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ART

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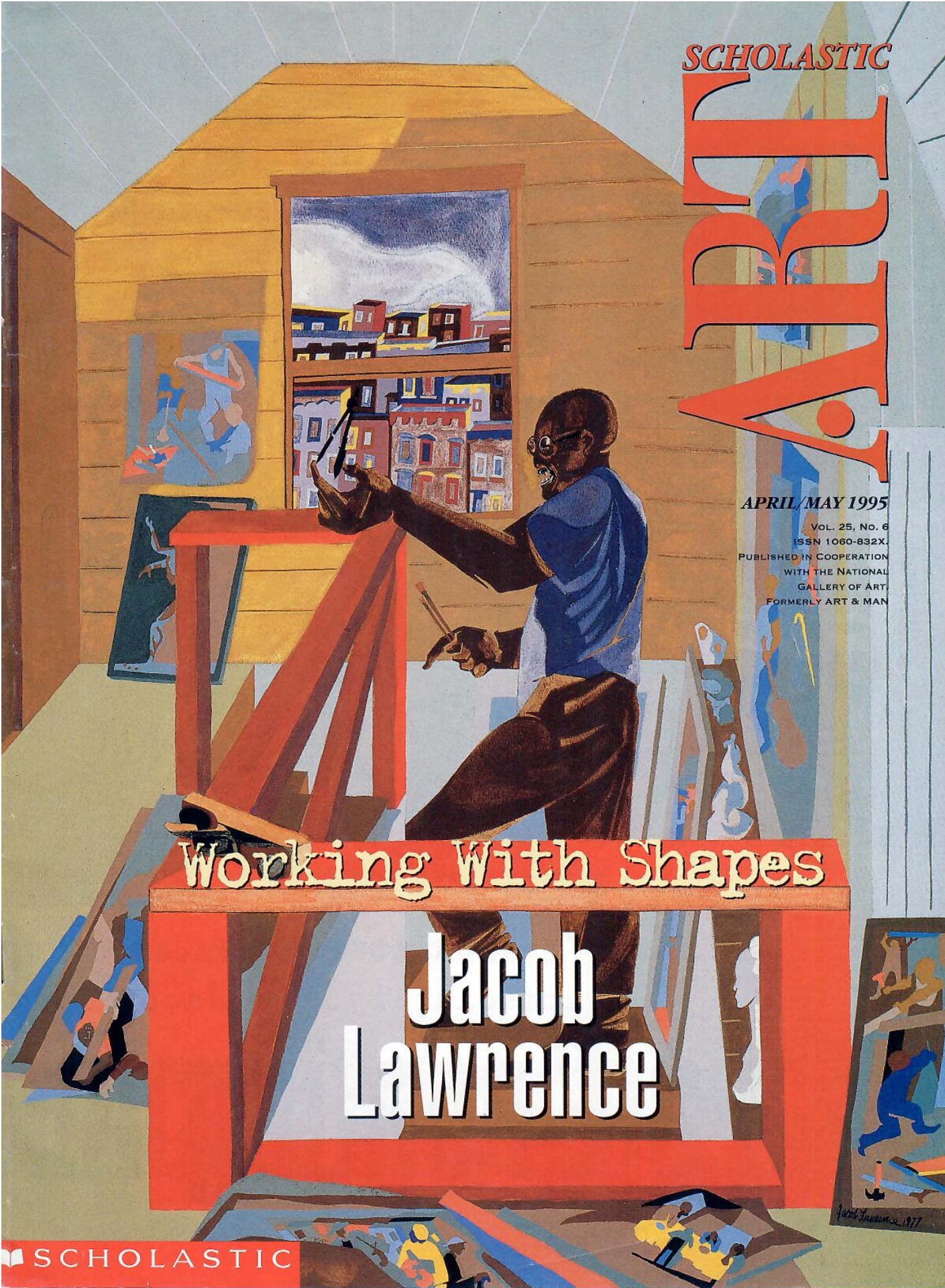
GALLERY OF ART

FORMERLY ART & MAN

Working With Shapes

Jacob
Lawrence

SCHOLASTIC





COVER: Jacob Lawrence, b. 1917. *The Studio*, 1977.
Gouache on paper. 30" x 22".
Seattle Art Museum. Photo: Paul Macapia.

