

The Dayton Art Institute
100 Years of African-American Art: The Arthur Primas Collection
Marking the Past/Shaping the Present: The Art of Willis "Bing" Davis
On view: November 6th, 2010 through January 30th, 2011

Introduction to the Exhibition

100 Years of African-American Art celebrates the creativity and achievements of African-American artists, many of whom worked under the extreme pressure of an unresponsive public. The exhibition features 69 works from the Arthur Primas collection, one of the country's most significant collections of African-American art. It highlights 34 artists, including Hughie Lee-Smith, Charles White, Elizabeth Catlett and many others, who created magnificent art that reflects the African-American experience and aesthetic.

The Dayton Art Institute and the University of Dayton will jointly present *Marking the Past/Shaping the Present: The Art of Willis "Bing" Davis*, a retrospective of works by the nationally acclaimed Dayton artist. The University of Dayton will display Davis' photographs, masks and ceramics, while The Dayton Art Institute will host an exhibition of his oil pastels. Davis attended The School of The Dayton Art Institute and has been at the forefront of the Dayton arts community for more than three decades as an artist, educator and community activist.

A Note to Educators

This Educator Resource Guide is designed as a supplement to the exhibition and will assist educators by:

- providing a historical timeline of key events during the last 100 years of the African American experience
- providing information about select artists and historical context of the artwork in the exhibition
- aligning the exhibition's thematic content to the Ohio Academic Content Standards
- providing additional resources, such as books, videos and websites to assist in preparing students for their visit

Key objectives of the Educator Resource Guide are for the student to:

1. recognize universal themes of freedom, dignity and community expressed in the exhibition
2. gain knowledge of the civil rights movement by examining select works in the exhibition
3. recognize that visual art has the capability to bring attention to and expand awareness of social issues

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Objective #1

*To recognize universal themes of freedom, dignity and community
expressed in the exhibition*



Bryan Collier
Langston Hughes (from the book titled “Visiting Langston”)

Collier’s interest in art was always encouraged both at home and at school. He developed a unique style of painting that incorporated both watercolors and collage. Collier states, “Collage is more than just an art style. Collage is all about bringing different elements together. Once you form a sensibility and a connection, how different elements relate to each other, you deepen your understanding of yourself and others.”

Today Collier spends his time working on book illustrations, creating his own studio pieces and going into classrooms to talk with teachers, librarians and students about books and art. “With the books that I have been doing, I have this amazing opportunity to bring my art and the process of making artwork and books into the classroom. I ask the student to talk to me and talk to each other about how they feel and what their own experiences are. Basically I ask them to tell their own story through art.”

Talk about:

- Which man in the picture do you think is Langston Hughes?
 - What did the artist do to focus your attention on Hughes?
- Why do you think the artist included musicians in the picture with Langston Hughes?
 - Name some ways the artist created a feeling of rhythm and movement in the picture.
 - Think of some words that describe how the picture makes you feel.
- The picture is an illustration from a book. How does the picture tell a story without using any words?



Romare Bearden
The Lamp

Romare Bearden was strongly affected by a trip he made to the Caribbean. Because he lived in cities like New York, Bearden was overwhelmed by the rich, vivid, “clean” colors of the tropics. He soaked in these colors, and used them in his works to try and bring a little of that experience to his viewers in America. The artist once said: “My intention is to reveal through pictorial complexities the life I know.”

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Bearden was also a jazz and blues fanatic, and he incorporated his love of music into his art. Bearden was friends with the artist Stuart Davis who was also strongly influenced by jazz, and Davis showed Bearden how to visualize relationships between colors and musical notes. Bearden, through associations with other artists such as Davis as well as his own self-study, developed a strong link between the two disciplines.

In *The Lamp*, Bearden depicts a mother teaching her child to read. The image could not be more intimate nor could it represent something more important: the sharing of time, knowledge, and love. No fewer than three hands point to the book as testament to the importance of instruction that functions as the route to empowerment and self-determination. The kerosene lamp lights the room but also is a symbol that education leads to a brighter future of expanded opportunity.

Talk about:

- Who do you think the people in the picture are?
- What do you think the people in the picture are doing?
 - What do you see in the picture that makes you think this?
- Do you think the artist used the book and lamp as symbols?
 - What do you think the book and the lamp symbolize?
 - Why do you think Bearden created this picture?

