

CHARLES WHITE, ARTIST AND TEACHER

ESTHER ADLER

If you don't know, learn. If you know, teach.

—Liberation Bookstore motto

Charles White was a devoted teacher his entire life. Throughout his career, he seamlessly wove his dedication to education into his artistic practice. White embodied the motto of the activist Una Mulzac's Liberation Bookstore in Harlem through his belief in self-reliance and the responsibility to learn, paired with the duty to teach.¹ For him, personal discovery was not enough. Hard-earned knowledge had to be shared.

Even as a student in Chicago, White had already begun to teach others about history and culture as well as fine-art techniques. He would assume the role of teacher formally, at art schools and universities, and as needed, engaging with community groups. His commitment to creating meaningful, accessible images of African Americans and making them available to a broad range of viewers was central to his teaching mission. To this end, he embraced popular and commercial media as well as conventional fine-art venues for works that depicted underappreciated historical figures, celebrated cultural heroes, and archetypes of the oppressed and unseen. His paintings, drawings, and prints were perfectly suited for democratic distribution as book and album covers but equally as inexpensive reproductions. This latter use in particular allowed them to function both as independent artworks and as teaching surrogates for the artist himself, bringing his imagery and the knowledge and values it embodied to much wider audiences than he could reach through his exhibitions or classes. White was an advocate for the people he depicted in his artwork as well as for the generations of students he taught and mentored, many of whom continue to work as professional artists today. His influence, as attested by the stylistic and conceptual connections between their practices and by their own acknowledgment, reflects his continuing legacy.

ADLER

“IF YOU DON’T KNOW, LEARN”

White’s reverence for learning and dedication to teaching can be traced to his childhood in Chicago. He attended a predominantly white high school, where the teachers actively discouraged his interest in African American history.² But he was already educating himself, mainly on his own initiative, on US history and the role played by black Americans. As a young child, he had benefited from the guidance and generosity of librarians at the main branch of the Chicago Public Library, who supervised him while his mother was at work. White was encouraged and supported at the library in a way he was not in school, and what he learned there and through later study became his subject matter. This is especially apparent in the early monumental works he executed while working for the mural division of the Illinois Art Project of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) (see pls. 7, 10, 18) and in 1943 for Hampton Institute (now University) (see fig. 10, p. 33; see also Sarah Kelly Oehler’s essay in this volume).

White began formal art instruction at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) in middle school. Simultaneously, he studied on his own and discovered resources like the Art Crafts Guild, an organization founded by local like-minded African American artists.³ Members would pool funds to send selected artists to classes at the SAIC (as one of the youngest, White was never chosen).⁴ In return, those artists were expected to share this instruction with the larger group. This way of learning, driven by hard work and generosity, would be a touchstone for White throughout his career.

In fact, he began teaching even as he actively pursued his own studies at the SAIC, where he enrolled after graduating high school in 1937. He gained part-time employment as an art instructor at Saint Elizabeth Catholic High School and led classes in life drawing at the South Side Community Art Center (SSCAC), which he helped found with other members of the Art Crafts Guild. This activity paralleled his own art practice and his experimentation with media and techniques, including monotype (see fig. 1). After his marriage to sculptor and printmaker Elizabeth Catlett in 1941, he relocated to New Orleans, where she was chair of the art department at Dillard University. He worked there for one semester as a drawing teacher, introducing his students to the practice of working with a live model.⁵

White’s artistic ambition and belief in the transformative power of education are further evident in his continual study and efforts to improve his own skills. Even after executing successful mural projects and numerous other critically acclaimed artworks in Chicago, he continued to push himself to broaden his capabilities and take advantage of every opportunity. In April 1942 he received a Julius Rosenwald Fellowship, which allowed him to enroll at the Art Students League in New York. A destination for his generation, the league was run by and for artists. Its focus on studio experience and creative freedom was similar in some ways to that of the SSCAC.⁶ White studied with artist Harry Sternberg, who had made murals for the WPA, including *Chicago: Epoch of a Great City* for the post office in the Lakeview neighborhood in 1937–38.⁷ In a report on his Rosenwald experiences, White recalled that “under the guidance of Harry Sternberg, by far the most stimulating and understanding instructor I have ever worked with, I experimented with the various tempera techniques as applied to both mural and easel painting. Five months of study at the League gave me a clearer understanding of the techniques of egg tempera and the function of mural painting.”⁸ In

FIG. 1
CHARLES WHITE
(AMERICAN, 1918–1979)

Untitled (Seated Woman), c. 1939.
Monotype in oil on paper; 35.6 ×
26.7 cm (14 × 10 ½ in.). Merrill C.
Berman Collection. Cat. 4.



CHARLES WHITE, ARTIST AND TEACHER

addition to continuing to learn new techniques, White also maintained his commitment to independent learning: in the same report, he discussed his own study of “the history of the American Negro, with particular emphasis on his role in helping to build a democratic America”; he conducted his research at the Schomburg Collection of Negro Literature, History and Prints located at the 135th Street Branch Library, as well as at the Library of Congress in Washington, DC, and at the library at Hampton Institute.⁹

The Contribution of the Negro to Democracy in America (fig. 10, p. 33) was the culmination of White’s scholarly investigations and study of tempera. This was the first mural he executed on a wall and not a freestanding canvas. The artist felt able to engage with students at the historically black college, and for this reason he considered Hampton the “ideal” location for his work: “I feel that in advancing my ideas in the art field, I will have to spend much of my time teaching and encouraging young Negro art students. We have the opportunity to make a great contribution to American culture, but it will have to be a group effort rather than an individual contribution.”¹⁰ White taught by example as much as through technical art instruction, and the mural, which was unveiled on June 25, 1943, exposed students both to the contributions made by African Americans in the United States and to the role of art in educating viewers. His painting challenged what White referred to as “a plague of distortions, stereotyped and superficial caricatures of ‘uncles,’ ‘mammies,’ and ‘pickaninnies’” in popular culture and replaced them with uplifting depictions of black leadership and humanity.¹¹ He considered his time at Hampton ultimately a success and believed that his presence on campus had a lasting effect: “I feel that I have been quite instrumental in interesting the entire Hampton community in the function of art in advancing the cause of the Negro people and that I have helped to stimulate the art students to express themselves more freely and with greater understanding of their role as Negro artists.”¹²

White’s influence was fostered in large part by Viktor Lowenfeld, an Austrian émigré who started at the school in 1939 and founded its art department. A known figure in pedagogical circles prior to his arrival in the United States, Lowenfeld would ultimately become one of the most influential figures in the field of American art education.¹³ While at Hampton, he encouraged his students to embrace personal expression above all else: “Art consists in depicting the relations of the artist to the world of his experiences—that is, depicting his *experience* with objects, not the *objects themselves*,” he wrote in 1945. “If we would like to learn to understand Negro art we have to try to analyse the forces which determine his experiences with the world which surrounds him.”¹⁴ These forces included, of course, intense prejudice and inequality, especially in the American South. Lowenfeld believed that these social factors adversely affected black artists, encouraging them to emulate their white counterparts rather than follow their own creative impulses.¹⁵ As a successful professional with a history of completed projects and exhibitions, White proved that a black artist could overcome limitations to great ends.¹⁶ His commitment to changing the narrative surrounding African Americans and their accomplishments further supported Lowenfeld’s goal of challenging young artists to find their own voices and draw on their personal experiences.

