



Archibald J. Motley Jr.,  
*Tongues (Holy Rollers)*, 1929. Oil on canvas,  
29.25 x 36.125 inches (74.3 x 91.8 cm). Collection  
of Mara Motley, MD, and Valerie Gerrard Browne.  
Image courtesy of the Chicago History Museum,  
Illinois. © Valerie Gerrard Browne

# THE ART OF ARCHIBALD MOTLEY

CONNECT,  
COLLABORATE  
& CREATE

## LESSON PLAN

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## Summary of lesson plan

In this integrated arts and social studies lesson, titled “Archibald Motley and the Afro-American Religious Traditions” for 6th, 7th, and 8th grades, students will evaluate and analyze Motley’s paintings *Tongues (Holy Rollers)* (1929) and *Gettin’ Religion* (1948) to gain insight as to the changing attitudes and historical development of African American religious practices in Chicago. Students will study the painting, consider the role of art in everyday life, and compare the messages that Motley conveys in this painting with other primary and secondary sources relating to the spread of Evangelical religion.

## Big Idea

- Students will understand that Motley’s paintings reflect society and attitudes toward religion and culture.
- Students will understand how artists like Motley represent everyday experiences in their art.

## Enduring Questions

- What do the images in Archibald J. Motley Jr., *Tongues (Holy Rollers)*, 1929, convey about the human condition and experience?
- Why is the creation and exhibition of a work of art important to understanding of real life or imagined experiences?
- What images in the painting detail Motley’s view of Afro-American religion?

## Learning Objectives

- Students will understand what Motley wanted to communicate about the experience of African American religion in his paintings *Tongues (Holy Rollers)*, 1929 and *Gettin’ Religion*, 1948.
- Students will know how a work of reflects the society in which the artist lives.
- Students will be able to explain the main idea(s) and details represented in *Tongues (Holy Rollers)*.

Standard	Common Core State Standards	Objective-Students will . . .
<i>Anchor Standard #7. Perceive and analyze artistic work.</i>	CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.	Analyze <i>Tongues (Holly Rollers)</i> and determine what sociological and historical evidence is found in the painting.
<i>#11. Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural and historical context to deepen understanding.</i>		Analyze <i>Tongues (Holly Rollers)</i> and determine what sociological and historical evidence is found in the painting
<i>St. IL. 27. B.3 Know and describe how artists and their works shape culture and increase understanding of societies, past and present.</i>	CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.7 Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.	Reflect on the images in the painting and explain how they may relate to the Afro-American religious experiences.
	CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.6 Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).	List the details from the painting that illustrate the artist's point of view regarding the "Shout" and Pentecostal religion.

## Lesson Plan Activities

**Length:** Sixty minutes per day for five (5) days.

### Agenda Day 1

- Review historical method and differences between primary and secondary evidence.
- Teacher place KWL chart (which tracks what a student knows (K), wants to know (W), and has learned (L) about a topic) on Board. Title "How do we view art"? Class completes columns K and W.
- We conduct a close read of Motley's painting, *Tongues (Holy Rollers)*, 1929, using the following questions to encourage students' close observation:
  - So what did you see? What's going on in the image/work of art?
  - What is something you notice about the colors?
  - What is something you notice about the objects?
  - What is something you notice about the people in the piece?
- What did you notice first and why?
- What's the focal point?
- How does the artist show us what's important?
- How does your eye travel through the picture, and why?
- Notice the artist's use of lines (or colors, shapes, etc.).
- What adjectives would you use to describe the lines (colors, shapes, etc.)?
- What's the overall mood of the painting?
- Who are the people in the piece?
- Where are they going?
- What are they doing out?
- What are their social statuses?
- How do you know? What in the painting tell you this?
- What do you think the artist wanted to communicate?
- What do you see that makes you say that?
- What's the main idea or the theme of this piece?
- Students record their response (can work in pairs) on the Graphic Organizer to Interpret Art (see attached).
- Students share their findings recorded on the graphic organizer to their peers.
- Exit Slip: completed graphic organizer.
- Homework: Distribute copy of photograph Southside Community Art Center (*Children outside the entrance to the SSAC, 1941*, Photograph from the Vivian Harshe Collection, Carter Woodson Library) and *Chicago Defender* article "THE NEED FOR AN ART CENTER" Jun 03, 1939 (see appendix). Explain that the photograph is a primary document as it belongs to the period when Motley made his art. Ask the students to study the photograph and article, writing a paragraph explaining why art may have played an important role in how these children may view the society they live in.

