

# MMFA

Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts Displays Works by An Influential American Artist

### *History, Labor, and Life: The Prints of Jacob Lawrence Comes to the Capital City*



**Montgomery, AL** — The Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts (MMFA) invites you to see an exciting exhibition depicting African-American experiences. The traveling exhibition *History, Labor, Life: The Prints of Jacob Lawrence* provides a comprehensive overview of influential American artist Jacob Lawrence's (1917–2000) printmaking collection, featuring more than 90 works produced from 1963 to 2000. The exhibition explores three major themes that occupied the artist's graphic works. It opens to the public from **August 3, until October 27, 2019**.

"We are thrilled to present these compelling and colorful prints by Lawrence, an important American artist. His imagery of everyday scenes depicts both hardship and hope while commenting on the struggle of daily life," said MMFA Curator Jennifer Jankauskas.

Lawrence started exploring printmaking as an already well-established artist. Printmaking suited his bold, formal, and narrative style exceptionally well. The relationship between his painting and printmaking were intertwined, with the artist revisiting and remaking earlier paintings as prints.

Lawrence was primarily concerned with the narration of African-American culture and history. His acute observations of community life, work, struggle, and emancipation during his lifetime were rendered alongside vividly imagined chronicles of the past. The past and present in his practice are intrinsically linked, providing insight into the social, economic, and political realities that continue to impact and shape contemporary society today.

*History, Labor, Life: The Prints of Jacob Lawrence* is organized by the Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD) Museum of Art in collaboration with the Jacob and Gwendolyn Knight Lawrence Foundation, and is curated by Storm Janse van Rensburg, SCAD head curator of exhibitions.

### **About the Artist**

Lawrence was born in Atlantic City, New Jersey, in 1917. His family had moved north from the rural South to find a better life. After his parents separated, Lawrence and his two younger siblings lived in settlement houses and foster homes in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, until 1930, when the siblings joined their mother in New York City. Lawrence was 13 years old. His education in art was both informal—observing the activity and rhythms of the streets of Harlem—and formal, in after-school community workshops at Utopia House and the Harlem Art Workshop. At both centers, he was able to study with the prominent artists Charles Alston, and in the course of his work, he became immersed in the cultural activity and fervor of the artists and writers who led the Harlem Renaissance, Alston among them. Lawrence received a scholarship to the American Artists School, and he began to gain some notice for his work. Members of the creative community, including poet Claude McKay and sculptor Augusta Savage, encouraged him as an artist.

In 1938, Lawrence had his first solo exhibition at the Harlem YMCA, and he started working in the easel painting division of the Works Progress Administration's Federal Art Project. In 1940, he received a grant from the Rosenwald Foundation to create a series of images on the migration of African-Americans from the South. The painter Gwendolyn Knight assisted him on the captions for the images and initial coating of the panels. They married in 1941. The same year, "The Migration of the Negro" series debuted at the Downtown Gallery, New York City. Lawrence was the first artist of color to be represented by a major New York gallery, and the success of this exhibition gave him national prominence.

Lawrence was active as both an artist and art educator. He taught at Black Mountain College in North Carolina in 1946, and later at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Maine and the New School for Social Research in New York. In 1971, Lawrence became a professor of painting at the University of Washington in Seattle. Lawrence received the National Medal of Arts, and he was the first visual artist to receive the Spingarn Medal, the NAACP's highest honor. He was a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters and was the recipient of 18 honorary doctorates from universities including Harvard University, Yale University, New York University, Howard University, and Amherst College. He had served as both as a commissioner of the National Council of Arts and as a nominator for the Fulbright Art Committee and the National Hall of Fame.

Lawrence was still drawing and painting until his death in Seattle in 2000.

### **About the Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts**

The Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts was founded in 1930 by a group of local artists as a place for both exhibiting art and a space for art education. The original intentions of our founders—to exhibit and teach—continue to inspire and inform every action and activity here at the Museum which, since 1988, has shared the 277-acre Blount Cultural Park with our partners across the lake at the celebrated Alabama Shakespeare Festival.

Today's MMFA visitors stroll art-studded grounds and permanent collection galleries. They see compelling changing exhibitions and learn about art by playing in our interactive gallery, Artworks, making art in its bustling studios, or by participating in other engaging events and programs. And, as of late September 2018, MMFA visitors can now relax and recharge in the serenity of our stunning new three-acre John and Joyce Caddell Sculpture Garden.

While the Museum's collection is still home to the art of many of the regional artists who first established it, over time, it has become known for its strength in American art and Old Master Prints. Recent, important acquisitions of art made by African-American and Asian artists and works inspired by images and themes related to the experiences of these groups represent the breadth and depth of the lives and concerns of those who now call Montgomery and the River Region home. Through the exhibition of this work as well as the programs and events that help connect our communities with it, the MMFA is recognized as a leading arts and cultural resource here in the state and Southeastern region.

The Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts, a department of the City of Montgomery, is supported by funds from the City of Montgomery, with support from the Montgomery County Commission and the Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts Association. Programs are made possible, in part, by grants from the Alabama State Council on the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts.

## **Related Programs**

### **Second Sundays**

Sunday, August 11; 2 PM

### **Opening Reception (for Museum Members Only)**

Thursday, August 1; 6 PM

### **Film: *Jacob Lawrence: The Glory of Expression***

Thursday, September 5; 5:30 PM

### **Short Course: History, Labor, and Life**

Tuesday, September 17, 24, and October 1; Noon

### **Historical Storytelling Through Art for Homeschool Students**

Friday, September 20 and 27; 1 PM

### **Teen Workshop**

Thursday, September 26; 4 PM

### **Art Ed Central**

Thursday, September 26; 4:30 PM

### **Last Call**

Thursday, October 10; 5:30 PM

## **Related Exhibitions**

### **Prints from the Student Art Collection**

August 10 through September 22, 2019

### **Life in Pictures**

September 28 through November 15, 2019

## **General Information**

Free admission and ample parking.  
www.mmfa.org  
334.625.4333

### **Hours:**

#### **ArtWorks**

Tuesday–Saturday, 10 AM–5 PM  
Sunday, Noon to 5 PM

#### **Galleries, Caddell Sculpture Garden, and Parker Terrace:**

Tuesday–Saturday, 10 AM–5 PM  
Thursday, 10 AM–9 PM  
Sunday, Noon to 5 PM

### **Café:**

Tuesday–Saturday, 11 AM–2 PM

### **Museum Store:**

Tuesday–Saturday, 11 AM–4 PM  
Sun, Noon to 4 PM

### **Location:**

Wynton M. Blount Cultural Park  
One Museum Drive  
Montgomery, Alabama, 36117

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**Jacob Lawrence, *The Builders (Family)*, silkscreen on paper, 34" x 25.75", 1974; © 2019 The Jacob and Gwendolyn Knight Lawrence Foundation, Seattle/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York**

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