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ROBERT BLACKBURN: AMERICAN PRINTMAKER

by

DEBORAH T. CULLEN

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Art History in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York.

2002

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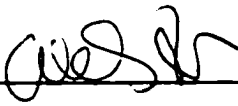
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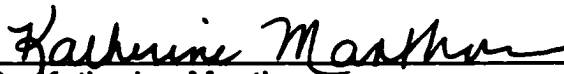
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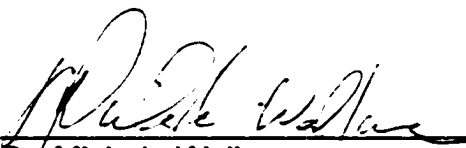
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THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Abstract

ROBERT BLACKBURN: AMERICAN PRINTMAKER

by

DEBORAH T. CULLEN

Advisor: Dr. Diane Kelder

Robert Blackburn (b. 1920) affected the course of American printmaking through his graphic works, and the institution he founded in New York in 1948, The Printmaking Workshop (PMW). When cited, he has been contextualized as a black WPA artist or as printer-teacher, at both PMW and Universal Limited Art Editions (ULAE). As a teen, he learned lithography in the Harlem WPA; he was intrinsic to the formation of ULAE as well as PMW. However, Blackburn's passage through lithography is epic, linking the Harlem WPA era with the "graphics boom" of the 1960s. His fluency and technical mastery of complex, abstract, color lithography contributed to forging the well-known ULAE expression.

This study chronicles Blackburn's graphic oeuvre and influences. The first chapter assesses the 1930s uptown arts community, who responded to the Harlem Renaissance's intellectual and artistic legacy, European abstraction, African art, and the artistic ideologies and political tendencies of both American social realism and Mexican modernism.

The second section examines the 1940s and 1950s, when Blackburn encountered varied modernist currents at the Art Students League, including "Indian Space Painters," Atelier 17's Surrealism, and Abstract Expressionism. His work for The Harmon Foundation, initiation of PMW, groundbreaking lithograph collaboration with Will Barnet (1951-1952), and travel to Europe is outlined.

The third chapter covers his most productive period, from the late 1950s until 1971. It investigates his tenure as the first master printer of ULAE (1957-1963) while reviewing his mature lithographs—complicated, varicolored abstractions. They prefigured or complimented the more familiar ULAE production, and as precursor and participant, Blackburn influenced Larry Rivers, Grace Hartigan, Robert Rauschenberg, and the ULAE aesthetic in general.

The final portion summarizes from 1971 to the present, including PMW's incorporation, organizational structure, and select sponsored projects, while focusing on collaborative efforts that affected Blackburn's prints. Romare Bearden and Krishna Reddy inspired Blackburn in monotype and intaglio; Blackburn also created small- and large-scale woodcuts in the 1970s and 1980s. In conclusion, appendixes outline a preliminary Blackburn print catalogue, and a formative listing the artists of PMW.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I began working with The Printmaking Workshop Print Collection in June 1993, after participating in Robert Blackburn's Printmaking Workshop (PMW), in various capacities, since 1985. After three years of sorting through the collection (no mean feat, at approximately 18,000 pieces), organizing it in alphabetical order, supervising simple cataloging, making many exhibitions from it, and just looking at it and listening to it, I became convinced The Printmaking Workshop Print Collection was a profoundly important—but mostly unknown—resource that documented an extremely diverse and complex saga of American printmaking since 1948, that was not recorded anywhere else.

Scattered in the Print Collection, I found many of Bob Blackburn's own prints; he always pushed them aside and encouraged me to focus on everyone else. However, as I gathered his powerful images together, and tried to understand the chronology and interconnections of his own life and art, I realized that his passage through printmaking in the United States told an epic story. I hope, with this dissertation, to finally record his extraordinary life in print, so that his quiet but extremely important connections to many aspects of American printmaking can be fully understood.

To Bob Blackburn I owe my love and appreciation: since he made me a part of his tumultuous but charmed life more than seventeen years ago, he has been my artistic father and model in perseverance. His generosity, belief in humanity, and artistic and personal openness were extremely influential. I am honored to have been able to work with him, and privileged that he has entrusted me to handle the legacy of prints for which he is responsible. I hope that by making his life's work public—documenting his contribution in a scholarly fashion, and placing selections from his print collection in public institutions, including the Library of Congress, for future generations—that I have honored him.

I would like to acknowledge several groups of people who have supported my dissertation project as well as the long and interconnected work with the PMW Print Collection: the staunch proponents of Bob Blackburn and PMW, who are easing this legacy into the new century: Will Barnet, Celeste Beatty, Craig Owens and Jane Stephenson; the long-standing and deeply-committed PMW comrades Camille Billops and Jim Hatch, Kathy Caraccio, Corrine Jennings and Joe Overstreet, and Richard Nelson; the many, many artists and participants of PMW who have helped in ways large and small over the years, far too numerous to mention here but most especially: Jennifer Bergman, Betty Blayton, Wes and Missy Cochran, Sylvan Cole, Yvonne Cook, Judy Collischan, Andy Davis, Kelly Driscoll, Ed Fausty, David Finn, Osmani Garcia, Meredith Hedges, Lance Lumar, Vernita McNeil, Krishna Reddy, Joan Smith, and Marjorie Hunt Van Dyke; Michael Chisolm, Michael and Susana Leonard, and Pam Tillis; and the very special print curators at the Library of Congress, Katherine Blood, Harry Katz, Elena Millie, and chief Jeremy Adamson.

On the academic side, I thank my advisory committee, particularly Dr. Diane Kelder for her patient and good-humored support throughout my lengthy process, and Lauren Frederick-Bowen, Assistant Program Officer and friend. I am grateful to those who gave me the opportunity to present my ideas in earlier, formative stages, particularly Lori Bookstein and Lauren Bakoian of Lori Bookstein Fine Arts, Dr. Mary Ann Calo of Colgate University, New York, and Dr. Salah Hassan and *NKA/Journal of Contemporary African Art*, Cornell University, New York.

On the personal side, I would like to acknowledge the important moral support and flexibility which my colleagues at El Museo del Barrio offered, particularly Director Emeritus Susana Torruella Leval and Chief Curator Fatima Bercht, as well as Assistant Curator Margarita Aguilar and Registrar Noel Valentin. The intellectual and emotional encouragement of my friends at the Graduate Center was critical, especially that of Lise Patt and Dan Walkup, as well as James Wechsler; I am indebted to Karl Peterson for the professional and uncompensated photography of Bob's prints, and to my dear friend Edward Stein, for always and absolutely understanding the importance of the project. Finally, I could not have done this without the instrumental belief and sustenance provided by my husband, Arnaldo Morales; the years of encouragement from my sister, Laurie Ligos and her family; and my mother, Barbara Cullen.

In closing, I would like to acknowledge the primary funding sources that have supported the long germination of this undertaking, and thus made my dissertation project possible. In 1993, The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts gave The Printmaking Workshop the seminal funding to initiate the entire collection documentation project, under which I was contracted, specifically, to work with The Print Collection. I am most grateful to them. The New York State Council on the Arts, particularly the Visual Arts Program skillfully led by Director Elizabeth Merena, has been *the* key supporter and champion of the Printmaking Workshop's efforts over many years; I am indebted to her vision. I am honored to be a recipient of a 2002 Professional Scholars Grant from Faith Ringgold's Anyone Can Fly Foundation. Finally, I am especially grateful to a 2001 J. Paul Getty Curatorial Research Fellowship, which allowed me a three-month leave of absence from my job in the summer of 2001. During this time, in collaboration with the Library of Congress, I was able to focus on their efforts to acquire the core collection, plan for a celebratory exhibition, and consider the revision and future of this dissertation for publication. In this way, I hope, it will impact on the real world.

Deborah T. Cullen
New York, September 2002

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Drawings, dimensions and location of originals unknown.

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- 74 a-b. Robert Blackburn, *Untitled (AKA Torn Shapes)*, ca.1960-1963.
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76. Robert Blackburn, *Faux Pas*, 1960.
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80 b. Robert Blackburn, *Untitled*, ca.1976-1984.

Monotype, 22.25 x 30." Collection: Wes and Missy Cochran (LaGrange, GA).

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84. Robert Blackburn, *Jus Jazz* (AKA *Jus Jazz Set*), ca.1978-1983.

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86. Robert Blackburn, *Blue Things*, 1963-1970.

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87 a. Robert Blackburn, *Miss Unity*, 1974.

Woodcut, 26 x 20/37 x 25."

87 b. Robert Blackburn, *Miss Unity*, 1990-1996.

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88. Robert Blackburn, *Jay Hawk Tawk*, 1974-1975.

Woodcut, 20 x 26/25 x 37."

89. Robert Blackburn, *Purple Flash I*, 1972.

Woodcut, 26 x 20/39.5 x 24.5."

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94. Robert Blackburn, *Three Ovals*, 1960s-70s.
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INTRODUCTION

Robert Blackburn (b. 1920) affected the course of printmaking in the United States through his own work, as well as through the institution which he founded in New York City in 1948, The Printmaking Workshop (PMW). While his name is frequently cited in general accounts of the history of twentieth-century American printmaking, to date there is no monograph—or any substantial and accurate discussion—of Blackburn's own graphic work. When he has been mentioned, he has generally been cast in one of two, circumscribed roles which have delineated public understanding of this extraordinary printmaker's contributions. In exhibitions, slim catalogues and articles, he has been contextualized as 1) as a black artist of the WPA, or 2) teacher and catalyst, focusing on his institutional work with PMW and Universal Limited Art Editions (ULAE).

Indeed, Blackburn was trained in lithography through a program sponsored by the WPA. While it was not until fairly recently that any critical accounts of minority artists' participation in the celebrated WPA projects existed, and these efforts are to be lauded, such a tactic of inclusion short-changes Blackburn. This label only accounts for his work to age eighteen, and is hardly an accurate way to designate a printmaker who continues to produce work at age eighty-one.¹

¹ There have been numerous, popular efforts which have included Blackburn under this rubric. See, for example the following exhibitions and/or publications: the exhibition catalogue *New York/Chicago: WPA and the Black Artist*, curated by Ruth Ann Stewart (New York: The Studio Museum in Harlem, 1977); the exhibition catalogue *The Black Artists in the WPA 1933-1943* by Charlene Claye Van Derzee (Brooklyn: New Muse Community Museum, 1977); the exhibition catalogue *Augusta Savage and The Art Schools of Harlem*, curated by Deirdre L. Bibby with text by Juanita Marie Holland (New York, The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, 1988); the exhibition catalogue *Black Printmakers & the WPA*, curated by Leslie King-Hammond (Bronx: Lehman College Art Gallery, 1989) as well as the concurrent symposium coverage, "Black Printmakers and The WPA: A Symposium" by Ellen Sragow, *The Tamarind Papers* (Albuquerque: No. 13, 1990) 73-76; the touring exhibition and catalogue

For the most part, consideration of his own printmaking practice has always been overshadowed by analyses of the history of The Printmaking Workshop (PMW)—the oldest and largest print workshop in the United States, whose roster of artists is international and diverse—or by mention of Blackburn's role as the first master printer at ULAE, as he aided other, better-known artists in the pursuit of their more acclaimed productions.

His role as founder of PMW is notable, as it is the oldest continuously operating non-profit, artist-run printmaking studio in the country. Its mission is clearly indebted to institutions such as the WPA which were formative to young Blackburn. PMW has been prominently discussed in feature articles such as those published in *The New York Times*.² A half-hour documentary which aired on PBS in February 1998 again reinforced Blackburn's role as the founder and creative spirit of the Workshop.³ In such articles, surveys and even awards, Blackburn's artistic contributions and The Printmaking Workshop's importance have been conflated.⁴ These types of discussions neatly sidestep serious

Alone in a Crowd: Prints of the 1930s-40s by African-American Artists (New York: The Collection of Reba and Dave Williams, 1992); and, finally, the exhibition brochure, *Art in a Day's Work: Prints from the WPA*, by Cindy Medley Buckner (Baltimore: Baltimore Museum of Art, 2000). Sharon F. Patton's *African-American Art/Oxford History of Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) includes Blackburn as a WPA artist, and the website of North Carolina Central University Art Museum, who owns one of Blackburn's elusive WPA prints, in fact classifies him with the group of black artists who were active during the Harlem Renaissance and the WPA (www.nccu.edu/artmuseum/permnccu.html).

² Recent feature articles include Dulcie Leimbeck, "The Master and His Mecca," *The New York Times*, Arts & Leisure Section, Sunday, February 8, 1998; Phyllis Braff, "A Guiding Spirit for Printmakers," *The New York Times*, February 2, 1992, and Grace Glueck, "Printmaking For the Love of It," *The New York Times* (Section C, Tuesday, July 12, 1988), 15.

³ Produced and directed by Gail Jansen, and narrated by Ossie Davis, "Lasting Impressions" was a special documentary which aired in celebration of both PMW's fiftieth anniversary and Black History Month. It was broadcast in New York on WNET/Public Television Channel 13, Thursday, February 12, 1998, at 8:30 pm.

consideration of Blackburn's own work. They allow for the simple chronologizing of the workspace history and the successive waves of apprentice printmakers. It is an easily understood "who's who," particularly in terms of African American artists from the 1950s through the 1990s. Blackburn's work—which is harder to categorize and more difficult to contextualize—has been directly avoided as a topic.

Similarly, Blackburn is nearly always mentioned, in passing, as the first master printer at Universal Limited Art Editions (ULAE), the Long Island workshop which sparked the "graphics boom" of the early 1960s by enticing well-known artists such as Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns to lithography.⁵ In the volumes produced about this seminal workshop, Blackburn's artistic impact on ULAE's production has never been analyzed, despite the fact that he was responsible for the first seventy-nine editions that ULAE published, and his own experimental color lithography from 1950 to 1960 was crucial and prior to

⁴ Two examples of important articles which do this are Hildreth York, "Bob Blackburn and the Printmaking Workshop," *Black American Literature Forum* (Vol. 20, No. 1-2, Spring-Summer 1986), 81-95, and Edmund "Barry" Gaither, "Millennium Portrait: Robert Blackburn," in *American Visions*, (Vol. 15, Number 1, February/March 2000), 23-30. These articles intend to speak about Blackburn's important contributions as a printmaker, but each only reproduce one of his prints. In fact, they devote much more visual and descriptive space to the other prints and printmaking which PMW has fostered. While it is a very important survey, *American Prints and Printmakers* by Una E. Johnson (NY: Doubleday, 1980) also mentions Blackburn and The Printmaking Workshop together. Finally, and very recently, The College Art Association's 88th Annual Conference Convocation bestowed Blackburn with the Distinguished Artist Award for Lifetime Achievement in New York on February 23, 2000, for his contributions *through* The Printmaking Workshop.

⁵ This oversight occurs again and again in the volumes printed on ULAE over the years. Major omissions in the ULAE literature occur in the exhibition catalogue essay, Tony Towle, "A Few Selected Memories of Tanya Grosman and ULAE," in *Proof Positive: Forty Years of Contemporary American Printmaking At ULAE, 1957-1997* (Washington D.C.: The Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1997); the exhibition and print catalogue by Esther Sparks, with Amei Wallach, *Universal Limited Art Editions. A History and Catalogue: The First Twenty-Five Years* (Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago, 1989); the exhibition catalogue introduction by Maurice E. Bloch to *Words and Images: Universal Limited Art Editions* (Los Angeles: University of California, 1978); and in Calvin Tomkins's obituary, "The Art World: Tatyana Grosman," *The New Yorker* (August 9, 1982) p. 82.

the lithography "explosion." It is revealing to consider how Blackburn's talents and predilections shaped the concept of printmaking that the artists invited to ULAE espoused.

Certainly, Blackburn's own work suffered as a result of his fifty-four year commitment to The Printmaking Workshop. For decades, in addition to making his own work, he taught, printed for others, and went about the business of maintaining a fine arts workspace, actively outreaching to artists. Despite this, when Blackburn's existing body of work is assessed against the received story of American color lithography, it is astonishing that he has not been given more serious attention before. A comprehensive and critical study of his own print oeuvre, and of his artistic role in shaping the history of American printmaking, is long overdue.⁶

In my dissertation, I catalogue Blackburn's print production for the first time, and analyze his art production chronologically, against the trajectory of his biography. In the first, and longest, chapter, I spend considerable time exploring the artistic milieu into which Robert Blackburn was born and in which he artistically matured. By investigating the multiple influences of Blackburn's

⁶ The most comprehensive articles and exhibition catalogue essays on Blackburn and The Printmaking Workshop are, to date, Elizabeth Jones, "Robert Blackburn: An Investment in an Idea," *Tamarind Papers* (Volume 6, Number 1, Winter 1982-1983); Will Barnet, Nina Parris, and Harriet Green, in the exhibition catalogue, *Robert Blackburn: A Life's Work* (New York: The Alternative Museum, 1988); Noah Jemison and Kay WalkingStick, in the exhibition catalogue, *Bob Blackburn's Printmaking Workshop: Artists of Color* (Brookville, New York: Hillwood Art Museum, Long Island University/C.W. Post, 1992); and Barbara Lekatsas's essay in the exhibition catalogue, *Will Barnet-Bob Blackburn: An Artistic Friendship in Relief* (LaGrange, Georgia: Cochran Collection, 1997). There have also been two unpublished Master's thesis on Robert Blackburn and The Printmaking Workshop by Claude L. Elliot (University of Mississippi, 1995) and Jennifer Bergman (University of Maryland, College Park, 1996). My own dissertation summary, which was published as "Robert Blackburn: Revisioning Graphics," *NKA/Journal of Contemporary African Art* (Ithaca: Africana Studies and Research Center, Cornell University), Spring 2000, was the first in-depth analysis of Blackburn's artwork.

complex environment, I address the network of forces that pressured the black arts community in Harlem. Focusing on the years 1920 through 1940, this chapter outlines the major artistic debates, which were the Harlem Renaissance's intellectual legacy, still relevant at the time of Blackburn's birth in 1920 and continuing to hold powerful sway through his development in the 1930s. African art had a particular resonance for the Harlem community during this period and I provide a brief analysis of the effect of African art on these particular modernists, in relation to the larger American scene. Concurrently, this chapter defines certain ideologies and political tendencies prevalent in the WPA, particularly those of the Harlem community that informed Blackburn. Finally, I discuss his circles' relationships to the Mexican artists of the time, which were of serious artistic, as well as political, consequence. This constellation of concepts and concerns is analyzed through the large number of Blackburn's student drawings which have endured due to their reproduction in his high school art and literary magazine. Additionally, I closely examine the few surviving WPA-era lithographs which Blackburn created.

In the second section, I examine the years between 1941 and 1957. In many ways, these years are the most difficult to assess authoritatively; during this transitional period, there are incomplete records and scant existing works of art. Blackburn moved frequently, struggled to support himself, and traveled. However, the few, extant, stylistically shifting and abstracted figurative works are key to understanding his mature works. Thus, I begin my scrutiny of this era with Blackburn's move from Harlem to downtown, where he attended the Art Students League. I follow him through his work for The Harmon Foundation, as well as other institutions, and explore the nature and origins of The Printmaking Workshop at its founding in 1948. I probe his groundbreaking collaboration

with Will Barnet in 1951 and 1952, in which they created a suite of multi-storie, complex color lithographs. Blackburn's time in Europe, under the auspices of a John Hay Whitney Traveling Fellowship, and his return to New York, are covered. By surveying the lithographic print shops in New York at the time—as well as the impact of Stanley William Hayter's Atelier 17 workshop in New York—I outline the state of typical and experimental printmaking during the period. Finally, I review the various, modernist currents holding sway at the Art Students League, especially the "Indian Space Painters," the European influences in New York and Paris with which Blackburn came into contact, as well as the inescapable force of Abstract Expressionism, particularly on black artists of this time. All of this modern ferment greatly affected Blackburn. Through my analysis of this environment and his available works, it is clear that both American and European abstraction were topical concerns.

The third chapter covers the period from 1955 until 1971. It focuses on Blackburn's return from Paris, through his tenure as the first master printer at Universal Limited Art Editions, and, eventually, his return to the full-time directorship of The Printmaking Workshop. Throughout, Blackburn's mature lithographs in his signature style—complicated, varicolored abstractions—are addressed, particularly in relation to the more familiar production of ULAE, which they prefigured or complimented. Concurrent with the so-called graphics "boom," Blackburn's own artwork of this period can be seen as the coalescence of the forces of his training and milieu, coupled with the fully-developed flowering of his prodigious talents as a color lithographer. Particularly during the period when Blackburn worked at ULAE, from 1957 into 1963, his own work in color lithography ripened. This decade and a half is viewed as the most important and productive period of his career, in terms of

his own art work, the importance of the prints he produced for others, and his decision to incorporate The Printmaking Workshop.

The fourth and final portion summarizes the more recent decades, from 1971 to the present. It includes Blackburn's decision to incorporate The Printmaking Workshop as a not-for-profit institution. Case studies of two of the most prominent and experimental artists who collaborated with Blackburn, Romare Bearden and Krishna Reddy, are examined, particularly in terms of their inspiration to Blackburn, as he undertook a series of monotypes and intaglio works. Additionally, I track Blackburn's shifting production into abstract, small- and large-scale woodcuts during the 1970s and 1980s. Two important collaborative efforts which PMW fostered, the seminal 1974 *Impressions: Our World* portfolio of black printmakers, as well as Vincent FitzGerald's artist's books of the 1980s, are mentioned. The Printmaking Workshop's catalytic effect on the community of printmaking—though its outreach as well as its "seeding" of other institutions—is cited.

The Printmaking Workshop as an institution must be discussed. Blackburn participated in several institutions that informed his vision of PMW, which, indeed, can be seen as a link between WPA ideals and the contemporary, funded, non-profit space. PMW served as an important forum, where national and international artists were introduced to printmaking, to other printmaker-artists, and their diverse approaches. Many of those who participated would travel onwards, sometimes seeding other schools and workshops, such as The Lower East Side printshop (New York City), The Asilah Workshop (Morocco) and even the first Namibian printshop for black artists in post-apartheid South Africa. The PMW Print Collection was not only a record of the

history of these artists and processes, but also a document of intangible exchanges, ideas, and moments in time. Robert Blackburn, the dynamic founder and artistic director to this day, was the catalyst of this forum, serving as equal parts teacher, master printer, technical advisor, fundraiser, diplomat, instigator, and friend to thousands of artists.

Through Blackburn's own work, we examine the rocky transition from the Harlem Renaissance to Social Realism to Abstraction for the black printmaker. Blackburn is a critical figure who had contact with European and modernist printmaking communities. He disseminated technical information and championed the color lithograph as a fine art form to a diverse community of American artists at a time when the medium was not readily and democratically available. Blackburn's life has been richly entwined with many important American printmakers and streams of printmaking: the post-Harlem Renaissance artists, various WPA printmakers, Atelier 17 participants, teachers, students, and artists affiliated with the Art Student's League, Cooper Union, New York University, and the New School (all of whom moved in circles around Abstract Expressionism), the ULAE "explosion" group, and many other diverse members who contributed to the PMW community.

However, I propose that the most compelling context in which to place Blackburn as an artist is as a precursor to the so-called "graphics boom" of the 1960s. It is enlightening to examine what Blackburn brought to ULAE, influencing the printmaking practices of Larry Rivers, Grace Hartigan, Robert Rauschenberg, and others, after twenty years of his own practice in the medium. I demonstrate Blackburn's contribution to forging the well-known

ULAE aesthetic—which frequently stands for “quintessential” American modernist printmaking—through a close examination of Blackburn’s prints.

While studying his work, we find that Blackburn’s prints are both familiar and unfamiliar. Considered a “printmaker’s printmaker,” his graphics have been exhibited internationally and are represented in numerous public and private collections. However, a lack of documentation has created confusion about Blackburn’s trajectory. Reproductions of his work are scarce, and often misdated, mis-titled, and incorrectly oriented (frequently upside down or sideways). Part of my project—the first attempt at a definitive Blackburn print catalogue—serves to clarify the arc of his career, and its dates, in order to more accurately assess his impact.

Part of the confusion about Blackburn’s graphic output is due to the fact that his mastery of the medium has led him to invert the operation, highlighting the process itself as opposed to a finished edition. In his oeuvre, a consistent edition is rare. His prints primarily exist in multiple state color proofs, themes and their variations. Frequent color changes are accompanied by variations on the printing order and orientation. Furthermore, motifs are constantly recycled and can be traced from stone to stone, block to block, decade to decade. The “Print Catalogue” which is a part of my dissertation project, should serve to clarify the dates of the key works, as well as their subsequent variations. Additionally, a working appendix, listing the artists who have worked at PMW, further enriches his chronology and offers the opportunity to discuss relevant collaborations.

This state of affairs is, for me, emblematic of the limited recuperation that is too often performed on behalf of black artists. Since very little published documentation exists for most African American artists (with the exception of a few major figures, such as Romare Bearden, Elizabeth Catlett, Jacob Lawrence, and Norman Lewis, although every day, this situation changes with Aaron Douglas, William H. Johnson, Archibald Motley and Dox Thrash added to the list), establishing biographical and chronological accounts is often difficult, let alone locating all their works, critically examining them, and finally contextualizing them within these specific artists' times. However, this contextualization has been my main concern. Therefore, while I have tried to definitively establish the basic chronology of Blackburn's biography, I have placed much more focus on his context, his milieu, his contacts and his complex and rich set of interests in order to illuminate the important body of prints he has created over sixty years.⁷

⁷ This is not in an effort to "legitimize" him (as stated in a curiously underhanded remark regarding a discussion of Jacob Lawrence's art historical influences) but simply in an effort to treat Blackburn in a serious art historical manner, which rightfully addresses influences and sources with a critical eye, despite any vagueness on the part of the artist. For the remark in question, see Paul J. Karlstrom, "Jacob Lawrence: Modernism, Race and Community," *Over the Line: The Art and Life of Jacob Lawrence*, edited with an introduction by P  ter T. Nesbett and Michelle DuBois, with essays by Patricia Hills, Paul J. Karlstrom, Leslie King-Hammond, Lizzetta LeFalle-Collins, Richard J. Powell, Lowery Stokes Sims, Elizabeth Steele, and Elizabeth Hutton Turner (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000), 244 n.6.

Through my study, a new but fairly obvious role is offered for assessing Blackburn's graphic contributions. While his African American heritage lends a particular shape and context to his achievements, I propose that Robert Blackburn should be seen, in the end, simply as a major American printmaker; thus, I have deliberately given the broadest title to this dissertation: *Robert Blackburn, American Printmaker*. I do not believe any other qualifications are required.

CHAPTER 1: MILIEU

This chapter explores the milieu into which Robert Blackburn was born and in which he artistically matured. By investigating the multiple influences of Blackburn's complex environment, it will be obvious, as Alain Locke put it, that "the culture of the Negro is of a pattern integral with the times and with its cultural setting."⁸ Focusing on the years 1920 through 1940, this chapter outlines the major artistic debates that were the Harlem Renaissance's intellectual legacy, still relevant at the time of Blackburn's birth in 1920 and continuing to hold powerful sway through his development in the 1930s. African art had a particular resonance for the Harlem community during this period; therefore, within this discussion, there will be a brief analysis of the role of primitivism. Concurrently, this chapter defines certain ideologies prevalent in the WPA, particularly those of the Harlem community that informed Blackburn. Finally, there will be discussion of his circles' relationships to the Mexican artists of the time, which were of serious artistic, as well as political, consequence.

On the last boat leaving Jamaica for the United States just prior to World War I, Janet Chambers of Kingston met Archibald Blackburn of Montego Bay. Passengers together, Janet and Archibald left the British West Indies and arrived in the United States in 1914, where together they had one daughter, who died, and then a son, Robert Hamilton, in 1920. Later, they had another daughter, Gertrude, in 1925, who would go on to have seven children (and,

⁸ Alain Locke, "Foreword," *The New Negro*, edited by Alain Locke with an introduction by Arnold Rampersad (1925; reprint, New York: Touchstone, 1992), xxvi.

later, many grandchildren) of her own. Robert Hamilton would never marry nor have any known children.

Robert Hamilton Blackburn was born in 1920 in Summit, New Jersey. His parents worked for the Lackawanna Railroad in Summit, and, from approximately 1925 to 1927, in Elmira, New York. Blackburn has stated that his memories of art begin at this time, with a recollection of "winning a red and yellow automobile for some drawing I had done."⁹ By 1927, the Blackburns moved to Harlem. "There was a period of poverty because we were moving right into the Depression," he has noted.¹⁰ Early in his life, Robert Blackburn's father and mother separated. Both Janet and Archibald would have sons with other partners, giving Blackburn two half-brothers, Kenneth and Oswald. After the separation, there were further, difficult financial times. Blackburn remembers once "being evicted for non-payment of rent," as well as having been on welfare.¹¹ He recalls that he and Gertrude were even placed away from his mother for a brief period, in temporary custody at the Heckscher Building for Children (located at 1230 Fifth Avenue and 104th Street, currently the site of El Museo del Barrio) which, at the time, provided shelter and services for children.¹²

The Blackburn family's fortuitous move to Harlem placed young Robert squarely in a situation that fostered his inherent artistic talents, despite the

⁹ Robert Blackburn. Interview by Paul Cummings, December 4, 1970. The Archives of American Art, The Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C. Transcript of an audiotape, 2.

¹⁰ Ibid., 3.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² All information not specifically footnoted is derived from notes taken during conversations, in person and by telephone, between Robert Blackburn and the author, from 1993 to 2002.

difficulties which many families faced during the Great Depression. He has remarked that his experiences at this time were "strengthening," and recalls strong and diverse influences, ranging from the forceful Christianity of the Adam Clayton Powell Baptist parish (where his mother insisted he attend Sunday school) to his own stirring atheism.¹³ Young Blackburn got into some street trouble with other youths in his adolescence, and he shamefacedly recalls making fun of the Chinese family that ran the laundry. However, he always drew—as he frequently says, "I had an inclination to make pictures,"¹⁴—and read widely. Blackburn was impressed by the philosophical writings of Mahatma Gandhi and the autobiography of Frederick Douglass, as well as fictional polemics including Theodore Dreiser's *The Genius* and John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*. Artistically inclined, Blackburn took up the violin, but had to give it up due to financial constraints. Blackburn recalls the antagonisms between West Indian and Southern Negro communities in Harlem. He remembers the great exhilaration of jazz music and its dances. He recollects the lindy hop and the jitterbug as creative vehicles, forms of expression that promoted goodwill and unity. During this period of his adolescence, he worked in a local grocery store on the weekends for three dollars.

¹³ Except where noted, Blackburn's recollections in this paragraph are taken from his video interview by Kelli Jones on the occasion of the exhibition, *Masters & Pupils: The Education of the Black Artist in New York, 1900-1980*, held at the Jamaica Arts Center, (Queens, NY), curated by William P. Miller and Kelli Jones, Visual Arts Director, 1987. The Hatch-Billops Collection, New York. Videocassette.

¹⁴ Noah Jemison, Catalogue essay, *Bob Blackburn's Printmaking Workshop: Artists of Color*, (Brookville, NY: Hillwood Art Museum, Long Island University - C.W. Post, 1992), 9.

He has stated that while his mother encouraged his artistic talents, and was a "very warm, a very expansive woman and a very patient woman . . . she had a certain kind of dignity and culture to her," his father "was never particularly interested in me and art."¹⁵ Blackburn's father—whom he remembers as moody—stressed that Blackburn make some kind of material success of his life. Despite his lack of immediate family support, Blackburn sought out and was fostered by a surrogate clan, consisting of some of Harlem's most influential artists, writers, and talents. As he became involved with the Harlem arts community in the mid-1930s, Blackburn became absorbed in the currents that carried forward the progression of the Harlem Renaissance.

Artist Elton Fax has recalled the time vividly, as an international mix of political and artistic influences:

At that time, Europe was in ferment. There was a popular front in France, a civil war in Spain. The Italians had invaded Ethiopia. There was the rise of National Socialism in Germany. In the United State, there was a rise in unionism as people became more conscious of the role of unions in bettering living conditions for themselves. We were still in the Depression which really did not end until WW II began. The dust bowl had developed in the Southwest and migrants were going off to California. John Steinbeck wrote *The Grapes of Wrath* calling attention to the plight of these people.

During that period, segregation was rampant and black people were still being lynched in the South. Public accommodations were inaccessible to them. Even in New York City, we were unable to go to places that are now open. Despite these things, Harlem was a mecca to black artists. We were at the tail end of what was called the Negro Renaissance. Those were the days of people like

¹⁵ Blackburn. Paul Cummings interview, 4.

Langston Hughes, Claude McKay and Bruce Nugent . . .
 They were followed by others like Richard Wright and
 William Attaway and of course, we all know that William
 DuBois and people of that ilk were still influencing the
 thought that guided black people in those days.

In music there were people like Duke Ellington and Louis
 Armstrong, Fletcher Henderson, and Cab Calloway, and in
 classical music, William Grant Still, Marian Combo. On the
 concert stage were Marian Anderson, Paul Robeson, and
 Roland Hayes. One of the things that made Harlem popular
 during those days, were the nightclubs. But there was also
 the theater. . . ¹⁶

By studying these events and forces at work in Blackburn's milieu, we will then
 be able to recognize the multiple influences to which his earliest artwork
 responded.

Immediately on the heels of the first Great Migrations northward, just after
 World War I (beginning in 1918, and continuing in waves until 1940), Harlem
 was the artistic center for migrating blacks. It flowered with cultural
 achievement and racial awareness. This unusually productive, active period is
 known as The Harlem Renaissance, or the New Negro Movement. At its
 height—typically defined from 1919 to 1929—a high concentration of
 imaginative individuals contributed to the immense outpouring from this
 creative center of African American production. Organizations such as W.E.B.
 DuBois' National Association for the Advancement of Colored People,¹⁷ Marcus

¹⁶ Elton Fax, with Walter Christmas, Riva Helfond, Ernest Crichlow, Georgette Seabrooke,
 Elba Lightfoot, Bruce Nugent, and Robert Blackburn. Interview by Camille Billops, November
 17, 1985. The Hatch-Billops Collection, New York. Transcribed and published as "Harlem
 Artists Guild and Harlem Community Arts Center," *Artist and Influence*, Volume V, 1987 (New
 York: Hatch-Billops Collection, Inc.), 35.

¹⁷ William Edward Burghardt "W.E.B." DuBois (b. 1868 - d. 1963), a writer, historian and
 teacher, is best known for co-founding of the National Association for the Advancement of
 Colored People (NAACP) in 1909, and editing its journal, *The Crises*, which began in 1910 as

Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association,¹⁸ and George "Father Divine" Baker's mission in Harlem¹⁹ all served to coalesce, invigorate and support Harlem's citizens in various ways, through intellectual, nationalistic and charitable support.

However, Harlem during the Harlem Renaissance was not a national, ethnic and cultural center without internal debates, particularly in the area of the visual arts. Although well-recognized for its literary production, a closer examination of

a prominent vehicle for African American art, literature and ideology. DuBois was opposed to Booker T. Washington's philosophy for blacks of "pulling oneself up by one's own bootstraps" through manual education and black capitalism. DuBois believed in higher education and the cultivation of the "Talented Tenth" for leadership in the African-American community. W.E.B. DuBois received his BA from Fisk University, and then became the first African-American to receive a Ph.D. from Harvard. DuBois' 1903 book, *The Souls of Black Folks*, was the most influential study of African Americans in the first quarter of the 20th century. DuBois urged African-American artists in the 1920s to create from the experiences of African-American folk life and to celebrate their ancient African cultural heritage. Later in life, DuBois would organize the first four Pan-African congresses, and is considered the Father of Pan Africanism. DuBois attended the inauguration of the President of Liberia, and became a resident of Ghana at the invitation of President Kwame Nkrumah, where he died in 1963 at the age of 95. DuBois was correct in forecasting that one of the major issues of the twentieth-century would be the issue of race.

¹⁸ Marcus Mosiah Garvey (b. 1887 Jamaica - d. 1940) immigrated to Harlem in 1916. He admired Booker T. Washington, read all he could on African politics and history, and identified himself as a Black Nationalist. His political goal was to take Africa back from European domination and build a free and United Black Africa; to this end he incorporated the Universal Negro Improvement Association 1918 (UNIA), whose goal was the unification of "all the Negro peoples of the world into one great body and to establish a country and government absolutely on their own". The motto of UNIA was "One God! One Aim! One Destiny." The weekly newspaper, *Negro World*, glorified African history and heroes. Garvey was titled the "Provisional President of Africa" and he and the members of his empire paraded in elaborate military uniforms. UNIA grew quickly. By 1919 there were over 30 branches throughout the United States, the Caribbean, Latin America and Africa. Garvey claimed over a million people had joined his organization in three years, and UNIA certainly formed an enormous mass movement which began to fail only after he was convicted of mail fraud and was deported to Jamaica in 1927.

¹⁹ George Baker moved to Harlem from Sayville, Long Island in 1932, where he opened his ministry as Father Divine at 20 West 115th Street. Divine's religious services, food, and hostel accommodations were a powerful and coalescing force in Harlem, and Divine often made political statements; thus offering important support to selected movements. Many of the artists working in Harlem fondly recall his soup kitchen, eating a "full course meal with apple pie and everything for twenty-five or thrifty cents." (Riva Helfond, "Harlem Artists Guild," *Artists and Influence*, 36.)

the visual art production during this period has been underway by scholars over the past twenty years. As Dr. Mary Schmidt Campbell has noted, the artists "never organized formally as a group, in contrast to both the next generation of Black artists supported by the Work Projects Administration (WPA) and the artists of the civil rights movement . . ." ²⁰ There were struggles over the definition of appropriate African American expression through the iconography employed by artists and writers. Alain Locke—called the "infamous architect, midwife, mentor and godfather of this movement" ²¹—authored what has been generally been considered the prevalent side. ²² Simply put, Locke proposed that African American artists should reference their African heritage, thus developing their own, uniquely "racial" art. In 1925, Locke edited *The New Negro*. This volume, published by Albert and Charles Boni, contained the winning entries of a competition announced in *Opportunity* magazine, which were originally published in a special edition of *Survey Graphic* magazine. Locke invited additional writers to contribute to this topic, and the expanded anthology of texts (which included essays, fictions, and poems, with illustrations) cumulatively charged the African American community with the mission of recovering their interrupted heritage, in order to provide the basis for racial pride. Locke's important essay in the volume, "The New Negro," described the transitional state in which he saw the black race. "By shedding

²⁰ Mary Schmidt Campbell, "Introduction," *Harlem Renaissance: Art of Black America*, with essays by David Driskell, David Levering Lewis, and Deborah Willis Ryan. (New York: The Studio Museum in Harlem, 1987), 39.

²¹ Leslie King-Hammond, "Harlem Schools of Art and the WPA," *A New Deal for Public Art: Murals from Federal Work Programs* (Bronx: The Bronx Museum of the Arts, 1993), 28.

²² Alain Leroy Locke (b. 1892 - d. 1954) received his PhD in Philosophy from Harvard University in 1918. He attended Oxford on a Rhodes scholarship in 1907, and had also studied at the University of Berlin and the College de France in Paris. He joined the faculty of Howard University in Washington D.C. in 1912, where he worked until his retirement.

the old chrysalis of the Negro problem we are achieving something like a spiritual emancipation," he wrote.²³ Locke's analysis in "The New Negro" was based on an understanding and recovery of ethnic history. "This deep feeling of race is at present the mainspring of Negro life," he wrote.²⁴

Locke further affirmed his position in his essay, "The Legacy of the Ancestral Arts," which was also published in *The New Negro* volume. This tract fully articulated what Locke saw as the differences between the accomplishments of the black American artist versus that of the African artist. Locke saw the African American as gifted in music, poetry and dance, with expression that was "free, exuberant, emotional, sentimental and human."²⁵ However, he described African art as rich primarily in terms of its plasticity and craftsmanship, where "expressions are rigid, controlled, disciplined, abstract, heavily conventionalized."²⁶ He concurred that African American artists would, naturally, express themselves in essentially 'American' forms; however, what Locke described was some original but buried essence to which it was positive to return. He discussed inevitable, cultural factors versus inherent racial tendencies, stating that these "represent essentially the working of environmental forces rather than the outcropping of a race psychology; they are really the acquired and not the original artistic temperament," he wrote.²⁷

²³ Locke, "The New Negro," *The New Negro*, 4.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 11.

²⁵ Locke, "The Legacy of the Ancestral Arts," *The New Negro*, 254.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 255.

Locke described art that would be specifically representative of the Negro American. He charged African American artists with the responsibility of relating to both their African ancestry as well as articulating the situation of the contemporary African American in the United States, creating "a school of Negro art, a local and a racially representative tradition."²⁸ There was an emphasis on, and reference to, African heritage as well as African American history, folklore and heroes. Locke encouraged focus on the black experience both in the United States (particularly in the South) as well as in Africa, especially through the depiction of daily life, including renderings of African and African American musical and religious traditions. Images that presented the social injustices of racism, bigotry, etc. were lauded. Locke called abstraction "imitative and not highly original,"²⁹ and clearly argued for an agenda of social criticism that was better served by figuration.³⁰ Locke also praised neo-folk and neo-primitive styles, rich in decorative design and color. Artists were encouraged to document black experience, celebrate black heritage, and protest the black condition through their images and writings. Locke's prescribed themes thus shaped the dominant subjects of the Harlem Renaissance's production. His point-of-view influenced the output of the entire Harlem Renaissance's art community, as well as art production in the Renaissance's aftermath. Despite his impact in the visual arts, Locke's personal interests were in literature and music.

²⁸ Ibid., 266.

²⁹ Ibid., 266.

³⁰ Locke promoted celebrations of the beauty of black physiognomy, and in many ways could be seen as the originator of the "Black is Beautiful" movement which exploded during the Civil Rights Struggles during the 1960s.

Locke organized an early, full-scale exhibition of African art in New York in 1927 at the New Arts Circle gallery, in conjunction with the Belgian Blondiau-Theatre Arts Collection ³¹. This exhibition was the first direct exposure many black artists had to African sculpture at the time. Despite the fact that he had been encouraging artists to study African art, gaining access to it first-hand was a problem. Locke's expectation for his project was that it would serve to set apart, consciously and proudly, the historical artistic achievement of the black community, placing it on equal but alternative footing with the accomplishments of white, Western culture, and strengthen the resolve of black artists to return to their rightful, but estranged, cultural roots which had, meanwhile, been colonized by white modernists. He lamented, "the American Negro, even when he confronts the various forms of African art expression with a sense of its ethnic claims upon him, meets them in as alienated and misunderstanding an attitude as the average European Westerner."³² In this statement, Locke reveals his belief that modernism misused African art in its formalist concerns. He urged black Americans to claim their "direct cultural kinship"³³ in order to create a fresh, racially specific and racially righteous idiom. "No great art will impose alien canons upon its subject matter," he decreed.³⁴ However, despite his own pioneering project, Locke himself later lamented, "the young American Negro artist has not yet been exposed to the influence of African Art."³⁵

³¹ Warren M. Robbins and Nancy Ingram Nooter, *African Art in American Collections, Survey 1989* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989), 31.

³² Locke, "The Legacy of the Ancestral Arts," *The New Negro*, 255.

³³ *Ibid.*, 256.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 264.

³⁵ Alain Locke, catalogue essay, *Exhibition of the Work of Negro Artists Presented by The Harmon Foundation at the Art Center* (New York: The Harmon Foundation, 1931), np.

In this, Locke's arguments would resonate with negative aspects of the social realist and regionalist agenda dominant in the mainstream American art world. Both promoted a tendency toward provincial, chauvinistic, and isolationist explorations. In 1933, Locke himself wrote of this similarity: "And just as it has been a critical necessity to foster the development of a national character in the American art of our time, by the very same logic and often by the same means, it has been reasonable to promote and quicken the racial motive . . ."³⁶

Locke's position echoed the exhortations of Thomas Craven, Thomas Hart Benton, and even Holger Cahill, Director of the Federal Art Project, who, in 1936, stated that, in part, the FAP "partly aimed to undermine both imported nineteenth-century European academic traditions and the newly arrived conventions of Modernist art."³⁷ These proponents argued for a return to mythic, indigenous, and untainted 'American' sources while rejecting any so-called 'foreign' influence. While Craven rallied for artists "to have done with alien cultural fetishes,"³⁸ Benton argued that "the United States is invaded by aliens, thousands of whom constitute so many acute perils."³⁹ Indeed, "this form of racist polemic was a component of the New Deal nationalism."⁴⁰ This idea was

³⁶ Alain Locke, "The Negro Takes His Place in American Art," *Exhibition of Productions by Negro Artists Presented by The Harmon Foundation at the Art Center* (New York: The Harmon Foundation, 1933), np.

³⁷ Jonathan Harris, "Modernism and Culture in the USA, 1930-1960, Part 1: Capitalist Crisis and Artistic Culture during the 1930s," *Modernism in Dispute: Art Since the Forties* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 16.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 8.

³⁹ Barbara Rose, "Introduction: The Practice, Theory, and Criticism of Art in America," *Readings in American Art 1900-1975*, edited by Barbara Rose (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1975 revised edition), 27.

⁴⁰ Harris, "Modernism and Culture in the USA," 18.

broadly promoted under the auspices of the WPA (an acronym for Works Progress Administration from 1935 to 1939, and Work Projects Administration from 1939 to 1943), where a heavy emphasis was placed on figuration, history, and socio-economic conditions. At this same time, what Locke was proposing—urging black artists to return to their source in African art —came to be called 'ancestralism.' His vision dovetailed a version of primitivism with notions of social realist responsibility and regionalist chauvinism, targeted specifically to African American artists. Black artists were caught in the vortex of all these philosophies, European, American and African American. Indeed, Jacob Lawrence had read Thomas Craven in 1934;⁴¹ both Bearden and Lawrence have stated that the work of George Grosz, who taught at the Art Students League, had a profound impact on them. They discussed artists such as Kathe Kollwitz, Thomas Hart Benton and the other Regionalists. The beliefs of the socially committed artists fed the atmosphere, and the nuances between the groups led to lively debates about iconography, style, and subject matter.

For the artists of Harlem, then, the Cubo-abstract models of the European avant-garde, which provided a way for artists to synthesize African art with cutting-edge style (as did the related American precisionist and geometric abstract styles), were to be treated with caution. One successful mediator of this stylistic morass was Aaron Douglas. In 1924, Douglas met Albert Barnes, who provided access to his collection of both modern European painting as

⁴¹ Lizzetta LeFalle-Collins, "African-American Modernists and the Mexican Muralist School," *In the Spirit of Resistance: African American Modernists and the Mexican Muralist School*, Lizzetta LeFalle-Collins and Shifra M. Goldman (New York: American Federation for the Arts, 1996), p. 30. See also the timeline at the official Jacob Lawrence website, www.jacoblawrence.org.

well as African sculpture.⁴² As Schmidt Campbell has noted, “strongly influenced by the modernists’ shallow depth of field, the monochromism of Analytic Cubism, and the extreme simplifications and stylizations of African sculpture, Douglas developed a style . . . that came to be regarded as the prototypical visual expression of the Harlem Renaissance.”⁴³ Indeed, for many years Douglas had been noted as “the only black artist of significance to emerge from the Harlem Renaissance.”⁴⁴ He was extremely familiar with Locke's prescriptions; Douglas's illustrations appeared throughout *The New Negro*. While his works were visually modern, their subject matter always dealt with African and African American subjects in legible friezes.

⁴² Albert Barnes (b. 1872 Philadelphia - d. 1951) in his 1925 essay, “Negro Art and America,” which was published in Locke's *The New Negro*, puts forth an extremely essentializing theory that “the primitive race” was somehow closer to harmony with nature, and poetry was the essence of their souls. Barnes's idea was that there were “characteristically Negro” achievements. As a child, Barnes attended camp revival meetings with his mother, where he developed an appreciation for African American culture, spiritual revivals, creative expression, and a compassion for the working man. Barnes received his M.D. from the University of Pennsylvania Medical School; he then attended the University of Berlin. In 1902, he co-developed a new silver compound; the antiseptic, Argyrol, formed the basis of his fortune. Barnes began collecting French art with the American painter William Glackens, a former schoolmate. After 1911, the two visited American art museums and artists' studios. In 1912, Glackens went to Paris and bought about 20 modern paintings for Barnes, including Picasso. Later, Barnes went on buying trips, and met Gertrude and Leo Stein. He began collecting Matisse, Renoir, and Cezanne. In 1922, Barnes first purchased an African sculpture for his collection. As a trained scientist and admirer of philosopher John Dewey, Barnes sought to impose a “scientific” method of evaluating art. For example, in 1915, he published the article, “How to Judge a Painting.” Barnes wished to provide nondiscriminatory access to art and education; thus, The Barnes Foundation was founded in Merion Station, Pennsylvania, in 1922, with 710 of his personal paintings and a \$6 million-dollar endowment. Its mission was to “promote the advancement of education and the appreciation of the fine arts;” additionally, the Foundation maintains an arboretum.

⁴³ Schmidt Campbell, “Introduction,” *Harlem Renaissance*, 29.

⁴⁴ Elsa Honig Fine, *The Afro-American Artist: A Search for Identity* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1971), 85. Honig Fine wrote this in her pioneering and standard survey. Since the 1970s, numerous other scholars have contributed greatly by researching the other painters and sculptors arising from the Harlem Renaissance. However, information on printmakers continues to lag behind.

In any case, the racist tendencies of such blind patriotism were not overlooked. In 1936, at the First American Artists' Congress in New York, Saul Schary read to the assembled members, "In the field of criticism, Thomas Craven, the most vociferous champion and apologist of the American Scene group, has gone even farther in his muddled thinking. He has made statements which in their nationalistic tendency show him to be congenial to fascism."⁴⁵

At the same conference, Aaron Douglas lamented the impoverished situation of the African American artist at this time. "In all the fifteen million Negroes there aren't more than a dozen painters and less than half a dozen sculptors of outstanding attainment. This is a very peculiar situation," he stated.⁴⁶

The same year, 1936, Locke published the first English-language book devoted exclusively to the artistic history of African Americans, entitled *Negro Art, Past and Present*.⁴⁷ Because he offered a concrete program of action—bolstered by intellectualized theories—and clearly declared tactics for the African American artist, Locke enjoyed an influence comparable to that of Clement Greenberg two decades later.⁴⁸ Locke and Greenberg both set forth a logical, national-racial path for artists to follow. African Americans who insisted on working on images that contradicted Locke's tastes—like those that didn't fit Greenberg's predilections—found themselves outside the most powerful

⁴⁵ Saul Schary, "Tendencies in American Art," *First American Artists' Congress Against War and Facism* (New York: Town Hall & New School for Social Research, 1936), 62.

⁴⁶ Aaron Douglas, "The Negro in American Culture," *First American Artists' Congress*, 14.

⁴⁷ Alain Locke, *Negro Art: Past and Present* (1936; reprint, New York: Arno Books, 1969).

⁴⁸ Ann Gibson made this comparison in "Two Worlds: African American Abstraction in New York at Mid-Century," *The Search for Freedom: African American Abstract Painting 1945-1975* (New York: Kenkeleba Gallery, 1991), 34.

philosophical, aesthetic and critical system of their time and culture. Locke's position was supported by such important cultural players as Barnes and historically had a basis in the influential writings of W.E.B. DuBois. DuBois and the NAACP's pronouncements had always been similarly bastioned. For example, DuBois' 1926 essay, "Criteria for Negro Art," paved the way for Locke's point of view.⁴⁹ As David Levering Lewis has noted, "there were considerable risks for those who openly criticized the arts-cum-civil rights creed of the NAACP and Urban League—jeopardizing concert performances, publishing contracts, and foundation grants."⁵⁰

As well, Locke and his tenets were upheld by The Harmon Foundation. From 1925 to 1935, The Harmon Foundation emerged as another powerful cultural player that supported black artists through segregated exhibitions and related publications.⁵¹ Locke worked with The Harmon Foundation on occasion. He published essays in their catalogues, juried the 1928 exposition, and also advised Director Mary Beattie Brady on many of their programs and grants. While The Harmon Foundation, with its separatist policies and its outspoken,

⁴⁹ W.E.B. DuBois, "The Criteria for Negro Art," *The Crisis* 32, October 1926, 290. DuBois also maintained that African American artists should create their own distinctive voice through the use of primarily African, but additionally European, tools and models as needed.

⁵⁰ David Levering Lewis, "Harlem My Home," *Harlem Renaissance*, 69.

⁵¹ William Elmer Harmon (b. 1862 - d. 1928), a wealthy white real estate developer, organized The Harmon Foundation in New York City in 1922. It was directed by Mary Beattie Brady until it closed in 1967. From 1925 to 1932, The Harmon Foundation presented Distinguished Achievement Among Negroes Awards. The Foundation was well-known for its support of the visual arts, and organized five important, annual travelling exhibitions, with catalogues, from 1928 to 1933, to coincide with its awards. Additionally, The Harmon Foundation sponsored classes in the arts, and acquired works by African Americans for its own collection, which, upon its dissolution, was distributed to the collections of Fisk University, Hampton University, the National Museum of American Art, and the National Portrait Gallery. The Foundation also offered college scholarships, nursing scholarships, grants for playgrounds and parks, and produced educational and Christian films. The Foundation's papers are located at the Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

somewhat paternalistic leader was, at times, controversial, under Brady's directorship the Foundation "staged a series of competitions and exhibitions between 1926 and 1935 that brought African American artists national attention as a group for the first time."⁵² Indeed, one important contribution of The Harmon Foundation catalogues (published 1928, 1929, 1930, 1931 and 1933) was that they provided printed reproductions and biographies on African American artists that otherwise did not exist. These would play a crucial role in establishing as "professional" many black artists who would go on the roles of the WPA. In fact, documents show that Brady sent lists of African American artists to the WPA for their consideration, and corresponded with officials there to insure that black artists were located, approached, reviewed and accepted.⁵³

Locke's clear and compelling intellectual position, as well as his connections and supporters, made him an extremely powerful culture broker. His theories, however, when analyzed, contained certain, simplistic assumptions: while promoting black artists as no less talented than their white counterparts, with a separate but distinguished history, Locke repeatedly described their talents as specific and suited to certain forms. At the same time, he favored particular artistic trends while ignoring others. For example, he continually praised black spiritual music while barely mentioning the blues or jazz. He paid less attention to poetry that was in a vernacular vein, such as that of Langston Hughes, while admiring more conservative poets such as Countee Cullen, who tended to emulate traditional European models. Locke barely discussed the important, militant black movements such as those of Marcus Garvey, nor does he give

⁵² Romare Bearden and Harry Henderson, *A History of African-American Artists: From 1792 to the Present* (NYC: Pantheon Books, 1993), 251.

⁵³ Harmon Foundation papers, Library of Congress, Manuscripts Division, Washington D.C.

any particular attention to the influence of radical political movements on the art of African Americans although he does note that Harlem was forced to the left, embracing socialism, communism, and/or Marxism, which were powerful forces on many American artists of this time. Finally—and perhaps simply as a product of his times—Locke never addresses any issues of gender or sexuality as they impacted African American production. Even at the time, what was seen by some as his racial essentialism provoked heated debate, despite his advantageous position. Locke was well aware of this. As he wrote in 1933, "A few years back . . . most of our artists subscribed to the creed that racialism in art was an unwarranted restriction . . ." ⁵⁴

Historians Levering Lewis, Arnold Rampersad, and others have fluently described the nuances of these charged times, challenging the historical perspective that Locke's prescriptions alone led the Renaissance artists. Rampersad has stated succinctly that "Langston Hughes described Locke only as one of the three 'midwives' of the movement, along with Charles S. Johnson and the literary editor of *The Crisis* magazine, Jessie Fauset."⁵⁵ In speaking of *Fire!!*, a magazine self-published by Hughes, Cullen, and Nora Zeal Hurston in 1926, Rampersad observed that Locke "was clearly peripheral to these younger writers less than one year after the appearance of *The New Negro*."⁵⁶ Even an unsigned editorial in *Opportunity* that year pointedly stated that black

⁵⁴ Locke, "The Negro Takes His Place in American Art," np.

⁵⁵ Arnold Rampersad, "Introduction," *The New Negro*, p. xi.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. xxii.

artists should be free "to feel the pulsations and rhythms of their own life, philosophy be hanged."⁵⁷

Gary A. Reynolds carefully reconstructed how the five Harmon Foundation exhibits were critically received as news items—human-interest stories—and not as occasions for serious art criticism.⁵⁸ In sum, Reynolds writes, "Unfortunately, many critics were led into the quagmire of trying to define 'black art' . . . The old chestnut of 'What is American in American art?' could easily be modified to ask, 'What is African in African American art?' "⁵⁹ When examining the printed debates of these times instigated by the presentation and discussion of what African American art should be, it is clear that this topic generated considerable and intricate discussion.

Much of the arguments centered on Locke and his high-profile writings. Highlights from the critical debates would include two essays published in *The Nation*. The June 1926 issue contained both George S. Schuyler's "Negro Art Hokum" as well as Langston Hughes's more poetic and thoughtful "Negro Art and the Racial Mountain." Schuyler emphatically denied the existence of a 'racial' art, stating that art by African Americans "is identical in kind with the literature, painting and sculpture of white Americans: that is, it shows more or less evidence of European influence."⁶⁰ Schuyler felt that black art "shows the

⁵⁷ "Editorials: American Negro Art," *Opportunity*, IV (August 1926) p. 239.

⁵⁸ Gary A. Reynolds, "American Critics and The Harmon Foundation Exhibitions," *Against the Odds: African-American Artists and The Harmon Foundation*, Gary A. Reynolds and Beryl J. Wright (Newark: The Newark Museum, 1989), 107-119.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 117.

⁶⁰ George S. Schuyler, "The Negro Art Hokum," *Black America: Confrontation and Accommodation in the Twentieth Century*, edited with an introduction by Richard Resch (1926; reprint, Lexington, Massachusetts: D.C. Heath and Company, 1969), 91.

impress of nationality rather than race . . . all reveal the psychology and culture of their environment—their color is incidental."⁶¹ However, Hughes's essay would consider the nuances of Locke's complex charge towards the formation of a 'racial' art. He addressed the lack of support for black artists by their own communities, thus forcing their dependence on white patronage, which encouraged their novelty, but nonetheless enforced the standards and models of the white, Western canon. "This urge within the race towards whiteness, the desire to pour racial individuality into the mold of American standardization, and to be as little Negro as possible and as much American as possible," wrote Hughes, was the 'racial mountain.'⁶² For Hughes, it was a fear and uncertainty of their own capabilities, beauty and particularities. In this, Hughes wrote, "The Negro artist works against an undertow of sharp criticism and misunderstanding from his own group and unintentional bribes from the whites."⁶³

Of course, some writers maintained simplistic analyses that continued in racist lines. The *New York World* published William Auerbach-Levy's 1930 diatribe, "Negro Painters Imitate Whites," which charged that African American artists lacked originality, and were merely imitative of European traditions. He suggested that they had innate and peculiar patterns of design and color to which they should adhere.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Ibid., 93.

⁶² Langston Hughes, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain," *Black America*, 94.

⁶³ Ibid., 97.

⁶⁴ William Auerbach-Levy, "Negro Painters Imitate Whites," *New York World*, January 5, 1930, 1M.

More interesting, though, were the dissenters to Locke's camp that came from within the African American intelligentsia. Wallace Thurman—who coined the term 'Niggerati'—wrote the 1932 novel, *Infants of the Spring*, which satirized nearly all the Harlem Renaissance artists with unfavorable portrayals. In 1934, Romare Bearden, then only twenty-two, wrote the essay, "The Negro Artist and Modern Art," which was published in *Opportunity* magazine in December 1934.⁶⁵ In it, he specifically criticized the separatist patronage of The Harmon Foundation, which he assessed as hindering artists by encouraging them to show before they are ready, without fair and open competition. He wrote that these projects promoted "standards that are both artificial and corrupt." Bearden indicted any use of critical double standards; he bemoaned the lack of serious analysis surrounding African American production at all. He also took Locke's philosophy to task due to its wholesale rejection of all modernist influences.

While Bearden stated that African American work at the time was timid, "hackneyed and uninspired, and only mere rehashings,"⁶⁶ he went on to assert:

⁶⁵ Romare Bearden, "The Negro Artist and Modern Art," *The Portable Harlem Renaissance Reader*, edited and with an introduction by David Levering Lewis (1934; reprint, New York: Viking, 1994), 135. Romare Bearden (b. 1912 in Mecklenburg County, Charlotte, North Carolina - 1988) moved north with his family by 1915. Bearden spent time in New York, Pittsburgh, and Moose Jaw, Canada. After he graduated from high school in Pittsburgh in 1929, he returned to New York, where his family had permanently settled in Harlem. Bearden attended Boston University until 1931, while playing baseball for the Negro League. In 1935, he graduated from New York University with a Bachelor of Science, where he majored in mathematics. At NYU he began producing political cartoons which were published nationally in periodicals like the *Baltimore Afro-American* and *Opportunity*. He studied with George Grosz at the Art Student's League from 1936 to 1937. Bearden was becoming a recognized talent in Harlem; at the first public session of the American Artist's Congress (founded in 1935), Harlem Renaissance patriarch Aaron Douglas mentioned Bearden, (although this has been printed as "Boarden": see *First American Artists' Congress*, 15) as one of the upcoming African American painters.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 139.

I admit that at the present time it is almost impossible for the Negro artist not to be influenced by the work of other men. Practically all the great artists have accepted the influence of others. But the difference lies in the fact that the artist with vision, sees his material, chooses, changes, and by integrating what he has learned with his own experiences, finally molds something distinctly personal.⁶⁷

Bearden thus rallied for the subtle incorporation of contemporary and historical sources, whether African, Western or otherwise, by black artists who had to find their own way, taking into account their dual heritage.