The dialogue and friendship between the two men had a profound effect on their students. The recollections of muralist John Biggers, who studied at Hampton in 1943, give a sense of the exhilarating atmosphere:

Learning from Charles White, Betty Catlett and Viktor Lowenfeld was such a wonderful opportunity. Listening to them criticize each other’s work—it really got me motivated. Viktor and Charlie would argue. Viktor would say, “Well, Charlie, I don’t think that’s so very good,” and then tell him why. Charles

ADLER

FIG. 2
JOHN BIGGERS
(AMERICAN, 1924–2001)

House of the Turtle and Tree House, both 1990–92. Acrylic on canvas; each: 600 × 300 cm (240 × 120 in.). William R. and Norma B. Harvey Library, Hampton University, Hampton, VA.



would get so mad. . . . Then we'd see them at supper; all laughing and smiling and hugging each other. . . . I know that many students were overwhelmed, but that experience made me really want to become an artist.¹⁷

Biggers also learned by watching White work: "I produced little Charles Whites for a while. I watched his every step, became his helper, made myself as useful as I could to him."¹⁸ He was keenly attuned to the details of the older artist's process: "Charlie blocked out his drawing, then worked it out in geometric forms and planes. He started from spontaneous little scribbles, then tightened it up in the black-and-white studies, and then loosened it up again in the color study. He blew up every figure to full size before he put it on the wall" (see pls. 15–18). Biggers found it difficult, however, to incorporate this extensive preparatory stage into his own practice: "Because he'd 'overdrawn' the preliminary work, the painting lost its freshness. I learned from that, not to make such highly detailed sketches that I can't change them on the wall. In my latest murals, I made a conscious effort to concentrate my energy in the painting rather than the drawing."¹⁹ Biggers was likely referring to his murals *House of the Turtle* and *Tree House* (fig. 2), which were commissioned for the William R. and Norma B. Harvey Library at Hampton. Biggers's formative experiences with White influenced his own art and teaching career, which addressed African American history and heritage.

"PEOPLE'S INSTITUTE"

Following their time at Hampton, White and Catlett returned to New York. Over the course of the next few years, they were both exposed to leftist organizations and

CHARLES WHITE, ARTIST AND TEACHER

practices that shaped their own art and pedagogical approaches. For White, this engagement with politics surrounding labor and race began in Chicago but continued in New York and is evident in the subject matter and choice of medium in his work.²⁰

When the George Washington Carver School opened at 57 West 125th Street in Harlem in October 1943, White and Catlett were on staff. According to press reports, it was incorporated as “a non-partisan people’s institute for adults . . . to develop thinking citizens who can take their rightful place in the modern world . . . to develop interracial understanding, harmony and unity . . . an educational and social center with the object of developing mature leadership and intelligent citizenry among the Negro people.”²¹ The school’s director was Gwendolyn Bennett, the poet, artist, and former director of the WPA-sponsored Harlem Community Art Center, with powerful black politicians and cultural figures on its board like New York City Council member Benjamin Davis Jr., the Reverend A. Clayton Powell Jr., and the performer Paul Robeson.²² The school offered classes in African American history, contemporary literature, music appreciation, and fine arts as well as life skills classes like sewing and personal finance. “This school,” Bennett explained, “is owned and operated . . . by people who believe that the man in the street is a creative force that must be developed.”²³ White taught drawing, as did fellow artist and friend Ernest Crichlow (see fig. 5, p. 90); artist Norman Lewis taught painting, and Catlett taught sculpture. Enrollment grew steadily—by 1946, just over two years after the school was founded, it had more than seven hundred students.²⁴

Carver’s official mandate may have been “non-partisan,” but political awareness and education were part of the curriculum in practice. Years later, in a 1991 interview, Catlett referred to it as “theoretically a Marxist institution” that encouraged class consciousness even in seemingly apolitical courses.²⁵ Among the staff and supporters were many with leftist leanings, including Bennett herself, who had been dismissed from the WPA for her “un-American” views, and Davis, who was elected to the New York City Council on the Communist Party ticket. Some accused the school of being a Communist front: labor leader and organizer Frank Crosswaith derided it in the press as an attempt to “exploit the Negro and try again to hitch him to the tail of the Communists’ kite.”²⁶

White’s affiliation with Carver, and even earlier with Workers Children’s Camp (Wo-Chi-Ca), the interracial camp where he and Catlett taught from the summer of 1942, reflected his belief that black Americans fighting for racial equality could find common cause with those fighting for workers’ rights.²⁷ This position was also evident in his work with the leftist press. He wrote articles and drew illustrations for the Communist Party newspaper *Daily Worker* and the Marxist periodical *New Masses* (after 1948, *Masses and Mainstream*), the latter of which published a lithographic portfolio of six of his drawings in 1953.²⁸ White’s independent art making also engaged with contemporary social and political issues. Whether fine art or commercial illustration, his output aligned with his approach as an educator, embracing an accessible style aimed at teaching his viewer. In a 1978 interview White argued that “art must be an integral part of the struggle. It can’t simply mirror what’s taking place. It must adapt itself to human needs. It must ally itself with the forces of liberation. The fact is, artists have always been propagandists. I have no use for artists who try to divorce themselves from the struggle.”²⁹

White’s insistence on art being “part of the struggle” informed his work of the 1940s. His 1945 painting *War Worker* (pl. 21) depicts an anonymous laborer whom White considered as critical as the eminent historical figures of his murals. The man’s oversized, powerful hands figure prominently, twisted and grasping a satchel swung over his shoulder, echoing the raised fist in the poster behind him that champions

ADLER

workers' fight for freedom. White exposed the clear disconnect between this strong and capable but weary African American man and the poster's message of hope for his country. The worker participates in the fight for freedom but, as a black man in America, will not share in the victory.

Made not for a gallery but for the cover of a *Daily Worker* pamphlet, the 1946 drawing *The Return of the Soldier (Dixie Comes to New York)* (pl. 27) is more explicit in its message. The illustration accompanied an article by Harry Raymond about the murder of active-duty soldier Charles Ferguson and his brother Alphonso, a veteran, by a Long Island policeman (a third brother was also shot and a fourth imprisoned for disorderly conduct).³⁰ The bloated officer, backed by a hooded Klan member, towers over dead and pleading black men, the pyramidal composition reflecting the unbalanced power dynamic among them. White's dramatic visual telling of contemporary events, even in an image specifically made to accompany a text that would do the same, is evidence of his focus on effective communication in his art. And his willingness to make works that would function as accompanying illustrations further shows a lack of concern about the typical hierarchies between high and low art forms. If White's ultimate goal was to make powerful, accessible images that would be seen by and teach a broad range of viewers, then the cover of a mass-produced pamphlet was as desirable an exhibition space as a gallery or museum wall.

In 1946 White and Catlett traveled to Mexico, using funding from a Julius Rosenwald Fellowship she had received the previous year. Although this was the first trip abroad for either artist, they were already aware of and impressed by the revolutionary content and compelling representational style of contemporary Mexican artists, particularly the famed muralists Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco, and David Alfaro Siqueiros. But printmakers like Leopoldo Méndez, Pablo O'Higgins, Francisco Mora, and others working at the Taller de Gráfica Popular (TGP), a graphic arts collective in Mexico City, also had a significant influence on White. With diminished opportunities and funding for mural projects, and precarious health caused by tuberculosis, he began to focus more attention on drawings, prints, and easel paintings. He was already firmly committed to reflecting in a meaningful way on contemporary events in his art by the time he visited Mexico, but his observations and experiences from his time at the TGP further convinced him of the success of such an approach:

The Graphic Workshop is a collective of artists whose work is primarily for the consumption of the Mexican working people . . . they deal with the issues that spring from the problems of the people in their fight to overcome the oppression of the Mexican working people, in their struggle to achieve freedom for the working class. It is a people's art that they are producing. . . . I saw for the first time artists dealing with subjects that were related to the history and contemporary life of the people. Saw these artists go to the people, get their material, I saw them come out of the studio . . . their studio was in the streets, their studios were in the homes of the people, their studio was where life was taking place.³¹

White's affiliation with the Carver School, where he taught students for whom fine art could open doors and expand world views, and the highly accessible, message-driven art he produced both independently and for left-leaning publications, had already aligned his work as a visual artist and teacher with his political beliefs. His experience in Mexico decisively confirmed the validity of his approach and the possibilities it held for measurable social impact.

