

Artist Profile – Lois Mailou Jones

b. 1905 Boston, MA; d. 1998 Washington, DC

Jones was born into a family whose ethnic heritage included Native American, Scotch, African, and Dutch. Her childhood comprised of her going off on her own and climbing on roofs to look at all the buildings and family vacations to Martha's Vineyard where she fell in love with nature. Jones attended Boston's High School of Practical Arts and after school walked to the Museum of Fine Arts to take vocational classes. After high school Jones attended again the School of the Museum of Fine Arts and graduated with honors in 1927. Jones also attended the Boston Normal Art School where she received her teaching certificate, and the Design Art School of Boston where she graduated in 1928.

Jones became a professor at Howard University and in 1937 obtained her first sabbatical that allowed her to travel to Paris. Once in Paris, Jones became friend with French painter Céline Tabary and painted over forty works that were then displayed in museums and galleries. When Jones returned to the U.S. galleries would not display her work because of the color of her skin, her work began reflecting her deep immersion in the diverse places she called home and the differences between them.

Jones' watercolors include dynamic compositions, an appreciation for nature and textiles, and interest in architecture. Influences on Jones' works were her personal experience with racism, sexism, and the prejudice and discrimination that were present in her career path as well as the fact that she grew up privileged. Jones used her work to explore nature and to represent an uplifting perspective of the black experience and at the same time painted to discuss race and African Americans calling for equality and freedom.

While Jones was in Paris her paintings had a specific style, they were impressionistic and used a palette knife to complete. Because of the palette knife, her paintings were full of texture and the subjects were mainly still lifes and outdoor cityscapes. Another factor of her Paris paintings were the vibrant colors along side the shadows and highlights as well as the overlaying patterns. After Paris, her style became more linear, geometric, and modern, this change coincides with her marriage to graphic artist Louis Vergniaud Pierre-Noël.

Although Jones kept the same meanings behind her paintings, she was constantly changing her techniques and styles and she continued to create. Jones did not want to be known as only a watercolorist or only a landscape painter so she played with figuration, impressionism, pattern abstraction, and collaged compositions. Her nature themed paintings are brightly colored and include looks of Navajo, Caribbean, and African styles.

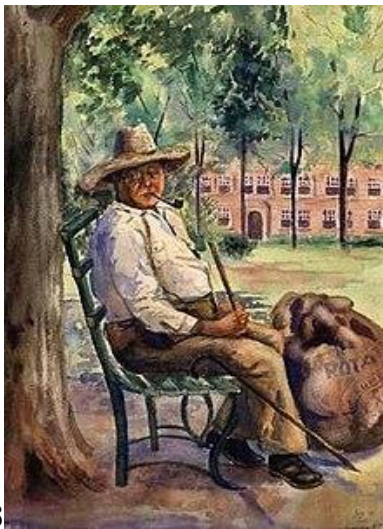
Jones cofounded the National Negro Opera Company, her works were collected by Bill and Hillary Clinton, and she received an extensive amount of awards and grants. Some awards include the John Hope Prize, the Candace Award, and the Outstanding Achievement Award in the Visual Arts. Some examples of Jones' work include *Grossesse (1)*, *Still Life Pineapple (2)*, *Brother Brown (3)*, and *Untitled (River Landscape) (4)*.



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