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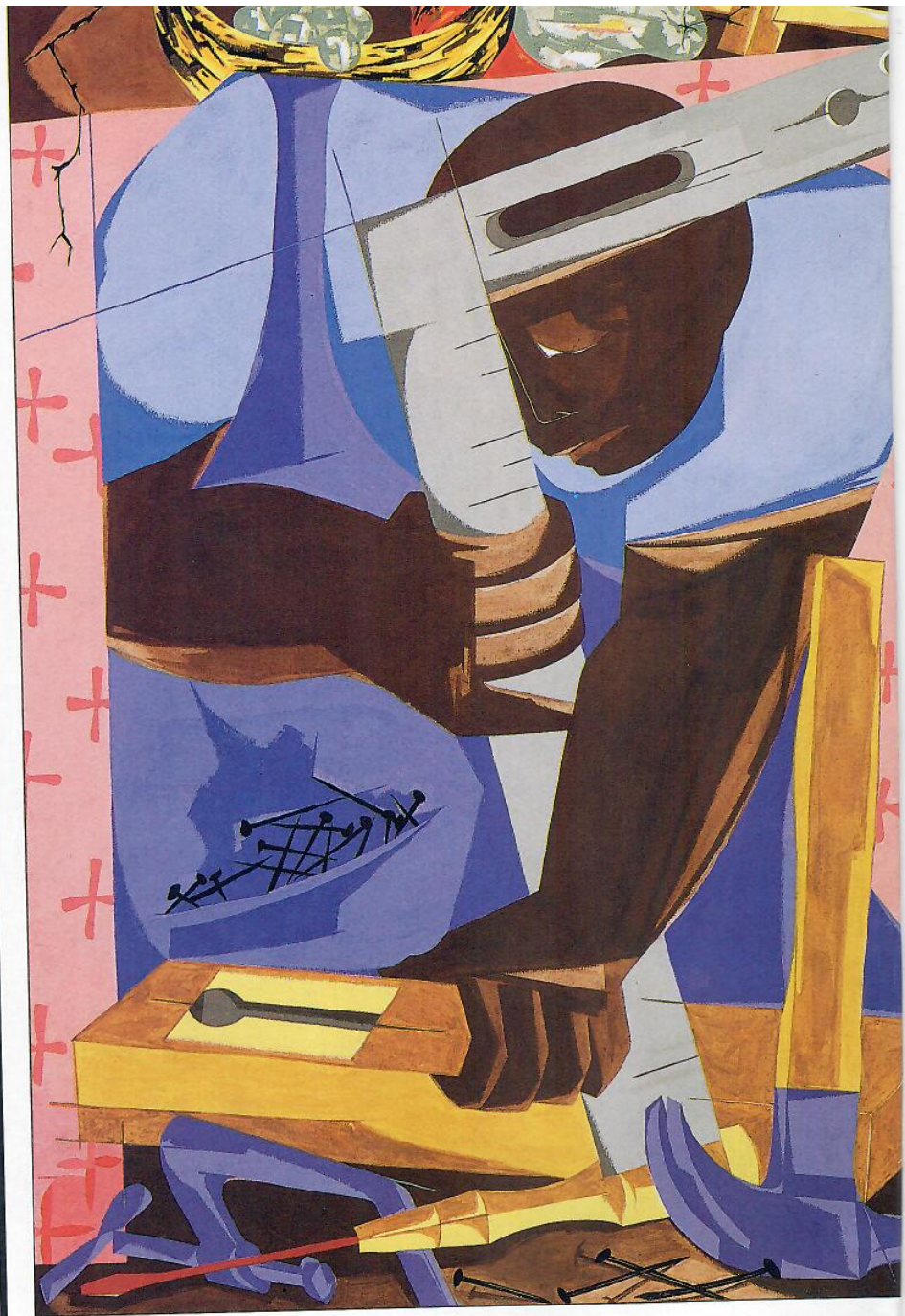
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"I want to communicate. I want to be heard immediately." — Jacob Lawrence

Creating Art

Jacob Lawrence

JACOB LAWRENCE'S ART CAREER BEGAN AT THE age of 13. His mother had moved the family from Philadelphia to Harlem, a section of New York City, and Jacob was having problems at school. Afraid he would get into trouble, his mother sent him to a neighborhood settlement house, which had an after-school arts and crafts program. Jacob sat down with some brightly colored crayons and began doing bold, angular designs. Sixty-three years later, Lawrence is not only still creating art, he is considered one of the most important social realist painters of the 20th century.

For more than half a century, contemporary American artist Jacob Lawrence has been painting important events in the history of African-Americans. He has developed a unique personal style that expresses his feelings about black Americans' struggle for equal treatment. Lawrence has said, "What the artist has to say is more important than the technique he uses to say it." And as you can see by the images here, he expresses his feelings in the most direct way possible.

Lawrence's art focuses on people. He uses the human figure to communicate universal feelings shared by everyone. The gestures, shapes, and positions of the figures he creates suggest emotions almost everybody can recognize. Look through this issue. By glancing at their **body language**, can you find figures that might symbolize **anger**, **defeat**, **exhaustion**, **sadness**, or **intense concentration**?