Bearden was not the only one who opposed segregated projects. One of Harlem's most important teachers, the artist Charles Alston, stated that he refused to exhibit with The Harmon Foundation⁶⁸:

I have always been pretty unalterably opposed to the segregated show. This all started in the very early days back in the 30's when The Harmon Foundation used to have an annual show of Negro painters. And you'd be in the show and that was that until the next year when you'd come out again and be paraded. The critics, sort

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Charles Henry (aka "Spinky") Alston (b. 1907 Charlotte, North Carolina - 1977) was a painter, sculptor, graphic artist, illustrator, and educator. His family relocated to New York City in 1913, and he attended DeWitt Clinton High School. He received his B.A. and M.A. degrees from Columbia University and also studied at New York University. He taught at the Harlem Community Art Center, Harlem Art Workshop, The Art Students League (1950) and Pennsylvania State University, and he was associate professor of painting at the City University of New York. Alston worked as a muralist for the WPA during the Depression. His two panel mural of that period, "Magic and Medicine," can be seen at Harlem Hospital. Alston was a member of the Board of Directors of the National Society of Mural Painters, and an active member of SPIRAL, a black artists' collaborative founded in the 1960s. While Alston did not participate in The Harmon Foundation's five exhibitions of "American Negro Artists," he did appear in The Harmon Foundation's 1934 film, "A Study of Negro Artists." As well, he participated in: "An Exhibition of Negro Art" in March 1935, (NYC: YWCA Auditorium, 144 West 138th Street); The Harmon Foundation's exhibition at the Baltimore Museum, 1937-1939; "Art of the American Negro," (Tanner Galleries, Chicago, Illinois) and "American Negro Art," (NYC: Downtown Gallery) in 1940; and "The Negro Artist Comes of Age," in 1945 (Albany Institute of History and Art, Albany, NY), among others.

of, at least I felt, pulled their punches, didn't apply the same standards. And I've always felt that the Negro artist cannot make it except in meeting the best of the competition from his contemporaries and that to artificially group him aside and apart was not giving him the chance for a full and total development. And at the same time it was setting up what to me was a false premise—that there is such a thing distinctively in this country as a Negro art. I don't think so. I think you have a certain kind of American experience, be it an experience as a Negro in America, but it is an American experience. And I think it's an important experience and I think it ought to be in the mainstream of American experience. I think to set up a little category like this even in those days to me said separation. I just didn't approve of it so I have refused consistently to show in segregated shows. There has been disagreement about that.⁶⁹

One of the most vocal, and eventually, the most powerful opponents to Alain Locke's position was James Porter, one of Locke's colleagues at Howard University.⁷⁰ In 1937, Porter published an article in *Art Front* magazine that attacked Locke's philosophies. "Dr. Locke supports the defeatist philosophy of the 'segregationist'," Porter accused, "weakly he has yielded to the insistence of the white segregationist that there are inescapable internal differences between white and black."⁷¹ Porter rebuked Locke's camp of ancestralism, writing

⁶⁹ Charles Alston. Interview by Al Murray, October 19 1968, Archives of American Art, The Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C. Transcript of audiotape, www.archivesofamericanart.si.edu.

⁷⁰ James A. Porter (b. 1905 Baltimore, Maryland - 1970) received a BS in Instruction of Art from Howard University where he taught while producing his own art. He continued his studies at Teacher's College and the Art Students League in New York from 1927-1929, when his work received an award from The Harmon Foundation. Porter continued his studies at the Sorbonne in Paris; he received his MA from New York University in Art History in 1937. In 1943, he published, *Modern Negro Art* (New York: Dryden Press); Porter exhibited internationally, and travelled widely in the Caribbean, Mexico, South America, and Africa for his intensive research into African and Afro-diasporic art. In 1945-1946 he received a Rockefeller Foundation Travel Grant for this purpose. In 1953, Porter was appointed head of Howard University's Department of Art.

⁷¹ *Art Front* 3 (July-August 1937), 8-9.

Some would have the Negro artist smother his spirit at the moment it begins to soar into consciousness. These people seem to think that it is better for him to amble forever in the dim glades of formlessness where they imagine the primordial values of art to be. For them the Negro is without cultural or written history, and hence capable of only an "instinctual" art. Such an idea is not only foolishly romantic, it is clearly anti-cultural. So far it has not taken root in the minds of the younger Negro artists.⁷²

Porter's work continued to be an antidote to Locke's point-of-view through the 1960s.

Interestingly, one very important rebuttal to Locke's philosophies came in a paper delivered at the First American Artists' Congress Against War and Fascism, held in New York City in 1936. Lynn Ward's "Race, Nationality and Art"⁷³ outlines the three possible factors that have been held accountable for an artist's talents and inclinations: blood, geography, or the entire cultural environment in which the artist matures. Ward outlines these notions and goes on to specifically refute Locke's idea of ancestralism, stating:

All responsible anthropologists agree that there is no acceptable scientific foundation for the belief that one race is more primitive, basically inferior or fundamentally

⁷² James A. Porter, *Modern Negro Art*, with a new introduction by David C. Driskell (1943; reprint, Washington D.C.: Howard University Press, 1999), 111.

⁷³ Lynd [sic] Ward, "Race, Nationality and Art," *First American Artists' Congress Against War and Facism* (New York: Town Hall & New School for Social Research, 1936), 38-41. The following footnote is attached on the title page: "The writer wishes to acknowledge his indebtedness to Mr. Meyer Schapiro for part of the material contained in this paper." This paper has been cited by Serge Guilbaut as "presented to the congress by Lynn Ward. . ." (p. 21) although the footnote reads "Text prepared in collaboration with Meyer Schapiro" (*How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom and the Cold War*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983, 211, n. 16). Ann Gibson simply credits the entire text to Schapiro ("Two Worlds," 51, n. 208).

different in mind from another. This being the case, the unique qualities of African tribal art, for example, must proceed not from the blood stream but from cultural circumstances that stem originally from geographic and climatic conditions. The Negro who is born into that isolated culture becomes a part of it not because of special capacities in his bloodstream, but by the mere circumstance of birth, and a Negro who is born into another culture must, if he is to function validly, become part of it. There are no mystical blood lines leading back to Africa.

What then are we to think of certain leaders of Negro art who would put the Negro artist in America to work in the forms of African tribal art, seeking thereby to develop his 'unique racial qualities'? Surely they are playing into the hands of those whites who for economic reasons are anxious to deny to the American Negro the benefits of the only culture with which he has had any contact for hundreds of years, the only culture of which he could ever become a valid part.⁷⁴

In the discussion following, it was reported that Louis Lozowick noted that if "exclusive nationalism" was bad, "exclusive internationalism"—the suppression of national minorities and their cultures—was equally threatening to the positive heterogeneity of the United States immigrant mix. "Therefore," Lozowick politely stated, "I say that to supplement the paper, which is undoubtedly excellent, we ought to make provision at this time for the acceptance and support of the culture of any minority."⁷⁵

Ward succinctly addressed the tightly woven issues surrounding African Americans, Americans, and the concept of authenticity, by presenting it as an issue of class. This issue would become more overbearing during the reign of

⁷⁴ Ward, "Race, Nationality and Art," 39.

⁷⁵ Discussion, *First American Artists' Congress*, 59.

Abstract Expressionism. Ward presciently foreshadowed one of the pending discourses on abstraction versus realistic expression by placing it in Marxist terms:

We are confronted with a growing emphasis on race and nationality in art. We have many appeals for an "American art" in which the concept of America is very vague, usually defined as "a genuine American expression" or "explicitly native art" and sometimes includes a separation of American painters into desirable and undesirable on the basis of Anglo-Saxon surnames . . . the real basis for an emotional separation between the member of the tribe and the outsider is to be found in more or less obscure feelings of economic rivalry and insecurity . . . the word "American" used in that way has no real meaning. It suspends a veil of fictitious unity and blinds our eyes to the fact that there can be no art in common between the Americans who own Rockefeller Center, the Americans in the Legion in Terre Haute, and the Americans in, as a symbol, Commonwealth College in Arkansas.⁷⁶

This important and serious consideration of the position of African American artists, on the part of nearly four hundred, politically committed, primarily white artists, as well as their close reading of Locke's theories and the controversy around the idea of ancestralism, proves a general awareness of the quandary which the modern black artist faced at this time. However, when "Race, Nationality and Art" was published in *Art Front*, it was in turn criticized as an attempt to denigrate Negro cultural heritage, substituting instead the "better" one of European Modernism. Outlining these heated dialogues illustrates the weighty and nettlesome positions allocated for African American artists in relationship to the general modern art community in the United States during, and after, the Harlem Renaissance period.

⁷⁶ Ward, "Race, Nationality and Art," 41.

Despite the fact that African art was so frequently invoked during this period, the chronological presentation of original works of African art to the Harlem community was delayed even further beyond its already-belated transmission to the general American modernist art community. African American artists were, certainly, looking for modern form in many places, including the example of African art. Certain artists, such as Douglas and as Hale Woodruff had been actively seeking out individual examples of African art on their own since the 1920s.⁷⁷ Fairly realistic depictions of African objects appear in still lifes by black artists Palmer Hayden (as in *Fetiché et Fleurs*, 1933) and Wilmer Jennings (in his *Still Life*, 1937). However, for most artists—without resources to travel and purchase, or with no direct connection to Barnes or Locke—exhibitions and publications were the primary source. In the documentation of the scant exhibitions of African art which we know African American artists attended it is notable that these presentations were much like the

⁷⁷ Hale Aspacio Woodruff (b. 1900 Cairo, Illinois - d. 1980) is an excellent example of an artist who recovered his relationship to African art during this period through research and collecting, and then deployed his knowledge in modernist abstraction. Woodruff moved to abstraction in the late 1940s, but he would always contend that his imagery was derived from Ashanti gold weights, Ibo masks, Yoruba carvings, and Dogon granary doors. He bought his first piece of African art while in Paris in 1928 with Alain Locke. Woodruff would go on to be a collector of Akan gold weights, Ibo masks, and Yoruba carvings. Woodruff travelled to Mexico to work on a Diego Rivera mural in 1934. On his return, he was hired by the WPA as an artist and a teacher from 1935-1943 at Atlanta University, where he organized the Atlanta annuals (which begin in 1942), prominent showcases for black artists at the time. (By 1947, Woodruff and Bearden decided to discontinue support for any such segregated exhibitions.) Woodruff travelled to New York in 1943-1944 on a Rosenwald Fellowship; he moved to New York in 1946 when he received a position to teach at New York University, which he held until 1970. His colleagues included William Bazotes and Tony Smith. Woodruff, with Smith and Robert Inglehart, maintained the studio at 35 East 8th Street, where, from 1948 to 1949, the "Subjects of the Artists" group had been, run by Mark Rothko, Robert Motherwell, David Hare, and Barnett Newman. Under Woodruff, Smith and Inglehart, Studio 35 was an exhibition and studio space affiliated with NYU, which held weekly lectures and finally, a three-day conference in the Spring of 1950 which was seminal to the theorization of the Abstract Expressionist Movement and attended by all the relevant artists and critics. In 1963, Woodruff and Norman Lewis co-founded the artists' group, Spiral.

mainstream's display of this art at the time. African art displayed for the Harlem community was not presented in a dramatically different fashion by or for black artistic circles. In both cases, the objects were presented for their plastic qualities, sources of admirable form and craftsmanship. They were isolated from any social, spiritual, or economic context, each on a pedestal or spotlight within a vitrine in the clean gallery space.

European modernism's influential encounter with African art is generally dated circa 1906, and attributed simultaneously to Picasso, Braque, Matisse, the German Expressionists and the Fauves.⁷⁸ However, its influence on modern art in the United States was not significant until much of the European artwork that it influenced was showcased in the international Armory Show held in New York in 1913. Shortly thereafter, several groundbreaking but small gallery exhibitions of African sculpture take place in New York: in 1914, Alfred Stieglitz organized an exhibit at his 291 Gallery while Robert Coady organized an exhibit at the Washington Square Gallery. In 1916-1917, Maurice de Zayas organized a project at the Modern Gallery, accompanied by the portfolio "African Negro Wood Sculpture Photographed by Charles Sheeler, With a Preface by Marius de Zayas." In 1923, the major undertaking, "Primitive Negro Art," organized by ethnologist Stewart Cullin, was held at the Brooklyn Museum. In 1933, "American Sources of Modern Art" (which included African as well as Native American objects) was organized by Holger Cahill for The Museum of Modern

⁷⁸ This encounter is usually discussed under the rubric of "primitivism." "Primitivism" in modern art usually means Western art that draws upon non-Western, tribal art forms and objects, generally those from Africa, Oceania, and the Americas. This practice has been normally associated with the belief that artists from these areas are more isolated and thus more "natural," "original," and, thus, superior in their untainted intuitions, instincts, sexuality, and spirituality. For the purposes of this text, specific examination of African art as an influence, and, later, Native American art as a influence, is made, with avoidance of the overall term of "primitivism."

Art. None of these projects can be said to have had particular impact on the Harlem art community.

As noted, Alain Locke had organized a full-scale exhibition of African art in 1927. Shortly thereafter, he arranged to have these objects on permanent display at the 135th Street Library, which, by 1925, had a special collection designated as the Division of Negro Literature, History and Prints.⁷⁹ Charles Alston relates that he had direct and significant contact with Alain Locke during the installation of his African art show at the library: "He called me," Alston has stated, "I helped him arrange things, which gave me a chance to feel them and look at them and examine them."⁸⁰

In 1935, the Museum of Modern Art in New York held its key exhibition, "African Negro Art," organized by James Johnson Sweeney and Alfred H. Barr, Jr. This groundbreaking project was extremely well attended; in fact, many African Americans—who normally did not attend the MOMA—visited this specific project. While it can be assumed that the majority of visitors to Locke's project, as well as to the Schomburg installation, were black, the MOMA exhibition is recognized as having earned a significantly increased black constituency. The

⁷⁹ In 1926, The Carnegie Corporation purchased Arthur Schomburg's collection of 10,000 items for the 135th Street Library. This collection became the cornerstone of The Division of Negro Literature, History, and Prints, which became a branch of the New York Public Library and was re-named in 1973 as The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. Schomburg had frequently loaned objects from his personal library to the 135th Street Library, which was a center of intellectual and cultural activity in Harlem. After the purchase, Schomburg was the first curator of the collection. Arturo Alfonso Schomburg (b. 1874, Puerto Rico - d. 1938) studied in San Juan, where, as an avid student of history, he began a lifelong quest for knowledge about people of African descent, studying history and collecting books, letters, manuscripts, prints, playbills, paintings and artifacts that made up the core of his unique and extensive library.

⁸⁰ Bearden and Henderson, *A History of African-American Artists*, 261.

MOMA made a specific outreach effort to African American communities in New York, which was reported to have increased the black population's visitation to MOMA by six percent during the period of the exhibition.⁸¹ The literature has noted that several influential Harlem artists visited this exhibition. According to a 1973 interview with Norman Lewis by Vivian Browne, "Lewis visited the exhibition so frequently that the guards soon knew him by sight."⁸² Jacob Lawrence took a bus trip, organized by "Professor" Charles Seifert, to the MOMA exhibition.⁸³ Lawrence met Seifert, a lecturer and historian with a large library of African and African American literature, in 1935. Seifert encouraged Lawrence to use his library as well as the Schomburg collection at the 135th Street Library; he organized bus trips from Harlem to museum exhibitions, including "African Negro Art."

The MOMA exhibition had an accompanying book and portfolio of photographs of the objects by Walker Evans. One set of seventy-five, black-and-white prints was donated to the 135th Street Library, where it was exhibited in December 1936. Additionally, in 1935,

. . . The Harmon Foundation had put together a collection of thirty-seven photographs of objects from the collection, and Locke had prepared explanatory material to accompany the photographs. As a Harmon Foundation publication explained, 'actual exhibitions of the Primitives are available to so few, and the demand for an understanding of these simple, straightforward art forms so great, that the

⁸¹ Virginia-Lee Webb, *Perfect Documents: Walker Evans and African Art*. 1935 (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000), 22.

⁸² Ann Eden Gibson, *Abstract Expressionism: Other Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 234, n. 92.

⁸³ www.jacoblawrence.org.

Foundation felt photographs with explanatory notes might fill this need.' ⁸⁴

These two photographic projects helped to make images of African art available to the Harlem community.

The MOMA publication followed the lead of de Zayas's 1916-1917 portfolio of prints by Charles Sheeler.⁸⁵ Similarly, it sought to broaden the circulation of these sought-after images by reproducing them through a respected fine art photographer well known for his so-called "objectivity." However, inspection of the photographs reveals their collusion in the presentation of African art through a Modernist prism, enhancing the effect of the gallery presentation. The objects were photographed against a seamless backdrop, and often appear to be floating on the page. By removing the African objects from their three-dimensional context, flattening them and reproducing them in black and white, they become two-dimensional, almost decorative elements, dis-embodied, isolated and centered. The white borders of the photographic print serves as a device that aligns and bounds this now-decorative element. Diffused lighting provides equal visual access to all surfaces of the visible object, evenly highlighting geometric forms and balances. What is visually accessible is fragmented and flattened into a play of seemingly Cubistic shapes, foreshortened into a patterned surface. Despite the pretense of the reliable transcription of the photograph, its frontality necessarily focuses on the abstract

⁸⁴ Reba and Dave Williams, "Themes and Images," *Alone in a Crowd: Prints of the 1930s-40s by African-American Artists* (New York: The Collection of Reba and Dave Williams, 1992), 24.

⁸⁵ Daniell Cornell, "Transforming Documents: Charles Sheeler, Walker Evans, and Barry Le Va," *Imaging African Art: Documentation and Transformation* (Yale University Art Gallery, 2000). I thank the author for bringing his ideas to my attention.

and formal qualities of the once-sculptural objects. Equalized in size, color, tone and texture, the works are stabilized and presented frontally. The viewer is thus placed in calm and successive confrontation with each work, which emphasizes the spectator's objectifying role. Even these circulated photos of African art, while attempting to provide artists with this alternative model, did so by presenting and photographing the works already stranded within a modernist framework and format.

In his catalogue essay for the MOMA exhibition, "African Negro Art," Sweeney argues that Cézanne interpreted African understanding of form for the European masters. Thus, he sought to argue that modern art's understanding of African art was already mediated by Cézanne, thereby keeping western art's lineage within the understood canon. In listening closely to Alston's comments about his experience with Locke's African exhibition, we find that his exposure to African art was, also, thoroughly tempered by his simultaneous study of European masters who had already absorbed African art's formal lesson. Within this conundrum, it becomes impossible to separate any direct experience with African art from their prior knowledge of the 'primitivizing' European modernist artists.⁸⁶ Alston recalled:

I think my first exposure to African art was through Alain Locke. Alain Locke came up here with an exhibition of African sculptures, masks and what not, for the Schomburg

⁸⁶ Interestingly, John Graham, in his 1936 preface to *Exhibition of Sculptures of Old African Civilisations*, held at Jacques Seligmann Gallery in New York, also noted this dual basis of African sculpture: its poised and plastic classicism, as well as its origin in Negro culture. He was one of few that emphasized the practical purposes of the objects; further, he stated that study of it was the key which would release modernism from naturalism. His 1937 work, *System and Dialectics of Art* followed up on this concept as did his analysis that same year, "Primitive Art of Picasso." Graham was associated with the Surrealist search for the primitive; he was also influential in establishing so-called "primitive" art as a model for many of the major Abstract Expressionist artists.

Collection. I went around there while he was arranging the exhibit and this was the first time I'd seen any number of examples of African art. I was fascinated with them. And with Locke right there on the scene I probably asked a million questions about them and I had a chance to hold them and to feel them. And they have played a tremendous part in my work. I think if you look at my work you can see that very clearly—the kind of plastic feeling about the figure. It's very close to African art. I know for a long time I had to almost consciously make my stuff not do a long neck on a figure. One or two of those very delicate lovely pieces were long-necked. About that same time I became aware of European painters who had discovered African art. And they were my first idols in painting. People like Modigliani, for instance . . . Well, I suppose the modern movement in general once you got with it had a tremendous influence on your work. I would say the great modern painters, the Picassos, the Braques, the Modiglianis, the Soutines, people like that, and the African art which has been an abiding influence on my figure work. They've all had an impact on me. You can't come up through our systems of education without having the influences of the great masters of the Renaissance and Greece and Egypt and what not . . . As I say, if you're educated as Western man—let's face, we are—an African-American has a sort of double heritage, you know. I mean he's got one that's biological and one that's environmental. Certainly all of the training that you get is Western-oriented. When you first decide you're going to be an artist and you have the opportunity to go to art school you're immediately thrust into the context of Western art. All the other aspects of your education are Western. So this is part of your heritage, too.⁸⁷

As Alston, Graham, Ralph Ellison, and others have noted, the black artist has a double heritage to contend with: his own cultural heritage, as well as Modernism's western heritage, which frequently interprets his heritage through its lens. Locke's dream of an unmediated Ancestralism was not possible in the

⁸⁷ Alston. Al Murray interview.

United States. African American audiences did not have any special understanding of the social, economic, religious or political significance of African objects from a continent and centuries away. As with general American audiences at the time, they, too, were seeing these objects uprooted, with little or no context. Even in their attempts to access original African objects, black artists did not have unfettered physical or intellectual access. Langston Hughes succinctly reminisced:

I did not feel the rhythms of the primitives singing through me, and so I could not live and write as though I did. I was only an American Negro—who had loved the surface of Africa and the rhythms of Africa—but I was not Africa. I was Chicago and Kansas City and Broadway and Harlem.⁸⁸

In an interview, Robert Blackburn has noted that during his artistic maturation in the late 1930s, he recollects that Harlem was moving away from the influences of Social Realism and toward a European or Cubistic model. While he remembers animated discussions about Benton, and very little passionate talk about African art, he fondly recalls long discussions about the work of Alexander Archipenko, Amadeo Modigliani, and Yasuo Kuniyoshi. Blackburn has stated,

Many of these people up there in Harlem were more interested in illustrative kind of painting, or semi-abstract and modernistic, but it was not a school that was strong in terms of even African art. So culturally I would have to say there was not much moving back to Africa, these people were not that involved in this concept. There was a moving away in terms of rejection of that and I think this is important . . . because I don't feel that's where the

⁸⁸ Quoted in Lizzetta LeFalle-Collins, "The Critical Context of Jacob Lawrence's Early Works, 1938-1952," *Over the Line*, 133 (origin. Nathan Irvin Huggins, *Harlem Renaissance*, London: Oxford University Press, 1971, 179.)

development ultimately lies, I think that art is a thing that has its roots in many things . . .⁸⁹

The recollections and work of the artists of that time attest to the multiplicity of influences and pressures they felt. This included African art, seen through a modernist lens, as one wellspring among many other complex sources.⁹⁰

Bearden wrote in 1946, "It would be highly artificial for the Negro artist to attempt a resurrection of African culture in America. The period between the generations is too great, and whatever creations the Negro has fashioned in this country have been in relationship to his American environment."⁹¹ It is interesting to note that in Bearden's 1934 attack on Locke, he also wrote of the profound influence of Rivera and Orozco. These romanticized figures were another set of extremely important role models that black artists of the time looked to for their clarity of vision. Despite Bearden's critique of Locke's promoting African art as a proper source for African American artists, Bearden was more accepting of such nostalgic adaptation by the Mexicans. He praised the Muralists, writing, "Two of the foremost artists of today are the Mexicans, Rivera and Orozco. If we study the work of these two men, it is evident that they were influenced by the continental masters. Nevertheless, their work is highly original, and steeped in the tradition and environment of Mexico. It might be

⁸⁹ Blackburn. Paul Cummings interview, 6.

⁹⁰ For example, I remain skeptical of LeFalle-Collins's argument that African art influenced black artists from Harlem in an extremely different manner than other modern artists: "(African American artists') responses to the 'primitive' indigenous forms of African art used by cubists was very different from that of the European avant-gardists. It encouraged African-American and Mexican artists to look to their own pre-colonial cultures as a basis for the content as well as the abstract form of their own work." See LeFalle-Collins, "African-American Modernists," *In the Spirit of Resistance*, 44.

⁹¹ Romare Bearden, "The Negro Artist's Dilemma," *Critique 1* (November 1946), 16-22.

noted here that the best work of these men was done in Mexico, of Mexican subject matter . . . "⁹² It is clear that Bearden advocated learning from the Western canon, while taking the most important clues from one's own environment: in this case, the indigenous Mexican past was fine for the Mexicans, but Africa was not a proper source for African Americans.

There was mutual empathy between the black arts community and the Mexican modernists, and their moments of connection greatly impacted African American artists from the Harlem Renaissance through the 1930s. The African American struggle for equality was supported by the Mexicans. David Alfaro Siqueiros, Diego Rivera and Jesus Escobedo all made prints critically depicting the Ku Klux Klan's activities. As early as 1918-1919, José Clemente Orozco visited New York City and Harlem. His impressions of this trip would inspire his art for decades, in such works as his celebratory 1928 lithograph, *Vaudeville in Harlem* or his 1930, nineteen-print New York lithograph cycle, which closed with his important image, *Hanged Negro*.

Lizzetta LeFalle-Collins has demonstrated that Miguel Covarrubias influenced Charles Alston. Covarrubias visited New York in 1924 and was guided through Harlem by Carl van Vechten. He drew in Harlem nightclubs, and some of his work was printed in *Vanity Fair* as early as December 1924. One of his works was chosen for the cover of Langston Hughes's *The Weary Blues*, 1927; in 1927 he also published his suite, *Negro Drawings*, inspired by the life and pulse he witnessed in Harlem.⁹³

⁹² Bearden, "The Negro Artist and Modern Art," 139.

⁹³ LeFalle-Collins, "African-American Modernists," *In the Spirit of Resistance*, 59.

Hale Woodruff has recounted the importance of the Mexicans to black artists at the time:

The Mexicans had begun in the 1920's. I think they began their so-called renaissance around 1923 and they had already developed a great, exciting movement down there. As you say, the influence was felt back here. There was an upsurge during the Thirties of the influence of Mexican mural painters. Almost every post office in the country had a mural painted in it. This was the influence of the Mexicans. Right over here at the New School there is a mural by Orozco. And the mural by Rivera which is supposedly still on the walls at Radio City was one of the great events of the day when it was first painted. So there was a general social consciousness. This is reflected in the Roosevelt Administration. It was a rather pervasive thing.⁹⁴

Will Barnet, who was teaching at The Art Students League by 1934, had printed both lithographs and intaglios for Orozco at the League. He summarized, "I was very influenced by [José] Clemente Orozco, who was my god at that time . . ." to which Steven Polcari, the interviewer, responded, "He was very popular. People don't realize *how* popular he was in the thirties."⁹⁵

⁹⁴ Hale Woodruff. Interview by Al Murray, November 18, 1968. The Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C. Transcript of an audiotape, www.archivesofamericanart.si.edu

⁹⁵ Will Barnet. Interview by Stephen Polcari, April 3, 1993. The Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C. Transcript of an audiotape, www.archivesofamericanart.si.edu. Will Barnet (b. 1911, Beverly, Massachusetts) studied at the School of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, and then attended the Art Students League on scholarship from 1930 to 1933, where he made his first lithograph. From 1935 to 1946, Barnet became the official litho printer at the League, where he printed for Orozco, Raphael Soyer, and Adolf Dehn. In 1936, Barnet was hired by the WPA Graphics Project as a printer and technical advisor. By 1937, Barnet began teaching at the League; in 1941 he began to teach at the New School for Social Research and in 1945 he taught at Cooper Union. Barnet has shown extensively since the mid-1930s; in the late 1940s, he became member of the vanguard group, the American Abstract Artists. He was one of the founding members of The Printmaking Workshop and remains on its Board of Directors to date.

American artists of this time also imitated the Mexican model of organization. The Artist's Union, founded in New York in 1934, was based on the Mexican *Revolutionary Union of Technical Workers and Plastic Artists (Sindicato Revolucionario de Obreros Técnicos y Plásticos)*, founded in 1922, which sought to eliminate the caprices of private patronage by advocating that artists charge an hourly or per-piece rate, much like any other kind of worker.⁹⁶ Their manifesto, entitled, *Manifiesto of the Mexican Union of Laborers, Technical Workers, Painters, and Sculptors (Manifiesto del Sindicato de Trabajadores, Técnicos, Pintores y Escultores Mexicanos)* was drafted by Siqueiros and signed by Rivera, Orozco, Carlos Mérida, Xavier Guerrero, Fermín Revueltas, Ramón Alva Gaudarrama, and Germán Cueto. It was published in *El Machete*, the Union's publication, in June 1924. Such influential U.S. artists as George Biddle read this document.

Biddle had traveled to Mexico where he worked with the muralists, returning to be actively involved in the WPA in New York. Romare Bearden and Harry Henderson, among others, have noted that Biddle's firsthand observation of Mexican activism directly influenced the structure of the WPA itself. They write that in 1933, "the painter George Biddle wrote his old classmate President Roosevelt, urging government-sponsored artwork. He cited murals painted by Mexican artists 'on plumber's wages.'" ⁹⁷ WPA expert Francis O'Connor concurs. He states that Biddle wrote to Roosevelt and urged him to emulate the

⁹⁶ Gerald M. Monroe, "The '30s: Art, Ideology and the WPA," *Art in America* (Nov.-Dec. 1975, Vol. 63, No. 6) p. 66. See also entry "David Alfaro Siqueiros," in *Latin American Art of the Twentieth Century*, edited by Waldo Rasmussen with Fatima Bercht and Elizabeth Ferrer (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1993), 394.

⁹⁷ Bearden and Henderson, *A History of African-American Artists*, 228.

Mexican model. O'Connor recorded that Biddle was referred to the Treasury, who embellished public buildings. "This initiated a chain of events that led the federal government to promote rather than solely procure art."⁹⁸

The popularity of the Mexican modernists and muralists with the WPA artists, including those artists based in Harlem, inclined many to draw a link between the artists on the roles and leftist political groups, which, in fact was often the case. The major Mexican muralists were committed Communists; Rivera even spent nine months in Russia in 1927-1928. However, not everyone appreciated the U.S. government's support of artists who espoused radical political views and whose model organizations were based on those in Communist and Socialist nations. At the American Artists' Congress, for example, Stuart Davis noted criticism of the program issuing from a major newspaper. "It is Hearst's *Daily Mirror*," he railed, "that launches the most vicious attack against the artists on Government projects, calling them 'Hobohemian chiselers' and 'ingrates ready to bite the hand that feeds them.'"⁹⁹ Gerald Monroe has observed that, in fact, the WPA was not even wholeheartedly supported within the government itself. "It should be emphasized that Congress itself did not create any of the arts projects," he commented, "they were initiated by President Roosevelt's executive decision and provided for out of general WPA funds. Both art project agencies and their individual artist-employees were under frequent attack from Congressional Committees, the recurrent charge being that they were subversive and under Communist influence."¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Francis V. O'Connor, "The Historical Background of New Deal Murals," *A New Deal for Public Art: Murals from Federal Work Programs* (Bronx: The Bronx Museum of the Arts, 1993), 10.

⁹⁹ Stuart Davis, "Why an Artists' Congress?" *First American Artists' Congress*, 4-5.

¹⁰⁰ Monroe, "The '30s," 67.

Such political affiliations have been well documented. For example, by 1929, the John Reed Club was founded in the United States. The John Reed Club's founders included influential artist Louis Lozowick; popular artists William Gropper and Fred Ellis served as delegates to the Ukraine convention in 1932. The John Reed Club promoted revolutionary values by sponsoring artistic and literary endeavors that advanced these ideas. For example, the Club supported exhibitions like "The Social Viewpoint in Art," which featured works by Thomas Hart Benton, John Steuart Curry, George Biddle, and Stuart Davis. The New York Chapter affiliated with the popular art and literary magazine, *The New Masses*, where the John Reed Club published its official manifesto in 1932. This manifesto had six main points that underlined its mission to further the cultural activities of the working class; number four focused on the advancement of the race struggle. This point vowed to "fight against white chauvinism (against all forms of Negro discrimination or persecution) and against the persecution of the foreign-born."¹⁰¹ By advocating for equal rights, far left groups like the John Reed Club paid "special attention paid to the development of Negro artists and writers."¹⁰² For example, Langston Hughes was a member of the Club; in 1935, when he received a Guggenheim Fellowship, Hughes spent one year in Mexico.

Stuart Davis was an important link between the politically active artists' groups, American modernism and the Harlem arts community. Davis spent 1928 to

¹⁰¹ "John Reed Club of New York: 'Draft Manifesto'." *Art in Theory 1900-1990: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, edited by Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 403.

¹⁰² Monroe, "The '30's," 65.

1929 in Paris, where he made eleven lithographs at Atelier Desjobert.

Returning to New York in 1931, he made five black and white lithographs with George C. Miller, and by 1935, he began printing in the Graphics Division of the WPA. As well, Davis produced three WPA murals, including one for the World's Fair in Queens in 1939.

Davis was very involved in artists' organizations at this time. By February 1934, the "Unemployed Artists Group" turned into the "Artists Union," which, by 1935, claimed over 1400 members. Although outwardly non-political, the Artists' Union attempted to represent artists working on government projects and published the artistic-political journal *Art Front*, which Davis edited for the first few issues. During this time, many artists were active in the social and political movements that responded to the Great Depression, confronting "the complex issue of commitment to social change and its relationship to art."¹⁰³

Also in 1935, the American Artists Congress (AAC) was formed, a Popular Front organization whose purpose was to "achieve unity of action among artists of recognized standing in their profession on all issues which concern their economic and cultural security and freedom, and to fight War, Fascism and Reaction, destroyers of art and culture . . ."¹⁰⁴ Davis served as the AAC National Secretary in 1936 and the National Chair in 1938. He was somehow able to successfully negotiate all varieties of politically committed artists; however, his friendship with Arshile Gorky broke over his political commitment. All of these

¹⁰³ Bearden and Henderson, *A History of African-American Artists*, 227.

¹⁰⁴ Stuart Davis, "Introduction," *First American Artists' Congress*, cover verso.

artists' groups and organizations were linked to leftist political activity, and the scrutiny was hard, particularly for black artists.

Davis, a jazz aficionado, was very friendly with Romare Bearden. By 1940, Bearden knew Davis, whose work—through its composition, spatiality and reference to popular culture, especially jazz—made an enormous impact on him. As well, there is a visible and strong relationship between Davis's work and Jacob Lawrence's work of this time.¹⁰⁵ Edith Halpert, who was Davis's dealer from 1927 to 1963, began to show the work of Lawrence in 1941. Lawrence was active in the Artists Union as well as on the roles of the WPA. In works such as *House and Street*, 1931, Davis's patterned planes include brick buildings, darkened windows, fire escape ladders and zig-zaggy support columns. This type of bouncy urban abstraction can also be seen in Lawrence's work, such as *This is Harlem*, 1942-1943. Lawrence's work of this period also employs street signs and typefaces, as in the work of Davis. Will Barnett has also stated that he was very impressed by Davis's work of the 1930s. Barnett met Davis at the Art Student's League, where Davis taught briefly from 1931 to 1932.

Blackburn recalls that during this period, while living with his mother in Harlem, on 139th Street, he was interviewed for an article in the *Daily Worker*, a socialist newspaper. Despite the fact that he was embarrassed to have her meet him at the one-room apartment that he shared with his mother, the white,

¹⁰⁵ Lowery Stokes Sims also makes this analogy but she points out that Lawrence himself never "ascribed a direct relationship," to Davis. Lowery Stokes Sims, "The Structure of Narrative: Form and Content in Jacob Lawrence's Builders Paintings, 1946-1998," *Over the Line*, 206-208.

leftist female interviewer lent him a certain street and artistic credibility. As it has been succinctly stated,

All shades of the cultural liberal and left-wing, affected by radical politics, worked together on common goals. Between 1933-1938 the John Reed Club, the Artists' Union, the Harlem Artists' Guild, and the American Artists' Congress Against War and Fascism influenced the New Deal's WPA/FAP. Popular Front ideas linked them with artists' organizations in Europe and Mexico. Artists had an idealistic view of working-class culture and found a role model in the insurgent labor movement.¹⁰⁶

Clearly, much has been written about the connection between artists and the political left in these times.

However, the African American artist Ronald Joseph recalls, "During the period of the WPA, I was inevitably wrapped up in protestations and so on. And then, one day, I realized that this political stuff was . . . not exactly too much, but that I don't function well in that way. Organizational groups are very important, very significant; you feel fine. But then all of a sudden you can realize you have work to do, but it's not the same work."¹⁰⁷ Joseph, who had been active politically and had even traveled to Washington with Stuart Davis and Hugo Gellert, was an important influence on, and friend to, Robert Blackburn.¹⁰⁸ Both have described

¹⁰⁶ Francine Tyler, *Artists Respond to the Great Depression and the Threat of Fascism: The New York Artists' Union and its Magazine Art Front* (Ph.D dissertation, New York University, 1991).

¹⁰⁷ Ann Gibson, "The New York Years: Interview With Ronald Joseph," *Black American Literature Forum*, Volume 23, Number 4 (Winter 1989), 726.

¹⁰⁸ Ronald Joseph (b.1910 St. Kitts, British West Indies - d. 1992) Joseph lived in Dominica and moved to the United States in 1920, at age 10, with adoptive parents. (Joseph's mother had moved to Harlem earlier.) He graduated from Fieldstone School, an Ethical Culture School, in 1929, and then attended Pratt Institute from 1931 to 1934. He and his foster family lived on 59th Street and Tenth Avenue, and he admired Da Vinci and Goya from an

similar attitudes toward their participation in organized politics. Both private, both focused, Blackburn and Joseph were kindred in that the two of them maintained a separation between their art and the politics swirling around them; despite their professed intellectual sympathies, neither manifested their commitment via their imagery. Blackburn has stated, "I've always been an integrationist . . . I think an artist way of life has to be one that is trying to make things one and not trying to fragment. Because people are basically the same and we know that."¹⁰⁹

Charles Alston went to Radio City to watch Rivera working on *Man at the Crossroads*. Alston has reminisced, "Orozco and Rivera were tremendous influences on all artists, black and white, in this country . . . We were all involved because we were involved in other ways with the social realism of the 30's . . . I happened to be on the mural project so I was particularly aware of the Orozcos and the Riveras. As a matter of fact, I used to go down to Radio City when Rivera was painting the one they destroyed. And between his broken English and my broken French, we managed to communicate. And I was very much influenced by his mural work."¹¹⁰ Alston's two-panel mural *Magic and*

early age. He also has stated that he went to the New York Public Library regularly and he studied in the art section, including Chinese art and Juan Gris. Later, he Joseph was on the roles of the WPA where he met Norman Lewis, Romare Bearden, Robert Blackburn, Riva Helfond, Ernest Crichlow. Joseph was active politically during the WPA years; then he was drafted. After serving in World War II, Joseph had a GI Bill of Rights Scholarship and then a Rosenwald Fellowship in 1948; he travelled in Peru and Paris and returned to the US in 1950. In 1956, he left the US permanently for Brussels, Belgium, where he died.

¹⁰⁹ Blackburn. Paul Cummings interview, 13.

¹¹⁰ Alston. Al Murray interview. Another interesting point of connection is through the work of Jacob Lawrence. In this same interview, Charles Alston recalls encountering the young Lawrence as a student at this time: "I came to of Columbia and worked a year as a boys' work director at a little community house in Harlem, the Utopia House. Incidentally, that's where I discovered—and I insist that I discovered—Mr. Jacob Lawrence. Jake was a kid of, oh, about ten years old. Mothers used to leave their children at Utopia House in the morning while they went to work; they'd have a program for them, and then the parents would pick them up after work. Jake was one of these kids. I had an art class as one of the activities and Jake was

Medicine, 1936, executed for Harlem Hospital (and first exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art) clearly shows his indebtedness to the Mexican model as well as the obvious influence of African and modern European art.

In 1936, after Rivera's infamous mural project in New York, Siqueiros stayed in New York for a while en route from Los Angeles to Spain. During this time, he set up an Experimental Workshop in Union Square; Jackson Pollock and his brother Sanford McCoy, among others, participated in the meetings and exercises. That same year in Mexico, Leopoldo Méndez, Luis Arenal, and Pablo O'Higgins founded The Popular Graphics Workshop (*Taller De Gráfica Popular*, or, TGP). This print workshop's core of original members were former muralists who used the workshop as a forum for the discussion and furthering of their revolutionary goals, including the nationalist spirit of *Mexicanidad*.¹¹¹

The *Mexicanidad* of the mid-1930s has much in common with the ethnic and populist art that was manifested by both the late "New Negro" era in Harlem as well as the Roosevelt generation's regionalisms and realisms. The TGP's linoleum prints also expressed their ideals through large-edition, widely-disseminated, and technically excellent black-and-white linoleum block prints

interested. And I noticed almost immediately what an interesting eye this kid had. He didn't work like the other kids. He knew pretty definitely what he wanted to do and it didn't relate to the typical kind of thing that children of that age do. At that time he was interested in very fantastic masks. I showed him how to build up forms and make papier-mache masks and then he would paint them. I wish there were some of those masks around today. I think probably they've all been destroyed, probably. But they were fantastically interesting. I'm glad I had the sense at that time to realize that this kid had a very unusual, unique kind of talent, and way of seeing things. I wouldn't even let him watch me paint. And I tried my best just to protect this very unique quality in Jake." Finally, another point of connection is Ben Shahn, who assisted Diego Rivera on the Rockefeller Center mural. Shahn was an active WPA artist who showed with Edith Halpert's Downtown Gallery beginning in 1930. Halpert began to show the work of Jacob Lawrence in 1941.

¹¹¹ Henry C. Estrada, "From Populist to Pop: The Graphic Arts of the Chicano and Puerto Rican Movements," in *Pressing the Point: Parallel Expressions in the Graphic Arts of the Chicano and Puerto Rican Movements* (New York: El Museo del Barrio, 1999), 20.

provided the roadmap for the WPA's proliferation of black-and-white lithographic images.

While the Mexican influence on African American artists of this time was profound in many complex ways—just like the impact of African art— it should not be oversimplified. For example, Ronald Joseph stated that he felt Rivera, Orozco and Siqueiros were "imposed" on them during that timeframe.¹¹²

As in the case of African art, the Mexican artists were certainly not the only influence upon the artists of Harlem. Again, LeFalle-Collins overstates the case: "African American artists *developed* a cultural group identity in the 1930s and 1940s when exposed to the work of Mexican School muralists and printmakers. *Their conscious decision to emulate* the tenets, techniques, art processes, and themes of the Mexican School was not just a matter of artistic preference but also a profoundly political choice . . ." ¹¹³ (emphasis mine). While it is true that there was an artistic and political admiration, LeFalle-Collins has lost sight of the legitimizing stimulus of European and American Modernism, the American Regionalists and the Social Realists (or Social Protest art), as well as the lingering and complex influences of the Harlem Renaissance itself.

¹¹² Gibson, "The New York Years," 726.

¹¹³ LeFalle-Collins, "Redefining the African-American Self," *In the Spirit of Resistance*, 19. Although LeFalle-Collins does not address the work of Robert Blackburn (her project focused on Charles Alston, John Biggers, Elizabeth Catlett, Sargent Claude Johnson, Jacob Lawrence, Charles White, John Wilson, and Hale Woodruff) she specifically addresses the work of Blackburn's teachers and colleagues. While there is, undoubtedly, an enormous Mexican influence in Harlem at this time, my position is that there are multiple, competing, and infused influences to examine; I believe their choices cannot be so directly attributed to an emulation of a single source.

Between 1934 to 1939, Robert Blackburn was actively involved with the complex web of art programs and groups in Harlem. Between the ages of thirteen and eighteen, he attended the Harlem Arts Workshop at the 135th Street Library and the artistic "salon" known simply as '306,' the Arts and Craft program at the Harlem YMCA, The Uptown Art Laboratory, and was a member of the Harlem Artists Guild. Most famously, from 1937 to 1939, Blackburn attended the Harlem Community Art Center (often simply referred to as "The Harlem Arts Center"), located at 290 Lexington Avenue and 125th Street. In this WPA-sponsored center, Blackburn learned lithography.

He has recollected that his uncle, a house painter, met Charles Alston and told Alston about young Blackburn's artistic talent. Alston encouraged the uncle to bring Blackburn to the 135th Street Library, where he taught in an arts program with Henry Bannarn. Blackburn feels that while his family may not have been particularly interested in his art career,

the main thing the family would have been concerned about was the fact that it kept me off the streets, because . . . I was part of a gang, I had to be, but I was always pulled away because my interest in art was stronger and so then rather than go with the gang every afternoon I'd be going around with Spinky Alston to draw and run errands and whatever else they wanted me to do, because I liked those people.¹¹⁴

Through the extraordinary network of art programs in Harlem at this time, Blackburn came into contact with other professional African American artists who would go on to read like a "who's who" of this uptown period, including: Charles Alston, William Artis, James Baldwin, Henry Bannarn, George Barina,

¹¹⁴ Blackburn. Paul Cummings interview, 7.

Romare Bearden, Gwendolyn Bennett, Ernest Crichlow, Countee Cullen, Aaron Douglas, Ralph Ellison, Elton Fax, Rex Gorleigh, Palmer Hayden, Riva Helfond, Langston Hughes, Louise Jefferson, William Henry Johnson, Ronald Joseph, Gwendolyn Knight, Jacob Lawrence, Norman Lewis, Richard William Lindsay, Elba Lightfoot, Claude McKay, Sarah Murell, Augusta Savage, Georgette Seabrook Powell, Marvin and Morgan Smith, James Lessene Wells, Richard Wright, and many more of the key players of the early 20th century African American art milieu. Blackburn has stated that within this group, he found friendship, father figures, and a positive family image. He has said, "I was closer to these people than I was to my own family, I have to make that clear . . ."¹¹⁵ This model that these artists and groups provided would impact Blackburn tremendously, shaping the rest of his life. These artists had a positive affect on the talented and intelligent Blackburn, who, up to the year after his delayed high school graduation in 1940, could have easily taken the path toward a less meaningful street life.

From 1932 until 1936, Blackburn was a middle school student at Frederick Douglass Junior High School (PS 139) where he has recalled working with John Sollace Glenn, Norman Lewis,¹¹⁶ Ilya Bolotowsky, Zell Ingram and S.

¹¹⁵ Robert Blackburn. Interview by Karl Fortess, June 10, 1972. The Archives of American Art. The Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C. Audiotape.

¹¹⁶ Norman Lewis (b. 1909 Harlem - d. 1979), whose parents were from Bermuda, began drawing at an early age but was largely a self-taught artist. He studied with Augusta Savage and then briefly in 1933 with Raphael Soyer at the John Reed Club Art School. From 1936 to 1939, under the WPA, Lewis continued his independent studies, and was paid to teach. An active member of the Artist's Union, Lewis appears in Max Yavno's famous photo of the "Artist's Sessions at Studio 35". Later, Lewis was instrumental in Spiral and co-founded Cinque Gallery with Romare Bearden and Ernest Crichlow. He showed with Marian Willard from 1946 until 1964, who in 1949 wrote of his work, in a letter to Robert Beverly Hale, an Assistant Curator for the Metropolitan Museum of Art, that his work "does not deal with social problems but spiritual and painting problems."

Witonski. He participated in an after school program there with the poet Countee Cullen, whom Blackburn cites as an influential presence, as well as the sculptor William Artis.¹¹⁷ At the junior high school, Blackburn was the art editor of the magazine, the *Pilot*, in 1936. Blackburn designed a mural for the lobby of the school, which he executed with other students. Upon his graduation, he was honored with the Frederick Douglass Guidance and Art Medals in 1936.

During this same middle school period, from 1934 to 1935, Blackburn worked with painter Richard W. Lindsey, Rex Gorleigh and William Artis in the Arts and Crafts Department of the Harlem YMCA. Through the YMCA, Blackburn received the John Wanamaker Medal in 1936, and the prestigious Spingarn Award¹¹⁸, the Robert Pious Award, the Poussant Award, and the G.J. Pinckney Award in 1937. He assisted Artis in designing and rendering a mural for the boy's recreation hall of the YMCA. At the same time, Blackburn was an extracurricular student at the Harlem Arts Workshop, where Ronald Joseph, ten years his senior, was teaching. Joseph would have a profound effect on Blackburn; he has stated repeatedly that Ronald Joseph was one of his greatest influences, an artist who should be more widely recognized. Blackburn and Joseph would inaugurate a lifelong friendship at the Harlem Arts Workshop.

¹¹⁷ William Ellsworth Artis (b. 1914 Washington, North Carolina - d. 1977) moved to New York in 1927, where he studied with Augusta Savage in the early 1930s. He received a scholarship to the Art Student's League, where he studied from 1932-1934. Artis taught and directed the boy's programs in arts and crafts at the 135th Street Branch YMCA from 1937 to 1941.

¹¹⁸ In 1914, Joel E. Spingarn, chairman of the NAACP, established the Spingarn Medal for "the highest and noblest achievement of an American Negro."

The Harlem Art Workshop (HAW) in its various incarnations had a long and illustrious history. Founded in 1921, the HAW operated from the 135th Street Library. This program was one of the first and strongest pre-WPA art programs in Harlem. In the late 1920s, the Carnegie Foundation funded what they called "the Library School and Art Workshop" at the branch library, and Charles Alston became its Director for an initial, brief period.¹¹⁹ In 1932, Audrey McMahon and Frances Pollak of the College Art Association were instrumental in obtaining a grant of twenty thousand dollars from the municipal art committee towards the HAW's community art programs.¹²⁰ William E. Artis and Richard M. Lindsey taught soap carving, painting, and model plane building. In July 1933, The Harmon Foundation donated funds to the Harlem Adult Education Committee of the 135th Street Library to administer workshops for adults and children which James Lesene Wells proposed and directed.¹²¹ Palmer Hayden and Susie McIver also taught there through 1934, and Charles Alston also began teaching there again at this time, at the urging of Alain Locke.

In 1934, at age thirteen, Robert Blackburn was enrolled in HAW classes with Alston at the instigation of his uncle. Records indicate that he was prolific; eight of his student oils, a pastel, a *papier maché* mask were selected for an annual

¹¹⁹ "Biographical Chronology," *Charles Alston, Artist and Teacher*, with texts by Gylbert Coker and Corrine Jennings (New York: Kenkeleba Gallery, 1990), 20.

¹²⁰ Bearden and Henderson, *A History of African-American Artists*, 228.

¹²¹ James Lesene Wells (b. Florida 1902 - d. 1993) moved to New York in 1919. He studied at the National Academy of Design & Teacher's College, New York City. Wells was appointed to the faculty of Howard University, Washington D.C. in 1929 where he taught for forty years. Wells studied at Columbia University, the National Academy of Design; he worked in Paris as well as at Atelier 17 in 1945 while it was located in New York City. Wells initiated and directed the Harlem Arts Workshop at its inception in 1933.

exhibition by the Art Workshop.¹²² Blackburn participated at the end of the HAW's lengthy operation. By December 1936, the HAW lost its base of funding, forcing it to close one year later in 1937. However, during its years of operation, artists and talents such as Henry Mike Bannarn¹²³, Romare Bearden,¹²⁴ Jacob Lawrence,¹²⁵ Aaron Douglas, Norman Lewis, Countee Cullen, Claude McKay, Langston Hughes, Richard Wright, and Alain Locke passed through in some capacity, as either participant or instructor.

During this same time frame, in May 1934, Charles Alston—who was quickly turning into one of Harlem's most influential teachers—initiated what would become an historical artistic gathering point, simply called “306.” Located in Alston's studio at 306 West 141 Street, ongoing, weekly salon-type meetings became the center of creative discussion and socialization for the Harlem art intelligentsia. According to Bearden and Henderson, this was initiated as an outgrowth of the thriving HAW at the Library. “When the project at the 135th Street Library overflowed, (Alston) was authorized to find quarters for an additional center. At 306 West 141st Street, he found an old stable whose hayloft could be converted into a large studio-classroom. The building also

¹²² “Exhibition of Work by Students in the Art Workshop of the Harlem Adult Education Committee, Charles Alston, Instructor,” Carbon copy of 1934 exhibition checklist. The Harmon Foundation papers. Library of Congress, Manuscripts Division, Washington D.C.

¹²³ Henry Mike Bannarn (b. 1910 - d. 1963), a sculptor, came to New York from Minneapolis with Gordon Parks, photographer, in Spring 1934.

¹²⁴ Romare Bearden (b. 1912 - d. 1988) Bearden will be discussed further in Chapter 4.

¹²⁵ Jacob Lawrence (b. 1917 - d. 2000) met his teacher Charles Alston in 1927 in Utopia House art classes in Harlem; he also worked with Alston at the Harlem Arts Workshop in the NYPL and Savage at her studio. From 1934 to 1937, he studied with Bannarn at 306. In 1941, he exhibited his “Migration Series” at Edith Halpert’s Downtown Gallery. In 1943, he exhibited the “Harlem Series” at the same gallery. In 1944, The Museum of Modern Art exhibited the “Migration” and “Coast Guard” series. By 1946, Lawrence was teaching at Black Mountain College, North Carolina.

contained two apartments, one of which he took. The other went to Henry W. "Mike" Bannam . . . "¹²⁶ In other accounts, since the HAW served primarily children and adolescents, Alston felt the need to create an adult version. The 306 salon remained active for approximately four years. When Alston was placed in charge of the WPA Harlem Mural Project, he used the well-known location of 306 as the registration point. Alston supervised the WPA Harlem Hospitals Mural Project, a major undertaking that employed several important artists in public works, including Alston himself.¹²⁷ Blackburn was one of the youngest visitors to 306. He has reminisced that as he hung around this historic place, he was exposed to artists and ideas that affected his life:

At 306, he said, he achieved a vision of the world which 'saved him as a human being.' He recalls the discussions: Alston and Richard Wright (before Wright denounced the Party) extolling the merits of capitalism and socialism, respectively; Claude McKay discoursing on the responsibility of the Black artist; endless interpretations of Locke's relatively ancient dictums on the uses of African Art.¹²⁸

Another very important Harlem teacher was Augusta Savage.¹²⁹ Savage, who had been teaching art in Harlem since 1929, was a mentor to Norman Lewis,

¹²⁶ Bearden and Henderson, *A History of African-American Artists*, 263. *Charles Alston: Artist and Teacher* states that he opened 306 when the Library School and Art Workshop lost its Carnegie Sponsorship and that only the Library School was supported by the WPA (21).

¹²⁷ This project included the artists: Ad Bates, Fred Coleman, Selma Day, Edgar Evans, Cecil Gaylord, Vertis Hayes, Ronald Joseph, Gwendolyn Knight, Elba Lightfoot, Richard Lindsey, Francisco Lord, Georgette Seabrook, John Solace Glenn, O. Richard Reid, James Yeagan and others. (Bearden and Henderson, *A History of African-American Artists*, 237).

¹²⁸ Jeff Richard Donaldson, *Generation '306': Harlem, New York* (Ph.D Dissertation, Northwestern University, 1974), 155.

¹²⁹ Augusta Savage (b. 1892 Green Cove Springs, Florida - d. 1962) came to New York where she studied at Cooper Union from 1921 to 1924. Savage was admitted to Fountainbleau School of Fine Arts in 1923 but then denied admission when it was learned she was black. In 1926 she was awarded a fellowship to the Royal Academy in Rome, but

William Artis, Ernest Crichlow, Elton Fax, and others. In 1932, she began teaching art from her studio on 143rd Street. In 1936, Savage renovated a garage on 136th Street, over which she lived, and christened it the Uptown Art Laboratory (UAL) for teaching art to children and the African American community. Gwendolyn Bennet and Norman Lewis lived in the house in front of it. Elton Fax recalls that he and Fred Perry were teaching art to children in Savage's garage when the Harlem Community Art Center was set up as a separate space.¹³⁰ Ernest Crichlow recalls that Vaclav Vytlacil and Nathaniel Derk, two instructors from the Art Students League, would come on Saturdays to teach in Savage's space. Prior to the WPA programs, these artists did this of their own initiative, without being paid, as a personal outreach to the Harlem community of young artists. Blackburn recalls:

It was a very moving experience for me. I was the kid among all these older people. Georgette (Seabrook) and I had begun along with Jake (Lawrence) at the studio at 306. I think I was thirteen at the time I went there. This was, of course, before the Harlem Arts Center. I cannot tell you the impact of coming down to Augusta Savage's place and sitting in a room with Norman Lewis, Jake Lawrence, and Spinky (Charles Alston). Vytlacil, strong and so intense about what he was doing, would get down on his knees to explain to us about abstract art. Now remember at this time, we didn't have too much knowledge of what was

declined due to lack of funds. From 1929 through 1931, she was the recipient of Julius Rosenwald and Carnegie Foundation fellowships, which allowed her to travel to Paris and study at l'Académie de la Grande Chaumière. Upon her return to New York in 1931, she opened the Savage School of Arts and Crafts with a grant from the Carnegie Foundation. The school was also known as Savage Studios and the Uptown Art Laboratory from 1934 to 1936. Through these studios, Savage became an important teacher and influence on many artists. Savage was a Project Supervisor for the FAP/WPA from 1936 to 1937, and from 1937 to 1939 she was the Director of the Harlem Community Art Center of the FAP/WPA. In 1939, her commission for the World's Fair, "The Harp" or, "Lift Every Voice and Sing," forced her to cede her Directorship to Gwendolyn Bennet. Shortly afterwards, Savage left Harlem for Saugerties, New York, where she sculpted in wood, clay, bronze and marble.

¹³⁰ Fax, "Harlem Artists Guild," 37-38.

going on in Europe. We were still involved in other things.
 Vytlacil brought this kind of truth to us with intensity and
 sincerity . . . ¹³¹

Blackburn has frequently cited the early impact Vytlacil had on him.¹³² During a period and in a place where the ashcan or social realist school was dominant, Blackburn credits Vytlacil with bringing ideas about abstraction to Harlem. He remembers that Savage asked Alston and Lewis to teach, but that they did not show up in any sustained way. "They were further on as artists, they didn't want to listen to Vytlacil, whereas I was younger so it was easy," Blackburn remembers, "they were in that black or Negro Renaissance period and there was the Project and the Orozco ghettos and Tom Benton and that group."¹³³ However, Vytlacil did show up, regularly, and spoke about abstraction and modernism in a way that greatly influenced Blackburn. "He was bringing in the contemporary concepts, because he had worked in Paris . . . he knew Picasso and all that."¹³⁴

¹³¹ Blackburn, "Harlem Artists Guild," 42.

¹³² Vaclav Vytlacil (b. 1893 - d. 1984) was of Czech descent. He taught at the Art Students League in NY in 1928, from 1934-1943, and from 1945-1966. After World War I, Vytlacil left the United States to study with Hans Hofmann in Munich; he travelled through Europe and studied with Hofmann from approximately 1921 to 1927, when he was instrumental in securing an invitation for Hofmann to teach in California and then, in 1928, at The Art Students League. A founding member of the American Abstract Artists, Vytlacil exhibited and taught nationally, even serving as Chair of the Art Department at Queens College, City University of New York. Vytlacil has been pivotal, bringing modern European painting, and abstraction, to American students since the late 1920s. According to Ann E. Gibson, in the winter of 1935, Vytlacil gave a series of informal talks at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, which The Harmon Foundation helped to publicize. Charles Alston, Blackburn's teacher, who studied at Pratt with one of Vytlacil's students, Alexander Kostellow, may have attended.

¹³³ Blackburn, Paul Cummings interview, 18.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 5.

During this period, it has been reported that

(Jacob) Lawrence regularly attended Savage's classes and formed an especially close friendship with Robert Blackburn, Ronald Joseph, and Gwendolyn Knight. They would regularly visit the 135th Street library, museums, galleries and lectures both uptown and downtown, constantly discussing the art they saw, critical issues regarding modernism, and the aesthetic aspirations of African American artists.¹³⁵

However, as a sixteen-year old black high school student, Blackburn has recalled that he was fearful of travelling downtown, although he did visit museums on occasion. Perhaps Lawrence, who was nineteen, felt more comfortable travelling around the city.

Blackburn has vividly recalled Vytlačil and Alston discussing European and American artists, including the work and theories of Thomas Hart Benton. "It made a tremendous impression on me because (Vytlačil) was very involved in real creativity and because he was involved in that, I mean he felt it strongly . . ." Blackburn has related, "it's like he was more close to me than my father."¹³⁶

While Savage was running the UAL, she also ran a "Music-Art Center," where the WPA/FAP organized classes very early on in the project. Gwendolyn Bennet has documented that, while working in collaboration with Augusta Savage, the two conceptualized the Harlem Community Art Center, a complete and

¹³⁵ Leslie King-Hammond, "Inside-Outside, Uptown-Downtown: Jacob Lawrence and the Aesthetic Ethos of the Harlem Working-Class Community," *Over the Line*, 71.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 17.

separate WPA art workshop to serve the Harlem Community.¹³⁷ At some point in 1937, Audrey MacMahon of the WPA issued a press release supporting the creation of a Harlem Community Center. Savage was the HCAC's first director.

In November 1933, as part of his "New Deal," President Franklin Delano Roosevelt ordered Work Relief to assuage the effects of the Great Depression, from 1933 to 1944. For visual artists, this meant that from 1935 to 1939, "WPA" referred to the Works Progress Administration, and from 1939 onward, it referred to the second phase of this plan, the Work Projects Administration. In 1935, the WPA sanctioned the Federal Art Project (or, FAP) which, in turn, had different divisions for the different disciplines.

The Graphic Arts Division of the FAP ran from 1935 to 1940; in New York, it was based in a midtown studio located in the East '30s in Manhattan. From 1935 to 1938, it was under the overall leadership of Gustave von Groschwitz. Anthony Velonis and Hyman Warsager ran an important component of this, the New York silkscreening project, from 1935 to 1939. According to Groschwitz, 1936 was a key year in the revival of color lithography. In a sense, the WPA's Graphic Arts Division can be credited as key impetus to the revival of lithography, silkscreen and block printing in the United States in the 20th Century, by providing excellent facilities, and paying artists, to produce prints.

Aside from the main midtown print studio, the WPA also placed print studios in Community Centers in various neighborhoods and in different cities. This is

¹³⁷ Gwendolyn Bennet, "The Harlem Community Art Center, *Art for the Millions: Essays from the 1930s by Artists and Administrators of the WPA Federal Art Project*, edited with an introduction by Francis V. O'Connor (Greenwich: New York Graphic Society, 1973).

how the Harlem Community Arts Center came into existence. In fact, the WPA's largest New York community center for teaching arts was its Harlem facility, which offered easel painting, sculpture, mural programs, children's program, and a printmaking facility at 290 Lenox Avenue. The color silkscreen poster for FAP-sponsored art classes at the HCAC advertised, "Hundreds are receiving free instruction/drawing, painting, weaving, lithography, sculpture, etching, metal craft, photography, costume illustration/Harlem Community Art Center."¹³⁸ Two men, with the last names Margolies and Myers, taught etching.¹³⁹ Riva Helfond taught lithography, and Francisco Lord and Selma Burke taught sculpture. As in all the WPA print programs, the artists learned all the processes of printmaking themselves, and once they produced their works, their prints were allocated to tax-supported institutions across the country. The lines between teaching and learning were blurred. It would not be uncommon for an artist to be employed by the WPA on a mural project and to teach a class in drawing at a community center, as well as take classes in printmaking as a student.

Roy DeCarava, who left Cooper Union School of Art for the Harlem Community Art Center in 1940, after two years of study in which he encountered prejudice and hostility, has stated: "Now, the Harlem Art Center was a wonderful place. That's where I met all the young artists. The Center was on 125th Street, where the black community gathered. Paul Robeson had an office there, and

¹³⁸ Text from poster in the collection of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C. by artist Jerome Henry Rothstein (b. 1918); date stamped on verso, "Feb. 9, 1938."

¹³⁹ Fax, "Harlem Artists Guild," 37. Most likely, one was either Samuel L. "SL" Margolies, American, 1898-1974; or Joseph Margulies, American, 1896-1986.

Langston Hughes was a familiar presence.”¹⁴⁰ DeCarava’s mother, who did clerical work for the WPA, transferred her job to him. From there, he got a position on the poster division, and he learned serigraphy. DeCarava knew Blackburn at this time. His mother was also a Jamaican immigrant. One year younger than Blackburn, DeCarava befriended Charles White, with whom he studied painting and drawing at the George Washington Carver Art School after the HCAC closed, in 1944-1945, and whose work he admired as much as that of Ben Shahn.

