

Represent:

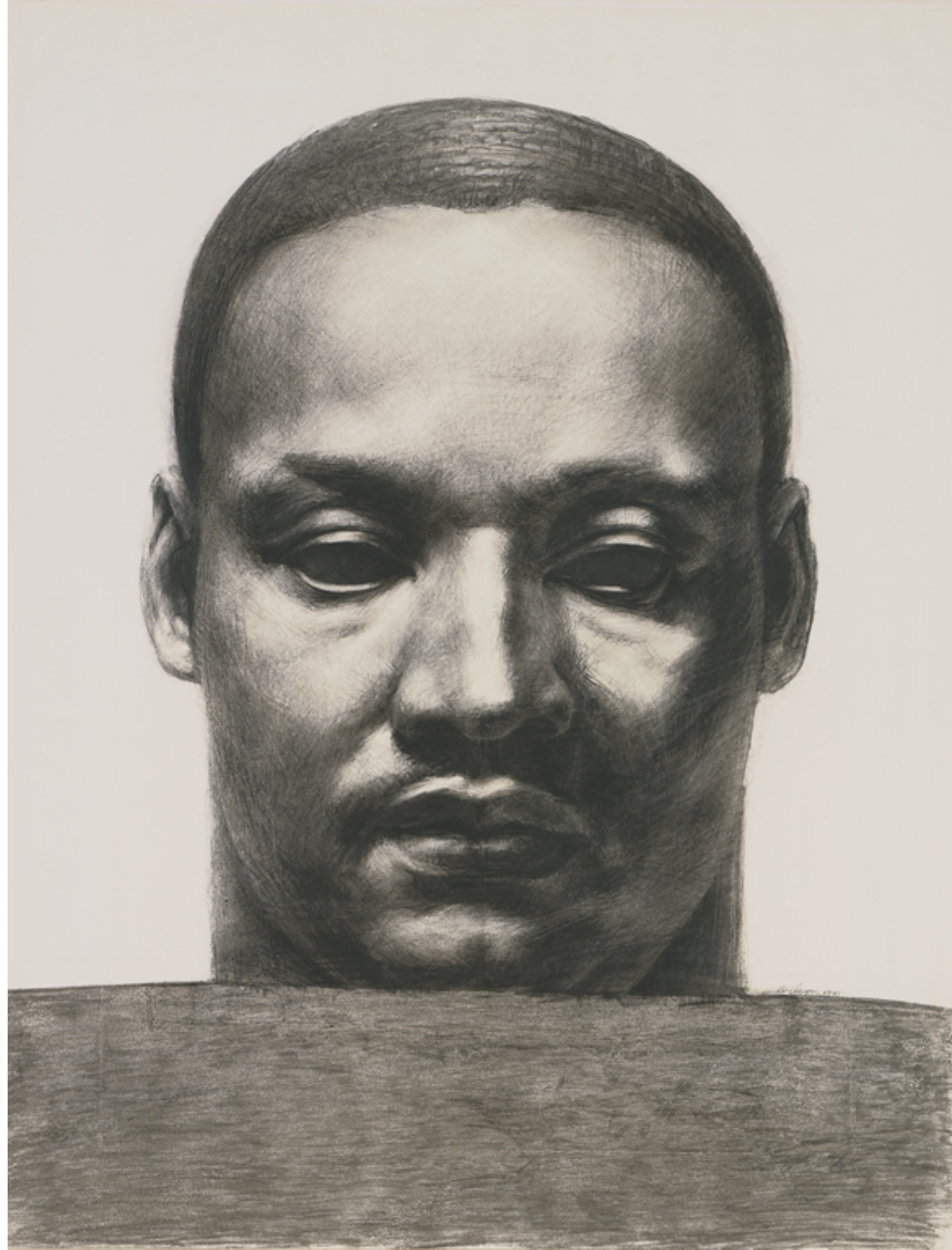
200 Years of African American Art



"(Cover Page) Libraries Are Appreciated" by Jacob Lawrence (1917-2000), 1943. One of the great stars to emerge from the Harlem Renaissance, Lawrence achieved national recognition for his narratives of African American life and history, notably the iconic "The Great Migration" series, completed when he was in his 20s, which traces the movement of African Americans to the North. Later, he painted many works dignifying ordinary black workers, from carpenters to construction workers, and others striving to get ahead. In this work, set in the New York Public Library at 9 West 124th Street, he depicted three figures reading books, suggesting a thirst for knowledge that will enable them to succeed in life. The Louis E. Stern Collection, 1963 ©2014 the Jacob and Gwendolyn Lawrence Foundation, Seattle/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

(Right) In this stern but vulnerable likeness, sculptor John Woodrow Wilson said he wanted viewers to recognize in this contemplative expression the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr's energy and strength, as well as his weariness and personal struggles. This charcoal drawing was used in designing an 8-foot-tall bronze portrait of the civil rights leader in a Buffalo park. The smooth style of the bust reflects Wilson's solid academic training, his numerous tours to view European art and his work as an art professor at Boston University. A 125th anniversary acquisition, purchased with funds contributed by the Young Friends of the Philadelphia Museum of Art in honor of the 125th anniversary of the museum and in celebration of African American art, 2000.