Over the years, Jacob Lawrence has been making paintings that focus on subjects like civil rights, racism, labor, and poverty in America. One of his favorite themes is that of



builders because they represent the satisfaction gained by working with other people for a common goal. When you look at his paintings, you can see how Lawrence uses **shapes** to communicate his message. The *Cabinetmaker* (left) is so involved with his work that the shape of his body **echoes** and **becomes part** of his tools. The figures in *The Builders #1* (above) **contrast** and **interlock** with each other and the structures they create. Even in his self-portrait (shown on the cover), Lawrence uses shapes to define himself. The artist's figure is partially **framed** by the bright-red stair railing in his studio. The crowded, rectangular buildings seen from his window are a reminder of the streets of Harlem, where Lawrence's art began.

"I like tools. They've become symbols of order and ambition to me." —Jacob Lawrence

The Builders #1, 1970. Gouache on paper, 22" x 30". Henry Art Gallery, University of Washington, Seattle. Gift of the artist.

ant the idea to strike the viewer
nce

American Images

"When the subject is strong, simplicity is the only way to treat it." —Jacob Lawrence

Far Left: *Cabinetmaker*, 1957. Casein on paper. 30 1/2" x 22 1/2". Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution. Gift of Joseph Hirshhorn 1966. Photo: Lee Stalworth.



Scenes of Protest



JACOB LAWRENCE WAS BORN IN 1917 IN ATLANTIC CITY, New Jersey. When his family settled in New York City in 1930, the country was going through the Great Depression. His parents had separated when he was 12 and his mother couldn't get a job, so Lawrence had to leave high school to work. He continued studying on his own and soon realized he was reading about black people who had played major roles in U.S. history, yet their names hadn't been in any of his schoolbooks.

In 1937, Lawrence began painting visual stories based on black history. Soon he was hired by a government program that put unemployed artists to work. In 1941, 60 of Lawrence's paintings titled *The Migration Series* were shown in a New York gallery. What emotions does the work above produce in you? The subject is clearly violent. Lawrence's sharp, flat, jagged angles, stylized

"Harriet Tubman's story is one of the great American sagas."
—Jacob Lawrence

Daybreak—A Time to Rest, 1967. 30" x 24".
© 1995 Board of Trustees. National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. Anonymous gift.

"I don't do 'protest' paintings. I just paint the way I feel about things." —Jacob Lawrence

shapes, slashing diagonals, tilted picture plane, and distorted, masklike faces make it almost unnecessary to read the title—*Race Riots*. By the time he was 30, Jacob Lawrence was the foremost black artist in the country.

After serving as a combat artist during the Second World War, Lawrence taught at various colleges while continuing to paint. A favorite subject was Harriet Tubman, a 19th-century black woman who helped slaves escape to the North during the Civil War. Two paintings on these pages are based on this theme. Both works focus on feet, and both are presented from an unusual point of view. In *Daybreak—A Time to Rest* (far left) the central figure has been foreshortened to show that escape was the only possible solution for runaway slaves. In the work below, the artist has selected a significant detail—feet chained together—to focus attention on the horrors of slavery.

Lawrence had his first major museum retrospective in 1960 and his paintings have been shown around the world. In 1971, the artist moved to Seattle, where he teaches and paints.

Jacob Lawrence developed his unique visual style in order to express his strong feelings about social injustice.

Migration of the Negro series, No. 50. 1940-41. 18" x 12". Museum of Modern Art, NY, NY. Gift of Mrs. David M. Levy. Photo © 1995 The Museum of Modern Art, NY, NY.

"Harriet Tubman dreamed of freedom.... She saw a line dividing the land of slavery from the land of freedom."
—Jacob Lawrence

Harriet Tubman series, 1939-40, No. 9. Casein, on hardboard, 12" x 18". Hampton University Museum, Virginia.



American Players



“A work of art must contain the crucial element of mystery if it is to endure.”
—Jacob Lawrence

Games, study for the Kingdome mural, 1978. Gouache. 24 1/2" x 52". Courtesy of the artist and Francine Seders Gallery, Seattle, WA.

WHILE JACOB LAWRENCE IS BEST KNOWN FOR his works of social criticism, he also paints the life he sees around him. His distinctive “Cubist” style, filled with **simplified, flat, geometric shapes** conveys his involvement while watching a performance, whether it is a baseball game, an athletic event, a race, or a show.

