

## Black Artists



**Henry Ossawa Tanner Biography**  
**Painter (1859–1937)**

Henry Ossawa Tanner was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on June 21, 1859. As a young man, he studied at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. In 1891, Tanner moved to Paris, and after several exhibits, gained international acclaim—becoming the first African-American painter to receive such attention. "Nicodemus Visiting Jesus" is one of his most famous works. He's also known for the paintings "The Banjo Lesson" and "The Thankful Poor." Tanner died in 1937 in Paris, France.



**Augusta Savage Biography**  
**Civil Rights Activist, Sculptor (1892–1962)**

Born in Florida in 1892, Augusta Savage began creating art as a child by using the natural clay found in her hometown. After attending Cooper Union in New York City, she made a name for herself as a sculptor during the Harlem Renaissance and was awarded fellowships to study abroad. Savage later served as a director for the Harlem Community Center and created the monumental work *The Harp* for the 1939 New York World's Fair. She spent most of her later years in Saugerties, New York, before her death from cancer in 1962.

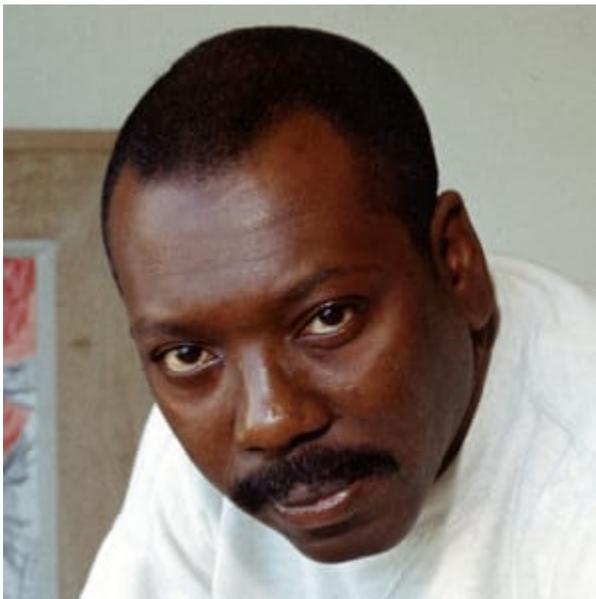


### **Edmonia Lewis Biography**

**(c. 1844–c. 1907)**

The first professional African American and Native American sculptor, Edmonia Lewis earned critical praise for work that explored religious and classical themes. Edmonia Lewis' first notable commercial success was a bust of Colonel Robert Gould Shaw. The money she earned selling copies of the bust allowed her to sail to Rome, Italy, where

she mastered working in marble. She quickly achieved success as a sculptor. The circumstances of her death in 1907 are unclear.



### **Jacob Lawrence Biography**

**Painter (1917–2000)**

Raised in Harlem, New York, Jacob Lawrence became the most renowned African-American artist of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Known for producing narrative collections like the *Migration Series* and *War Series*, he illustrated the African-American experience using vivid colors set against black and brown figures. He also served as a professor of art at the University of

Washington for 15 years.



**Jean-Michel Basquiat Biography**  
**Painter (1960–1988)**

Jean-Michel Basquiat was a Neo-Expressionist painter in the 1980s. He is best known for his primitive style and his collaboration with pop artist Andy Warhol. Jean-Michel Basquiat was born on December 22, 1960, in Brooklyn, New York. He first attracted attention for his graffiti under the name "SAMO" in New York City. He sold sweatshirts

and postcards featuring his artwork on the streets before his painting career took off. He collaborated with Andy Warhol in the mid-1980s, which resulted in a show of their work. Basquiat died on August 12, 1988, in New York City.



