

142

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

NEW YORK

11 WEST 53rd STREET
TELEPHONE: CIRCLE 5-8900
CABLES: MODERNART, NEW-YORK

SARAH NEWMAYER, PUBLICITY DIRECTOR

September 30, 1943.

TO City Editors
Art Editors
Education Editors

Dear Sirs:

You are invited to come or send a representative to

Press Preview of

YOUNG NEGRO ART: Work of Students
at Hampton Institute

Tuesday, October 5
2 to 6 P.M.

in the Young People's Gallery of the
Museum of Modern Art
11 West 53 Street.

The exhibition will open to the public Wednesday, October 6.

For further information please telephone me at Circle 5-8900.

Sincerely yours,

Sarah Newmeyer

Sarah Newmeyer
Publicity Director

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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11 WEST 53RD STREET, NEW YORK 19, N. Y.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WORK OF YOUNG NEGRO ARTISTS EXHIBITED AT MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Under the title of Young Negro Art: An Exhibition of the Work of Students at Hampton Institute, a selection of twelve paintings, twenty-five drawings and one mural will be shown in the Young People's Gallery of the Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, from Wednesday, October 6, through November 28. The exhibiting artists, seven young men and one woman now or recently students at Hampton, are from various parts of the country: Virginia, New York, North Carolina, Florida, Indiana, Pennsylvania, Ohio. Several of the men are now in the Armed Services. The pictures cover a wide range. John T. Biggers of Gastonia, North Carolina, is represented by the greatest number of works shown: his mural The Dying Soldier and two study sketches for it, three paintings, and six drawings.

Victor D'Amico, Director of the Museum's Educational Program, refers to the exhibition and to the artistic potentialities of the Negro as follows:

"The Negro possesses a rich creative power which is sometimes highly individual and sensitive. He is imaginative and responsive when properly guided and encouraged, but can easily become inhibited and imitative under inflexible and formal teaching. There are few teachers who truly understand the Negro's profound creative ability and who are capable of instructing him without destroying or at least perverting his visual perception and his instinctive talent. The same may be said about teaching white students, but it is more applicable to the Negro because he is more malleable and sensitive, and therefore more easily influenced. It does not matter whether the teacher is white or Negro; what does matter is that he understand his students and their sensitive expression. I have seen Negro students under the direction of Negro teachers imitate certain obsolete patterns in painting of the School of Paris, but when properly understood and guided, their power and will to express seem boundless. The work of the students at Hampton Institute is a healthy and promising example of the creative potentiality of the American Negro.

"Dr. Viktor Lowenfeld, head of the Art Department at Hampton Institute, is a teacher who understands and is able to draw out the creative gifts of the Negro. The exhibition illustrates his power to do so and is a commendable effort. It represents, however, only the beginning of a complex and difficult problem. There are indications in the exhibition of the struggle of the Hampton student in finding his own expression as opposed to imitating the traditional schools of art and contemporary artists. Occasionally one senses an influence from a European school or a favorite master in the painting, but this should eventually disappear as the student gains confidence and the ability to express his own ideas. This exhibition is, therefore, more important as an indication of the creative potentiality of art in the American

Negro and as a wholesome and intelligent approach in training him, than as a collection of finished works of art."

This year marks the seventy-fifth anniversary of Hampton Institute. On April 1, 1868, three years after the close of the Civil War and five years after the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation, fifteen Negro students met in the scattered buildings of Little Scotland plantation in the old Virginia town of Hampton to form the first class of the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute. Sponsored by the American Missionary Association, the school was founded by a young Brigadier-General, Samuel Chapman Armstrong, who had commanded Negro troops during the Civil War. In 1870 the school was incorporated under the laws of the State for "the instruction of youth in the various common-school, academic and collegiate branches, the best methods of teaching the same, and the best mode of practical industry in its application to agriculture and the mechanical arts." Today, after seventy-five years of devotion to its original purpose, Hampton Institute occupies a waterfront campus of seventy-four acres with approximately one hundred and forty-five buildings and two farms. Some of the money for the earlier buildings was "sung up" by the Hampton Singers who travelled throughout the North giving concerts of Negro spirituals.