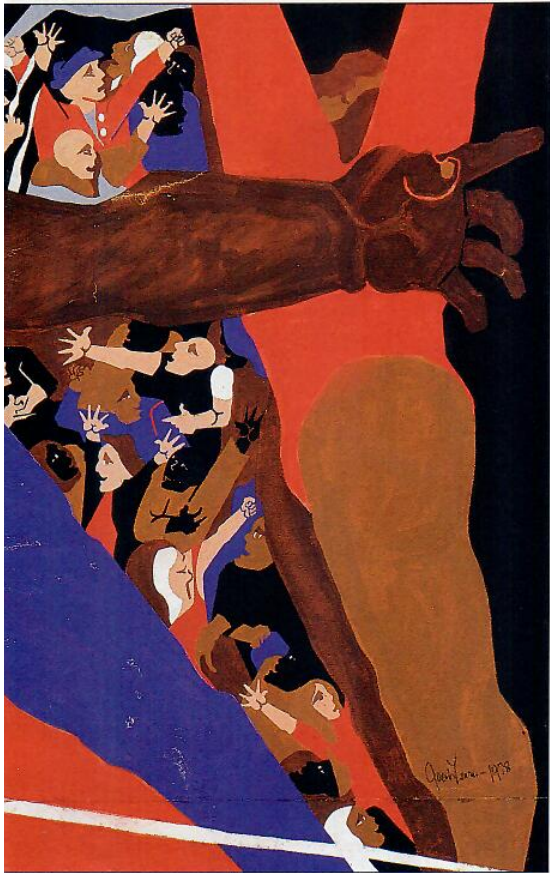
In *Strike* (below right), Lawrence has combined social commentary and an enjoyment of sports. This 1947 painting marks the appearance of Jackie Robinson, the first black player in major league baseball. The work is not a portrait of Robinson. It symbolizes the anxieties the first black players may have had by covering the face of one of the background

figures—the catcher—with a mask and glove.

Compare this early work with another sports painting done nearly 30 years later. *Games* (above) is a study for a large mural Lawrence did in 1979 for an athletic stadium. In both works **large, simplified** silent figures perform in front of noisy, active crowds made up of **small, varied shapes**. In *Strike*, the figures are somewhat realistic and there is a sense of depth. In *Games*, and the 1972 Olympic Games poster (pages 8-9), the artist has completely **flattened the shapes and distorted the perspective**. Everything—athletes and background—has been thrust forward, almost into the viewer’s face. We see the scenes from sev-

“I paint the things I have experienced....
I paint the American scene.”

—Jacob Lawrence



MASTERPIECE
OF THE
MONTH
Preview



“Because we were so poor, the people in Harlem used color as a means of brightening their lives.”—Jacob Lawrence

Theatre Series, No. 8: Vaudeville, 1951-52. Egg tempera. 30" x 20". Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. Gift of Joseph Hirshhorn, 1966. Photo: Lee Stalsworth.

eral angles—the side, above, and below. The shapes are reduced to flat planes of color, and there is little feeling of depth. Interlocking diagonals create a sense of energy and motion. The edges of the work are so filled with activity, and the composition is so tightly cropped, that the athletes seem to burst out of the frame.

When he was young, Lawrence and his family went to stage, or Vaudeville (VAUD-vill), shows at the Apollo Theatre in Harlem. In *Vaudeville* (above right), two stylized figures perform in a shallow, stage-like setting. The bright patterns contrast with the players' sad expressions, capturing the vitality as well as the tragic aspects of life in Harlem.



“I want to communicate. I want the idea to strike the viewer right away.”
—Jacob Lawrence

Strike, 1949. Tempera. 20" x 24". Howard University Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