## Agenda Day 2

- Review previous day's assignments and homework. Choose several students to report to the class what they discovered about the role of art.
- Organize students into groups of 3-4. Distribute text, "African American Religious Experience," in *Encyclopedia of Religion and Society*, William H. Swatos, Jr. Editor. 2004. Web. 12 Feb. 2015, <http://hrr.hartsem.edu/ency/african.htm>.
- Prior to this session, cut the article into sections and give each group a different part of the article. Explain jigsaw method and how to share with the rest of the class what each group reads.
- Homework: Ask students to read and annotate brief handout: "What do Pentecostal Christians believe?," Accessed at: [http://www.religionfacts.com/christianity/denominations/pentecostalism/summary\\_of\\_pentecostal\\_theology.htm#sthash.9SCvQ0oU.dpuf](http://www.religionfacts.com/christianity/denominations/pentecostalism/summary_of_pentecostal_theology.htm#sthash.9SCvQ0oU.dpuf) Web 12 February 2015.

## Agenda 3

- Begin by sharing Common Core State Standard (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.1) on the Board. Discuss homework assignment in relation to goals of citing specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.
- Watch video "The Ring Shout and Birth of Afro-American Religion" from *This Far by Faith*, episode 1. PBS (2003). Available at [http://www.pbs.org/thisfarbyfaith/about/episode\\_1.html](http://www.pbs.org/thisfarbyfaith/about/episode_1.html) and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KmmTMg3e5Uo>
- Discuss video with students, providing exit slip question.

## Agenda Day 4

- Review "close read" strategies and art interpretation graphic organizer.
- Project Motley's painting *Gettin' Religion*, 1948.
- Using the following prompts, have students complete the organizer:
  - *So what did you see? What's going on in the image/work of art?*
  - *What is something you notice about the colors?*
  - *What is something you notice about the objects?*
  - *What is something you notice about the people in the piece?*
  - *What did you notice first and why?*
  - *What's the focal point?*
  - *How does the artist show us what's important?*
  - *How does your eye travel through the picture, and why?*
  - *Notice the artist's use of lines (or colors, shapes, etc.).*
  - *What adjectives would you use to describe the lines (colors, shapes, etc.)?*
  - *What's the overall mood of the painting?*
  - *Who are the people in the piece?*
  - *Where are they going?*
  - *What are they doing out?*
  - *What are their social statuses?*
  - *How do you know? What in the painting tell you this?*
  - *What do you think the artist wanted to communicate?*
  - *What do you see that makes you say that?*
  - *What's the main idea or the theme of this piece?*
- Homework: Using their notes from the graphic organizer, ask students to write a brief paragraph on how they believe that Motley feels about evangelical religious practices.

## Agenda Day 5

- Review and share students' observations from graphic organizers from both paintings.
- Ask students to compare and contrast the paintings, listing 5 similarities and 5 differences.
- Point out that the paintings were created almost ten years apart.
- Writing prompt: Ask students to consider what social, economic, and political changes could have impacted the artist's and his audience's perspectives on evangelical religion?
- Return to handouts and ask students to find evidence to support their conclusions.
- Assign first draft of writing prompt as homework.

### Assessments:

Evidence of Student Learning:

- Completion of the graphic organizer.
- Student discussions with their shoulder partners about Motley's paintings *Tongues (Holy Rollers)* and *Gettin' Religion*.
- Written summary & evaluation of information from the graphic organizer.
- Completion of the writing prompt.