The HCAC was the first place to offer printmaking—accessible technical expertise and equipment—to the New York black community at large. Prior to this, fine art graphics facilities had been unavailable. Vertis Hayes noted that the historical deprivation of resources was detrimental to the creative community, creating a draining effect as artists left for areas where such resources were available, or simply wasted their talents. “Too often he is forced to leave his own community for lack of facilities in art training or any art opportunities,” Hayes wrote, “to the WPA/FAP must go the credit for having taken the initiative in bringing art opportunities.”¹⁴¹ By making printmaking available to this community, there was a surge in graphic experimentation by diverse artists who had not been able to work in the medium before. By placing a print workshop in Harlem, rather than centralizing all printmaking at the midtown studio, it can be argued that the uptown artists were able to more freely explore and investigate, holding spirited discussion as to its applications that may have been muted under more heterogeneous and intimidating

¹⁴⁰ Peter Galassi, *Roy DeCarava: A Retrospective* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1996), 13.

¹⁴¹ Vertis Hayes, “The Negro Artist Today,” *Art for the Millions*, 212.

circumstances.¹⁴² As well, particularly at the HCAC—which was heavily trafficked—artists were connected to the larger arts community of writers, musicians, and philosophers. "It made all the artists equal so the black artist did get a chance to work," Blackburn noted, "I never got in on that, and I always felt that I was cheated in a way, by being so young, because they got \$26.80. I remember (that) to paint I had a job and had to hustle around."¹⁴³

Prints in particular had the charge of being democratic, mass-distribution tools for disseminating political or didactic messages. They occupied a place between high culture and popular culture, promising a more direct participation in the production and distribution of images by and for a black audience. They were less expensive and more portable than painting and sculpture. The Mexicans were a positive role model.

Nationally, many other well-known African American artists also made prints under the stewardship of WPA centers. In Philadelphia, these include Samuel Joseph Brown, Dox Thrash,¹⁴⁴ Raymond Steth, and Claude Clark. In Boston, both Allan Rohan Crite and John Wilson began with the WPA. In Cleveland, Hughie Lee Smith, Charles Sallee, and William E. Smith worked at the WPA center which was based in the Karamu House. In 1915, Karamu House —a Swahili word for "Center of Community"—was founded for the artistic black

¹⁴² See Chapter 2 for Blackburn's comments on how intimidating "going downtown" was to the Harlem artists at this time.

¹⁴³ Blackburn. Paul Cummings interview, 13.

¹⁴⁴ The recent, excellent exhibition and accompanying catalogue on Dox Thrash is a fine example of the new scholarship in this area, of which this dissertation hopes to participate. John Ittman with David R. Brigham, Cindy Medley-Buckner, and Kymberly N. Pinder, *Dox Thrash: An African American Master Printmaker Rediscovered*. Exhibition catalogue. (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2002).

community. In Chicago, Eldzier Cortor, Charles Clarence Dawson, Lawrence Arthur Jones, William McBride, and David Ross all worked. At the Howard University Center in Washington D.C., Lois Mailou Jones and James Lesene Wells were encouraged. In Atlanta, both Wilmer Jennings and Hale Woodruff were initiated and in San Francisco, Sargent Johnson got his start. Indeed, Vernon Winslow, in his 1941 article, "Negro Art and the Depression," assessed the impact of these African American community art centers. He argues that they led to artistic emancipation, by merging forces of industry and imagination, and that they were unique in being truly democratic in that it is one moment when printmaking is available completely outside a university system.¹⁴⁵

The HCAC, the outgrowth of Augusta Savage's UAL and brainstormed in collaboration with Gwendolyn Bennet, was also indebted to the demands of the newly created Harlem Artists' Guild. In 1935, the Harlem Artists' Guild (HAG) was established to curtail discrimination within the WPA, and "to band all the Harlem artists together into a cultural group."¹⁴⁶ Aaron Douglas was the first president, and Augusta Savage was elected Vice-President; in 1936 she was nominated President. Bennet has noted that the HAG was also an outgrowth of Savage's Harlem art classes, as well as the work of the HAW. The HAG served to represent the Harlem community's particular needs, in a more focused fashion than the Artist's Union, which was founded just earlier in February 1934, to advocate for the rights and benefits of all artists under the WPA. According to a government report filed by Gwendolyn Bennet, the Harlem Community Art Center began November 1937 and ran through March 31, 1939.

¹⁴⁵ Vernon Winslow, "Negro Art and the Depression," *New Deal Art Projects: Anthology of Memoirs*, Francis V. O'Conner, editor. (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1972.)

¹⁴⁶ Gwendolyn Bennet, "The Harlem Community Art Center," 14.

Located in a large, centrally located loft space, the WPA-sponsored Harlem Community Art Center (HCAC) was officially inaugurated on December 20, 1937; Eleanor Roosevelt visited that same day.

Gwendolyn Bennet became acting director of the HCAC in January 1938 when Augusta Savage left her position to fulfill her obligation to an important commission she had received to create a sculpture for the 1939-1940 New York World's Fair, to be held in Flushing Meadows Park, Queens. Because of her lengthy involvement with the sculpture, *Harp*, Savage was not allowed to return to her position and Bennet was appointed official Director. Over the sixteen months which Bennet's government report covers, she documented that 70,592 people had attended the HCAC's various activities (primarily classes, exhibits, lectures, and demonstrations), and 2,467 children and adults had registered for classes; she noted that such luminaries as Albert Einstein and Paul Robeson had visited. A sponsors group was formed to support the HCAC. The HCAC participated in some vanguard collaborations during this time; one with Bellevue Hospital, sponsored by the WPA/FAP, explored the topic "Art and Psychopathology." As well, "delinquent and maladjusted children" were sent from various psychiatric wards in the city for art classes to HCAC.¹⁴⁷

Aside from Savage and Bennet, the faculty at the HCAC included Henry Mike Bannarn, George Barina, Selma Burke, Elton Fax, Sargent Johnson, Riva Helfond, Norman Lewis, and Vlastislav Vytlačil. Blackburn attended HCAC classes with Ronald Joseph. His other fellow students included Ernest

¹⁴⁷ Although I have not found a complete list of collaborative efforts that the WPA supported in conjunction with the HCAC, the prominent mention in governmental reports of the pairing of the artistic efforts from this particular WPA workshop with psychiatric patients or outsider art is troubling.

Crichlow, Walter Christmas, Charles (Carl) Hill, Jacob Lawrence, and Clarence Williams. At the HCAC, in 1938, Blackburn learned lithography with Riva Helfond¹⁴⁸ and George Barina, going on to create his few, well-known WPA lithographs. Beginning with this period, Blackburn has also noted that he, Riva Helfond, and Ronald Joseph forged a close alliance, both artistic and personal. He states that while originally Helfond had a profound influence on Joseph, and Joseph greatly admired her, both Joseph and Helfond impacted the younger Blackburn. Blackburn has stated that Helfond was not only important as a lithography instructor, but as a female role model. In addition to studying with her at HCAC, he brought her to his high school, where they had a litho press set up, but no one to teach it. He states that while there was resistance and resentment from the art teacher at the school, the six or so students who wanted to learn were extremely appreciative.¹⁴⁹

In her governmental report, Bennet wrote: "gratifying too has been watching Robert Blackburn, one of our students, develop his talents and win recognition last year by being awarded two first prizes in a nationally conducted high-school art competition, and this year receive, upon his graduation from school, a year's scholarship to the study at the Art Students' League."¹⁵⁰ Blackburn's outstanding talent continued to advance, bringing him to the attention of the

¹⁴⁸ Riva Helfond Barrett (b. 1910, New York) was raised in Europe and Russia. In 1923, she returned to the US. She studied at the Art Students League with Alexander Brook, Morris Kantor, Yasuo Kuniyoshi, Harry Sternberg, and William von Schlegell. In the late 1930s, she worked on the serigraph section of the WPA in New York and taught lithography at the Harlem Community Art Center in 1938. Since the 1940s, she exhibited internationally, including the Museum of Modern Art, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Library of Congress. She is a long-time resident of Plainfield, New Jersey.

¹⁴⁹ Blackburn. Paul Cummings interview, 10-11.

¹⁵⁰ Bennet, "The Harlem Community Art Center," 214-215.

artists, instructors and administrators of the HCAC. His teenage predilection for, and enthusiastic embrace of, the elaborate process of stone lithography were extremely unusual for a young black man in 1930s Harlem.

While the WPA did not censor imagery—and certainly, a good deal of abstract art was being produced, particularly by the mural project—in the print projects there was a general climate and legacy that encouraged realistic, populist imagery that concerned itself with social commentary, and was inclusive, democratic, or considered "readable" by the general population. While many of the artists themselves were interested in abstraction, both the general and American artistic backlash against European models advocated for regionalist and social realist styles. As well, the politics of the fine arts community (especially in Harlem) including socialism and communism, placed an emphasis on "art for the people" —or clear, anti-elitist, message-oriented images.¹⁵¹ As Gerald M. Monroe has written, "European-derived avant-garde styles were de-emphasized, most artists were working in variants of the American-scene or Social-Realist styles then being promoted by much of the American art establishment. It is worth noting that these styles had huge popular as well as critical support, and were in keeping with the idealistic New Deal belief in the possibility of cultural change and the social responsibility of

¹⁵¹ For example, the exhibition, "An Art Commentary on Lynching" was shown at the Arthur U. Newton Gallery on 57th Street, New York, in 1935 (it was a response to the failed 1933 proposal of an anti-lynching bill). This project was exemplary in that it featured multi-racial artists. Juried by Elaine Locke, Albert C. Barnes and Audrey MacMahon of the WPA, the project was also typical in the type of thematics of this era that did not provide opportunities for abstraction to be shown. It included works by Bannarn, Woodruff, Samuel Brown, E. Simms Campbell, Allan Freelon, Wilmer Jennings, Malvin Johnson, as well as Isamu Noguchi, Bacon, Bellows, Thomas Hart Benton, Paul Cadmus, French, Marsh, Orozco, John Steuart Curry, and Sternberg. Raquel Tibol mistakenly argues otherwise in "Foreword: In the Land of Aesthetic Fraternity," *In the Spirit of Resistance*, 11.

art."¹⁵² It is also worth noting that politically aware artists, such as those allied with the AAC, knew of Meyer Schapiro's clear and startling indictment of art-for-art's sake, which echoed the rally for an art for the people. Schapiro wrote, "artists who are concerned with the world around them in its action and conflict, who ask the same questions that are asked by the impoverished masses and oppressed minorities—these artists cannot permanently devote themselves to a painting committed to aesthetic moments of life, to spectacles designed for passive, detached individuals, or to an art of the studio."¹⁵³ Such demands on their creativity placed artists of this time in a quandary.

Despite the fact that Vaclav Vytlacil had spoken to him about abstract art by the inception of the WPA, Blackburn's work at this time was most obviously affected by Mexican, Social Realist, and Regionalist mores and iconography. This is evident in his earliest surviving images, drawings reproduced in *The Magpie* the art and literary journal of DeWitt-Clinton High School, published in the volumes from June 1936 through June 1939.¹⁵⁴ These student works illustrate stories written by Blackburn—in pieces such as "Harlem Traveler," "Young America," and "Block Dance,"—or by other writers, such as "Definition of America" by Stanley Gottheimer, "Morning in Manhattan" by R. Berman, or "I, T'ao" by S. Diamond. Some of his drawings concern themselves with the stated theme of the volume, or generic topics such as labor or the arts. Others are observations of landscape, in both urban and country settings, as well as figure studies.

¹⁵² Monroe, "The '30s," 64. .

¹⁵³ Meyer Schapiro, "The Social Bases of Art," *First American Artists' Congress*, 37.

¹⁵⁴ When Blackburn was participating, this was published in January and June each year.

The most interesting and complex drawings are two sets of untitled end paper panels that Blackburn made for *The Magpie*. These sophisticated compositions clearly show the coalescence of forces that impressed the seventeen-year old high school student. The most obvious formal relationship is to Mexican *muralismo*. Although small in scale, these drawings are epic scenes constructed in the style of such Mexican and American panoramas. Simultaneously, there is evidence of Aaron Douglas', Diego Rivera's, Charles Alston's, and Thomas Hart Benton's influence on young Blackburn. Blackburn would have seen Douglas' *Aspects of Negro Life* cycle, 1934, at the 135th Street Library when he took classes with Alston at the Harlem Art Workshop, held at the Library, in 1935 (Illustration 1). Blackburn's drawings echo the format used by Diego Rivera in *Man at the Crossroads*, 1933 (Illustration 2), as well as the schema of his teacher Alston's *Magic and Medicine* murals, 1936 (Illustration 3) at the Harlem Hospital. Alston observed Rivera at work prior to his own mural commission, and Rivera's impact flowed through Alston to Blackburn, providing a basis for the 1937 *Magpie* drawing.¹⁵⁵ Finally, correlations can be made to American painters, particularly Thomas Hart Benton's *America Today* cycle, 1930 (Illustration 4). Blackburn has affirmed that both Benton's work and his theories were discussed in Harlem in this time.

In one set of endpaper drawings, a kaleidoscopic image juxtaposes a rural setting on the left side with an urban scene on the right (Illustration 5). Both depict men heading to work. In the country setting, men walk alongside a train

¹⁵⁵ Blackburn did not personally see Rivera's mural at Rockefeller Center. He was only thirteen years old when it was destroyed.

that steams towards a barn-like, wooden-planked building. In the group of men, there are clear depictions of Negro heads, as well as an ambiguous figure in the lower right who sports a cowboy hat or sombrero and has a bandanna tied at the neck. The hills of the landscape mount towards the sky in undulating waves, over which an army charges at the very top. The silhouetted soldiers are legible by the arches that shorthand their helmets; splayed bayonets radiate, Giotto-like, in the air from the mass of the group. A waving flag points toward beams of sunshine that stream down from the sky. Encroaching on this scene from across the book's spine are stacked-up, anonymous-faced buildings. These flow over from the urban depiction on the right, perhaps implying the ever-expanding city from which more men (in fedoras and suits) march in file towards the factories and skyscrapers. I-beams swing in from the margins, implying continual construction that frames and bears down on the marching men. The anonymous buildings that blot out the sky in this image echo those used in Douglas' *Song of the Towers* section in the *Aspects of Negro Life* cycle. The silhouette and beams of light are a common device found in Douglas' work.¹⁵⁶

The contrast between country and city was a typical Benton theme; the relationship of history to the present is another widespread topic found in the murals of Rivera, Douglas, and Benton. In another of Blackburn's end papers for *The Magpie*, he depicts a scene that contains pilgrims and Indians,

¹⁵⁶ Aaron Douglas (b. 1899 Topeka, Kansas - 1979) moved to New York for his graduate degree from Columbia's Teacher's College. During the Harlem Renaissance, Douglas illustrated all the prominent black writer's works, including Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, and Alain Locke's *The New Negro* (1925). His political drawings and cartoons were widely published, and his "Aspects of Negro Life" murals of 1934 were commissioned by the PWAP, prior to the FAP, the original mural project which lasted only one year. Douglas founded the art department at Fisk University and served as its chair for twenty-nine years.

standing together stoically, while cowboys and pioneers of the wild west pass, moving towards rolling fields and quaint, fenced barns (Illustration 6). Infringing on this image from the right is a very different urban vision of the war years. Uncle Sam, with his back to a mass of marching soldiers, huddles under his cape and gazes downward at paperwork—perhaps the constitution—which hangs limply in his hand. A woman raises her hands in supplication to the heavens, while another woman behind raises her hand in self-defense towards the soldiers. The American flag forms the side of a corral, beyond which a steamer chugs to far ports while women gossip beneath a street lamp. These hungry and tense nighttime images reference both the effects of the Depression in the United States as well as the threat to freedom in the European theater. The suppliant figure is clearly derived from Alston's *Magic and Medicine*. It is interesting to note that while Douglas and Alston referred to the specific past of African Americans, Blackburn referred to the general history of the United States. There are no African depictions or slavery references in these works.

It is evident that in his studies with Alston, Blackburn was absorbing the forms and figures of the Mexican muralists. Examples of the Mexican impact abound. For example, Blackburn's 1936 drawing, *Man with Load* (Illustration 7) is a reprise of the "burden carriers" (*cargadores*) which appears in many of Diego Rivera's works from 1925 through 1935. These would include most famously Rivera's *The Flower Carrier*, 1935 (Illustration 8).¹⁵⁷ The notion of the figure bearing weight is also a common convention notable in many WPA prints, for

¹⁵⁷ Several of Rivera's *cargador* images are discussed in *Mexico: Splendors of Thirty Centuries*, edited by John P. O'Neill, with an introduction by Octavio Paz (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1990), 632.

similar reasons: the image celebrates the essential labors of the working class. A Mexican presence is also obvious in both the style and content of the June 1938 drawing, *Abroad* (Illustration 9). Here, a striding, white-shirted, rifle-slinging, sombrero-capped figure, printed in the "Vagabond Issue" of *The Magpie*, is inspired by Diego Rivera's *Zapata* images (Illustration 10).¹⁵⁸ As with the burden-carrier images, Rivera frequently depicted the revolutionary agrarian reformer, Zapata. These images range from an early Cubist picture in 1915, through several mural appearances from 1926 through 1931, and the well-circulated lithograph of 1932. Blackburn's image is indebted to Rivera's picturing of the idealized fighter. While the dress in *Abroad* is taken directly from *The Flower Carrier*, Blackburn's figure may be a conflation of a Zapatista and an anti-Franco fighter from the Spanish civil war.

Several of Blackburn's other images from *The Magpie* emulate the conventions of monumentalism found in Mexican mural painting as well as social realist iconography. In these, figures were dignified, larger-than-life, volumetric "personifications of state power and energy, directed towards reconstructive ends in accordance with New Deal ideology."¹⁵⁹ Depictions of men at work include Blackburn's *Tree Cutters*, January 1937 (Illustration 11) and *Lumberjacks*, June 1937 (Illustration 12). These images of noble labor in rural settings are related to popular images by WPA artists, such as Clare Leighton's *Loading*, 1931 (Illustration 13), which also depicts dignified lumberjacks piling cut trees. These nostalgic representations were antithetical to the realities of the time: grinding urban poverty and the humiliation of

¹⁵⁸ Ibid, 630. Here, the Zapatista images are outlined.

¹⁵⁹ Harris, "Modernism and Culture in the USA," 30.

unemployment. Artist Louis Guglielmi commented on this trend, “The time has come when painters are returning to the life of the people once again and in doing so are absorbing the richness, the vitality, and the lusty healthiness inherent in the people.”¹⁶⁰

Another drawing from the period, *School Yard* (Illustration 14) depicts three youths sitting on the ground, backs against the school building. With their textbooks piled next to them, they are caught in a moment of relaxation from their studies, as two talk while one dozes. Blackburn’s school children borrow their poses from the widespread “down and out” images of the Depression that artists were producing around him. Harlem-based but slightly older artists — such as William Smith, in *Poverty and Fatigue*, 1940 (Illustration 15) — or the mainstream, white social realists—such as Blanche Grambs, in *No Work*, 1935 (Illustration 16)—caught such body language in print, making visible the demoralizing effects of the Depression. In Blackburn’s younger hands, however, the attitudes of the Depression were transformed into more optimistic, lounging school chums, who, one could imagine, would spring up and back into the classroom as soon as the bell rang.

Blackburn’s *Barns*, January 1938 (Illustration 17) derives from a particular stream of African American imagery prevalent at the time, as well as the “dustbowl” works ubiquitous in photographs produced under the auspices of the Farm Securities Administration (FSA). His drawing—which appears to be scratchboard rather than charcoal pencil or ink, as the others are—shows barns surrounded by a swirling field. The ground sweeps up around the open

¹⁶⁰ Louis Guglielmi, “After the Locusts,” *Art for the Millions*, 113.

doorways; the sky overhead halos the pitched roofs. Blackburn also worked with this iconography in *Upper New York* (Illustration 18). Hale Woodruff's woodcuts of this time, such as *Relics* (Illustration 19) as well as Charles Alston's lithograph, *Deserted House*, c.1938 (Illustration 20) take on a similar theme and tone: the picturesque, decaying heartland building, threatened by the elements. Hale Woodruff's Atlanta students were dubbed the "Outhouse School" as a result of their images of barren landscapes with rickety buildings, some containing images of outhouses along with rural housing, shacks, and barns.¹⁶¹ Woodruff has stated that these landscapes, with their desiccated hillsides and shaky buildings, depicted the social and economic conditions under which southern blacks lived. He noted that such works expressed black artists' support of regionalism, which was felt to be the most current art movement of the time.¹⁶² Kymberly N. Pinder has noted that, in the case of Dox Thrash, who also produced images consistent with this look:

while following the contemporary national trend of Regionalism, Thrash, like Woodruff and his students, was also representing a black rural environment that he knew intimately. It was the harsh economic conditions of the South and the unchecked racial violence that made people like Thrash leave the hometowns they later romanticized.¹⁶³

While such types of works by African American artists were denigrated due to their honesty, very similar depictions (by Dorothea Lange or Walker Evans, for

¹⁶¹ Albert Murray, "An Interview with Hale Woodruff," *Hale Woodruff: 50 Years of his Art* (New York: The Studio Museum in Harlem, 1979), 72. *Time* gave this name to the art being produced by Woodruff and his students in Atlanta on September 21, 1942, p. 74.

¹⁶² Bearden and Henderson, *A History of African-American Artists*, 205-206.

¹⁶³ Kymberly N. Pinder, "'Racial Idiom' in the Work of Dox Thrash," *Dox Thrash: An African American Master Printmaker Rediscovered*, John Ittmann, with essays by David R. Brigham, Cindy Medley-Buckner, and Kymberly N. Pinder (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2001), p. 74.D

example) were lauded for the very same reasons: they focused on the enduring and humble conditions and dignified the struggle of 1930s rural America.

The few surviving prints by Blackburn that were produced under the auspices of the WPA workshop at the HCAC were made while he was still enrolled in high school. These include two that were published in *The Magpie*. The first, *Coal Shute II*, June 1938 (Illustration 21) towers over the point-of-view in which the viewer enters the image, a *tour-de-force* of planks, stairwells, windows and support beams that form an intricate and satisfying composition while showing off Blackburn's skill as a both a draftsman and lithographer. The image can be seen as an extension of the "Outhouse School." However the depiction here is urbanized; Blackburn's ruin decays next to a working factory. This is more an indictment of the economic transition the country was facing, as some industries failed, displacing their workers, while the fortunate continued their business. As an almost scientifically drafted piece, that also exposes the workings of economy and the growth of the city, this print is related to popular depictions such as Louis Lozowick's lithograph, *Guts of Manhattan*, 1939 (Illustration 22). While Lozowick's cable welder controls the monstrous mechanism that runs beneath the city, the image also serves as a compelling, abstract composition. Blackburn's *End Piece* drawing of January 1938 (Illustration 23), that provides a view into the bowels of war's trenches, functions in a similar vein. While extolling the individual's sweat and sacrifice for the greater cause, it also allows for a dramatic, chiaroscuro composition of masses.

Other extant lithographs from this time, such as *Mike's Place*, AKA, *Cafe Scene*, 1938 and *Club Room*, c.1939, show Blackburn's familiarity with local painters

such as Archibald Motley or Palmer Hayden, who brought a regionalist perspective to the Harlem scene. Blackburn's images record daily scenes where colleagues enjoyed a social moment.

In drawings such as *Beginning* (Illustration 24), *End* (Illustration 25), and *Fresh Fish* (Illustration 26) it is again necessary to consider the dual emphasis on the heroic figure in both Mexican and Social Realist works. Stylistically, the drawings are built up from wispy graphite shadings, much as Thomas Hart Benton, Benton Spruance, or Jan Matulka crafted their lithographs during the mid- to late 1930s. We can see how Blackburn's everyday figures take on a symbolic and heroic proportion. Such conventions can "signify the grandeur of the 'state worker' as symbolic of the nation's mission to rebuild itself. This symbolic abstraction, the personified 'worker,' was a key ideological emblem in the USSR and USA during the 1930s."¹⁶⁴ These figures, "epitomize the optimistic portrayal of heroic working men, laboring to build America out of the Depression."¹⁶⁵ Extremely popular teacher and lithographer Harry Sternberg, who taught at the Art Students League from 1933-1968, was well known for his prints of workers, such as *Builders*, 1935-1936. These mammoth types, it should also be noted, were also influenced by the so-called "classic" bathers that Picasso produced in the early 1920s. Picasso's influence at this time, of course, cannot be overestimated. The bathers also influenced important United

¹⁶⁴ Harris, "Modernism and Culture in the USA," 13.

¹⁶⁵ James Wechsler, *Arthur Murphy: Prints and Drawings* (New York: Mary Ryan Gallery, 1993), 4. Wechsler's forthcoming Ph.D dissertation on Hugo Gellert for The Graduate Center of The City University of New York also explores the idealized figure during the WPA era.

States artists, such as Philip Guston, who, in turn, greatly impacted the artists of these times.¹⁶⁶

In 1939, Guston executed *Maintaining America's Skills* on the WPA building at the New York World's Fair in Queens. This mural won first prize in a public opinion poll. In an interview, Blackburn's teacher and slightly older friend Ronald Joseph has vividly recalled the 1939 New York World's Fair; Joseph's images of this time also contain rounded, monumental figures that take shape as they are subtly shaded against the white page.

In 1940, Guston completed a lobby mural for the Queensbridge Housing Project, titled either *Work and Play* or *Cultural and Recreational Activities of a Community Center* (Illustration 27a-b). Guston's sketches for this project, which date to 1938 and 1939, and his much-lauded mural were well known through the WPA community. The influence of these works can also be seen in Blackburn's *Wrestlers* (Illustration 28) and *The Arts* (Illustration 29), drawings reproduced in the June 1939 *The Magpie*. The tumbling, engaged, but anonymous figures are indebted to Guston's repetitive "gladiator" children, who play at the docks in the Queensbridge mural. Similarly, there is a visual

¹⁶⁶ Phillip Guston (b. 1913 Montreal, Canada - d. 1980) moved with his family to Los Angeles in 1919, where he briefly attended Otis Art Institute in 1930. He was sympathetic to the plight of the American Negro and had painted a cycle of works about the Scottsboro case in 1931. With his high school friend, Jackson Pollock, Guston traveled to Claremont, California, to watch Orozco work on his mural "Prometheus" for Pomona College in 1932. With his friend, Reuban Kadish, he assisted Siqueiros in Mexico on a mural in 1934. Guston moved to New York in late 1935, stayed with Pollock, and joined the mural project of WPA, the FAP. In 1939, he executed "Maintaining America's Skills" for the New York World's Fair WPA building, in Queens, which won first prize based on a public opinion poll. In 1940, Guston completed a lobby mural for the Queensbridge Housing Project, titled either "Work and Play" or "Cultural and Recreational Activities of a Community Center."

relationship between Blackburn's image of the arts and Guston's trio of musicians in his mural.

It has been recorded that by 1941, Blackburn was extremely interested in the Cubists. Artists immediately surrounding Blackburn, who were slightly older, have remarked that they were influenced by European modern art at a slightly earlier date. For example, Romare Bearden studied the works of Picasso and Miro prior to 1940. Picasso's influence was felt not only through his return to classicism. While the New Order iconography was compatible with Social Realists and American Regionalists of all political stripes, as well as those leaning to the left, including many of Harlem's leading artists, his *Guernica*, 1937, was seen as an effective model of politically-committed yet modern art. In its direct and powerful criticism of a Fascist bombing during the Spanish Civil War, the work was very important to the activist artists of this era who supported the Popular Front. Beyond its political statement, on an artistic level, "the formal qualities of *Guernica*—which was painted as part of what was regarded as a continuance of the Cubist idiom established by Picasso and Georges Braque before the First World War—became the subject of an intense debate . . . "¹⁶⁷ In fact, this work was the subject of an American Abstract Artists (AAA) discussion at the Museum of Modern Art in 1937. The AAA was formed in 1936 in response to the widespread criticism of abstraction, primarily geometric abstraction. Their public debate over *Guernica* centered on the suitability of Cubistic or abstract idioms of art created "for the people." Such a topic would have double resonance for the black artists of Harlem working during this period as they worked under Locke's, Benton's, and Craven's exhortations.

¹⁶⁷ Harris, "Modernism and Culture in the USA," 16.

Stuart Davis must also be remembered as an important influence during the mid- to late 1930s, in the continuance of a French perspective in the arts. Barnett has seen Davis as the American continuation of the French model, which was important at the time: "A lot of modern art going on . . . and whatever they say is American painting is baloney. It's French painting. French. French all the way through. Influenced by the French. The French were having a tremendous influence. A very big influence. And I was being influenced by the French, too. I mean, admit it." ¹⁶⁸ Even Ernest Crichlow,¹⁶⁹ a colleague of Blackburn's at the HCAC, has stated, "I remember in my earlier years I was very influenced by the French school of painting, which was abstract and distortion but the image was still there."¹⁷⁰

One of Blackburn's most developed lithographic images from this time, *Refugees*, sometimes titled *People in a Boat*, June 1938 (Illustration 30), is related to widespread Depression-era imagery of displacement and migration. As well, this image responds to a series of freak storms and floods that occurred that year in the northeastern, southern, and western part of the United States, which were broadly reported in the media. It should be noted that this

¹⁶⁸ Barnett. Stephen Polcari interview.

¹⁶⁹ Ernest Crichlow (b. 1914 Brooklyn), whose father was from Barbados, graduated from high school and took three years of commercial art school in Manhattan before he traveled to Harlem in approximately 1932 because he had heard of Augusta Savage. He found her and studied with her, and soon became involved with the Harlem art scene. He also studied at NYU and the Art Students League. Crichlow participated as an artist of the WPA in both North Carolina and New York via the Harlem Community Art Center. Later, Crichlow was a co-founder of Cinque Gallery with Romare Bearden and Norman Lewis. He married in 1952, and has one son. Crichlow still lives and works in Brooklyn.

¹⁷⁰ Ernest Crichlow. Interview by Henri Ghent, July 20, 1968. Archives of American Art, The Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C. Transcript of an audiotape, 25.

image has been seen as a "Depression era version of a Biblical scene, best known in art by Raphael's tapestry cartoon, *The Miraculous Draught of Fishes*.¹⁷¹ While there is no evidence that Blackburn was looking at Raphael, he has stated that he did visit museums and look at "old masters, you knew about Rubens and so on, but in a peripheral sort of way, it was like a place that really didn't involve you."¹⁷² Blackburn's stance on religion is equally clear:

I was never very religious . . . although I had very strong moral values myself about what was fair and right . . . I remember being very critical and that's interesting because I had it at an early age . . . not anti-religion because I feel that everyone is religious in a particular way . . . and we had to go to church every Sunday morning . . . And I went but I knew that people who were there were not really religious in a sense. They went because they had to go and it was sort of form and then they came out and they cursed . . .¹⁷³

The powerful image, drafted by the serious eighteen-year-old, might be more profitably interpreted by relating it to the picturing of African American migrations, and, most specifically, the widespread images of the Underground Railroad. In 1938, Jacob Lawrence exhibited his *Toussaint L'Ouverture* series in New York at the De Porres Interracial Center on Vesey Street; in 1939 he completed his *Frederick Douglass* series and by 1940, he finished his *Harriet Tubman* series. Blackburn has often cited that he read Frederick Douglass' diaries in junior high school and that they affected him powerfully. Lawrence's attention to the topic of the Underground Railroad, on the heels of his well-received and much-discussed exhibition, was well known to his friend

¹⁷¹ Williams, "Themes and Images," 27, caption 18.

¹⁷² Blackburn. Paul Cummings interview, 6.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 3.

Blackburn at this time. In fact, Blackburn himself has commented that this work was made during a time when traveling was impossible due to the dangers on the road. "It was a refugees sort of concept," he has said of the work.¹⁷⁴

Certainly, the two rowers at the head of the boat seem focused on ferrying the four other figures aboard. While one hunches under a hood beside bundles and sacks, and one dips his hands into the water, the two standing figures peer towards the opposite, forbidding shore, seeming to wonder what awaits them. *Refugees* presents an ambivalent African American perspective of life in the United States in the 1930s.

The relationship this work has with Max Beckmann's well-known *Departure* triptych, 1932-1933 (Illustration 31) should also be noted.¹⁷⁵ Beckmann's allegorical history painting resonates with mythological allusion tied to the struggles of his own historical and cultural milieu—in Beckmann's case, depicting the rise of fascism in Germany. *Departure*, created in the tripartite form of an altarpiece, contains a central image referring to the Great Flood. Biblically, the flood was a metaphorical "second chance" for the redemption of

¹⁷⁴ Robert Blackburn. Interview by Jennifer Bergman, February 16, 1994. Unpublished transcript of an audiotape. 5. The author is grateful to Jennifer Bergman for so generously sharing her resources.

¹⁷⁵ Max Beckmann (b. 1884, Leipzig, Germany - d. 1950 New York). Studied in Weimar in 1900 and first visited Paris in 1903-04. In 1904, he settled in Berlin. In 1912, he held his first solo exhibits. He volunteered for the German army medical corps in 1914, but was discharged for reasons of health and settled in Frankfurt. In 1925, Beckmann was exhibited with the Neue Sachlichkeit group in Mannheim, and he taught in Frankfurt. His first show in the United States took place at J. B. Neumann's New Art Circle, New York, in 1926. From 1929 to 1932, he continued to teach in Frankfurt but continued to spend time in Paris. When the Nazis came to power in 1933, Beckmann lost his teaching position and moved to Berlin. In 1937, his work was included in *Entartete Kunst*, the Nazi exhibition of "degenerate art." Beckmann left Germany for Amsterdam, where he remained until 1947. In 1938, he had the first of numerous exhibitions at Curt Valentin's Buchholz Gallery, New York. Beckmann traveled to France in 1947 and then the United States, where he taught in Saint Louis, and held his first US retrospective in 1948. Beckmann also taught in Colorado and at the Brooklyn Museum Art School.

humanity. In the work, a fisher-king stands in a boat, in profile, looking away from the viewer and toward the shore, much as in Blackburn's image. Serenely making a gesture of blessing with one hand, with the other he pulls a net aboard the boat, loaded with fish. The side panels depict the oppression of rights and vignettes of hellish violence rising in Germany at that time. Blackburn was an admirer of Beckmann's work, and Blackburn's peers were generally interested in the German Expressionists.¹⁷⁶ Blackburn's *Refugees* has a kinship with *Departure*. Both make vaguely biblical, metaphorical allusions to passages through threatening, specifically historical atmospheres, looking towards potentially brighter futures.

Due to these images, particularly the well-known and well-received lithographs, *Coal Shute II* (or *Abandoned Coal Shute*), *Mike's Place* (or *Cafe Scene*), *Club Room*, and most particularly *Refugees* (or *People in a Boat*), one of the strongest "roles" in which Blackburn has been cast is that of black artist of the WPA. The following exhibitions (as well as their catalogues) have consistently framed Blackburn's work within the production of the WPA: In 1977, *New York/Chicago: WPA and the Black Artist* at The Studio Museum in Harlem, and *The Black Artist in the WPA 1933-1943* at the New Muse Community Museum in Brooklyn both positioned his prints directly within this time frame. Nearly a decade later in 1986, two more projects reiterated this role by again contextualizing Blackburn within the WPA and its legacy: *Unbroken Circle: Afro-*

¹⁷⁶ Blackburn has stated that before his awareness of Picasso, which came during the Art Students League period in 1941, he was more aware of Yasuo Kuniyoshi and Max Beckmann, "but he wasn't as popular then." (Robert Blackburn. Jennifer Bergman interview. 4.) Blackburn was well aware of the German Expressionists in general. Beckmann had shown in New York since 1926 and in 1938 had held a solo exhibition. As well, Blackburn's friend Romare Bearden studied with Beckmann's colleague, George Grosz, at the Art Student's League in 1936-1937. Both Bearden and Lawrence spoke highly of Grosz's work.

American Artists of the 1930s and 1940s at Kenkeleba House and *Masters & Pupils: The Education of the Black Artist in New York, 1900-1980* at the Jamaica Arts Center. In 1989, *Black Printmakers and the WPA* at Lehman College Art Gallery in the Bronx, curated by Leslie King-Hammond, in conjunction with a symposium moderated by Ellen Sragow and published in *The Tamarind Papers*, further developed the scholarship of this role. More recently, *Alone in a Crowd: Prints of the 1930s-40s by African-American Artists* from the New York collection of Reba and Dave Williams, had a high-profile tour, debuting concurrently at the Newark Museum and the Equitable Gallery in New York in 1992. This exhibition traveled for four years to prominent venues such as the Yale University Art Gallery, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Brooklyn Museum, and the Art Institute of Chicago. Again, Blackburn was presented to the public as an artist of the WPA, specifically, a black artist of the WPA. More recent projects include *Art in a Day's Work: Prints from the WPA* (Baltimore Museum of Art, 2000) which, at least, correctly stated that Blackburn was a younger artist instructed and inspired by the black printmakers in the program. However, even Sharon F. Patton's very good survey, the publication *African-American Art*, mentions Blackburn's work only in relation to the WPA.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁷ See, for example, the following exhibitions and/or publications: the exhibition catalogue *New York/Chicago: WPA and the Black Artist*, curated by Ruth Ann Stewart (New York: The Studio Museum in Harlem, 1977); the exhibition catalogue *The Black Artists in the WPA 1933-1943* by Charlene Claye Van Derzee (Brooklyn: New Muse Community Museum, 1977); the exhibition *Unbroken Circle: Afro-American Artists of the 1930s and 1940s*, curated by Vincent Smith and David Driskell, (New York: Kenkeleba House, 1986); the exhibition *Masters & Pupils: The Education of the Black Artist in New York, 1900-1980*, curated by William P. Miller and Kelli Jones, Visual Arts Director (New York: The Jamaica Arts Center, 1986); the exhibition catalogue *Augusta Savage and The Art Schools of Harlem*, curated by Deirdre L. Bibby with text by Juanita Marie Holland (New York, The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, 1988); the exhibition catalogue *Black Printmakers & the WPA*, curated by Leslie King-Hammond (Bronx: Lehman College Art Gallery, 1989) as well as the concurrent symposium coverage, "Black Printmakers and The WPA: A Symposium" by Ellen Sragow, *The Tamarind Papers* (Albuquerque: No. 13, 1990) 73-76; the touring exhibition and catalogue *Alone in a Crowd: Prints of the 1930s-40s by African-American Artists* (New York: The Collection of Reba and Dave Williams, 1992); Sharon F. Patton's *African-American Art/Oxford History of Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), and, finally, the exhibition brochure, *Art*

This role is interesting as a starting point; situating him within the framework of the WPA provides him with an instantaneous pedigree, as a producer of easily accessible, social realist, valuable period works. However, Blackburn produced less than eight known lithographic images at the Harlem Community Art Center. This role has been assigned to him based on the four available images from 1938 and 1939. In fact, he was not a paid artist of the WPA at all, because he was only a high school student. The most striking thing about this role is that it would propose to consider Blackburn's work only to age eighteen. While it is interesting and enlightening to take into account his formative training under the role models of the WPA and its ideology, to cast Blackburn's main achievement as that of "WPA printmaker" does him a serious disservice in that it only accounts for his student work.¹⁷⁸

By 1939, The Harlem Community Art Center lost its sponsorship from the WPA, although it continued functioning into 1940. Many of the artists from the HCAC made a trip to Baltimore to protest closing of WPA, including Riva Helfond. Several were arrested when black artists weren't served in restaurant. With the United States engagement in World War II, many artists suddenly faced much more serious problems than the closure of the community center. While Blackburn did not participate in World War II due to his poor vision, many of his friends and colleagues did serve¹⁷⁹. He graduated from DeWitt Clinton High

in a Day's Work: Prints from the WPA, by Cindy Medley Buckner (Baltimore: Baltimore Museum of Art, 2000).

¹⁷⁸ Blackburn continues with his work to this day, for 63 additional years beyond the WPA era.

¹⁷⁹ For example, Romare Bearden served in the United States Army from 1942 to 1945. During his tenure in the armed forces, he was stationed in the United States.

School at a slightly delayed date, in 1940, and received a scholarship to the Art Students League, where he began classes the following year. He has stated that at graduation, he expected to receive an award due to his numerous honors and art achievements. However, when the award was given to another, white student who was not as well known as Blackburn, he suffered his first serious disappointment. Blackburn felt the force of prejudice, and became very angered by it: "When I left I just said the hell with everything . . . I became part of and very involved with the gang. It was a period when like we were standing on the corners, we were breaking into houses, and I didn't give a good shit, pardon the expression, because I felt that it was just not right."¹⁸⁰ Blackburn has acknowledged that Alston spoke with him and made him realize that his art was more important. He chose to continue his art studies, and thus was once again pulled from a street life and sent on his creative path.

As we have seen, there were many, multi-layered and complex influences at work in the Harlem arts community. The most relevant forces have been examined in order to establish the underpinnings of what would become Robert Blackburn's art practice. In a related vein, Dr. Mary Schmidt Campbell has lamented the lack of nuanced, critical readings of the Harlem Renaissance period: "What is perhaps most perturbing about all these critical assessments, however, is the fact that the Harlem Renaissance Artists are rarely, if ever, discussed within the context of the crucible of ideas that was Harlem in the 1920s and 1930s."¹⁸¹ While Campbell goes on to mention that these artists should be considered against the culture of black folklore, black American

¹⁸⁰ Blackburn. Paul Cummings interview, 11.

¹⁸¹ Schmidt Campbell, "Introduction," *Harlem Renaissance*, 50.

history, political activism and jazz, she states that a broader consideration of American art during this period would reveal it to be “emphatically conventional.” In this all-too-typical apologia for perhaps what she sees as the “conventional” work by the Harlem Renaissance artists, she fails to see how they subtly responded to the multiple streams of influence and inflected their work in their own way, much as even the young Blackburn pulled typical themes, poses, and images from Harlem Renaissance, *muralismo*, and Social Realism and made them his own.

Campbell and others have stressed that the prevalent concern among African American artists during the 1920s and 1930s was the search for identity as modern black artists representing, and speaking to, their particular community. However, the images, the artists' statements, and the complicated weave of history reveals that the stakes were, in fact, higher. While the search for an authentic black voice was undoubtedly one concern, this seemed to be nestled inside the overarching issues and searches of all American modern artists, concerned with the problems of modern art.

Consider, in closing, these perspectives, shared by the artists themselves. Ernest Crichlow has stated that during the WPA, he remembers the artists as being interested in learning techniques and sharing information, more than about particular stylistic issue. “So we were learning about lithography, we were learning about etchings, we were learning simple things, like even how to make gesso panels and the use of casein and egg tempera, you know. Until that time, I think most of us just learned how to draw and paint. We didn't know about all the special techniques because I don't think we had that kind of art

training . . . I think we were more concerned with that aspect of painting at that time." ¹⁸²

Charles Alston has remembered his colleagues: "I think they were more or less interested in doing good painting . . . I think in the painting of Bearden, for instance, his early painting was pretty much in terms of searching, as any other artist was searching. You'd experiment with what was going on in Europe, you borrowed from Picasso, you borrowed from here, you borrowed from there. You were interested in good painting and you were interested in keeping up or knowing what the contemporary developments were and exploring them. Now just by virtue of being what you are and living the experience you're living, I think your subject matter tends to be that with which you are most familiar. But I think that was incidental."¹⁸³

When asked about his relationship to specific streams or trends in art, Ronald Joseph stated, "Sometimes I felt that these things were being imposed upon me: that I should be American, or European, or Cubist. I wanted to understand Cubism . . . I was after the universal. They were telling me that the particular was the event. It's ridiculous . . . I just ignored it."¹⁸⁴

And, of course, economic disenfranchisement was a reality. Amidst these wide-ranging artistic interests and global perspectives, Blackburn has stated that within his circle, after the collapse of the WPA, artists struggled once their schooling was completed. They had little hope of any professional outlets for

¹⁸² Crichtlow. Henri Ghent interview, 17.

¹⁸³ Alston. Al Murray interview.

¹⁸⁴ Gibson, "The New York Years," 727-728.

exhibiting their works and they had no hope of earning their living from it. They could try for a Rosenwald or Whitney Fellowship if they were not able to benefit from the GI Bill for service in World War II. But, for the most part, "people had jobs: elevator operators, pushing trucks in the garment center, working in laundries, mopping floors . . . you could apply to and hope that you were screened for the Whitney. But they never came up because no one ever came to Harlem . . . the possibility was not there. We were out of it. The same with the possibility of teaching."¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁵ Blackburn. Paul Cummings interview, 14.

CHAPTER 2: MODERNISMS

This chapter examines the years between 1941 and 1957. Starting with Blackburn's departure from Harlem to attend the Art Students League, it follows him through his work for The Harmon Foundation (as well as other institutions) and explores the origins of The Printmaking Workshop in 1948. Blackburn's time in Europe, under the auspices of a John Hay Whitney Traveling Fellowship, and his return to New York are covered. By surveying the lithographic print shops in New York at the time, as well as the impact of Stanley William Hayter's Atelier 17 workshop in New York, the state of typical and experimental printmaking during this period is examined. Through a review of the various, modernist currents of the Art Students League, the "Indian Space Painters," and the European influences in New York and Paris with which Blackburn came in contact, it will be clear that both European and American abstraction impacted his work. Finally, the stunning influence of Abstract Expressionism, particularly on black artists of this time, will be examined. All of this modern ferment greatly affected Blackburn. By the end of the chapter, an examination of his first mature works reveals his signature style: complex, multi-color abstracted lithographs.

According to Jacob Lawrence, when, in 1940, he moved to a building at 33 West 125th Street—where, for eight dollars per month he got an unheated loft—Blackburn, William Attaway, Romare Bearden, Ronald Joseph, and Claude McKay already lived there.¹⁸⁶ "We had a loft and we all had our private

¹⁸⁶ Blackburn recalls that he moved into the building in 1940; this must have been after March when there is documentation that Blackburn was living on 138th Street. Lawrence has recalled that he moved into the building in the late Spring of 1940. See the timeline at the official Jacob Lawrence website, www.jacoblawrence.org/art02.html.

studios there," Blackburn has remembered. He has recollected that there was a hearty interest in European modern art trends, primarily the Cubists. Of his colleagues in Harlem he summarized, "these artists were not regional, they were interested in the modern ideas. Cézanne was art at that moment in my class."¹⁸⁷

Blackburn enrolled in the Art Students League on scholarship in 1941 at age twenty; through 1942 and 1943, he held a two-year work scholarship. In his first two years, he studied with Vaclav Vytlacil, who had made such an impression on him in Harlem during his adolescence. Blackburn sought out Vytlacil because he "was aesthetically and creatively my kind of teacher, because I was interested in those ideas philosophically . . . the real ideas, with Braque or Picasso and the new things which I was interested in . . . "¹⁸⁸ Blackburn was moving away from his interest in social realism and the Mexican influence. At the Art Students League, he began to read seriously, for the first time, about the Cubists. This research would influence him tremendously.¹⁸⁹ Will Barnet, Blackburn's other major influence at the League, was also greatly affected by the Cubists. On numerous occasions, both Blackburn and Barnet mention Juan Gris as an important influence. Barnet has described, "I felt an affinity for Juan Gris. He was very important in my life. Did a lot for me and gave me a lot of information."¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁷ Robert Blackburn. Interview by Paul Cummings, December 4, 1970. The Archives of American Art, The Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C., 19.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 20.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 7.

¹⁹⁰ Will Barnet. Interview by Stephen Polcari, April 3, 1993. The Archives of American Art, The Smithsonian Institution, www.archivesofamericanart.si.edu.

Vytlacil taught in the evenings, which suited Blackburn since he had to work days. He held several different odd jobs, including porter jobs, sundry work in offset houses and printing plants, and free-lance commercial art. During his second year, he got a porter job at the school, so he cleaned the facility for four hours after classes, with one other student. Blackburn did not, perhaps, make many significant friendships at the League because he was always scrambling, working. Aside from the valuable time he spent with Barnet and Vytlacil, he has noted that he met Nell Blaine, Terry Haass, Burt Hasen, Harry Hoehn, Seong Moy and David Ruff there.¹⁹¹

In his third year at the Art Students League, Blackburn studied with Will Barnet on Saturdays. He went to Barnet as a graphics teacher, to pursue what he had begun at the Harlem Community Art Center. Despite his interest in printmaking, Blackburn has remarked, "I didn't plan to go into lithography, I didn't want to especially, I didn't think of myself as a graphic artist even though I liked to draw. I was interested in being a painter . . . " ¹⁹² Barnet, a painter-printmaker, had himself studied lithography at the League in 1930. By 1934, he was the Art Students League's professional printer, and by 1936, the youngest faculty member to teach the graphic arts.¹⁹³ Barnet shared both his aesthetic sense of printmaking, as well as the craft of it, with Blackburn, who worked as his

¹⁹¹ Although Blackburn remains a very private person who has many friends but few very close associates, he did remain in touch with most of these colleagues from the Art Students League, inviting them in later years to make prints at The Printmaking Workshop. Blaine, Haass, Hasen, and Moy all have prints in The Printmaking Workshop Print Collection.

¹⁹² Blackburn. Paul Cummings interview, 20.

¹⁹³ *Will Barnet: Etchings, Lithographs, Woodcuts, Serigraphs, 1932-1972 Catalogue raisonné*, compiled and edited by Sylvan Cole, Jr., with a foreword by Robert Doty. (New York: Associated American Artists Gallery, 1972).

assistant.¹⁹⁴ Slowly, their relationship evolved from teacher-pupil to colleagues, two printmakers eager to plumb the medium of lithography. "We wanted the stone and what we did on the stone to express the same ideals of painting only they were graphic in nature. They had a different look to them, they had to deal with paper instead of canvas . . . we used the stone in a very free way," Barnet remembers. Eventually, they experimented with washes, creating textural body in images by investing various layers with diverse grounds, sometimes even digging into the stone, like a mezzotint, to create a patterning that would hold ink both physically as well as chemically. "The stone became a very manipulated thing, like a drawing," Barnet has stated.¹⁹⁵ Barnet, who has alternated periods of painting with periods of printmaking throughout his prolific career, found a kindred spirit in Blackburn. Both thought like painters, and neither was afraid to see the print matrix as a sculptural body, as they pushed at the boundaries of what was then standard lithographic practice.

According to Elizabeth Jones, Blackburn's training by Barnet was through a hard-earned apprenticeship, as they printed for other artists:

It was the policy of the Art Students League to separate art from technique in the lithography classes, where students were seldom allowed to print their own work . . . At the League on weekends Blackburn would assist Barnet in the printing of the accomplished work of Raphael Soyer and other prominent artists, as well as the work of students; it

¹⁹⁴ Blackburn also, later, worked with Bill Wetzel as his assistant. Wetzel took over Barnet's position as graphic printer when Barnet became a full instructor in painting and graphics at the Art Students League. Later, Arnold Singer took over printing for Wetzel.

¹⁹⁵ Will Barnet. Interview by Jennifer Bergman, April 11, 1994. Unpublished transcription of an audiotaped telephone conversation, 2.

was through such work with Barnett that Blackburn gained the basis of his technical knowledge.¹⁹⁶

Blackburn had been trying to broaden his repertoire of lithographic technique, beyond what Riva Helfond had taught him at the HCAC. Around this same time, he approached George C. Miller, asking for technical information. "Blackburn recalls his disappointment when, as he tells it, Miller responded, 'Young man, if you want to learn anything from me, you'll have to spend a hundred dollars a week, and I'll teach you something.'"¹⁹⁷ Of course, Blackburn did not have such financial resources.

During the years between Blackburn's graduation from high school and the completion of his studies at the Art Students League, he continued to progress professionally and exhibit nationally. In 1940, his work was included in the exhibition, "Art of the American Negro, 1850-1940," held at the American Negro Exposition in Chicago.¹⁹⁸ That same year, Alain Locke mentioned the twenty-year-old in his updated book, *The Negro in Art: A Pictorial Record of the Negro Artists and the Negro Theme in Art*. In December 1942, Blackburn's print, *Café Scene*, was included in the major exhibition, "American Negro Art: 19th and 20th Century," curated by Edith Halpert and held at The Downtown Gallery located at 43 East 51st Street. By 1943, James Porter made the following mention of twenty-two-year-old Blackburn in his book, *Modern Negro Art*: "To

¹⁹⁶ Elizabeth Jones, "Robert Blackburn: An Investment in an Idea," *Tamarind Papers* (Volume 6, Number 1, Winter 1982-1983), 11.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ This project was organized by Alonzo Aden and funded by The Harmon Foundation and the WPA. See M. Akua McDaniel, "Institutional Support of African American Art: 1930-1945," in *Selected Essays: Art and Artists from the Harlem Renaissance to the 1980s* (Atlanta: National Black Arts Festival, 1989), 26.

the writer's knowledge there are only three Negro printmakers who have sufficient command of lithography to be able to produce fine prints and to instruct others in the medium. They are James L. Wells, Hughie-Lee Smith,¹⁹⁹ and Robert Blackburn."²⁰⁰ By 1945, Blackburn's work was included in the "The Negro Artist Comes of Age," held at the Albany Institute of History and Art, New York.²⁰¹

In the early and mid-1940s, Blackburn came into contact with the strong currents of Indian Space Painting, Surrealism, and Abstract Expressionism in the New York art world. It is worth briefly examining each in turn, in order to note their differing viewpoints, and the manner in which Blackburn responded to these distinct trends.

Kurt Varnedoe has stated that during World War II, U.S. artists shifted their interests from the primitivism of African art to the primitive forms of Indian art. He has noted that, in contrast to the heritage of African descendants, Native American art offered indigenous, nationalistic sources as well as a history seemingly unclaimed and untroubled by a present, modern population:

For the European nations, who had (despite their colonial policies) never developed internally an African slave population, "art negre" lacked a problematic social aspect

¹⁹⁹ Hughie Lee-Smith (b. 1915) studied at Cleveland Museum of Art and Cleveland Art Institute, as well as Wayne State University in Detroit. Lee-Smith worked on the WPA print project and taught at Karamu House, Cleveland. Later, he taught at the Art Students League in New York.

²⁰⁰ James Porter, *Modern Negro Art* (1943; reprint, Washington D.C.: Howard University Press, 1992), 153.

²⁰¹ This project was sponsored by the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Phelps Stokes Fund. The catalogue contained an essay by Alain Locke. See McDaniel, "Institutional Support of African American Artists," 26.

that it obviously possessed in the United States. Europeans, remote from both Africans and American blacks, tended to elide the two cultures. The fortunes of Africanizing primitivism in Europe had thus become associated with the chic of Negro blues and jazz (Josephine Baker et al.) in a fashion that was not exportable to pre-World War II America. Even though artists such as Gottlieb owned and admired African objects, it would have been quite a different matter for white painters in New York in 1940—as opposed to Picasso or Modigliani in Paris decades before—to evoke an ancestral linkage between their innovations and the art of Africa. While many American artists insistently called up general Primitive precedents as validation for their work, a specific linkage—via overt African sources—between an already beleaguered modernist minority and the far more seriously oppressed and populous black culture would have brushed too close to the specific social engagement that most of the artists were busy expunging from their art. Native Americans, constituting a smaller and more comfortably folkloric social presence, were more easily available to Caucasian artists for annexation as an ancestral source.²⁰²

While modernist European artists remained the primary mediators for imparting selected lessons of African art to American artists, Native American sources were seemingly unspoken for; this aroused the interest of American artists who wanted to interpret this work directly. Native American work was readily accessible in permanent collections as well as through a series of exhibitions. In addition to the permanent collections on view at the Museum of Natural History and the Brooklyn Museum, a series of high-profile exhibitions in New York at this time offered indigenous material for study. In 1933, the Museum of Modern Art held its exhibition, “American Sources of Modern Art,”

²⁰² Kurt Varnedoe, “Abstract Expressionism,” in *Primitivism in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern*, edited by William Rubin (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1984), 623-623.

which included both Native American and Mesoamerican art. In 1941, the Museum of Modern Art opened "Indian Art of the United States." The later, 1945 exhibition, "Accident and Design: Some Parallels Between the Modern and the Primitive," was held in Cincinnati. Although many artists did not see this firsthand, an influential catalogue written by Robert Goldwater accompanied it. This book paired modern artists with pieces of traditional art from their country of origin, adding credence to the notion that "American" artists should look to Native American sources. As art historian Ann Gibson has stated, "While interest in Native American culture was widespread during the 1940s, American enthusiasm for African art and African sources was in decline. In fact, following its heyday in the twenties, one of the last gasps of admiration for African art sparked by the *Negritude* movement in Paris and the Harlem Renaissance in New York was the "African Negro Art" exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in 1935."²⁰³

Concurrently, in 1936, the American Abstract Artists group (AAA) formed in response to criticism of abstraction. Several of the future AAA artists were, at this time, working with Hans Hofmann on Eighth Street, in downtown New York. From Hofmann's, they frequented Albert E. Gallatin's Gallery of Living Art, located on Washington Square in a New York University building. Gallatin, who showed Picasso, Miró and others, also displayed a traditional Haida wall painting by John Wallace. Some of these Hofmann students would go on to form a group entitled "The Indian Space Painters" in the late 1930s.

²⁰³ Ann Eden Gibson, *Abstract Expressionism: Other Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997). 65.

Inspired by both their interest in abstraction and geometric abstraction, as well as the traditional artworks of Native Americans, "these artists sought to eliminate the distinction between 'background' and 'figure' in their paintings. The result of their efforts was the development of a totally flat configuration, called 'Indian Space.' "²⁰⁴ They sought to bridge hard-edge geometric abstraction with the expressive abstraction initiated in the United States during the 1940s. The Indian Space painters tried to use abstraction as a pictorial language that combined image with symbol, and thus, image with language. The painters did not hold a formal exhibition as a group until April 1946, at Gallery Neuf on 79th Street. Entitled "Semeiology," or, "8 and a Totem Pole," the project included paintings by the members of this group as well as a Haida house pole. This group's interest in issues of language was brought to the fore with the publication of their short-lived magazine, *Iconograph*, 1946-1947.²⁰⁵

Steve Wheeler, Robert Barrell, and Peter Busa were among Hofmann's students. The Indian Space Painters' group included these three as well as Will Barnet, Getrude Barrer, Howard Daum, Oscar Collier, Helen DeMott, Ruth Lewin, Lilian Orloff and Robert Smith. The core group of the Indian Space painters was associated with the Art Students League. During this time, Will Barnet played an important role as an advocate of Indian Space at the Art

²⁰⁴ Sandra Kraskin, *The Indian Space Painters: Native American Sources for American Abstract Art*, exhibition catalogue, (New York: The Sidney Mishkin Gallery, Baruch College, 1991), 7. Although not officially a part of the Indian Space Painters Group, the artists Jackson Pollock, Adolf Gottlieb, Richard Pousette-Dart and others were also powerfully affected by Native American iconography and style. See W. Jackson Rushing, "Ritual and Myth: Native American Culture and Abstract Expressionism," *The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting 1890-1985* (New York: Abbeville Press/Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1986), 272-295.

²⁰⁵ For more on *Iconograph* Magazine, see Ann Eden Gibson, *Issues in Abstract Expressionism: The Artist-Run Periodicals* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1990), 19-23.

Students League. Another major artist of the Indian Space group, Howard Daum, was a student of Barnett's at the same time as Blackburn. Blackburn knew his colleagues Daum and Wheeler well. Additionally, through Barnett and others, he was aware of the Indian Space painting theories and had seen much of the work being produced. However, Blackburn felt that he personally did not relate that closely to this group.

The Indian Space painters were, however, linked to the Surrealists in that they both employed the process of automatic drawing to generate pictorial fields. Blackburn was much more significantly influenced by Surrealism and Abstract Expressionism although Indian Space Painting can be seen as a counterweight to the notion that black artists were looking to only to the origins of African art for primitive models.

Parallel with the Indian Space Painters, beginning in 1939 and continuing until the mid-1940s, many influential European artists, particularly the Surrealists, were fleeing the increasingly unsafe conditions in Europe and settling in New York. These included Breton, Chagall, Dali, Ernst, Leger, Lipschitz, Masson, Matta, Mondrian, Ozenfant, Seligman, Tanguy, Tchelitchew, and Zadkine,²⁰⁶ as well as Albers, Duchamp, Feininger, Grosz, and, as mentioned, Hofmann. Through this geo-political displacement of artists, many American artists came into direct contact with these European artists for the first time. Many of the Surrealists affiliated with Atelier 17, an intaglio workshop first located at the New School for Social Research, and later on 8th Street, not far from Hofmann's. The New School for Social Research was active in promoting

²⁰⁶ Irving Sandler, "Dada, Surrealism and Their Heritage: 2. The Surrealist Emigres in New York (*Artforum*, May 1968), 25.

Surrealist activities; in January 1941, they hosted a series of lectures by Gordon Onslow-Ford, who was invited to the United States by the Society for the Preservation of European Culture. Onslow-Ford promoted automatism, and at one of his lectures Robert Motherwell and William Baziotes met Roberto Matta.²⁰⁷ Matta then formed a brief-lived group that convened approximately four times in 1942-1943, where, with William Baziotes, Robert Motherwell, Jackson Pollock, Peter Busa and Gerome Kamrowski, they discussed the potential of automatism.²⁰⁸

Automatism, an experimental method that allowed the subconscious to generate images not controlled by the conscious mind, was coupled with a hunger to explore experimental media that could also help "free" images by allowing for their creation in new ways. This idea was brought to the fore during the WPA period, perhaps also attributed in some small measure to the Mexican model; Siqueiros, particularly, always advocated using new media and translated some of that enthusiasm directly when he held several meetings in New York in 1936. Martica Sawin has written,

Many artists on the Project felt free to experiment with materials and styles. In addition, the New York WPA had tried to foster an interest in varied traditional and innovative mediums, not only reviving fresco and egg tempera but also stimulating experimentation with industrial materials and commercial paints. David Smith and Francis Criss had

²⁰⁷ According to Sandler, Arshile Gorky, William Baziotes, David Hare, and Jimmy Ernst were present. According to Martica Sawin, Yves Tanguy, Jacques Seligmann, Roberto Matta and Robert Motherwell were also present, but Gerome Kamrowski, was not.

²⁰⁸ For more detail, see Martica Sawin, "The Third Man,' or Automatism American Style," *Art Journal* (Fall 1988), 181-186.

as their WPA assignment the managing of an experimental materials workshop.²⁰⁹

This revival of experimentation, nurtured by the WPA, and then reinforced after the collapse of the Project by the influx of Surrealists, greatly affected the American artists of this period, including the Indian Space Painters and the fledgling Abstract Expressionists. As well, it was influential across printmaking of this time. In intaglio, the phenomenon of Hayter's Atelier 17 crystallizes this moment.

