

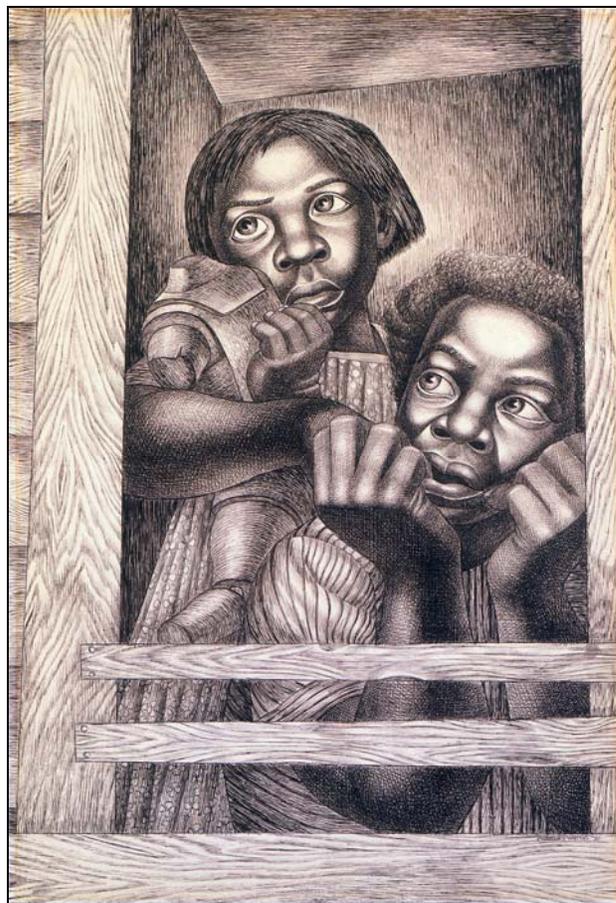
By MONA MOLARSKY
REVIEWS: New York

UP NOW: CHARLES WHITE
Michael Rosenfeld Gallery

The people in Charles White's drawings seem to be carved from ebony, walnut, mahogany, and oak. Even the children are old souls – trees with deep roots. White (1918-79) was an important African American painter, printmaker, and muralist. The drawings, among his finest works, are filled with unforgettable figures. This show, covering the period from 1942 to 1979, highlighted his superb draftsmanship. In *Juba* (1962), a woman stands, eyes closed, face turned skyward. Her powerfully drawn figure is caught between motion and stasis. *Awaken from the Unknowing* (1961) shows a young woman reading a newspaper, her sculpted face emerging from the shadows of her hair.

White's senses of humanity in these works and his palette of rich browns recall the etchings of German artist Käthe Kollwitz, although White has a modern rhythm and earthy perspective all his own.

A member of the socially engaged generation of artists who flourished under the WPA's Federal Art Project, White always believed art should be part of the political dialogue. *Wanted Poster Series #16* (1970), a patch-work quilt of imagery, is a meditation on Civil War-era posters for runaway slaves and suggests that America remained dangerous for black people.



Untitled (Two Children), 1950, ink on paper-board, 29 3/4" x 20", signed

Untitled (Two Children), 1950, zooms in on two youngsters staring from the window of a house not much bigger than a packing crate. Its bold approach evokes the spirit of Taller de Gráfica Popular, the printing collective in Mexico City where White and his first wife, artist Elizabeth Catlett, worked during the '40s.

Whatever the subject, White looks straight at his fellow humans and insists that we do as well. These ten drawings offered a tantalizing glimpse of his much larger body of work.

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