

Harlem Renaissance Art

Artists of the Harlem Renaissance used their photographs, paintings, and other art pieces to explore the African American experience in this era. Artists used a variety of styles such as abstractism, realism, and postmodern assemblage to address a diverse array of subjects.



WILLIAM H. JOHNSON

William Henry Johnson was an African-American painter born in Florence, South Carolina. He moved to New York to enroll in the National Academy of Design in New York. His style evolved from realism to expressionism to a powerful folk style for which he is best known.

William Johnson spent the late 1920's in France, where he learned about modernism and earned considerable awards.

PALMER HAYDEN

Palmer C. Hayden grew up in Virginia and Washington, Dc before studied at the Cooper Union in New York City. He painted in both oils and watercolors, and was a prolific artist of his era. Much of his influences came from the environment around him. Most art historians agree that his most influential or well-known works would be the ones which reflect African-American folklore. He tried to capture rural life as well as urban backgrounds in New York City. Many of these urban paintings were centered in Harlem.



ARCHIBALD MOTLEY

Unlike many other Harlem Renaissance artists, Archibald Motley, Jr. never lived in Harlem. He was born in New Orleans and spent the majority of his life in Chicago, although he had several popular exhibits of his art in New York City. He studied painting at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. He is most famous for his colorful chronicling of the African-American experience during the 1920s and 1930s, and is considered one of the major contributors to the Harlem Renaissance. He specialized in portraiture and saw it “as a means of affirming racial respect and race pride.”

