

# Black art movement and the harlem renaissance

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HERE HERE YOUR HERE HERE Black Art Movement and the Harlem

Renaissance The Black Arts movement is characterized by not only writing, but different paintings and other artistic representations from notable black artists. The foundation of the black arts movement can be traced all the way back to the days of slavery and the birth of the nation, with famous black poets such as Phillis Wheatley whose signed first edition of poems published in 1773 fetched over \$30, 000 at auction (Peterson, 2006). Additionally, a signed first edition of abolitionist leader Frederick Douglass, written as a narrative of his escape efforts in 1855, is estimated to sell for approximately \$25, 000 at auction (Peterson). These are valuable because these artists helped to pave the road for the Harlem Renaissance that now categorizes modern African-American art.

The Harlem Renaissance “ refers to an era of written and artistic creativity among African-Americans that occurred after World War I and lasted until the middle of the 1930s Depression” (Lamb and Johnson, 1). It was a period where black Americans, and even some groups of white supporters, began to realize that black people had many creative talents and could provide meaning to their lives through artistic and innovative expression. During this period, black Americans began to embrace their unique cultural heritage and abandoned efforts to mimic the styles of white artists (blackhistory. com, 1). These changes that led to self-esteem development about their heritage occurred on the back of black movement from the segregated South, where many of them and their ancestors were still working as indentured servants, in order to find liberation and connection with their black roots. This growth in the black middle class, as they were able to find jobs, provided them new

opportunities to express themselves through dramatic and creative art forms (blackhistory. com). At this period, there was also an interest being formed for jazz music with many white Americans that enjoyed the new sounds of lyrical black expression.

One notable writer from this Harlem Renaissance period was Henry Dumas, who wrote a collection of short stories that described the efforts of different civil rights activists to describing the “ lethal strength of a sax solo”, in order to celebrate the African-American spirit and movement toward liberation as a culture (Flexman, 213). Another novelist, Amiri Baraka, helped to build Black Dialogue, a publication facility that supported black arts. In his poetry, which was considered very risqué during the Harlem Renaissance, he spoke of “ fists beating niggers out of jocks or setting fire and death to whities ass” as a means to show African-American defiance against racial intolerance (Judge, D6). It is poetry like this that often caused social uprising in different black social groups and reminded them that they were still an oppressed people, therefore inspiring the next generation of blacks to explore artistry as a means to help in the cause for civil rights.

The black arts movement involved many different African-American artists that often used their creative expression and poetry to influence others to reconsider their role in broader, White society. It is likely that without these historical figures, prominent leaders like Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X would not have been inspired to use peaceful (and sometimes violent) protest that marks the current state of liberation for African-Americans nationwide.

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