Represent: 200 Years of African American Art," on view at the Philadelphia Museum of Art from January 10-April 5, highlights selections from the museum's holdings of African American art and celebrates the publication of a catalog examining the breadth of these noteworthy collections.





"The Annunciation" by Henry O. Tanner (1859–1937), Philadelphia, 1898. A high point of the Philadelphia Museum's African American Collection is this work by Tanner, who spent most of his career as an expatriate in France. The bright yellow column at left suffuses the setting with a golden glow, magnifying the significance of the biblical scene, and demonstrating why Tanner is considered the greatest African American painter of the Nineteenth Century. Purchased with the W.P. Wiltach Fund in 1899, "Annunciation" was the first work by an African American to enter the

With work by renowned artists such as Henry Ossawa Tanner, Horace Pippin, Jacob Lawrence and Carrie Mae Weems, the exhibition showcases a range of subjects, styles, mediums and traditions. Since the museum's acquisition of Tanner's painting "The Annunciation" in 1899, its collections of African American art have grown significantly, especially during the last three decades.



"Smoking My Pipe" by Samuel Joseph Brown Jr (1907–1944), Philadelphia, 1934. Perhaps buoyed by help from New Deal art programs, Brown, in this jaunty self-portrait, presents himself as a pipe-smoking, bow-tied young artist and confident, fashionably dressed man about town. In reality, he was struggling to make a living during the Great Depression. Public Works of Art Project, on long-term loan to the Philadelphia Museum of Art from the Fine Arts Collections, US General Services Administration.

From compelling stories to innovative methods, "Represent" explores the evolving ways in which African American artists have expressed personal, political and racial identity. It begins with rare examples of fine and decorative arts made in the 1800s by free and enslaved individuals, such as a large storage jar by the accomplished potter David Drake. As access to artistic training and opportunities increased, the relationship between creative expression and identity grew more complex and nuanced. In the early Twentieth Century, artists like William Henry Johnson and Elizabeth Catlett embraced Modernism by representing personal experiences or scenes of daily life in vibrant colors and dynamic compositions.

"Birds in Flight" by Aaron Douglas (1899–1979) 1927. Kansas-born Douglas, a leader of the Harlem Renaissance, helped open the way for African American artists to employ explicitly black themes, inspiring a resurgence of racial pride in black art. While teaching at several institutions of higher learning he created murals featuring flattened, nearly transparent, silhouettes dramatically documenting the African American journey from Africa through slavery to emancipation. Here he makes effective use of energetic flat patterns reflecting the fragmentations and reductions of post-Cubist art, as well as African designs. Promised gift of Marguerite and Gerry Lenfest in honor of Anne d'Harnoncourt. ©Heirs of Aaron Douglas/Licensed by VAGA, New York.





"Mr Prejudice" by Horace Pippin (1888–1946), 1943. The best known among untutored African American painters, Pippin surmounted a painting arm crippled in World War I to create works of great visual sophistication and emotional impact. He gained national attention for genre scenes, landscapes, still lifes, and religious and historic scenes. In "Mr Prejudice" he took on the issue of discrimination faced by black men returning from military service in World War I. Gift of Dr and Mrs Matthew T. Moore, 1984.

In the exhibition, abstract paintings and sculpture from the 1960s through the 1980s by Barbara Chase-Riboud, Martin Puryear and others show a desire to balance cultural and artistic identities, challenging the idea that work by African Americans should be viewed in primarily racial terms. By contrast, many artists working in the 1990s and since, Glenn Ligon and Lorna Simpson among them, have used pictures and text to examine the past and make pointed statements about race.

"Hands" quilt by Sarah Mary Taylor (1916–2000), Mississippi, winter 1980, 83¼ by 78 inches. Quilts, longtime creations of black female craftspeople in the South, are represented in the Philadelphia Museum by a dazzling array of brilliant colors and varied patterns, including some by the famed Gee's Bend, Ala., quilters. Taylor traced her left hand on a sheet of paper, which was then cut out and used as the pattern using fabric shapes from old dresses. The Ella King Torrey collection of African American quilts, 2006.

Represent" culminates by stepping outside historical narrative to present an array of portraits by several generations of artists, from those active over a century ago to those making work today.