CHARLES WHITE, ARTIST AND TEACHER

THE WORKSHOP SCHOOL AND ART FOR HIRE

In June 1950 White was once again teaching in New York, but this time for a decidedly different type of institution: the Workshop School of Advertising and Editorial Art.³² Directed by the designers A. F. Arnold and Milton Wynne, the Workshop School curriculum aimed to serve people already working in the advertising world and those looking to break into it.³³ One of two black instructors on staff, White likely taught life drawing, given his previous experience in that area.³⁴ The school promoted ethical accountability, professional development, and technical instruction: “[T]he artist must assume responsibility as to what use is made of his art, to what purpose he lends his art, what his art sells, decorates, stands for. If his sole function is to choose and arrange, draw and prepare art for reproduction or use, without moral obligation as to content, he is something less than an artist. . . . The process of art . . . is not a way of making a living, but a way of life.”³⁵ Thus, the school aimed to broaden the scope of the artist working in the commercial world, both in a professional and a moral sense.

These goals paralleled those of the Committee for the Negro in the Arts (CNA), a group that also occupied much of White’s attention during the 1950s. Organized in 1947 with support from a broad interracial coalition of major figures that included poet Langston Hughes, writer Dorothy Parker, and entertainers Harry Belafonte and Paul Robeson, among many others, the CNA was “dedicated to the integration of Negro artists into all forms of American culture on a dignified basis of merit and equality.”³⁶ The organization aimed to “help erase the persisting racial stereotype and to create employment for Negroes in the various art fields.”³⁷ The CNA was more than an advocacy group; it provided education and training for black artists and professionals looking to pursue careers in radio, television, and other areas of popular culture. Once employed in the arts and media, they would be able to counter the widely distributed, generally negative, images of African Americans.³⁸

White was a member and a financial supporter of the CNA. He donated the proceeds from the sale of a painting from his 1949 American Contemporary Art (ACA) Gallery exhibition to help establish scholarships for young black artists. He also donated money from the sale of prints of his drawing *Trenton Six* to the CNA.³⁹ His personal artistic goals aligned with those of the CNA: he challenged stereotypes of black Americans with his powerful images of heroes and ordinary people who summon great strength in the face of oppression. Although little is known about White’s curriculum at the Workshop School, his commitment to presenting accurate, and at times idealized, imagery in his own work likely influenced his role. His position there, as at Hampton years earlier, gave him the opportunity to push the CNA’s agenda of changing how black people were represented in American culture. Furthermore, his unique stature as a black man who was also an accomplished artist and respected teacher would have had an important effect on his students.

The artist created a significant body of commercial work over the course of his career. Moreover, he allowed his noncommercial output to be reproduced on a broad scale. In this way, his for-hire output—positive representations of African American empowerment that reached a range of viewers—served his intertwined artistic and pedagogical philosophies. White illustrated books, both for children, like *Four Took Freedom: The Lives of Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass, Robert Smalls, and Blanche K. Bruce* (fig. 3), and for adults, such as his oil-wash drawings commissioned for *The Shaping of Black America* (1975), written by the senior editor at *Ebony* magazine, Lerone Bennett Jr.⁴⁰ From 1968 to 1971 White allowed his works to be reproduced in the complimentary calendars distributed by the black-owned Golden State Mutual Life Insurance Company in Los Angeles (for more on this, see Ilene Susan Fort’s essay in this volume). These included his drawing *General Moses (Harriet Tubman)* (pl. 79), which Golden State

ADLER

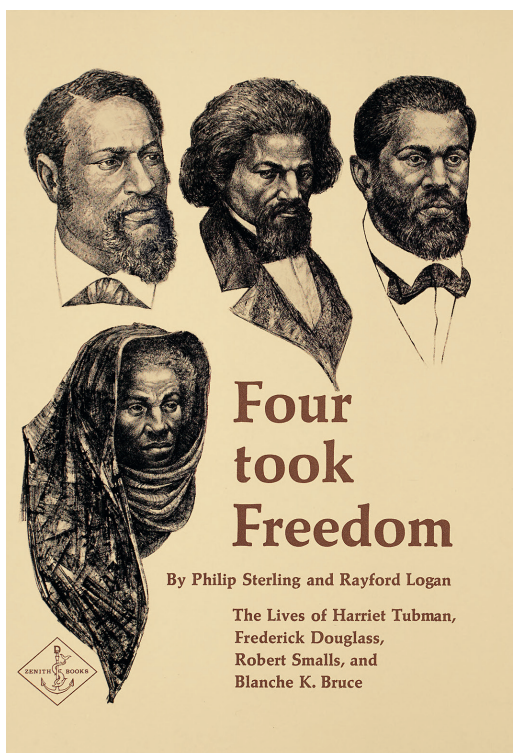


FIG. 3
Charles White drawings (clockwise from top left) of Blanche K. Bruce, Frederick Douglass, Robert Smalls, and Harriet Tubman, reproduced on the cover of Philip Sterling and Rayford Logan, *Four Took Freedom* (New York: Zenith Books, 1967).

FIG. 4
Charles White's *General Moses (Harriet Tubman)*, reproduced in Golden State Mutual Life Insurance Company's calendar for 1969. Cat. 113.

commented that this ending “would send audiences away certain that they had seen a masterwork in the fine arts.”⁴⁴ Drawings including *Folksinger (Voice of Jericho: Portrait of Harry Belafonte)* (pl. 72), *Chain Gang* (1959; private collection), and *Children Playing* (1959; private collection) introduced the different acts in Belafonte’s Emmy Award-winning television special *Tonight with Belafonte*, which the entertainer envisioned as a way to “demand equality by offering a proud black history that could challenge mainstream white erasure, show defiant survival against the odds, and soothe the difficult memory of ‘the pain of that life.’”⁴⁵ When reproduced on record covers, in print, and on television and film screens, White’s images reached audiences far larger than those who visited exhibitions. Moreover, he understood that his fully realized depictions of African Americans had to be seen by viewers of all races in order to affect popular perceptions: “I’m no longer concerned with whether I win another big prize here or a grant there,” he said in a 1967 interview in *Ebony* magazine. “The recognition which I seek is getting my work before more and more masses of people, and improving my work. I’m not out to overwhelm the art world to prove I’m an artist. There are other barometers I can use.”⁴⁶

“IF YOU KNOW, TEACH”

White had been teaching for three decades by the time he moved to Los Angeles, but it was as a drawing instructor at the Otis Art Institute (now the Otis College of Art and Design) that he solidified his legacy as an

commissioned; it appeared in the 1969 calendar (see fig. 4). These projects had clear educational aims: even the calendars were made by a company with a vested interest in supporting black artists and sharing their work with the community.⁴¹ The powerful image of Tubman, resting solidly on a boulder and staring directly at the viewer with enormous self-possession, merged a lesson about this important historical figure with a message of self-empowerment.

