

PREVIEWING UPCOMING EXHIBITIONS, EVENTS, SALES AND AUCTIONS OF HISTORIC FINE ART

ISSUE 42

# AMERICAN FINE ART

M A G A Z I N E

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# GALLERY SHOWS

Previews of upcoming shows of historic American art at galleries across the country.



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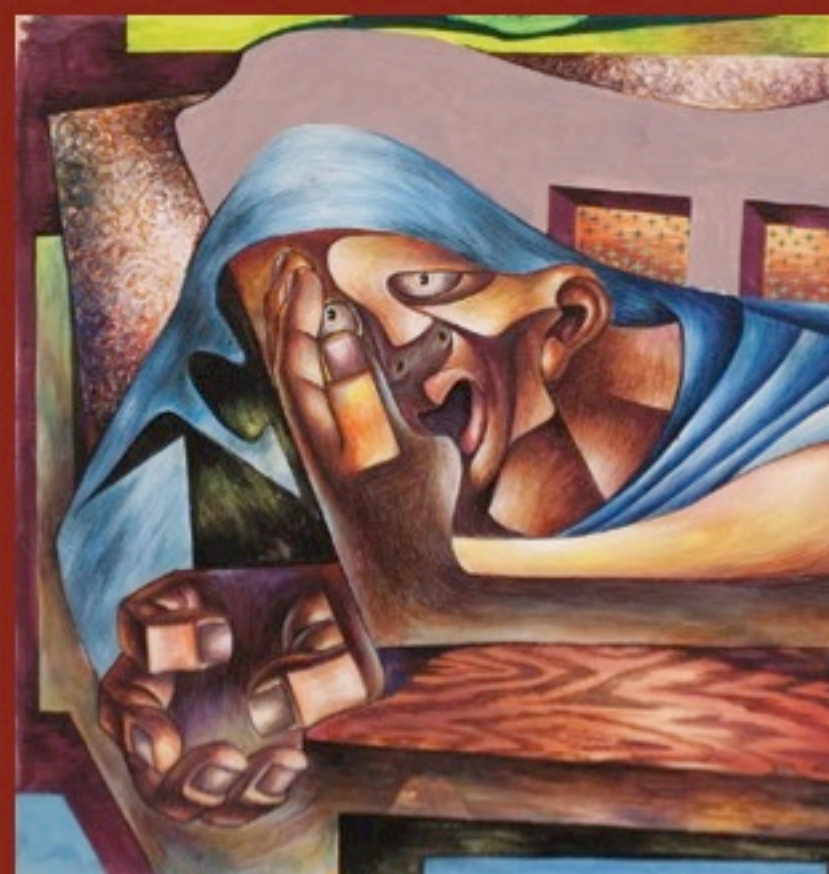
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Previews of upcoming shows of historic American art at galleries across the country.

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**At Michael Rosenfeld Gallery:**

**Charles White (1918-1979),** *Untitled*, ca.1945. Tempera on Abacco illustration board, 18¾ x 17½ in.



# Truth and Beauty

*Michael Rosenfeld Gallery features works by Charles White alongside those of his artistic friends*

**Through November 10**  
**Michael Rosenfeld Gallery**  
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New York, NY 10011  
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www.michaelrosenfeldart.com

Charles White (1918-1979) was given his first set of oil paints by his mother when he was 7 years old. When they would travel into the city from Chicago's South Side, she would drop him off at the Chicago Public Library since, even then, he

was such a voracious reader. Often, he would take a break and walk across the street to the Art Institute of Chicago to look at the paintings.

At the library he had resolved to start with A and work his way through the alphabet, a task he didn't complete. Spared the fate of his grandmother and other relatives who were slaves in the south, he did, however, live in a divided city and was no stranger to racism. On his journeys through the stacks of the library when he was 14 years old he came across Alain Locke's *The New Negro* which instilled in him a sense of pride in his heritage. White wrote, "I had never

realized that Negro people had done so much in the world of culture, that they had contributed so much to the development of America, it became a kind of secret life, a new world of facts and ideas."