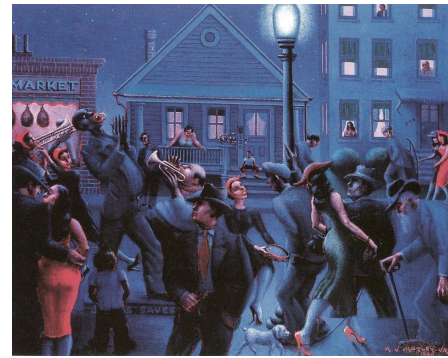
Formative – Teacher will use the questioning strategy as s/he moves around the classroom while students complete the graphic organizer to check for understanding of what they need to do, as well as their generation of opinions about Motley's paintings. Key artifacts will include the graphic organizer, students' answers to teacher's questions and drafts.

Summative – Student completion of the graphic organizer and writing prompt. The graphic organizer and writing prompt will be assessed using the attached rubric (see appendix).

## Works of Art



Archibald J. Motley Jr., *Tongues (Holy Rollers)*, 1929. Oil on canvas, 29.25 x 36.125 inches (74.3 x 91.8 cm). Collection of Mara Motley, MD, and Valerie Gerrard Browne. Image courtesy of the Chicago History Museum, Illinois.



Archibald J. Motley Jr., *Gettin' Religion*, 1948. Oil on canvas, 31.875 x 39.25 inches (81 x 99.7 cm). Collection of Mara Motley, MD, and Valerie Gerrard Browne. Image courtesy of the Chicago History Museum, Illinois

### Key information about the artist:

Archibald Motley was a practicing Catholic who attended the Mission Church of Saint Brendan in the Englewood neighborhood of Chicago. Throughout his writings, the artist expressed his devotion to god and included crucifixes in several of his paintings, including his *Self-Portrait (Myself at Work)* from 1933. Though he was Catholic, he advocated for religious tolerance and appreciated various expressive aspects of black culture.

### Key information about the artist's context:

During Motley's era, there was a great expansion of Protestant faiths and his depiction of evangelical church meetings and street preaching reflects the impact such expansion had on Bronzeville. In the pages of the *Chicago Defender*, the role of religion seems in dispute during this era as some readers did not appreciate storefront churches and preachers who took to the street. Instead, many migrants were encouraged to practice their faith more conservatively in what was perceived as "legitimate" houses of worship, such as the Olivet Baptist Church. In "The Black Church," author Marilyn Mellowes provides this succinct history:

"Between 1890 and 1930, 2.5 million black people, mostly poor and working class, left their homes in the South and relocated in cities of the North. This influx of Southerners transformed Northern black Protestant churches and created what historian Wallace Best calls a 'new sacred order.' Best's study of the impact of the Great Migration in Chicago explores the dynamics of this transformation. Accustomed to a more emotional style of worship, Southerners imbued churches with

a "folk" religious sensibility. The distinctive Southern musical idiom known as "the blues" evolved into gospel music. The themes of exile and deliverance influenced the theological orientation of the churches. Women filled the pews; in Chicago, 70 percent of churchgoers were women. Responding to the immediate material and psychological needs of new congregants, black churches undertook social service programs.

Few ministers were more aware of the impact of the Great Migration than the Rev. Lacey K. Williams of Olivet Baptist Church, the oldest Baptist church in Chicago. In an essay published in the *Chicago Sunday Tribune* in 1929, Williams argued that black churches must respond to the practical and spiritual needs of people struggling to adjust to urban life; the churches must be "passionately human, but no less divine." Under Williams' leadership, Olivet developed a program of progressive social reform, reaching out to new migrants, providing them with social services and knitting them into the larger church community. Olivet Church became the largest African American church – and the largest Protestant church – in the entire nation."

### Key information about the works of art:

*Tongues (Holy Rollers)*, 1929:

Motley painted this lively scene while visiting relatives in rural Arkansas. By framing the painting with curtains, he seems to reveal an important aspect of black religious experience, sharing the sense of community and exuberance that characterizes evangelical worship. On the back wall, above the words "Jesus" and "Saves" the artist used thick dots of a white, yellowish paint to indicate electric sconces on the wall that would illuminate the interior. Symbolically these three "dots" also make reference to the Trinity, a central aspect to the Pentecostal faith that practices communing with the holy spirit and speaking in "tongues." The musical expression and repeated swaying forms provide a sense of energy of the church meeting.