White’s commercial opportunities included a variety of popular entertainment projects. In 1954–55 he made numerous drawings for Vanguard Records’s *Jazz Showcase*; they appeared on album covers, including recordings of trumpet player Joe Newman and pianist Sir Charles Thompson.⁴² White was nominated for a Grammy Award for Best Album Cover—Graphic Arts in 1965 for his drawing *Spirituals*, which was reproduced on an RCA Victor recording of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra playing Morton Gould’s *Spirituals for Orchestra* and Aaron Copland’s *Dance Symphony* (fig. 5).⁴³ He also made work for film and television. A triptych depicting the main characters of the 1958 film *Anna Lucasta* (pls. 73–75), including Eartha Kitt and Sammy Davis Jr., appeared just prior to the closing credits. A reviewer



CHARLES WHITE, ARTIST AND TEACHER

educator. He joined the faculty in 1965 and remained until his death in 1979—his longest institutional affiliation. At Otis, White trained a generation of artists that would, in many ways, carry on his own socially committed practice.

White continued to focus on his own art making, and this influenced his lesson plans at Otis. In the syllabus for his second-year drawing class in 1967–68, in addition to sessions on life drawing with an “emphasis on anatomical structure,” White assigned exercises in “vignette drawing,” directing students to “create [a] figure within an oval or circular shape or a combination with [a] rectangular shape.”⁴⁷ He regularly used this tondo format in his own work, especially in his recently completed *J’Accuse* series of drawings, including *J’Accuse #6* (pl. 81) and *J’Accuse #10 (Negro Woman)* (pl. 83), in which monumental images of black men and women are situated in a format historically used for portraits of nobility and wealthy sitters. As his student Kerry James Marshall noted, “He taught us to do the things he was doing. . . . His lectures would be about things like how the *J’Accuse* group of works came to be, what that means, how you try to do work that’s symbolic and emblematic.”⁴⁸

Another class assignment was the following: “From a representational study of the figure, create an abstract study”; this was listed in the syllabus under the heading “Representational plus Abstract.”⁴⁹ Although White worked in a figurative, representational style for his entire career (in a 1967 interview he said, “Basically, I’m a realistic painter and I can’t apologize for being a realistic painter”⁵⁰), in later decades he began setting his figures within increasingly abstract grounds. Stripes and planes of tone created through layering umber oil wash, a signature medium for the artist in his last decade, complicate the space from which the men, women, and children of the *Wanted Poster Series* (see pls. 88–93) emerge and contribute to the multivalence of later drawings like *Black Pope (Sandwich Board Man)* (pl. 99). White’s engagement with abstraction and his requirement of an abstract study from his students reflect a personal negotiation with nonrepresentational art and, more broadly, an openness to diverse styles and perspectives.⁵¹

In fact, the work White made leading up to and during his time at Otis is some of his most experimental. The crouching nude figure in *Birmingham Totem* (pl. 70), a drawing made in 1964 in response to the 1963 Alabama church bombing that killed four young girls, squats atop a pile of building rubble. That pile is a tour de force of abstract mark making, with grids and planes thrusting up and toward the viewer. Similar passages of graphic experimentation can be seen in the rocks and grass in *General Moses (Harriet Tubman)* (pl. 79) and in the area surrounding the head at the top of *Nat Turner, Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow* (pl. 85). In *Dream Deferred II* (pl. 86), the variously shaped detritus seemingly attached to the side of a dilapidated house are also layers of geometric abstraction weighing down on the figure who peers out from beneath them. White used unorthodox techniques to apply ink to illustration board, and he encouraged his students to experiment as well, specifying on his syllabus that “[a]side from the conventional drawing tools, students will search for and discover the unconventional such as: balsa wood, Kleenex, rags, branches, wax, cue sticks, leaves, etc., etc.”⁵² He found his Otis students a receptive and inspiring audience: “Oh, it’s such a beautiful, reciprocal kind of relationship, one in which both teacher and student grow as a result of the mutual contact. I’m not too happy about my own peer group.

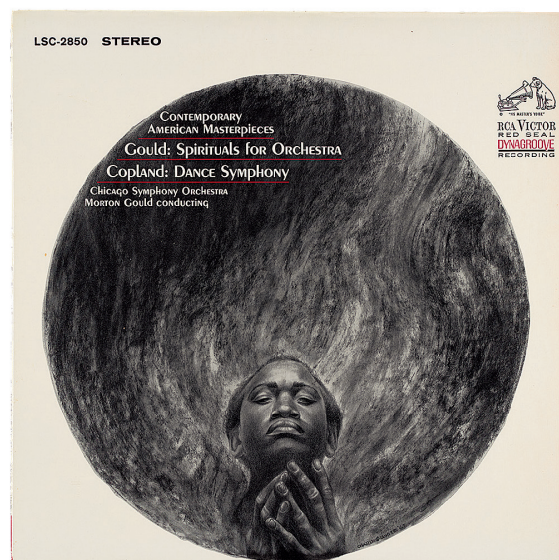


FIG. 5
Charles White drawing reproduced on the cover of *Contemporary American Masterpieces: Gould: Spirituals for Orchestra; Copland: Dance Symphony* (RCA Records, 1965).

ADLER

FIG. 6
CHARLES WHITE
(AMERICAN, 1918–1979)

Ceramic sculptures, 1968.
 Left, ceramic and paint; 40 × 24.8 × 10.2 cm (15 3/4 × 9 3/4 × 4 in.).
 Right, ceramic, paint, and twigs; 36.8 × 31.8 × 31.8 cm (14 1/2 × 12 1/2 × 12 1/2 in.). Both private collection.
 Cats. 68–69.



They're too self-satisfied. They're not willing to take risks. They're not questioning. Youth has a tendency to do those things. There are no sacred cows to them. I like the fact that they're willing to challenge the accepted idols."⁵³ White, too, was willing to challenge expectations, even about his own work. Moving beyond the boundaries of his graphic and painting practice, he took advantage of the ceramic facilities at Otis established by artist Peter Voulkos and created sculptures that referenced the patterning of African art but had little obvious connection to his drawings. Nevertheless, he included them (fig. 6) in an exhibition at Heritage Gallery in 1973.⁵⁴

While White embraced the new and, to a limited extent, the abstract late in his career, he still served as a touchstone for young artists interested in more classical technical instruction, especially those committed to working in a figurative style. Judithe Hernández, a former student of White's who continues to live and work as an artist in Los Angeles, explains, "We looked at Otis as an opportunity to be trained. The best possible training one could get in those days was either there or Chouinard [Art Institute] in a classical sense."⁵⁵ Born in East Los Angeles into a Mexican American family, Hernández enrolled at Otis in 1969, taking the undergraduate courses offered at the time and earning an MFA in 1974.⁵⁶ Concurrent with her studies, she was heavily involved in the Chicano movement's fight for civil rights for Mexican Americans, and this political activism influenced her artistic endeavors. It also mirrored White's own commitment to support his social and political values through his art. Hernández provided illustrations for the early issues of *Aztlán: Chicano Journal of the Social Sciences and the Arts* and artwork to accompany the poetry of Chicano writer and activist Alurista in his first book, *Floriscanto en Aztlán* (1971).⁵⁷ She was also affiliated with the Chicano artist group Los Four, which included artists Carlos Almaraz, Roberto "Beto" de la Rocha, Gilbert "Magu" Sánchez Luján, and Frank Romero, as well as a number of other collective endeavors in Los Angeles during the 1960s and 1970s. This political engagement shaped her proposal for her Otis MFA thesis project (see fig. 7): "One of the things I wanted to do was to have a practicing artist, in an academic setting, in a scholarly way, talk about Chicano iconography and then produce a suite of work that was based on that iconography using the tools of that urban expression. So it's actually