He continued, "For a while I kept this newfound knowledge to myself. It became a kind of secret life, a new world of facts and ideas in diametric opposition to what was being taught in the classrooms and textbooks as unquestionable truth. But then, the clash began to come out in the open.

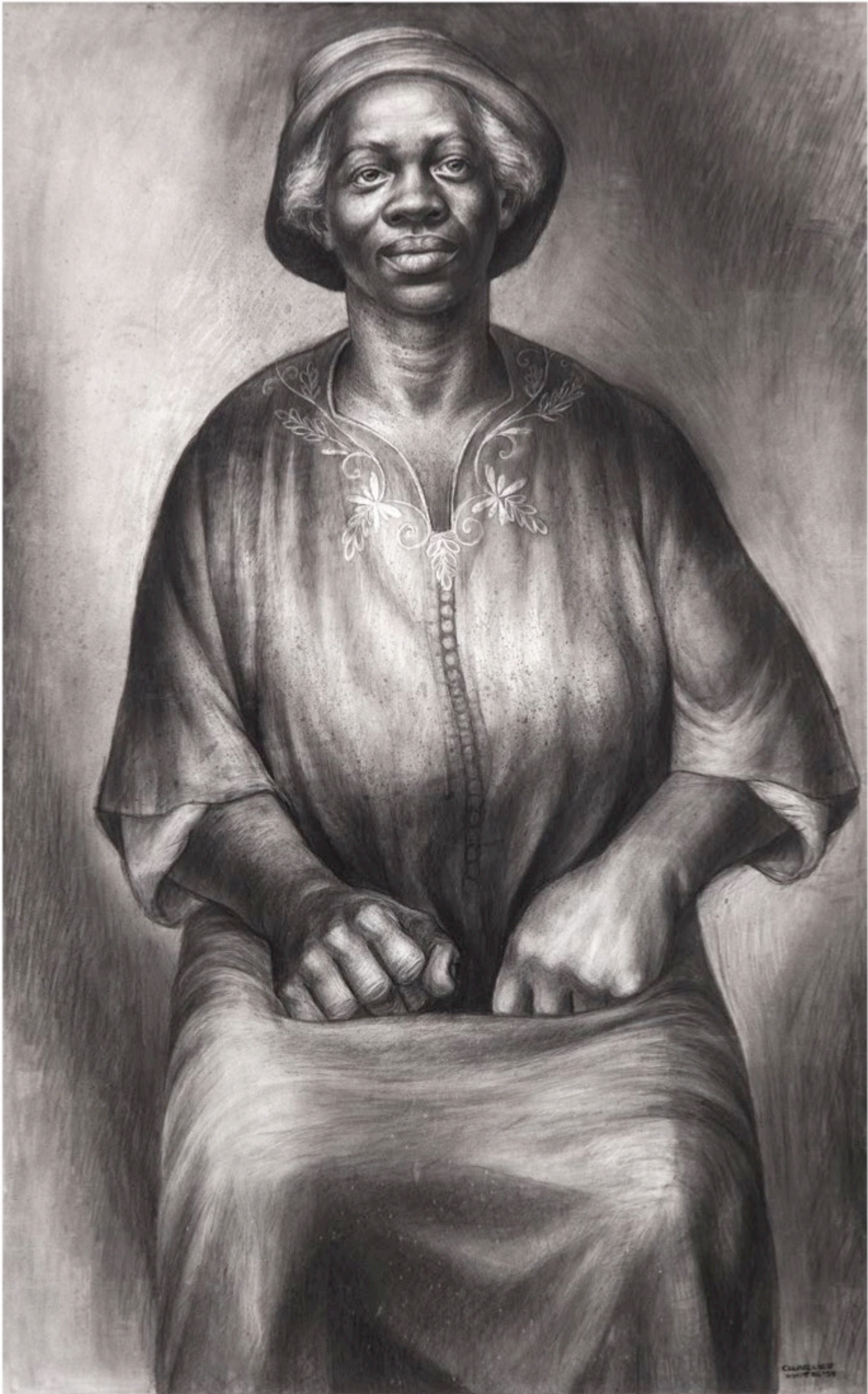
"I would ask my teachers why they never mentioned a Negro in history. I would bring up the name of Crispus Attucks, the first martyr of the American Revolution of 1776, or of Denmark Vesey, Nat Turner and Frederick Douglass... The histories from which we were taught, they would say, were written by competent people, and whatever they did not mention was simply not important enough to mention. When I spoke up about these ignored great figures, I would be told to sit down and shut up. In public speaking classes, whenever I had a chance to speak, it would be about these discoveries of mine. The other Negro students were often embarrassed by this. It had been deeply ingrained in them as in me in my first school years, that to be a Negro was something of which to be ashamed;



