcG9zAzEEdnRpZAMEc2VjA3BpdnM-?p=faith+ringgold+art&fr2=piv-web&fr=mcafee#id=2&vid=9b84a95bd45d4ddb0a5763483001b88b&action=view
- Jean Michel Basquiat
<https://www.sothebys.com/en/articles/21-facts-about-jean-michel-basquiat>
- Beverly McIver paintings <http://beverlymciverart.com/exhibitions>

Plan of Instruction:

1. **Introduction:** Harlem Renaissance spanning the 1920s to the mid-1930s was primarily a literary experience, but visual artists kindled a new black cultural identity that depicted real black life. Alain Locke, in 1926, declared that through art, “Negro life is seizing its first chances for group expression and self-determination.”

The immense number of black artists from the last two centuries cannot possibly be represented in one lesson plan. YAAHA chose sixteen artists to provide a timeline of historically significant work that share milestones in American history. That despite many barriers, these artists produced diverse works of art of epic proportions that gave voice to the black experience in America.

2. **Lecture:**

- a. Slide 1: Title Slide: Visual Artists From the 20th and 21st Centuries
- b. Slide 2: Introduction (Read Slide)



- c. **Slides 3 - 6: James Van Der Zee (1886-1983)** James, a photographer, became a chronicler of black life in Harlem. His formal posed family photographs, taken in his studio, were of the growing black middle class in Harlem (***Garveyite Family***). He would photograph celebrities, social life, funerals, restaurants, barbershops, church services, and weddings. Sometimes he would manipulate the image with special effects in his darkroom; ***Future Expectation*** shows a transparent image of a child at the wedding couple's feet.
- d. **Slides 7 - 8: Alma Thomas (1891-1978)** Alma was an exuberant colorist using abstract shapes and patterns classified as an Expressionist painter. She felt that color is life and light is the mother of color. In 1969, man's landing on the moon inspired a series of paintings with short bars of color with an impasto technique. Alma achieved success as a black female artist despite the segregation and prejudice of her time. She never turned to racial or feminist issues for her art, believing that the creative spirit is independent of race and gender.
- e. **Slides 9 - 10: Augusta Savage (1892-1962)** Augusta was a prominent portrait sculptor from the Harlem Renaissance. Augusta's art career got significant attention from the bust sculpture of her nephew, ***Gamin***. Gamin means street urchin. Her most important sculpture was ***The Harp***, a sixteen-foot sculpture created for the 1939 World's Fair in New York. It comprises twelve black singers representing the strings of the harp and the hand and arm of God forming the rest of the harp. In the front is a man kneeling and holding the foot peddle of the harp. ***The Harp*** was inspired by the song "Lift Every Voice and Sing" (1900) by James Weldon Johnson. (in 1919, the NAACP called it the Negro National Anthem)
- f. **Slides 11 -12: Aaron Douglas (1899-1979)** Aaron was an important painter, graphic, and mural artist who painted in the Art Deco and Cubist style. His painting ***Window Cleaning*** depicts everyday life in Harlem. His mural painting ***From Slavery Through Reconstruction*** is a flat silhouetted style that depicts powerful images of black life struggles.
- g. **Slides 13 - 14: William H. Johnson (1901-1970)** William's art style evolved from realism to expressionism to a powerful folk style and use of four to five colors. ***Chain Gang*** is created in the strong folk-art tradition and depicts the horrible practice of convict leasing and chain gangs prevalent until the 1950s. Other mighty folk-art works by William include ***Homesteaders***, ***Deep South***, ***On A John Brown Flight***, and ***Going to Church***.
- h. **Slide 15: Lois Mailou Jones (1905-1998)** Lois was a black expatriate in Paris during the 1930s and 1940s. She was raised to appreciate education and had various painting styles during her lustrous art career, influenced by travels to Europe, Africa, and the Caribbean. She painted traditional landscapes to African-themed abstraction and was enormously proud of

her African roots and ancestry. She taught design and painting at Howard University for more than forty years. **(See Jones video URL in Material list)**