CHARLES WHITE, ARTIST AND TEACHER

graffiti art—my whole thesis was aerosol spray paintings and drawings. And [White] thought that was great.” According to Hernández, White talked to his students about his own positive experiences in Mexico.⁵⁸

White was especially supportive of the relatively few students of color at Otis, many of whom sought him out. His professional success established him as a role model, proof that a career as an artist was possible for them. “Charles White was the pivotal figure that everyone in California rallied around,” according to Kerry James Marshall, who enrolled at Otis specifically to study with White, earning his BFA in 1978 (see Marshall’s preface to this volume). “I don’t think there’s another figure like him who seemed to embody all the possibilities of being a professional artist . . . [His work] was popular. His work was in the world in a way that people who were in the arts and people who weren’t in the arts knew about it. . . . I don’t know another person who was in California at the time that I would have heard about who had the same kind of profile.”⁵⁹ Marshall’s own practice as a painter, draftsman, and printmaker has been close to White’s since he began studying with him as a teenager. He mimicked his mentor’s oil-wash palette in an early work painted on a window shade (fig. 2, p. 17)—a reference to a much-repeated story of White’s own childhood misappropriation of his living room curtain as a canvas. Marshall grew up in Los Angeles, then lived in New York before settling in Chicago, and his adopted city has informed his work. His 1994 painting *Many Mansions* (fig. 8), set in the Chicago Housing Authority’s Stateway Gardens complex, depicts three well-dressed black men tending colorful flower beds in front of high-rises that had become notorious as sites for violence and crime. Their lush surroundings, which include a surreal collection of cheerfully colored Easter baskets and twittering bluebirds carrying a banner with the message “Bless Our Happy Home,” stand in startling contrast to the bleak reality faced by residents (in 1996 Chicago began to demolish Stateway Gardens). *Many Mansions* and the four other paintings that make up Marshall’s *Garden Project* series all tackle the issues of inequity and poverty facing African American communities. He cites White as an influence on this commitment to social consciousness in his work:



FIG. 7
JUDITHE HERNÁNDEZ
(AMERICAN, BORN 1948)

Viva la Revolución!, 1974. Spray paint, gesso, and pastel on paper; 182.8 × 243.8 cm (72 × 96 in.).
Courtesy of the artist.

ADLER

FIG. 8
KERRY JAMES MARSHALL
(AMERICAN, BORN 1955)

Many Mansions, 1994. Acrylic on paper mounted on canvas; 289.6 × 342.9 cm (114 × 135 in.). The Art Institute of Chicago, Max V. Kohnstamm Fund, 1995.147.



I think he felt that there was a responsibility for artists to address social inequity, and if you're not doing it directly, certainly to always make sure that was present in people's consciousness, that they understood something about history. If you think about the way he talked about his career and what you should be thinking about as a student, that was the charge—that you should always be engaged with history, that you should be engaged with the politics of your time, and that your work should be in the service of helping to dignify people.⁶⁰

Like Marshall, artist David Hammons knew of Charles White prior to studying with him at Otis, seeing his work in reproductions as well as in exhibitions, as he recalled in 1970:

I never knew there were “black” painters, or artists, or anything until I found out about him—which was maybe three years ago. There's no way I could have got the information in my art history classes. . . . He's the only artist that I really related to because he is black and I am black, plus physically seeing him and knowing him. Like, he's the first and only artist that I've ever really met who had any real stature. And just being in the same room with someone like that you'd have to be directly influenced.⁶¹

Hammons had moved to Los Angeles in 1963. He took classes at a number of schools, including Los Angeles City College, Los Angeles Trade-Technical College, and Chouinard Art Institute in addition to studying at Otis. The focus on the black figure in the “body prints” he began making in the late 1960s, as well as the underlying social and political messaging in many of these works, reveal White's influence. After coating himself and his clothing with margarine, Hammons would “print” an image on board by pressing

CHARLES WHITE, ARTIST AND TEACHER

his body against it, later applying powdered pigment to reveal the impression. The positioning of the figure, together with the addition of silkscreened elements and found objects, often extended the political commentary of these works—another connection with White’s legacy of socially engaged art. *Injustice Case* (fig. 9), for example, shows a man bound to a chair and gagged; the work’s frame is wrapped in an American flag. Visceral and highly charged, this body print was a response to the actual treatment of Bobby Seale, the cofounder of the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, who was physically restrained in this way during his trial in Chicago on charges of inciting a riot at the 1968 Democratic National Convention.⁶² *Injustice Case* was included in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art 1971 exhibition *Three Graphic Artists: Charles White, David Hammons, Timothy Washington* alongside a number of White’s works, including *J’Accuse #1* (pl. 80), *Seed of Love* (pl. 84), and *Wanted Poster Series #17* (pl. 90). White agreed to participate in this exhibition, despite the protests of the local Black Arts Council, which believed he deserved a solo show there. This was a clear statement of his support for his students and young black artists, which was a fundamental aspect of his pedagogy.⁶³

In addition to his role at Otis, White participated in a number of local programs for middle-school and high-school students (see fig. 10). William Pajaud, art director of Golden State Mutual Life Insurance Company, and artist Bill Tara lobbied for White to teach Saturday morning classes for the Tutor/Art Program, which served underprivileged communities.⁶⁴ It was through the Tutor/Art Program that the artist Richard Wyatt Jr. met White.⁶⁵ Even as one of the youngest participants, at twelve years old, Wyatt was immeasurably influenced by White: “He would show me things, and encourage me to find my own voice, which I did later on.

During my UCLA years, around 1976, I was bothered by the fact that a lot of the stuff that I was doing wouldn’t necessarily be seen by people in the areas where I grew up. So I started doing work in the street, and that became my canvas. . . . And that’s how I found my voice, kind of utilizing the things I learned from him.”⁶⁶ Like White, Wyatt was drawn to murals as a way of making his art widely available, and he has been commissioned to create public artworks situated throughout Los Angeles: the 1991 mural *Hollywood Jazz: 1945 to 1972* is located at the Capitol Records Tower in Hollywood, and *City of Dreams/River of History* (fig. 11) is installed in Union Station.⁶⁷ Following his mentor’s practice, Wyatt’s work includes both well-known figures, like singers Nat King Cole and Ella Fitzgerald, in *Hollywood Jazz*, and anonymous settlers who helped found the



FIG. 9
DAVID HAMMONS
(AMERICAN, BORN 1943)

Injustice Case, 1970. Body print (margarine and powdered pigments) and American flag; framed: 175.26 × 120.02 × 5.72 cm (69 × 47 ¼ × 2 ¼ in.). The Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Museum Acquisition Fund (M.71.7).

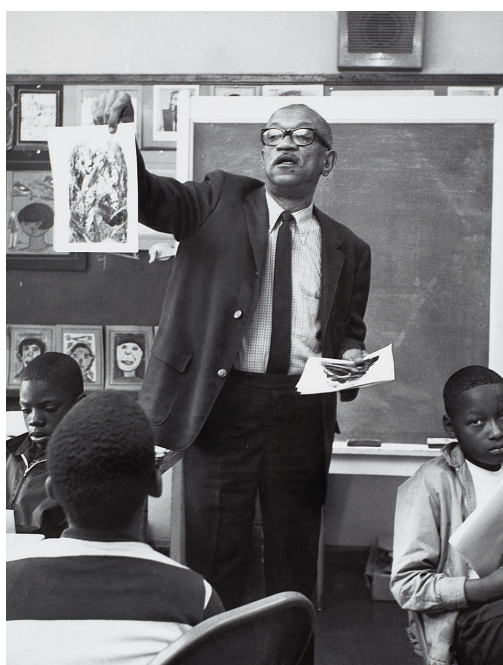


FIG. 10
Charles White visiting a Los Angeles school classroom, mid- to late 1960s.

