

CONNECTING WITH AFRICA

The folk artist has been commonly identified as that person who has had no formal art training and who creates from an inner passion and drive. Often materials used are those found in the artist's environment-wood, recycled objects, salvaged tin, shells, natural vines and limbs-virtually anything the artist can find to help express his or her ideas. The folk artist makes a personal statement about his or her culture, religion, beliefs, family, or any subject which has deep meaning. The collection at Hickory Museum of Art features a diversity of artists and subject matter. Many of these artists began their works late in life when seeking a way to satisfy the creative urge or deal with inner visions.

GRADE LEVEL: 7

North Carolina Essential Standards: Social Studies

Estimated time: 45 minutes

Goal 8: The learner will assess influence and contributions of individuals and cultural groups in Africa.

Goal 13: The learner will describe historic, economic, cultural connections among NC, US, and Africa

Objective 13.02-Describe diverse cultural connections that have influenced development of language, art, music, and belief systems in NC and US and analyze their role in creating a cultural mosaic

- The students will observe and compare two African-American artists and examples of their work.
- The students will analyze the works in connection with African cultural influences.

MATERIALS:

- Visual of Bessie Harvey's "*Tongues Cannot Tell*"
- Visual of Lonnie Holley's "*Mask*"

ABOUT THE ARTISTS:

Bessie Harvey was born in Dallas, Georgia, in 1929 and died in 1994. She is renowned as a "visionary artist" and her work reflects African history and religious themes. Through her art, she has connected contemporary black culture to the ancient cultures of Africa as seen in her sculptures. Her figurative sculptures embody the "spirit" of the wood, bringing to life the spirits and souls she feels are captured in trees and wood.

Much of her work uses limbs and roots that have minimal facial features and paint. Her work also reflects her concern for the struggle of blacks, both past and present, and the significance of her African ancestry.

Lonnie Holley was born in 1950, one of twenty-seven children. He turned to art in the 1970's as a means of dealing with personal tragedy and emotional problems. In Alabama, Holley became known as "The Sandman" for his carvings from fragile sandstone. His work is reflective of his African ancestry and influenced by African art.

LESSON ACTIVITIES

Discussion: Harvey

- What activity is pictured here?
- How was the piece made?
- How does the artist's use of materials affect your interpretation of the piece?
- What do you think the artist is saying?
- Harvey used roots and tree parts to bring out living spirits she sensed. How would you describe the spirits embodied in this sculpture?

Discussion: Holley:

- How does this piece reflect Holley's African heritage?
- What medium is used for this piece?
- What do you see in this work?
- What colors are used and why do you think the artist chose them?

POST ACTIVITIES

- Research African superstitions and discuss how either piece of art might be influenced by religion and/or superstition.
- Research African masks, materials, purpose, etc. Have students design and make a mask and explain it to the class.

ASSESSMENT/EVALUATION

- Students were engaged in discussion of art pieces
- Students applied an understanding of African cultures/tribal characteristics to works of art