Atelier 17 was originally founded in Paris in late 1927 by the British engraver Stanley William Hayter. There, Hayter worked with artists including Chagall, Ernst, Giacometti, Lipschitz, Miró, Tanguy, and later, Braque, Picasso, and Léger. Hayter relocated to New York with his workshop in 1940. In its new city, Atelier 17 was first set up at the New School for Social Research; later it moved to another space on 8th Street near Washington Square Park. In 1950, well after the war, Hayter returned to Paris to re-start Atelier 17; various stateside artists maintained the New York version in tribute to Hayter (including Karl Schrag, Terry Haass and Harry Hoehn, James Kleege, Peter Grippe, and Leo Katz) until 1955, when it closed its U.S. doors for good. While many of the artists who had been comfortable in Hayter's New York studio were foreign-born immigrants—including Nemecio Antunez, Louise Bourgeois,²¹⁰ John Buckland-Wright, Federico Castellon, Chagall, Werner Drewes, Max Ernst,

²⁰⁹ Sawin, p. 181.

²¹⁰ Born in Paris in 1911, and educated there, Bourgeois moved to New York in 1938 when she married art historian Robert Goldwater. Interestingly, Bourgeois enrolled at the Art Students League where she studied with Vaclav Vytlacil; in 1939 she began to experiment with printmaking on her own, and in 1941 she studied it at the League with Will Barnet. She made prints at Atelier 17 in 1946.

Friedrich Friedel, Anthony Gross, Terry Haass, Ian Hugo, Phillip Kaplan, Armin Landek, Wifredo Lam, Mauricio Lasansky, Léger, Lipchitz, Matta, Massón, Seong Moy, Miró, Louis Nevelson, Gabor Peterdi, André Racz, Karl Schrag, Kurt Seligman, Yves Tanguy, and Enriqu  Zanartu—they mingled and exchanged ideas with many emerging American artists, including Ellen Abbey, Fred Becker, Dorr Borhwell, Letterio Calapai, Lee Chesney, Minna Wright Citron, Ruth Cyril, Worden Day, Dorothy Dehner, John Ferren, Sue Fuller, James Goetz, Alice Trumbull Mason, Jean Morrison, Robert Motherwell, Louise Nevelson, Harold Paris, Helen Phillips, Jackson Pollock, Reuban Kadish, Alfred Russell, Anne Ryan, and Pennerton West.

The international atmosphere of Hayter's experimental print studio was familiar to many who had fled the continent during troubled times; old friends were re-encountered in the new space while eager American artists took the opportunity to rub shoulders with the Europeans and study with the renowned print master. During its ten years in New York, Hayter's studio was an important point of contact for Surrealism and emerging Abstract Expressionism through printmaking, particularly automatism. Hayter taught a form of automatism, with plate and burin, as a point of entry to understanding the possibilities of engraving. Automatism—a method of uncontrolled drawing or doodling, that generated images directly from the subconscious—was a Surrealists practice upon which certain emerging Abstract Expressionists seized. While Hayter insisted that his students practice in this method, (which, in students' hands, sometimes results in a "look" that detractors of his method frequently note) he was a force in keeping American printmaking current with the concepts that preoccupied the rising painters of the times.

According to Riva Castleman, Hayter's studio created a small movement in printmaking at the same time Abstract Expressionism was reaching vitality. In her view, "several artists who responded well to the craftsman orientation of Hayter's workshop created major works within the limitations of the intaglio medium. Three of the most important, Gabor Peterdi, Mauricio Lasansky, and Karl Schrag, all immigrants, dominated the field of printmaking in the U.S.A. through the 1950s."²¹¹ Una Johnson has summed up the Atelier's impact more broadly. "The high standards of work, the lively discussions concerning the accomplishments of the great graphic artists of the past, and the reapplication of old methods combined with fresh ideas were widely felt. The application of various print media within a single composition dramatically enlarged the possibilities of the printed image. The problems of new forms, soaring lines, color, infinite textures, and the expanding size of the print itself were carried forward."²¹² Hayter's fresh emphasis on the experimental nature of intaglio resonated just a few blocks away, where, at Blackburn's studio, he was a similar catalyst to a group gathered to push at the limitations of methods and subjects in lithography. Both workshops promoted printmaking as a medium on par with painting and sculpture through their focus on quality, technical excellence, artistic concept, and the artists' hands-on involvement in the process.

²¹¹ Riva Castleman, *Prints of the Twentieth Century* (London: Thames and Hudson, revised and enlarged edition, 1988), 130. It is interesting that such an influential curator and scholar of printmaking reveals such a clear disdain for the important developments in the United States during this period. Castleman's European blinders prevented her from even mentioning Blackburn, his work, his role as a printer and teacher, or The Printmaking Workshop—that is to say, the entire subject of this dissertation—in her standard survey.

²¹² Una E. Johnson, *American Prints and Printmakers* (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc. 1980), 76-77.

Although Blackburn did not study with Stanley William Hayter (as is commonly stated), he did visit Atelier 17 on several occasions, and took one short summer session in etching while Hayter was abroad. Working with Terry Haass, whom he was fond of from their days together at the Art Students League, Blackburn recalls that he was charged with mixing inks for the group. Blackburn, of course, knew of Hayter's distinguished contributions to printmaking and admired him greatly; he knew Hayter socially from openings and the print world. Later in life, Hayter served on Blackburn's Board of Trustees from 1971 until his death in 1988. Blackburn has commented that he regrets never having studied formally with Hayter, but Blackburn's responsibilities during this period were time-consuming. However, a crossover of artists between the two shops was significant. In 1952, after Hayter had returned to Paris, Blackburn invited Bob Broner from Atelier 17 to set up intaglio facilities at his workshop. Gerson Leiber worked as Broner's monitor.²¹³ At this point—while the direction of the New York Atelier 17 was unclear, and there were struggles over succession and control—many of the artists who had been working at Hayter's moved to Blackburn's studio to continue their pursuits in intaglio.

Bob Broner was quickly joined at Blackburn's by other engravers and etchers including Minna Citron, Terry Haass, Seong Moy, and Doris Seidler. Chaim Koppelman, who used etching as his critical medium, became a key supporter of the workshop during this period. Originally a sculptor, Koppelman was drawn to the use of tools directly on metal. He had studied the philosophy of Aesthetic Realism with its founder, Eli Siegel. Koppelman has stated, "The

²¹³ Robert Broner. Interview by Dennis Barrie, May 8, 1974. The Archives of American Art, The Smithsonian Institution, New York. Transcript of an audiotape.

Workshop was very affecting. It made a good mix, and we learned from each other."²¹⁴ While the workshop never promoted any specific ideology, including Aesthetic Realism, it was genuinely inclusive and artists like Koppelman were free to pursue his beliefs through his art. Koppelman was extremely supportive of both Blackburn and the special workshop atmosphere, and from the early 1950s, he made sure to include Blackburn's prints in exhibitions at Terrain Gallery, the Aesthetic Realist gallery, despite the fact that Bob did not adhere to this particular philosophy.

Jackson Pollock acknowledged that he had two "masters"—Thomas Hart Benton and Stanley William Hayter. "Most of the Abstract Expressionist prints made in the United States in the early 1950s were the work of artists who had been influenced by Hayter,"²¹⁵ Lanier Graham has noted. David Acton summed up this connection, "the pioneer Abstract Expressionist painters in New York during the 1940s shared common principals of spontaneity and subjectivity, largely derived from French Surrealism." He notes that as these painters' prints are seriously studied, "a new picture begins to emerge of the remarkable conceptual, geographical and chronological influence of Abstract Expressionism on American printmaking."²¹⁶ As noted, Hayter's reinforcement of automatism as a method with which to mine the intuitive and rich contents of the psyche was a tangible bridge between French Surrealism and developing American Abstract Expressionism. Automatism allowed the art process itself to

²¹⁴ Chaim Koppelman. Notes from an unpublished interview with the author, 1993.

²¹⁵ Lanier Graham, *The Spontaneous Gesture: Prints and Books of the Abstract Expressionist Era* (Canberra: National Gallery of Australia, 1989), 19.

²¹⁶ David Acton, "Introduction," *The Stamp of Impulse: Abstract Expressionist Prints* (New York: Hudson Hills Press in association with the Worcester Museum of Art, 2001), 9.

reveal its subject(s); through its process they were able to excavate and explore deeply ingrained Jungian archetypes and myths, and universal subjects of global tradition. Drawing from Greek, Roman, African, Indian, Native and other cultural traditions, they looked to their unconscious for subjects, interpreted through Freudian constructions.

As Ann Gibson has pointed out, the mythologies surrounding Abstract Expressionism necessitated a suppression of conflicting facts. Despite the fact that the movement strove to generate universal images, unmoored from specific political or social agendas, at the same time it encouraged a cult of the artist. These artists' biographies became mythologized, as they probed their individual psyches. The idolized artists (particularly obvious, for example, in the case of Jackson Pollock) advanced the fictions which they enjoyed while working under the WPA, where artists were treated with the stature of working men, as opposed to effete, creative types. As macho men doing their part to revision the nation, they took on the role of cowboys or soldiers—modern-day primitives—despite the fact that most were not fit to serve in the war, and the moniker “intellectual” suited them well.²¹⁷ Barbara Lekatsas has noted that this very same model has been applied, historically, to printmakers:

. . . art has to prove its ability to convey the contradictory experience of industry and leisure simultaneously. Craftsmanship proves that the artist is the worker rather than an indolent dreamer. If he or she can convey the experience of workmanship, then the audience will be released to experience the pleasure of expression, contemplation, even idleness. Printmaking in this respect becomes a genre full of possibilities and contradictions. Not as elite as painting, it nonetheless remains a process

²¹⁷ Gibson, *Abstract Expressionism*, 13-14.

based on craftsmanship and pre-industrial techniques, that also allows the artist to control the means of production, as well as dissemination, of the print. As Michel Merlot writes in *History of Art: Prints* (New York: Rizzoli, 1981) the printmaker had to create a place for himself in the social order: 'It was in his personality that this initial contradiction had to be resolved, and that is why such composite qualities were expected of him: he had to be both 'creator' and 'craftsman,' both 'intellectual' and annual 'worker.' The personality of the engraver would always oscillate between workman and artist. (page 41.) ²¹⁸

The Abstract Expressionist artists cherished the notion of originality; individuality provided authenticity, which was a function of freedom, and led to improvisation. One who could successfully improvise had talent. In this regard, they treasured a jazz aesthetic of free-form invention. Despite the fact that jazz came out of African American culture, these artists were slow to acknowledge the African Americans artists around them, whose concerns were, at times, quiet different. For example, in April 1950, an historic three-day symposium was held at Studio 35. Norman Lewis participated. During the sessions, Lewis raised the question of the artist's relationship to the public. He mentioned the WPA/FAP projects, as well as organizing unions. Lewis stated that the public encounter was important to make people aware of the concerns and struggles of the artists. Lewis questioned what relationship the Abstract Expressionists were to have with their public audience. Since no one responded, Ad Reinhardt pressed the point and asked each participant to comment on this. Few would, and their dismissive remarks prompted Alfred Barr, the moderator, to move the discussion along to another topic. This important moment pointed to the differing concerns of African American artists working in Abstract Expressionist

²¹⁸ Barbara Lekatsas, *Will Barnet-Bob Blackburn: An Artistic Friendship in Relief*, catalogue essay (LaGrange, Georgia: Cochran Collection, 1997), 4-5.

modes. Such concerns, in conjunction with the rising racial tensions of the war years, may have kept them isolated and truly alienated within the art world of that period.²¹⁹

However, it was precisely this point of Lewis' concern—the failure of art as an effective means of political and social engagement—that contributed to the rising cult of the individual's subjectivity during the postwar era in the United States. At the same time, when private patronage replaced government support, painters faced the production and consumption of their art. Their personalities and marketability directly influenced their achievement; these technical and social conditions directly shaped the successful Abstract Expressionist style.²²⁰ Of course, during this period, the situation could never be equal for white male artists as for black artists.

While black artists still felt the pressure to respond to the situation of their people, white artists felt pressure to become “properly” abstract. During the era of McCarthyism, social realist artworks were seen as dangerously political and leftist, while pure abstraction was criticized as communist. Senator George Dondero led congressional assaults on American art that followed either tendency. This atmosphere was another powerful motivation for the Abstract Expressionist to embrace an apolitical, process-driven style that was abstract

²¹⁹ See Robert Motherwell and Ad Reinhardt, eds., *Modern Artists in America* (New York: Wittenborn-Schulz, 1952) for transcripts of the symposium. See Ann Gibson, “Recasting the Canon: Norman Lewis and Jackson Pollock,” *Artforum* 30 (March 1992), 66-74, for an in-depth analysis of Lewis' relationship to Abstract Expressionism.

²²⁰ This argument is effectively made by T.J. Clarke, “In Defense of Abstract Expressionism,” *October* 69 (Summer 1994) 23-48.

but not meaningless, that was seemingly American but still in an “international” style.

Abstract Expressionism did not have pointed social concerns, or any interest in daily life or politics. Mimesis was anathema; academic or naturalistic images were *retardataire*, echoing past styles such as regionalism or social realism. Literary, biographical or political meanings were avoided in favor of generalized psychoanalytic (Jungian) concepts and humanistic themes. Its sources were timeless, placeless and internal; it also stressed its own facture, including its optical values and its importance as an index, or proof, of its originality and spontaneity (the mark of its improvisational process). However, this spontaneity became, paradoxically, the “look” of the movement, generated or manufactured as an index of immediacy, directness, and intuition. There was a certain violence implicit in this “immediate” style, but this was not a violence of rebellion, protest or agitation; simply the raw primitive, painting his existential alienation. However, this existentialism was quite particular: it was not political, it was not related to race, gender, or ethnicity. It was a particular alienation shared by those in a certain group. Its subject was always its own action, the unfolding of itself.²²¹

Thus, it is interesting to note that Romare Bearden and Jacob Lawrence—neither of whom ever completely departed from figurative content for any length of time—were the two most successful and exhibited black artists during this time frame with their figure-based works. By 1941, Lawrence

²²¹ E.A. Carmean, Jr. and Eliza E. Rathbone with Thomas B. Hess, *American Art at Mid-Century: The Subjects of the Artist*, exhibition catalogue (Washington D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1978.) This formulation, of course, was made earlier by Harold Rosenberg, “The American Action Painters,” *Art News* (December 1952).

was exhibiting with Edith Halpert's Downtown Gallery. By 1944, he presented both his *Migration* series and *Coast Guard* series at the Museum of Modern Art. Bearden showed with Samuel Kootz Gallery from late 1945 to 1948. In 1945, Bearden had a painting from his *Passion of Christ* series exhibited in the Whitney Museum of American Art's Annual Exhibition of Contemporary American Painting. By 1946, he was also showing at Galerie Maeght in Paris. By the early 1950s, Bearden exhibited with Cordier & Eckstrom. By 1947, of all the African American artists working in New York, only Bearden, Lewis, Rose Piper²²² and Thelma Johnson Streat²²³ had solo exhibitions in New York galleries. Bearden has called the mid- and post-War period, "the black years," when opportunities to exhibit—even in the controversial community group shows or all black exhibitions of the WPA era—were gone. However, Bearden and Lawrence, were attaining some measure of success in this time. Their popularity was achieved with their images of black American life, not the abstract experimentations that they, and many other, African American artists were producing.

Despite this dearth of recognition, sales, and exhibitions, groundbreaking African American painters such as Hale Woodruff and Norman Lewis were

²²² Rose Piper (b. 1917) began painting in High School and attended Hunter College. She graduated in 1940 and then attended the Art Students League for two and a half years, where she studied with Yasuo Kuniyoshi and Vaclav Vytlacil. From 1946 to 1948 she held two Rosenwald Fellowships and she traveled to Paris. In 1947 she had her first one-person exhibition at Michael Freilich's RoKo Gallery; she also showed with ACA Gallery during this period.

²²³ Thelma Johnson Streat (b. 1912 Washington - 1959) grew up in Washington and attended Oregon Museum Art School from 1934-1935 and the University of Oregon in 1935-1936. She showed with The Harmon Foundation and by the mid-1930s had moved to New York. She worked for the WPA in San Francisco, where she also exhibited in M.H. de Young Museum in 1941. In 1942, she exhibited at the Raymond & Raymond Galleries in New York. That year, Alfred Barr purchased "Rabbit Man," 1941, for the Museum of Modern Art. Streat painted, designed fabric and jewelry, and performed dance interpretations.

moving to abstraction in the mid-1940s, just like their white counterparts.

Woodruff would always contend that his imagery was derived from Ashanti gold weights, Ibo masks, Yoruba carvings, and Dogon granary doors. Woodruff used abstraction as a process of retrieving personal history and cultural achievements through scholarly research. This was an opposing stance to the white Abstract Expressionists, who, it could be said, used style as a means to recover some kind of pure and un-intellectualized expression. As well, the mix of styles which African American artists marshaled from the mid-1940s through the 1950s—swinging from abstraction to figuration and back again—was unacceptable in Greenbergianism, despite the fact that it has been noted that "in fact, many artists moved between the two poles of figurative and non-figurative, sometimes in different works and sometimes in a single image."²²⁴ Some historians like Gibson, who has examined the specific case of the black artist at this time, remark that in addition to the lingering Lockean and social demand, a play of styles reflects the "double consciousness" that W.E.B. DuBois pointed out in the 1920s, which African Americans deploy to survive in both in the mainstream world, as well as their own community.²²⁵ Woodruff seems to have found an eloquent solution to the pressures of both Locke's legacy of ancestralism as well as the currents of Abstract Expressionism, by forging an historio-ethnic abstract language based in the specifics of African cultural iconography.

²²⁴ Graham, *The Spontaneous Gesture*, 49, commenting on six Jackson Pollock prints from 1951. It should be noted that African American artists did not necessarily see their project as different than that of the recognized Abstract Expressionists. In fact, in 1961, Hale Woodruff stated, "In the new forms of so-called Modern Art, which are now anonymously international and are largely defiant of any accepted national or racial characteristic" the African American is able to produce "simply as another artist, making no particular racial claims, but only those of all men and artists." Clearly, he did not feel that his abstract works were "racial."

²²⁵ Gibson, *Abstract Expressionism*, xxxii-xxxiii.

Abstract Expressionism did not carry on directly in the traditions of any abstract foreign schools (such as French Cubism, German Expressionism, French or Spanish Surrealism, or Dutch Neo-plasticism). It was peculiarly nationalistic in this sense, where the (white, heterosexual, male) artist plays the role of intuitive cowboy, working out of his own anguished psyche. It is interesting to note the fluid relationship between American Abstract Expressionism (whose term was coined in 1946 by the U.S. critic Robert M. Coates) and its French variant, which by the early 1950s was called by French critics either *Informel* ("formless" or "unformed") or *Tachisme* ("stain" or "blot"). One key exhibition held in Paris in 1951 was the "Exhibition of Opposing Forces" ("Exhibition Véhémenees confrontées"), held at Galerie Nina Dausset, Paris. Organized by Michel Tapié and Georges Mathieu, this project brought together Europeans and North Americans working in these related styles, and included Bryen, Hartung, Mathieu, Wols, Riopelle, Pollock, and de Kooning.

While links were forged between Paris and New York during the war years, at, for example, Hayter's Atelier 17, these connections continued in strength after the war, when many artists, particularly African American artists, took advantage of the GI Bill or other programs to travel to France. In many ways, Paris was friendlier toward black artists than the U.S. The postwar boom economy and U.S. dominance also contributed to ease in travel. Many influential artists opened the way between New York and Paris, Abstract Expressionism and Art *Informel*. For example, Bernard Childs was one active and well-known link. Childs employed automatism, accident and experimentation in prints that were shown widely in group exhibits in both the United States and Europe. Childs, who lived in New York from 1947 to 1951, moved to Paris in 1952 and studied

at Atelier 17 there in 1954. He was extremely prolific, producing experimental drypoints and engravings through the 1950s that demonstrated his conceptual and technical achievements; Childs was friendly with Blackburn and participated at the workshop in later years when he returned to New York. Sam Francis was another vital link between French Art *Informel* and second generation American Abstract Expressionism. Francis, who first went to Paris in 1950, was close to Joan Mitchell and Jean-Paul Riopelle. He showed in both Paris and New York by the mid-1950s, and by the latter part of the decade, began experimenting with lithography for both ULAE in New York, Eberhard Kornfeld and Emil Mattieu in Switzerland, and, by 1962, Tamarind Lithography Workshop in Albuquerque. Francis edited Walasse Ting's important artists' book, *1¢ Life*, in 1964. Ting himself was an important bridge between Chinese calligraphy, Parisian Art *Informel* and *Tachisme*, American Abstract Expressionism, Pop art and the Cobra group. Blackburn knew both Francis and Ting and admired their work in graphics; later he proofed Francis' first attempts at lithography (see Chapter 3).

The Cobra movement was also being investigated during this time in Paris. Cobra, a postwar expressionism movement from northern Europe, whose acronym was derived from its cities of origin ("Copenhagen," "Brussels" and "Amsterdam"), placed a heavy emphasis on figuration. In 1951, the first exhibition of Cobra art was held in Paris, organized by critic Michel Ragon. Cobra art, with its interest in outsider art and children's art, was also clearly a topic of interest in Blackburn's printmaking milieu. In 1952, while making prints at Blackburn's studio, Barnett was described in the raw, expressionistic terms of Cobra. An article that followed his work at The Printmaking Workshop stated:

Barnet enjoys working on the stone directly. Reaching across the length of the slab to fill in the face, he said this stage of the work sometimes made him think of the cave men who also drew with greasy pigment on stone surfaces—an extravagant comparison perhaps, as the artist's grin admitted, but one that applied at least in the boldness and directness as one broadly brushed stroke followed another."²²⁶

Will Barnet's son, Todd, used to come to the workshop while Barnet was printing. Todd was shown how to make a black-and-white lithograph and encouraged to do so. Examples of his work are in The Printmaking Workshop Print Collection. It is well documented too, that Barnet admired children's art and other naïve forms. This interest, in fact, may have instigated the idea for Blackburn's outreach program with children, which began sometime before 1956. Blackburn has credited Larry Potter²²⁷—another of the early PMW artists, who taught at Union Settlement—with being one of the first organizers of a children's portfolio at his print studio.

During the late 1940s, there were closely entwined relationships between Surrealism and Abstract Expressionism, in New York, nationally, and internationally. Clearly, printmakers had an active role in this development; as well, there were obviously black, latino, asian and other artists participating in

²²⁶ Dorothy Seckler, "Will Barnet Makes a Lithograph" with photographs by Alfred Gescheidt, *Artnews* (April 1952) 38-41ff.

²²⁷ Hugh Lawrence Potter (b. 1925 Mount Vernon, NY - d. 1966) grew up in Harlem. His parents had emigrated from St. Kitts in 1914. Potter attended Seward Park High School, and, six years after his graduation, in 1950, he enrolled in Cooper Union. Potter traveled for the first time to Paris in 1956, perhaps "inspired to travel to Paris by his good friend Bob Blackburn, who had lived there for a year in 1953." (See *Explorations in the City of Light: African American Artists in Paris 1945-1965*, New York: The Studio Museum in Harlem, 1996, p. 84). He returned to the U.S. in 1958, studied at The Art Students League, and left again for Paris that same year. Potter remained in Paris where he died tragically from an asthma attack in January 1966, a chronic and lifelong condition from which he suffered.

what has been historicized as a white, male painters' scene. Blackburn has described how he never felt fully involved with what he calls the 'Cedar Bar crowd':

It is a different group from that group that I was involved in . . . I grew up in a different generation. The Cedar Bar group represents the newer wave that came in . . . also aesthetically I was you might say a little old-fashioned. Old fashioned in the sense I was interested in Cézanne and old painting and a certain kind of classicism whereas that whole school was expressionist and it was not my personality type . . . There was no possibility for me to make it big because in that personality struggle there is no room for, there was no room for that kind of Negro . . . in that whole group you see there is no black artists . . . if a black painter came down there he'd be like, you'd pat him on the head you see, he doesn't fit in . . . there was no chance in that abstract expressionist school because it was like who knows who and who hung around with who . . . in other words the only kind of people you're going to get there were people who fitted into that pattern.²²⁸

Blackburn noted that even Bob Thompson, Norman Lewis, and Hale Woodruff were perceived, at the time, as peripheral to the core movement, despite the fact that certain revisionist art historians have made the case for their integral, but under-acknowledged role in the larger Abstract Expressionist movement. Ronald Joseph has echoed Blackburn's opinion. He has also explained their outsider status as a function of the stratified, segregated city neighborhoods:

We didn't mix socially . . . There were several moments during the WPA where you thought it was possible that it would develop, because you met at parties, and so on. But there was no continuity . . . They didn't have anything against me, and I didn't have anything against them. We just didn't meet . . . Is it being in the same neighborhood?

²²⁸ Blackburn, Paul Cummings interview, 26.

Probably the neighborhood. Neighborhood is more direct and explicit.²²⁹

These desolate years also meant that the precious facilities for printmaking provided by the WPA were gone, and therefore there was little or no access to the equipment required. As well, in this era, printmaking was considered a "secondary" technique. Painting was the important medium. The humble status conferred on the print as an object was not attractive to artists seeking to forge monumental, modern ideas. Graphics' connection to mass distribution (emphasized during the WPA era) demanded, by default, that printed images should be in some way communicative; as we have seen, a black artist was expected to transmit the African American situation. Thus, the prospect for an African American artist to pursue printmaking, particularly in an abstracted mode, was bleak. The coalescence of this entire situation impelled Robert Blackburn to find his own means, and his own path, towards experimental abstract color lithography.

Despite the so-called 'color revolution' in France in the late nineteenth century, instigated by the lithographs of artists including Pierre Bonnard, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, and Edouard Vuillard,

. . . in the early decades of the twentieth century, American artists actively avoided color lithography. Even in France, where, in contrast to America, the tradition of the painter-printmaker was well established, the makers of color prints were forced to overcome a long-standing identification of their medium with the popular and the commercial. Many artists believed, as did Odilon Redon, that lithography was

²²⁹ Ann Gibson, "The New York Years: Interview With Ronald Joseph," *Black American Literature Forum*, Volume 23, Number 4 (Winter 1989), 732-733.

'cheapened by the addition of color . . . [which destroys] its specific qualities so that it comes to resemble a cheap, colored print.'²³⁰

Clinton Adams has noted that this prejudice, coupled with a lack of supportive, professional printers with whom creative artists could work, severely handicapped the development of color lithography in the early twentieth century. Color lithographs by artists such as Joseph Pennell and James McNeill Whistler were made abroad. Despite Albert Sterner's encouragement of artist George Bellows, as well as his stimulation of both George C. Miller and Bolton Brown to print for artists, Adams has summarized that of the many artists who went on to make lithographs, only Arthur B. Davies explored color (with Miller) through the 1920s. In 1917, George C. Miller opened his lithographic workshop in New York. Probably the best-known artists' lithographic printer, Miller printed primarily in black and white. His shop was located at 6 East 14th Street in 1920. Later, it moved next door to 3 East 14th Street.²³¹

The Art Students League is also considered very important to the history of lithography in the 1920s to the early 1930s. By 1934, Associated American Artists had initiated an extremely successful printmaking venture established by Reeves Lewenthal. Lewenthal paid artists a two hundred dollar fee. He paid a printer to make an edition of two hundred and fifty, plus ten Artist's Proofs. He then marketed the images through department stores and mail order, for five dollars each. Lewenthal decided which artists were selected and what image

²³⁰ Clinton Adams, "Lithography," in *A Spectrum of Innovation: Color in American Printmaking 1890-1960* by David Acton (Worcester, Massachusetts: Worcester Art Museum, 1990), 33.

²³¹ Clinton Adams, *American Lithographers 1900-1960: The Artists and their Printers* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1983).

was printed. He worked with many established printers, including Miller, Lynton Kistler, and Lawrence Barrett.

In 1935, Jean Charlot, Albert Carman and Emilio Amero printed offset color lithographic editions in New York. However, Carman's *Artists Color Proof Associates* was short-lived. Emil Ganso and Theodore Roszak also printed in color in the 1930s. This entire situation would change in August 1935, with the startup of the FAP/WPA's printmaking project. The FAP's first workshop opened on February 6, 1936 on the twelfth floor of 6 East 39th Street. Russell T. Limbach planned the main graphics workshop and had implemented color lithographic services by 1937. Gustave von Groschwitz, who supervised from 1935 to 1938, and Theodore Wahl, who was the workshop's principal printer, both contributed to stimulating color lithography during the New Deal. More than one hundred and thirty color lithographs were produced by the FAP facilities; the first, by Stuart Davis, was *Shapes of Landscape Space*, 1939. Jackson Pollock printed lithographs with Ted Wahl privately, from 1934 to 1937. In 1938, Margaret Lowengrund—who in the 1950s would found her own important print studio—taught color lithography at the New School for Social Research. However, this period of the late 1930s was remarkable in that it offered a brief moment where artists not affiliated with schools, without any financial resources from patrons or galleries, could explore the full extent of color lithography.

There were a few professional lithographic printers in New York during these times that were known to work with artists. Aside from George C. Miller, J.E. Rosenthal, an offset and zinc printer, was located at 413 Broadway until 1939. He printed for Walt Kuhn, Max Weber, and George "Pop" Hart. Jacob "Jake"

Friedland had his lithographic printshop at 55 East 9th Street into the 1930s, when he began working for the FAP. He printed for Adolf Dehn, Louis Lozowick, and Moses and Rafael Soyer. As well, during this period in 1933 or 1934, Grant Arnold is considered to be one of the first printers to employ the use of a 'chop'²³² to identify the prints from his workshop.

After the FAP folded in 1943, many working artist-lithographers found it difficult to continue making prints because of the lack of independent and accessible facilities. Particularly, experimental work in color was nearly impossible due to a dearth of available, skilled technicians as well as the costliness of employing a printer at all. Fine art, color lithographic printers and printmaking facilities in New York in the 1940s were scarce.

In those days it was still unusual for artists to operate the presses themselves and by far the more usual procedure was for the artist to draw on the stone, which was then delivered to the "professional" printer for the production of the edition. The concept of a close artist/printer relationship in which the artist was an informed partner in the printing process and in which the act of printing is a part of the creative process, was a concept that had its precedents only in the printing of medieval block books and among German Expressionist artists at the turn of the century. In most of the western world the artist and the printer existed in separate worlds and the printer jealously guarded the secrets of his profession.²³³

²³² The embossed, inked, or stamped symbol used by printers and print workshops, usually in the margin of the paper, as a mark that identifies the printer or print workshop that produced the print. Also known as a "blindstamp."

²³³ Nina Parris, "A Life's Work," *Robert Blackburn, A Life's Work*, exhibition catalogue, (New York: The Alternative Museum, 1988), 4.

In 1948, The Workshop of Graphic Art, a brief-lived, politically motivated project, produced two fine-print portfolios for widespread distribution. According to an article at the time in *The Daily Worker*, "The Workshop of Graphic Art is an offshoot of the Dreiser Cultural Workshop organized during the war." Some fifty artists comprised the group who worked out of a loft at 106 East 14th Street. Jay Landau, a founder of workshop, was replaced in 1948 by Charles Keller. Jane Filey was the full-time printer, and the production director was Bud Handelsman. The newspaper stated that while the Workshop was "close to the Mexican Graphic Workshop in its endeavors, the new group recalls the crude power of the group projects of the thirties when government sponsorship in American helped to free so much talent for creative work." Their first portfolio—which was sold for one dollar—included works by Charles White.²³⁴

White, who had traveled to Mexico in 1946 on a Rosenwald Fellowship to work at the Taller de Gráfica Popular, contributed to the Workshop's "mass-produced print portfolios that were in keeping with his philosophy that art should be accessible to all the people. For the portfolio, *Yes, the People*, 1948, White made two black and white works, *Mexican Woman* and *Mexican Boy*. He produced three more prints for a second workshop portfolio, *Negro USA*, 1949."²³⁵ *Yes, the People* also included images by the artists Antonio Frasconi,

²³⁴ Charles Wilbur White (b. 1918 Chicago - 1979) was on the WPA in Chicago. During this period, in 1941, he met and married his first wife, Elizabeth Catlett. White received a Rosenwald Fellowship to go to Dillard University in New Orleans, where Catlett was the head of the Art Department. They moved to New York in 1942 where White began his studies with Harry Sternberg at the Art Students League. White was drafted in 1943 and later discharged; White received a Rosenwald Fellowship, which he used to travel to Mexico in the fall of 1947 and study at the Taller de Gráfica Popular. There, White and Catlett separated and White returned to New York. They divorced and by 1950 he married Francis Barrett. White lived in New York until 1956, when they moved to California where he worked and taught until his death.

²³⁵ Lizzetta LeFalle-Collins, "African-American Modernists and the Mexican Muralist School," *In the Spirit of Resistance*, 56.

Helen Maris, Eugene Karlin, Milton Wynn, and Phillis Skolnik. Frasconi designed the cover, and the sculptor Leonard Baskin (who was also a member of the graphic workshop group) wrote the introduction. The second folio, "commemorating Negro History Week,"²³⁶ also included a work by Jacob Lawrence. White designed the cover and contributed the lithographs, *Our War* and *Negro USA*.

During this same period, Blackburn printed *We Have Been Believers*, 1949, (Illustration 32) for White; Blackburn's first chop is visible on this work. Despite White's work at The Workshop of Graphic Art, where he produced prints such as *Youth* (Illustration 33) that same year, he considered Blackburn to be his primary printer in New York. A note in White's personal file on Blackburn, written by White's wife, states: "Bob Blackburn was Charlie's printmaker in New York before we moved to California. They wanted to work together again after many years apart but Charlie's illness prevented the reunion . . . *John Brown*, *Gideon*, and *Triumph* were executed with him between 1950 and 1956, when we moved to California."²³⁷

By the early 1950s, Margaret Lowengrund had opened The Contemporaries Gallery in New York with an affiliated print shop in Woodstock. Artist Miguel Ponce de Leon served as her assistant; in 1952, he printed for David Smith. By 1955, she moved into larger facilities at Third Avenue and 77th Street, where

²³⁶ Angelica Kaufman, "The Graphic Workshop and its First Portfolio", *The Daily Worker* (Monday, December 20th 1948), found in White's papers, on microfilm in the Archives of American Art, The Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C.

²³⁷ Charles Wilbur White papers, Archives of American Art, The Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C. Microfilm.

her printer Arnold Singer produced *Detail Study for Cliché* for Stuart Davis. Lowengrund printed for Archipenko, Avery, Biddle, Dehn, Seligman, Smith, Sutherland, and Tamayo, among others. Her untimely death in 1957 did not prevent the successful union of her studio with Pratt Institute, creating an important, non-profit graphics department under the leadership of Fritz Eichenberg. By 1952, Arnold Singer was another important printer at the Pratt Graphics Center, who had studied with Barnet and printed at the Art Students League, and would print for other artists as well as work at Blackburn's workshop.

Another important milestone, which would affect printmaking in New York, was the establishment of The Division of Community Education (División de Educación de la Comunidad, AKA DIVEDCO) in Puerto Rico in 1949. Modeled on Roosevelt's WPA programs, this government project sponsored print workshops that, in turn, were led by artists such as Lorenzo Homar, Rafael Tufino, and Antonio Maldonado. These artists had studied printmaking prior in Mexico, with the TGP artists. They, with others, helped to establish the Center of Puerto Rican Art (Centro de Arte Puertorriqueño, AKA CAP, 1950-1952) and the Workshop of the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture (Taller del Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueño, AKA ICP, 1957-1985). These developments on the island would prove important to printmaking in New York after World War II, when increased immigration programs would bring many Puerto Ricans (and Mexicans) to New York. These groups' political, economic, and social struggles through the 1950s would have much in common with those of the African Americans during the civil rights struggles. During the 1960s, the graphics "boom," an explosion of fine-art printmaking, coupled with this use of printmaking in the service of liberal-radical politics would foment the founding

of many print workshops on both the East and West coast with grassroots political ties. As well, the boom would lead to a resurgence of the commercial market for the graphic arts.

Adams has stated that by 1948, original lithographs were created across the country that "demonstrated the power of the medium to accommodate images parallel to those of Kline and Pollock."²³⁸ He refers to Richard Diebenkorn and Frank Lobdell's work in San Francisco, Emerson Woelffer in Colorado Springs in the early 1950s, and "the mythic abstractions of Harold Paris, including *Caballa*, printed in 1952 by Robert Blackburn in New York." It is in this context that Adams mentions Blackburn (and Will Barnet) as "artist-teachers who contributed importantly to American lithography in this period."²³⁹ It was precisely in 1948 that Blackburn founded his own workshop in New York. His work during this period, as well as the important experimental color collaborations he undertook with Will Barnet, was pioneering.

Blackburn moved "downtown" (which he defined as any area below 110th Street) just before his completion of studies at The Art Students League. His Harmon Foundation file notes his change of address in February 1943, in care of the New Dance Group, located at 17 West 24th Street between Broadway and 6th Avenue.²⁴⁰ On different occasions, he has tried to express what "downtown" signified to him in his youth. "People had more money than I had and more freedom . . . I still have these feelings of being a little frightened of the

²³⁸ Adams. *American Lithographers*, 161.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 166.

²⁴⁰ The Harmon Foundation papers, Library of Congress, Manuscripts Division, Washington D.C. I believe he may have shared space with Ernest Crichlow at this time.

whole scene," he remembers.²⁴¹ He described how, with his Harlem school chums, he would sometimes play hooky from school and take the "El"—the elevated train—to the New York aquarium, riding over the "white world" but never stopping in between. "You were always trying to move into something that was not really yours," he expressed.²⁴²

For four years after his graduation from the Art Students League, from 1943 to 1947, Blackburn worked for The Harmon Foundation, located at 140 Nassau Street in New York City, under the directorship of Mary Beattie Brady and her assistant, Evelyn Brown. Blackburn called it "a very wonderful place in some ways, philanthropic."²⁴³ He labored for the graphics division, where he did everything from office work to the research and production of graphics and titles for 16 mm. films, to working with the photographer to create animated sequences. During this same period in the mid-1940s, Blackburn worked for the National Youth Administration, the Harlem Community Health Center and the Harlem Tuberculosis and Health Committee, where he created health displays and brochures. Additionally, he worked with Wango Weng, formerly of the State Department and China Institute of America, then director of China Film Enterprises and China Photo Supply, as well as with Fred S. Wythe, Office of War Information, Overseas Division. For Weng and Wythe, Blackburn produced title backgrounds for films. Additional employment included work in commercial art studios and lithograph houses. In 1945, he exhibited in shows held at the public libraries of Chicago and New York as well as at the Newark

²⁴¹ Blackburn. Paul Cummings interview, 19.

²⁴² Robert Blackburn. Interview by Karl Fortess, June 10, 1972. The Archives of American Art, The Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C. Audiotape.

²⁴³ Blackburn. Paul Cummings interview, 16.

Museum, New Jersey. By 1947, Blackburn had been accepted in the Brooklyn Museum Annual and the Library of Congress Annual. During this period, Blackburn attended some evening classes at the Art Students League where he worked from the model. At some point, he lived at 306 East 6th Street in the East Village, where he had no access to a press and could only draw. But by 1947, he had acquired a press. Slowly, he began printing for himself and other artists. During this period, as well, he completed 260 editions for the Associated American Artists mail order house.

There is very little extant work from the early and mid-1940s in which to study Blackburn's evolving style. There is no definitive work from Blackburn's stint at the Art Students League; later, from 1943 to late 1947, it seems likely that he had little time or money, and scarce access to make lithographs. There are a few examples of prints and sketches from this transitional period that bridges Blackburn's known Harlem works to the 1940s. The works from this period reflect Blackburn's burgeoning interest in Cubism. The surviving prints are modest, figurative subjects, relying primarily on the litho pencil. Based on these observations, the works can be dated as early as 1943, the very end of the Art Students League period, where Blackburn's colleague was Charles White.

For example, in Blackburn's *Youth*, (Illustration 34) two children's faces, as well as the space in the background, is fractured into planes that reflect light or cause deep shadow, thus giving the surface a bas-relief quality. However, this work still maintains a naturalistic, and classical, influence. The figures are closed and complete; despite the somewhat modern breakup of space, the work is composed in layers of frontal, middle and background spaces, complete with a horizon line of trees. As well, in this black and white lithograph,

Blackburn used litho pencil alone, as in the WPA works. He continues to treat the picture plane of the stone as in his WPA images, framing out a square window that he completely fills in through variegated shading. In a similar fashion, Blackburn's *Youth*, ca. 1943-1948, and White's *Youth*, 1949 are related but dissimilar. While White's black and white pencil lithograph from the Workshop for Creative Graphics period shows a monumental Negro head, gazing hopefully but nervously toward the horizon, Blackburn's youths are types out of any particular, historical context (although somehow Renaissance-like, due to the hair and collars). They are ambiguous racially, and presented in an anonymous expanse of grass and trees. Again, while White's treatment of this topic is fairly specific and socially conscious, Blackburn's vision is more indebted to art historical references; his interest is in the bas-relief surface composition.

The second lithograph, *Mother and Child*, ca. 1943-1948 (Illustration 35) is a similarly-styled, very small figurative work that perhaps was used as a holiday greeting. It is the earliest surviving print in which Blackburn employs both tusche²⁴⁴ and color inks, although essentially the work is a black and white drawing over which blue and rose are laid. Blackburn's image is a fairly traditional Madonna and Child depiction. A Modigliani-necked mother, draped in a white headscarf, wearing blue robes, serenely presents a rosy, nude babe. Behind her, a sun/moon shape frames her head like a halo. This work most likely also dates to the Art Students League period.

²⁴⁴ Grease in stick or liquid form, used for drawing in lithography.

These works also have a relationship to works by Charles White and Elizabeth Catlett, whom Blackburn knew. From 1942 to 1946, White and Catlett were based in New York; White attended the Art Students League in 1942-1943, studying with Harry Sternberg while Blackburn studied with Barnet. And, as noted, Blackburn printed for White from the late 1940s. However, in interview, he has commented that he was not particularly interested in their work, which he considered illustrative, promoting particular ideologies. He summarized,

Some of the things that happens when you get into political art, you begin to tell stories and you begin to illustrate and I felt that was not what I wanted to do because illustration was one thing and creating vital space is another so it came out through the work I was doing which was abstract but also . . . it was an avoidance of facing certain things . . . a kind of escape . . . I had to separate my political activity . . . I liked what they did and I accepted it but you see, there are two sides . . . being a black artist I knew that's what I was expected to do. Although I did do some things in that vein it was not really where I wanted to go.²⁴⁵

²⁴⁵ Robert Blackburn. Interview by Jennifer Bergman, February 16, 1994. Unpublished transcript of an audiotape, 12-13. Elizabeth Catlett (b. 1915 Washington D.C.) went to Howard University where she studied with Lois Mailou Jones, James V. Herring and James A. Porter. She was briefly on the WPA but was fired. After teaching in Durham, NC, she went to the State University of Iowa for her MFA, where she learned sculpture and studied with Grant Wood. Her thesis sculpture won first prize in the American Negro Exposition in Chicago in 1940, where she met Charles White whom she married. They moved to New Orleans where she briefly headed the Dillard University Art Department; in 1942 they moved to New York where she studied sculpture with Ossip Zadkine. In 1943, White and Catlett went to Hampton University where White had a mural commission. There, they met John Biggers and Hale Woodruff. They returned to New York where White was drafted; he was discharged and hospitalized until after World War II. Catlett taught at George Washington Carver School in Harlem, alongside Gwendolyn Bennett, Norman Lewis and Ernest Crichlow. In 1946 and 1947, Catlett received a Rosenwald Fellowship for study in Mexico, where she studied sculpture with Francisco Zuniga and made prints at Taller de Gráfica Popular. During this period, she and White separated and divorced, and Catlett met and married Francisco Mora. Eventually, due to persecution by the U.S. government and accusations based on her affiliations in Mexico, Catlett became a Mexican citizen where she maintains her base in Cuernavaca today.

These two early Blackburn prints do have thematic relationships to White and Catlett's work of this period, although they are handled in a slightly different manner. A comparison to their works is instructive in that it shows the very different track Blackburn was taking in comparison to the black center at this time.

Blackburn's *Mother and Child* is similar to both White's *Hope for the Future*, c.1947 (Illustration 36) and Catlett's *Mother and Child*, 1946 (Illustration 37), both of which also depict Madonna and Child themes. However, White's and Catlett's prints, like Blackburn's *Youth*, remain black and white, pencil lithographs, done in Cubo-sculptural style. Their images are coded messages, nervous portents, with blighted trees creating pessimistic atmospheres for foreboding figures.²⁴⁶ Their two works are symbolic pieces in the social realist tradition, drawing on African sculpture and an ancestralist point-of-view. Blackburn's Madonna seems to stem more from the traditional Western canon; she is merely a Madonna, not a symbol of radical political ideology.

Three other, early works are also transitional, figurative pieces that reveal Blackburn's blossoming fluidity with Cubistic abstraction: *Nude*, ca.1943-1948, *Seated Nude*, ca. 1943-1948, and *Negro Mother*, 1948. These, perhaps, reflect an atypical period of time, when Blackburn worked from live models during occasional classes he would take at the Art Students League. In one example, a series of color proofs of an untitled lithograph depict a standing nude female model. This work, called, variously, *Nude* or *Sketch*, ca. 1943-1948 (Illustration

²⁴⁶ See Reba and Dave Williams, "Themes and Images," *Alone in a Crowd: Prints of the 1930s-40s by African American Artists* (NY: Collection of Reba and Dave Williams, second revised edition, 1993), 24-25. The Williams note that White's image is more cynical, his barren tree hanging with a noose.

38 a-d) reveals a progression in which Blackburn tries on various skin tones and background shades. The model's outline serves as a cipher of woman, a compositional form on which he is able to see how various shades work with grey, pink, and mustard backgrounds. Blackburn tries heavy and washy blacks and browns on the newsprint proofs; he leaves a number on good paper simply "white," that is to say, paper-color. Again, this unfinished work does not seem to be simply a statement about race, although undoubtedly that was at play in Blackburn's testing of brown and black shades. Blackburn is equally interested in breaking open the stage, the seat and the fabric hanging behind the model through the use of varied color combinations. These shapes, where they relate to the rounded legs or curly hair of the model, are the liveliest portions of the otherwise academic image. Similarly, in the lithograph *Seated Nude*, ca.1943-1948 (Illustration 39), Blackburn has created an immediate and active image from orange and rose washes. The figure is merely a series of curves, swathes of color that disarticulate the body, creating shadows that merge the body into the background patterning.

The untitled preparatory ink and charcoal drawing, and the lithograph, *Negro Mother*, 1948, both combine and advance a handling of the human figure found in *Youth, Mother and Child, Nude* and *Seated Nude*. The planar face, sketched in more fully in the drawing (Illustration 40), contrasts with the loosely handled body in the print (Illustration 41). The torso is handled abstractly. Circles, curving swathes and light and dark passages, formerly indicators of mass, here serve to flatten the body, opening it onto the picture plane as a sophisticated compositional field. Again, as in the earlier works, the figure is simply a point of departure for creating an active organization of lights and darks, shapes and space, which serve no particular didactic or ideological

purpose. These early figurative works, created during Blackburn's mid-to-late twenties, as he scrambled to make a living, prefigure the abstract works of his mature lithographs.

In October 1947, Blackburn wrote to The Harmon Foundation to inform them that he had relocated to 111 West 17th Street, 4th Floor (Telephone: Watkins 4-7190).²⁴⁷ He had found a large loft, and was living and working in it with, at times, up to four other artists, including Harry Hoehn, a printmaker from Atelier 17. A memo in The Harmon Foundation papers states, "He (Blackburn) now has a lithograph press. He has a job now doing lithography working from 5 pm until 2 am."²⁴⁸ One by one, as the others moved out, Blackburn strategized to keep the space to himself. He took on more printing for other artists, which he did in his living space, so that he could afford to keep it alone.

During this period of economic difficulty, Blackburn tried to stop doing menial porter jobs, unsteady free-lance commercial gigs, or the other odd jobs which he held during this period, so that he could place more focus on his art and less on the daily tribulations of such varied and unsteady work. One such temporary job involved traveling and selling dolls on the street. This job resonates with a scene described in Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*. Ellison writes of a "Sambo Boogie Woogie paper doll," the "black, mask-like face," mounted on the loose and "hateful head."²⁴⁹ In Ellison's text, the doll-seller has been betrayed by his political group, as well as by the systematic inequities of

²⁴⁷ The Harmon Foundation papers, Library of Congress, Manuscripts Division, Washington D.C. Robert Blackburn's file, memo dated October 28, 1947.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (1947; New York, Vintage International, 1995), 430-433.

race and economy. An image by Jacob Lawrence, *Dancing Doll*, created the same year as the release of Ellison's novel, appears to depict the book's seminal scene. Blackburn was forced to take such a job at one point. He recounted his experiences, and the sudden danger he faced one day:

We were selling dancing dolls at that time 'cause I was trying to make a living so I could keep the workshop going and do my work and pay for the presses and all that sort of stuff. And this woman refused to serve us. I was with Alan Meadows, he used to sell little dancing dolls to make a living. It was in Gary, Indiana, and I never will forget it because this woman was really basically a nice woman, a mother and all those things. But she ran this store and two black folks came in there and she said, "I'm not going to serve you." She was one step from picking up the cleaver . . . so we just ran out of the place. That could have been another lynch situation, anything could have happened. This had been happening all over the country.²⁵⁰

Blackburn has remarked on the organic beginnings of The Printmaking Workshop: "Not really wanting to print for other artists in itself, but the possibility came around and so I acquired another press," he noted, "there was no possibility to teach. So I said well I'll just start my own little thing and print for other artists. Then the idea came to have other people do their work, because I had friends who came over who wanted to work on their own . . ." ²⁵¹ However, Blackburn admits, "Printing was something that I liked to do, I mean I like the idea of making the prints for myself and liked lithography and I thought it was an important thing both socially because I had a very social—I now know it, there it is, it's my cause."²⁵² As well as providing a means for him to produce

²⁵⁰ Blackburn. Jennifer Bergman interview, 8.

²⁵¹ Blackburn. Paul Cummings interview, 21-22.

²⁵² Ibid., 24.

and help other artists to produce their work, Blackburn has also acknowledged that it was a better way to make a living than working as a porter, and he had a strong desire to be independent and self-supporting due to his upbringing. However, from the beginning, Blackburn's interest was in providing a service, which allowed him to host a wide-ranging community and foster their interaction through art. Carrying out this charge, which was ideally addressed through a communal, printmaking workshop atmosphere (as opposed to teaching the solitary endeavors of painting, sculpture, etc.) would remain equally important to him as his own creative endeavors for the rest of his life.

At first, Blackburn called his endeavor the Bob Blackburn Workshop, as in the early "chop"²⁵³ on White's print, *Youth*. From the early 1950s until 1963, it was called The Creative Graphic Workshop, as an early color lithograph poster advertisement produced by Gerson Leiber, and its chop, reveals. Blackburn opened his home-studio to a core group of artists who wanted to share equipment and camaraderie as they experimented in lithography. Blackburn, Barnet, and the other artists working with them in the early days shared an enthusiasm for learning the processes of lithography themselves, in order to push the boundaries of the medium. In remembering the difference between Blackburn's undertaking in lithography and the other, major shops, such as George C. Miller's, Barnet has recalled,

. . . he (Miller) would print them for you and he was really a great printer but you couldn't really experiment or do things of that sort, that was something he disliked immensely . . .
At Bob Blackburn's shop there was an opportunity to work

²⁵³ Blackburn's chops were always small embossed marks placed in the lower left or right corner of the margin.

in all kinds of ways of handling the stone that wasn't limited.²⁵⁴

On this point, print expert Sylvan Cole has concurred:

Miller, for example, didn't like the artists to use a lot of tusche, and he didn't like them to use razor blades or things like that because it cut into the stone and it meant—that stone was important to him! And also when it came to grinding the stone down, if there were cuts in there, he had to grind it lower and it used the stone up faster. So Miller was an absolute difficult person to do any experimental work, he wanted the traditional crayon lithograph.²⁵⁵

Blackburn, however, has never had a conservative attitude toward his materials. In the name of experimentation, for example, he would allow artists to nick into the stones to create textured grounds as he himself did in several of his own works.

Blackburn has recalled that in the pioneering days of the workshop, he continued to work jobs during the day, and opened the studio three nights a week. During this early phase, he has remarked that Will Barnet and John Von Wicht were key participants, supporting him in his endeavor. Blackburn's open and encouraging attitude attracted many diverse lithographers and lithography students to his workshop. Their approaches to printmaking were informed by Social Realism, Regionalism, and Ancestralism, Surrealism, Abstraction and Expressionism. Blackburn recalls that Romas Viesulas, Ronald Joseph. Larry Potter, Reed Summer, Thomas Laidman, Chaim (Hy) Koppelman, and James

²⁵⁴ Barnet. Jennifer Bergman interview, 5.

²⁵⁵ Sylvan Cole. Interview by Jennifer Bergman, March 15, 1994. Unpublished transcript of an audiotape, 10.

Mellon were present in the early days; Karl Schrag and Jan Gelb began slightly later. Tom Laidman states that his teacher, Will Barnet brought him to Blackburn's, in 1950. He recalls Margo Robinson Steigman (and her husband, Joe Steigman, who was a chemistry professor), Danny Swerdloff, Irwin Rosenhouse, Claire Romano, Janina Hannum, Harold Paris, Mel Silverman, Priscilla Haley, Woody Pantilla and Milton (Milt) Glaser. Other artists during the first years included Albert Heckman, Al Blaustein, Aubrey Schwartz, Michael Ponce de Leon, Arnold Singer, Antonio Frascioni, Benita Sanders and Sue Fuller.²⁵⁶ Lily Michael, Hans Moller, Seong Moy, Harlow Rockwell, Clare Romano, Audrey Rosenson, Ernest Crichlow, William Sharpe, William A. Smith, Charles White, and Lumen Winter also worked there; Bud Handelsman, Helen Maris, and Phillis Skolnik, from the short-lived Workshop for Graphic Art, came to Blackburn's to print.

Gerson (Gus) Leiber taught at the workshop, and in the early phase, the workshop supported not only printmaking but also served as a forum for drawing and art instruction in general. "It was like a flowing group that at certain times would sit down after class and talk about art and life, and . . . we would move the chairs back on certain nights and make a big stage and set up easels, for about three years,"²⁵⁷ Blackburn remembers. Laidman recalled the early shop in great detail:

When I came there in 1950, the Shop was at 111 West 17th Street in a four-story red brick building. There was no elevator, and everything in the place went upstairs on our

²⁵⁶ Parris, "A Life's Work," 5.

²⁵⁷ Blackburn. Cummings interview, 22.

backs, including presses, stones, lumber for building, and coal for the stove in the middle of the Shop. We froze in the winter, roasted in the summer, and the heat didn't make printing any easier; we went through all kinds of maneuvers to keep the images in the stones from filling in.

The atmosphere was intimate and friendly. There was an open arrangement, whereby students and artist had unlimited access. There were three or four litho presses, and we'd all fight for press time. Bob was a dynamo of energy. He never walked, he trotted. He'd bound up the four flights and hit the landing on the run. He lifted and grained stones, rolled them up and printed them all day and into the night—and then he'd work on his own prints. Sometimes I'd watch him work. I don't remember ever seeing any preliminary sketches. He'd go right to the stone, draw an image, etch it, roll it up and print it. Then he'd draw on another stone, print that over his first image, then evaluate the result. He always had five or six blank stones around while he was working. He used them like paintbrushes. He was a tremendous artist.²⁵⁸

Works from 1948 to 1950 evince Blackburn's continued interest in figurative composition; as well, they attest to his growing mastery of lithographic methods. Two related lithographs, *Boy With a Green Head*, 1948 (Illustration 42) and *Head in Wash*, ca.1948-50 (Illustration 43) can be seen as self-portraits, although Blackburn states he drew these works from his imagination. Particularly in *Green Head*, the elongated nose, low straight mouth, and high forehead reflect Blackburn's particular physical attributes at this time. This lithograph continues Blackburn's stylized head in *Youth*, depicting a planar head, round flat eyes and columnar neck. However, *Head in Wash* playfully creates a face from a few brushy strokes, shading with bubbly reticulations of the inky tusche that have been captured, etched and inked. While *Green Head*

²⁵⁸ Thomas Laidman. Letter to Richard Nelson, 1995. The author is grateful to Richard Nelson for so generously sharing his resources with me.

retains a fairly even frame for this image, created from an evenly pencil-shaded field, *Head in Wash* loosens the background, the washy tusche describing an uneven perimeter related to a stones' edge. *Head in Wash* reveals a more playful Blackburn, luxuriating in his medium.

In 1948, Blackburn was hired as a printer at Cooper Union Art School at the urging of Will Barnet. This was a monumental offer, since he was one of the very first African Americans hired by the school; however, he was not titled as a teacher, instructor or professor. Blackburn attributes racist attitudes to the fact that he was kept in the position of technical printer, and not promoted to instructor until many years later. He has spoken in retrospect that while at the time he was grateful for the steady work, he realizes now that he was a token hire. "Whenever delegates from South American would come, or students, or whatever from Africa, some of the African cultural things, they would always bring them into the room and present me, but they would always say I was a teacher and I wasn't and it was an awful position . . ." ²⁵⁹ In 1949, Blackburn also printed at the National Academy of Design, in a class with another instructor.

By 1950, Blackburn's work had been exhibited both nationally and internationally; that year, his works were included in the Philadelphia Print Club, the Cincinnati Biennial of Contemporary Lithography, the Texas Centennial, Atlanta University and in the *Internationale Graveurs Originale Contemporaine* in Paris. ²⁶⁰ He also taught one semester at The New School for Social

²⁵⁹ Blackburn. Paul Cummings interview, 28.

²⁶⁰ Sources consulted are carbon copies of Blackburn's application for the Julius Rosenwald Foundation Fund (Chicago, Illinois), c.1947; a xerox copy of a letter to submitted in application for employment to the New School for Social Research (New York, New York), dated November 21, 1950; and a xerox copy of Blackburn's fellowship application for the

Research, taking over a course for Adja Yunkers in 1950-1951, where he met Harold Paris, who was a student there. Paris, who studied intaglio at Atelier 17, learned lithography from Blackburn, and eventually came to the workshop to make a well-known series of prints.

From 1950 to 1951, Blackburn took evening drawing classes with Wallace Harrison in his studio on 14th Street. Blackburn respected Harrison's skilled draftsmanship, which he felt was related to Cubism. Harrison was friendly with Picasso, Hans Hofmann and Vaclav Vytlacil, so there was a natural connection to Blackburn's interest in European modern art. Additionally, Harrison was interested in Chinese painting, which Blackburn was as well. His introduction to the Asian arts began through his friend and mentor from the HCAC, Ronald Joseph, who studied Asian art in the New York Public Library. This was reinforced through Blackburn's work with Wango Weng on documentary films in the mid-1940s. Blackburn worked closely with Weng for two years, as a freelance assistant doing graphics, titles, and backgrounds for Weng's 16mm films, which were produced under the auspices of the State Department and China Institute in America, explicating the art, culture, and history of China. Weng went on to direct China Film Enterprises and China Photo Supply. "So when I worked with him [Harrison] it was like another extension," Blackburn has noted.²⁶¹ Modern European abstraction and the Asian influence, as reinforced by Harrison, allowed Blackburn to push his breakdown of the figurative image into abstracted forms further than ever before.

John Hay Whitney Foundation (New York, New York), c. 1951. Archives of The Printmaking Workshop, New York.

²⁶¹ Blackburn. Paul Cummings interview, 21.

Two sketches from this period (ca.1950-1951) contain one untitled image, that can be seen as an abstracted still life composition rotated sideways (Illustration 44), while the other can be read as deriving from a posed nude (Illustration 45). Blackburn never strongly embraced the figurative image and these are reminiscent of the complex endpapers he created in high school, which showed his strength in creating a bas-relief surface of light playing against shadow through a forest of forms, something the table-top still life would allow him to do in endless variations, a few years later in his career.

However, during this period in the early 1950s, Blackburn noted the tension between his own artistic endeavors and the responsibilities of running the workshop. The workshop interfered with his studies with Harrison. "There was this conflict between the two. And there was a decisive point there when I had spoken to him, because there was a question of getting there and getting my work done and I had this workshop which was a kind of responsibility in a sense and yet it meant something to me—obviously it must have because I stuck with it . . ." ²⁶²

During this same time period, Romare Bearden's work underwent a period of dramatic development.²⁶³ He studied Chinese art and calligraphy in New York's Chinatown, where he moved in 1956.²⁶⁴ While Lowery Stokes Sims has stressed Bearden's French sensibility, Matthew S. Witkovsky has made the case for his close relationship to many of the major abstract expressionists,

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ It is interesting to note that during this extremely fertile period, from 1952 to 1966, Bearden held a full-time job at the Department of Social Services.

²⁶⁴ Lowery Stokes Sims, *Romare Bearden*, (New York: Rizzoli Art Series, 1993).

especially Robert Motherwell. Witkovsky has noted, "Bearden never relinquished the notion of universal significance in art, just as he pursued throughout his life a modernist interest in the flat canvas."²⁶⁵ Witkovsky has also discussed the relationship between Bearden's works of the early 1950s with the production of Helen Frankenthaler, Hans Hofmann, and Carl Holty. He notes the "overlay of coloristic entities devoid of figures and lines, and with an emphasis on fluid motion rather than taut geometry."²⁶⁶ Ronald Joseph has remarked that, between 1950 and 1956, Bearden was one of the artists he admired most. Despite the fact that Blackburn had greatly expanded his circle of influence during the 1940s, to include Cubism, Surrealism, and Abstract Expressionism, he maintained his close connections to the work being produced by the other African American artists of his milieu, including Bearden and Joseph.

Blackburn has repeatedly stated that Ronald Joseph was a tremendous, artistic intellect, one of his greatest—and most under-appreciated—influences. Through the 1940s and to the 1950s, Joseph retained his close ties to both Blackburn and their HCAC instructor, Riva Helfond, who also admired him tremendously. After serving in World War II, Joseph received both a Rosenwald Fellowship as well as his sponsorship under the G.I. Bill of Rights. Under this dual patronage, he went to Peru for two years, from 1948 to 1950. Then he went to Paris, and finally returned to New York, where he was miserable, working menial jobs. During this dark period, Blackburn credits

²⁶⁵ Matthew S. Witkovsky, "Experience vs. Theory: Romare Bearden and Abstract Expressionism," *Black American Literature Forum*, Volume 23, Number 2 (Summer 1989), 277.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 269.

Joseph with helping him to focus his work. Blackburn recalls making sketches, or “notations,” with Joseph in various parks in the greater Metropolitan region. Sometimes they went north, either to Van Cortland park in the Bronx, or to Westchester areas such as Riverdale or Parkchester. Or, they went to waterfront areas in Brooklyn where they sketched boats. Many charcoal and ink drawings that the two made between 1950-1952 still survive and are, visually, extremely kindred (Illustrations 46-48). Few of the works Blackburn made with Joseph are in color; most are linear and washy ink drawings. Blackburn has remembered,

I did a lot of black and white drawings that related to the oriental brush drawings. That's because one of the things that happened was I became very friendly with Ronald Joseph. We used to go out and draw in the country. Like Sundays we would go out and draw . . . I got into using this sumi kind of . . . at that time it was mostly black and white because those early things, we weren't doing color so much . . .

