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Lois Mailou Jones

The artist I chose for my presentation is Lois Mailou Jones. She was born to Carolyn and Thomas Vreeland in Boston, Massachusetts. During her childhood, her parents encouraged her to paint using watercolors. They lived in a house on Martha's Vineyard, where Jones met some individuals that impacted her life, such as carver Meta Warrick Fuller, and author Dorothy West. During her teenage years, she attended Practical Arts high school in Boston and took night classes at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. She held her most memorable independent presentation at the age of seventeen. Shortly after this, she started exploring different avenues regarding African covers during her time at Ripley Studio. From her exploration of African veils, Jones made costume designs for the Denishawn school. During 1923 and 1927, Jones attended school and finally graduated in 1928. A short time later, she started working at the F.A Cultivate Company in Boston. Throughout the mid of that year, she went to Howard University where she chose to focus more on painting rather than designing. From 1928 to 1936, she began teaching but was also working at Charlotte Hawkins Brown. Here she coached a basketball team, taught folk dancing, and played the piano for church services. In 1930, she was selected by James Vernon Herring to join the craftsmanship office at Howard University in Washington D.C., Jones stayed as a teacher of watercolor painting until her retirement in 1977. In the mid-1930s, Jones started to look for acknowledgment for her fine art. During this period, she moved away from designing and started exploring different avenues regarding painting. In 1937, Jones got an suggestion to Paris and work at the Académie Julian. She delivered over 30 watercolors during her year in France. In total, she finished around 40 artworks during her time at the Académie. This is where she did one of her most well-known artworks called Les Fetiches in 1938.

Between the years of 1968 and 1970, she traveled out to 11 African nations, which affected her artwork style and assisted her with making canvases like the Moon Masque. She made a trip to African nations, for example, Ethiopia, Sudan, Kenya, Zaire, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Senegal. During 1989 and 1998, Jones kept on delivering stimulating new works. She went to France again and explored different styles of art including her past post-impressionist style. In 1998, Jones died at 92 years old at her home in Washington, DC.

**Brother Brown**

One of her first paintings was the "Brother Brown". It is a painting of an African American man, sitting on a park bench, smoking a pipe. The man is sitting under a tree, gathering some shade to find the ideal spot to simply rest. There is a big sack of potatoes on his left and a cane of sorts on his right. She found a visual middle between Post-Impressionism and Fauvism in this piece of art. This particular piece of art is currently sitting in the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington D.C, if you guys want to check that out.

**The Ascent of Ethiopia**

The Ascent of Ethiopia is my favorite personally. Jones utilized Egyptian themes to communicate the beliefs of the Harlem Renaissance with a hint of the Jazz Age. Here, the pharaoh, figures move up to a modern city, where Black innovation excels. Jones arrangement joins individuals of African descent with their past and their future. Many historians and critics have proclaimed the painting to be a masterpiece and a perfect mixture of design and visual language of the Harlem Renaissance. During 1954 and 1967 Jones' various oils and watercolors enlivened by Haiti are presumably her most commonly known works. In them, her liking for brilliant tones, her comprehension of her own might interpret Cubism's essential standards, and her quest for an unmistakable style arrived at an apogee. In a large number of her pieces, one can see the impact of the Haitian culture, with its African impacts, which revitalized how she saw the world. These ideologies are incorporated in “Ode to Kinshasa” and “Ubi Girl from Tai Region”. Her work turned out to be more unique, dynamic, and specifically in the wake of moving to Haiti.

**Les Fétiches**

In 1938, she delivered Les Fétiches, an African-propelled oil painting that is claimed by the Smithsonian American Art Museum. Jones painted Les Fétiches in a Post-Cubist and Post-Primitive style. It represents five traditional African masks that seem to convey a strange profound aspect brought by ritual dances. She had the option to view and concentrate on various African items and covers at the Musée de l'Homme and displays through her cooperation in Paris. Since Jones grew up in Boston, where she experienced racial discrimination. Jones cherished her time in Paris as she felt completely acknowledged in the public arena instead of the United States at this time and this is why she painted Les Fétiches, to explore her African roots.

**Self-portrait**

In 1940, Jones created one of the few self-portraits she ever made. The painting not only positions 35-year-old Lois as a serious American artist but also as an African American artist obligated to present her African culture. Jones went to Africa for the first time in 1970, at age sixty-five, but the forms, rhythmic cadences, and vibrant color she associated with the ceremonies of Africa had infused her art since her student years. These influences are apparent in the Self Portrait, in which Jones links her identity with traditional African sculpture. You can also find this self-portrait in the Smithsonian Museum in D.C.

**Moon Masque**

Lois Mailou Jones' Moon Masque, 1971, is a dazzling piece of dynamic tone and striking piece of art. Cover-like profiles and plans are drawn from Ethiopian materials. At the focal point of Moon Masque is a papier-mâché copy of a heart molded white Kwele veil from Zaire (modern day Congo). However, adapted, the countenances look like genuine people whose profiles are covered with tears tumbling from the eyes of the cover. It is enticing to say that the veil addresses the legacy and origin of some African groups.

**Ubi Girl from Tai Region**

In 1972, Jones created one of her masterpieces called "Ubi Girl from Tai Region". It portrays a young lady from the Tai Region of Liberia whose face is painted for the commencement of womanhood. Jones proposes the unification of Africa in this work by showing two Congolese covers and the profile of an extraordinary fixation from the Ivory Coast close by her Liberian model. This work represents Jones' recovery of her African legacy following a tour she took to Africa for the first time in 1970.

**Africa**

  This searching spirit is exhibited in Africa, a 1935 painting depicting three women with chiseled features, gash-like closed eyes, and elaborate gold jewelry, who are surrounded by lush foliage. The trio’s elongated features and flat expressions evoke those often found on African masks, a recurrent aesthetic component in Jones’s artwork. This is also a subject she would also explore in celebrated works like Les Fétiches, the artwork we mentioned before. In this painting, Jones pays tribute to the foundational role of Africa in the cultural imagination of African American artists at the time, especially for women artists of the diaspora, whose identities were multiple.

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