

African american paintings during the harlem renaissance narrative



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African American Paintings during Harlem Renaissance Niccole Marshall

Art/101 June 27, 2010 Melissa Ernstes Figure: 1 No Date We four in Paris

Palmer Hayden Watercolor on paper Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY The

painting, We four in Paris is a perfect example of using cubism as a school of art. Palmer Hayden used bold shapes such as squares, and circles, when drawing the characters faces, and bodies. Like many cubism painters, he used browns, blacks, reds, and dark oranges. The painting is of men playing a card game around a table in Paris.

The painting might suggest that the men were playing a illegal game, because they are looking over their shoulders. Unfortunately, the date is unknown, but the men look as if they were the newly defined African

American. Figure: 2 1924 The Mending Sock Archibald J. Motle Oil on canvas Auckland Art Museum, U of North Carolina at Chapel Hill The Mending Sock is a classic example of a true work of art. The colors are so bold, and keep your eyes focused on particular pieces. The painting is of an elderly woman mending a sock while sitting in her chair.

The painting suggests that the elderly woman is tired because of the hard wrinkles and sadness in her face. She does not have the leisure of someone else fixing her clothing, which was a clear example of the way African Americans lived at this time. In the painting there is a photo of a Caucasian woman, which may also suggest that she is submissive to the woman in the photo. This painting seems to be postimpressionism because it looks similar to still life, as shown by the fruit basket on the table. This painting symbolizes a struggle from the ancestors of current African Americans.

Figure: 3 1927

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Rebirth Aaron Douglas Oil on Canvas Institution Unknown The painting Rebirth has a lot of meaning, and emotion that can be defined personally for African Americans. African Americans ancestors were taken from their homeland in Africa. As stated in history, they were brought to America to be enslaved, and stripped of their individuality. It was as if they were no longer human, and lost themselves. The Harlem Renaissance was the chance for African Americans to be reborn, and become something within themselves. The painting illustrates all this through the people getting off their knees and standing up.

The painting also has African statues, and symbols to show their birth land. The artist uses expressionism painting, because they are trying to show what they, and others are feeling. Figure: 4 1929 Blues Archibald J. Motley Oil on canvas Institution Unknown The painting Blues expresses greatly of what the Harlem Renaissance was. The Harlem Renaissance was known for its appreciation and expression of art. It was filled with music, poetry, paintings, dancing, and Jazz was the main music played by African Americans. Jazz filled nightclubs, bars, homes and streets.

This painting symbolizes a memorable time for African Americans. The painting has people enjoying jazz music played, while dancing to the tune. The artist used rich, bold colors, and dark colors. Such colors used in this painting, are usually done with impressionism. Figure: 5 1934 Brothers Malvin Gray Johnson Oil Smithsonian American art Museum, Washington, DC The painting, Brothers is a painting of two brothers dressed in slacks who are sitting outside next to each other. The colors in the painting are dark, like a cloudy day. The brothers have no shoes on, and are very close.
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It is visible that one of the brothers is the younger one. The younger one is shorter, and is leaning on the older one. In previous history African Americans were enslaved, and families were split apart. The Harlem Renaissance was a new era for African American families. They were now able to be together, and live normal like others. The painting is postimpressionism, because it is like a portrait, or still life. Figure: 6 1934 Song of the Tower Aaron Douglas Oil on canvas Unknown Institution The painting Song of the Tower is a painting that can be interpreted in many ways according to how one feels.

Aaron Douglas truly captured emotion, and history in this classic , and popular piece. This painting has 3 men who are believed to be African American, and each tell their own story. The man to the right is trying to get to the top, and excell in the workforce. The man to the left is a slave man who ran away from his slave owner. The man at the top of the mountain is playing the saxophone, and he represents the Harlem Renaissance. The Harlem Rennasaince, at the top was a way for African Americans to express their talents, and be who they needed, and wanted to be. This way of painting would have to be expressionism.

Figure: 7 1937 The Janitor who paints. Palmer Hayden Oil Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC. The Janitor who paints is a painting that was done during the Harlem Renaissance years. The painting is done of a man whom is a father and a husband, painting a portrait of his wife and child. In the painting, you will also notice a cat sleeping at his feet. The painting was done in oil, using bold colors for the clothing, and background

images. The Janitor who paints does express Realism, because the artist captured fine details in the art as if you were there with them.

The expressions in the faces and the worn in the clothes are examples of realism. The painting symbolizes to me how African American lived during this era. Figure: 8 1938 Negro Worker James Lescesne Wells Lithograph on paper No institution/ Museum The Negro Worker is a painting that is made to look like a self portrait of an African American man. The painting has a meaning behind it relating to African American workers, still to this day. The man is very significant to the Harlem Renaissance because it was the time African American men were allowed to really make a change for themselves, and their families.

They were able to get a good job. The man in the painting wears a proud smile. The painting was done in black and white. The painting style was realism, because it looks like actual life. Figure: 9 1940 Singing saints Sargent Claude Johnson Lithograph on paper No institution/ Museum The painting Singing Saints is an example of an abstract painting because the people in the painting are not how the real world appears. The painting is done by exaggerating what the people actually look like. There isn't any color used in the painting, other than black and white.

The painting draws your attention to the bold shapes of the people. In the painting there are two people who appear to be playing an instrument, and most likely singing a hymn. Figure: 10 1943 Nightlife Archibald J. Motley Oil on canvas Art Institute of Chicago, IL Nightlife is a beautiful, bright, and bold painting. The painting is full of African Americans enjoying their evening. The

painting has some people sitting in chairs, some standing, and some dancing with a partner. The painting is full of bright emotion, and draws a positive energy.