ADLER

FIG. 11
RICHARD WYATT JR.
(AMERICAN, BORN 1955)

City of Dreams/River of History,
 1996. Oil on honeycomb aluminum;
 67 × 238 cm
 (26 3/8 × 93 1/16 in.). Union Station,
 Los Angeles.



metropolis in *City of Dreams*. He has similarly welcomed commercial opportunities for his art, and his drawings appeared in the 1980 Golden State Mutual Life Insurance Company calendar.

Many of White's Los Angeles students have explored the mural format.⁶⁸ Hernández made numerous public murals with the group Los Four. Kent Twitchell is perhaps White's student most associated with a Los Angeles mural practice. Although Twitchell was not initially familiar with the older artist's work, Hernández suggested that Twitchell meet White, and he ultimately enrolled in graduate school at Otis specifically to study with White: "I wasn't interested in anybody else. He was the one who kept me sane there—everybody else was talking about 'painting is dead.' . . . I didn't feel very welcome there, but Charles White kept me sane."⁶⁹ White was a touchstone for students interested in pursuing figurative, representational painting at a time when conceptual art and new media were increasingly popular.⁷⁰ Twitchell had served in the Air Force and received degrees from East Los Angeles College and California State University, Los Angeles, by the time he enrolled in the graduate program at Otis. He had also already begun making public murals—he was working on *The Freeway Lady*, visible at the time to drivers on the 101 Freeway, in 1973, when he and Hernández had their initial discussion about White.⁷¹ Despite this, he still found White to be a significant influence and mentor: "It was invaluable what we learned from him, way beyond just being able to draw. . . . For the most part, he respected who each of us was at that point, where we were going, and didn't try to turn us into him. . . . I started taking drawing very seriously, much more seriously than painting, because he did."⁷² Twitchell considered White an "American cultural hero," and the elder artist became the subject of one of his monumental drawings, *Portrait of Charles White* (fig. 12).⁷³ Twitchell ultimately executed a mural at Otis, *Holy Trinity with Virgin* (1978), a religious painting disguised as a portrait of the television actors Billy Gray, Jan Clayton, and Clayton Moore. Although Otis relocated in 1997, *Holy Trinity with Virgin* remains at the site, which is now the Charles White Elementary School of the Los Angeles Unified School District.⁷⁴

During his time in Los Angeles and at Otis, White taught and mentored students who dedicated themselves to creating work that has social and political impact. As he noted in 1942, "We have the opportunity to make a great contribution to American culture, but it will have to be a group effort rather than an individual contribution."⁷⁵

CHARLES WHITE, ARTIST AND TEACHER

“THE ARTIST AS TEACHER”

In September 1977 *The Work of Charles White: An American Experience* opened in the main gallery of the Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery in Barnsdall Park.⁷⁶ In addition to works from the 1960s and 1970s, the Barnsdall Park installation of this major traveling exhibition included some significant additions, in particular, the monumental working drawings for White’s final mural, *Mary McLeod Bethune* (fig. 11, p. 136), commissioned for the Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune Regional Library in Exposition Park. Bethune, the daughter of former slaves, rose to prominence not only as an activist and influential political figure but also as an educator, and White’s altarpiece-like mural pays homage to her legacy of teaching. In the painting a young child, a book open on his lap, sits at Bethune’s feet, the gridded alphabet behind him symbolizing her fight for educational opportunities for African Americans. It is especially fitting that this work was represented in the artist’s Barnsdall Park exhibition, for White’s importance as an educator was also evident in a parallel exhibition installed there, *The Artist as Teacher*, which presented works by his students including Hammons, Twitchell, and Wyatt. According to Adrienne Rosenthal, writing in *Artweek*, “Their debt to White in theme or execution within the variety of their expression is an enriching example of the valuable legacy that White’s talent gives to all people.”⁷⁷

This juxtaposition of White’s work with that of his students in one of his final major exhibitions prior to his death in 1979 affirmed his legacy as a teacher and artist. It also reflected the inseparable ties between his art making and pedagogy. Shaped by his own struggles, his drive and ambition to learn led him to create powerful visual images that would, in turn, teach others. His engagement with a variety of schools and institutions over the course of his career is evidence of his talent for and commitment to teaching. His willingness to engage in both a fine-art practice and a more commercially oriented one that placed his work in books, on record covers, and in films speaks to his ultimate goal of communicating with the largest possible audience. That his art, and the art of many of his students, continues to challenge and educate viewers today is a testament to his success.

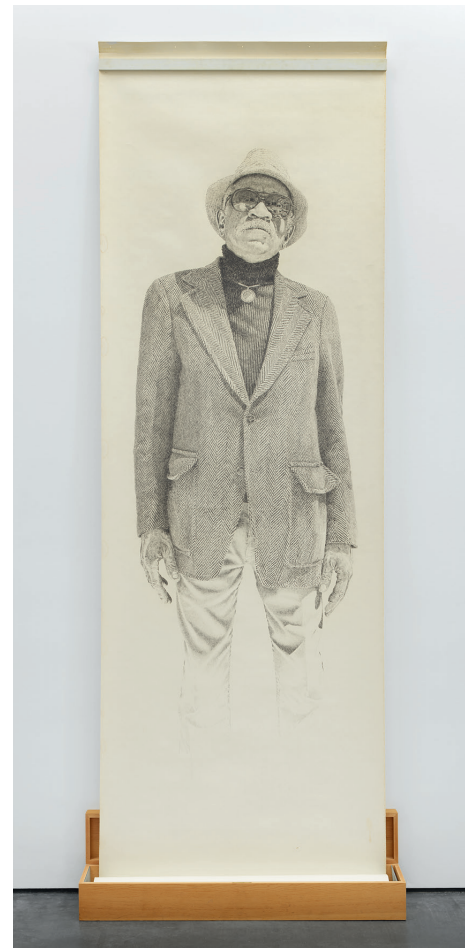


FIG. 12
KENT TWITCHELL (AMERICAN,
BORN 1942)

Portrait of Charles White, 1977.
Pencil on paper; 335.28 × 121.92 cm
(132 × 48 in.). Los Angeles County
Museum of Art, gift of Benjamin
Horowitz.