MASTERPIECE OF THE MONTH #6

Munich Olympic Games

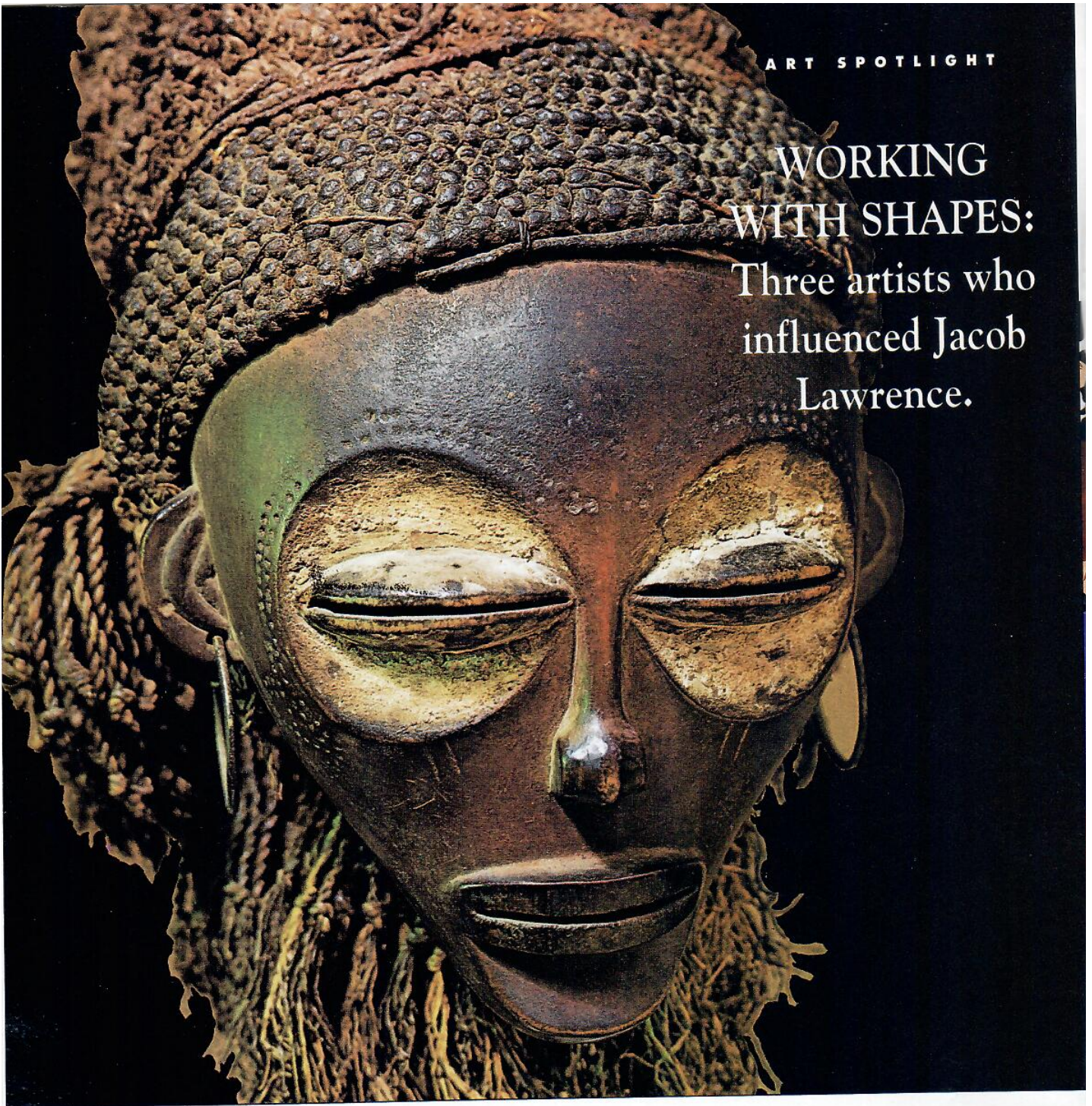


Jacob Lawrence, b. 1917. Munich Olympic Games poster, 1972. Seattle Art Museum. Purchased with funds from P.O.N.C.H.O. Photo: Paul Macapia.

SCHOLASTIC
ART

“I want to record my environment...
the activity, the movement, what is
around me.” —Jacob Lawrence

WORKING WITH SHAPES: Three artists who influenced Jacob Lawrence.



African Images

Both Picasso and Jacob Lawrence were influenced by African art.

Girl's Mask. Painted Wood. Bajokwe, 19th century. Private Collection, Brussels.

When critics asked Jacob Lawrence why his paintings looked like those done by Cubist painters, he said, "I wasn't thinking in terms of Cubism...I worked cubistically without consciously thinking about it."

Compare the African mask (above) with the *Three Musicians* and with the heads in

Lawrence's paintings. One of the reasons both Picasso's and Lawrence's works seem similar is that African art influenced both. Their stylized, masklike faces reflect the simplified, geometric shapes found in wooden masks like this one, carved by a 19th-century African artist.

Unlike most Western art,

African masks were not made for decoration; they were created for ceremonial purposes. Certain features were **exaggerated** or **distorted** to express the mask's function. For example, the large, closed eyes in this mask may mean it was created for some secret ceremony not meant to be seen by many people.

Painting With Squares

Compare the *Three Musicians* (right) by Spanish artist Pablo Picasso with works in this issue by Jacob Lawrence. As you can see, both artists have created mysterious, masklike faces and simplified, squarish figures that are squeezed into tight spaces.

At the beginning of the 20th century, Picasso developed a painting style that influenced later artists. He wanted to represent actual objects on a flat canvas—to show them from many points of view. He had been searching for a way to do this when he visited an exhibition of African art. When Picasso saw the way African artists captured the essence of an object, he decided to incorporate their ideas into his work. He **simplified** his figures, emphasizing their **geometric shapes**. He broke each



The painting on the left by Pablo Picasso, is a very famous example of Cubism.

Pablo Picasso (1881-1973). *Three Musicians*, 1921. Oil. 67" x 7' 3/4". The Museum of Modern Art, N.Y. Mrs. Simon Guggenheim Fund. Photo © 1995 The Museum of Modern Art, NY, NY. A.R.S.

object into **flat, angular, planes**, setting them in **shallow, stage-like spaces**. These **flat forms** and **rectangular shapes** are typical of the Cubist style.

More Scenes of Protest

Ben Shahn, the artist who created the painting on the right, was already well known for his works of social protest when Jacob Lawrence was just beginning his career. In the posters, murals, and photographs he made for government agencies during the Depression and World War II, Shahn **simplified** and **stylized** his images in order to communicate his message immediately and directly.