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Objective #2

To gain knowledge of civil rights movement by examining select works in the exhibition



Charles Alston
Martin Luther King

A great world leader for peace and tolerance, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. has been and remains a force in American life. Artists represent him as a way of honoring and extending his influence, making art itself a political activity. Alston’s wide-eyed, sky-searching portrait of Reverend King suggests deep spirituality and the artist’s sensitive portrayal invites the viewer to revisit the significance of Dr. King’s legacy.

Alston himself was a pioneer in the Civil Rights movement: he was the first black instructor at the Art Students' League of New York in 1950 and later the first black instructor at the Museum of Modern Art in 1956.

Talk about:

- The artist has chosen to depict Martin Luther King with his eyes wide open and looking up. Why do you think the artist chose to do this?
- How does the artist bring attention to the importance of the Civil Rights Movement by creating this sculpture of Martin Luther King?
- What are some reasons that it would be important to honor a person, movement or cause?
 - Think about ways art can honor a person, movement or cause and give some examples.



Benny Andrews
KKK- Broken Chains

Benny Andrews could be called a minimalist. His drawings, oils and collages all share a stark simplicity. Andrews said that he was not interested in how much he could do on a canvas but how little. In this drawing Andrews has depicted an African-American man looking at a broken sculpture representing the Ku Klux Klan. The sculpture in the drawing is shown with its face uncovered, as well as with broken arms and broken chains around its base.

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) became the main opponent of the Ku Klux Klan. In 1964 the NAACP, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) organized its Freedom Summer

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campaign. Its main objective was to try to end the political disenfranchisement of African Americans in the Deep South. Volunteers from the three organizations decided to concentrate their efforts in Mississippi. The three organizations established 30 Freedom Schools in towns throughout Mississippi. Volunteers taught in the schools and the curriculum included black history, and the philosophy of the civil rights movement.

Talk about:

- Does the sculpture in the drawing remind you of another famous sculpture in America?
 - What does The Statue of Liberty represent to you and how does it differ from what you think the sculpture in the drawing represents?
- Why do you think the artist drew the sculpture with its face exposed?
- Why do you think the figure’s arms and the chains around the base of the sculpture are broken?

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Objective #3

*To recognize art has the capability to bring attention to
and expand awareness of social issues*



Charles White
Freeport Columbia

Artists often create art as a vehicle for change in the world in which they live. Charles White (1918-1979) was one of America’s finest artists of the mid-20th century and a giant figure in African American art history. His artworks celebrated African-American heroes as well as ordinary women and men struggling to maintain dignity in a racist society. Charles White is quoted as saying, “Paint is the only weapon that I have to fight what I resent. If I could write, I would write about it. If I could talk, I would talk about it. Since I paint, I must paint about it.”

Like many other African-American artists in the 20th century, White examined the recurring tragedy of lynching. In this charcoal and ink drawing titled ***Freeport Columbia***, White has depicted a military veteran who has served honorably in his nation’s defense and has returned to white racist hostility and violence. In this depiction, the soldier has broken free of the lynchers’ noose and is carrying a replica of the Statue of Liberty torch in his right hand. At the bottom left of the drawing, White shows the alliance of the Ku Klux Klan, the police and a white male representing the persistence of American racism. The scene at the bottom right reflects the racial turmoil that continued through the civil rights movement.

Talk about:

- What do you think this drawing is about?
 - What makes you think that?
 - What are the clues that the artist has given you?
- Discuss the artist’s meaning of the noose, torch and chain.
- How do you think attitudes toward African-Americans have changed since the Civil Rights movement?



Curtis James
Tulsa Race Riot of 1921

This artist has chosen to represent one of the most devastating race riots in the history of the United States, the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921. Tension mounted between black and white communities over an incident that allegedly occurred in an elevator in downtown Tulsa. There are several versions of what supposedly transpired between Sarah Page, a 17-year-old white elevator operator, and Dick Rowland, a 19-year old black man, but the most common being that Dick Rowland accidentally stepped on Page’s foot in the elevator, throwing her off balance.

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When Rowland reached out to keep her from falling, she screamed. Many Tulsans came to believe through media reports that Rowland attacked Page although no sufficient evidence surfaced to substantiate the claim.

The strained relationship between the white and black communities led to the Tulsa Race Riot. Armed white men looted, burned and destroyed the black community. Numerous accounts described airplanes carrying white assailants firing rifles and dropping firebombs on buildings, homes, and fleeing families. The planes, six biplane two-seater trainers left over from World War I, were dispatched from the nearby Curtis Field (now defunct) outside of Tulsa. White law enforcement officials later claimed the sole purpose of the planes was to provide reconnaissance and protect whites against what they described as a "Negro uprising." However, eyewitness accounts and testimony from the survivors confirmed that on the morning of June 1, the planes dropped incendiary bombs and fired rifles at black Tulsans on the ground. When the smoke cleared, mere shells of buildings were all that remained of the business district. The Red Cross estimates that more than 300 people were killed and approximately 1,200 homes were destroyed.