Continuing this thought, Blackburn has expressed how color in general presented a conflict for him at this time. He was thinking about its use in lithography and trying to overcome the technical, economic and artistic issues it presented:

Color was something we didn't understand, didn't know how to put into lithography . . . We didn't even have the colors. I used to have to run around and find people who could make colors with the quality you need to make a good print lithograph. This was only because in America we were not doing color printing . . . I think it was a question of easily accessible and I was able to control some of the form through black and white more so than in color so it make me focus on that and then when I started printing for other people it made me even more specific because then I was printing predominantly black and white prints for other

artists. When we got into color there were problems of money I mean in terms of colors and other technical problems that I had to overcome . . .²⁶⁷

If it was lonely and artistically unfashionable to pursue lithography, it was also difficult. "The dearth of technical literature and the secrecy of the unions frustrated even the most devout lithographers," Elizabeth Jones has written. She quotes Blackburn recalling,

We didn't have any idea how something like photolithography worked. We couldn't get the chemicals; they made it a secret. Even though I worked in offset houses, one of the strangest things was to find that, although I was interested and I knew all the people I worked with, union rules prohibited them from letting me know anything because I was not in the union. They would hide formulas behind the calendars on walls, and I would see them sneaking . . . to see the formulas so I would not know how to do it . . . it was part of the craft secrecy that abounded at that time to keep the competition out.²⁶⁸

Despite the fact that Blackburn recalls facing the challenge of color in the early 1950s, and these trade conflicts, at this same time he quickly developed a reputation for color lithographic experimentation and technical excellence in its deployment. In an interview nearly thirty years later, Gustave Von Groschwitz vividly recalled Blackburn's color prints from the Cincinnati Biennials. While Von Groschwitz also remembered the work of Kistler, Barrett and Miller, he recalled that most of their work was in black and white. "Bob Blackburn, who often printed for other artists," he pointed out, "exhibited two color lithographs in the

²⁶⁷ Blackburn. Jennifer Bergman interview, 10.

²⁶⁸ Jones, "Robert Blackburn," 12.

1950 exhibition."²⁶⁹ Von Groschwitz was not the only print aficionado who knew of Blackburn's work. In 1950, Blackburn had received a Purchase Award from the Library of Congress (Washington D.C.) while in 1951 he was honored with a Purchase Award from the Brooklyn Museum (New York).

One excellent example of Blackburn's masterful handling of color lithography by 1950 is his *Girl in Red* (Illustration 49). While it is a complex and lovely testament to Blackburn's technical skill with color stones during this time, what is most intriguing about this work is the subject matter. It is a color print that deals with issues of color, or race. Figuratively handled with graded strokes of the litho crayon accented or outlined by tuschy brushmarks, this young black girl looks directly and wryly out at the viewer, her arms crossed. While this is, on one level, a classic portrait—seated in front of the typical open-window landscape, before a quintessential still life table top—this girl in red is a most distinctive model. She is not a street urchin, country bumpkin or struggling city worker, as most depictions of young African Americans were up to this time. This young sophisticate seems quite at home in her country surrounds. Neatly attired in a polo-type dress and matching headband that smoothes her sleek, blunt-cut hair off her face, the young lady insouciantly leans on her elbow. Such a subject, with such body language, must have seemed a bit startling to many in the segregated 1950s.

Another color lithograph, *Still Life*, ca.1950-52 (Illustration 50) is not quite so exuberant. Here, the tabletop still life from *Girl in Red* expands. Blues play off

²⁶⁹ Clinton Adams, "Color Lithography in the 1950s: The Cincinnati Biennials. A Conversation with Gustave Von Groschwitz," *Tamarind Technical Papers* (No. 7, Summer 1977), 88.

ochres, with a jolt of orange setting off the composition. Here, Blackburn employs the same color combination as in *Girl*, only in a more contained and muted expression. A pitcher, bottle, shaker, glass and ashtray stand like sentinels around the two round objects, orange and white, that rested in the dish at the elbow of *Girl*. These tabletop items are flattened and simplified. Blackburn plays with the idea of shading, highlights, and texture. However, in this print, these devices become relics, techniques divorced from their purpose. They create visual interest across the flattened surface, while not adding any illusionistic depth at all.

During this same time, between 1951 and 1952, Will Barnet, in collaboration with his friend and protégé Blackburn at The Printmaking Workshop, produced a groundbreaking series of experimental color lithographs using up to fifteen stones in one image—a feat virtually unheard at that time. In 1951, Barnet (with Blackburn) completed *Child Alone* (Illustration 51), *Awareness of Dawn, Morning, Summertime, Awakening, Enfant, Indian Summer, Enfant with Yellow Background* (sometimes known as *Betsy*), *Spring*, and *Swing*. In 1952, they produced *Child Among Thorns* (Illustration 52 a-b), *Growing Things, Feline, The Fine Friends*, and *Summer* (sometimes known as *Repose*).

Many of Barnet's prints were shown in New York City;²⁷⁰ a later version of this project was traveled nationally by the American Federation for the Arts. A

²⁷⁰ Barnet's exhibition at Bertha Schaefer Gallery (32 East 57 Street, NYC) from October 29 to November 17, 1952, entitled *Will Barnet: New Color in Lithography*, was his first graphic show in ten years, and covered works created over two years. The checklist contained the following fifteen prints: *Memory of Childhood, Awakening, Indian Summer, Swinging, Long Summer, Spring, Enfant, Betsy, Morning, Child Alone, The Awareness of Dawn, black and Gray, The Siblings, The Fine Friends, and Growing Things*. The exhibit, *Will Barnet Makes a Color Lithograph*, was offered for travel in October 1952. The show included prints, photographic panels of Barnet at work, and his tools. Will Barnet papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C. Microfilm.

prominent *Artnews* article noted the importance of works and covered their production at Blackburn's studio with text and studio photographs.²⁷¹ Barnet's work was reviewed, among other places, in the Friday arts section of *The New York Times*.²⁷² Like others before her, Seckler noted the extraordinary nature of Blackburn's studio:

After years of carrying on his print work in the League's studios, where most of his earlier tonal lithographs had been turned out, Barnet moved the center of his graphics pursuits to the downtown studio print shop run by Robert Blackburn, a well known graphic artist. It was a set-up in which artists could come to work, either independently or with some help, in an atmosphere very different from that of a commercial workshop. Barnet's students and fellow workers formed a nucleus of congenial artists with a passion for plates and stones that often kept them working until far into the night as well as on week ends. Nothing could contrast more strikingly with the attitudes of the earlier artists—who often regarding lithography merely as a process for multiplying impressions or as a cheap source of tinted "chromos"—than the fastidious treatment given the stone in Blackburn's print shop.²⁷³

Seckler stressed two aspects of the lithographic practice that Blackburn encouraged simultaneously: both the direct and experimental spontaneity, as well as the care and craftsmanship over time, which he stressed in his studio. "A medium in which there is such an infinite capacity for easy correction favors a gradual evolution of an idea and makes possible the maximum in spontaneity . . ." ²⁷⁴ Seckler summarized. The American Federation of the Arts'

²⁷¹ Seckler "Will Barnet Makes a Lithograph," 38-41.

²⁷² "Variety of Media at Art Galleries," *The New York Times* (Friday, Nov. 2, 1951).

²⁷³ Seckler, "Will Barnet Makes a Lithograph," 38.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 40.

press release also emphasized that these prints were direct and organic, not reproductions. They described how Barnet "approaches stone and plate as seriously as canvas . . . the entire lithographic process is a continuously creative development of an idea. He lets this idea grow while working on the stone, sees it change and expand in the printing. As a result, each print has a life of its own. It is not a mere recasting or transposition of an idea."²⁷⁵ This educational discussion attempted to place these fine arts prints on par with other, more respected forms such as painting. Even in the 1950s, printmaking was often thought of as a reproductive, and thus lesser, art form.

Will Barnet himself has stated:

Bob began his workshop with the purpose of maintaining the tradition of fine art lithography. Under his guidance the workshop has continued to provide the opportunity for each generation to experience the basic methods and special properties of the stone. Bob's persistence in keeping his idea alive is nothing short of heroic. In the past four decades the art of lithography has gone through long periods of neglect. I often worked with him employing as many as seventeen stones in one print and using techniques unfamiliar to American printmaking. These pre-date all printmaking of recent years and should hold a special place in its history.²⁷⁶

Five years prior to the start of Universal Limited Art Editions (which, in retrospect, heralded the start of the 'graphics boom') Blackburn and the work of his printshop was well documented. Despite all this important activity,

²⁷⁵ Will Barnet papers. The Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C. Microfilm.

²⁷⁶ Will Barnet, "Foreword," *Robert Blackburn: A Life's Work*, exhibition catalogue, (New York: The Alternative Museum, 1988), 3.

somehow, the notion persists that not much of importance happened in lithography during this period. It has become the popular and persistent myth. Calvin Tomkins summarized the accepted story of the state of printmaking at mid-century as such:

. . . most of the significant modernists were not interested. Printmaking rested securely in the hands of printmakers—craftspeople whose work was of interest almost exclusively to themselves. Lithography, the most “painterly” of the print processes, had virtually ceased to exist as a tool for American artists. In 1950, there were very few professional printers left in the country capable of pulling an image from a lithographic stone or plate, and their facilities were standardized and limited; since lithography involves a complex collaboration between artist and printer, anyone who wanted to take full advantage of the medium had to go to France . . . none of the artists of the New York School took an interest in lithography until the late fifties, when Barnett Newman and Robert Motherwell were invited to work at ULAE.²⁷⁷

The qualifications implied by Tomkins’ comments—‘significant’ and ‘professional’—serve to exclude Blackburn and his shop which, from the beginning, was both non-‘standardized’ and *not* ‘limited’; in fact, it was known for its experimental hunger. However, for Tomkins, Blackburn is not considered significant. His essay does not mention Blackburn and Barnett’s groundbreaking collaboration as a relevant exception to his statement.

Riva Castleman’s standard *Prints of the 20th Century* does not mention Blackburn’s work, The Printmaking Workshop, or his role as a master printer at all. She, too, bemoans the lack of lithography in this country in this very time

²⁷⁷ Calvin Tomkins, “The Art World: Tatyana Grosman,” *The New Yorker* (August 9, 1982), 82.

period without looking to Blackburn's diverse shop. In a few scant pages, she covers the noteworthy lithographic ventures of the early 1950s by discussing only Sam Francis, Willem de Kooning, Robert Motherwell and Barnett Newman's few lithographic forays prior to the start-up of ULAE and, later, Tamarind (founded in Los Angeles in 1960). Nearly two decades (1940s, 1950s) of American lithography are glossed over with this oversight, despite ample evidence to the contrary.

This attitude was echoed by Thomas Hess, who assessed that by 1957, printmaking's "techniques had shriveled to craft-secrets of master-printers, and of academic artists, saturated in a late 19th century esthetic, who despised, as much as they were despised by, the modernists."²⁷⁸ For some reason this blind spot around Blackburn, Barnett, and the Creative Graphic Workshop's extraordinary color lithographic production at this time has persisted. Only Elizabeth Jones has noted that, while lithography was being snubbed by the Abstract Expressionists due to its affiliation with black and white social realism, Blackburn's workshop "safeguarded lithography."²⁷⁹ Blackburn, of course, had been, since 1938, first and foremost a lithographer; his artistic thought and process was carried out precisely within that medium. The received story of lithography in the United States however, generally does not acknowledge his role, which, of course, was predicated by the fact that he himself was a fluent and skillful lithographic artist who fully understood the potential of the medium. Perhaps the historical obfuscation of the relevance of Blackburn's own work is due in part to his increasingly private artistic pursuits, while he became more

²⁷⁸ Thomas B. Hess, "Prints: Where History, Style and Money Meet," *Art News* (Volume 70, Number 9, January 1972), 29.

²⁷⁹ Jones, "Robert Blackburn," 11.

publicly recognized as a teacher and printer. Of course, his "outsider" status, as an African American printmaker following abstraction, who was not frequently noted in the 'mainstream' art press (with the exception of the *Artnews* article), has aided this longstanding critical silence.

Just after this monumental collaboration with Will Barnet, in 1952, Blackburn was successful in his application for a John Hay Whitney Traveling Fellowship. With the support of Will Barnet, Alain Locke and Print Curator William Lieberman of the Museum of Modern Art, Blackburn's fellowship enabled him to travel, for the first time, to Europe. "My grant was to go there and study lithography and printmaking in general and maybe come back and teach," Blackburn explained.²⁸⁰ His destination was Paris.

Blackburn wished to follow in two great traditions that led to Paris: 1) that of African American artists, who traveled to Paris to find equality and respect away from the segregated brutality of the United States, and 2) that of enlightened artist-printmakers, who went to Paris to find sophisticated printmaking facilities where modernist color prints were encouraged. Among many, many others, Stuart Davis, Louis Lozowick, Mabel Dwight, Reginald Marsh, Benton Spruance, and John Taylor all made lithographs in Paris in the late 1920s and early 1930s.

The Harlem Renaissance's artistic group reinforced the idea of the requisite pilgrimage to Paris begun by the painter Henry Ossawa Tanner in the late 19th century. Since Tanner's time, African American artists completed their

²⁸⁰ Blackburn. Paul Cummings interview, 44.

education by a stay in Paris. Richmond Barthé, Gwendolyn Bennet, Aaron Douglas, Palmer Hayden, Lois Mailou Jones, Augusta Savage, and Hale Woodruff had all spent time there. The groundbreaking writers, such as James Baldwin and Richard Wright, as well as blues and jazz musicians and dancers (such as Josephine Baker) had been embraced by the city.

Immediately following World War II, the GI Bill of Rights assisted in continuing this tradition. However, during France's Fourth Republic (1946 - 1958)—in which France both tried to overcome the sacrifices of the occupation as well as deal with the colonial conflicts of the cold war years—Paris struggled to return to its traditions, sophistication and glamour, despite a lack of supplies and resources. At the same time, the country as a whole wrestled with its memory of the war years, and then immediately went on to face the demoralizing Indochina war (1946 - 1954), immediately followed by the Algerian conflict. As Paris faced internal struggles in the postwar years, African American artists flocking to Paris at this time enjoyed a new status. "In contrast to the years after World War I, Parisians viewed African Americans foremost as Americans, not Africans, during the 1940s and 1950s. Primitivism was no longer in fashion, blacks were no longer a novelty in Paris, and American culture had to a certain extent replaced African culture as an object of fascination for the city's intellectuals."²⁸¹

²⁸¹ Tyler Stovall, *Paris Noir: African Americans in the City of Light* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1996), 135.

Blackburn traveled to France in 1953 by boat.²⁸² The journey took nine days. Blackburn wished to study at Atelier Desjobert in Paris. "More than any other printer, (Edmond) Desjobert made the Americans welcome, and as a consequence his workshop became a central point at which they might meet and work together."²⁸³ Ralston Crawford, John Taylor, Yasuo Kuniyoshi and Adolf Dehn all produced prints with Desjobert by the early 1950s. Desjobert's studio was legendary amongst the WPA printmakers who influenced Blackburn, and this was, therefore, seen as an important opportunity for him as both a black artist as well as a printmaker. However, Blackburn was frustrated artistically during his stint at the Desjobert workshop. The separation between artist and printer was not conducive to his work. "They would not let me even go downstairs to see the stones being ground," he later complained.²⁸⁴

Blackburn was disappointed with the Desjobert Atelier and also in need of a break from a print studio atmosphere. "I went to Paris, but immediately I went to Paris I went right into litho shops and I started making lithographs and I had to stop,"²⁸⁵ he has said. This repetition of his experience in New York stifled him. "I didn't do many prints. I did a lot of drawing and not many prints."²⁸⁶

²⁸² From the available documents, it seems that Blackburn won the John Hay Whitney Travelling Fellowship in 1952, and then he spent all of 1953 and 1954 abroad. He may have returned into 1955.

²⁸³ Adams, *American Lithographers*, 74.

²⁸⁴ Jones, "Robert Blackburn," 12.

²⁸⁵ Blackburn. Jennifer Bergman interview, 11.

²⁸⁶ Blackburn. Paul Cummings interview, 44.

Blackburn had met André l'Hôte at Atelier Desjobert.²⁸⁷ l'Hôte taught painting and drawing at his own studio, and Blackburn worked with him for approximately six months, talking intensely about abstract art. He mentored Blackburn in much the same way as Vaclav Vytlacil did, and Blackburn held him in similar regard. However, of the work he did with l'Hôte, he has commented, "I did some paintings of which I was not quite happy because they were too much in the vein of Andre l' l'Hôte."²⁸⁸ Despite the fact that wanted a reprieve from the print workshop, he has noted, "I started doing some *plein-air* painting and it was not comfortable because I felt I was isolated . . . ²⁸⁹ While he was frustrated artistically, the Fellowship was not a loss due to its personally enriching experience.

I worked at the studios of Desjobert doing one or two prints, but I found because of certain problems . . . first of all, my being able to print my own stone, which I was so used to, and in terms of the fact that it was an extremely professional studio so that even the lifting of the stone they wouldn't let you do. It inhibited me, because I was so used to being in my own . . . also there was sort of a reaction because here I was completely free to a certain degree, and to come over here to repeat my situation in New York . . . It didn't make sense. I wanted to experience a new thing so I started at l'Hote and started painting which I had wanted to do more of. Also I just wanted to kind of relax . . . I was able to sit in a café which I had never been able to do

²⁸⁷ André l'Hôte (b. 1885, Bordeaux, France - d. 1962) was one of the original Cubists, taking part in the first Cubist exhibition in Paris. However, he never officially joined that or any group, and by the 1950s continued to employ figures in his work. He was a well-know teacher and writer on art, contributing regularly to the *Nouvelle Revue Francaise*. l'Hote had studied Gothic sculpture, Rubens, David, Delacroix, Cézanne, Picasso, and Braque. He taught in Montparnasse and mentored several African American artists prior to Blackburn, including one of Blackburn's Harlem teachers, Rex Gorteigh.

²⁸⁸ Blackburn. Paul Cummings interview, 46.

²⁸⁹ Blackburn. Jennifer Bergman interview, 12.

and just look at the people pass by, able to wander in the streets . . .²⁹⁰

Blackburn enjoyed Paris, meeting people and seeing the sights. Terry Haass had arranged for him to stay in a hotel room. He first lived near l'Académie de la Grande Chaumière. Later, he moved to rue Delambre, closer to the Seine on the left bank. Traditionally, writers and musicians settled in the Latin Quarter and Saint-Germain-des-Prés, while artists tended to settle in Montparnasse. But by the early 1950s,

. . . black artists lived throughout the city. Ollie Harrington lived next door to Académie Raymond Duncan on rue de Seine in the Latin Quarter. Ed Clark had a studio on rue Delambre in Montparnasse and at one time, in a studio on Cité Falguiere where Modigliani once worked, facing Soutine's atelier. Other artists lived farther away, in cheaper neighborhoods: Beauford Delaney at Clamart, then on rue Vercingétorix south of Montparnasse Station, and Larry Potter near Parc Montsouris, not far from the studio of engraver William Hayter in 1960.²⁹¹

In the early 1950s, many African American artists' paths were crossing in Paris as they made connections to artistic and philosophical circles there. Many of them took advantage of the GI Bill to travel and further their training.

More than any other group of African Americans in Paris, black artists went there in the postwar years as beneficiaries of the GI Bill. In order to take advantage of the bill's provisions, American veterans had to study at an approved school, either in the United States or abroad.

²⁹⁰ Blackburn. Paul Cummings interview, 44.

²⁹¹ Michel Fabre, "The Cultural Milieu in Postwar Paris," *Explorations in the City of Light: African American Artists in Paris 1945-1965* (New York: The Studio Museum in Harlem, 1996), 36.

Several art schools in Paris met this qualification, especially the Ecole des Beaux-Arts and the Académie Julian, the alma mater of Henry Ossawa Tanner and Gwendolyn Bennett. The Académie de la Grande Chaumière, where Aaron Douglas and Augusta Savage had studied during the interwar years, also attracted American students in the late 1940s. By the beginning of the 1950s, more than two hundred veterans had used their GI Bill benefits to study art in the French capital, including black artists like Herbert Gentry, Bill Rivers, Romare Bearden, Robert Colescott, Pal Keene, and Harold Cousins.²⁹²

Herbert Gentry had arrived 1946, studying with Ossip Zadkine and Yves Brailleur at l'Académie de la Grande Chaumière, and, by 1952, he began "Chez Honey," a café and art gallery. James Baldwin arrived in 1948. Heywood William Rivers arrived in 1949 and remained until 1953. Rivers studied at the École du Louvre and began the Galerie Huit near Saint-Julien-le-Pauvre with funding from the Rosenwald Foundation.²⁹³ Paul Keene attended l'Académie Julian from 1949 to 1951. By 1950, Harold Cousins began to study with Zadkine and Robert Colescott was a student of Léger. In 1950, Romare Bearden spent nine months in Paris on the GI bill, where he studied philosophy at the Sorbonne with Gaston Bachelard.²⁹⁴ Kelly Williams was active in Paris between 1951-1954, attending the Académie Montmartre and exhibiting at Galerie Huit. Ed Clark was in Paris from 1952 to 1956, studying at l'Académie de la Grande

²⁹² Stovall. *Paris Noir*, 141.

²⁹³ Rivers had shown with Ellsworth Kelly at Salon de Jeunes Peintres to good reviews; at his cooperative Galerie Huit. Rivers was joined by Al Held, Jules Olitski, Seymour Boardman and Hugh Townley.

²⁹⁴ In Paris, his group included Constantin Brancusi, Georges Braque, and Jean Helion, as well as Americans such as the writers James Baldwin and Albert Murray and painters Herbert Gentry, Paul Keene and William Rivers. Like Blackburn, Bearden made little artwork while in Paris.

Chaumière. Beauford Delaney arrived 1953. In 1952, The Café Tournon was the favorite of Richard Wright, Chester Himes, William Barner Smith and cartoonist Ollie Harrington, a presiding force.

Oliver Harrington was the editorial cartoonist who created the popular "Bootsie" series in 1935 in New York. He began his relationship with Paris in 1944, where he traveled as a war correspondent. In 1951, he left the United States for Paris permanently. Harrington played a key role in the life of Paris's postwar black American community, bringing together artists, writers and musicians of the left bank. Blackburn has recalled being friendly with Clark, Delaney, l'Hote and Harrington during this period. He also recollects meeting Jean Debuffet as well as the great printer Roger Lacourière, who had worked with Picasso.

In France, Blackburn also met Krishna Reddy for the first time.²⁹⁵ Reddy, who studied sculpture with Ossip Zadkine at the l'Académie de la Grande Chaumière, and engraving with Stanley William Hayter at Atelier 17 in Paris,

²⁹⁵ Reddy (b. Andhra Pradesh, India, 1925) received a Diploma of Fine Art from the International University at Santiniketan in 1947. He then went to Europe where he received a Certificate of Fine Arts from the Slade School of Fine Arts, University of London (1952). Reddy then went to Paris where he specialized in gravure at Atelier 17 while receiving a Certificate of Fine Arts from l'Académie de la Grande Chaumière, Paris, where he studied sculpture with Ossip Zadkine. In 1957, Reddy also received a Certificate of Fine Arts from the Academia DiBelle Arti DiBrera, Milan, where he studied sculpture with Marino Marini. Reddy became involved with Atelier 17 in Paris, where he studied from 1951 to 1976, serving as co-director from 1954 to 1976. In 1954, Reddy with his friend Moti are generally credited with perfecting the technique of simultaneous color printing (the "viscosity" technique) which Ruthven Todd and Joan Miró employed earlier, but with erratic results.

Reddy first visited the United States in 1964, while working on a sculpture commission in Montreal. He taught at the American University in Washington D.C. and travelled throughout the U.S. and Mexico. During this time, Reddy stayed at Hayter's house in New York, where he met Blackburn again. Blackburn invited him to teach at PMW, where he taught for the first time in the fall of 1968. Reddy returned to the U.S. in 1970 and 1973, and moved to New York in 1976 where he set up a Color Print Atelier at New York University.

was included in the circles of Constantin Brancusi and Alberto Giacometti.

Blackburn would later reminisce:

My first encounter with Krishna was in the spring of 1953 near the Pont des Arts in Paris, a city which itself symbolized the pinnacle of Western Art for many black American artists prior to the 1940s. As a black artist newly arrived in Paris this jeweled city represented personal, psychic and social release and the freedom to grow and create without the limitations of the ghetto. It was a beautiful Parisian afternoon; there stood this striking man of color whose soft vibrations drew me towards him. We talked briefly. This encounter was to remain with me until our next meeting ten years later in the New York at the home of S.W. Hayter. Perhaps it was the spirit of Gandhi and his liberation struggle which had electrified black people, or perhaps it was the sublime images of Indian Art that I had experienced in museums which became the mortar cementing the bond of friendship between Krishna and me. This respect, trust and mutual empathy have deepened in the course of these thirty years.²⁹⁶

Reddy and Blackburn would go on to work together, at Blackburn's shop in the United States, more than fifteen years later.

Riva Helfond came to visit Blackburn toward the end of his stay in Paris. At this time, Helfond was loosening her ties with Ronald Joseph in New York, and strengthening them with Blackburn. Helfond knew Beauford Delaney well, and the three of them also spent some time together. For a period, she traveled around with Blackburn on a motorcycle. Blackburn visited France, Switzerland and Italy by motorbike. Although the period was not productive artistically, the adventure itself was meaningful. "There was a period when I just couldn't do

²⁹⁶ Robert Blackburn, "Krishna Reddy: Teacher," *Krishna Reddy: A Retrospective*, exhibition catalogue, (Bronx: Bronx Museum of the Arts, 1981), 13.

anything," he has said, "I wanted to see and experience and travel."²⁹⁷ By the end of 1954, however, Blackburn's "money was running out, I began to feel the need to settle down and do something. But of course already that time was roughly in the swirl of coming back and getting involved again."²⁹⁸ Eventually, Blackburn sold his motorcycle for cash and headed back home.

Meanwhile, in New York, "Blackburn has credited Koppelman with the personal initiative of helping to transform the studio into a loose cooperative of seven artists . . . by paying an annual fee to guarantee on-going expenses."²⁹⁹ Tom Laidman has recollected that in Blackburn's absence, the artists struggled to keep the print workshop going for him. Margot and Larry Steigman, Chaim Koppelman and Larry Potter were instrumental in supporting The Printmaking Workshop during Blackburn's sabbatical in Paris.

When he was away in Europe, we all saw much more clearly what he'd been up against alone. Everything from raising the rent money to getting rid of the garbage was a problem . . . The main impetus for keeping it open was Bob. We were not only his printing pupils and fellow artists, but his friends. Our loyalty to him, to the Shop and to each other was great. We felt that it was important to keep the Shop open because there was no other place like it. It was a place where all kinds of people came, worked with and accepted each other. ³⁰⁰

²⁹⁷ Blackburn. Paul Cummings interview, 46.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ Parris, "A Life's Work," 6.

³⁰⁰ Thomas Laidman. Letter from to Jennifer Bergman, 1994.

CHAPTER 3: EXPLOSION

This chapter will cover the period from 1955 until 1971. It focuses on Blackburn's return from Paris, through his tenure as the first master printer at Universal Limited Art Editions, and his return to the full-time directorship of The Printmaking Workshop. Throughout, Blackburn's mature lithographs will be addressed. Concurrent with the so-called graphics "boom," Blackburn's own artwork of this period can be seen as the coalescence of the forces of his training and milieu already outlined, the fully-developed flowering of his prodigious talents as a color lithographer. Particularly during the period when Blackburn worked at ULAE, from 1957 into 1963, his own work in color lithography reached a mature strength. This decade and a half was the most important and productive period of his career, in terms of: 1) his own work, 2) the importance of the prints he produced for others at ULAE, and 3) his decisive relationship to incorporate The Printmaking Workshop. However, Blackburn himself has commented wistfully on this three-way pull on his attentions:

I feel as though I was a fractured individual whereas Jake Lawrence . . . was more complete. He stayed where he was. By that I mean, he did what he knew . . . he stayed in his little room and he made these things which are monumental things, the *Migration* series and all that. By circumscribing his activity he was able to create a monument. I think that sometimes is the thing. I was torn between building something which I thought had value and doing my own work. So those are the kind of things if you look back on you say, well, gee, I would have done differently but you couldn't because you were who you were.³⁰¹

³⁰¹ Robert Blackburn. Interview by Jennifer Bergman, February 16, 1994. Unpublished transcript of audiotape, 13.

When Blackburn returned from Paris, in 1955, he found his workshop still open, and the camaraderie of his peers a welcome change from the closed atmosphere he encountered in the French print studio. After Blackburn's relative dry period while living in Paris and traveling in Europe, his return provoked an outpouring of creativity. He worked and re-worked still life themes in various ways. For example, he did a series of small, Cubistic table top views in both intaglio and lithography, treating the topic, simultaneously, both realistically as well as extremely abstractly. These include *Table* (intaglio variants, 1957 (Illustration 53 a-d), *My Table*, ca.1956 (Illustration 54), *Quiet Instrument*, 1958 (Illustration 55), *Lemon and Green Jug*, 1959 (Illustration 56), and *Interior*, 1958 (Illustration 57). Through this exploration of themes and their variations, we learn much about Blackburn's pictorial—and political—interests.

Progressive intaglio versions of *Table* clearly reveal Blackburn's process. He begins with a proof of a schematically drawn, Cubistic tabletop. All the classic elements are present: a vase, a pipe on a dish, a wineglass on its side, a spouted kettle, a mandolin. The table is centrally placed, rising from the bottom of the page on curving legs. The lines that describe these simple and recognizable shapes intersect each other, creating a dynamic, stained-glass effect. In certain areas, Blackburn has added a soft cloud of aquatint, puddling it in the spaces between the leading. These touches of shading both visually pop the table-top items, which are white, and add a visual fluidity to the picture, washing through the sheet in ripples, unifying the fractured image from top to bottom. In progressive proofs, as Blackburn proceeds to work this image, he continues to add to the scheme. More than eight progressive proofs exist, some of which contain ink drawings on top of the impression that reveal

Blackburn's evolving vision of the image. Darker, inky washes, then crosshatching, then a heavier, coarser aquatint in areas, then bolder cross-hatching—these drawings are then translated into aquatints and deep, gouged lines. As Blackburn tries out different effects on this small black and white picture, he continues to break it down, shattering it into almost unrecognizable pieces of white, black, and shady grey, bristly with crosshatched areas.

What emerges from Blackburn's repetitive reworking of such a seemingly prototypical and benign subject—the still life—is his interest in the tension between mimesis and abstraction, and the role of mark-making as both a representational sign and an abstracted, compositional element. In Blackburn's still life depictions, the idea of elucidation merges with the idea of composition, frequently resolving itself as a tangled web in which certain items are clear but partial, their shapes not closed but transmogrifying into other elements, lines and shapes. His style leaves the viewer aware they are before both a window and a plane, each simultaneously, "picturing" a still life through a language composed of lines and shadings that, through their thickness or tenuousness, direction and rhythm, exist as signs of three-dimensional objects, or, at very least, as signals which conjure the conventions of still life. All his still lifes of this period oscillate between the presence of the imaginary and the presence of the ground, continually referencing the sheet, the stone, the plate or some other element of their facture. Blackburn's play in this meta-language of the visual accepts and references, simultaneously, both the impoverishment of the ground as well as a "ground both supplemented and supplanted . . . It enters our experience not as an object of perception, but as an

object of discourse, of representation . . . in direct opposition to modernism's search for perceptual plenitude and unimpeachable self-presence."³⁰²

Blackburn's very use of the typical, European still life, a Cubist trope, is worth noting. Again and again, from 1956 through at least 1961, he focused on this type of composition. Simultaneously, he produced some fairly Cubo-realistic versions, while others departed from the object and were more concerned with abstraction. Blackburn seems to have repeatedly employed the still life device as a politically evacuated image, which allowed him to tap into problems of color and composition, and permitted him to explore abstraction and mark-making, while sidestepping the problems brought to the fore by figures and portraits—attendant and weighty issues of their appropriate color, style and message. Through the still life, he seems to have been able to find freedom within the very standardized format. Reginald Gammon, whom Blackburn lived with for a brief period in the early 1960s, also made related still life works.³⁰³

In these complex works, Blackburn uses litho pencil and tusche to create shaded areas and texture, playing against areas of flat, cutout shape. He uses layered and flat colors as well as the white of the paper in forming a densely interlocked surface. These compositions are visually rich, offering shifting and luminous planes as well as moments of illusionistic depth both signaled—and denied—through shape and shadow. Blackburn was not the only African American artist working through thematic subjects in degrees of abstraction at

³⁰² Rosalind Krauss, "Re-Presenting Picasso," *Art in America* (December 1980), 96. While Krauss is discussing the contribution of Picasso's collage, it is my contention that these very issues were also at stake in the lithographic works discussed.

³⁰³ I am indebted to Corrine Jennings for bringing this to my attention.

this time. A better-known example is that of Romare Bearden, whose series during this time are very much akin to Blackburn's search.

Lowery Stokes Sims has discussed Bearden's wide-ranging influences, incorporating both his critical stance towards the Harlem Renaissance's Ancestralism, the Abstract Expressionist's Primitivism, as well as his appreciation of Italian Renaissance work and seventeenth-century Dutch painting, selected American modernism (including his friends, Carl Holty and Stuart Davis), Chinese painting, French Affichiste collage, color field painting, and "an intensive apprenticeship in Cubism in the 1940s."³⁰⁴ Sims has demonstrated how these divergent streams shaped Bearden's style as it moved from representation to abstraction and back again. However, Matthew Witkovsky, in commenting on the relationship between Romare Bearden's and Robert Motherwell's watercolors, has more pointedly noted similar tactics in both of their works during this period from the late 1940s through the 1950s. Witkovsky has written that they—much like Blackburn—were specifically interested in Cubist structure and language while simultaneously trying to liberate its rigidity through a more poetic lyricism:

Bearden calls three-dimensionality into question by re-using, in the style of Cézanne, Fauves, and Cubists alike, the device of the upturned table top; Motherwell questions the importance of shading via a schematized crosshatching akin to Picasso's parodic 'Neo-Impressionist' dots.³⁰⁵

³⁰⁴ Lowery Stokes Sims, *Romare Bearden*, *Rizzoli Art Series*, Editor: Norma Broude (New York: Rizzoli, 1993), np.

³⁰⁵ Witkovsky, "Experience vs. Theory," 263.

Witkovsky sees this enterprise as an investigation of Cubist pictorial conventions, building on the lessons of collage, through a self-referential, analytical approach. Blackburn, too, seems to be pulling at the topic and conventions of French Cubistic still life until it is flattened and wed to his painterly, lithographic surface, as fluid and shifting as the kaleidoscope of color proof variants, table-top compositions that comprise the bulk of his work during this time. It is interesting to note that aside from Witkovsky, there has been little other discussion to date of the deployment of such critical pictorial meta-language by African American artists during the incipient postmodern period.

During this period when Blackburn seemed primarily interested in still life-based compositions, he was also, simultaneously and sporadically, producing completely abstract works. From 1958 to 1961, Blackburn achieved his most spatially sophisticated still lifes; these include *Untitled. AKA Still Life Study*, ca.1957 (Illustration 58), *Red Pipe*, 1958 (Illustration 59), *Reflections*, 1960 (Illustration 60) and *White Pitcher*, 1961 (Illustration 61). At the same time, Blackburn was working with graphics that were entirely non-objective, including *Red and Black*, 1958 (Illustration 62), and the more ambitious *Yellow on Red*, 1962 (Illustration 63), which do not appear to derive from subjects in life at all but rather seem to be concerned with a shallow, graphic space composed of color and shape. With these works, Blackburn relinquishes even the title's reference to objects in the real world—a relationship that he retained in his abstracted still lifes of this period through naming alone.

Between 1958 and 1961, Blackburn worked on variations of the lithograph *Heavy Forms*, culminating in a small edition in 1961 (Illustration 64 a-c). This work demonstrates his fluid approach to the horizontal plane of the stone. The

state proofs exist in at least twenty versions, the first set in strident 1950s variants of green, pink, red, grey, purple, and black; some proofs exist in four shades of these color choices. Each proof is printed in a unique order, each print canceling or revealing different passages. The imagery can be seen as deriving from a simple Cubistic splaying of the classic tabletop still life that Blackburn had been repeating as a visual trope during the late 1950s. Here, however, the print matches its 'tabletop' to the surface of the stone, tipping it up to an abstracted, organic shape, thereby referencing the print process itself. Compositionally, the edges register the image against the flatness of the paper, onto the flat spread of the table or pressbed on which it was created. In the final edition of twelve, the border echoes the edge of the stone, whose edges are inked and printed in all their irregularity. This direct reference to the stone itself, to the material process of lithography, recedes as one looks into the center of the print. Moving in from the absolute, uneven edges, a brushy sepia frame encloses and grounds the illusion of the image, in contrast to the reference to tabletop or horizon which cut across the frame of the earlier proofs. *Heavy Forms*, when editioned, is finally composed like an organic blossoming within a frame of sky, with plenty of paper flickering through the image to allow it to breathe.

As we have seen, Blackburn's work evolved from social realist compositions and figures, in the WPA aesthetic, through still life forms to abstracted formal color compositions, influenced by European Cubist models. By 1960, his work had evolved into an exploration of surface-ground gestalt and color relationships. Clearly, Blackburn's imagery is engaged with New York School Abstraction, Expressionism, surface and color concerns. Examination of his body of work from the late 1950s into the early 1960s also reveals it to be

concerned with process itself. Because of his familiarity with the printmaking process, Blackburn treated the stone with tremendous fluidity, in an all-over fashion, constantly reworking images from all sides, constantly re-orienting the image. Frequently, he signed his work on both top and bottom margin, allowing options for viewing (see, for example, different color proofs from his *Heavy Forms* series, which are signed on different margins—and sometimes on both top and bottom margin on the same impression). His thinking was classically “Steinbergian”: that is to say, horizontal, across the surface of the stone, as he moved around it as it lay on the pressbed. Leo Steinberg, in coining the expression “the flatbed picture plane,” described a radical shift in orientation that he saw crystallized in the work of Robert Rauschenberg. He borrowed “the term from the flatbed printing press . . . a pictorial surface whose angulation with respect to the human posture is the precondition of its changed context.”³⁰⁶

Steinberg's metaphor described a move away from the illusionistic window or the bodily, experiential model used by prior Western art. This mode, in which Rauschenberg oriented his works beginning in the 1950s, thus re-framed the viewer's experience and relationship to the art object, directing it away from an illusionistic field and toward an opaque horizontal, “any receptor surface on which objects are scattered, on which data is entered, on which information may be received, printed, impressed—whether coherently or in confusion,” in which the “surface is no longer the analog of a visual experience of nature but of operational process”³⁰⁷ Such analysis has rarely been considered in relationship to African American artists of the same milieu yet it is apparent that

³⁰⁶ Leo Steinberg, “Other Criteria,” in *Other Criteria: Confrontations With Twentieth-Century Art* (1968; reprint, London: Oxford University Press, 1972), 82.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 84.

they were interested in many of these same concepts. For example, Witkovsky has discussed how Bearden himself described the thin, overlapping planes of color he used during this same period as "an interpenetration of color planes," that is to say, an all-over composition, created "from each side of the canvas."³⁰⁸ Bearden, too, was working with the flatbed picture plane approach. Other African American artists who might be profitably examined through this model include Ronald Joseph, Ed Clark and Larry Potter, among others.

Blackburn's work was also exploring other contemporary concerns—such as action painting and indexical and mechanical mark-making—which, again, are rarely discussed with regard to African American artists of this period. Tom Laidman's apt observation—that he treated the stones like paintbrushes—reveals much about Blackburn's lack of preciousness with the idea of the edition, of his matter-of-fact engagement with the stone's surface. Blackburn struggled as Rosenberg described, the stone his arena, bearing the traces of struggle and process. At the same time, he broke down the idea of lithography as a high craft process, whereby the printmaker faithfully reproduces the rigidly identical print edition. Indeed, Blackburn printed widely disparate color proofs through the process of his own lithographs; frequently, he never arrived at an edition at all. For him, the steps in the journey were the goal. He highlighted the process of printmaking itself, as opposed to a finished edition; in his oeuvre, a consistent edition is rare. His prints primarily exist in multiple state color proofs: themes and variations. Frequent color changes are accompanied by variations in the printing order and orientation, producing unique color and

³⁰⁸ Matthew S. Witkovsky, "Experience vs. Theory: Romare Bearden and Abstract Expressionism," *Black American Literature Forum*, Volume 23, Number 2 (Summer 1989), 272.

state proofs. His interest in markmaking—in the play between the handmade mark and those inherent to the process (such as the effects of ink and inking) reveals his awareness of the implications of mechanized process, riffing on the idea of repetition within a supposedly standard edition. Blackburn thus explored the implications of seriality and the unique through the process of color lithography. His print investigations are contemporaneous with the most groundbreaking investigations of his era, varying and repeating a language of expressive gestural abstraction through mechanized process, pulling it apart at the same time.

In this, Blackburn's work profits by analyzing it in the context of his contemporaries, particularly Andy Warhol and Robert Rauschenberg, who more famously examined the implications of seriality during this same period. Warhol's understanding of the increasingly reciprocal embrace between high art and the mass culture of commercialism led to a pointed evacuation of the painterly mark, the unique gesture. According to Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, one of Warhol's contributions was his depletion of Jasper Johns's and Rauschenberg's painterly strategies. While Warhol mechanically re-interpreted Johns's carefully differentiated grid elements (perhaps reinforcing the element of chance which Ellsworth Kelly had instated), Warhol was also able to re-configure Rauschenberg's "direct imprinting techniques and persistent use of indexical marking . . . emptied by Warhol of all the expressivity and decorative artistry the technique had regained in Rauschenberg's work of the late fifties."³⁰⁹ Buchloh has also pointed out that both Warhol and Rauschenberg

³⁰⁹ Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, "Andy Warhol's One-Dimensional Art: 1956-1966," *Andy Warhol: A Retrospective*, edited by Kynaston McShine (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1989), 43-44.

were drawing on a fully-developed (although, at that time, critically disavowed) artistic tradition of mechanized mark-marking, that began with the Dada gestures of Man Ray, Duchamp, and Picabia.³¹⁰

In opposition to Warhol, Rauschenberg's hand-painted exercise, *Factum I* and *Factum II* (both 1957) left him perfectly poised to undertake printmaking of a different sort. The two *Factum* combine paintings replicated each other, fusing the "increasingly dominant presence of mass-cultural imagery with high-art and the inherited idiom of Dada collage with the conventions of gestural abstraction."³¹¹ From here, Rauschenberg created the cycle of drawings with dye-transfer on paper, *Thirty-four Illustrations for Dante's Inferno* (1959-1960) and then moved to lithography. Roni Feinstein has claimed that it was Rauschenberg's work in lithography that was the final step towards his silkscreen paintings. She attributes a great influence in his work to the lessons learned while creating their spare, large, black and white images: "It was in their assertive, graphic appearance, their initial concentration on black and white, their use of reproductive processes, and their continued reliance on found, mass media-derived imagery that the lithographs anticipated the Silkscreen Paintings."³¹² While Blackburn did not have direct contact with Warhol, he was the intercessor in Rauschenberg's initial encounter with lithography at ULAE.

³¹⁰ Ibid., 48-49.

³¹¹ Ibid.

³¹² Roni Feinstein, *Robert Rauschenberg: The Silkscreen Paintings, 1962-64* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1990), 43. Feinstein also claims that by 1964, the silkscreen paintings had a reciprocal effect on Rauschenberg's later lithographs.

In 1957, Robert Blackburn was hired as the first master printer at Universal Limited Art Editions. While he commuted to this paying "day job" in Long Island, The Printmaking Workshop continued as an artists' cooperative in Chelsea. During this period, Blackburn began spending less time at PMW, only visiting during evenings or weekends. Tatyana Grosman and her husband Maurice, a painter who knew screen printing, founded the new lithographic venture in West Islip, ULAE.³¹³ Tatyana, who began the renowned print studio in order to support the two of them, initially knew little of the graphic process:

She knew hardly anything at all about the making of books, or prints, for that matter. She approached an artist, the sculptor Mary Callery, who lived in nearby Huntington, and asked her for something—it turned out to be a gouache—that could be made into a print. When Tanya took the completed silk-screen reproduction to William S. Lieberman, then curator of the Department of Prints and Illustrated Books at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, he admired its quality but not the fact that it reproduced a prior work of art. Carl Zigrosser, then curator of the Department of Prints at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, told her something similar. It seems that at first she was not listening. She persisted with the silk screens until she persuaded the artist Larry Rivers and poet Frank O'Hara to collaborate on a lithographic book . . .³¹⁴

³¹³ Tatyana Auguschewitsch (b. 1904 - d. 1982) was born in Siberia; her family moved first to Japan, then Dresden, where they settled, and where, in 1929, she met the artist Maurice Grosman, who had been born in Poland. They were married in 1931 and banished by Tatyana's family. In 1932, they fled to Paris and lived among artists including Jacques Lipschitz, Chaim Soutine, and Ossip Zadkine. In 1940, the Grosman's fled the Nazis who were about to invade Paris, an odyssey that culminated in their hiking over the Pyrenees into Spain. From there, they travelled to New York in 1943. They lived in Greenwich Village, where Maurice pursued his painting career which was not lucrative. Maurice supported them selling silkscreened reproductions of artists such as Picasso and Grandma Moses. When Maurice suffered a heart attack in 1955, the Grosmans moved to a house they had purchased in West Islip, Long Island. Tatyana, who now needed to support them both, followed Maurice's lead.

³¹⁴ Amei Wallach, "Tatyana Grosman: A Memoir," *Universal Limited Art Editions: A History and Catalogue, The First Twenty-Five Years*, by Esther Sparks (Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago, 1989).

Tatyana had found two discarded lithographic limestones in her front yard, imbedded in her garden path. She bought a second-hand press for fifteen dollars, and began to invite artists to work in prints. Eventually, her vision formed, and she enticed the best painters of the time into making highly crafted prints and portfolios. She began to look to the current painters showing in New York, luring them to experiment in lithography. She was said to spare no expense for these projects, "coddling" the artists, lavishing "time, food and materials" on them.³¹⁵ Tatyana was distracted by bookkeeping and less interested in selling work than helping to produce it; in later years, she finally admitted that her finances "were a mess."³¹⁶ Despite the fact that she was alleged to have stormy relationships with her printers over the years—whom she is said to have paid irregularly—Blackburn seems to have been in complete agreement with Tatyana's single-minded, passionate rationale. To this day, Blackburn speaks extremely highly of her inspiration, and has criticized workshops that "push the artist into a mold . . . limited by [the] printer," as well as by any restrictions of time and money.³¹⁷ According to Elizabeth Jones, at ULAE, Blackburn, followed Tatyana's example, and "subordinated himself in order to fulfill the artist's promise." Blackburn has commented on the kind of sensitivity and care with which he approached each collaboration:

Each artist is a distinctly different individual. You cannot take the same yardstick for Jasper and apply it to Rauschenberg. I think it's so important to preserve the

³¹⁵ Ibid., 14.

³¹⁶ Ibid.

³¹⁷ Elizabeth Jones, "Robert Blackburn: An Investment in an Idea," *Tamarind Papers* (Volume 6, Number 1, Winter 1982-1983), 12.

creative identity of the artist. It is the marriage of the printer's expertise with the creative energy of the artist that makes the fine print, that makes the exceptional, the unusual and the distinctive print. If an artist comes in and wants to step on the stone, then the printer's genius is to find out how to capture that. If he can do that, then he is a great printer. He is a creative printer. The basic techniques are extremely simple; there is nothing so complicated. It's being able to interpret the mood of this individual who has something important to say that is important because what he has to say is the real truth.³¹⁸

Ironically, the first artists Tatyana invited to ULAE had a deep distaste for printmaking. Few of the artists Blackburn worked with had tried lithography, or any form of printmaking, prior to their work there. None had seriously explored any graphic medium, and an adjustment in thinking, in visualization, was necessary. Blackburn had been thinking in prints his entire adult life. It must have been frustrating to the artists at first. Larry Rivers remarked on his first lithographs:

The lithograph stone surface is very smooth. The marks going on it can be made with a rather difficult to handle, almost rubbery crayon, or with a dark liquid called Tusche. I had never seen any of the necessary equipment before this and if I wasn't thinking about a Picasso or Matisse print I thought printmaking was a dull occupation of pipe-smoking corduroy deep-type artisans. Whatever you do comes out opposite to the way you put it down . . . It is almost impossible to erase, one of my more important crutches. Technically it was really a cumbersome task. One needed the patience of another age.³¹⁹

³¹⁸ Ibid.

³¹⁹ Larry Rivers, "Life Among the Stones," *Location* (Volume One, Number One, Spring 1963), 93.

Rivers shared the Abstract Expressionist prejudice that printmaking was not quite an art and regarded working in the media as “jumping back into the 15th century.”³²⁰ According to Franz Kline, “Printmaking concerns social attitudes, you know—politics and a public . . . like the Mexicans in the 1930s; printing, multiplying, educating; I can't think about it. I'm involved with the private image.”³²¹ And Robert Rauschenberg most famously said, “I thought the second half of the 20th century was no time to start drawing on rocks.”³²² However, Tatyana was patient, quietly persisting.

Over those first five years at ULAE, Blackburn collaborated with many prominent Abstract Expressionist and Pop Artists, including Jim Dine, Sam Francis, Helen Frankenthaler, Fritz Glarner, Robert Goodnough, Grace Hartigan, Jasper Johns, Robert Motherwell, Robert Rauschenberg, and Larry Rivers. Blackburn printed the first seventy-nine editions for the ULAE.³²³ In most cases, Blackburn taught

³²⁰ Judith Goldman, “American Prints 1960-1981” in *American Prints: Process & Proofs* (New York: The Whitney Museum of American Art, 1981), 148-149.

³²¹ Adams, *American Lithographers*, 160.

³²² Goldman, “American Prints,” 57. See also Robert Rauschenberg, “Work Notes on Lithography,” 1962, published in *Rauschenberg: XXXIV Drawings for Dante's Inferno*, exhibition catalogue (Geneva: Galerie G rald Cramer, 1968), np.

³²³ A complete list of all work produced by Robert Blackburn, is as follows: 1957–*Stones*, by Frank O'Hara and Larry Rivers (1957-1960), Larry Rivers's *The Bird and the Circle*, *The Afternoon*, and *Molly*. In 1958, he printed Larry Rivers's *The Winged Girl*, *Dark Plant*, *The Iron Figure*, *The Circled Girl*, *The Bike*, *Girl I*, and *The Bike Girl II*. As well, he printed *Drawing for Tondo*, *Drawing for Relational Painting* by Fritz Glarner that year.

In 1959, Blackburn continued to print for Rivers (*Marriage Photograph*) and Glarner (*Drawing for Tondo No. 1*, *Drawing for Tondo No. 2*, *Drawing for Tondo No. 3*, *Drawing for Tondo No. 4*, *Drawing for Tondo No. 5*, and *Drawing for Tondo No. 6*). That year, he also began work with Sam Francis. Blackburn proofed Francis's first three lithographs (*Very First Stone*, *Four Stone Untitled*, and *Five Stone Untitled*), which were not editioned until 1968 due to Francis's travels abroad.

In 1960, he worked with Grace Hartigan on *The Hero Leaves His Ship I (Hero)*, *The Hero Leaves His Ship II (Hero)*, *The Hero Leaves His Ship III (Ship)*, *The Hero Leaves His Ship IV (Ship)*. With Jasper Johns, he printed *Target*, *Coat Hanger I*, *Coat Hanger II*, *0 Through 9*,

the artists how to make lithographs. Master printer Blackburn shared his sensibility of the medium with these artists as they experimented and brought their painterly concerns to printmaking; he taught them how he, as an artist, approached the stone.

By 1957 when he began at ULAE, Blackburn had been making lithographs for twenty years. His own work clearly proposes many of the elements that his more recognized peers—the artists of ULAE, who eagerly embraced graphics—would promote in their revival of printmaking as a medium. At ULAE, Blackburn worked directly with these artists who went on to define the American “graphics boom” of the early 1960s.³²⁴ As he printed important works for the emerging generation of artists, Blackburn's predilections and fluency with the

Flag I, Flag II, and Flag III that year. As well, Blackburn continued working with Larry Rivers, printing *Jack of Spades* and beginning *Lucky Strike II*, which would be finished in 1963.

In 1961, he and Rivers printed many projects together, including *Webster, Last Civil War Veteran I, Last Civil War Veteran II, Ford Chassis I, Ford Chassis II, Face of Clarice I, Face of Clarice II*, and *Lucky Strike in the Mirror (Lucky Strike I)*. Blackburn also continued collaborating with Hartigan, printing *Pallas Athene*, and the variant, *Pallas Athene: Black Stone*. Robert Goodnough, Helen Frankenthaler, and Robert Motherwell also began work at ULAE. With Goodnough, Blackburn printed *The Speaker, The Chief I, The Chief II, The Chief III*, and *Three Figures*. With Frankenthaler, he editioned *First Stone, May 26 Backwards*, and *Brown Moons*. For Motherwell, over the period of 1961 to 1962, he printed *Poet I* and *Poet II*.

Also during 1962, Blackburn printed Hartigan's *Inside Outside* and began Frankenthaler's *Post Card for James Schuyler*, which would be dated 1962/1965/1967. He began work with Jim Dine, producing *Pliers* and *Four C-Clamps*. And, the very important collaborations with Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg began in 1962. With Johns, Blackburn editioned *Painting with Two Balls I, Painting with Two Balls II, False Start I, False Start II*, and *Device*. With Rauschenberg, he printed *Abby's Bird, Merger, Urban, Suburban, License, Stunt Man I, Stunt Man II*, and *Stunt Man III*.

Blackburn was finishing his work at ULAE by 1963, and attempting to return fulltime to PMW. However, in 1963, he editioned Robert Rauschenberg's *Accident*, Larry Rivers *Purim*, and began work on Rivers's *Nine French Bank Notes I* (1963-1964), *Nine French Bank Notes II* (1963-1965), Gwynne (1964-1965) and *15 Years* (1965).

³²⁴ ULAE was the first in a series of U.S. print publishers that were instrumental in bringing about what is thought of as a graphic arts revival—particularly of the lithograph—in America in the early 1960s. Other important litho studio start-ups after ULAE include Tamarind (founded in Los Angeles in 1960); Gemini G.E.L. (also Los Angeles, California), and Tyler Graphics, Ltd. (Bedford, New York).

medium contributed to the new look of these works, which would go on to define the "print explosion." Looking at Blackburn's own experimental color lithography around 1960, it clearly developed prior to the boom. Undoubtedly, as well, his invigorating collaborations at the West Islip studio artistically stimulated Blackburn himself.

Blackburn was equal parts teacher, technician, translator and producer. His self-effacing style—humble in the background, never presumptuous—has contributed to a disregard of his contributions to the ULAE aesthetic. Indeed, Blackburn himself has never stressed his role in the printmaking done at ULAE. However, when studying the first early prints, particularly those produced by Rivers, Frankenthaler, Hartigan and Rauschenberg, in comparison to Blackburn's own works and concerns, his influence is evident.

In the case of other artists, such as Jasper Johns, Blackburn's touch is, perhaps, less apparent. With Johns, he seems to have more transparently and faithfully captured the already established artist's approach, evident in his painting. Johns's prints were less concerned with plumbing the print medium on its own terms, than producing works that were of a piece with his painting. For this, Johns has been lauded: "he translated the rich surfaces of his flat subjects from his canvases to the stone, thus establishing a more painterly lithographic tradition."³²⁵ Johns himself has stated his initial lithographic goals as more reproductive than experimental: "I knew nothing about the lithography process and only hoped that prints would resemble my drawings to some degree."³²⁶

³²⁵ Harriett Green, "The Graphics Boom," *Robert Blackburn, A Life's Work* (New York: The Alternative Museum, 1988), p. 12.

It is worth examining how Blackburn's role in this graphics explosion has been continually and effectively erased in the literature. Riva Castleman, for example, writes, "Mrs. Grosman offered her lithograph press at first to two friends, Larry Rivers and Fritz Glarner. In 1960 she invited a younger painter, Jasper Johns, to her shop, and in 1962 Robert Rauschenberg began to work there."³²⁷ While this is true, the implications of these statements are that Rivers, Glarner, Johns, and Rauschenberg worked at ULAE alone with their genius—or, that Grosman assisted them. Undoubtedly, Grosman had the eye and extended the invitations; however, it is well documented that she did not know how to print. Esther Spark's important volume on ULAE faithfully mentions each printer in the catalogue listing, but scarcely discusses Blackburn or his impact. The later, more well known printers, including Donn Steward and Bill Goldston, receive more attention. Calvin Tomkins contributed to the confusion about the role of the printer by stating that Tatyana "placed her trust in the artists she invited, and the artists pushed the technicians—the printers, who replaced one another

³²⁶ Jasper Johns. Letter to the author in response to a questionnaire, April 9, 2002. In this letter, Johns reveals a number of interesting points about his relationship to Blackburn. He states, "I have no detailed memory of working with Bob Blackburn:" Johns recalls that Blackburn participated in two of his early prints, despite the fact that Blackburn proofed and printed his first twelve print editions. He comments that the Grosmans were often present when Blackburn was working, that he himself often worked "in a separate space," and that "I was not aware of Bob Blackburn's own work as an artist and I never visited his Manhattan workshop." The complete and formal separation of Johns and Blackburn, human beings working on the same artwork together in the same house, is extremely curious. It has helped me to understand why, at The Printmaking Workshop, Blackburn always took tremendous pleasure in pairing artist with printer; he insured that they worked together in a more collaborative and friendly fashion. He personally made sure that the artists who came to print understood the artwork of the printers with which they worked; in my experience, all printers are artists in their own right as well. In his studio, Blackburn has served as a catalyst who set up many enduring friendships in this way.

³²⁷ Riva Castleman, *Prints of the Twentieth Century* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1988 revised and enlarged edition), 167.

with fair frequency in those early days."³²⁸ While Tomkins implied that it was an ever-changing cast of characters, impossible to track, the truth is that Blackburn was ULAE's sole printer for the first five, critical years. More recently, Tony Towle, who relegates Blackburn's key role in those first five years to a footnote, mistakenly states that from ULAE, "he went on to start his own workshop in New York."³²⁹ Blackburn's prior and existing mastery of lithography when Grosman contracted him has remained an unacknowledged, unexplored, and overlooked factor in the incredible early production at that studio.

To my knowledge, there is only one notable exception to Blackburn's erasure from history. Elizabeth Jones has most thoroughly and accurately discussed Blackburn's primary role as the first printer at ULAE. Her five-page article on Blackburn and the lonely living room production of ULAE describes precisely the primitive conditions under which he worked. Jones's essay is the most accurate existing examination that sparks the question of Blackburn's influence on the ULAE aesthetic. By pointing out that Grosman insisted that Blackburn impress the edges of the stones, as well as her belief that a prepared stone should be printed in the same day, Jones indicates that Grosman had an "intaglio mentality" that was well-supplemented by Blackburn's lithographic expertise.³³⁰ However, Jones does not explore Blackburn's work or its relationship to some of the prints he produced for others at ULAE.

³²⁸ Calvin Tomkins, "The Art World: Tatyana Grosman," *The New Yorker* (August 9, 1982), 84.

³²⁹ Tony Towle, "A Few Selected Memories of Tanya Grosman and ULAE," *Proof Positive: Forty Years of Contemporary American Printmaking At ULAE, 1957-1997* (Washington D.C.: The Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1997) 29, n.16.

³³⁰ Jones, "A Life's Work," 13.

ULAE's first project, initiated in the summer of 1957, was *Stones*, a portfolio which combined Frank O'Hara poems with interpretive black and white lithographs by Larry Rivers. Tatyana had an infatuation with handmade papers and artists' books, the European model of the luxurious fine print. The idea of producing lavish *livres d'artiste* appealed to her:

She had been surrounded by illustrated books since her childhood and, since her father was a newspaper editor, already had an instinctive feeling for type and ink and paper. Her marriage to the artist, Maurice Grosman, and their subsequent life in Paris brought her into contact with artists and writers, and at least a glimpse of the great books issued by the French private presses . . . The decision to establish a workshop was, in a large sense, the culmination of a life-long love affair with books—not ordinary books, but great books in which a writer and an artist, working side by side, could express themselves spontaneously, perhaps even simultaneously.³³¹

While Blackburn's methods were very experimental and contemporary (although his taste in art ran towards the classic)—in many ways, more so than those of Grosman's old world style, handmade papers, and the perfect edition (although her tastes in art were very much in the cutting edge)—Blackburn was very much affected by Grosman's support of the artist's book, and would later facilitate the production of many such volumes, collaborations, and portfolios at his studio. Blackburn began his involvement with ULAE in the production of the *Stones* portfolio.

Stones was, in many ways, building on the European printed-book tradition that had recently crossed the Atlantic to great success. *21 Etchings and Poems*, a

³³¹ E. Maurice Bloch, "Introduction," *Words and Images: Universal Limited Art Editions* (Los Angeles: University of California, 1978), xiii.

portfolio produced at Atelier 17 by Peter Grippe, was the first New York portfolio that paired poets with artists, to produce a deluxe, illustrated volume. This landmark artist's book, under production through the late 1950s and completed in 1960, was the largest collaboration between poets and artists to be undertaken in the United States until that time:

Grippe's project proved to be the beginning of a new tradition in America—a tradition of extremely successful artist-poet collaborations. *21 Etchings and Poems* directly inspired *Stones*, a portfolio by Frank O'Hara and the artist Larry Rivers which was begun in 1957 and published in 1960. It also inspired the most famous illustrated book of the early 1960s, *1¢ Life*, which in turn had a significant influence on other artists' books during the later part of the decade.³³²

1¢ Life, was a portfolio/artist book comprised of sixty-one original lithographs, nearly all in color, that were inspired by the typeset poems of the Chinese poet and painter, Walasse Ting.³³³ Blackburn was aware of Ting's work, even prior to the publication of *1¢ Life*. He knew his work from the New York galleries, and Blackburn's supervisor from his freelance days in film graphics, Wango Weng, had contributed an essay to Ting's New York gallery exhibition brochure in

³³² Lanier Graham, *The Spontaneous Gesture: Prints & Books of the Abstract Expressionist Era* (Canberra: National Gallery of Australia, 1989), 20.