*Gettin' Religion*, 1948

In this crowded street scene, Motley depicts a wide variety of people on a summer evening strolling on the streets of Bronzeville. At the left, there is a preacher on a soapbox surrounded by several musicians. Some of the figures have stopped to watch the performance and are even willing to make a donation to the young woman holding a tambourine at the center. The entire scene is bathed in this electric blue light, making it seem like a movie set. Unlike the earlier *Tongues (Holy Rollers)*, where the artist set the scene up with curtains, the religious performers here are integrated into urban life, perhaps reflecting the greater familiarity of evangelical religion. By this point in Chicago, *All Nations Pentecostal Church* broadcast its gospel music program each week until 1955.

## List of resources for teachers and students:

"African American Religious Experience," in *Encyclopedia of Religion and Society*, William H. Swatos, Jr. Editor. 2004. Web. 12 Feb. 2015, <http://hrr.hartsem.edu/ency/african.htm>.

"THE NEED FOR AN ART CENTER" *Chicago Defender* (Jun 03, 1939) p.14, col.1, Jun 03, 1939 (Editorial Page).

"What do Pentecostal Christians believe?," [http://www.religionfacts.com/christianity/denominations/pentecostalism/summary\\_of\\_pentecostal\\_theology.htm#sthash.9SCvQOoU.dpuf](http://www.religionfacts.com/christianity/denominations/pentecostalism/summary_of_pentecostal_theology.htm#sthash.9SCvQOoU.dpuf) Web 12 February 2015.

Flug, Michael. "Black Chicago Renaissance." *Chicago Metro History Education Center*. Chicago Metropolitan History Fair. Web. 18 Jan. 2015. <<http://www.chicagohistoryfair.org/for-teachers/curriculum/black-chicago-renaissance.html>.

Mellows, Marilyn, "The Black Church," *God in America*. PBS 11 Oct. 2010. Web. 3 March 2015. <http://www.pbs.org/godinamerica/black-church/>

Powell, Richard J., ed. *Archibald Motley: Jazz Age Modernist*. Durham: Nasher Museum of Art at Duke U, 2014. Print.

Walker, Noland W. (P.D.W.). "There is a River" *This Far by Faith*, episode 1. PBS (2003). Available at [http://www.pbs.org/thisfarbyfaith/about/episode\\_1.html](http://www.pbs.org/thisfarbyfaith/about/episode_1.html) and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KmmTM-g3e5Uo>