Talk about:

- What do you see happening in the painting?
- What story is the artist trying to tell in the painting?
- Does the title give you information about the event that took place?
- How does the composition of the painting help tell the story? Or dramatize the story?
 - Discuss reasons why the artist would use this point of view.

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Ohio Academic Content Standards
ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

The content of this exhibition and the suggested curriculum connections in this educator resource are in alignment with specific benchmarks as outlined in the Ohio Academic Content Standards for English Language Arts.

Phonemic Awareness, Word Recognition and Fluency Standard

Students in the primary grades learn to recognize and decode printed words, developing the skills that are the foundations for independent reading. They discover the alphabetic principle (sound-symbol match) and learn to use it in figuring out new words. They build a stock of sight words that helps them to read quickly and accurately with comprehension, intonation and timing as appropriate for the text.

Grades	Benchmark
4-7	A
8-10	A

Writing Process Standard

Students’ writing develops when they regularly engage in the major phases of the writing process. The writing process includes the phases of prewriting, drafting, revising and editing and publishing. They learn to plan their writing for different purposes and audiences. They learn to apply their writing skills in increasingly sophisticated ways to create and produce compositions that reflect effective work and grammatical choices. Students develop revision strategies to improve the content, organization and language of their writing. Students also develop editing skills to improve writing conventions.

Grades	Benchmark
5-7	A, C, D, E, F, H
8-10	A, B, C, D, F

Writing Application Standard

Students need to understand that various types of writing require different language, formatting and special vocabulary. Writing serves many purposes across the curriculum and takes various forms. Beginning writers learn about the various purposes of writing; they attempt and use a small range of familiar forms (e.g., letters). Developing writers are able to select text forms to suit purpose and audience. They can explain why some text forms are more suited to a purpose than others and begin to use content-specific vocabulary to achieve their communication goals. Proficient writers control effectively the language and structural features of a large repertoire of text forms. They deliberately choose vocabulary to enhance text and structure their writing according to audience and purpose.

Grades	Benchmark
5-7	A
8-10	A

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Ohio Academic Content Standards
ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Acquisition of Vocabulary Standard

Students acquire vocabulary through exposure to language-rich situations, such as reading books and other texts and conversing with adults and peers. They use context clues, as well as direct explanations provided by others, to gain new words. They learn to apply work analysis skills to build and extend their own vocabulary. As students progress through the grades, they become more proficient in applying their knowledge of words (origins, part, relationships, meanings) to acquire specialized vocabulary that aids comprehension.

Grades	Benchmark
4-7	B
8-10	B, C

Writing Conventions Standard

Students learn to master writing conventions through exposure to good models and opportunities for practice. Writing conventions include spelling, punctuation, grammar and other conventions associated with forms of written text. They learn the purpose of punctuation: to clarify sentence meaning and help readers know how writing might sound aloud. They develop and extend their understanding of the spelling system, using a range of strategies for spelling works correctly and using newly learned vocabulary in their writing. They grow more skillful at using the grammatical structures of English to effectively communicate ideas in writing and to express themselves.

Grades	Benchmark
5-7	A, B, C
8-10	A, B, C

Communication: Oral and Visual Standard

Students learn to communicate effectively through exposure to good models and opportunities for practice. By speaking, listening and providing and interpreting visual images, they learn to apply their communication skills in increasingly sophisticated ways. Students learn to deliver presentations that effectively convey information and persuade or entertain audiences. Proficient speakers control language and deliberately choose vocabulary to clarify points and adjust presentations according to audience and purpose.

Grades	Benchmark
5-7	A
8-10	A

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Ohio Academic Content Standards
SOCIAL STUDIES

The content of this exhibition and the suggested curriculum connections in this educator resource are in alignment with specific benchmarks as outlined in the Ohio Academic Content Standards for Social Studies.

History

Students use materials drawn from the diversity of human experience to analyze and interpret significant events, patterns and themes in the history of Ohio, the United States and the world.

Grades	Benchmarks
K-2	D
3-5	B
6-8	A, G
9-10	E, F
11-12	B

People in Societies

Students use knowledge of perspectives, practices and products of cultural, social groups to analyze the impact of their commonality and diversity within local, national, regional and global settings.