³³³ Published in Bern by E.W. Kornfeld in 1964, the 174-page project was written by Ting and edited by Sam Francis. The edition of 2000 was numbered in color stencil, and the loose sheets were encased in a cloth portfolio, silkscreened in color, and designed by Ting, which went inside a dustjacket and slipcase. Maurice Beaudet printed all the lithography, while the typography was done by Georges Girard. The prints were by the following artists: Alan Davie (2 prints), Alfred Jensen (3 prints), Sam Francis (6 prints), Walasse Ting (6 prints), James Rosenquist (1 print), Pierre Alechinsky (5 prints), Kimber Smith (6 prints), Alfred Leslie (2 prints), Antonio Saura (1 print), Kiki O.K. (2 prints), Robert Indiana (2 prints), Jean-Paul Riopelle (2 prints), Karel Appel (5 prints), Tom Wesselmann (2 prints), Bram van Velde (1 print), Joan Mitchell (1 print), Allan Kaprow (1 print), Andy Warhol (1 print), Robert Rauschenberg (1 print), K.R.H. Sonderborg (1 print), Roy Lichtenstein (1 print), Oyvind Fahlstrom (1 print), Reinhold (1 print), Claes Oldenburg (2 prints), Jim Dine (1 print), Mel Ramos (2 prints), and Enrico Baj (2 prints).

1957, which established another connection to Ting.³³⁴ *1¢ Life* was extremely important, for as Castleman has noted, "this volume provides the sole example of the conjunction of European and American gestural art and its American successor, Pop art."³³⁵

Stones was under production from 1957-1960, and during that time, Blackburn also printed all the major, early prints produced at ULAE, including ten other editions for Rivers from 1957 to 1963. Rivers and Blackburn had much in common; both loved jazz (indeed, Rivers began his career as a musician) and they shared friendships with certain artists, for example, Nell Blaine. Rivers' early black and white prints were abstracted figurations, signs and symbols scattered across the surface, interwoven with broken down strokes, marks and *pentimenti* that reveal the process of creating the image. Rivers has commented that some of the marks he made on the stones never printed, and resulted in "sketchy and anecdotal" prints of "very casual results."³³⁶

These casual results were, in part, due to the fact that the Grosman's had extremely simple facilities, and they could not provide any technical advice to Rivers as he began to work. When Grosman initially invited Rivers to work, she brought two stones to Rivers's Southampton studio for him and O'Hara to work on. Then, the Grosmans brought more stones up to Rivers' Manhattan studio walk up. Shortly thereafter, Rivers began to go out to the Grosman's West Islip

³³⁴ *Walasse Ting: Paintings*, with essays by Julien Alvard and Wango Weng. (New York: Galerie Chalette, March 12 - April 6, 1957) Exhibition brochure.

³³⁵ Castleman, *Prints of the Twentieth Century*, 149.

³³⁶ Esther Sparks, *Universal Limited Art Editions. A History and Catalogue: The First Twenty-Five Years* (Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago, 1989), 245.

studio, where they had hired a local printer, Emanuel Edelman, to proof. Finally, Blackburn was hired to print the editions. Rivers continued to draw on stones, producing a dozen precarious, fleeting images—editions printed while *Stones* was being completed.

After many thin black and white sketches, Rivers finally produced a strong color lithograph, *Jack of Spades*, 1960 (Illustration 65), which, in many ways, is related to Blackburn's *Color Symphony* of the same year (Illustration 66). Both use brightly decorative, boldly expressionistic strokes and a fully realized pictorial composition; both engage swinging curvilinear forms to unite what could easily be jangling colors; both are able to reach a reflective balance that is about the action and composition of the surface and which does not rely on narrative content. While Blackburn's print is completely saturated and worked, Rivers is a quicker study with fresh white paper throughout.

While Blackburn worked intensively with Rivers over the years of his tenure at ULAE, Grace Hartigan is the only artist who has discussed Blackburn's role at length and with affection, commenting directly on the importance of Blackburn's role in the process at ULAE. Beginning in 1960, Blackburn worked with Hartigan on her first lithographs. An unusual circumstance necessitated that they print some of her work in Baltimore, and through this trip she was able to see Blackburn outside the confines of the studio, as a human being and talented artist facing racial discrimination. Hartigan remained in touch with Blackburn and in the late 1980s, she made prints at PMW with him.

Through her more personal recollections, we can see that despite Blackburn's modest and unassuming personality, his expertise was key to the production of

works. Hartigan has acknowledged her reliance on, and partnership with, him during her printmaking process. Hartigan has written of her beginning at ULAE:

In 1959 or 1960, I got a phone call from Tanya Grosman asking me if I would like to do some lithography. I had never done lithograph or even seen a stone but was curious and she came to my Essex and Hester Street studio with Bob Blackburn lugging four pre-historic looking (to me) stones.

They laid them on a table and gave me tusche, litho crayons and medium and left. I stalked the stones for a while and then with "The Hero Leaves His Ship" (poem by B. Guest) in mind, literally attacked them with splattered tusche, rags, hands, razor blades, etc.

I called Tanya and she came with Bob and looked aghast at what I had done. Bob said, "If its on the stone, I can print it." I went to their Long Island studio and saw the press for the first time and what it meant to have a master printer fix the stones and then work to gut every nuance on the carefully selected paper.

I felt an almost mystic kinship with Bob Blackburn. Without him, my work would have died on those heavy, clumsy stones; with him, they glowed with darks and greys and light on the paper. This, I think, is what collaboration is all about.³³⁷

Hartigan has also written sensitively of Blackburn's plight as a black person in the United States in the early 1960s, which was made evident during their trip to Baltimore with the ULAE entourage. Hartigan notes his quiet and matter-of-fact way of dealing with segregation.

I have just glanced again at Esther Sparks ULAE history,
and I'm sorry she didn't emphasize Bob Blackburn's role in

³³⁷ Grace Hartigan, *Robert Blackburn: A Life's Work* (New York: The Alternative Museum, 1988), 15.

the early days of the printshop. Tatyana was a great planner, instigator, persuader—Bob for me was the soul of ULAE . . .

Except for the color *Pallas Athene* all my lithos were done on the stones in my studios, I only went to Long Island for the printing which I knew nothing about and put my trust in Bob. We printed all the time except for very good lunches. Bob saw small “errors” and rejected prints that I would have let go . . .

I’d like to mention the circumstances of the color litho. Bob, Tatyana and Maurice came to Baltimore which was a segregated city in ’61. Tatyana and Maurice stayed in a hotel—no hotel would accommodate a black person. Bob slept in my studio, we ate there too, since no restaurant would seat him. He showed no anger, bitterness or resentment, although I still feel for him.

As (Esther) Sparks states, Adelyn Bruskin found an old litho press at the top of the museum and that was the only time I worked the stones outside the studio, there with Bob & Tatyana. I remember how Bob helped encourage me with color, I simply found it almost impossible to use black and think color. I still think of that print as a black & white with color touches here & there.³³⁸

In looking at Hartigan's black and white *Hero* works (Illustration 67), or even the *Pallas Athene* prints (Illustration 68), we can understand her instant rapport with Blackburn. His own black and white proofs (see, for example, the *Untitled* works, Illustration 69-70, that exist only as undated proofs³³⁹) reveal him to be working in a very similar mode, likewise concerned with the expression of the

³³⁸ Grace Hartigan. Letter to Jennifer Bergman, December 8, 1994.

³³⁹ While there are many proofs from this period, none are editioned. As well, very few of the proofs that still exist were signed together at the time; as the need arises, Blackburn titles, signs and dates them ad hoc. I have reason to believe many were signed after the fact. Therefore, I am often in doubt about the dates of these works, although they maintain strong relationships to the work he was doing at ULAE and therefore I feel justified in placing them around this time. As well, there are so many and they are so fluid and experimental, I am certain it was the stimulating experience at ULAE that initiated all these proof prints.

crayon, tusche wash, and scrape, also interested in bringing out all the subtleties of the work.

Similarly, Helen Frankenthaler's early works have much in common with Blackburn's abstracted landscape proofs of this time. In May 1960, Tatyana Grosman wrote to Frankenthaler, inviting her to print at ULAE. Her friends, Larry Rivers and Grace Hartigan, also encouraged her. However, she postponed the invitation for nearly one year. According to Esther Sparks, this was for two main reasons: first and foremost, Frankenthaler considered herself a painter.³⁴⁰ Printmaking would be neither spontaneous nor solitary, and the working rhythm and collaborative nature would be a very different process. Additionally, the change in scale would also be a dramatic challenge. In 1961, Blackburn's first edition for Frankenthaler at ULAE was *First Stone* (Illustration 71). As with all her early lithographs, this image was composed of simple, sensuous shapes described by unmodulated color, placed in open, landscape-like forms, where much of the paper is left bare. It was said that Frankenthaler faced lithography in 1961 with uncompromising aplomb and lack of timidity. She mixed her own inks and rejected Grosman's suggestions for papers to use. She wrote corrections in the margins and worked and re-worked images sometimes for years. And, "if an image displeased her, she left it and moved on, discarding

³⁴⁰ Helen Frankenthaler had some similar background experiences to Blackburn. After studying with Rufino Tamayo at the Dalton School, and with Paul Feely at Bennington College (Vermont), she, too, enrolled at the Art Students League in New York. In 1947, she studied there with Vaclav Vytlačil. In 1948 in New York, she also worked with Wallace Harrison. However Frankenthaler—as opposed to Blackburn—was quickly recognized by, and included in, the New York avant-garde as she struggled with abstraction during this period. By December 1950, she was included in the Kootz Gallery's "Fifteen Unknowns" curated by Adolph Gottlieb; by 1951 she exhibited with Tibor de Nagy Gallery. In 1952, Frankenthaler began her well-known poured works directly on unprimed canvas, such as *Mountains and Sea*, which Clement Greenberg would bring the Washington D.C. painters, Morris Louis and Kenneth Noland, to see in her studio in April 1953.

stones like typing paper until she got it right."³⁴¹ This image is much like Laidman's recollection of Blackburn treating the stones like paintbrushes, and *First Stone* makes a strong relationship to Blackburn's own, energetic *Little Landscape* (Illustration 72).

Robert Rauschenberg began working at ULAE in 1962. Of the printmaking experience, Rauschenberg himself noted, "Drastic changes! A drawing is an intimate thing I hold in my hand; a painting is bold on the wall. Here I have to print. The press is involved and the printer."³⁴² Rauschenberg incorporated of the act of printing itself as subject, style and object. As Douglas Davis described,

He has indeed brought, in effect, the printer's art to art: the use of discarded printer's plates, pressed onto the stone itself; of the silkscreen, laid, too, upon stone; of freshly printed magazine pages, applied directly and through the medium of transfer papers; the use of the stone itself (its imperfections, its outlines and its cracks); finally of the pressroom, as subject and creative environment.³⁴³

In this, Rauschenberg involved Blackburn, who, at this time, in his own work, also was very cautiously exploring similar processes. For example, in Blackburn's edition, *Blue Window*, 1962, or its variant, *Windowed Shapes*, 1963 (Illustrations 73 a-c), the abstract composition is formed from torn, collaged shapes and the texture of cheesecloth, which is used in lithography to rub the gum arabic and acid etch into, and off of, the stone. Blackburn's use of torn

³⁴¹ Sparks, *Universal Limited Art Editions*, 84, n.7.

³⁴² Douglas M. Davis, "Rauschenberg's Recent Graphics," *Art in America*, July-August 1969, Volume 57, Number 4, 90.

³⁴³ *Ibid.*, 90.

paper pieces as compositional and textural elements can be seen in the undated, untitled proofs, AKA *Torn Shapes* (Illustration 74 a-b). The use of fabrics common to the workshop, as well as a collage aesthetic, echoes Rauschenberg's more radical experiments. It had been observed that Rauschenberg ". . . literally converts the printer into a spontaneous material, using his skills as he might the stone itself."³⁴⁴

During this time, Blackburn was attempting to extricate himself from the overwhelming work load at ULAE in 1963, in order to return fulltime to PMW as well as his own artmaking and studio. He brought in another printer, Zigmunds Priede, in order to offset the Grosman's reliance on him. A critical moment occurred in 1963, during the printing of Robert Rauschenberg's *Accident* (Illustration 75). Esther Sparks notes that "after a few impressions, the stone broke in two pieces. Both the stone and proofs were discarded. Rauschenberg made another image on another stone and it was proofed; this broke after three impressions. Rauschenberg placed the two fragments back on the press bed, added another stone he called 'the debris,' and printed the edition."³⁴⁵ Edward Foster has related a slightly different, more fatalistic version:

The initial design had been completed and the lithography stone was in the process of being proofed on the press when it cracked and no impressions exist from this first design. The composition was drawn again on a new stone and a few proofs were taken when this stone also cracked on the press, causing considerable concern to the technical staff present. Rather than abandon what then seemed an ill-fated project, Rauschenberg accepted the circumstance. The position of the broken stone was fixed

³⁴⁴ Ibid., 91.

³⁴⁵ Sparks, *Universal Limited Art Editions*, 432.

and the broken chips of limestone were picked up and themselves became the object of an additional stone (seen in the composition in the lower margin at the space between the crack and the original stone). The edition was printed in this fashion and given its most appropriate title. Later submitted to the International Print Exhibition at Ljubljana, Yugoslavia in 1963, it won the Grand Prix, the first time this coveted award had been given to the work of an American artist. The significance of this lithograph, in addition to the award, is that it is so indicative of Rauschenberg's approach to printmaking . . . created from ideas at hand.³⁴⁶

Accident became a seminal image in the graphics explosion indexing the new printmaking's rupture with the past. It has been related that this event "shook Blackburn's confidence and redefined his need to get back to more personal professional concerns . . . feeling that he was losing touch with his own shop and work (he) returned to the Printmaking Workshop on a full time basis."³⁴⁷ Legend has it that this traumatic event caused Blackburn's departure from ULAE, despite the fact Blackburn had been trying to leave ULAE anyway. Additionally, as a seasoned printer, he knew that stones sometimes cracked through inherent vice, uneven pressure, or any number of other circumstances. After Rauschenberg's *Breakthrough I*, 1964 and *Breakthrough II*, 1965 both cracked, well after Blackburn left ULAE, "it was decided that the 'bed' of the press must have been uneven and that unequal pressure was breaking the stones; a new bed was made."³⁴⁸

³⁴⁶ Edward A. Foster, "Introduction," *Robert Rauschenberg: Prints 1948/1970* (Minneapolis: The Minneapolis Institute of Arts, 1970), np.

³⁴⁷ Parris, "A Life's Work," 6.

³⁴⁸ Towle, "A Few Selected Memories," 29, n.22.

Around this same time, Blackburn produced his key work, *Faux Pas* (Illustration 76). In this work, the sense of still life is completely jettisoned. A tour-de-force of lithographic effect activates this abstract composition. Heavy rich flat color sits next to the most ephemerally delicate featherings of tusche wash. Through the middle of the image, a white stripe of paper breaks the image, alluding to the fragile object-hood of the limestone. This bipartite composition either prefigures that of Rauschenberg's 1963 print, *Accident*, or comments on it; Blackburn's white stripe is difficult to read as anything other than a sign of Rauschenberg's fractured stone, which was Blackburn's final proof at ULAE. Blackburn's piece, titled *Faux Pas*—named some years after the edition was printed³⁴⁹—winks with reference to the important event, the “gaffe” which would become such a key event in the history of contemporary printmaking. Blackburn's retrospective title indicates his hindsight, his understanding of the importance of that event, as well as his intimate relationship to it.

In the following years, through the 1960s, Blackburn would fully explore the broken stone concept with his elegantly calligraphic, *Untitled* works, AKA *Curious Stone*, *Broken Stone*, etc. (Illustration 77 a-d). While these works recall Blackburn's early interest in Sumi ink drawing, they take as both subject and composition the progressively crumbling surface of a lithographic stone.

³⁴⁹ I found this entire edition, wrapped in brown paper, in the archives of The Printmaking Workshop in 1994, and I was with Blackburn when he put the title to the prints a few days after I showed it to him. While I believe that his title refers, compositionally, to Rauschenberg's famous work, I also believe Bob was probably referring to his mis-placing his own edition for over thirty years. In my opinion, the date he gave the work, 1960, is fairly accurate although I believe it also could have been after 1963. It would be interesting to ascertain if, in fact, the work was created before or just after *Accident*; however, to date, I have no corroborating evidence in either regard.

By 1962, Blackburn decided to put his full energies into PMW. Although the dedicated printmakers had kept it open while he was in Paris, and continued to help it function when Blackburn commuted to his paying job at ULAE, "they could always disappear whenever they wanted. Their investment was not so great but mine was an investment in an idea."³⁵⁰ The Printmaking Workshop was located at 111 West 17th Street, 4th Floor, until 1967 or 1968, when it moved to 248 West 23rd Street.³⁵¹ Blackburn has reflected on his experience at ULAE, and the lessons he brought from West Islip into his own Printmaking Workshop:

I believed that the idea of that wonderful marriage between the printer and the artist, the person who sort of directs the whole thing was very important, that they need each other . . . I think when it becomes commercial it destroys that thing that is most important and most creative.³⁵²

³⁵⁰ Jones, "Robert Blackburn," 14.

³⁵¹ Cited as The Creative Graphics Workshop, 248 West 23rd Street, in *Artist's Proof* (New York: Pratt Institute, 1968), Vol. 8.

³⁵² Robert Blackburn. Paul Cummings interview, 25.

CHAPTER 4:

INCORPORATION, EXPERIMENTATION, AND OUTREACH

Robert Blackburn is most frequently mentioned as teacher and catalyst for future students. Discussion usually focuses on his institution, The Printmaking Workshop (PMW), and the succeeding, more well known generations he has fostered through it. His role as founder of PMW is notable, as it is the oldest continuously operating non-profit, artist-run printmaking studio in the country. PMW's mission and method is clearly indebted to those institutions which were formative to the young Blackburn.

PMW has been prominently discussed in feature articles such as those published in *The New York Times*.³⁵³ A half-hour documentary which aired on PBS in February 1998 again reinforced Blackburn's role as the founder and creative spirit of the Workshop.³⁵⁴ In such articles, surveys and even awards, Blackburn's artistic contributions and The Printmaking Workshop's importance have been conflated.³⁵⁵ These types of discussions neatly sidestep serious

³⁵³ Recent feature articles include "The Master and His Mecca," by Dulcie Leimbeck, *The New York Times*, (Arts & Leisure Section) Sunday, February 8, 1998; "A Guiding Spirit for Printmakers," by Phyllis Braff, *The New York Times*, February 2, 1992, and "Printmaking For the Love of It," by Grace Glueck, *The New York Times* (Section C, Tuesday, July 12, 1988), 15.

³⁵⁴ Produced and directed by Gail Jansen, and narrated by Ossie Davis, "Lasting Impressions" was a special documentary which aired in celebration of both PMW's fiftieth anniversary and Black History Month. It was broadcast in New York on WNET/Public Television Channel 13, Thursday, February 12, 1998, at 8:30 pm.

³⁵⁵ Two examples of important articles which do this are Hildreth York, "Bob Blackburn and the Printmaking Workshop," *Black American Literature Forum* (Vol. 20, No. 1-2, Spring-Summer 1986), 81-95, and Edmund "Barry" Gaither, "Millenium Portrait: Robert Blackburn," in *American Visions*, (Vol. 15, Number 1, February/March 2000), 23-30. While it is a very important survey, *American Prints and Printmakers* by Una E. Johnson (NY: Doubleday, 1980) also mentions Blackburn and The Printmaking Workshop together. Finally, and very recently, The College Art Association's 88th Annual Conference Convocation bestowed Blackburn with the Distinguished Artist Award for Lifetime Achievement in New York on

consideration of Blackburn's own work. They allow for the simple chronologizing of the workspace history and the successive waves of apprentice printmakers. It is an easily understood "who's who," particularly pertaining to African American artists coming out of the WPA, from the 1950s through the 1990s. Blackburn's work—which is harder to categorize, more difficult to contextualize—is directly avoided as a topic. While he sacrificed much in the way of his personal creativity for the sake of administering the Workshop, he has, nonetheless, been producing prints of astonishing relevance over these last 60 years. In fact, this year, 2002, he was invited by the New York City Metropolitan Transit Authority to produce a mosaic design for a Harlem subway. His works during the 1970s continue his innovative use of lithography, paring it down to a black and white minimalism tinged by his interest in Asian ink drawing. At the same time, during the 1970s, his work broadened in scope to include important works in woodcut, as well as experimentation with monoprinting, inspired by his collaborations with Romare Bearden, as well as viscosity intaglio prints, under the tutelage of Krishna Reddy.

In 1971, Blackburn finally incorporated The Printmaking Workshop as a not-for-profit institution, thereby making it eligible for public funds. In the years since its formal incorporation, PMW has served as an international model for other printmaking studios. While discussing the period of incorporation, this chapter will also track Blackburn's mature print investigations, as well as discuss some of the more prominent individuals who brought experimental techniques to the Printmaking Workshop community during this time. For example,

February 23, 2000, for his contributions *through* The Printmaking Workshop, at both the awards ceremony and in the pamphlet disseminated that evening.

Romare Bearden's photoetchings and stenciled monoprints, which he began producing with Blackburn at PMW during the 1970s, as well as Krishna Reddy's pioneering viscosity techniques, which he taught at PMW in the late 1970s, are examined. Finally, the varied and ambitious group portfolio projects, which marked the production of PMW, will be mentioned.

In 1962, when Blackburn extricated himself from ULAE, he returned to his Creative Graphics Workshop, which was still located at 111 West 17th Street, between Sixth, and Seventh Avenues, on the Fourth Floor. By 1968, he relocated the studio to more spacious quarters at 248 West 23rd Street, where it would remain until late 1975 or early 1976. At that time, PMW moved back to 17th Street (this time at 114 West 17th Street, on the Third Floor). By 1971, the Workshop incorporated as a non-profit organization as grants to individuals and organizations became more prevalent; in Chaim Koppleman's words, PMW "slowly un-co-opped."³⁵⁶ Original Board members included Betty Blayton, and Arline Lederman. A group of artists active at the workshop during that time participated in meetings to draw up the by-laws; these included Lucy Hodgson and Alan Koslin.

The workshop concept, of course, has roots in the 16th century, and was the basis of PMW's approach, where the elaborate and expensive equipment required for printmaking necessitated that artists collaborate in a community of shared interests. At PMW, the unique exchange of ideas and approaches, the search and discovery of a friend or mentor, happened in an environment that juxtaposes artists/printmakers at different stages of their careers. Over the

³⁵⁶ Nina Parris, "A Life's Work," *Robert Blackburn: A Life's Work* (New York: The Alternative Museum, 1988), 6.

years, PMW has served numerous artists at the critical point of maturation, providing support, exchange, and a professional work environment. As Stanley William Hayter has said, "The Workshop conception of an artist is not that of a lone wolf, but a member of a group of artists working together, pooling their ideas, communicating to one another their discoveries and achievements."³⁵⁷ By 1971, when Blackburn made the transition from his private endeavor to a publicly funded project, many diverse artists, working in both intaglio and lithography participated, and dozens of international artists who passed through New York each year stopped to work at PMW with Blackburn. In 2000, it was estimated that over 1,000 artists participated at PMW each year.

In many ways, Blackburn had modeled PMW on the art projects that encouraged him; clearly, he based PMW on his meaningful and democratic experiences at the Harlem Community Art Center, coupled with the visionary high-art cauldron of Tatyana Grosman's ULAÉ editioning project. It should be noted that his PMW was purposefully devoid of the exclusionary, hierarchical structure that he experienced at Atelier Desjobert in Paris. The institutions of Blackburn's formative years informed his vision of PMW, which, indeed, can be seen as a link between WPA ideals and the contemporary, funded, non-profit space. Interestingly, one compelling reason that PMW was incorporated as a not-for-profit organization in 1971 was that a few years prior, the creation of the NEA and other structures of governmental funding were responsive to—among other things—the gains made by the Civil Rights and Equal Rights movements.

³⁵⁷ Printmaking Workshop brochure, 1971. Hayter was on the Board of PMW from its inception.

The Printmaking Workshop was incorporated as a non-profit printmaking studio for production in lithography, etching, relief and photo processes. Its mission is to continually work towards the goals of: 1) maintaining creative and artistic quality, 2) supporting and encouraging innovation, 3) pioneering opportunities for third world and minority artists, and 4) fostering public appreciation of the fine art print. PMW serves as a low-cost facility for the creation of fine art prints, and as an environment where artists of differing disciplines, backgrounds, cultures, ages, and levels of expertise can exchange ideas, technical information, and approaches to art. PMW encourages artistic exploration, experimentation, and collaboration in the print medium for artists, and — through fellowships and scholarships — it opens its studios to hundreds of artists from around the world, many of whom might not otherwise have had a chance to make prints. PMW is committed to serving artists of differing cultural and ethnic backgrounds, and strives to provide them with opportunities to pursue their own work supported by an established institution. By incorporating PMW, Blackburn was able to receive grants and donations towards a more codified regimen of programs and services. This governmental, corporate, and foundation funding for its programs as well as its general operations allow Blackburn to subsidize the cost of studio time and classes, thus keeping the prices low and accessible while expanding services offered. From its incorporation, The Printmaking Workshop has continually been partially funded by The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), The New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA), The New York City Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA), private foundations (including, at various times, the Jerome Foundation, The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, the Robert Sterling Clark Foundation, and the New York Community Trust), corporations

(including Consolidated Edison and Fleet Bank), and many individuals each year.

PMW maintained extremely well equipped, low-cost facilities, offering printmaking to a broad public. During its peak years in the mid-1980s, PMW was open seven days a week, eight a.m. to midnight (twenty-four hours, by arrangement), in an eight thousand square-foot loft. It had four private intaglio editioning rooms, one with a 40 x 60" Charles Brand press; two private lithography editioning rooms, and open workshop with four intaglio presses, 2 lithography presses, a separate acid/solvent room, a darkroom, a graining sink, a rosin box, tables, lockers, shelves, and over one hundred, variously-sized Bavarian limestones for lithography on the premises. Additionally, a Van der Cook type press, and a small lithography press specially modified for printing collotype, were available.

The incorporated workshop solidified Blackburn's vision. He was now able to offer selected, emerging and mid-career artists access to the facilities at no cost, and underwrite experimental projects by mature, non-mainstream artists through a network of funded grants. Additionally, he was able to host foreign artists for short periods, and to send art programs out to under-served neighborhoods in the five boroughs. Blackburn specifically focused on African American, Latino/Latin American, Native American and Asian/Asian American artists working in the New York area, as well as visiting artists from so-called "Third World" nations. PMW's programs structured the services he had been offering, scattershot, on his own, through the years, and raised specific funding for each project. PMW made it possible for a wide array of artists to work in the facilities. Guest Artists and Invited Artists Programs, as well as Third World

Minority Fellowships, were competitive slots offered annually. Blackburn awarded various scholarships, monitorships, and internships as needs and requests arose throughout the year. Edition printing was another service offered by PMW. Providing low-cost production for gallery artists, Guest Artists and Invited Artists were matched with a printer from the PMW rosters. The process also provided valuable training for interns. Apprenticeship in the technical media was an important stage of development that taught both attitudes and techniques not readily available even in the best of schools. Blackburn was very good at pairing kindred printers and interns with artists, setting up what would become many long-term relationships of collaboration and mutual inspiration.

Teaching printmaking was a priority in Blackburn's studio. Classes were offered throughout the year in etching, lithography, relief printing and monoprinting, and occasionally other specialized regimens. These courses, given in eight-week evening sessions at affordable rates, were offered spring, summer and fall. Master printers shared their expertise, passing along century-old traditional methods as well as introducing experimental techniques. Students represented artists at varied levels: art students, sculptors, printers, photographers, or painters. Tours and demonstrations oriented visiting groups from around the world to PMW's various activities. In addition to PMW's many classes on-site, there were programs that extended beyond the premises: the Outreach Program connected PMW to the diverse ethnic worlds of the New York community, focusing on children, adolescents, and seniors. The Community Outreach Program was one of the first official projects at PMW in 1971, although it had been unofficially underway prior to that. Printmaker-teachers brought portable presses to schools and community centers that were under-

served. In the summer, a van called "The Printmobile" took printmaking to outdoor parks and streets in the greater metropolitan area, offering on-the-spot experience to children. PMW documentation shows impromptu print classes held in Riverside Park, Central Park and on Harlem's Streets.

Each artist who participated at PMW was requested to leave prints for The Print Collection as a documentation of his or her work. Since 1971, many artists left several impressions or entire editions to benefit PMW, because funded programs subsidized them. The Collection numbers over 12,000 prints, serving as an educational reference and record of contemporary printmaking, as well as a source of sales. Continually growing, it reflects widely diverse cultural traditions and contemporary experimental techniques in lithography, intaglio, and relief. The Exhibition Program derived from the Print Collection, and functioned on an international scale. It sent out shows at the request of institutions, schools, galleries and museums, and staged on-site projects in the editioning room hallway-cum-gallery.

PMW was well known for its open, informal, and accommodating atmosphere. Artists dropped in continuously, to visit with Blackburn, show him their work, discuss their projects, and arrange to work at his PMW. He was on premises as much as possible, and, by the mid-1980s when he himself was not printing, he was overseeing the entire operation, from the editions to the classes to the independent artists to the fundraising and administration. Blackburn was also well known for attending artworld openings and functions nearly every evening; he was continuously reaching out and inviting people to visit the PMW. Like Tatyana Grosman, he emphasized the production and the needs of the artists; he was never strong administratively and many people tried to assist in his

offices over the years. The workshop frequently found that it faced a deficit; loyal supporters always rallied, organizing print sales, auctions, benefits, or securing emergency funding that would see PMW through.

As PMW was being incorporated, after more than twenty years in operation, there was both a wave of grassroots art projects responding to the variegated needs of specific, and differing, communities which had formerly been disenfranchised; as well as a flurry of activity in printmaking, specifically- instigated in large part by the "graphics boom" for which ULAE was undoubtedly responsible. On the East Coast, the milieu included Andy Warhol's Factory, which began screen printing his projects in New York in 1962. By 1968, Blackburn was instrumental in helping to found The Lower East Side Print Shop, assisting Eleanor Magid, Federico Ruiz and others in their vision of a community based printshop for the artistic-bohemian area around Tomkins Square Park. In 1969, on the upper east side in El Barrio, or Spanish Harlem, El Taller Alma Boricua (or, the Puerto Rican Workshop) was founded. Marcos Dimas, Adrian García, Armando Soto, Carlos Osorio, Rafael Tufiño, Manuel Otero, and others, would contribute to the work of this print-based organization's community activism for the betterment of this predominantly Puerto Rican neighborhood. Meanwhile, back on the island of Puerto Rico in 1968, the artist Antonio Martorell, who would commute between New York and Puerto Rico, started up his own politically slanted print workshop, Taller Alacrán (Scorpion Workshop) in Santurce.³⁵⁸ Later, in 1979, Blackburn was personally and actively involved in the inception of the Asilah Workshop in

³⁵⁸ Taller Boricua and Taller Alacran need to be seen in the specific tradition of 20th-century Puerto Rican printmaking, including CAP, ICP, and DIVEDCO. There has been much written on this subject; refer to the bibliography for details.

Morocco, bringing entourages from PMW to this artistic coast town in order to run print classes and the facilities. Blackburn traveled to Asilah with Mohammed Khalil, Camille Billops, Richard Nelson, and Emilia Sunyer for the first summer Asilah Workshop. Later, in the 1990s, Blackburn worked closely with an artist, who, after her experience at The Printmaking Workshop, returned to her native South Africa to start the Namibian Workshop, the first of the post-Apartheid era. One of the extremely important contributions that PMW has made is that it has served as a model, inspiring the creation of these and other printshops worldwide.

Other New York organizations, formed during the tumultuous time of the late 1960s and early 1970s, underscore PMW's prescient, leadership role in promoting underserved groups, using art as an artistic-political means of activation, coalition, dignity and education. Another early organization to do so was Spiral, organized by Romare Bearden, Norman Lewis and Hale Woodruff. A forum for African American artists inspired by the lively discussions of the civil rights struggle, Spiral was concerned with the position of the black artist. Spiral's meetings also included Charles Alston, Emma Amos, William Majors, Richard Mayhew, and others; they mounted their sole exhibition in 1965.

In 1968, The Studio Museum in Harlem was founded to promote the art of African Americans. In 1969, El Museo del Barrio was founded to preserve, present and project the art and culture of Puerto Ricans. That same year, Cinque Gallery was begun as a non-profit space to showcase emerging, and diverse, artists. Cinque Gallery was initiated by Romare Bearden, Norman Lewis, and Ernest Crichlow. The Art Workers Coalition and the Black Emergency Cultural Coalition were also formed, to protest the limited

opportunities for the presentation of minority artists at The Metropolitan Museum of Art and The Whitney Museum of American Art. In 1970, The Basement Workshop in Chinatown was founded as an outlet for artists in that community and in 1974, Kenkeleba House is founded on the Lower East Side to showcase diverse artists.

The West Coast was undergoing a similar evolution: as print projects were flowering, so, too, were community-based arts organizations. In 1960, Tamarind was begun by June Wayne in order to train lithography printers in a standard and rigorous way, thus spawning small batches of competent printers for service across the country. Originally based in Los Angeles, and funded by the Rockefeller Foundation, Tamarind eventually moved to Albuquerque where it aligned with The University of New Mexico. By 1962, Crown Point Press for intaglio was founded by Kathan Brown in Oakland, California. Gemini Ltd. was started up in Los Angeles in 1965, by Ken Tyler. Originally known for its flawlessly smooth surface, high-tech lithography and screen printing, it spawned Gemini GEL (Graphic Editions Ltd.). Stanley Grinstein and Sidney Felsen broke with Tyler in 1967 to start their own enterprise. In 1973, Tyler moved cross-country to establish Tyler Graphics in Bedford, NY. Meanwhile, in California, the Chicano movement sparked a number of grass-roots print projects, including La Raza Graphic Center (San Francisco, 1971), Self-Help Graphics (Los Angeles, 1972), and the Mission Cultural Center/Mission Gráfica workshop (San Francisco, 1976).³⁵⁹

³⁵⁹ There has also been considerable scholarship on the Chicano graphic movements. Refer to the bibliography for details.

Blackburn's early experience with the Harlem groups like "306" provided him with a powerful example of what happened when different ages, expertises, and social strata mixed in an artistic atmosphere. His experience with the WPA shaped his strong belief in the power of bringing the arts to disenfranchised communities. As a first-hand beneficiary of the socially conscious program, Blackburn knew how such a forum could make a difference. From his positive experiences with the WPA and the Harmon Foundation, he believed that the government and philanthropic organizations in fact had a responsibility to aid in such projects as his workshop. In 1971, when PMW was incorporated, the civil rights struggles had fomented an atmosphere that reinforced his expectation of governmental, corporate and foundation support.

From the beginning, The Printmaking Workshop attracted artists from diverse artistic and cultural backgrounds. Blackburn has always focused on encouraging artists of color, visiting international artists, and emerging artists. Through the vehicle of printmaking, he invited them to interact with each other, to learn about each other, and in doing so, to learn about themselves. Dr. Mary Schmidt Campbell once said, "Bob Blackburn created the pluralistic community."³⁶⁰ A significant portion of PMW's programs focus on the encouragement of artists of color, and exchange with visiting international artists. Often called "The Little United Nations," PMW's reputation has sparked worldwide participation. In addition to the special focus he has placed on African American, Latino/Latin American American, Asian American, and Native American printmakers, Blackburn has developed relationships with communities of Caribbean artists, South and Central American artists, North-

³⁶⁰ Dr. Mary Schmidt Campbell, opening remarks at the *Artists of Color* exhibition, Hillwood Art Museum, Long Island, January 15, 1992, videotape.

Sub-Saharan, and South African artists, Eastern and Central European artists, Soviet artists, and Asian artists. Emma Amos has written, "Introductions are a major part of the Workshop's business. Bob *makes room* for artists. He makes people feel at home at the Workshop. He calls it 'Hands across the sea'."³⁶¹

Blackburn has expressed his philosophy: "I think most of our learning was sitting down at the coffee table with Von Wicht and Will and Ronald and drinking coffee and working together. That's why I believe in that."³⁶²

Romare Bearden had a long-standing relationship with Robert Blackburn.³⁶³ They first met sometime around 1936 in Harlem; at that time, Bearden was twenty-four and Blackburn was sixteen. At that time, both Bearden and Blackburn attended meetings at "306," and the two produced work at The Harlem Community Art Center between 1937 and 1939. Simultaneously, in 1940, the two artists had studios at 33 West 125th Street. After the early years in Harlem, Bearden and Blackburn continued to follow remarkably similar trajectories. Bearden attended the Art Students League from 1936 to 1937; Blackburn attended from 1941 to 1943. Bearden went to Paris on the GI Bill in 1950; Blackburn was in Paris in 1952. Back in New York City, Bearden struggled to have a successful career as an artist while Blackburn struggled to

³⁶¹ Emma Amos, *Art in Print: A Tribute to Robert Blackburn*, exhibition catalogue (New York: The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, 1984).

³⁶² Robert Blackburn. Paul Cummings interview, 31.

³⁶³ This section on Romare Bearden was first published as a brochure essay for the exhibition, *Finding the Tone: Romare Bearden's Monotypes and Robert Blackburn's Printmaking Workshop*, (New York: Lori Bookstein Fine Arts, 2000). The exhibition highlighted Bearden's *Jazz* series of monotypes (ca.1978 - 1979) as well as the *Caribbean* series (ca.1981 - 1983).

create a workspace that would democratically serve all printmakers. Through the years, Bearden and Blackburn remained friends and artistic colleagues. Traveling in the same circles, they knew many of the same artists, writers, and musicians. Bearden was one of the original Trustees for The Printmaking Workshop at its incorporation in 1971; he served on the Board until his death in 1988. For a period of time, between 1974 and 1983, the two collaborated artistically, during the production of monotypes that Romare Bearden made with Robert Blackburn at The Printmaking Workshop.

By 1961, Bearden was showing with Cordier & Eckstrom Gallery (then located at 978 Madison Avenue in New York). His collages were well received in *The New York Times* and *The Herald Tribune*, and he had works in the Museum of Modern Art and John F. Kennedy's pre-Inaugural suite at the Carlyle Hotel. In 1963, he was one of the founders of the Spiral group, who met at Bearden's Canal Street loft. In 1964, Bearden showed his acclaimed *Projections* series at Cordier & Eckstrom and the Corcoran Gallery in Washington D.C. By 1967, he was able to completely retire from his continuing part-time work with the Department of Social Services, and devote himself to his art production. This period in the late 1960s was tremendously productive. In 1969 he founded Cinque Gallery with Norman Lewis and Ernest Crichlow.

When Bearden initially came to work at The Printmaking Workshop in 1974, it was located at 248 W. 23rd Street. According to art historian and curator Gail Gelburd, Bearden's initial contact with printmaking was through the late artist William Majors, an accomplished intaglio printer who participated in the Spiral

group with Bearden.³⁶⁴ He showed Bearden the etching process sometime during the 1960s. Master Printer Mohammad Omer Khalil has stated that Bearden did not have much experience with printmaking when he began his work at PMW, but he went on to produce collographs, etchings, monotypes, and lithographs.³⁶⁵ The first thing Blackburn taught Bearden was the collograph process (a relief print composed of textured materials, attached to a backing, inked and printed). Bearden made at least two small editions on his own. Khalil's recollection is that Bearden produced the collographs *The Street*, which incorporated a mythological subject (horse, knight, trees, etc.), and one abstract collograph, which was not editioned. The first etching Bearden made at The Printmaking Workshop was *Tropical Flowers*, a print produced for the benefit of the Lincoln Community Center, which Khalil printed. Bearden made etchings and photo etchings at PMW with Khalil as well as with Master Printer Kathy Caraccio. By 1975, Khalil had produced the key plate for Bearden's *The Train* (Illustration 78). However, he did not proof or print it. Master Printer Kathy Caraccio proofed it in color, supervised making further plates, and printed the edition. Caraccio recalls that she was working with Emily Trevor (who had also worked previously with Khalil) during the 3rd move of PMW's space, sometime in 1975 or 1976, to the 3rd Floor of 114 West 17th Street. Caraccio states that they had begun the complex printing of *The Train* (a color photoetching, with a viscosity roll-up) at one shop, and completed it at the new shop space, in the first private editioning room which was built into the loft—even before there was

³⁶⁴ Gail Gelburd, *A Graphic Odyssey: Romare Bearden As Printmaker* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992). This was confirmed to me by Susan Stedman, Major's wife, in telephone interview, January 2000.

³⁶⁵ Mohammed Omer Khalil. Telephone conversation with the author, January 2000.

viable electricity or running water.³⁶⁶ Caraccio remembers printing the edition by daylight, and bringing in buckets of water from another floor. Linda Cunningham and Emily Trevor participated in the intaglio work, as well as Fish, Wheeler Co., Inc., who created halftone screens for Bearden's photo etchings. Herb Wheeler (who died in 1991) was introduced to Bearden by Norman Lewis. Wheeler's company created the many halftone screens of the images from which Bearden wanted to create prints. For example, the collage on paper, *The Train* (1974), germinated the print version of *The Train*. The collaged image was photographed and transformed into a variety of patterned halftone screens, which provided the many textures that can be seen in the prints. Bearden cut these different halftone films up and re-collaged them back together, re-constituting the image. The transformed image was photographed again to make a continuous film, which was transferred onto a copper plate to produce the printing plate.

Caraccio recollects that they proofed this single "key" plate in black and white on paper. Then, Bearden tried a variety of watercolor washes on top of it in order to fix the color scheme. The printers were given the watercolor version as a *bon a tirer* (BAT) and they then created the appropriate aquatints that would provide these areas of color. Caraccio recalls that for the print *The Family* (1976), which was commissioned by Alex Rosenberg and Transworld Art for the national bicentennial, Bearden came in to work with them, indicating areas on the key halftone plate which needed to be burnished out in order to define the images. As well, he did a bit of soft-ground work on top of the photoplate, in

³⁶⁶ Kathy Caraccio. Interview with the author, January 2000.

order to lend hand-drawn line areas which further developed aspects that had become muddled in the collaged halftone patterns.

Khalil also worked on two more photoetchings for Bearden that came through Blackburn and PMW, including a very large photoetching and *Jamming at the Savoy*, which was sponsored by June Kelly for exhibition at The Brooklyn Museum. Blackburn and Khalil have both noted that Joseph Kleinman, a printer located in New Jersey, also printed lithographs for Bearden, while Caraccio remembers that Orlando Condeso and Edgar Soberon were involved in serigraph printing for Bearden. Bearden also made an artist's book at PMW in 1983 for The Limited Edition Book Club. The pages include single, lithographed Bearden images, with accompanying text.

In the mid-1970s, Bearden produced the double series, *Of the Blues*. Nineteen collages were completed by 1975; the *Second Chorus* monotypes were completed in 1976. This group of monotypes include images of orchestras, single musicians (sometimes iconic, and sometimes personalities); they include images of New York, New Orleans' "Storyville," Chicago, and Kansas City. Both series were exhibited at Cordier & Eckstrom in 1976.

Blackburn has stated that Bearden produced approximately one hundred monotypes at PMW, sporadically, between 1976 and the mid-1980s. They were created from two sizes of Plexiglas, thirty by forty inches and twenty-two by thirty inches," with oil-based printing inks and benzene solvent. Cordier & Eckstrom financed the monotypes. A monotype (or monoprint) is a direct printmaking process that yields one-of-a-kind works. Artists commonly use Plexiglas as the matrix. The process involves hand-painting, inking, drawing or wiping the

surface for each print individually. The worked plate is then covered with paper and passed through an intaglio press, resulting in a unique work. A monotype can at times yield a second, very light impression called a “ghost.” Frequently artists print the monotype, and then work back into the surface (which retains the traces of the painted image) to get similar impressions or variations on the image in their further prints. According to Blackburn, Romare Bearden came to PMW prepared to work on Saturdays and occasional Sundays during this time period:

He brought his arsenal of materials: photographic reproductions he clipped from newspapers and magazines from which he wished to work. He had his favorite private editioning studio in the northwest corner of the loft at 114 West 17th Street where he tried to focus on his work. He would come in with his little bag of photographs, and he would work, using them as a stimulus. I, being open—that was my contribution—I let him do whatever he wanted, and I would collaborate with him in terms of preparing the plates, rolling up different colors, etc. And then he would draw into them, collage them, and incorporate them, and he was excited, and I saw that, and I respected that . . . I didn't say: you can't do this, you can't do that . . . I didn't disturb him. He knew what he wanted! I can see him sitting there, cutting something . . . he was the 'creative mind,' he was able to see himself growing . . . He realized what he needed—but he used whatever he got . . . The collaboration created the environment from which he was able to make his monotypes. As he was doing it, he would see things, and I'd say 'look!' and he would say, 'oh, yeah!' and then he would elaborate on it.³⁶⁷

Later, Bearden added collage elements to some of the finished monotypes. As well, he began working in a collage-related manner while actually printing the

³⁶⁷ Robert Blackburn. Interview with the author, January 8, 2000. First published in *Finding the Tone*.

monotypes. For example, he worked with stencils of heads, hands, and instruments, which he cut out, inked, placed and printed while printing the monotypes; these re-usable stencils were rearranged and repeated in different prints. This is evident in the monotype, *Jazz at Montreux*, for which the paper stencils have been preserved (Illustration 79 a-b). Blackburn has called these stencils “a natural outgrowth of the collage process.” Many of the stencils in fact seem to derive from iconography that can be found in his original collages. In a 1986 interview with Bearden, Gwendolyn Wells astutely observes that monotype and collage are kindred processes in that they both indirect.³⁶⁸ As well, Bearden thought in a reverse fashion, using printmaking in the service of his collage. In the fall of 1982, PMW Master Printer Marjorie Hunt Van Dyke monoprinted a group of 30” x 40” sheets of BFK Rives in flat colors for Bearden. He wanted these monoprinted sheets to cut up and use in his collages.

In his monotypes, Bearden used splashes of the solvent benzene (which cleans oil-based inks by dissolving them) in order to get washy, spreading effects on his inked surfaces, as seen in *Jazz Group*, *Ellington Sounds* and *Piano Player*. Here, the benzene drops dilute and move the color, indicating sound, motion, and depth. Additionally, Bearden used rainbow rolls, a technique where different color inks are laid side by side and rolled up, creating a smoothly gradated color on the roller which then transfers the color-field effect to the Plexiglas printing surface. A horizontal rainbow roll of pink, gray and green can be seen in *Trumpet, Trombone, and Dancer*, while a vertical rainbow roll is the backdrop for *The Vixen*.

³⁶⁸ Romare Bearden. Interview by Gwendolyn Wells. Published in Myron Schwartzman’s *Romare Bearden: His Life & Art* (New York: Abrams, 1990).

Blackburn has stated that the themes to which Bearden confined himself—such as *Mecklenburg*, *Storyville*, *Jazz* and the late *Caribbean* scenes—allowed him a certain freedom to improvise within the limitations. Perhaps Blackburn is able to understand this because he has done a similar thing with the theme of the still life. Blackburn relates that Bearden was attracted to the luminosity, vitality, and speed of painting on Plexiglas; he relished the fluid, vibrantly-colored images in contrast to the slower process of collage or photo etching, through which he produced his very well-known, complex, crystalline and Cubistic images. Bearden has spoken about how much he enjoyed working with thinned-down oils that allowed the surface to “sparkle.”³⁶⁹ In the monotypes, he often printed with part of the paper blocked out so that such an “open space” remained. This effect is used to create the space that stands for the piano in *Ellington Sounds*. The emphasis on the breathing image reveals Bearden’s powerful relationship to the space, the paper. Additionally, the monotype effects were well suited to his *Jazz* themes. The quick sketchiness and bold swathes of color, coupled with the spreading blotches of solvent, lent an immediacy, a presence to the work—the synesthetic effect of sound vibrations rippling through the air.

Bearden was powerfully affected by music, and has recalled specific moments of music and printmaking converging. For example, his monotype, *Portrait of Max: In Sounds, Rhythms, Colors and Silences* (1985), is a very abstracted, open grid work. The musician who inspired the work, Max Roach, has spoken about it in terms of pulse and silence. Bearden recalled working at PMW when a recording by Roach and Clifford Brown came on the radio: “I just took a brush

³⁶⁹ Ibid.

and painted the sound, the color rhythms, and the silences on a big sheet of plastic using a volatile benzene medium which dries within four or five minutes. Then I pressed the paper over it and made this oil-on-paper."³⁷⁰

Blackburn has linked Bearden's monotypes to his deep understanding of the jazz process:

He had a mind that could pick up on the different strands of things. He was a musician too, you know, and he lived in Harlem, and he *felt* Harlem. He came out of the Harlem Renaissance . . . He stretched when he was working with me. I wouldn't say that I was responsible for it, I was just there to say: look, let's do this. He didn't really care what he used. He worked with a brush right on the acetates, or the plates if necessary, and he pulled out of it these images that were expressive of his experience as black artist in Harlem . . . He knew musicians, and musicians would always come up to see him . . . It was *our* music and we loved it. It belonged to us . . . If you listen to musicians talk about their work, you realize that they have to find their tone, find what they want to say, and I think that's where it comes from: the improvisational nature of jazz is translated to the improvisational nature of these images . . .³⁷¹

On the other hand, Blackburn, who was also very broadly interested in music—although not specifically jazz—knew jazz well and understood its important place within African American life in general. Blackburn has always been more interested in classical music, as well as various ethnic musical practices, like Indian ragas, etc. He stated, "I don't think you can equate jazz music with any kind of specific painting, I think it would be a mistake if you make an

³⁷⁰ Ibid., 287.

³⁷¹ Robert Blackburn. Interview with the author.

interpretation of what you hear in the music, or you make a translation. The music is a . . . kind of personal stimulus."³⁷²

In the last two decades of his life, Bearden received many accolades.³⁷³ Of his work with Blackburn, Bearden has written: "So many of us who have made prints with him are grateful to Robert Blackburn for his help and inspiration, and grateful too that he continues to practice his craft, always enlarging its scope. And above all, we have the highest respect for his artistic integrity and his humanity."³⁷⁴ As one of the leading African American artists, Bearden's legacy strongly impacted The Printmaking Workshop community. There was tremendous excitement at PMW whenever he printed there, despite the fact that Robert Blackburn and PMW were not mentioned in the exhibition of his monotypes at Cordier & Eckstrom.³⁷⁵ The film entitled *Bearden on Bearden*, (1979 or 1980), co-directed by Billie Allen and Nelson Breen, with photography

³⁷² Robert Blackburn. Paul Cummings interview, 39.

³⁷³ Bearden was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters (1966) and the National Institute of Arts and Letters (1972). He co-authored two books: with Carl Holty, *The Painter's Mind: A Study of the Relations of Structure and Space in Painting* (1969), and with Harry Henderson, *Six Black Masters of American Art* (1972), for which he had received a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1970. He was honored with a retrospective at The Museum of Modern Art, New York (1971). In 1973, the Beardens began building a house on the French Caribbean island of St. Martin, and he initiated the *Island Scenes*, as well as works about the *Obeah* religion, practiced in the Caribbean. He produced series in the late 1970s on themes including the *Odyssey*, *Mecklenburg County*, *Pittsburgh* and *Harlem*. Bearden completed the *Jazz* series from 1978-1979, and the *Caribbean* series from 1981-1983. In 1979, the retrospective *Romare Bearden: 1970-1980* was held at the Mint Museum, located in Bearden's hometown of Charlotte, NC. The exhibit travelled to Jackson, Mississippi; Baltimore, Maryland; Richmond, Virginia; and the Brooklyn Museum in New York. By this time, Bearden had received numerous honorary doctorates and awards, culminating with the National Medal of the Arts, presented to him by President Ronald Reagan (1987).

³⁷⁴ Romare Bearden, *Art in Print: A Tribute to Robert Blackburn*, exhibition catalogue (New York: The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, 1984).

³⁷⁵ With the exception of the Bookstein exhibition for which this section was originally commissioned, Bearden's monotypes have always been referred to consistently as "oil on paper," beginning with their debut at Cordier & Eckstrom in 1976. Perhaps was due to some underlying sense that monoprints were less valuable than what sounded like a painting.

by Frank Stewart, documents Bearden enjoying his monoprinting experience at PMW, and it shows the close working relationship that Bearden and Blackburn shared. Many artists at PMW tested Bearden's stencil monotype method and developed upon it. For example, both Michael Kelly Williams and Robin Holder have pushed the process, teaching it to succeeding generations. Even Blackburn himself did an experimental suite of approximately ten monoprints between 1976 and 1984, in which he also using paper stencils (Illustration 80 a-b). Atypical of Blackburn's oeuvre, these monoprints were, like Bearden's, figurative, and used repeated imagery of a two- or three-person group. However, unlike Bearden's essentially ebullient images, Blackburn's monoprints were executed in blacks, whites, and greys, stiff groups of diverse faces peering off the page, with titles including *Fear* and *What is Apartheid?* These seemingly political images, executed by Blackburn in his sixties, seemed to contemplate racism on an international scale. Another possibility is the images were initiated by the widespread media attention that the Sudanese famine was receiving that year; in New York, the arts community staged a number of benefit exhibitions and relief auctions. Blackburn sent work to at least one such exhibition, held at New York University's Loeb Student Center.

In October of 1987, Robert Blackburn prepared new papers for Bearden, using washy watercolor grounds instead of a heavy rainbow roll. Bearden soon took sick and never returned to PMW to print on those papers. Romare Bearden passed away on March 12, 1988, at age seventy-six. The washed papers remain—with the photo etching plates, stencil cut-outs, sketches and working proofs (some cut, some drawn upon)—in the archives of The Printmaking Workshop's print collection.

From the late 1960s through the 1970s, Blackburn expanded his technical and creative repertoire with experimentation in intaglio and a more extended examination of relief printing. Blackburn continued his relationship with Krishna Reddy, whom he had met in Paris, during one of Reddy's first trips to the United States in 1964. In a party at Stanley William Hayter's home in New York, Blackburn again encountered Reddy, whom he invited to teach at PMW. By 1968, Reddy was teaching at PMW. Reddy, renowned for the development of viscosity printmaking techniques, went even further by sculpting the metal plates. By working and teaching at PMW, Reddy introduced viscosity printing to American printmakers. Blackburn has noted that "Krishna's first arrival in New York in 1964 witnessed the flowering of new ideas in his work, ideas which he had earlier researched but had not organized into a cohesive system. From this point onward, the concept of the sculpted plate, with its surface dictating color nuances, character and configuration was the basis for the final print."³⁷⁶ Aside from offering Reddy a base from which to teach his ideas, Blackburn himself took Reddy's classes, which were offered through the 1970s. Printmaking Workshop documentation from some time in the mid-1970s shows Blackburn deep in conversation with Reddy over the plate, *Organic Thing*, AKA *Purple Stones*, 1979 (Illustration 81), while Kathy Caraccio prints in the background. Blackburn also produced a second, untitled intaglio plate, which was a circular shape composed of interlocking pieces, reminiscent of a yin-yang pattern (Illustration 82). This image seems to be derived from a woodcut image, based in a tile pattern, that Blackburn made in Morocco in 1978, entitled *Asilah Oui* (Illustration 83). This was translated to a lithographic image, *Jus Jazz* (Illustration 84) in which the Moroccan image is couched in a sandy seaside

³⁷⁶ Robert Blackburn, "Krishna Reddy: Teacher," *Krishna Reddy: A Retrospective*, exhibition catalogue, (Bronx: Bronx Museum of the Arts, 1981), 13.

landscape reminiscent of Asilah. Blackburn travelled to Asilah, Morocco, to help set up a printmaking workshop there. During his time in Morocco, and immediately after, he produced several small intaglio images that he worked over with subtle areas of aquatint.

During this long period from the late 1960s through to the early 1980s, Blackburn began to work slowly on a series of related, large- and small-scale woodcuts. Perhaps his work in sculptural relief intaglio and his investigation of aquatint textures during this period prompted Blackburn to begin thinking in terms of woodblock relief printing. His increasing interest in breaking down images and abstract compositions into flat areas of color certainly lent themselves to this technique. Blackburn began experimenting with woodcuts in the late 1960s. One early example, from 1969, *Blue and White* (Illustration 85) shows Blackburn reverting to comfortable ground, creating a still life subject similar to his earlier, Cubistic explorations. An oval tabletop tips up to display its contents. Deceptively simply, Blackburn created a sense of a "vase" and other objects through two shades of blue and the corralled white of the paper. Quickly, he became much more proficient, creating large-scale, abstract images. Over the decade, he worked and reworked several large blocks, creating an interlocked series of relief images that were bolder and simpler in color, masterfully graphic as they played with the interchangeable possibilities and qualities of the wood blocks themselves.

For example, Blackburn worked on *Blue Things*, 1963-70 (Illustration 86) over a long period. In this image, solid cells of royal blue, as well as stripes of light blue shot through with white, play off a true orange and earthy red. This work reads as a horizon line, or some other organic image such as blood cells. The

edition as well as color variants signed on top or bottom continues to insist on Blackburn's play with the "flat-bed" notion. There are virtually no discussions of Blackburn's late woodcut works, but one that does exist unwittingly also reads this image as contiguous with the earth; that is to say, although approaching the content from a very different perspective, one historian has produced an early reading of the piece that intuitively understands its relationship to the horizontal plane rather than the vertical picture plane. While initially Richard Powell writes of a window-like orientation, containing "the dramatic horizon of light blue and white, separating a canopy of Yoruba blues," he concludes that "*Blue Thing (sic)* is a visualization of crossing over the rivers, the rocks and/or the races."³⁷⁷ By instinctively re-situating the work to a final resting place underfoot, Powell understood Blackburn's relationship to the flatbed picture plane.

Later, Blackburn re-cycled the blocks from this image to create a complex set of entirely different images. For *Miss Unity*, 1974/1996 (Illustration 87 a-b), he carved further into the stepping-stone shapes and printed them in lemons and tangerine, their feathered edges giving a feeling of pulsation. He then re-oriented these blocks vertically, joining them abruptly by placing the outer edges at the center, butting them together yet leaving them slightly askew, with a visible white rift splitting the image slightly off-center just as in his celebrated lithograph, *Faux Pas*. Blackburn succeeds in producing a new work that again references the process, in this case, of the woodcut. The fissure between the wooden slabs calls attention to its own materiality, the process of registration,

³⁷⁷ Richard J. Powell, "I, Too, Am America, Protest and Black Power: Philosophical Continuities in Prints by Black Americans, *Black Art: An International Quarterly*, 2 (Spring 1978), 4-25.

while the title perhaps alludes to both the printing glitch and racial tension. He also printed this re-carved and re-connected version horizontally, in variants of charcoal greys, blacks and chocolate browns. These were more seamlessly joined, connecting across the center and the large pendant biomorphs.

Blackburn entitled these, *Jay Hawk Tawk*, 1974 (Illustration 88). Blackburn also re-cycled the four corner relief areas from *Blue Things*, pressing them into use in *Purple Flash*, 1972 (Illustration 89) and *Yellow Flash*, 1972 (Illustration 90). In these, he creates a heavenly space where the seam of the blocks reads like a revelatory crack in the heavens. It registers as a sinuous purple lightening bolt or a jewel-like yellow diamond embraced by red, respectively. Blackburn uses this practice of re-cycling and re-visioning in another group of large related woodcuts, including *Space Shape*, AKA *Kiss Shape*, 1970 (Illustration 91), *Sunburst*, 1967-1969 (Illustration 92), and *Walk in the Shade*, 1970-1974 (Illustration 93).

Blackburn also employed this in-depth mode of thinking as he worked on the interesting, small woodblock series from the mid- to late-1970s, which includes *Three Ovals* (Illustration 94) and *Three Ovals Blue Green, Red Inside*, and, finally, *Woodscape*, 1984 (Illustration 95). In this series of prints, Blackburn starts with a very simple, black and white image of the three wobbling ovals of the title, framed apart into sections by black lines of varying widths. Areas of this break down into shading patterns that both hearken back to his earlier deployment of the language of Cubism, while revealing the texture of the wood itself. Hatching tempers solid black, producing recession in contrast with a sharp white outline around a heavy solid black area. After *Three Ovals* and *Three Ovals Blue Green*, Blackburn produced some working prints where he filled certain areas with directly printed woodgrain in brown ink. This

experiment led Blackburn to re-think these blocks, creating the new work, *Woodscape*. *Woodscape* incorporates the same image as *Three Ovals*, oriented vertically. In this case, Blackburn took the dominant outlines of *Three Ovals* and used them as incisions into a grainy block. That is to say, what was black-printed relief areas in *Three Ovals*, in *Woodscape* is defined only by outline incisions marking the shapes. He prints this textural crimson block on grey, set off by black areas. This print, then, is transmogrified into a visual field which, while it could reference landscape, most certainly references the physical lumber of the matrix.

In addition to Blackburn modeling PMW on the Harlem-WPA organizations in which he participated, his later experience at ULAE also affected and inspired him. He believed in serving artists just as Tatyana Grossman did; however, he never restricted his attention to a few select artists, but held a more democratic vision of everyone's potential. And while PMW sought to serve a social function, it very much also sought to serve an artistic one; that is to say, Blackburn had an affinity for certain types of artists and work, and he was very much interested in the quality of the productions done at this shop. While he was open-minded about the types of work people produced at PMW, his admiration of ULAE, and his commitment to the value of certain types of productions can most clearly be seen through elaborate book and portfolio projects that PMW sponsored. One of the first major projects funded by NEA after The Printmaking Workshop's incorporation was the important portfolio, *Impressions: Our World* (1974). This grouping of African American artists also contained a foreword by Romare Bearden and a text by Edmund Barry Gaither. Emma Amos, Benny Andrews, Vivian Brown, Eldzier Cortor, Mohammed Khalil, Norman Lewis, Mavis Pusey, Vincent Smith and John Wilson were invited to PMW and offered assistance

and space. Under Blackburn's active organization, these artists created intaglio images that were editioned at and by PMW in silvery grey, black and white, and marketed to major national institutions as well as smaller ethnic organizations. The purpose was to interject high-quality prints by African Americans into mainstream collections. (Both The Museum of Modern Art, New York, and the Library of Congress have these portfolios in their collections) As well, the portfolio was marketed to universities and community centers, for which it would serve as an example and point of pride. The portfolio was, in many ways, a standard print suite, with an embossed, fabric covered slipcase, textual introductions by prominent individuals, and standardized, well-printed impressions of each image nestled between tissue sheets. However, it may well be the first of this kind of portfolio done completely by African Americans in the U.S. As such, this early portfolio project is indicative of Blackburn's vision of the institutional role of PMW. Blackburn made the sponsorship of artists of color his first priority, and what he offered was access to the high standards of Western printmaking. *Impressions: Our World* highlights Blackburn's perception of his role as an agent and conscience in American printmaking.