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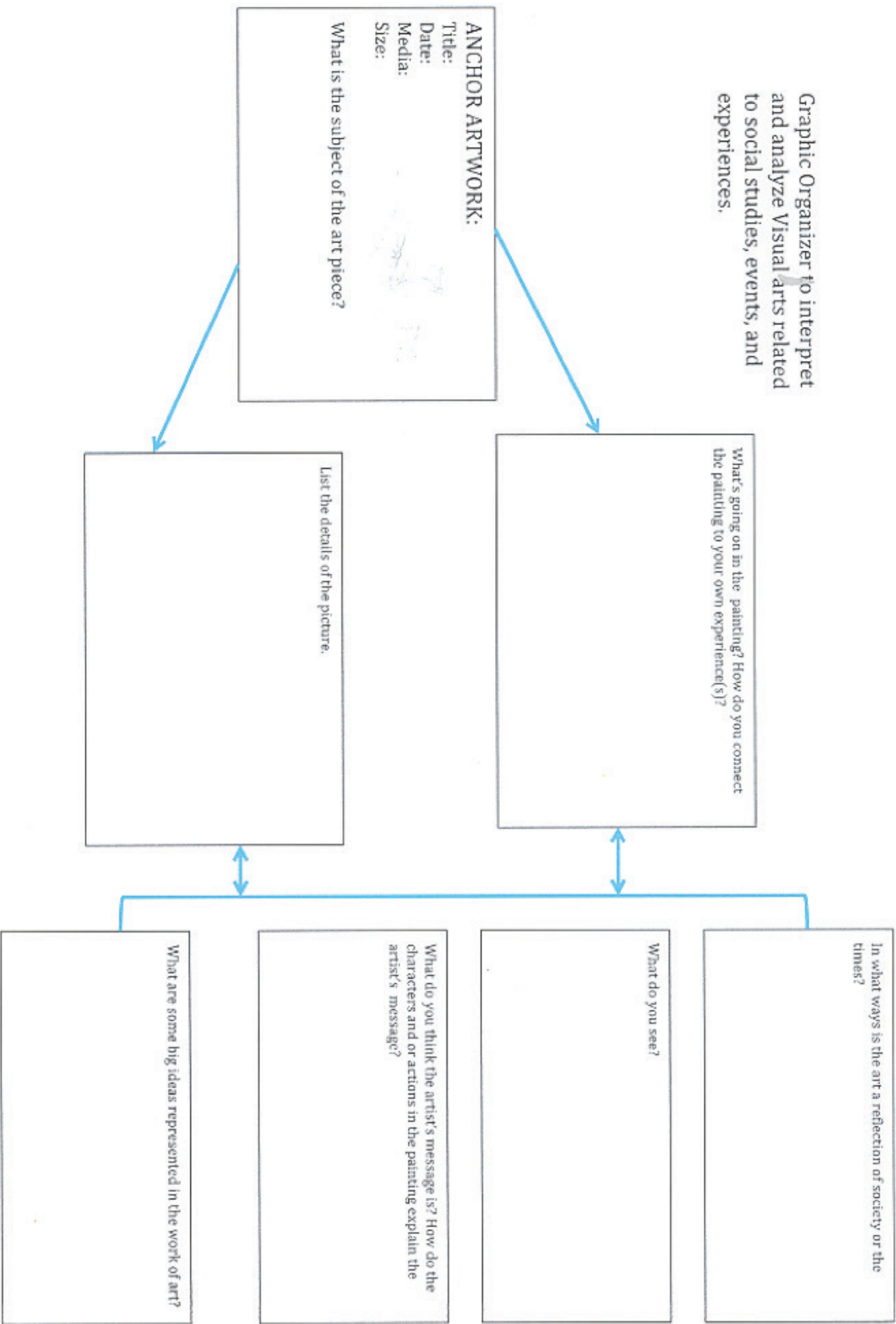
## Appendix

### Art Appreciation Rubrics

Category	4	3	2	1
Identifies Important Information	Student lists all the key ideas from the text	Student lists 3 of the key ideas from the text	Student lists 2 of the key ideas from the text	Student fails to list both key ideas from the text
Identifies details	Student identifies 100% of the key words, and underline details	Student identifies 67% of the key words, and underline detail	Student identifies 33% of the key words, and underline details	Student identifies less than 33% of the key words, and underline details
Neatness	Student work neatly done without errors	Student work Neatly done without 67% errors	Student work neatly done without 33% errors	Student work neatly done with more than 33% errors

Key Ideas and details in Works of Art	3	2	1
	Identified 4 or more key ideas and details in the work of art	Identified 3 key ideas and details in the work of art	Identified 2 or fewer key ideas and details in the work of art

Graphic Organizer to interpret and analyze Visual arts related to social studies, events, and experiences.





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## THE NEED FOR AN ART CENTER

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The establishment of a community art center in our midst must not be viewed in a narrow sense, for such an institution will not only serve to give impetus to the dormant talent of those to whom the opportunity for creative self-expression has been denied, but will also be a lasting medium through which the bugaboo of racial differentiation may be permanently destroyed.

In the true realm of art for art's sake, the contributory elements of prejudice based upon preconceived notions, are absent. The true artist is unbiased, otherwise his vision or imagination becomes blurred. He must see all things that make up his environment in their right proportion. A distortion, a misrepresentation, is just as injurious to his reputation as a wrong diagnosis or unsuccessful surgery is to the surgeon. In a sense, the artist suffers more than the surgeon, for with the death of the patient the case may well be forgotten; whereas a painting may remain as a permanent piece in an art gallery.

It is probable that no agency has ever exercised as urgent and abiding a hold upon the human imagination as has the creation of the modern art center. Here in our community the element of racial discord, social disparities, undemocratic tendencies, make the existence of a community art center a necessity. Not only will such a center enhance the cultural tone of the community—it will, by the same token, create a rightful appreciation of the artistic contributions of the black artist to American civilization. To realize the operation of such a center should be the dream of all those who are mindful of their obligation to the community.