

Curatorial Notes

September-December

2016

This document contains notes written by kYmberly Keeton, M.L.S., Arts Library Coordinator about her experience conducting research, curating, and cataloging their latest exhibition about artists from the Works Progress (WPA) Administration, the visual arts arm of the Federal Art Project.

***Part 1:
Acts of Seated
Experience***

Part 1: Acts of Seated Experience is an exhibition that derived from artwork researched and found in the New York Public Library Public Domain Collection. As the art curator for The Arts At Page Library, these images spoke volumes being that they were a part of the Works Progress (WPA) Administration, the visual arts arm of the Federal Art Project. Many artists during the Great Depression were offered positions as art educators, writers, musicians, actors and artists to support themselves from 1935 until 1943. Each artist chosen for this exhibition created art about African American life during this period in history.

The research process, as the curator it was surprising to discover that many of the images featured in part one of this exhibition, were by American artists versus African American artists. Only one African American artist is featured in this first exhibition, Charles Alston a painter, illustrator, muralist, and teacher. Though many artists were hired to work for the Federal Art Project, a lot of them did not receive notoriety. This exhibition, created to provide a platform for art patrons to learn more about WPA artists and the roles that they played as observers of African American culture and how they viewed social and economic issues that were lingering during the Great Depression as artists and critical thinkers.

The artistic approaches by the majority of artists featured in this

exhibition are easel paintings, prints, drawings, and photography – still images, black and white or in color. During the Federal Art Project, WPA favored figurative work versus abstract art. Art patrons will come to find that many of the artworks are representational of African American life in Harlem, New York.

This body of work is a digital exhibition that is available online. The platform used to house the online exhibition is courtesy of Omeka.net, a free, flexible, and open source web-publishing platform for the display of library, museum, archives, and scholarly collections and exhibitions. There are 10 images featured and are arranged in three parts. The culmination of the exhibit (Summer 2017) will consist of all of the images from the first two exhibitions and the last set of works chosen.



It brings me pleasure as an art librarian to share this exhibition with you, *Part 1: Acts of Seated Experience*. Feel free to send comments our way regarding your experience viewing the exhibition here: theartsatpagelibrary@gmail.com.

kYmberly Keeton, M.L.S.

Arts Library Coordinator

The Arts At Page Library

Web: www.theartsatpagelibrary.wordpress.com

Space: <https://theartsatpagelibrary.omeka.net>

Featured Artists

Charles H. Alston

Bernard P. Schardt

Joseph Leboit

Nan Lurie

Elizabeth Olds

Soloman Eytinge

G.G. Fish

DaytonBrandfield

Saul Kovner

G Khan: (Bio Not Avail.)

MEDIA ADVISORY

Part 1: Acts of Seated Experience

The Arts At Page Library Presents Its First Online Art Exhibition

September 21, 2016

Jefferson City, MO—Join The Arts At Page Library for an

exclusive look at artwork by artists that participated in the Federal Art Project, the visual arm of the Great Depression-era The Works Progress Administration that lasted from 1935-1943. The exhibition created to commemorate the work, *Part 1: Acts of Seated Experience online art exhibition*. There are 10 artists featured including *Charles Alston, G. Kahn, Saul Kovner, Dayton Brandfield and Solomon Eytinge, G.G. Fish, Bernard P. Schardt, Joseph Leboit, Nan Lurie and Elizabeth Olds*. Art patrons will relish in an archived oral history interview with WPA artist Charles Alston an African American educator, sculptor, and draftsman (artist).



The Federal Art Project was created to help artists with relief who were suffering during the Great Depression. These artists were from various backgrounds in the visual arts with different skill levels. Funded under the Emergency Relief Appropriation Act of 1935, The Federal Art Project operated from August 29, 1935, until June 30, 1943. The Federal Art Project became a cultural and educational network for African American artists, writers, literary gurus, and scholars. The majority of artists given assignments or jobs were from the northern region of the United States. The African American Registry states on its website, “An editorial in Opportunity Magazine in 1939 credited the WPA in northern cities with giving qualified Blacks their first chance at employment in white-collar positions. Alain Locke, an early chronicler of the Harlem Renaissance, attributed its survival during the 1930’s to the WPA. The WPA also funded Black acting troupes. The Negro Theatre Project staged Walk Together Chillun by Frank Wilson at the Lafayette Theatre through the WPA.”

The Arts At Page Library Coordinator, kYmberly Keeton, M.L.S., researched numerous art pieces through the New York Public Library’s Public Domain Collection and works featured in this exhibition have been selected for the first time to be shown to the public by an academic library. *Part 1: Acts of Seated Experience* pays homage to the Federal Art Project artists that received little to no exposure or notoriety as contributors to the art world when they were alive. Each piece of art featured in *Part 1: Acts of Seated Experience* tells a story without words, which will draw audiences in and provide an opportunity to step back in time, and become engaged with history.

Exhibition Details

View Online: September 22 thru December 1, 2016

Access Exhibit: <https://theartsatpagelibrary.omeka.net/>

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