In the early 1980s, Vincent FitzGerald began producing artist's books at The Printmaking Workshop. In Blackburn, FitzGerald found an artist who understood these ambitious collaborative efforts, and Blackburn welcomed the production at his shop. He was interested in the literary relationships FitzGerald's projects teased out, as well as the experimental and luxurious details of each project. For nearly a decade, the Vincent FitzGerald book projects were an unofficial but ongoing "division" of The Printmaking Workshop, with some project or another occupying one of the editioning rooms at PMW. Blackburn supported these projects by offering editioning rooms free of charge,

and partially subsidized printing labor. These were high quality, elaborate publications that paired an artist with a writer, or a new translation of a text, in the tradition of lavish European *livres d'artistes*. Primarily intaglio, they also employed lithography, hand-worked portions, hand-laid typography, photo processes, cut or unfolding portions, carefully stitched and bound covers, and luxurious slipcases. The first project, completed at PMW in 1985, was entitled the *Cote d'Azur Triangle* by Harry Kondoleon. This project took nearly two years to complete and was illustrated by Mark Beard and printed by Marjorie Hunt Van Dyke, Jennifer Porter and Agnes Murray. Beard also completed a project, *Moses and the Shepard: Jalaluddin Mohammed Rumi Poems* in 1987.³⁷⁸ FitzGerald was a generous participant in the Printmaking Workshop community, and in 1988, he traveled with Van Dyke, Weil, and Blackburn to Sweden for the opening of an exhibition of book projects held at Anders Tornberg Gallery. There, as a guest, Blackburn editioned the simple black and white lithograph, *Stockholm*, 1988. The following year, 1989, Blackburn was invited as a guest artist to the Fabric Workshop in Philadelphia, where he completed three large, abstract screenprints in blue, yellow and pink. These were printed on linen in an edition of three, and stretched like canvases.

³⁷⁸ Other Vincent FitzGerald book productions which were, in part, printed at PMW included Maurice Grosser: *Eighteen Portraits by Virgil Thomson* (1985), Susan Weil: *Handbook* (1985), Susan Weil and Marjorie Hunt Van Dyke: *James Joyce's The Epiphanies* (1987), Joan Vennum: *Seven. Close and Distant* (1986), Neil Welliver: *Ibsen* (1986-1987), Ted Kurahara: *To the Blue Wall, David Rattray Poems* (1993), Joan Busing: *A Woman's Love and Life, Robert Schumann's Song Cycle with Eight Poems by Adelbert Von Chamisso* (1989), and Judith Turner: *The Parthenon Pediments* (1993); additionally, he produced a number of prints by individual artists including Deborah Freedman, Annette Senneby, and Peter Thomson. While FitzGerald primarily collaborated with PMW Master Printer Marjorie Hunt Van Dyke, his complex projects often incorporated other printers, including Lothar Osterberg, and the bookbinder Zahre Partovi.

As well, in the mid-1980s with funding from the Jerome Foundation, PMW began a formal competition for Fellowships. These annual slots allowed the production of the portfolios, *Sixteen Artists* (1982-1983), and *18/40* (1984-1985). At roughly the same time, PMW instigated annual "Minority Artists Fellowships," targeted to emerging African American, Latin American, Asian American, or Native American artists, who could apply for one year of free shop time and classes in printmaking. Approximately ten were selected by jury each year; at the end of the period, a group portfolio, with slipcase and text introduction by a commissioned writer, was coordinated and produced by PMW. Each Fellow received a portfolio and PMW attempted to market the rest. These portfolios have included *Emanations* (1983-1984), *Atmospheric Burn* (1985), *Untitled* (1987-1988), *Etched, Drawn and Embossed* (1989), *Eleven Spaces* (1990).

After the mid-1960s, following a peak of creativity, Blackburn turned his attention to PMW. After 1971, there is no doubt that he sacrificed much in the way of his personal creativity for the sake of administering the Workshop. Nonetheless, even in the 1970s and 1980s, Blackburn produced important prints that maintained a vigorous dialogue with the print medium. His works during the 1970s continue his innovative use of lithography, paring it down to a black and white calligraphic minimalism tinged by his interest in Asian ink drawing. At the same time, his work broadened in scope. Blackburn began

producing powerful abstract woodcuts, a suite of strikingly experimental monoprints, and investigations of intaglio techniques. Even in the 1990s and more recently, Blackburn continues to work. He has enjoyed productive Guest Artist Residencies at the Fabric Workshop (Philadelphia, 1989), Dieu Donne paper and printmaking facility (New York, 2001), and this past year (2002) he completed a mosaic design for the New York City Metropolitan Transit Authority, to be installed in the 116th Street Subway Station.

CONCLUSION

PMW remained at 114 West 17th Street for over ten years, until December 1987 when it relocated just east, across Sixth Avenue to 55 West 17th Street, again on the Third Floor. In its later years—with the escalating New York rents, as Old Navy stationed itself on the formerly ramshackle Sixth Avenue—and as Blackburn got older, PMW would move again in September 1997 to 19 West 24th Street, Ninth Floor (between Broadway and Sixth Avenue). Finally, in 2001-2002, PMW undertook the process of merging with The Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts (EFA), located at 323 West 39th Street. In Blackburn's 81st year, he is making plans for his longtime, maverick and independent PMW to become a program operated by EFA, in order to insure its long-term future viability, by moving it into the building owned and operated by EFA that will provide it with a stable space and an administrative umbrella while preserving PMW's mission and character. As well, a "core" collection of The Printmaking Workshop (including at least one work by each artist who left work there, as well as one copy of each portfolio and artist book), numbering approximately 2,500 items, has been selected, appraised, and deposited with The Library of Congress. The Library of Congress' Department of Prints and Photographs is acquiring this core holding of work. By placing these prints in a public collection, the entwined stories of both Blackburn and The Printmaking Workshop begin to be inserted into the national record of graphics. As histories get written and re-written, this "other" story of printmaking in the United States is of great interest.

Robert Blackburn is one of a very few African American artists of the twentieth century who dedicated his life to printmaking and was a key participant in its development. He is an exemplary "bridge": between the WPA print experience

and the post-war one, between the ideologies of the Harlem Renaissance and those of the greater New York School, between the world of printmaking and that of New York- and European-style painting; between the world of uptown and that of downtown. By looking closely at Blackburn's prints, the story of African American modernism, as it played out in printmaking, can begin to be examined. Blackburn's invisibility in terms of mainstream American printmaking histories is completely baffling, considering his important role.³⁷⁹ An in-depth analysis of the complex, intertextual exchange between African American printmakers and the Mexicans, Social Realists, Abstract Expressionists, Cubists, Taschists/Informelists, and Pop artists has never occurred. In terms of his own work, the fact that Blackburn never conformed to an easily-defined position as a black artist has undoubtedly contributed to the critical inability to assess his achievement. He was not a creator of folk images, nor a primitivist, nor a teller of social tales, nor a spokesperson for Harlem. Blackburn himself pointed this out most astutely when he discussed Tatyana Grosman's advice to him:

One of the things she said to me out there and I remember it, it was important, and that is that she thought I should involve myself with some of the new black movements, because she was very sensitive to that being Jewish and having suffered and seeing her husband suffer and so on. And having experiences even in Russia, being from the intelligentsia and so on, she always had the human concept in life. She said Bob, you should work with people like James Baldwin, who was just coming out at that time, and some of the young people and do something with them in terms of the shocks we've all been through,

³⁷⁹ While I have not spent any time in this dissertation on Ralph Ellison and his idea of African American invisibility, clearly, it can be applied here. This concept has received such widespread discussion, that I find it threatening to become a stereotypical response and thus avoided it as a catch-phrase explanation, but rather attempted to describe it here. See Ralph Ellison, *The Invisible Man*, (New York: Random House, 1952).

oriented to the people who are already sort of established. In other words, that was her role, that I should work on my own identity and all that. And she might be right from certain points of view, but I think she wasn't right for me because I wasn't the person to do it, someone else maybe. *Because my scope was more in her area.* But I thought it was interesting.³⁸⁰ (emphasis mine)

In this comment, Blackburn reveals that he saw himself not as someone leading an ethnic-artistic revolution, but as one whose contribution was in the grand, mainstream print tradition; certainly, he saw himself as a black artist, but, more largely, as an American printmaker. Tatyana's area, Blackburn noted, was to "create good prints, and it was close to my way of thinking which is why I stayed four years."³⁸¹ As we have seen, he was an abstractionist in the French/American tradition, a downtown New York artist, a pioneer of graphic images who maintained technical excellence through his entire, very private life.

In my opinion, Blackburn should occupy his most obvious role: as a graphic artist crucial to the history of American printmaking, not just African American art history, a New York lithographer who was one of the only connective links between the WPA and the graphics boom; in fact, as we have seen, a printmaker whose own creative approach significantly informed the ULAE print production that we know so well. Blackburn's creativity, perseverance and technical mastery helped to forge the well-known ULAE aesthetic, which in itself frequently stands for "quintessential" American modernist printmaking.

³⁸⁰ Robert Blackburn. Paul Cummings interview, 35.

³⁸¹ Ibid., 33-34.

Clearly, Blackburn's work impacted the American graphics revival. He should be considered as one of the most influential printmakers of his generation. It has been the purpose of this study to contextualize his prints within their proper, and larger, *milieu*. In closing, we need to more closely examine how he could have been excluded from the discourse for so long.

APPENDIX I: ROBERT BLACKBURN CATALOGUE

A Preliminary, Chronological Listing of Major Known Works

Dimensions are listed as follows: print size/sheet size; height precedes width.

Abbreviations:

Cochran	Collection of Wesley and Missy Cochran (LaGrange, Georgia)
HB	Hatch-Billops Collection (New York, New York)
Jennings	Collection of Corrine Jennings (New York, New York)
PMW/LOC	The Robert Blackburn Printmaking Workshop Print Collection, Library of Congress, Division of Prints and Photographs (Washington D.C.)
Williams	Collection of Reba and Dave Williams (New York, New York)

1930s

Works by Robert Blackburn listed in a 1934 Exhibition Flyer from the 135th Street Library. This was an exhibition of student work from the Arts Workshop (Charles Alston, Instructor) offered under the auspices of the Harlem Adult Education Committee, with funding from The Harmon Foundation:

Basketball Players, 1934

Oil painting, dimensions and location unknown.

Head of a Boy, 1934

Oil painting, dimensions and location unknown.

Landscape, 1934

Oil painting, dimensions and location unknown.

Islands, 1934

Oil painting, dimensions and location unknown.

The Spainard, 1934

Oil painting, dimensions and location unknown.

Arctic Scene, 1934

Oil painting, dimensions and location unknown.

White Sister, 1934

Oil painting, dimensions and location unknown.

Boy Fishing, 1934

Oil painting, dimensions and location unknown.

Girl in a Red Hat, 1934

Pastel drawing, dimensions and location unknown.

(Untitled), 1934

Papier maché mask, dimensions and location unknown.

Images by Robert Blackburn, reproduced in *The Magpie*, the art and literary magazine of DeWitt-Clinton High School. Some of these are available online at: www.newdeal.feri.org/magpie/archive/author.htm:

School Yard, nd

Drawing, p. 20-21, dimensions and location of original unknown

Reproduced in: *The Magpie*.

Huron, nd

Drawing, dimensions and location of original unknown

Reproduced in: *The Magpie*.

Stone Cutter, nd

Drawing, dimensions and location of original unknown

Reproduced in: *The Magpie*.

(9 untitled works), nd

Drawings to illustrate, "Definition of America" by Stanley Gottheimer '37

dimensions and location of original unknown

Reproduced in: *The Magpie*.

(14 untitled works), nd

Drawings to illustrate, "Morning in Manhattan" by R. Berman

dimensions and location of original unknown

Reproduced in: *The Magpie*.

(2 untitled works), nd

Drawings to illustrate, "I, T'ao" by S.(Stanley) Diamond

dimensions and location of original unknown

Reproduced in: *The Magpie*.

(Untitled), nd

Drawing to illustrate text by Stanley Diamond '38

dimensions and location of original unknown

Reproduced in: *The Magpie*.

(Untitled portraits), nd

Drawings covering a 2-page spread, dimensions and location of original unknown

Reproduced in: *The Magpie*.

Barn, nd

Drawing, page 37, dimensions and location of original unknown

Reproduced in: *The Magpie*.

Reader, nd

Drawing, page 76, dimensions and location of original unknown

Reproduced in: *The Magpie*.

Cloud Watcher, nd

Drawing, page 69, dimensions and location of original unknown

Reproduced in: *The Magpie*.

End Paper, Part 1 and 2, nd

Drawings on the front and back cover versos

dimensions and location of original unknown

Reproduced in: *The Magpie*.

Harlem, nd

Drawing, dimensions and location of original unknown

Reproduced in: *The Magpie*, "Outdoor Issue," June 1936, v. 20, n.2, p. 6.

***Man with Load (AKA The Toiler, Toil).* 1936**

Charcoal and ink drawing, 8 x 10"

Collection: The Harmon Foundation Collection, The Library of Congress, Division of Prints and Photographs, Washington D.C.

Reproduced in: *The Magpie*, "Outdoor Issue," June 1936, v. 20, n.2, 6; Locke, *The Negro in Art* (1940) 105; *United Asia* 5 (June 1953) 182; Dover, *American Negro Art* (1960) 14.***End Paper, Part 1 and 2,* 1937**

Drawings on front and back cover versos, dimensions and location of original unknown

Reproduced in: *The Magpie*, "Man's World Issue," January 1937, v. 21, n. 1.***Title Page* (illustration with hand-lettering done in collaboration with Leonard Michelson), 1937**

Drawing, dimensions and location of original unknown

Reproduced in: *The Magpie*, "Man's World Issue," January 1937, v. 21, n. 1, p. 1.***Tree Cutters,* 1937**

Drawing, dimensions and location of original unknown

Reproduced in: *The Magpie*, "Man's World Issue," January 1937, v. 21, n. 1, np.***Lumberjacks,* 1937**

Drawing, dimensions and location of original unknown

Reproduced in: *The Magpie*, "Man's World Issue," January 1937, v. 21, n. 1, p. 6.***Harlem Traveler* (story and 2 illustrations), 1937**

Drawings, dimensions and location of original unknown

Reproduced in: *The Magpie*, "Man's World Issue," January 1937, v. 21, n. 1, p. 19.***Young America* (story and 2 illustrations), 1937**

Drawings, dimensions and location of original unknown

Reproduced in: *The Magpie*, June 1937, v. 21, n. 2, p. 74.***Big House,* c.1937**

Intaglio, 3/12

Collection: Jennings

Reproduced in: *The Magpie*, June 1937, v. 21, n. 2.***Beginning,* 1938**

Drawing, dimensions and location of original unknown

Reproduced in: *The Magpie*, "Anniversary Issue," January 1938, v. 22, n. 1, p. 5.***Block Dance* (story and 6 illustrations), 1938**

Drawings, dimensions and location of original unknown

Reproduced in: *The Magpie*, "Anniversary Issue," January 1938, v. 22, n. 1, p. 66.***Barns,* 1938**

Drawing, dimensions and location of original unknown

Reproduced in: *The Magpie*, "Anniversary Issue," January 1938, v. 22, n. 1, p. 52.***End Piece,* 1938**

Drawing, dimensions and location of original unknown

Reproduced in: *The Magpie*, "Anniversary Issue," January 1938, v. 22, n. 1, p. 85.***At Home—Beginning,* 1938**

Drawing, dimensions and location of original unknown

Reproduced in: *The Magpie*, "Vagabond Issue," June 1938, v. 22, n. 2, p. 5.

Fresh Fish, 1938

Drawing, dimensions and location of original unknown

Reproduced in: *The Magpie*, "Vagabond Issue," June 1938, v. 22, n. 2, p. 48.

Coal Shute II (AKA Abandoned Coal Shute), 1938

Lithograph, 16.5 x 17.75", location unknown

Reproduced in: *The Magpie*, "Vagabond Issue," June 1938, v. 22, n. 2, p. 64.

Abroad—End Piece, 1938

Drawing, dimensions and location of original unknown

Reproduced in: *The Magpie*, "Vagabond Issue," June 1938, v. 22, n. 2, p. 77.

Refugees (AKA People in a Boat; Five Men in a Boat), 1938-1939

Lithograph, 15.5 x 19.75," edition 8

Collection: Williams (signed "c.1939"); North Carolina Central University Art Museum (Durham, NC, signed "For Guennie from Bob, 1938") 4/8, gift of Christopher Massey.

Reproduced in: *The Magpie*, "Vagabond Issue," June 1938, v. 22, n. 2, 64; Ploski and Marr, *Negro Almanac* (1976) 769; Williams, *Alone in a Crowd*, (1993) 27; Patton, *African-American Art* (1998) 146; Cullen, *NKA/Journal of Contemporary African Art* (2000) 66.

Mike's Place (AKA Cafe Scene), 1938-1939

Lithograph, 9 x 13.5 (or 15.5 x 8.75)," edition 5 or 12

Collection: Williams (signed "Cafe Scene, c.1939, 5/12"); HB

Reproduced in: *The Magpie*, "Vagabond Issue," June 1938, v. 22, n. 2.

Club Room, c.1939 (AKA *Checker Game*), 1939

Lithograph, 15.75 x 20.5 (or 13.25 x 16.25)"

Collection: Williams (signed "to Riva Helfond, 1939")

Reproduced in: *The Magpie*, June 1939, v. 23, n. 2.

Title Page, 1939

Drawing, dimensions and location of original unknown

Reproduced in: *The Magpie*, June 1939, v. 23, n. 2, p. 1.

Beginning, 1939

Drawing, dimensions and location of original unknown

Reproduced in: *The Magpie*, June 1939, v. 23, n. 2, p. 5.

The Arts, 1939

Drawing, dimensions and location of original unknown

Reproduced in: *The Magpie*, June 1939, v. 23, n. 2, p. 32.

Wrestlers, 1939

Drawing, dimensions and location of original unknown

Reproduced in: *The Magpie*, June 1939, v. 23, n. 2, p. 59.

End, 1939

Drawing, dimensions and location of original unknown

Reproduced in: *The Magpie*, June 1939, v. 23, n. 2, p. 81.

Roof Tops (AKA Housetops), 1939

Drawing/lithograph, 11.5 x 16," location of original unknown

Reproduced in: *The Magpie*, June 1939, v. 23, n. 2.

Upper New York, (ca. 1938)

Lithograph, 11.25 x 13.25"

Collection: Howard University, Washington D.C.

Reproduced in: *The Magpie*, June 1939, v. 23, n. 2; Locke, *The Negro in Art* (1940) 126;

Tanner Art Galleries, *Exhibition* (1940); Dover, *American Negro Art* (1960) 34 (with the caption, "Courtesy Barnett Aden Gallery, The possessing land must be possessed").

Works by Robert Blackburn, listed as lithographs, in letter from Mary Beattie Brady to Mrs. Herbert E. Kahn of Chicago, July 17, 1940. Harmon Foundation Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.:

Cafe Composition, 1938-1940

(could be *Mike's Place* or *Cafe Scene*, 1938-1939)

Lithograph, dimensions and location unknown.

Coal Pile, 1938-1940

Lithograph, dimensions and location unknown.

Dry Dock, 1938-1940

Lithograph, dimensions and location unknown.

Farm, 1938-1940

Lithograph, dimensions and location unknown.

Horses in Moonlight, 1938-1939

Lithograph, dimensions and location unknown.

Upper New York No.2, 1938-1940

(could be related to *Upper New York*, ca.1938)

Lithograph, dimensions and location unknown.

The Toiler, 1938-1940

(could be the drawing, *Man with Load*, 1936)

Lithograph (?), dimensions and location unknown.

Man with Mule

(Lithograph?), dimensions and location unknown.

Providence Houses.

(Lithograph?), dimensions and location unknown.

1940s

Youth, ca.1943-1948

Lithograph, 10.25 x 12.5/12.5 x 19"

Collection: PMW/LOC.

Mother & Child, ca.1943-1948

Lithograph, 8.75 x 4.75/12.5 x 9.5"

Collection: PMW/LOC.

Nude, ca.1943-1948 (AKA *Nude Sketch*)

Lithograph, 25 x 19, Proof sheets vary, approximately 29.5 x 24 to 32 x 22"

Collection: PMW/LOC; Cochran.

Seated Nude, ca. 1943-1948

Lithograph, 18 x 14.25/23.5 x 18.25"

Collection: PMW/LOC.

Negro Mother, ca.1948

Ink and charcoal study, approximately 10 x 8"

Collection: Private

Related Work: *Negro Mother*, 1948

Lithograph, dimensions and location unknown

Reproduced in: Donaldson, *Generation '306' - Harlem New York* (1974).

Boy With a Green Head, 1948

Lithograph, 14.5 or 15.5 x 10.5/17 x 22"

Collection: Atlanta University Collection, Clark Atlanta University (Atlanta, GA); Brooklyn Museum of the Arts (Brooklyn, NY); Philadelphia Museum of Art (Philadelphia, PA: dated 1950).

Reproduced in: Dover, *American Negro Art*, (1960) 53; The City University of New York, *The Evolution of Afro-American Artists: 1800-1950* (1967) 46; High Museum of Art, *Highlights* (1973).

Head in Wash, ca. 1948-50

Lithograph, 16 x 12"

Collection: Cochran

Reproduced in: Lekatsas, *An Artistic Friendship in Relief* (1997) 39.

1950s

There are various works on paper from the early 1950s that have not been completely catalogued. These include ink, charcoal and watercolor studies of parks; watercolors and gouaches based on the model and abstract studies; various abstract pencil and ink sketches. Some of these sketches are in private collections, as well as HB . Jennings, and PMW/LOC:

Untitled (AKA Standing Female Nude), ca.1950-1951

Ink and charcoal study, 18 x 15"

Collection: PMW/LOC.

Untitled (AKA Abstract Study), ca.1950-1951

Watercolor study, 18 x 15"

Collection: PMW/LOC

Untitled (AKA Park Study), ca.1950-1951

Wash on paper, 15 x 20"

Collection: PMW/LOC

Untitled (AKA Park Study), ca.1950-1951

Wash on paper, 15 x 20"

Collection: PMW/LOC.

Untitled (Cityscape)

Watercolor, 14.75 x 21"

Collection: PMW/LOC.

Untitled (Landscape with Buildings)

Ink wash, 15 x 19.75/15 x 20"

Collection: PMW/LOC.

Untitled (AKA Still Life Shell), ca.1957

Ink wash with gouache, 23.5 x 18.5"

Collection: PMW/LOC.

Girl in Red, 1950

Lithograph, 18.25 x 12.75/23.25 x 15.5"

Collection: PMW/LOC; Brooklyn Museum of the Arts (Brooklyn, NY).

Reproduced in: The Alternative Museum, *A Life's Work* (1988) 19; Collischan, *Rainbow: Prints from Bob Blackburn's Printmaking Workshop* (1993) 31; Gaither, *American Visions* (Vol. 15, Number 1, February/March 2000) cover; Cullen, *NKA/Journal of Contemporary African Art* (2000) 65.*Still Life*, ca.1950-52

Lithograph, 13.5 x 18.25/16.25 x 23"

Collection: PMW/LOC

My Table, ca.1956

Lithograph, 15 x 11/20.25 x 13"

Collection: PMW/LOC.

Table (AKA Cubist Table), ca. 1957-1958

Intaglio with ink, pencil and watercolor additions, 11.75 x 8.75. Sheets vary, approximately 19.25 x 12.75"

Collection: PMW/LOC; Cochran; HB; Jennings

Reproduced in: Utter, *New Art Examiner* (1993) 37; Lekatsas, *An Artistic Friendship in Relief* (1997) 47.*Table for Two*

Lithograph? dimensions and location unknown

Quiet Instrument, 1958/edition 12

Lithograph, 11.75 x 8.75/19 x 12.5"

Collection: The Library of Congress; Cochran (proof entitled *Odd Ball*).Reprinted in: Acton, *A Spectrum of Innovation: Color in American Printmaking 1890-1960* (1990) 233; Lekatsas, *An Artistic Friendship in Relief* (1997) 44.*Red Pipe (AKA Red Pitcher Still Life)*, 1958

Lithograph, 16.5 x 21.75/20 x 26.25", edition 10

Collection: PMW/LOC; HB; Cochran

Reproduced in: Lekatsas, *An Artistic Friendship in Relief* (1997) 41.*Interior*, 1958

Lithograph, 12 x 9/22.25 x 15", edition 12

Collection: PMW/LOC; Worcester Art Museum (MA)

Reproduced in: Acton, *A Spectrum of Innovation: Color in American Printmaking 1890-1960* (1990) 232.*Red and Black*, 1958

Lithograph, 19 x 13.5/23 x 17.25", edition 12

Collection: PMW/LOC

Reproduced in: Cullen, *NKA/Journal of Contemporary African Art* (2000) 65.*Lemon & Green Jug*, 1959

Lithograph, 11 x 14.5/13.25 x 20", edition 12

Collection: PMW/LOC.

Strange Objects, 1959

Lithograph, 15.75 x 21.75"

Collection: Philadelphia Museum of Art (Philadelphia, PA), Gift of the Print Club.

Reproduced in: Adams, *American Lithographers 1900-1960* (1983) 192; The Alternative Museum, *A Life's Work* (1988) 19.

Dream World, nd
Lithograph? dimensions and location unknown

Blue Wine Bottle, late 1950s
Lithograph, 14 x 16.5"
Collection: Howard University, Gallery of Art (Washington, DC).

Heavy Forms/Pink, 1958
Lithograph, 15.75 x 19.5, Sheets vary to approximately 19 x 26"
Collection: PMW/LOC; Cochran
Reproduced in: Lekatsas, *An Artistic Friendship in Relief* (1997) 37; Cullen, *NKA/Journal of Contemporary African Art* (2000) 68-69.

1960s

Related Work: *Heavy Forms*, 1961/edition 10
Lithograph, Image 15.75 x 19.5, Sheets vary to approximately 19 x 26"
Collection: PMW/LOC; Cochran
Reproduced in: York, *Black American Literature Forum* (Vol. 20, No. 1-2, Spring-Summer 1986) cover; The Alternative Museum, *A Life's Work* (1988) 19; Lundin, *Master Printers and Master Pieces* (1996) 183; Britton, *African American Art: The Long Struggle* (1996) 68; Lekatsas, *An Artistic Friendship in Relief* (1997) 46; Cullen, *NKA/Journal of Contemporary African Art* (2000) 69.

Color Symphony, 1960
Lithograph, 15.5 x 21.75/29 x 25"
Collection PMW/LOC; Worcester Art Museum (MA); Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute (Utica, NY); New York Public Library (NY), Cochran
Reproduced in: Lekatsas, *An Artistic Friendship in Relief* (1997) 40; Cullen, *NKA/Journal of Contemporary African Art* (2000) 67.

Faux Pas, 1960
Lithograph, 22 x 16.5/26 x 19"
Collection: PMW/LOC; Collection of Corrine Jennings (NYC); Cochran Collection (LaGrange, GA)
Reproduced in: Lundin, *Master Printers and Master Pieces* (1996) 185; Lekatsas, *An Artistic Friendship in Relief* (1997) 48; Cullen, *NKA/Journal of Contemporary African Art* (2000) 69.

Reflections (AKA *The Mirror*), 1960
Lithograph, 18.5 x 23.75/20 x 26.25"
Collection: PMW/LOC; Cochran; Walter O. Evans Collection of African American Art; Richard Nelson (San Diego, CA)
Reproduced in: Lekatsas, *An Artistic Friendship in Relief* (1997) 45;
eev.liu.edu/eevillage/HeckscherWOE/exhibit4.htm (sideways).

Pour Quoi?, ca.1960
Lithograph, 19.5 x 25/22.25 x 30"
Collection: PMW/LOC.

Blue Door, 1960
Lithograph
Collection: Kathy Caraccio (NYC).

Sunshapes, 1960
Intaglio, dimensions and location unknown.

The White Pitcher, 1961
Lithograph, 23.75 x 18.5/30 x 22.25"
Collection: PMW/LOC.

Yellow on Red, 1962/edition 10
 Lithograph, 18.5 x 24/20.5 x 26.25"
 Collection: PMW/LOC; Cochran
 Reproduced in: Cullen, *NKA/Journal of Contemporary African Art* (2000) 67.

Blue Window, 1962-1963/edition 10
 Lithograph, 17.5 x 26.75/22.25 x 30"
 Collection: PMW/LOC
 Reproduced in: Collischan, *Rainbow: Prints from Bob Blackburn's Printmaking Workshop* (1993) 25, mistitled *Blue Things*.

Related Work: *Windowed Shapes*, 1963/edition 6
 Lithographs, 17.5 x 26.5/2.25 x 30"
 Collection: PMW/LOC; Cochran
 Reproduced in: Parris and Green, *Through A Master Printer* (1985) cover; The Alternative Museum, *A Life's Work* (1988) 20; Lekatsas, *An Artistic Friendship in Relief* (1997) 38.

Untitled (AKA Torn Shapes), ca.1960-1963
 Lithographs, 21 x 27.25/25.5 x 32.25"
 Collection: PMW/LOC.

Untitled, ca.1960s-1971
 Lithograph, approx. 22 x 30"
 Collection: PMW/LOC.

Untitled (Little Stone), ca.1960s-1971
 Lithograph, approx. 22 x 30"
 Collection: PMW/LOC.

The Wood, 1963/edition 2
 Lithograph, 17.5 x 21/19 x 26.25"
 Collection: PMW/LOC.

Related Work: *The Wood/Sun Moon*, 1963
 Lithograph, 17.25 x 24.25"
 Collection: PMW/LOC; Cochran
 Reproduced in: Lekatsas, *An Artistic Friendship in Relief* (1997) 43.

Related Work: *Grey Wood*, 1963/edition 12
 Lithograph, 17.5 x 21.5/21 x 29.5
 Collection: PMW/LOC; Cochran
 Reproduced in: Lekatsas, *An Artistic Friendship in Relief* (1997) 42.

Notation I, 1964
 Lithograph
 Collection: Worcester Art Museum (MA).

Untitled, n.d.
 Lithograph?
 Collection Worcester Art Museum (MA).

Crystal, n.d.
 Lithograph
 Collection Worcester Art Museum (MA).

The Gem, 1967

Lithograph, 12.25 x 7.5/20 x 13"

Collection: PMW/LOC; Cochran

Reproduced in: Lekatsas, *An Artistic Friendship in Relief* (1997) 55.*Easter Print*, 1967 (versions titled *Easter Misprint*)

Lithograph, 18 x 18/18.5 x 18.5"

Collection: PMW/LOC; Cochran: Howard University, Gallery of Art (Washington, DC: entitled, *Easter #1*).Reproduced in: Lekatsas, *An Artistic Friendship in Relief* (1997) 53.*Two Reds*, 1968/edition 15

Intaglio, 11.25 x 9.5/22.25 x 19

Collection Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture (New York).

Little Landscape, ca.1960s-1968

Lithograph, 12 x 17/19 x 26"

Collection: PMW/LOC.

Root Toot, 1969

Large edition published by Sylvan Cole

Lithograph, 22.75 x 17.25/30 x 22.5"

Collection: PMW/LOC; Cochran: Brooklyn Museum of the Arts (Brooklyn, NY).

Reproduced in: Holton, *Robert Blackburn: Master Artist - Master Printer* (1994) np; Lekatsas, *An Artistic Friendship in Relief* (1997) 49.*Three Ovals*, 1960s-70s

Woodcut, 17.5 x 14. 5/22.5 x 17.5"

Collection: PMW/LOC

Reproduced in: Holton, *Robert Blackburn: Master Artist - Master Printer* (1994), np; Lundin, *Master Printers and Master Pieces* (1996) 187.Related Work: *Three Ovals/ Blue/Green*, 1963-70s

Woodcut, Image 17.5 x 14.25"

Collection: PMW/LOC.

Blue Things, 1963-70

Woodcut. Image 20 x 26/24 x 30"

Collection: PMW/LOC; Bronx Museum of the Arts (Bronx, NY), Edmund Barry Gaither (Dorchester, MA).

Reproduced in: *ABA: A Journal of the Affairs of Black Artists* 1 (No. 1, 1972), 11; *Artists Proof* 11 (1971), 33; Powell, *Black Art: An International Quarterly* 2 (No. 3, 1978), 6; Collischan, *Rainbow: Prints from Bob Blackburn's Printmaking Workshop* (1993) cover, mistitled *Blue Window*.*Sunburst*, 1967-1969

Woodcut, 20 x 26/25.25 x 38.25"

Collection: PMW/LOC; Cochran

Reproduced in: Parris and Green, *Through A Master Printer* (1985) np; Lekatsas, *An Artistic Friendship in Relief* (1997) 52.*Blue and White*, 1969

Woodcut, 16.75 x 22/21 x 29.25

Collection: PMW/LOC.

1970s

Oval I-1st State, 1967

Lithograph, 20.5 x 16.25"

Collection: PMW/LOC.

Untitled (Black Oval), early 1970s/ed. ?

Lithograph

Encircled, 1970s

Lithograph, 19.5 x 27/23.5 x 30"

Collection: PMW/LOC.

Ominous Shape (AKA *Ominous Black*)

Lithograph, 23.75 x 19.5/28 x 22"

Collection: PMW/LOC.

Untitled (AKA *Curious Stone*) ca.1960s-1971

Lithograph, 15.75 x 23/26 x 19"

Collection: PMW/LOC.

Untitled (AKA *Broken Stone I, One Piece*) ca.1960s-1971

Lithograph, 7.5 x 6.5/19 x 13"

Collection: PMW/LOC.

Untitled (AKA *Broken Stone*), ca.1960s-1971

Lithograph

Collection: PMW/LOC.

Untitled (AKA *Broken Stone II*), ca.1960s-1971 (possibly 1974)

Lithograph, 7.75 x 5.5"

Collection: PMW/LOC; Cochran

Reproduced in: Lekatsas, *An Artistic Friendship in Relief* (1997) 51.

Asilah Oui, ca.1978

Woodcut, 5.25 x 14/13.25 x 17"

Collection: PMW/LOC

Jus Jazz (AKA *Jus Jazz Set*), ca.1978-1983

Lithograph, 21 x 14/25.75 x 17.75"

Collection: PMW/LOC

Reproduced in: Parris and Green, *Through A Master Printer* (1985) np.

Untitled, ca.1979

Viscosity intaglio, 13.75 x 13.75/22/25 x 18"x 14"

Collection: PMW/LOC

Reproduced in: Holton, *Robert Blackburn: Master Artist - Master Printer* (1994) np; Lundin, *Master Printers and Master Pieces* (1996) 189.

Organic Thing (AKA *Purple Stones*), 1979

Viscosity intaglio, 14 x 13.75/22.25 x 18.5"

Collection: PMW/LOC

Reproduced in: Collischan, *Rainbow: Prints from Bob Blackburn's Printmaking Workshop* (1993) 24.

Reprint: *Organic Thing*, 2001

Viscosity intaglio, 14 x 13.75", multiple unique color variants

Printed by K. Caraccio Studios (NY).

Purple Flash I, 1972
Woodcut, 26 x 20/39.5 x 24.5"
Collection: PMW/LOC.

Yellow Flash, 1972
Woodcut, 26 x 20/30.75 x 23"
Collection: PMW/LOC.

Jay Hawk Tawk, 1974-1975
Woodcut, 20 x 26/25 x 37"
Collection: PMW/LOC

Walk in the Shade, 1970-1974
Woodcut, 20 x 26/25 x 34"
Collection: PMW/LOC; Bronx Museum of the Arts (Bronx, NY)
Reproduced in: Cullen and Dane *The Robert Blackburn Legacy: The Printmaking Workshop at Forty-Five* (1994) np.

Space Shape (AKA *Space Ship*, *Kiss Shape*), 1970
Woodcut, 22 x 20/30 x 22"
Collection: PMW/LOC
Reproduced in: *ABA: A Journal of the Affairs of Black Artists* 1 (No. 1, 1972), 13.

Related Work: *Miss Unity*, 1974
Woodcut, 26 x 20/37 x 25."
Collection: PMW/LOC; Bronx Museum of the Arts (Bronx, NY).

Reprint: *Miss Unity*, 1990-6
Woodcut, Image 26 x 20, Sheet 33 x 25"
Collection: PMW/LOC
Reproduced in: Collischan, *Rainbow: Prints from Bob Blackburn's Printmaking Workshop* (1993) 30.

Night Creature, 1974
Woodcut, 20 x 26"
Location unknown.

Block on Blue, 1974
Woodcut, 12.25 x 14.75/19 x 24.25"
Collection: PMW/LOC

Related Work: *Modern Times*, 1975
Woodcut, 11.5 x 11.25/21.5 x 16"
Collection: PMW/LOC; Bronx Museum of the Arts (Bronx, NY); Jean and Robert Steele Collection (MD)
Reproduced in: www.artgallery.umd.edu/exhibit/01-02/steele/blackburn.htm.

Reprint: *Modern Times*, 1984
Woodcut, 11.5 x 11.5/21.75 x 17.5"
Collection: PMW/LOC; Cochran
Reproduced in: Lekatsas, *An Artistic Friendship in Relief* (1997) 50.

Reprint: *Urban Renewal*, 1996, ed. 25
Woodcut, 11 x 11.5/19 x 17.75"
Collection: PMW/LOC

Set of approximately 10 black & white monoprints with stenciled imaged, ca. 1976-1984 including:

Untitled, ca. 1976-1984

Monotype, 22.25 x 30"

Collection: PMW/LOC

Reproduced in: Cochran, *African American Works on Paper* (1991) 19.

Untitled, ca. 1976-1984

Monotype, 22.25 x 30"

Collection: Cochran

Fear, ca. 1976-1984

Monotype, 22.25 x 30"

Collection: HB

What is Apartheid, 1984

Monotype, 22.25 x 30"

Collection: Ruth Sherman (NYC)

Reproduced in: The Alternative Museum, *A Life's Work*, 1988, 5.

Untitled, ca. 1976-1984

Monotype, 22.25 x 30"

Collection: George Wolfe (NYC).

1980s

Germination, 1983

Intaglio, 7 x 22/22.25 x 30"

Collection: PMW/LOC

Reproduced in: Parris and Green, *Through A Master Printer* (1985) np.

Stockholm, 1988

Lithograph, 16 x 20/22.25 x 30"

Collection: PMW/LOC; Cochran.

Reproduced in: Lekatsas, *An Artistic Friendship in Relief* (1997) 54.

Etching Proof, nd

Intaglio

Curly Q - Colored, nd

Intaglio with hand coloring, 8 x 7.75/9.5 x 10"

Collection: PMW/LOC.

Cross Triangle, 1982

Intaglio, 11.75 x 9/22 x 15"

Collection: PMW/LOC

Woodscape, 1984

Woodcut, 12 x 15.25/19 x 24"

Collection: PMW/LOC

Reproduced in: Lundin, *Master Printers and Master Pieces* (1996) 190.

Related Work: *Red Inside*, late 1980s

Woodcut, 15.25 x 12"

Collection: PMW/LOC.

From Asilah, 1985
 Intaglio, 11.75 x 10/22 x 15"
 Collection: PMW/LOC.

Native Tongue, 1988/edition 20
 Woodcut, 9 x 11.25/14.5 x 21"
 Collection: PMW/LOC; Bronx Museum of the Arts (Bronx, NY)
 Reproduced in: Cullen and Hershberger, *African-American Printmakers: The Printmaking Workshop* (1994) np.

Untitled, 1989
 3 variant works produced in Residency at The Fabric Workshop (Philadelphia, PA)
 Silkscreen, printed on linen and stretched onto frame

1990s-Present

Sunday Morning, 2000
 Intaglio-printed with pulp underpainting stencilled and registered to the printed image. 17.75 x 14.75/26 x 22"
 Paper produced by Lee Running at Dieu Donné, and printed by Kelly Driscoll and Aleksandar Duravcevic at D2 Press, published Dieu Donne (NY)
 Reproduced in: <http://www.papermaking.org/art/editions/index.html>

Commissioned drawing for the Metropolitan Transit Authority
 "Arts for Transit," 2002
 Plan for 116th Street Subway Mosaic

APPENDIX II: WORKING LIST OF PARTICIPANTS IN THE PRINTMAKING WORKSHOP

1. Abdulah Abu Bakr	56. Elliot Banfield
2. Rodolfo Abularach	57. M. Constance Bangs
3. Gabriela Aberastury	58. Mary Banham
4. Kola Abiola	59. Rita Baragona
5. Ayisha Abraham	60. J. Bardin
6. David Adams	61. Rudolph Barnanik
7. Lee Adler	62. Merete Barker
8. Sharon Adler	63. Will Barnet
9. Naheed Afridi	64. Richard Barnet
10. Malika Agueznay	65. Todd Barnet
11. Nii Ahene	66. William Barrell
12. Misako Aihara	67. Augusta Barreda
13. Bernice Aisenson	68. Alberto Barrera
14. Khurshid Alam Salaam	69. Victor Barros
15. Calvin Albert	70. Jose Bartoli
16. Julian Alberts	71. Leah Barton
17. John Allen	72. Stephanie Bartrom
18. Avis Allman	73. Halid Bas
19. Pat Almonrode	74. Aleta Bass
20. Nakhum Alpert	75. E. Bassman
21. Susan Altman	76. John Batty
22. Candida Alvarez	77. Harold Baumbach
23. Desiree Alvarez	78. Carole Bayard
24. Zahoor ul-Akhlaq	79. Nancy Lord Beal
25. Irving Amen	80. Mark Beard
26. Gregory Amenoff	81. Romare Bearden
27. Emma Amos	82. George Beauchamp, Jr.
29. Bernice Anderson	83. Fred Becker
30. Benny Andrews	84. Leigh Behnke
31. Pat Andrews	85. Paul Belfanti
32. Mark Andeyn	86. David Bell
33. Nancy Anello	87. Adolf Benca
34. Stephen Antonakos	88. Winnie Bendinier
35. Kaiq Antunes	89. Hanan Bengtsson
36. Tomie Arai	90. Maria Bengtsson
37. Arce	91. Bennett
38. Pat Arjunka	92. Carolyn Bennett
39. Megan Armstrong	93. Hameed Benjamin
40. Sarah Armstrong	94. Peter Berg
41. Jun Asano	95. Annette Bergh
42. Elise Asher	96. Susanna Bergtold
43. Nzinga Kianga Ashley	97. Linda Berman
44. Naazish Ata-Ullah	98. Shirley Bernstein
45. Cecilia Avamshur	99. Mike Berrier
46. Ellsworth Ausby	100. Arthur R. Berry
47. R Axelrod	101. Leigh Bhenke
48. Todd Ayong	102. John Biggers
49. Barbara Bachner	103. Monique Binswanger
50. Bruce Bacon	104. Cathy Billian
51. Jeffrey Bain	105. Camille Billops
52. Lauren Bakoian	106. Willie Birch
53. Carol Baldwin	107. Ben Bishop
54. George Ball	108. Isabel Bishop, attrib.
55. Diogenes Ballester	109. Sue Bitton

110.	Carlos Blaaker	168.	Analida Burgos
111.	David Black	169.	Selma Burke
112.	Robert Hamilton Blackburn	170.	Michael Burlee
113.	Nell Blaine	171.	Viola Burley
114.	Malcolm Blair	172.	Heather Burnes
115.	Peter Blaiwas	173.	Charles Burwell
116.	Dinao Blanch	174.	Joan Busing
117.	Carol Blank	175.	German Ortiz Cadena
118.	Abe Blashko	176.	Christopher Cades
119.	Al Blaustein	177.	Cain
120.	Betty Blayton	178.	Robert A. Cale
121.	Bruce Bleach	179.	Kit Callahan
122.	B Blecher	180.	Nicole Callibrant
123.	Martha Bloom	181.	Maria Boren Cantarella
124.	Selma Bluestein	182.	Dan Campanelli
125.	Judy Blum	183.	Medina Campey
126.	Bill Bodwell	184.	Laura Cantor
127.	Raphael Bogarin	185.	Rene Cantor, Jr.
128.	Ricky Bogin	186.	Francesco Capello
129.	H Bohm	187.	Dominick Capobianco
130.	John Bologna	188.	John Caputo
131.	Scunder Bogosian	189.	Kathleen Caraccio
132.	Anita Booth	190.	Noell Carr
133.	Yavine Borima	191.	Catharine Hunter Carine
134.	Janet Borse	192.	Y Carlier
135.	Arun Bose	193.	Leonora Carrington
136.	Kamal Boutaleb	194.	Sandra N. Carrion
137.	Tom Boutes	195.	Henrietta Carter
138.	Deborah Bornkamp-Bitter	196.	John A. Carter
139.	Kabuya Bowen	197.	Nanette Carter
140.	Juan Boza	198.	Rebecca Castrillo
141.	Lisa Bradley	199.	Elizabeth Catlett
142.	Peter Bradley	200.	Patricia Catlett
143.	Nancy Brandon	201.	Saint Clair Cemin
144.	Brendon Brady	202.	George Chaiken
145.	Richard Brady	203.	G Daly Champagne
146.	Joe Brainard	204.	Sarah Lai-Yi Chan
147.	Warren Brandt	205.	Natalie Beckford Chandis
148.	Elaine Breiger	206.	Lio Chang
149.	Harry Breitman	207.	Kereina Changfatt
150.	Felix Brenner	208.	S Chapin
151.	Theodore Brenson	209.	Clifford Charles
152.	Nancy Brett	210.	Carol Chase
153.	Vicki Brett	211.	Esteban Chavez S.
154.	N Brilliant	212.	Kitty Chavis
155.	Sue Britton	213.	Norberto Chiesa
156.	Robert Broner	214.	Herman Cherry
157.	Iris Broquedis	215.	Anne Chesnut
158.	James A. Brown	216.	Bernard Childs
159.	Kay Brown	217.	Ray Chin
160.	Marion Brown	218.	Wei Jane Chir
161.	Marvin Brown	219.	Holly Chirot
162.	Petey Brown	220.	Lisa Chovnick
163.	Robert Tracy Brown	221.	Paraskevou Christofides
164.	Ronell Brown	222.	Judi Church
165.	Vivian Browne	223.	Carmen Cicero
166.	Maude Bryt	224.	Javier Cintron
167.	Edgar Buongino	225.	Minna Citron

226.	Jean Paul Clad	284.	Frank Dawlder
227.	Ed Clark	285.	Bridget Day
228.	Melvin W. Clark	286.	Jeffrey Day
229.	Richard Clark	287.	Mark Dead
230.	Allan Hugh Clarke	288.	Thomas DeBolt
231.	Caroline Clarke	289.	Susan DeCapite
232.	Carroll Cloar	290.	Roy DeCarava
233.	Susan Ruth Cohen	291.	Patricia de Gogorza
234.	Yvette Cohen	292.	Thomas DeJong
235.	Susan Cohn	293.	Maggi de la Mater
236.	Cola	294.	Roberto Delamonica
237.	DL Cole	295.	Maria de Lurdes de Melo
238.	Maria Condeco	296.	Gail Deery
239.	Orlando Condeso	297.	Nadine Delawrence-Maine
240.	Robert Conover	298.	Alejandra Delfin
241.	Hugo Consuegra	299.	Alejandro Delfin
242.	Raul Conti	300.	Dora Delfin
243.	Houston Conwill	301.	Louis Del Sarte
244.	Candy Cooper	302.	De Romero
245.	Lila Copeland	303.	Ann Devere
246.	Harriet Corey	304.	Sister Elizabeth Devine
247.	Beatrice Coron	305.	Rini Dhumal
248.	Jayne Cortez	306.	Mauricio Diaz
249.	L Cortez	307.	Regina Dienes
250.	Eldzier Cortor	308.	Lee Dillon
251.	Dionigi Cossu	309.	Mary Dinabur
252.	Chris Costan	310.	Vieta M. Divila
253.	Adger Cowans	311.	Aleksandar Djuravcevic
254.	Jocelynn Crabs	312.	Alexander Dobkin
255.	Fred Cray	313.	Jeff Donaldson
256.	Alicia Creus	314.	Claudia Doring-Baer
257.	Ernest Crichlow	315.	Sophia Dounoukos
258.	Erika Crofut	316.	Dorris Dowllin
259.	Emilo Cruz	317.	Al Doyle
260.	Janet Culbertson	318.	Michael Drake
261.	Deborah Cullen	319.	Kelly Driscoll
262.	Adrienne Cullom	320.	Gerard Drouot
263.	Linda L. Cunningham	321.	Nancy Dryfoos
264.	Ann Rapp Curtis	322.	Guo Duarte
265.	Peggy Cyphers	323.	Emily Dubois
266.	D Czarín	324.	Cheryl Kolak Dudek
267.	D'Agostino	325.	Patricia Duffy
268.	Dawn D'Alusio	326.	Jorge Dumas
269.	Devraj Dakoji	327.	Diane Dunn
270.	Prahtiba Dakoji	328.	Martine Dupont
271.	Julie D'Amario	329.	Robert Ecker
272.	Mila Dal	330.	Tite Edberg
273.	Danilo	331.	Marcy Edelstein
274.	Leslie Daugirda	332.	Eric Edgerton
275.	Carlos Davila	333.	Anne Edholm
276.	Maritza Davila	334.	Mary Edholm
277.	Andrew Davis	335.	Leonard Edmondson
278.	David Davis	336.	Caroline Edwards
279.	Doreen Davis	337.	Melvin Edwards
280.	Dorian Davis	338.	Chung Shik Ee
281.	Mary Davis	339.	Efo
282.	Wendell Davis	340.	Elizabeth Egbert
283.	Winston Davis	341.	Louise Egbert

342.	Charles Egri	400.	Ruth Franklin
343.	Eisenberg	401.	Antonio Frasconi
344.	Kim Eldon	402.	Hannah Frassinelli
345.	Paula Eliasoph	403.	Sharon Frazier
346.	Juliet Ellin	404.	Deborah Freedman
347.	Michael Ellison	405.	Carlos Frias
348.	Damian Elwes	406.	Irvine Friedlander
349.	Gladys Emerson	407.	Louise Frishwasser
350.	Elliot Engle	408.	Per Froth
351.	Christopher Erb	409.	Gregory Frux
352.	David Erez	410.	Rosario Fuentes
353.	Eric Erickson	411.	Sue Fuller
354.	Eriko	412.	Julio Galetto
355.	Gloria Escobar	413.	Galfaur
356.	Renato Escobar	414.	Norman Galinsky
357.	Sonny Escover	415.	Kathy Gallagher
358.	Roberto Estopinian	416.	Kyle Gallup
359.	Geller Ettenheim	417.	Margaret Gallegos
360.	Doris Ettinger	418.	Mary Clare Galvin
361.	William Evaul	419.	Jo Ganter
362.	David Falk	420.	Ethel Garbos
363.	Annette Gandy Faret	421.	Gary Garcia
364.	Miriam Faria	422.	Osmani Garcia
365.	Joan Farrar	423.	Ernesto Garcia Pena
366.	Janet Faust	424.	AB Gardner
367.	Edward Fausty	425.	Urmila Garg
368.	Elton Fax	426.	Caroline Garrett
369.	Harriet Febland	427.	Florence Garret
370.	Tom Feelings	428.	Barbara Garrison
371.	Marsha Feigen	429.	Peter Gaztambide
372.	Dorothy Lubell Feigin	430.	Jan Gelb
373.	Rochelle Feinstein	431.	Sandy Gellis
374.	Dumille Feni	432.	Genassini
375.	Mark Fennessy	433.	Herbert Gentry
376.	Jerry Ferdinand	434.	J George
377.	Mia Feroletto	435.	Helen Gerardia
378.	Gwyn Ferres	436.	Cristos Gianakos
379.	Herschel Ferris	437.	Sharon Gilbert
380.	Maria Ficalora	438.	Dorothy Gillespie
381.	Bill Fick	439.	George Ann Gillespie
382.	C Fine	440.	Max Gimlet
383.	Joan Finton	441.	Nicola Ginzel
384.	Lisa Fisher	442.	Roland Ginzel
385.	Gillian Fitzgibbon	443.	Bernard Glasgo
386.	Malou Flato	444.	Michele Godwin
387.	Alan Fleisher	445.	Andrée Golbin
388.	Anthony C. Fletcher	446.	Judith Goldman
389.	Anna Flora	447.	Ana Golici
390.	Richard Florscheim	448.	Leon Golub
391.	Barbara Floyd	449.	Juan Gomez-Quiroz
392.	David Follansbee	450.	Diamantina Gonzalez
393.	Pierre Folliet	451.	Diane Gonzalez Gandolfi
394.	Diane Footlick	452.	Gloria Amparo Gonzalez
395.	Darin Forehand	453.	Sergio Gonzalez-Torero
396.	Carmen Frank	454.	Peter Goodall
397.	Mary Frank	455.	Cris Goodman
398.	Regina Frank	456.	Barbara Gordon
399.	Thomas Franken	457.	Fumiko Goto

458.	Gorvy	516.	Hassouba
459.	Mike Goscinsky	517.	Cynthia Hawkins
460.	Cie Goulet	518.	Louis Heckenblicher
461.	Elizabeth Grajales	519.	Albert Heckman
462.	W Grathwahl	520.	Meredith Hedges
463.	Gloria Graves	521.	Gena Hegelman
464.	Lawanda Graves	522.	Gary Heiden
465.	Barbara Gray	523.	Ray Heimroth
466.	Dennis Green	524.	Alexandre Helberg
467.	Michael Green	525.	Riva Helfond
468.	Barbara Grey	526.	Phoebe Helman
469.	Eugene Grigsby	527.	Michael Heming
470.	John Grillo	528.	J Henderson
471.	I Gris	529.	Maria Henle
472.	Raymond Grist	530.	Damian Henriques
473.	Bogdan Grom	531.	Anaida Hernandez
474.	Nancy Groopman	532.	Miguel Herrera
475.	Chaim Gross	533.	M Herscher
476.	Peter Gross	534.	Abner Herschberger
477.	Maurice Grosser	535.	Sue Herschberger
478.	Nancy Grossman	536.	Lizzie Hestevold
479.	Felix Guattari	537.	Cornelia Hice
480.	Patricia Guiack	538.	Yoshana Higa
481.	Deborah Guild	539.	Ikuyo Higuchi
482.	Sonia Guisado	540.	Jan Hildebrand
483.	Gregory Guiteras	541.	Gregory Hilton
484.	June Gumbel	542.	CR Hisso
485.	Lena Gurr	543.	Rodin Hiya
486.	Roy Guzman	544.	George Ho
487.	Richard Haas	545.	Adrienne Hoard
488.	Terry Haass	546.	Lucy Hodgson
489.	Carl Haber	547.	A Hoffenberg
490.	Katherine Hagstrom	548.	Lori Hoffer
491.	Halcolm	549.	Donald Holden
492.	Priscilla Haley	550.	Robin Holder
493.	Jules Halfant	551.	Kravitz Hollander
494.	Joan Hall	552.	Daniel Hollis
495.	John Halle	553.	Curlee Raven Holton
496.	Harmony Hammond	554.	Sandra Holtzman
497.	David Halvorsen	555.	K Honda
498.	Susan Hambleton	556.	Marion Howard
499.	Bill Hamel	557.	Paul Howard
500.	David Hammons	558.	Daniel Hristoff
501.	Hanako Hanafusa	559.	Jacqueline Hudson
502.	William Hancock	560.	Doug Huebler
503.	Bud Handelsman	561.	Manuel Hughes
504.	Mel Hantz	562.	Ted Hughes
505.	Elizabeth Harington	563.	Nene Humphrey
506.	C Duncan Harris	564.	Margo Humphrey
507.	Harrison	565.	Su-Li Hung
508.	Rick Harrison	566.	Diane Hunt
509.	Grace Hartigan	567.	Richard Hunt
510.	Abby Hartzler	568.	Helge Hunter
511.	Burt Hasen	569.	Jim Hunter
512.	Zarina Hashmi	570.	Liz Hunter
513.	Biruta Hassan	571.	Marcie Hunter
514.	Gaylord Hassan	572.	Hurro
515.	Maren Hassinger	573.	MF Husain

574.	Paul Husner	632.	Anita Janoff Katjanelson
575.	Claudia Hutchinson	633.	Shirley Katz
576.	Bill Hutson	634.	Andy Kay
577.	Wim Huurman	635.	Paul Keene
578.	Frances Hynes	636.	Hugh Keiser
579.	Walter Iler	637.	Rose Keevil
580.	Kyonei Inukai	638.	Souleymane Keita
581.	Prudencio Irazabal	639.	Keith Keller
582.	Marco Irizary	640.	S Kelson
583.	Christine Irvin	641.	Kemble
584.	Rosalee Isaley	642.	Bob Kelly
585.	Rodrigo Isaza	643.	P Purvis Kennedy
586.	Louis Iselin	644.	Tom Kennedy
587.	Monirul Islam	645.	Tom Kenny
588.	Michi Itami	646.	Zoe Keramea
589.	Gerald Jackson	647.	Catherine Kernan
590.	Miriam Jacobs	648.	Niki Ketchman
591.	Gail Jacobs	649.	R Keuneke
592.	Jackie Jafus	650.	Mohammed Khalil
593.	Nenad Jakesvic	651.	Banghan Kim
594.	May Janko	652.	Hee Sook Kim
595.	Angela Jansen	653.	Richard A. Kimball
596.	Kei January	654.	Pauline Kinahan
597.	Virginia Jaramillo	655.	Tom Kinny
598.	Janyra Jasan	656.	Maho Kino
599.	John P. Jay	657.	April Kinser
600.	Vincent Jeffrey	658.	Kipness
601.	Nicolette Jelen	659.	Dolores Kiriacom
602.	Noah Jemison	660.	Anthony Kirk
603.	Kathryn Jenkins	661.	Kirs
604.	Jamillah Jennings	662.	Sandi Kitt
605.	Marie Johanson	663.	Betty Kjelson
606.	Donald Johns	664.	Mark Klein
607.	Sherry Jones	665.	Randy Klein
608.	Madelon Jones	666.	Sue Klein
609.	Ronald Joseph	667.	Michael Knigin
610.	Pat Jow	668.	Irving Kreisberg
611.	Claudio Juarez	669.	Lizabeth Kobara
612.	Bennett C. Judson	670.	David Kobayasi
613.	Jerilyn Jurinek	671.	L Kohn
614.	S Kabet	672.	Cheryl Kolak Dudek
615.	Katherine Kadish	673.	David Koloane
616.	Reuben Kadish	674.	Chaim Koppelman
617.	Vasily Kafana	675.	Ed Koren
618.	Robin Kahukiwa	676.	Kumi Korf
619.	Carol Kalil	677.	Alan Koslin
620.	N Kane	678.	Thavorn Ko-Udomvit
621.	Eunju Kang	679.	Christos Koutsouras
622.	Nathan Kanofsky	680.	L Kraanprez
623.	Keico Kanemoto	681.	Louise Kramer
624.	Michael Kanter	682.	Louis Krefsky
625.	Daniel Kaplan	683.	Doris Kremdler
626.	Kapo	684.	Penny Kronengold
627.	Bhagwan Kapoor	685.	Susan Kronfeld
628.	Kris Kargo	686.	Diane Krukowski
629.	Susan Karnet	687.	Shigeko Kumabe
630.	Mollyne Karnofsky	688.	Hiroko Kumahara
631.	Kati-li	689.	Kilolo Kumanyika

690.	Ram Kumar	748.	Jeanette Louie
691.	Louis Kunsch	749.	Lisa Lowenthal
692.	Mie Kurahara	750.	Luis Lopez Loza
693.	Ted Kurahara	751.	Crystal Lorch-Seidman
694.	Sachiko Kusachi	752.	Hilary Lorenz
695.	John Kwon	753.	Mary Lovelace O'Neal
696.	Eliza Lahm	754.	Whitfield Lovell
697.	Doris Lai	755.	Al Loving
698.	Thomas Laidman	756.	Luanda Lozano
699.	Sonja Lamut	757.	Louis Lozowick
700.	Armin Landek	758.	Diana Lucas
701.	Kyle Lane	759.	Lance Lumar
702.	Denise Lanores	760.	Karin Lunar
703.	Larmee	761.	David Lund
704.	Denise Lapointe	762.	Bobbie Lurie
705.	Laroche	763.	Hugo Luta
706.	Prawat Laucharoen	764.	Catherine Lynch
707.	Horatio Law	765.	Stewart Machimias
708.	Jacob Lawrence	766.	Fred Mackentanz
709.	Spencer Lawrence	767.	Lisa Mackie
710.	Ruth Lazar	768.	Elenor Magid
711.	Eleanore Lazarof	769.	Florence Mahdavi
712.	Ruth Leaf	770.	Carloyn Maitland
713.	Daniel Leary	771.	Holly Maitland
714.	Arthur Lecude	772.	Ivan Majdrakoff
715.	Arline Lederman	773.	Brent Malone
716.	Colin Lee	774.	Arlette Malvernier
717.	Haejae Lee	775.	Juan Alberto Mancillo
718.	Kyung Lin (Kathy) Lee	776.	Jose Manco
719.	E Lefevre	777.	Leo Manso
720.	Gerson Leiber	778.	Fabian Marcaccio
721.	Patricia Leighton	779.	Brice Marden
722.	Tadeus Lepinsky	780.	Marcus Margall
723.	Judith Lerner	781.	Boris Margo
724.	Kamin Lertchaiprasert	782.	Helen Maris
725.	Kurt Lesser	783.	Isabella Banks Markell
726.	Rudi Lesser	784.	Cynthia Marks
727.	Jocelyn Levine	785.	A Juder Marques
728.	Mon Levinson	786.	Kerry Marshall
729.	Karen Levy	787.	Osvaldo R. Marti
730.	Michelle Levy	788.	D Martin
731.	Norman Lewis	789.	Doug Martin
732.	Rob Lewis	790.	James Martin
733.	Samella Lewis	791.	Julio Mas
734.	Saraly Lewis	792.	Olivero Masi
735.	Rejin Leys	793.	Marjorie Mason
736.	Shiou-Ping Liao	794.	Julio Mateo
737.	Pessia Lichaw	795.	Min Matsuela
738.	Victor Liguori	796.	KP Mautlea
739.	Andy Lilienthal	797.	Linda Mave
740.	James Little	798.	Eda Mayer
741.	Livia Livi	799.	Richard Mayhew
742.	Joe Loccisano	800.	Valerie Maynard
743.	Loder	801.	Luis Mazorra
744.	Janice Beth Loeb	802.	Christine McBride
745.	Selma Lokitz	803.	Howard McCalebb
746.	Armando Londono	804.	Paidrag McCann
747.	Robert Lopresti	805.	Dindga McCannon