- i. **Slide 16: Romare Bearden** (1911-1988) Romare was a Harlem Renaissance member in New York. He started his art career by doing editorial drawings for the humor magazine *Medley*, then editorial drawings for the *Baltimore Afro American*, *Colliers*, and the *Saturday Evening Post*. He moved to Paris and was influenced by the great artist George Braque. In 1935, he joined the Harlem Artists Guild. He produced his most innovative works with vibrant colors during 1967-1969. Romare is best known for his photomontage compositions made from cut images from magazines. **(See Bearden video URL in Material list)**
- j. **Slide 17: Jacob Lawrence** (1912-2000) Jacob was a master at narrative art that illustrated the black American experience. His portrayal of American historical subjects such as the Harriet Tubman series, the John Brown series, the Struggles series, the Harlem series, and his most successful Migration series were invaluable to black Americans' history. Jacob used vivid colors set against black and brown figures to tell the history of blacks in America. **(See Lawrence video URL in Material list)**
- k. **Slides 18-19: Gordon Parks** (1912-2006) Gordon was a successful photographer, musician, writer, and film director. As a photojournalist, he was self-taught, and he considered his camera his choice of weapon to tell stories of individuals. When he documented blacks in Washington D.C., he took his iconic ***American Gothic*** photo (A parody of Grant Wood's oil painting) of Ella Watson to illustrate discrimination. In 1949, Life Magazine hired Gordon as its first black photographer. In 1971, Gordon directed the phenomenally successful movie ***Shaft***.
- l. **Slide 20: Elizabeth Catlett** (1915-2012) Elizabeth was an American-born artist that lived over sixty years in Mexico. She studied under Grant Wood. She produced compelling graphic images, paintings, and sculptures primarily for African Americans. Her work gave a voice to the voiceless.
- m. **Slides 21-22: Faith Ringgold** (1930 -) Faith Ringgold is an activist, painter, author, mixed media sculptor, performing artist and is best known for her narrative story quilts. Quilt making has its roots in the pre-civil war slave culture; Faith re-interpreted its function to tell the black communities' stories. *Tar Beach* is also a children's book about eight-year-old Cassie Lightfoot, who lives in Harlem and dreams of escaping the summer heat by flying away from their rooftop on a hot summer night. **(See Ringgold video URL in Material list)**

- n. **Slides 23-24: Kerry James Marshall (1955-)** Kerry is the most expensive living black artist in America today. His contemporary paintings explore the black experience drawn from American history and Kerry's personal experiences; Kerry grew up in Watts in South Central Los Angeles. His monumental paintings challenge blacks' marginalization and are reflective of his knowledge of art history and black folk art.

In 1997, Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority (MPEA), which owns McCormick Place, invest in public art and purchased **Free Time** from Kerry for \$25,000 and sold it at Sotheby's for \$18.5 million (\$21.1 million, including fees) in 2018.

- o. **Slide 25: Jean Michel Basquiat (1960-1988)** Jean Michel Basquiat started as a graffiti artist with enigmatic witticisms and later became a neo-expressionist painter in the 1980s. He was a self-taught artist. He was known for his primitive art style and his collaboration with Andy Warhol. Jean's work contained ambiguous sayings, the fusion of words, symbols, stick figures, and animals. In May 2017, his *Untitled (1982)* sold for \$98 million (\$110.5 million, including fees). A Japanese collector purchased the painting. It was the most ever paid for an American artist at auction. Jean Michel died in 1988 of an accidental drug overdose. **(See Basquiat video URL in Material list)**
- p. **Slide 26: Beverly McIver (1962 -)** Beverly is an artist who explores her life through her autobiographical self-portraits. She chronicles her life and others to illustrate personal histories and struggles in the African American experience. These emotional works of art provide the expression of personal thoughts and communication to the challenges in life. **(See McIver paintings URL in Material List)**
- q. **Slide 27: Kara Walker (1969-)** Kara is a contemporary painter, silhouettist, printmaker and installation artist. She creates historical narratives of the American South. Her work reflects the African American themes of identity, and she is often called a history painter. Kara's work is highly sought after, and her work ranges in price from thousands of dollars to upwards of \$500,000. In 2000, her silhouette installations in black-and-white were enhanced with colored light on the gallery walls, ceiling, and floor to create an extra dimension to the artwork.
- r. **Slide 28: Kehinde Wiley (1977-)** Kehinde has changed the face of portraiture with his photorealist style against a densely patterned background. These delicate, bright, distinctive portraits of blacks garnered the commission opportunity for Kehinde to paint President Barack Obama. The portrait is currently on view at the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C., but will go on tour beginning June 2021 through May 2022.
- s. **Slide 29: Summary** (Read Slide)