**Charles White (1918-1979), *Paul Robeson*, 1973.**  
Oil and graphite on illustration board,  
41½ x 41½ in., signed.

Opposite page: **Charles White (1918-1979), *I Been Rebuked & I Been Scorned*, 1954.** Wolff crayon and charcoal on Anjac illustration board, 43½ x 27¼ in., signed.









that the Negro people were an inferior people, illiterate, uncouth.”

White continued to speak up and to express himself in paintings, drawings and prints, becoming an eloquent voice for his generation. In 1972 he was elected to the National Academy of Design.

Michael Rosenfeld Gallery in New York is showing the exhibition *Truth & Beauty: Charles White and His Circle*, through November 10. The exhibition “features the work of Charles White along with a selection of works from his artistic circle of friendships that include John Biggers, Eldzier Cortor, Roy DeCarava, Philip Evergood, Robert Gwathmey, David Hammons, Jacob Lawrence, Norman Lewis, Betye Saar, Ben Shahn, and Hale Woodruff.”

The exhibition runs concurrently with the first museum retrospective of his work in 30 years, *Charles White: A Retrospective*, at the Museum of Modern Art through January 13. The retrospective, which began at the Art Institute of Chicago, will be at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art February 16 through September 19, 2019. Rosenfeld Gallery notes that “White’s work will also be included in the traveling group exhibition *Soul of a Nation: Art in the Age of Black Power*, organized by Tate Modern, London, on display at the Brooklyn Museum through February 3, 2019. Michael Rosenfeld Gallery is a proud lender to both of these exhibitions.”

White eschewed the trend toward abstract expressionism but explored the concept of cubism and the work of the Mexican muralists Diego Rivera and José Clemente Orozco. His paintings of the '30s and '40s, such as an *Untitled* work from 1945, reflect that influence. He later turned to rendering portraits in a more socially realistic way as in the striking drawing, *I Been Rebuked & I Been Scorned*. The drawing was inspired by the spiritual of the same name which was sung nine years later by Mahalia

**Charles White (1918-1979), *Juba*, 1962.** Wolff crayon and charcoal on illustration board, 53¼ x 23¼ in., signed.





Charles White (1918-1979), *Untitled*, 1945. Tempera and graphite on illustration board, 14<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 24<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in., signed.

Jackson when Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his "I Have a Dream" speech in Washington, D.C. White's sitter embodies the passive resistance advocated by Mahatma Gandhi

decades before and later espoused by Dr. King. Another highlight of the Rosenfeld exhibition is a 1973 portrait of Paul Robeson created for the bass baritone

and stage/film actor's 75<sup>th</sup> birthday event at Carnegie Hall. Both White and Robeson were called before the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) for their political activism but, for unknown reasons, White's appearance was cancelled. At his appearance before HUAC, chaired by Francis E. Walter, a Democrat from Pennsylvania, Robeson said, "My mother was born in your state, Mr. Walter, and my mother was a Quaker, and my ancestors in the time of Washington baked bread for George Washington's troops when they crossed the Delaware, and my own father was a slave. I stand here struggling for the rights of my people to be full citizens in this country. And they are not."

White wrote, "Paint is the only weapon I have with which to fight what I resent. If I could write, I would write about it. If I could talk, I would talk about it. Since I paint, I must paint about it." ■



Charles White (1918-1979), *Juba #2*, 1965. Wolff crayon and oil wash on illustration board, 25<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> x 35 in., signed.