

# Gibbes Museum of Art in Charleston, SC, Features Works by William H. Johnson and WPA Artists

The Gibbes Museum of Art in Charleston, SC, is presenting its major spring exhibition, *Fighters for Freedom: William H. Johnson Picturing Justice*, on view through Aug. 7, 2022.

This exhibition brings together 28 paintings by the South Carolina born artist, which have not been seen together for almost 75 years. Organized by the Smithsonian American Art Museum, the exhibition will premiere at the Gibbes before a national tour. Additionally, the Gibbes will host special programming and an accompanying exhibition, *A New Deal: Artists at Work*, which includes works from the museum's permanent collection by artists like Johnson that benefited from the Works Progress Administration's Federal Art Program in the 1930s.

"Nearly 50 years ago, the Gibbes exhibited a collection by William H. Johnson – which was the first solo exhibition by a Black artist at the Gibbes," says Angela Mack, executive director of the Gibbes Museum of Art. "We are proud to once again showcase the work of this great American artist, who was born in South Carolina, and reflect on our commitment to feature artists from diverse backgrounds and experiences."



"Underground Railroad", ca. 1945, by William H. Johnson (American, 1901-1972). Oil on paper-board, 33 3/8 x 36 3/8 inches. Image courtesy of Smithsonian American Art Museum, gift of the Harmon Foundation.

Drawn entirely from the collection of more than 1,000 works by Johnson given to the Smithsonian American Art Museum by the Harmon Foundation in 1967, this exhibition is the first-ever presentation of this series in Johnson's home state of South Carolina. William H. Johnson painted his "Fighters for Freedom" series in the mid-1940s as a tribute to African American activists, scientists, teachers, performers and international heads of state working to bring peace to the world.

*Fighters for Freedom: William H. Johnson Picturing Justice* celebrates these fighters and their accomplishments while still acknowledging the realities of racism, violence and oppression that they faced and overcame. This series includes some familiar figures – Harriet Tubman, George Washington Carver, Marian Anderson and Mahatma Gandhi – as well as other lesser-known individuals whose equally-important determination and sacrifice have been eclipsed over time.

The Gibbes will host several special programs to further analyze the themes in *Fighters for Freedom: William H. Johnson Picturing Justice*, for more information, visit ([www.gibbesmuseum.org](http://www.gibbesmuseum.org)).

To accompany *Fighters for Freedom: William H. Johnson Picturing Justice*, the Gibbes will exhibit *A New Deal: Artists at Work*. The museum is one of a select group of institutions across the country



"Harriet Tubman", ca. 1945, by William H. Johnson (American, 1901-1972). Oil on paper-board, 28 7/8x23 3/8 inches. Image courtesy of Smithsonian American Art Museum, gift of the Harmon Foundation.

that houses works from the Federal Arts Project. During the Great Depression of the 1930s, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt launched his ambitious Works Progress Administration (WPA) programs that sent millions of unemployed Americans back to work, including more than 5,000 artists.



"Election Night", ca. 1935 - 1937, by Minnie Lois Murphy (American, 1901 - 1962). Wood-block print on paper, 8 x 10 1/2 inches. Gibbes Museum of Art, Gift of the WPA 1943.006.0017

From the WPA came the Federal Arts Project, which awarded opportunities to a diverse group of artists, including women, African Americans and recent immigrants from China, Russia and Germany. This monumental effort to put artists back to work resulted in a collection of artwork intended to capture the national spirit at the time and encourage creativity in the face of great challenges. *A New Deal: Artists at Work* is a collection of these works from a diverse group of artists during a very challenging time in American history.

*Fighters for Freedom: William H. Johnson Picturing Justice* is organized by the Smithsonian American Art Museum with generous support from Art Bridges, Faye and Robert Davidson and the Jacob and Gwendolyn Lawrence Foundation.

Home to the Carolina Art Association, established in 1858, the Gibbes Museum of Art is recognized among the oldest arts organizations in the United States. Housing one of the foremost collections of American Art from the 18th century to the present, the museum's mission is to enhance lives through art by engaging people of every background and experience with art and artists of enduring quality and by providing opportunities to learn, to discover, to enjoy and to be inspired by the creative process.

For further information check our SC Institutional Gallery listings or visit ([www.gibbesmuseum.org](http://www.gibbesmuseum.org)).

# College of Charleston in Charleston, SC, Offers Works by Dyani White Hawk

The College of Charleston in Charleston, SC, is presenting *Hear Her*, an exhibition of work by Sičánǵu Lakota visual artist and independent curator Dyani White Hawk, on view at the Halsey Institute of Contemporary Art, through Feb. 26, 2022.

Dyani White Hawk's work illuminates

society's consistent ignorance of Native people. With her video, photography, and works in other media, she aims to use the language of visual art to bring light to the deep chasm between our understanding of history and the truth. Her work weaves together forms from the canon of Western

*continued on Page 4*

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