Grades	Benchmarks
K-12	A, B
6-12	C

Geography

Students will use knowledge of geographic locations, patterns and processes to show the interrelationship between the physical environment and human activity, and to explain the interactions that occur in an increasingly interdependent world.

Grades	Benchmarks
9-10	A, C
11-12	A

Economics

Students use economic reasoning skills and knowledge of major economic concepts, issues and systems in order to make informed choices as producers, consumers, savers, investors, workers and citizens in an increasingly interdependent world.

Grades	Benchmarks
6-8	C
9-12	B

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Ohio Academic Content Standards
SOCIAL STUDIES

Citizen Rights and Responsibilities

Students use knowledge of the rights and responsibilities of citizenship in order to examine and evaluate civic ideals and to participate in community life and the American democratic system.

Grades	Benchmarks
6-8	B
9-12	A

Social Studies Skills and Methods

Students collect, organize, evaluate and synthesize information from multiple sources to draw logical conclusions. Students communicate this information using appropriate social studies terminology in oral, written or multimedia form and apply what they have learned to societal issues in simulated or real-world settings.

Grades	Benchmarks
K-2	A, C
3-5	A
3-12	D

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Ohio Academic Content Standards
VISUAL ARTS

The content of this exhibition and the suggested curriculum connections in this educator resource are in alignment with specific benchmarks as outlined in the Ohio Academic Content Standards for Visual Arts.

Historical, Cultural and Social Contexts

Students understand the impact of visual art on the history, culture and society from which it emanates. They understand the cultural, social and political forces that, in turn, shape visual art communication and expression. Students identify the significant contributions of visual artists to cultural heritage. They analyze the historical, cultural, social and political contexts that influence the function and role of visual art in the lives of people.

Grades	Benchmarks
K-4	A, B, C, D
5-8	A, C, D
9-12	A, B, C

Analyzing and Responding

Students identify and discriminate themes, media, subject matter and formal technical and expressive aspects in works of art. They understand and use the vocabulary of art criticism to describe visual features, analyze relationships, and interpret meanings in works of art. Students make judgments about the quality of works of art using the appropriate criteria.

Grades	Benchmarks
K-4	A, B, C
5-8	A, C
9-12	A, B

Valuing the Aesthetic Reflection

Students understand why people value visual art. Students will present their beliefs about the nature and significance of selected artworks and the reasons for holding these beliefs. Students reflect on and respect diverse points of view about artworks and artifacts.

Grades	Benchmarks
K-4	A, B, C
5-8	A, B
9-12	A, B, C

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Ohio Academic Content Standards
VISUAL ARTS

Connections, Relationships and Applications Standard

Students connect and apply their learning of visual art to the study of other arts areas and disciplines outside the arts. They understand relationships between and among concepts and ideas that are common across subjects in the curriculum. Students recognize the importance of lifelong learning and experience in visual arts.

Grades	Benchmarks
K-4	A, B, D
5-8	A, C, D
9-12	A

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Additional Resources
Websites for Artists in the Primas Exhibition

Charles Alston

<http://www.columbia.edu/cu/iraas/wpa/artists/calston.html>

<http://www.charleshenryalston.org/default.html>

Benny Andrews

<http://bennyandrews.com/>

<http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/USAkkk.htm>

<http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/nge/Article.jsp?id=h-1042>

Romare Bearden

<http://www.beardenfoundation.org/artlife/biography/biography.html>

<http://www.nga.gov/education/classroom/bearden/bio1.shtm>

<http://www.answers.com/topic/romare-bearden>

John Biggers

<http://www.tfaoi.com/aa/5aa/5aa200.htm>

Elizabeth Catlett

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/aaworld/arts/catlett.html>

Bryan Collier

<http://www.bryancollier.com/bio.php>

Jacob Lawrence

<http://www.artchive.com/artchive/L/lawrence.html>

<http://whitney.org/www/jacoblawrence/>

Hughie Lee-Smith

<http://www.tfaoi.com/newsmu/nmus57b.htm>

Bob Thompson

<http://www.figurativeexpressionism.com/thompson.htm>

Charles White

http://www.artyclopedia.com/artists/white_charles_wilbert.html

<http://www.jpanafrican.com/docs/vol3no4/3.4CharlesWhitebyPaul.pdf>

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Websites for General Information

http://www.artlex.com/ArtLex/a/african_american_6.html

<http://www.artcyclopedia.com/nationalities/African-American.html>

<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/langston-hughes>

<http://www.tulsalibrary.org/aarc/riot/riot.php>

<http://www.montgomerycollege.edu/Departments/hpolscrv/VdeLaOliva.html>