**James Van Der Zee Biography**  
**Photographer (1886–1983)**

James Van Der Zee was a renowned, Harlem-based photographer known for his posed, storied pictures capturing African-American citizenry and celebrity. Born on June 29, 1886, in Lenox, Massachusetts, James Van Der Zee developed a passion for photography as a youth, and opened up his own Harlem studio

in 1916. Van Der Zee became known for his detailed imagery of African-American life, and for capturing celebrities such as Florence Mills and Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Following hard financial times, Van Der Zee enjoyed a resurgence in his career during his later years. He died in 1983 in Washington, D.C.



### **Faith Ringgold Biography**

**Painter, Author, Civil Rights Activist  
(1930–)**

Faith Ringgold was born in New York City in 1930. While working as an art teacher in public schools, she began a series of paintings called *American People*, which portrayed the civil rights movement from a female perspective. In the 1970s, she created African-style masks, painted political posters and actively sought the racial integration of the New York art world. During the 1980s, she began a series of quilts that

are among her best-known works, and she later embarked on a successful career as a children's book author and illustrator.



### **Gordon Parks**

**Biography Director, Photographer,  
Songwriter, Pianist (1912–2006)**

Born on November 30, 1912, in Fort Scott, Kansas, Gordon Parks was a self-taught artist who became the first African-American photographer for *Life* and *Vogue* magazines. He also pursued movie directing and screenwriting, working at the helm of the films *The Learning Tree*, based on a novel he wrote, and *Shaft*. Parks has published several memoirs and

retrospectives as well, including *A Choice of Weapons*.



## **Kara Walker Biography**

### **Painter (1969–)**

Kara Walker was born in 1969 in Stockton, California. At the Rhode Island School of Design, Walker began working in the silhouette form. In 1994, her work appeared in a new-talent show at the Drawing Center in New York and she became an instant hit. In 1997, she received a John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation "genius grant." Since then, Walker's work has been exhibited in galleries

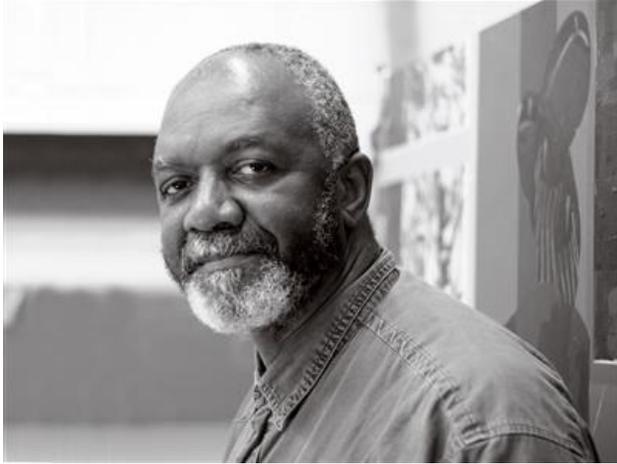
and museums worldwide.



## **Kehinde Wiley**

### **Painter (1977-)**

Kehinde Wiley, born in 1977 in Los Angeles, California, he is a Nigerian-American portrait painter based in New York City, who is known for his highly naturalistic paintings of black people. He was commissioned in 2017 to paint a portrait of former President Barack Obama for the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery, which has portraits of all the US presidents.



**Kerry James Marshall**

**Painter (1955-)**

Marshall is known for large scale paintings, sculptures, and other objects that take African-American life and history as their subject matter. His work often deals with the effects of the Civil Rights Movement on domestic life, in addition to working with elements of popular culture. In a 1998 interview with *Bomb Magazine*,

Marshall observed: “Black people occupy a space, even mundane spaces, in the most fascinating ways. Style is such an integral part of what black people do that just walking is not a simple thing. You've got to walk with style. You've got to talk with a certain rhythm; you've got to do things with some flair. And so in the paintings I try to enact that same tendency toward the theatrical that seems to be so integral a part of the black cultural body.”



**Elizabeth Catlett**

**American-Mexican graphic artist (1915-2012)**

Elizabeth Catlett was an American and Mexican graphic artist and sculptor best known for her depictions of the African-American experience in the 20th century, which often focused on the female experience.