

[Modern African American Art and Artists](#)

Like many artists who use cultural and ethnic heritage as an inspiration for their art, modern African American art often has strong roots in Africa. For many African American artists, the Southern region of the U.S. also represents a huge emphasis on the composition and subject of their work. There is a growing awareness of this unique form of expression and of the artists who create the works. For many years African American art has been tagged as crafts and seriously under appreciated. Fortunately that trend is changing and people from all ethnic backgrounds and lifestyles have more opportunities to view and learn from modern African American art. In order to more fully appreciate these artists, it is important to take a look at some of the African American artists who paved the way.

Henry O. Tanner (1859-1937) is best known for his painting "The Banjo Lesson." Initially his work reflected the black experience and his impressions of that life. Later in life he added more to modern African American art with his works of religious influence. Mr. Tanner made several trips to the Holy Land to find inspiration for his art.

As can be expected, the American era of slavery often plays a large part in modern African American art. This is certainly true of Claude Clark's work. A Georgia native, he has styled his work with strong Southern and African themes. His style is direct and the intention of his work is clear. One of his most well known paintings "Slave Lynching" is an obvious commentary of the social climate of the slavery era.

There is unlikely to be an art lover who has never heard of the Harlem Renaissance. Aaron Douglas did some of his finest work in that period. The murals of the Harlem Renaissance are popular and some of Douglas's work can be seen in libraries and public buildings in this form. His favorite inspirations were important people and significant events in the African American history. Aaron Douglas went on after painting his magnificent murals to inspire others interested in modern African American art at Fisk University. His influence can be felt in the art world even now, 27 years after his death.

One female African American artist who strongly affected the modern African American art scene is Clementine Hunter. She didn't begin painting until after the age of 40. Her work is simple and two dimensional, depicting Southern life through her eyes. Many consider her to be one of the most important artists to come from the South. Her African American painting was first recognized in the 1950's and continues to inspire.

Regardless of the media and subject chosen, modern African American art is finally receiving the attention and acclaim it deserves. Thanks to the many exceptional artists who gave the world a picture of the little talked about culture from which they came, young up and coming African American artists have an easier road to follow to receive the recognition they deserve. Great things can come from the lessons of these past artists.

Mr. Moyo Ogundipe has a Bachelors of Arts degree in Fine Art from the University of Ife, Ile-Ife, Nigeria and a Master of Fine Art degree in Painting from The Hoffberger School of Painting, Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore, USA.

One of Africa's most celebrated and renowned contemporary African American artist, Mr. Ogundipe has exhibited extensively in Africa, Europe and the USA. His paintings have been described as hypnotic, colorful and densely patterned.

In 1996, Mr. Ogundipe was awarded the Pollock-Krasner Fellowship. And in 2005 he was invited to become a member of Africobra, an organization founded in the 1960s and whose membership comprises of distinguished African-American artists.

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About the Author

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