806.	Sarah McCarty	864.	Alexander Motyl
807.	Donna McClean	865.	Catherine Mousley
808.	Jim McCormick	866.	Seong Moy
809.	Anne McDermott	867.	Susanne Mueller
810.	Joanne McFarland	868.	John Muench
811.	Terence McHugh	869.	Mary Mugele
812.	Barbara McPhail	870.	Christine Muhlberger
813.	Stephen Craig McPherson	871.	Michael Mulhern
814.	Damian Meade	872.	Jo Mullen
815.	Mears	873.	Martin Mullin
816.	Compeny Median	874.	Olivia Munroe
817.	Fethi Meghelli	875.	Shreedevi Munshi
818.	Fethi and Samir Meghelli	876.	Shogo Muro
819.	Ron Mehlman	877.	Alice Harold Murphy
820.	Jim Mellon	878.	Agnes Murray
821.	Kathryn Metz	879.	D Barton Muscione
822.	Pat Mercado	880.	Frances Myers
823.	Elizabeth Meyer	881.	Miki Nagan
824.	Lily Michael	882.	Itsuko Nakimoto
825.	Gabriella Mijer	883.	George Nama
826.	Charles Miller	884.	Namekawa
827.	Earl Miller	885.	James Nares
828.	Kay Miller	886.	Shigeru Narikawa
829.	Marion Miller	887.	Shmueli Naval
830.	Steven Miller	888.	Navanchetty
831.	Wade Miller	889.	Abdulaay Ndooy
832.	Lev Mills	890.	Otto Neals
833.	Yong Soon Min	891.	Nefertiti
834.	Charles Mingus II	892.	Judy Negron
835.	Wendy Mink	893.	Nelis
836.	Giacomo Mirabella	894.	Barry Nelson
837.	Carol Mitchell	895.	Richard Nelson
838.	Miyamoto	896.	Rudzani Nemasetoni
839.	Gladys Mock	897.	Jackson Lee Nesbitt
840.	Luciano Mogollon	898.	L Nesbitt
841.	Nicholasa Mohr	899.	Nessin
842.	Hans Moller	900.	Barbara Neustadt
843.	Luis Monje	901.	John Newman
844.	Olivia Monroe	902.	Wendy Newman
845.	Joyce Montz	903.	Jim Nickel
846.	Fay Moore	904.	Bessie Nickens
847.	Francis Moore	905.	Priscilla Nickeson
848.	Lori Moore	906.	Lia Nickson
849.	James Moore	907.	Niloza
850.	Jay Moon	908.	Barthosa Nkurumeh
851.	Francisco Mora	909.	Radim Novak
852.	Micha Moracha	910.	Heddy O'Beil
853.	Jorge Morales	911.	Thomas O'Brien
854.	Osamu Morazumi	912.	Denise O'Bieness
855.	Norma Morgan	913.	Ed O'Connell
856.	Pamela Morgan	914.	Hilda O'Connell
857.	Toshi Mori	915.	Jim O'Conner
858.	Moriarity	916.	Barbara Ohno
859.	Dianne Moriarity	917.	Motoi Oi
860.	Cherie Moses	918.	Austino Okafor
861.	Ira Moskowitz	919.	Jean Olds
862.	Lori Moss	920.	Katie O'Looney
863.	Rhoma Mostel	921.	Aaron Olshan

922.	Ademola Olugebefola Williams	980.	Stephanie Pogue
923.	Mary Lovelace O'Neal	981.	Fernando Pomalaza
924.	Robert Oprava	982.	Miguel Ponce de Leon
925.	Diana Orb	983.	David Porter
926.	Patricia Tallone Orsoni	984.	Mark Poster
927.	Alena Ort	985.	Aaron Ibn Pori Pitts
928.	Jose Luis Ortiz	986.	Hugh Lawrence Potter
929.	Hernando Osorio	987.	B Warshafsky Povegmirov
930.	Lothar Osterberg	988.	Richard Powell
931.	Joan Otero	989.	Lucio Pozzi
932.	Nestor Otero	990.	Doris Price
933.	M Oujah-Wilson	991.	Deborah Priestly
934.	Laurie Ourlicht	992.	Georgia Pugh
935.	Vevean Oviette	993.	Mina Pulsifer
936.	Yigal Ozeri	994.	Charles Roy Purcell
937.	Bill Paden	995.	Mavis Pusey
938.	Vincent Padovano	996.	Leonard Pytlak
939.	Gregory Page	997.	Helen Quat
940.	Jean Pagliuso	998.	Quinn
941.	J Pajanis	999.	Abdul Rahman
942.	Woody Panatilla	1000.	Ray Ranyan R Ramirez
943.	Laura Panno	1001.	Ed Rath
944.	Gail Paradise	1002.	Helen Evans Ramsaran
945.	W Hearne Pardee	1003.	Ilana Raviv
946.	Harold Paris	1004.	Omar Rayo
947.	Re Hyn Park	1005.	Roberta Raysor
948.	Kingsley Parker	1006.	LeRoy Redden
949.	Ofra Parmett	1007.	Bernard Reder
950.	Parmmo	1008.	Krishna Reddy
951.	Partha	1009.	Mari Reece
952.	Teodolina Pascoal	1010.	Calvin Reid
953.	Peter Passuntino	1011.	Virginia Reid
954.	Lee Pate	1012.	Noel Reifel
955.	Justine Patterson	1013.	Cuido Remache
956.	Sunri Edagawa Paturan	1014.	Molly Renda
957.	Julia Pearl	1015.	Phillip Resica
958.	Adair Peck	1016.	Vernel Reuben
959.	Phillip Pearlstein	1017.	Reynolds
960.	Michael Pelletheri	1018.	Naomi Ribner
961.	Margo Pelletier	1019.	Charlotte Richardson Ka
962.	Claude Pelletier-Pigot	1020.	Pat Richardson
963.	Chris Pelletiere	1021.	Ira Richer
964.	Lisa F. Penn	1022.	Afustin Rijo
965.	Pennino	1023.	Ken Rile
966.	Lage Persson	1024.	Faith Ringgold
967.	Betty Weiss Perez	1025.	Barbara Ritter
968.	Lynn Peterfreund	1026.	Theodore Rivenson
969.	Lawrence Philp	1027.	H Escalante Rivera
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972.	Robert Phillips	1030.	Yolanda Rizzo
973.	George Picken	1031.	Lisa Robbins
974.	Carl Pickhardt	1032.	Lee Robertson
975.	Carol Pickhardt	1033.	Aminah Brenda Lynn Robinson
976.	Lutka Pink	1034.	Elizabeth Robinson
977.	Jodi Pinto	1035.	Margot Robinson
978.	Michael B. Platt	1036.	Harlow Rockwell
979.	Linda Plotkin	1037.	Ruth Rodman

1038.	Anthony Rodriguez	1096.	Juan Sanchez
1039.	J Rodriguez-Grondona	1097.	Scott Sandell
1040.	Jorge Luis Rodriguez	1098.	Benita Sanders-Lambert
1041.	Liliana Rodriguez	1099.	Sophie Sanders
1042.	Myma Rodriguez	1100.	Alvin Sandler
1043.	Etta Roebig	1101.	Eve Sandler
1044.	C Lynn Rogan	1102.	Jane Sangerman
1045.	Gustavo Rojas	1103.	Rodrigo Sanz
1046.	Maria Luisa Rojo	1104.	Alan Saret
1047.	Esther Rolick	1105.	Jean Sariano
1048.	Tim Rollins & KOS	1106.	Kenjiro Sasaki
1049.	Cesar Roman	1107.	Roberta Sass
1050.	Clare Romano	1108.	SL Sears
1051.	Moses Ros	1109.	Gary Schaffer
1052.	Lyzette Rosado	1110.	Schaneder
1053.	Joan Rose	1111.	Nicole Schatborn
1054.	Karen Rose	1112.	Sidney Schatzky
1055.	Mary Ann Rose	1113.	Scheherezade
1056.	Rosemary Rosen	1114.	Melissa Scherer
1057.	Alex Rosenberg	1115.	Scherer & Ouporov
1058.	J Rosenblum	1116.	Rafaelle Schermer
1059.	Lynn Rosenfeld	1117.	Karoline Schleh
1060.	Rosengarten	1118.	Maria Schleiner
1061.	Rosenhouse	1119.	Joyce Schlesinger
1062.	Audrey Rosenson	1120.	R Schneider
1063.	Leonore Rosenthal	1121.	Karl Schrag
1064.	John Ross	1122.	Linda Schrank
1065.	Jerome Henry Roth	1123.	Joyce Schreiber
1066.	Lillian Rothenberg	1124.	Olive Schroder
1067.	Lenke Rothman	1125.	Lester Schultz
1068.	Alexander Jan Rottner	1126.	Elfreda Schuselka
1069.	Rowley	1127.	Elke Schwarz
1070.	Lee Ruelle	1128.	Arden Scott
1071.	Fred Ruiz	1129.	D Scott
1072.	Jane Runk	1130.	John T Scott
1073.	Harold Rubin	1131.	Doris Seidler
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1075.	Carol Rutenberg	1133.	Annette Senneby
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1081.	Tara Sabharwal	1139.	Marianne Sheil
1082.	Deli Saciletto	1140.	Juliet Shen
1083.	Marissa Saggio	1141.	Betsy Shepardson
1084.	Sercan Sahin	1142.	Hyun Shin
1085.	Patricia Salamanca	1143.	Sharon Shiraga
1086.	Eduardo Roco "Choco" Salazar	1144.	Akiko Shirai
1087.	Helio Salcedo	1145.	PH Shoemaker
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1154.	Hilario Silva	1212.	John Stone
1155.	Lenny Silverberg	1213.	Jeffrey Ingram Stone
1156.	Mel Silverman	1214.	Edvins Strautmanis
1157.	Naomi Silverman	1215.	Michelle Stuart
1158.	Ellen Simon	1216.	Stuhl
1159.	Luisa Simone	1217.	Chun Wuei Su
1160.	Allan Simpson	1218.	Annapam Sud
1161.	Hester Simpson	1219.	Carlos Ortiz Suenos
1162.	Lorna Simpson	1220.	Beth Sugar
1163.	Phil Sims	1221.	Altoon Sultan
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1169.	Judith Skoogfors	1227.	Faith Sutter
1170.	Paul Skorka	1228.	Sharon Howell Sutton
1171.	Slva Skrabel	1229.	Eriko Takahashi
1172.	Richard Sloat	1230.	Fumio Takasugi
1173.	Deborah Slowey	1231.	Takawori
1174.	Patricia Smart	1232.	Yasuyo Tanaka
1175.	Sarah Smelser	1233.	Tak Tanabe
1176.	Ann Smelt	1234.	Suzanna Tanger
1177.	Virginia Evans Smit	1235.	Ann Tanksley
1178.	AJ Smith	1236.	Eng Tay
1179.	Elly Smith	1237.	John Taylor
1180.	Elizabeth Smith	1238.	Maxwell Taylor
1181.	George "Geo" Smith	1239.	Sam Taylor
1182.	Manhola Smith	1240.	Mary Teichman
1183.	Mei Tei Sing Smith	1241.	Naomi Teppich
1184.	Robin A Smith	1242.	Frederick Terena
1185.	Vincent Smith	1243.	Tesfaye Tessema
1186.	William A. Smith	1244.	Brett Thompson
1187.	Ethel Smul	1245.	Carolyn Thomspson
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1189.	Judith Solodkin	1247.	Mildred Thompson
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1192.	Susana Sori	1250.	Virgil Thomson
1193.	Peter Spacius	1251.	Joanne Thornton
1194.	Nancy Sperakis	1252.	B Tippet
1195.	Bonnie Spiegel	1253.	Julian Tobias
1196.	Neal Spitzer	1254.	Lara Tomlin
1197.	Doris Stahl	1255.	Patricio Moreno Toro
1198.	Fern Stanford	1256.	Bill Toulis
1199.	Steve Stankiewicz	1257.	Deidre Tourin
1200.	Sanna Stanley	1258.	Jufus Trammell
1201.	Kathy Stark	1259.	Emily Trevor
1202.	Carol Steen	1260.	Gladys Triana
1203.	Nola Steinberg	1261.	Ronald Trujillo
1204.	May Stevens	1262.	Peggy Shu-Hsuon Tu
1205.	Bjorn Stethland	1263.	P Tuchner-Garrett
1206.	Beulah Stevenson	1264.	Nitza Tufino
1207.	Junie Stieve	1265.	Judith Turner
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1211.	Carolyn Stone	1269.	Dolly Unithan

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1272.	Robert Valdes	1331.	Jim Williams
1273.	Julio Valdez	1332.	Lyneise E Williams
1274.	Mark Valenti	1333.	Michael Kelly Williams
1275.	Marjorie Hunt Van Dyke	1334.	William T. Williams
1276.	Jane Van Ginkle	1335.	Bruce Wilson
1277.	Luther Vann	1336.	Jimmese Wilson Shalab
1278.	Giambert Vanni	1337.	John Wilson
1279.	Mimi Vaz	1338.	Tehran Khaliq Wilson
1280.	Manuel Vega	1339.	Wendy Wilson
1281.	Joan Vennum	1340.	Lisa Winick
1282.	Frank Versaggi	1341.	Larry Winston
1283.	Guillermo Vidal	1342.	Lumen Winter
1284.	Romas Viesulas	1343.	Doug Wirls
1285.	Georgia Villacorta	1344.	Tammy Wofsky
1286.	A Villalobos	1345.	Hale Woodruff
1287.	Jose Villalobos	1346.	Anna Wong
1288.	Muur Vindell	1347.	Diana Wong
1289.	Mark Vinson	1348.	Adrienne Wortzel
1290.	Susan Volker	1349.	Wright
1291.	Maja Vonmoos	1350.	Barbara Wright
1292.	Ursula Von Rydingsvard	1351.	Brendan Wright
1293.	John Von Wicht	1352.	Dmitri Wright
1294.	J Waddell	1353.	Wunderman
1295.	Bruce Waldman	1354.	Jacqueline Wutnich
1296.	Sandy Walker	1355.	Carol Ann Wyman
1297.	Kay WalkingStick	1356.	Noriko Yanagisawa
1298.	Ernest Walters	1357.	Sally Yap
1299.	Solomon Wangboje	1358.	Richard Yarde
1300.	David Warden	1359.	Deborah Yellin
1301.	Sidney Wasserman	1360.	Marcia G Yerman
1302.	Maryanne Watson	1361.	Andy Yoder
1303.	Carol Wax	1362.	Shoko Yomogizawa
1304.	Wilma Jane Wechselbaum	1363.	Frank Young
1305.	Ryan Weiderman	1364.	Charlotte Yudis
1306.	Debra Weier	1365.	John Zack
1307.	Susan Weil	1366.	Sasha Zakharov
1308.	Lisa R Weinberg	1367.	Nancy Zamboni
1309.	Larry Weinstein	1368.	Anya Zatakovaya
1310.	Weiss	1369.	Bruce Zator
1311.	Neil Welliver	1370.	Ellen Zeifer
1312.	Joyce E Wellman	1371.	Yigal Zemer
1313.	Nancy Wells	1372.	Jentea Zempel
1314.	Wenestein	1373.	Damian Zewel
1315.	Stow Wengenroth	1374.	Ben Zion
1316.	Wenji	1375.	K Zimarkis
1317.	G Werneck	1376.	Ben Zion
1318.	Shirley West	1377.	Brenda Zlamany
1319.	Jerry West	1378.	Klaus Zumbuhl
1320.	Linda Whitaker	1379.	Becky Zwicker
1321.	Charles White		
1322.	Ernestine White		
1323.	Stanley Whitney		
1325.	Wiebenson		
1326.	Emmett Wigglesworth		
1327.	Ben Wigfall		
1328.	Betty Wilde		
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<u>Working List of Printers</u>			
1380.	Ed Archie		
1381.	Elise Asher		
1382.	M'liss Bartlett		
1383.	Kathy Caraccio		
1384.	Chiong Yiao Chen		

1385. Devraj Dakoji
1386. Julie D'Amario
1387. Kelly Driscoll
1388. Darrell Forehand
1389. Ester Gold
1390. Peter Gross
1391. Bill Hall
1392. Mohammed Khalil (Sudan)
1393. Lisa Mackie
1394. Agnes Murray

1395. Randy Newhouse
1396. Laurie Ourlicht
1397. Jennifer Porter
1398. Gloria Rodriguez
1399. Lynn Rogan
1400. Maria Rojo
1401. Maryanne Sheil
1402. Holly Sears
1403. Marjorie Hunt Van Dyke
1404. Kathy Weinberg

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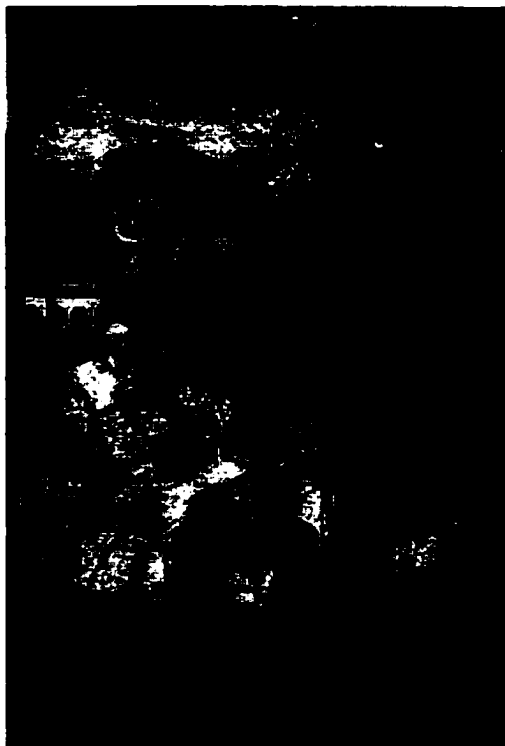
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(Top, Illus. 1) Aaron Douglas, *Song of Towers (Aspects of Negro Life cycle)*, 1934
Oil on canvas, 9' x 9.'

(Bottom, Illus. 2) Diego Rivera, *Man at the Crossroads*, 1933-1934
Fresco for Rockefeller Center, New York, 19 x 40.75' (destroyed).



(Top, illus. 3) Charles Alston, *Magic and Medicine*, 1936

Two oil on canvas mural panels, each 17 x 9.'

(Bottom, illus. 4) Thomas Hart Benton, *City Activities With Subway* (*America Today* cycle), 1930-1931. Distemper and egg tempera with oil glaze on gessoed linen, 7.75 x 11.20.'



(Top, Illus. 5) Robert Blackburn, *End Paper*, Part 1 and 2, 1937.
Drawings, dimensions unknown.

(Bottom, Illus. 6) Robert Blackburn, *End Paper*, Part 1 and 2, nd.
Drawings, dimensions unknown.



(Top Left, Illus. 7) Robert Blackburn, *Man with Load* (AKA *The Toiler, Toil*), 1936. Charcoal and ink drawing, 8 x 10."

(Top Right, Illus. 8) Diego Rivera, *The Flower Carrier*, 1935. Oil and tempera on masonite, 48 x 47.75."

(Bottom Left, Illus. 9) Robert Blackburn, *Abroad—End Piece*, 1938. Drawing, dimensions unknown.

(Bottom Right, Illus. 10) Diego Rivera, *Zapata*, 1932/edition 100. Lithograph, 16.5 x 13.25."



(Top Left, illus. 11) Robert Blackburn, *Tree Cutters*, 1937. Drawing, dimensions unknown.
 (Top Right, illus. 12) Robert Blackburn, *Lumberjacks*, 1937. Drawing, dimensions unknown.
 (Bottom, illus. 13) Clare Leighton, *Loading*, 1931. Wood engraving, 10.75 x 13.75."



(Top, Illus. 14) Robert Blackburn, *School Yard*, nd. Drawing, dimensions unknown.
 (Bottom Left, Illus. 15) William E. Smith, *Poverty and Fatigue*, 1940. Linoleum cut, 9 x 8."
 (Bottom Right, Illus. 16) Blanche Grambs, *No Work*, 1935. Lithograph, 16 x 11.5."



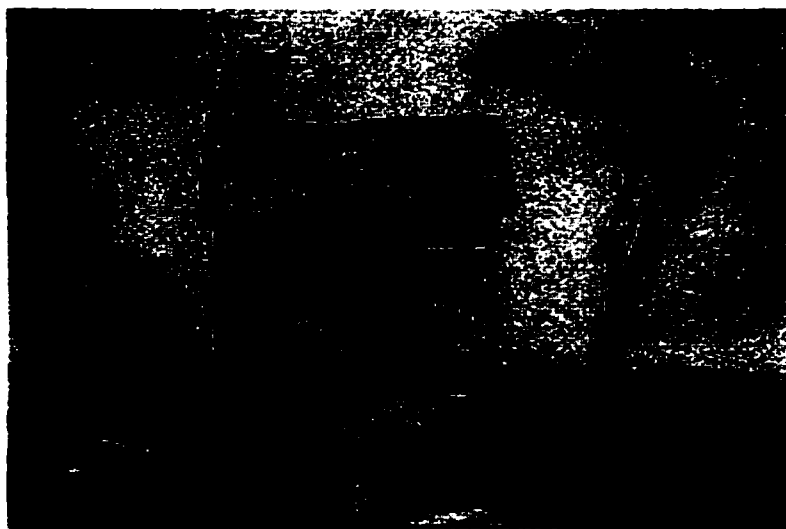
(Top, Illus. 17) Robert Blackburn, *Barns*, 1938. Drawing, dimensions unknown.

(Center, Illus. 18) Robert Blackburn, *Upper New York*, ca. 1938.

Lithograph, 11.25 x 13.25."

(Bottom, Illus. 19) Hale Woodruff, *Relics*, 1931-1946. Linoleum cut, 11 x 8."





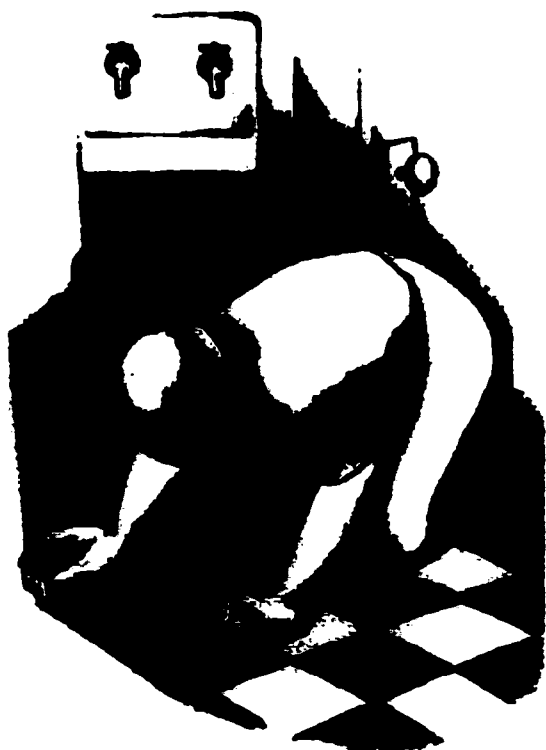
(Top, Illus. 20) Charles Alston, *Deserted House*, c. 1938. Lithograph, 11 x 15.25."
(Bottom, Illus. 21) Robert Blackburn, *Coal Shute II (AKA Abandoned Coal Shute)*, 1938
Lithograph, 16.5 x 17.75."



(Top, Illus. 22) Louis Lozowick,
Guts of Manhattan, 1939.
Lithograph, 16 x 10.5."

(Bottom, Illus. 23) Robert
Blackburn, *End Piece*, 1938.
Drawing, dimensions unknown.





PRELIMINARY

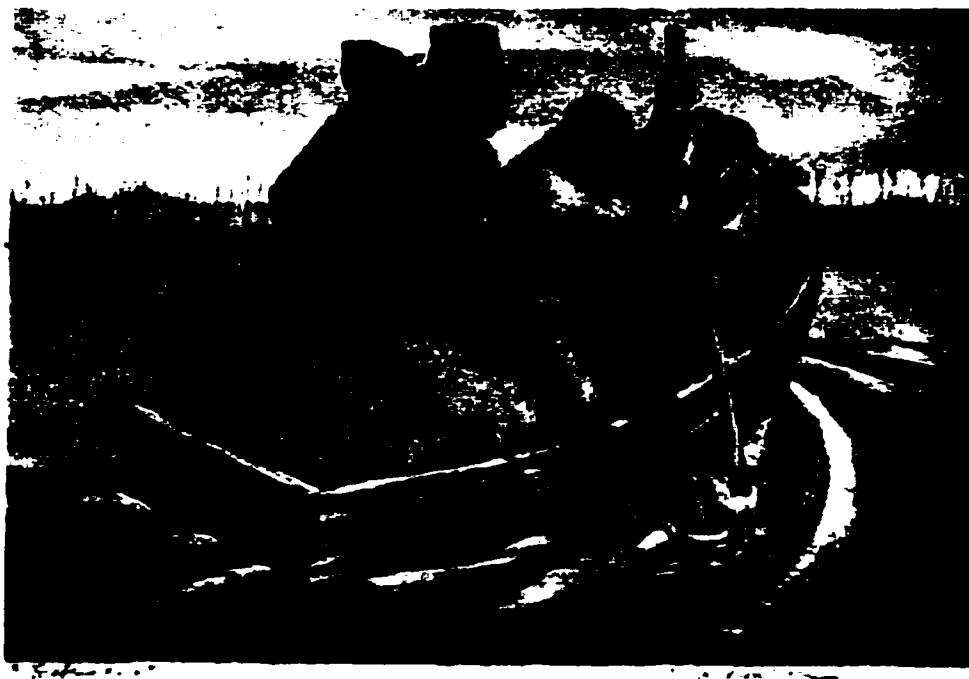
(Top Left, Illus. 24) Robert Blackburn, *Beginning*, 1938. Drawing, dimensions unknown.
 (Top Right, Illus. 25) Robert Blackburn, *End*, 1939. Drawing, dimensions unknown.
 (Bottom, Illus. 26) Robert Blackburn, *Fresh Fish*, 1938. Drawing, dimensions unknown.



(Top, Left and Right, Illus. 27 a-b) Details from Philip Guston, *Work and Play*, 1940-1941. Casein-resin emulsion on gesso, approx. 6 x 90," Lobby of the Community Center, Queensbridge Housing Project, Queens, NY.

(Bottom Left, Illus. 28) Robert Blackburn, *Wrestlers*, 1939. Drawing, dimensions unknown.

(Bottom Right, Illus. 29) Robert Blackburn, *The Arts*, 1939. Drawing, dimensions unknown.



(Top, illus. 30) Robert Blackburn, *Refugees* (AKA *People in a Boat; Five Men in a Boat*), 1938-1939/edition 8, Lithograph, 15.5 x 19.75."
 (Bottom, illus. 31) Max Beckmann, *Departure*, 1932-1933. Triptych, oil on canvas, center 84.75 x 45.5", sides 84.75 x 39.25."



(Top Right, Illus. 32) Charles White, *We Have Been Believers*, 1949. Lithograph, 11.75 x 10.75/19.25 x 13."
 (Top Left, Illus. 33) Charles White, *Youth*, 1949
 Lithograph, 14 x 11."
 (Bottom, Illus. 34) Robert Blackburn, *Youth*, ca.1943-1948. Lithograph, 10.25 x 12.5/12.5 x 19."



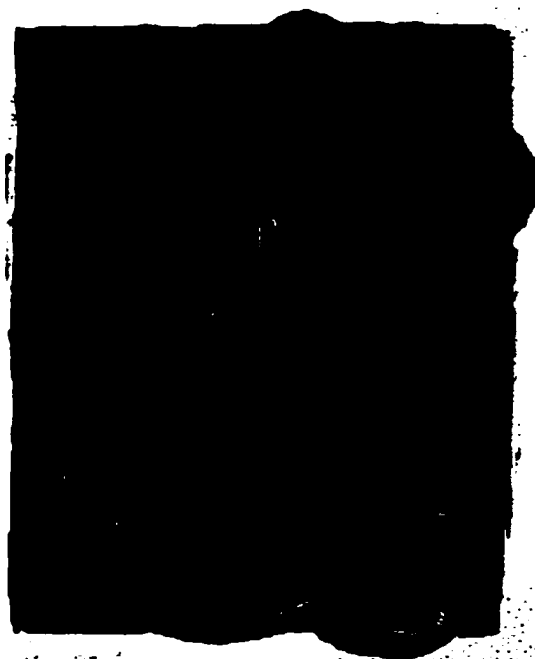
(Top, Illus. 35) Robert Blackburn, *Mother & Child*, ca.1943-1948. Lithograph, 8.75 x 4.75/12.5 x 9.5."

(Bottom Left, Illus. 36) Charles White, *Hope for the Future*, ca.1947. Lithograph, 13.75 x 10.75."

(Bottom Right, Illus. 37) Elizabeth Catlett, *Mother and Child*, 1946. Lithograph, 8 x 5.75."



(Illus. 38 a-d) Robert Blackburn, *Nude* (AKA *Nude Sketch*),
ca.1943-1948, Lithograph, 25 x 19, Proof sheets vary,
approximately 29.5 x 24 to 32 x 22."



(Top, Illus. 39) Robert Blackburn, *Seated Nude*, ca. 1943-1948.
Lithograph, 18 x 14.25/23.5 x 18.25."

(Bottom Left, Illus. 40) Robert Blackburn, *Negro Mother*, ca. 1948.
Ink and charcoal study, approximately 10 x 8."

(Bottom Right, Illus. 41) Robert Blackburn, *Negro Mother*, 1948.
Lithograph, dimensions unknown.



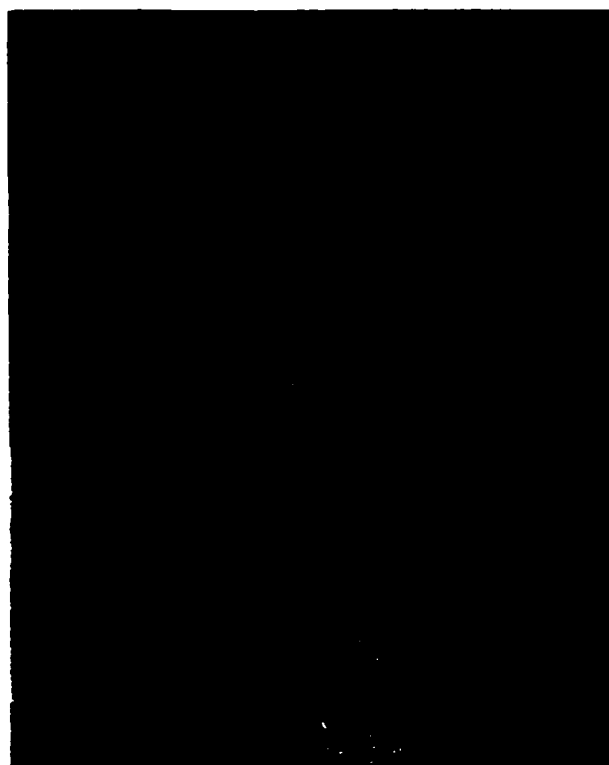
(Top, Illus. 42) Robert Blackburn, *Boy With a Green Head*, 1948.
Lithograph, 14.5 or 15.5 x 10.5/17 x 22."
(Bottom, Illus. 43) Robert Blackburn, *Head in Wash*, ca. 1948-50.
Lithograph, 16 x 12."

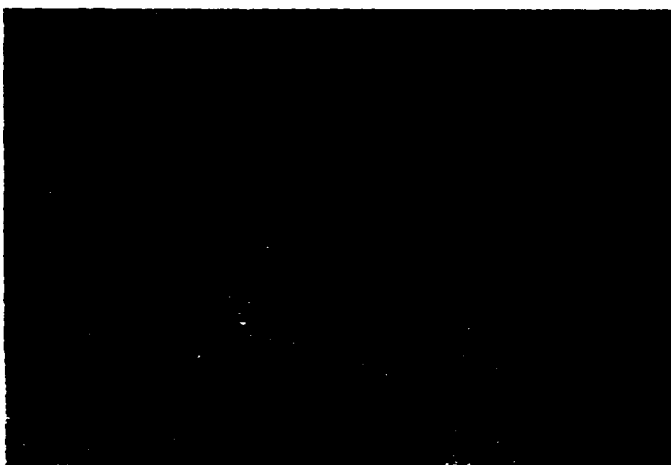




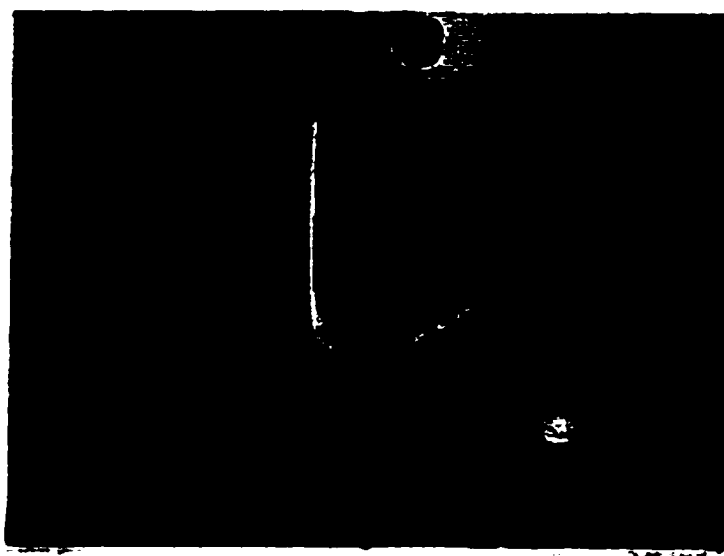
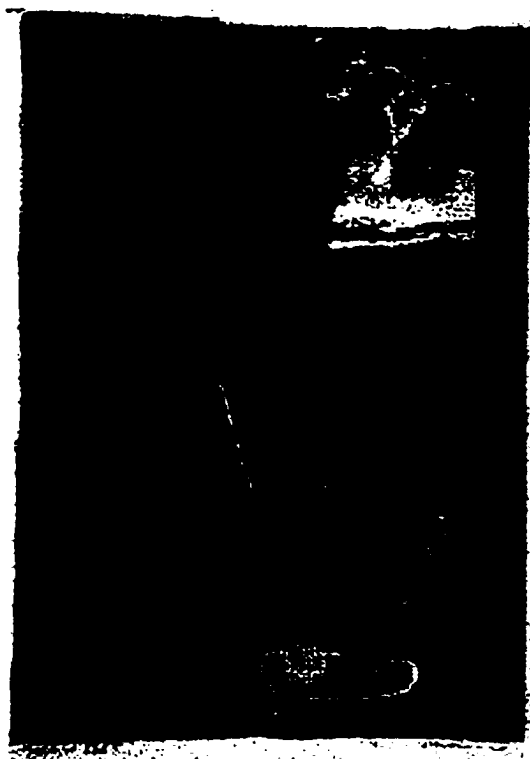
(Top, Illus. 44) Robert Blackburn, *Untitled (AKA Abstract Study)*, ca.1950-195. Ink and charcoal study, 18 x 15."

(Bottom, Illus. 45) Robert Blackburn, *Untitled (AKA Standing Female Nude)*, ca.1950-1951 Watercolor study, 18 x 15."

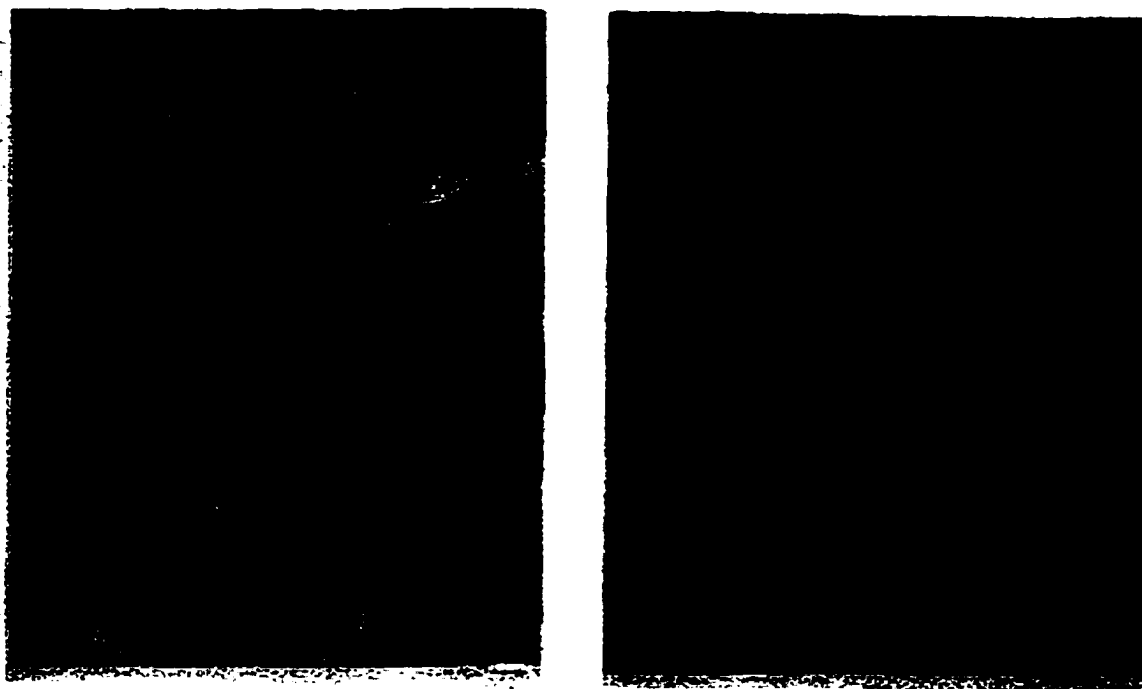




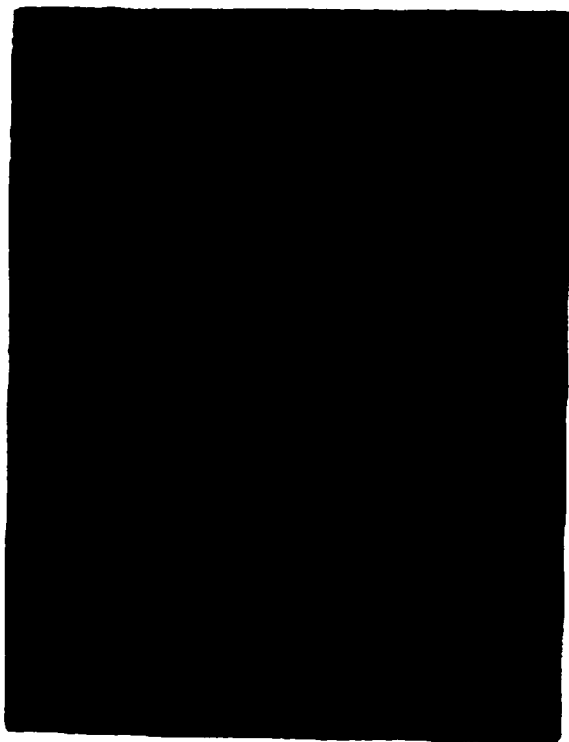
(Top, illus. 46)
 Robert Blackburn, *Untitled*
 (AKA *Park Study*),
 ca.1950-1951. Wash on
 paper, 15 x 20."
 (Center, illus. 47)
 Robert Blackburn, *Untitled*
 (AKA *Park Study*),
 ca.1950-1951
 Wash on paper, 15 x 20."
 (Bottom, illus. 48)
 Ronald Joseph, *Untitled*,
 1948-1956. Wash on
 paper, 47.5 x 60.5 cm.



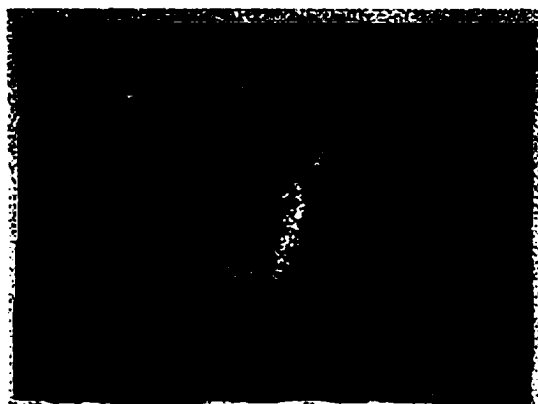
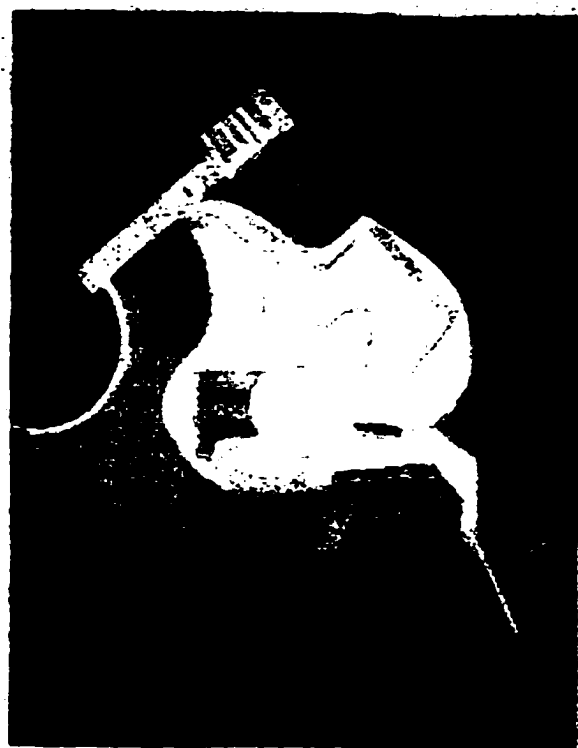
(Top Left, Illus. 49) Robert Blackburn, *Girl in Red*, 1950.
 Lithograph, 18.25 x 12.75/23.25 x 15.5."
 (Top Right, Illus. 50) Robert Blackburn, *Still Life*,
 ca.1950-52. Lithograph, 13.5 x 18.25/16.25 x 23."
 (Bottom, Illus. 51) Will Barnet, *Child Alone*, 1951.
 Lithograph, Image 19 x 24.25, Sheet 22.25 x 28."



(Illus. 52 a-b) Will Barnet, *Child Among Thorns*, 1952. Lithograph, 2 versions, 24 x 18.5."



(Illus. 53 a-d) Robert Blackburn, *Table* (AKA *Cubist Table*), ca. 1957-1958. Intaglio with ink, pencil and watercolor additions, 11.75 x 8.75," Sheets vary, approximately 19.25 x 12.75."

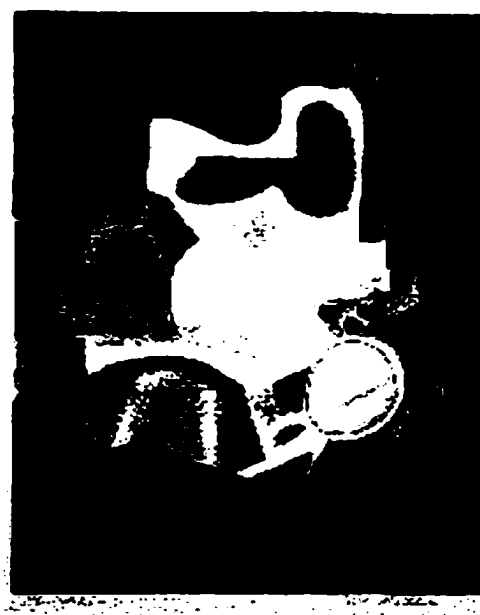


(Top Left, Illus. 54) Robert Blackburn,
My Table, ca.1956. Lithograph, 15 x
11/20.25 x 13."

(Top Right, Illus. 55) Robert Blackburn,
Quiet Instrument, 1958/edition 12
Lithograph, 11.75 x 8.75/19 x 12. 5."

(Bottom Left, Illus. 56) Robert Blackburn,
Lemon & Green Jug, 1959/edition 12
Lithograph, 11 x 14.5/13.25 x 20."

(Bottom Right, Illus. 57) Robert
Blackburn, *Interior*, 1958/edition 12
Lithograph, 12 x 9/22.25 x 15."



(Top Left, Illus. 58) Robert Blackburn, *Untitled* (AKA *Still Life Shell*), ca.1957. Ink wash with gouache, 23.5 x 18.5."

(Top Right, Illus. 59) Robert Blackburn, *Red Pipe* (AKA *Red Pitcher Still Life*), 1958/edition 10. Lithograph, 16.5 x 21.75/20 x 26.25."

(Bottom Left, Illus. 60) Robert Blackburn, *Reflections* (AKA *The Mirror*), 1960. Lithograph, 18.5 x 23.75/20 x 26.25."

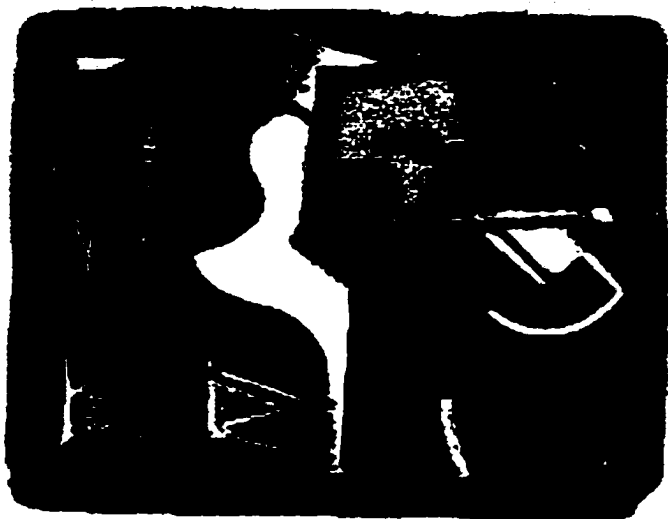
(Bottom Right, Illus. 61) Robert Blackburn, *The White Pitcher*, 1961. Lithograph, 23.75 x 18.5/30 x 22.25."



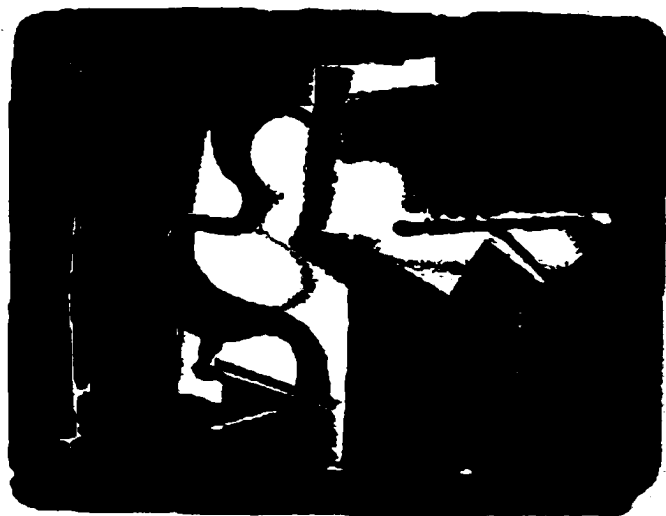
(Top, Illus. 62) Robert Blackburn,
Red and Black, 1958/edition 12.
Lithograph, 19 x 13.5/23 x
17.25."

(Bottom, Illus. 63) Robert
Blackburn, *Yellow on Red*,
1962/edition 10. Lithograph, 18.5
x 24/20.5 x 26.25."





(Top and Center, Illus. 64 a-b.
Robert Blackburn, *Heavy
Forms/Pink*, 1958 (variations)
(Bottom, Illus. 64 c) *Heavy
Forms*, 1961/edition 10
Lithographs, 15.75 x
19.5/sheets vary to approxi-
mately 19 x 26."



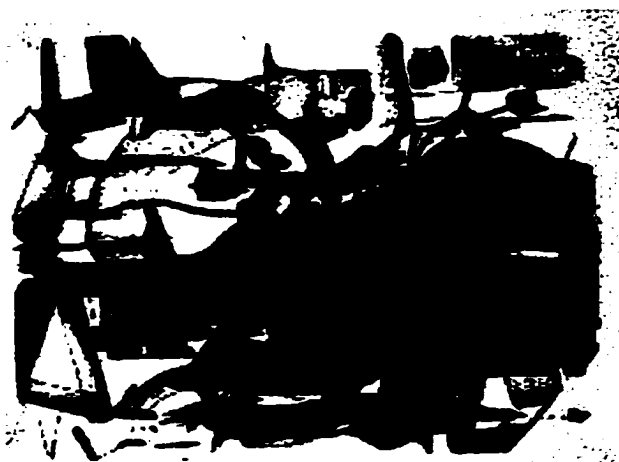


(Top, Illus. 65) Larry Rivers,
Jack of Spades, 1960.

Lithograph, 42.5 x 30."

(Bottom, Illus. 66) Robert
Blackburn, *Color Symphony*,
1960. Lithograph, 15.5 x
21.75/29 x 25."





(Top Left, illus. 67) Grace Hartigan,
The Hero Leaves His Ship IV, 1960.
Lithograph, 21 x 29.75."

(Top Right, illus. 68) Grace Hartigan,
Pallas Athene, 1961.
Lithograph, 30 x 22.25."

(Center, illus. 69) Robert Blackburn,
Untitled, ca. 1960s-1971.
Lithograph, approx. 22 x 30."

(Bottom, illus. 70) Robert Blackburn,
Untitled (Little Stone), ca. 1960s-
1971. Lithograph, approx. 22 x 30."

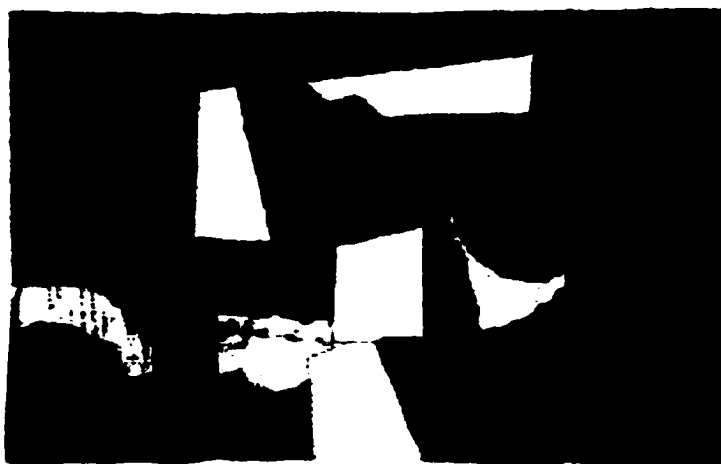


(Top, illus. 71) Helen Frankenthaler, *First Stone*, 1961.
Lithograph, 22.25 x 29.75."

(Bottom, illus. 72) Robert Blackburn, *Little Landscape*,
ca.1960s-1968 .Lithograph, 12 x 17/19 x 26."



(Top and Center, illus. 73
a-b) Robert Blackburn,
Blue Window, 1962-
1963/edition 10
(Bottom, illus. 73 c)
Windowed Shapes,
1963/edition 6
Lithographs, 17.5 x
26.75/22.25 x 30."





(Illus. 74 a-b) Robert Blackburn, *Untitled*
(AKA *Torn Shapes*), ca.1960-1963
Lithographs, 21 x 27.25/25.5 x 32.25."



(Left, Illus. 75) Robert Rauschenberg, *Accident*, 1963. Lithograph, 41.25 x 29.5."
(Right, Illus. 76) Robert Blackburn, *Faux Pas*, 1960. Lithograph, 22 x 16.5/26 x 19."

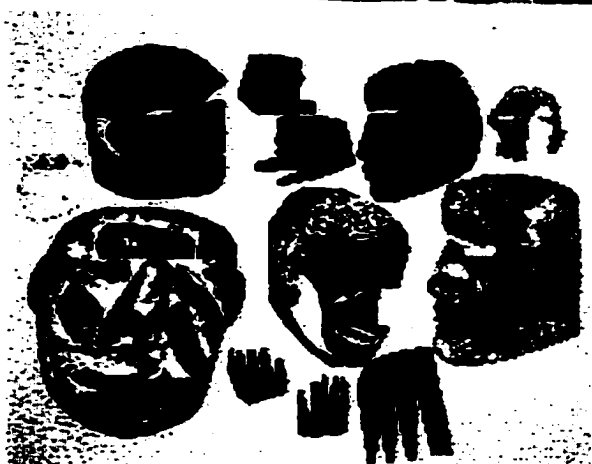


(Top Left, Illus. 77 a) Robert Blackburn, *Untitled* (AKA *Curious Stone*) ca.1960s-1971. Lithograph, 15.75 x 23/26 x 19."

(Top Right, Illus. 77 b) Robert Blackburn, *Untitled* (AKA *Broken Stone I, One Piece*) ca.1960s-1971. Lithograph, 7.5 x 6.5/19 x 13."

(Bottom Left, Illus. 77 c) Robert Blackburn, *Untitled* (AKA *Broken Stone*), ca.1960s-1971 Lithograph, dimensions unknown.

(Bottom Right, Illus. 77 d) Robert Blackburn, *Untitled* (AKA *Broken Stone II*), ca.1960s-1971 (possibly 1974) Lithograph, 7.75 x 5.5."



(Top Left, Illus. 78) Romare Bearden, *The Train*, 1978. Photoetching, 17.75 x 22.25."

(Center Left, Illus. 79 a) Romare Bearden, *Jazz at Montreux*, 1982. Monotype with stenciled images, 28 x 38."

(Bottom Left, Illus. 79 b) Romare Bearden, Paper stencils, varying sizes.

(Top Right, Illus. 80 a) Robert Blackburn, *What is Apartheid*, 1984. Monotype, 22.25 x 30"

(Bottom Right, Illus. 80 b) Robert Blackburn, *Untitled*, ca. 1976-1984. Monotype, 22.25 x 30."



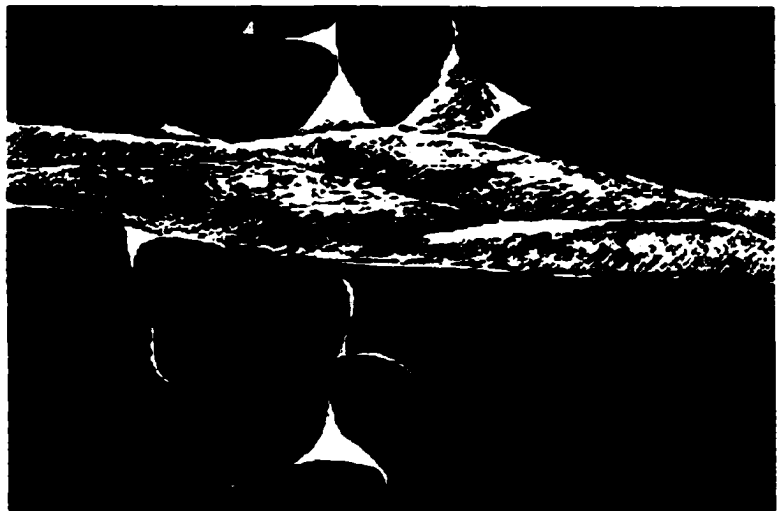
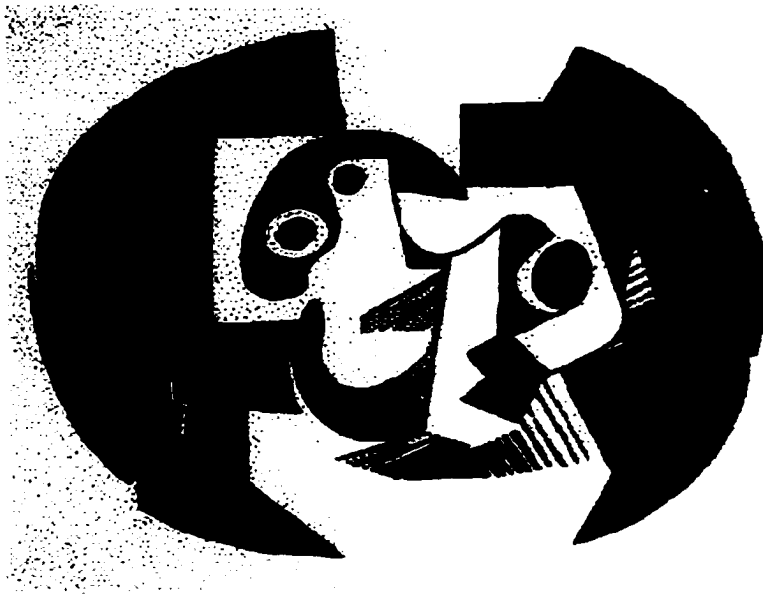
(Top Left, Illus. 81) Robert Blackburn, *Organic Thing* (AKA *Purple Stones*), 1979. Viscosity intaglio, 14 x 13.75/22.25 x 18.5"

(Bottom Left, Illus. 82) Robert Blackburn, *Untitled*, ca.1979. Viscosity intaglio, 13.75 x 13.75/22/25 x 14/18."

(Top Right, Illus. 83) Robert Blackburn, *Asilah Oui*, ca.1978. Woodcut, 5.25 x 14/13.25 x 17."

(Bottom Right, Illus. 84) Robert Blackburn, *Jus Jazz* (AKA *Jus Jazz Set*), ca.1978-1983. Lithograph, 21 x 14/25.75 x 17.75."





(Top, illus. 85) Robert Blackburn, *Blue and White*, 1969
Woodcut, 16.75 x 22/21 x 29.25.

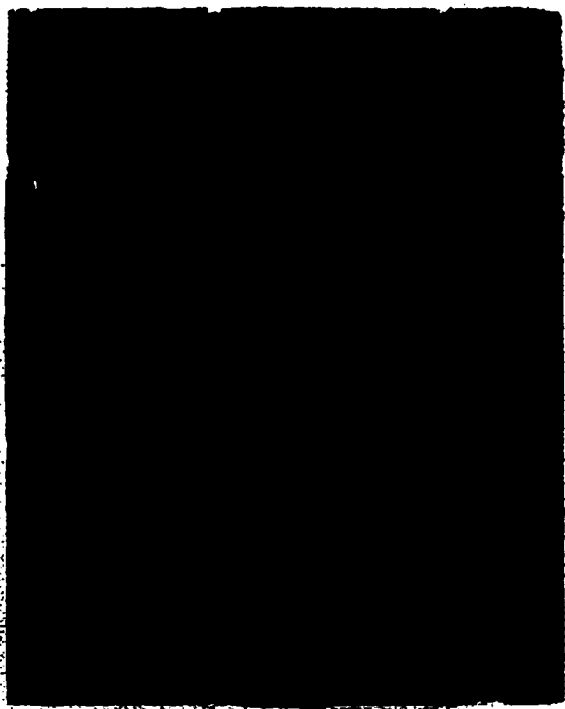
(Bottom, illus. 86) Robert Blackburn, *Blue Things*, 1963-70
Woodcut, Image 20 x 26/24 x 30."



(Top Left, Illus. 87 a) Robert Blackburn, *Miss Unity*, 1974
Woodcut, 26 x 20/37 x 25."

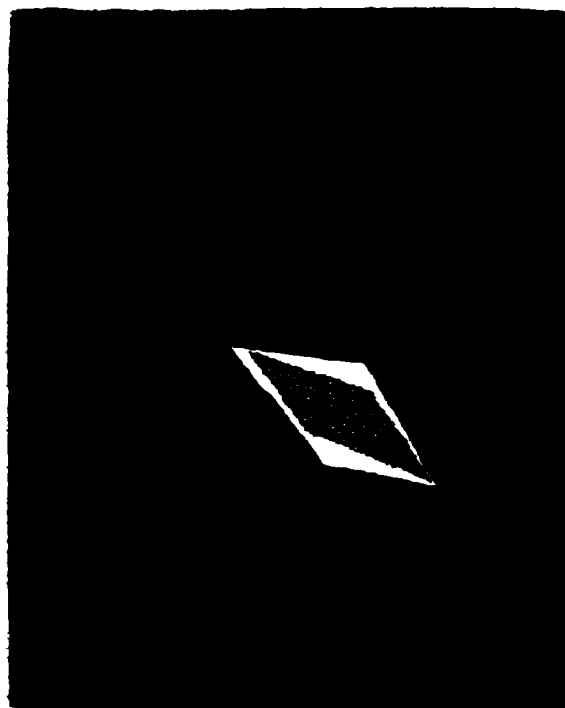
(Top Right, Illus. 87 b) Robert Blackburn, *Miss Unity*,
1990-6. Woodcut, 26 x 20/33 x 25."

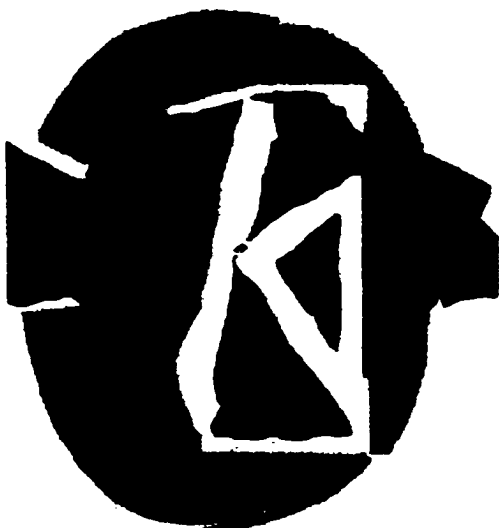
(Bottom, Illus. 88) Robert Blackburn, *Jay Hawk Tawk*,
1974-1975. Woodcut, 20 x 26/25 x 37."



(Top, Illus. 89) Robert Blackburn, *Purple Flash I*, 1972. Woodcut, 26 x 20/39.5 x 24.5."

(Bottom, Illus. 90) Robert Blackburn, *Yellow Flash*, 1972. Woodcut, 26 x 20/30.75 x 23."





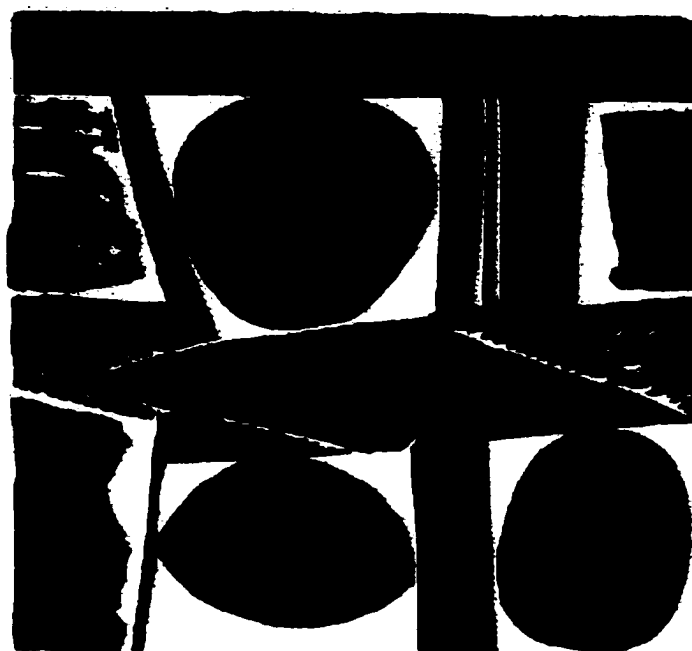
(Top, Illus. 91) Robert Blackburn, *Space Shape* (AKA *Space Ship*, *Kiss Shape*), 1970 Woodcut, 22 x 20/30 x 22."



(Center, Illus. 92) Robert Blackburn, *Sunburst*, 1967-1969 Woodcut, 20 x 26/25.25 x 38.25."



(Bottom, Illus. 93) Robert Blackburn, *Walk in the Shade*, 1970-1974. Woodcut, 20 x 26/25 x 34."



(Top, Illus. 94) Robert
Blackburn, *Three Ovals*,
1960s-70s. Woodcut,
17.5 x 14. 5/22.5 x 17.5."
(Bottom, Illus. 95) Robert
Blackburn, *Woodscape*,
1984. Woodcut, 12 x
15.25/19 x 24."