ADLER

1. The Liberation Bookstore (1967–2007) sold literature on black life, culture, and power. For more information on Una Mulzac and the Liberation Bookstore, see Douglas Martin, “Una Mulzac, Bookseller with Passion for Black Politics, Dies at 88,” *New York Times*, Feb. 4, 2012, www.nytimes.com/2012/02/05/nyregion/una-mulzac-harlem-bookseller-with-a-passion-for-black-politics-dies-at-88.html; and Fisher, *Black Literate Lives*, 77.
2. See Sarah Kelly Oehler’s essay in this volume.
3. For more on the Art Crafts Guild and the history of the SSCAC, see Oehler, *They Seek a City*, 40–42; and Tyler, “Planting and Maintaining a ‘Perennial Garden.’”
4. On the pooling of funds to pay for SAIC classes, see Gellman, “Chicago’s Native Son,” 149.
5. Barnwell, *Charles White*, 27; and Samella Lewis, interview by Peter Clothier, transcript, 3, Charles White Archives, CA.
6. White had initially intended to study at the Escuela Nacional de Pintura y Escultura (National Academy of Painting and Sculpture) “La Esmeralda” in Mexico City, but the US draft board would not grant him permission to leave the country. In his application for a Rosenwald Fellowship, White specified that “[m]y choice of this particular institution is dependent on the workshop basis of the school.” This further explains why he would have found the Art Students League, with its own “workshop basis,” an appropriate substitute.
7. Warner, *The Prints of Harry Sternberg*, 108. Like White, Sternberg also exhibited at the ACA Gallery beginning in the 1940s, and their social and professional circles likely overlapped during White’s time in New York.
8. White, “Report of a Year’s Progress and Plan of Work,” 1, Charles W. White fellowship file, Julius Rosenwald Fund Archives, box 456, file 6, John Hope and Aurelia E. Franklin Library, Special Collections and Archives, Fisk University, Nashville.
9. White, “Report of a Year’s Progress and Plan of Work,” 1–2.
10. *Ibid.*, 2; and in the same folder, White, “Statement of Plan of Work.”
11. White, “Statement of Plan of Work.”
12. White, “Report of a Year’s Progress and Plan of Work,” 2.
13. P. Smith, “Lowenfeld Teaching Art,” 30–33; and Ritter, *Five Decades*, 8–9. Lowenfeld’s reputation, as well as connections to MoMA head of education Victor D’Amico, enabled him to arrange an exhibition at MoMA in 1943 of Hampton student artwork. He had already organized one exhibition there, *Visual and Non-Visual Art Expression*, which was held in the museum’s Young People’s Gallery from March 7 to May 1, 1940. It contrasted artworks made by blind children and those with unimpaired vision as a way of highlighting different modes of experience and creative communication. For the press release for that exhibition, see www.moma.org/documents/moma_press-release_325164.pdf. *Young Negro Art*, featuring the work of Lowenfeld’s Hampton students, was held in the same gallery October 26–November 28, 1943. For the corresponding press release, see www.moma.org/documents/moma_press-release_325414.pdf. A work from *Young Negro Art* was purchased for the museum’s collection: Junius Redwood, *Night Scene* (1941).
14. Viktor Lowenfeld, “Negro Art Expression in America,” *Madison Quarterly* 5, no. 11 (Jan. 1945): 27.
15. Lowenfeld, press release for *Young Negro Art* (n. 13 above).
16. Catlett’s presence at Hampton, where she taught sculpture while White worked on his mural, was influential as well, especially on the artist and scholar Samella Lewis: Lewis had studied with Catlett at Dillard and transferred to Hampton to continue her studies with her. See Muchnic, “Samella Lewis,” 16–17; and Herzog, *Elizabeth Catlett*, 34–36.
17. Olive Jensen Theisen, *The Murals of John Thomas Biggers* (Hampton, VA: Hampton University Museum, 1996), 3. Another student at Hampton, Joseph Gilliard, suggests that White also learned about fresco and other painting techniques from Lowenfeld; see Ritter, *Five Decades*, 17.
18. Theisen, *Murals of John Thomas Biggers*, 3.
19. *Ibid.*
20. See the chronology in this volume.
21. “Harlem to Open Center Named for George Washington Carver,” *New York Herald Tribune*, Oct. 24, 1943, 5.
22. Ramona Lowe, “Harlem’s Carver School Draws Capacity Classrooms,” *Chicago Defender*, Feb. 5, 1944, 18.
23. Bennett quoted in Ann Rivington, “The George Washington Carver School,” *Daily Worker*, Oct. 26, 1943, 7.
24. Earl Conrad, “A Lady Laughs at Fate,” *Chicago Defender*, Jan. 5, 1946, 9. White left Carver in 1944 when he was drafted into the US Army. According to a flyer titled “This Is the Carver School,” dated Feb. 3, 1946, he had returned as an instructor by then. Professional and Literary Activities, George Washington Carver School, box 2, folder 2, reel 1, Gwendolyn Bennett Papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.
25. Herzog, *Elizabeth Catlett*, 37, quoting from a 1991 interview with the artist.
26. Frederick Woltman, “Carver School Name Called Red Negro Ruse,” *New York World Telegram*, Nov. 16, 1943, 14.
27. White and Catlett ran the art program at Wo-Chi-Ca that summer and thereafter continued to offer advice and support. There White met Frances Barrett, who was a Wo-Chi-Ca counselor in 1942. They would reconnect and marry in 1950. For more on the connections between the camp and members of White’s artistic communities in Chicago and Harlem, see Levine and Gordon, *Tales of Wo-Chi-Ca*, 9–28.
28. White, *Charles White: Six Drawings*. For more on White’s involvement with the leftist press, see Washington, *The Other Blacklist*, 73; for an extensive discussion of his political affiliations and their effects on his work, 69–122.
29. White, quoted in Jeffrey Elliot, “Charles White: Portrait of an Artist,” *Negro History Bulletin* 41, no. 3 (May–June 1978): 828.
30. Harry Raymond, *Dixie Comes to New York: Story of the Freeport GI Slayings* (New York: Daily Worker, 1946). See also Morgan, *Rethinking Social Realism*, 148–49.
31. Transcript of undated interview with Charles White, located in Lucinda H. Gedeon, research material on Charles W. White (c. 1977–97), Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC (hereafter AAA). For more on the history and influence of Mexican art and artists on White, Catlett, and other American artists, see Herzog, *Elizabeth Catlett*, 49–56.
32. Frances Barrett White writes that, after their marriage on May 31, 1950, “Charles returned to New York later that afternoon to start his new job at the New York School of Advertising Art”; F. B. White, *Reaches of the Heart*, 24. The school seems to have been known by several names—in 1949 alone, posters advertised it as both “Workshop School of Advertising Art” and “Workshop School of Advertising and Editorial Art”; see *Annual of Advertising and Editorial Art* 29 (1950): n.p., entry 198–99. Little information is available about how long the school was in operation. A letter from administrative director Matthew Cooper to White dated August 20, 1952, suggests that it may have closed at some point in 1951 or 1952, and that White was not asked to teach there during a planned reopening in October 1952. See reel 3194, Charles W. White Papers (CWP), AAA. On a curriculum vitae likely dating to the mid-1960s, White listed his time at the Workshop School as 1950–53. He also describes himself in the header as “Charles W. White, Painter, Graphic artist, teacher, designer,” unmicrofilmed material, CWP, AAA.
33. “Up to now, there has been no really professional school for artists in New York or elsewhere where an art director, layout artist, free-lance designer, art teacher could continue life drawing, improve on his design facility, increase his store of production data, and generally keep abreast of current trends, and help create future ones on a clinical, experimental and adult basis. It is on this basis that the school serves a real and unique purpose.” From A. F. Arnold, “Prospectus of Workshop School of Advertising Art,” unpublished, 1949, Columbia University Libraries, New York, 707 Ar65.
34. “Charles White One-Man Show—ACA Gallery,” press release, Feb. 1950. This announcement listed him as “one of the two Negroes on the faculty of the Workshop School of Editorial and Advertising Art.” A copy of this release can be found at the Amon Carter Museum of American Art, Fort Worth, Texas, in the object file for White’s drawing *Trenton Six*. I thank Shirley Reece-Hughes, curator of paintings and sculpture there, for sharing this and other materials with me.
35. Arnold, “Prospectus,” 6, 8 (n. 33 above).
36. Circular letter from CNA, June 17, 1949, W. E. B. Du Bois Papers, MS 12, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries, credo.library.umass.edu/view

CHARLES WHITE, ARTIST AND TEACHER

/pageturn/mums312-b128-i052/#page/1
/mode/1up.

37. Undated document, CNA, Printed Ephemera Collection on Organizations, PE.036, box 29, Tamiment Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, Elmer Holmes Bobst Library, New York University Libraries.

38. "Call to a Conference on Radio, Television, and the Negro People," 1949, CNA, Printed Ephemera Collection on Organizations (n. 37 above).