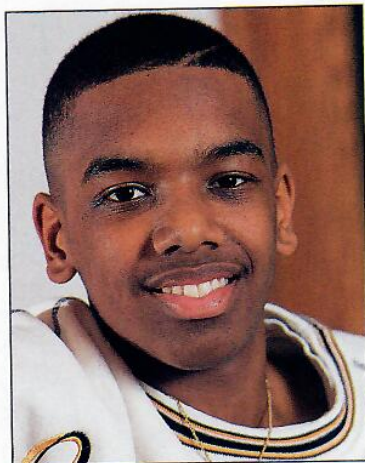
This work has to do with a famous trial that took place in the 1920s. Two Italian immigrants named Sacco and Vanzetti were tried, found guilty, and executed for plotting acts of terrorism against the U.S. government. Many people, including the artist, thought the trial was unfair. Look at the

faces of the lawyers and the judge, and at the poster on the court building in the background. How do you think Shahn felt about the legal system these people represented? What do you think the drooping lilies they hold might mean? The **elongated** and **distorted** faces and figures that symbolize justice form a black frame around the **focal point** of the picture, the pale faces of the two innocent men in open coffins.

Compare this painting by Ben Shahn to the other two images on these pages.

Ben Shahn (1898-1969). *The Passion of Sacco and Vanzetti*, 1931-1932. Tempera. 84 1/2" x 48". Whitney Museum of American Art, NY, NY. Gift of Edith and Milton Lowenthal in memory of Juliana Force.





Marcus Martin: DRAWING FIGURES

Marcus Martin, 15, did the expressive Scholastic Art Award-winning pastel drawing on the right in his art class at Ingomar Middle School in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Since he has a heavy schedule, Marcus spends most of his time on homework. He plays baseball, basketball, and plans to play football next year and, like Jacob Lawrence, he likes to combine sports and art. Marcus says, “I can express myself best through drawing sports figures. I’ve always been impressed by what professional athletes can do because of their hard work and dedication. I like to capture the perfection of their actions in my art.”

We select our Artist of the Month from among Scholastic Art and Writing Award winners. To enter, ask your teacher to write to the following program for entry deadlines and rules books:
Scholastic Art and Writing Awards
555 Broadway
New York, NY 10012

Scholastic Art magazine does not have a separate competition.

■ **How did you first become interested in art?**

I guess I started drawing after I saw sports figures on TV and in magazines. I liked the figures in motion and I wanted to reproduce their images for myself. As soon as I could take art in school I did. I found you could make what you wanted and nobody would criticize you.

■ **How did you come to do this award-winning portrait?**

It was a self-portrait assignment I did in my eighth grade art class. There were very few rules. The teacher basically told us to take a mirror and do a self-portrait using pastel. I just went about it like I was drawing another sports figure. I had my Cincinnati Reds* baseball cap in my locker, so I decided to wear it because I felt it added something personal to the picture. I think the logo on the cap also balanced out the

bright colors of the sweatshirt I was wearing.

■ **What do the figures and lettering on the front stand for?**

This sweatshirt was my favorite thing to wear in the eighth grade. It has a hood on the back and it’s made by a company called UMEN. I used the actual colors, and just drew the shapes I saw on that shirt. It took me about four weeks to draw the shirt so I left it at school to wear while I was working on the drawing.

■ **How did you go about doing this piece?**

First, I started drawing the face, since that was the most essential part of the picture. It was also the hardest in terms of detail and shading. I could take my sweatshirt off and look at the details while I was drawing them, but not my face. For that I had to use a mirror.

I started my drawing in pencil. I outlined the head and ears and added each of the features. Then I did the neck and drew the hat. I put the cap on backwards so I wouldn’t add too much shadow to the top of the face. I wanted the face to be the center of attention and if I made it too dark, it wouldn’t stand out against the bright-orange sweatshirt.

Once I was done sketching in the basic shapes, I started to add the smaller details. Then I began using the pastels; I made the face brown, the shirt red and yellow, and the hat white. When you stand close to the drawing you can see the other colors I used to shade and intensify the color. On the face, I used some white, some yellow, and some red. I used warm colors for the light areas and cool colors for the shadows—blue, black, dark brown, and dark green. There’s a little blue in



the hat and I put a little green in the face.

When you do a self-portrait, I think you always want to draw yourself looking better than you really do. I tried to make this one look as much like me as I could, but one of the class requirements was to keep it two-dimensional. So the figure is flat and simplified and doesn't look so realistic.

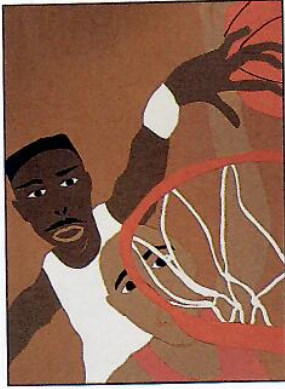
■ **When you were done with your portrait, were you satisfied?**

Yes, because it's hard for me to draw faces in general, so it was even harder to draw my own. The color and designs on the shirt get your attention right away. But then I think the picture draws you in. I feel it expresses something about me. It makes the viewer wonder just who this person is.