During the school year of 1942-43 the Institute enrolled 1,070 men and women, with a summer attendance of 500 or more students. It is now engaged in a wartime program including civilian defense, "refresher" courses in war-production trades and technical subjects, and engineering fundamentals. About one thousand enlisted men in the Army Motor Transport Corps from Army camps all over the country have been given advanced training in the service and maintenance in motorized Army equipment. The largest unit of wartime activity on the campus is the United States Naval Training Station where selected seamen, after undergoing basic training at the Great Lakes Naval Training Station, are instructed in Diesel and motor engine maintenance and repair, machine shop practice, electricity, welding, sheet metal, pipefitting, and ship's carpentry.

The teachers at Hampton are representatives of both white and Negro races and of many different countries and nationalities. In 1939 Hampton Institute appointed as Associate Professor of Art Dr. Viktor Lowenfeld, a native of Austria. Dr. Lowenfeld, who has degrees equivalent to that of Doctor of Philosophy in the United States, attended the Art Academy, the University, and the Kunstgewerbeschule

in Vienna, and was head of the Art Department at the Chajesreal-gymnasium and director of art at the Blinden Institute Hohewarte in Vienna from 1924 to 1938, and then for a year was consultant psychologist at the Lochland Institute, Geneva. He was a lecturer at Harvard University and Columbia University before going to Hampton Institute.

The exhibition is composed of works by Dr. Lowenfeld's students. He says of them:

"Art exists and develops only when no unnecessary restrictions hamper the creator in his development. In the case of the American Negro, certain inhibitions have tended to develop because of his minority status, and there is evidence to show that his freest art expression will evolve only after removal of these inhibitions.

"Unequal social conditions, particularly in the South, have created in the Negro a strong though often unconscious longing for everything which members of the majority group have achieved. In art this unconscious longing is frequently expressed in a tendency to imitate the 'superior' art of the white group. We believe this is why scarcely any students came to the Hampton Institute Arts Center whose previous work was a true expression of their own experiences. As a rule, their first conscious approaches toward art had been imitations, chiefly from white fashion magazines. Almost all of them, when they attempted to draw, drew white persons and not Negro features.

"This imitation, though psychologically understandable, is one of the inhibitory factors in the development of genuine Negro art. It is of even greater significance in the stages when a more 'developed' style of art-expression buries the inherent creative abilities of the Negro artist. As long as the imitative urge is still to be found mainly in such external manifestations as mentioned above, it can be easily removed. Once the Negro artist has established confidence in his own potential creative abilities, he unfolds rapidly.

"With this knowledge as a background, our basic principle in the Arts Center has been to seek, first of all, to liberate the young artist from all such false inhibitions and to encourage him to express freely what lies most deeply within himself. I believe that this is why so many students who came to Hampton Institute without any previous art experience, or with very little such experience, have developed rapidly in an almost unbelievable fashion."

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES OF EXHIBITING ARTISTS

YOUNG NEGRO ART: Work of Students at Hampton Institute

at the Museum of Modern Art
October 6 - November 28, 1943

Students in the Arts Center of Hampton Institute come from a variety of home backgrounds and represent a wide range of high school interests and pre-college training. They come from the North as well as the South, from urban as well as rural centers, from families of upper middle-class status and from homes of limited financial resources and restricted cultural opportunities.

Some arrive at Hampton Institute already definitely interested in art, seeking instruction which will prepare them for careers as commercial artists or teachers of art. Others, having already made a vocational choice in another field, discover latent artistic ability and shift to a major in art after a few months under the tutelage of Dr. Lowenfeld. A total of 165 students participated in activities in the Arts Center last year.

BAKER, Annabelle. Head, tempera

Father was a mortician and mother was a nurse. ~~Went~~ to Hampton Institute from Stanton High School in Jacksonville, Florida, where she was school artist and painted a mural for one of the local churches. She entered Hampton Institute as an art major and looks forward to a career in this field. Miss Baker, who was one of the two freshmen women who attained the highest academic average at the college last year, also holds the post of feature editor of the Hampton Script.

