



**Smithsonian Institution**

*National Museum of African American History and Culture*

## **Abbott's Monthly Vol. II No. 5**

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[[image]]

[[caption]] THE QUADROON MADONNA, the work of Charles C. Dawson, a Chicago artist and illustrator, who has shown great ability to handle any medium he chooses. [[/caption]]

to the artist is if more of those among us who are able would offer prizes-purchase prizes especially. There is an ever increasing number among our group who can afford to purchase pictures, but so far most aall the encouragement that the black artist has received has come from the whites; in Chicago, from the Municipal Art League, and in New York, the Harmon Foundation. In this age of intelligence we are surely loath to credit other races and peoples with more artistic feeling and appreciation than we can claim for ourselves.

One very interesting feature about our art is the way that our women are taking to sculpture, seemingly more so than to painting, with great success. First of that group is Edmonia Lewis of whom little is known. She was represented in an exhibition at the Art Institute of Chicago in 1927. Mrs. Meta Warrick Fuller of Framingham, Mass., perhaps the most noted sculptress of the race, is well-known in Paris where she studied and exhibited. More recently several others have appeared above the horizon, and are now recognized as the best produced by the race.

ANOTHER proof of the gradual upward move of our artists is the work of A.J. Motley, Jr., who in 1925 won two prizes in the annual exhibition of Chicago artists and in 1927 held an exhibition of his work in New York City, which attracted very favorable comment from the critics. The same year he was given the Harmon Gold aware, and at present is studying in France under the Guggenheim Fellowship. Just recently, several of his paintings were sent with a group of representative American paintings to be shown in Sweden.

The work of the white artist who claims a more advanced civilization may show a wider range of invention, perhaps finer distinction of line and form, but certainly no more evidence of spontaneity, whic is very necessary to the life of the art, but in the work of the Negro, are new possibilities of study, evidenced in the work of some of the present day painters of our race.

This writer believes that all the art of our race is fine art in the best sense of the term, if not, how, indeed, may it be defined? Here we have the art of a people hampered by conflicting traditions, which are yet quite evident and their art has not yet ceased to be vital. He must now bend every effort to make his art felt, and each effort must needs be forceful, direct, ever driving at his goal with all his might, and with all the energy that he can muster up. Just as our musicians and singers have, at times met up with handicaps and depressions, so have our artists, with the brush. The case of Miss Augusta Savage is striking. After having proved herself worthy of a scholarship to study at the American School in Paris, the scholarship was withdrawn, when she was found to be of African descent; however, she studk to her purpose, and to her determination to study abroad, and was recommended to, and received the Rosenwald Fund. These are things we must confront and combat.

SINCE H.O. Tanner is the most distinguished of our artists, much can be



said of his part. His religious subjects excel many in their beauty of color, composition and technique. Being the son of a Methodist Bishop and constantly under the influence of religious training naturally brought from him the desire to paint religious subjects. His "Three Marys" and the "Two Disciples at the Tomb" which are in the permanent collection of the Art Institute of Chicago, are indeed, fine examples of his art.

In the artists' portrait galleries of the Art Institute of Chicago hangs a portrait of him.

The landscapes of the late William A. Harper are

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conspicuous for original quality in design and beauty of color. Having met success here, he went to England and France to study. After his death, there came a general appreciation for his works. "Autumn in France" was presented to the Wabash Avenue Y.M.C.A. in Chicago, by the late N.H. Carpenter and his wife.

Since the death of Harper in 1910, a number of our artists have more or less successfully come to the front. From all parts of the country we hear of another who has made himself known as an artist of more or less degree. Chief among them are William E. Scott, Archibald J. Motley, Jr., Charles C. Dawson, illustrator and painter, and William M. Farrow, painter, etcher, lecturer and teacher, all of Chicago. Scott, a former student of Tanner, is far superior to others in his mural painting, and other works, which can be found abroad as well as at home. His technique is not out of the ordinary, but shows the handling of a professional.

ARCHIBALD J. MOTLEY, Jr., the winner of two prizes in the 1926 Annual of Chicago artists, is much admired for his colored subjects. As a painter of these subjects, he is far in advance of the average. His different types, old and young, are excellent for their quality of fine drawing and painting.

Charles C. Dawson, illustrator and painter is of a very high degree, showing great ability to handle any medium he chooses, with the exactness of a well trained hand.

William M. Farrow, painter, etcher, lecturer, teacher, writer and museum man of whom more is said in his biography, is a bright light in the firmament of our artists. In both his paintings and etchings, his technique is generally free and spontaneous. He is an unusual colorist.

New York City has produced such as M. Gray Johnson, Palmer C. Hayden, Aaron Douglas, William H. Johnson and Albert A. Smith and several others of lesser degree. M. Gray Johnson may be called a painter of spirituals, and is a very promising young artist. His paintings are superb in quality and technique. Seeing one of them is as pleasing as hearing the music itself and carries one back to the times in which these songs were originated. He has without doubt captured the rhythm of the spirituals.

AARON DOUGLAS who studied in New York and also under Weinold Reiss, is considered an artist of much ability. His drawing of the human figure are pleasingly handled.

William H. Johnson, whose portraits remind one of highly advanced caricatures, seems to have struck a note entirely different to any of the others. Accentuated lights and shadow with splashes of pea greens and coffee browns, classes his work quite unique. Some think he is a great modernist, who will either show us something new in art, or be lost entirely.

Albert A. Smith who studied in New York at the National Academy and in Paris where he now resides is another of our double-sided men, who etch and paint; and in both he is very efficient. His paintings are somewhat high in key and his technique simple, but his subjects very pleasing. He etches with the hand of a master, and paints equally as well.

From the west coast comes Sargeant Johnson of, California, an artist of recognized ability. His work in whatever medium he chooses, whether in terra cotta, or his drawings or his carvings, illustrate very clearly the strength of his achievements.

Even from the South, several of our best have come forth, some showing remarkable talent, ability, and skill. Chief among them is young Richmond Barthe, sculptor. His portraits in clay and his drawings and paintings are very fine. He is an excellent draftsman.

[[image]]  
[[caption]] THE BREAKAWAY, an interpretation of a modern dance, done by young Richmond Barthe, sculptor, which shows his remarkable talent, ability and skill. [[/caption]]

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