39. "Charles White One-Man Show—ACA Gallery," and "One Man Show of Charles White, Leading Young Negro Artist Opens at ACA Feb. 12," *Daily Worker*, Feb. 7, 1950, 11.

40. Sterling and Logan, *Four Took Freedom*; and Bennett, *Shaping of Black America*. The drawings for *Four Took Freedom* are listed as D189-D208 in Gedeon, "Introduction." It is likely that correspondence between White and Diana Klemin of Doubleday regarding illustrations for a publication referred to as "Freedom Soldiers" is about *Four Took Freedom*. See reel 3191, CWP, AAA. Gedeon lists the drawings for Bennett's book D287-98; "Introduction." They are now in the collection of Arthur Primas; see *Heroes*, 81–104.

41. K. Jones, *South of Pico*, 37, 143–44. Calendars are in the Golden State Mutual Life Insurance Company Records (collection 1434), UCLA Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, Los Angeles.

42. Gedeon lists thirteen drawings made for Vanguard for album covers. See Gedeon, "Introduction," D87–D99.

43. 1965 Grammy Award nomination card and program, reel 3191, CWP, AAA.

44. "Artist for Anna," *Hue* 6, no. 4 (Feb. 1959): 51. For more on White's involvement with *Anna Lucasta*, and film and television generally, see K. Jones, *South of Pico*, 24–27.

45. J. Smith, *Becoming Belafonte*, 203.

46. Louie Robinson, "Charles White: Portrayer of Black Dignity," *Ebony* 22, no. 9 (July 1967): 36.

47. "Second Year Drawing 1967–68, Charles White, Instructor, Introduction: Outline of Program," reel 3194, CWP, AAA.

48. Kerry James Marshall, conversation with the author, June 2016.

49. "Second Year Drawing 1967–68" (n. 47 above).

50. Robinson, "Charles White," 30.

51. For more on abstraction as it functions in the *Wanted Poster Series* and later works, see K. Jones, *South of Pico*; and Adler, *Charles White*.

52. "Second Year Drawing 1967–68" (n. 47 above).

53. Elliot, "Charles White," 826.

54. William Wilson, "Art Walk: A Critical Guide to the Galleries," *Los Angeles Times*, May 11, 1973, IV, 14.

55. Hernández, oral history interview, transcript, Mar. 28, 1998, AAA. The Chouinard Art Institute, founded in 1921 by Nelbert Chouinard, merged with the Los Angeles Conservatory of Music in 1961 to form the California Institute of Arts, a move orchestrated by Walt and Roy Disney. However, it remained a distinct entity at its

existing location in the Westlake area of Los Angeles, walking distance from the Otis Art Institute, until 1970 and the opening of the current CalArts campus in Valencia.

Chouinard, more so than Otis, was also known as a center for unorthodox and avant-garde thinking. For more information, see Karlstrom, "Art School Sketches," 97–99; and Perine, *Chouinard*.

56. During White's tenure at Otis, students were required to complete two years of undergraduate education prior to enrollment; they could then complete their junior and senior years at Otis. Judithe Hernández and Kerry James Marshall, discussions with the author; and Otis Art Institute of Los Angeles County Catalogue 1978–79, 13–14, collections.otis.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/arp/id/1359/rec/16.

57. Noriega and Rivas, "Chicano Art in the City of Dreams," 76; see also Alurista, *Florícanto en Aztlán*. For more on Hernández and her work, see her website, www.judithehernandez.com/.

58. Hernández in discussion with the author, Sept. 2016; and Hernández, oral history interview (n. 55 above). Richard Wyatt Jr., another former student of White's, also remembers him talking about his experiences in Mexico. Wyatt, conversation with the author, Sept. 2016.

59. Marshall, conversation with the author, June 2016.

60. Ibid.

61. Hammons, conversation with Joseph E. Young, 1970, quoted in Young, *Three Graphic Artists*, 7.

62. Young, *Three Graphic Artists*, 7; and K. Jones, *South of Pico*, 224–30.

63. F. B. White, *Reaches of the Heart*, 174–76. See also notes, most likely written by Frances Barrett White, reel 3192, CWP, AAA; and Lewis, interview by Clothier (n. 5 above). For more on the Black Arts Council, see K. Jones, *South of Pico*, 162–72. For more on White's agreement to participate in this show, see the essay by Ilene Susan Fort in this volume.

64. "Golden State Mutual Life Insurance Company Scholarship Class and Tutor/Art—a Report," reel 3194, CWP, AAA; and K. Jones, *South of Pico*, 35–38, 142–44. White's role as a teacher in this program recalls his own experiences as a student attending Saturday classes at the Art Institute of Chicago; see Sarah Kelly Oehler's essay in this volume.

65. Wyatt, conversation with the author, Sept. 2016; and Wyatt, "His Special Gift for Teaching . . .," *Freedomways* 20, no. 3 (1980): 177–78. Wyatt's mother, Ruby Wyatt, also sought White out, determined that her son have an opportunity to meet and study with him.

66. Wyatt, conversation with the author, Sept. 2016. Wyatt graduated from UCLA in 1978 with a BFA in painting.

67. "That specific site has layers and layers of history, so we wanted to deal with that. . . . I included early settlers of Los Angeles, known as los pobladores, along with references to the old Chinatown. I also put a couple of family members in there." Wyatt, quoted in Hugh Hart, "Stationed in Los Angeles," *UCLA Magazine* 26, no. 1

(Oct. 2014): 27. Wyatt restored *Hollywood Jazz* in 2013; Randy Lewis, "'Hollywood Jazz' mural lives on more brightly," *Los Angeles Times*, Feb. 18, 2013, articles.latimes.com/2013/feb/18/entertainment/la-et-cm-hollywood-jazz-mural-20130219.

68. White generally ceased mural painting after the dissolution of the WPA, when opportunities and funding, previously provided for this kind of public artwork by the US government, disappeared. An exception is White's last mural, *Mary McLeod Bethune* (fig. 11, p. 136), commissioned for the Bethune Branch Library in Exposition Park.

69. Twitchell, conversation with the author, Sept. 2016.

70. White discusses this in "Rap Session CW/RS 70," typescript, Charles White Archives, CA. There is also a copy in Lucinda H. Gedeon, research material on Charles W. White (c. 1977–97), box 2, folder 2, AAA. The interviewer is not identified by name but is referred to only as "student."

71. Twitchell, conversation with the author, Sept. 2016. For more information on *The Freeway Lady*, which was destroyed twice and repainted at Los Angeles Valley College in 2016, see Dana Bartholomew, "LA's Freeway Lady mural to be retired in San Fernando Valley," *Los Angeles Daily News*, Apr. 13, 2016, www.dailynews.com/arts-and-entertainment/20160413/las-freeway-lady-mural-to-be-retired-in-san-fernando-valley.

72. Twitchell, conversation with the author, Sept. 2016.

73. Ibid.

74. Ibid. LACMA has worked with the Charles White Elementary School to bring exhibitions and programming to the school's gallery since 2007. When *Charles White: A Retrospective* is presented at LACMA in 2019, the elementary school will host an exhibition of the work of White's students, some of whom continue to live and work in Los Angeles.

75. White, "Statement of Plan of Work" (n. 10 above).

76. Exhibition announcement, reel 3190, CWP, AAA. The exhibition was organized in 1976 by the High Museum of Art, Atlanta, and traveled to several institutions in the South prior to being presented in Los Angeles; see the selected exhibition history in this volume.

77. Adrienne Rosenthal, "Charles White Paints Hope and Anger," *Artweek* 6, no. 32 (Oct. 1, 1977): 4.