BEAN, John. Head of Man, charcoal
Head of Girl, charcoal

Son of a steel worker in Gary, Indiana. Graduated from the Gary High School, where he was active in sports, dramatics, debating and the art club. He had won five poster contests and had taken several high school courses in art when he was awarded a Hampton Institute art scholarship. He entered Hampton Institute, intending to study Art Education and Civil Engineering, and is now an art major.

BIGGERS, John T. Dying Soldier, mural in tempera
Searching for a New Home, oil
Laundry Woman, oil
Hand, watercolor
Study
Study for Faith
Study for Dying Soldier
Study, pencil, 1940
Shooting Lincoln, pencil, 1941
Study, crayon, 1942
Study for Dying Soldier, pencil, 1942
Study, pencil, 1943

Son of Mrs. Cora Biggers, domestic employee of Gastonia, North Carolina. Went to Hampton Institute to study plumbing and heating in the Department of Building Construction, hoping eventually to set up his own plumbing business in Gastonia. He had worked as a plumber's helper to earn his expenses in

preparatory school at Lincoln Academy in King's Mountain, North Carolina, where he graduated second in his class.

Biggers, perhaps the most talented student at present in the Arts Center, did his first oil painting in his freshman year. Now at the end of his second year, he has done an enormous amount of work in the Arts Center, including two murals, a sculptured head of General Samuel Chapman Armstrong, who founded Hampton Institute, and several smaller works. He looks forward to a career as an artist.

MACK, Joseph L. Pieta, oil
Mother and Child, oil
Despair, oil

Son of Hubert Mack, a brick mason, of High Point, North Carolina. Reported for induction at Fort Bragg not long ago, after receiving his Bachelor's degree at Hampton. He entered Hampton Institute as a major in Building Construction (Interior Decoration), with the hope that he might also pursue courses preparing him for a career as a cartoonist and magazine artist.

Mack spent his first two summer vacations on the campus earning his college expenses as a house painter, but by 1941 his talent for another kind of painting had won him a scholarship in art. While in college he prepared exhibits, arranged stage sets and decorations for proms, assisted in painting the Hampton murals at Fort Eustis, created and painted a prize-winning float for his social club in the 1942 Homecoming parade, and designed the Senior Yearbook.

MARTIN, Alfred James. Jazz, oil

Martin is a native of the Bronx in New York City and the son of Mrs. Helen Martin. His father is dead. A graduate of Morris High School in 1938, he attended City College of New York for six months and then entered Hampton Institute in the fall of 1939. He registered in the Trade School for work in electricity, planning to study electrical engineering at Cornell University later on. He took the three-year college course at Hampton, receiving a diploma in electricity in 1942 and ranking second in a class of 44. He played on the freshman football team, was a letter man in soccer, and took Civilian Pilot training.

REDWOOD, Junius. Night Scene, oil
Sunday, charcoal

Worked with Dr. Lowenfeld while taking war-training courses at Hampton Institute. He took machine shop practice from September to December 1940, probably in connection with a defense job. He is reported to be in the armed forces at present.

SPENCER, George. Accident, tempera on wood
Study for Accident

Son of Mr. and Mrs. George T. Spencer, a plasterer and school teacher, respectively. Entered Hampton Institute last fall from Highland High School in Gastonia, North Carolina, his home town. He planned to follow an art major, but was drafted in May of this year, after working in the Art Center less than a year.

STEWART, Frank. Saturday Rush, oil
Study for Too Late
Head of Man, pencil, 1941
Head of Man, crayon, 1942

Son of Mr. G. A. Stewart, an insurance man of Columbus, Ohio. Entered Hampton Institute on a scholarship from the Arts Center. Having already displayed artistic talent in the East High School in Columbus, he planned to major in Art at Hampton. He assisted in painting the Fort Eustis murals but was drafted before developing his talents further.