■ **If you had any advice to give other aspiring artists, what would it be?**

It probably would be just to have fun with art. If you start thinking of art as something you have to do to get a grade in class, you won't like it. But, even if it's a class requirement, if you can just let whatever happens, happen, then I think you can enjoy it.

“I think the picture draws you in. I feel it expresses something about me. It makes the viewer wonder just who this person is.”



CREATING WITH SHAPES

Work with shapes to create a dynamic sports poster

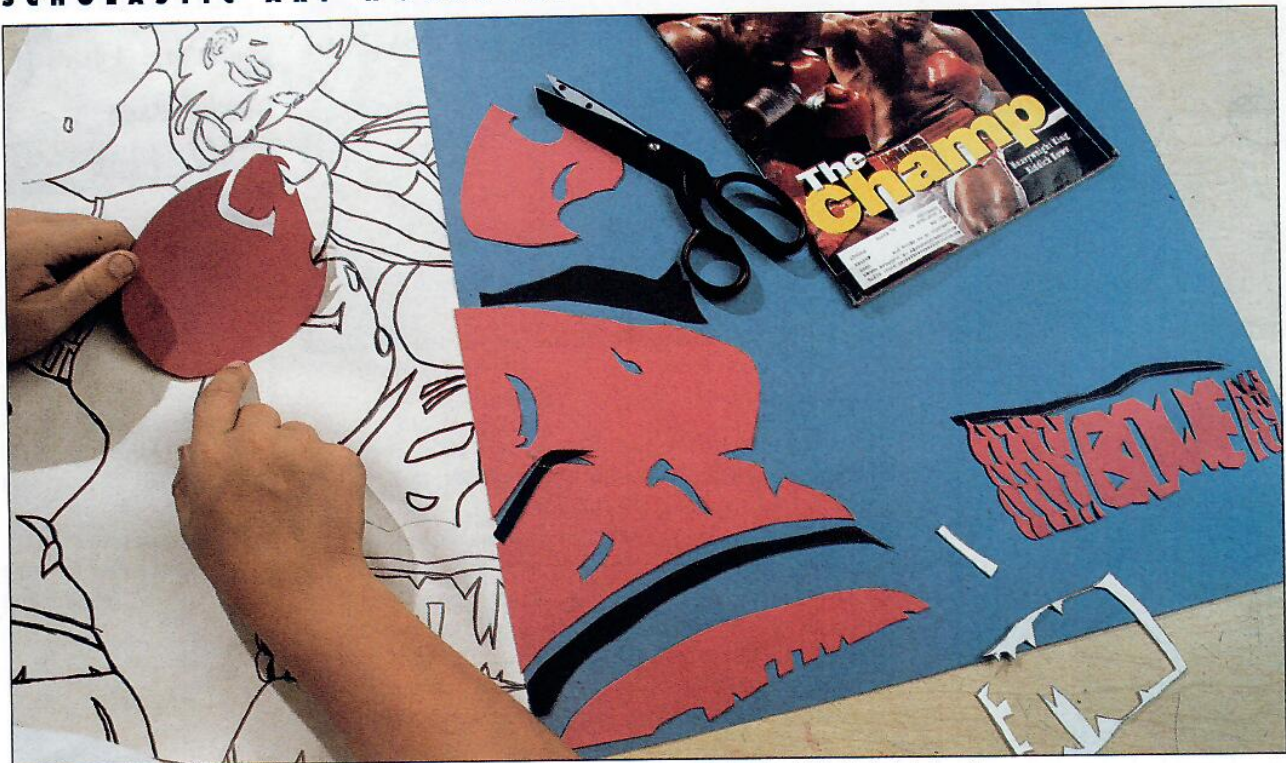
As you've seen, Jacob Lawrence's main subject is people. He paints the people he remembers from his own life. He also depicts heroic historical figures who have become larger than life. The artist uses strong, simplified, stylized, flattened shapes to express his feelings about these people and their lives.

Lawrence's interest in "body language" as a means of expression is an especially important component in his paintings and posters of sports figures (some of which are reproduced on pages 6-7 and 8-9). In the following workshop, you'll use shapes to express your own feelings when watching or taking part in some particular sport.

Materials

- Variety of sports imagery (sports magazines, newspaper photos, sports advertisements)
- 18" x 24" newsprint paper
- 18" x 24" colored construction paper
- X-Acto knives or scissors
- No. 2 school pencils
- Vinyl erasers
- Elmer's Glue-All

SCHOLASTIC ART WORKSHOP



Prepared by Ned J. Nesti Jr., Art Instructor, Morrison (IL) High School; assisted by Irene E. Feltes, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, IL.; Photos by Larry Gregory.

Starting Out

1. Collect a variety of sports images from magazines, newspapers, and advertisements. Figures should be **exaggerated** or **foreshortened**. Pick a specific sport—basketball, baseball,

football, soccer, track, tennis, etc., and select one single image that you feel sums up the sport. You may choose to use only a portion of this image. However, the **body language** of the figure(s) should be representative of the sport you've chosen.

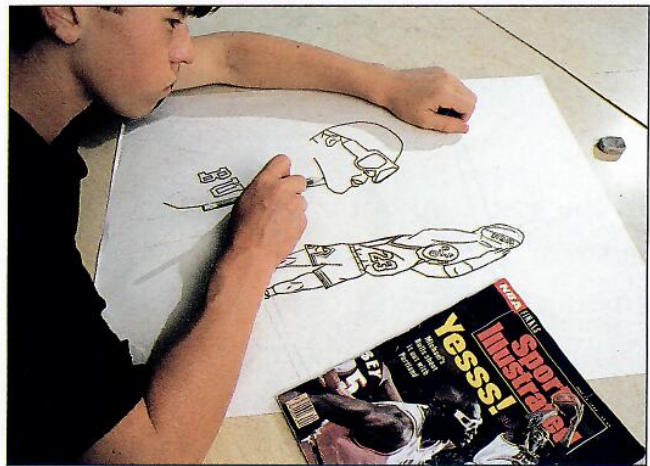
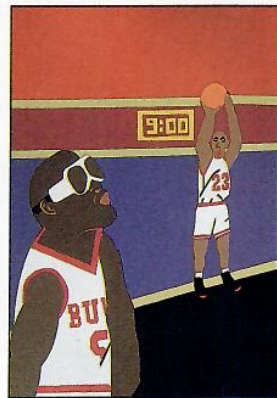
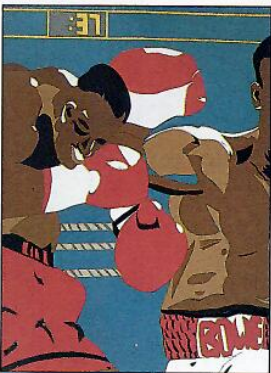
Step 2

Using the photo as a starting point, begin developing a drawing that stresses basic shapes or silhouettes. You can **rearrange**, change the **scale**, or **crop** the figures. **Simplify** as much as

possible, reducing figures to **large, geometric shapes**. Stress movement and eliminate all unnecessary details. (You might consider including details such as *words*, *numbers*, or *logos* since they play an important part in sports imagery.)

Step 3

When you have planned a balanced composition that you feel represents your sport, select a color scheme. Limit your colors to three or four, remembering that **warm, bright colors** appear to advance, and **cool, dark colors** appear to recede. Trace your basic shapes on sheets of colored construction paper and cut them out. Using one or two sheets of construction paper for the background, carefully glue down your shapes using *tiny dots* of glue.



Some Solutions

Can you find the major **focal point** in each of the works shown here? Can you tell what is going on by reading the figures' **body language**? Which artists have emphasized the drama of their sport by presenting it from an **unusual point of view**? Which artists have **distorted the perspective**? Which have **foreshortened their figures** to stress the action involved in playing the sport? Can you find examples of strong **diagonals**

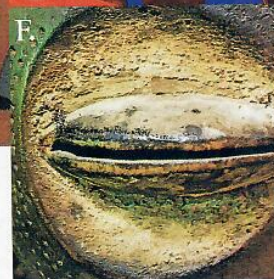
used to convey sensations of activity and motion? In which compositions does the artist capture movement by showing a figure in a corner (a **positive shape**) balanced by a large "empty" area of **negative space**? In any of these works, have the figures been so tightly **cropped** they look as though they are bursting out of the frame? Can you pick out the compositions that are **symmetrical** (the same on both sides) and **asymmetrical** (different on each side, but visually balanced)?

Do any of the shapes shown here look familiar?

FIND THE SHAPE

In this last issue of the school year, we're trying something different. Below you see a number of details, all of them from paintings or objects that have appeared in this issue. Can you find the work these details have been taken from and write down the page number?

- A. Page _____
- B. Page _____
- C. Page _____
- D. Page _____
- E. Page _____
- F. Page _____



Can you identify the type of shape in each detail and write down the appropriate letter?

- ___ Angular shapes
- ___ Organic shapes
- ___ Overlapping shapes
- ___ Repeat patterns
- ___ Profile
- ___ Shapes within shapes

Extra credit — if you can name the artist who created each of these works.

- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____
- D. _____
- E. _____
- F. _____

Answers: A. page 11; B. page 7; C. page 11; D. page 13; E. pages 6-7; F. page 10. Angular shapes C; Organic shapes D (or E or F); Overlapping shapes E (or B); Repeat patterns B; Profile A; Shapes within shapes F (or B); A. Shahn; B. Lawrence; C. Picasso; D. Martin; E. Lawrence; F. African artist.