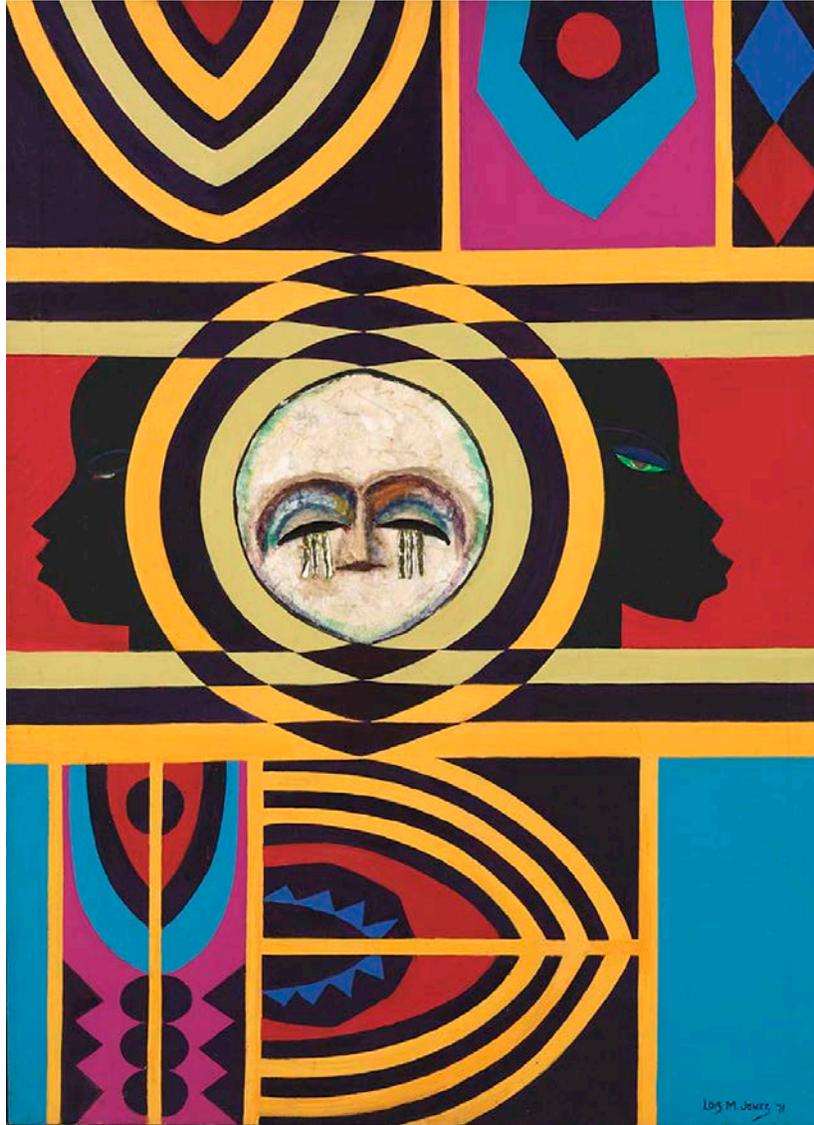
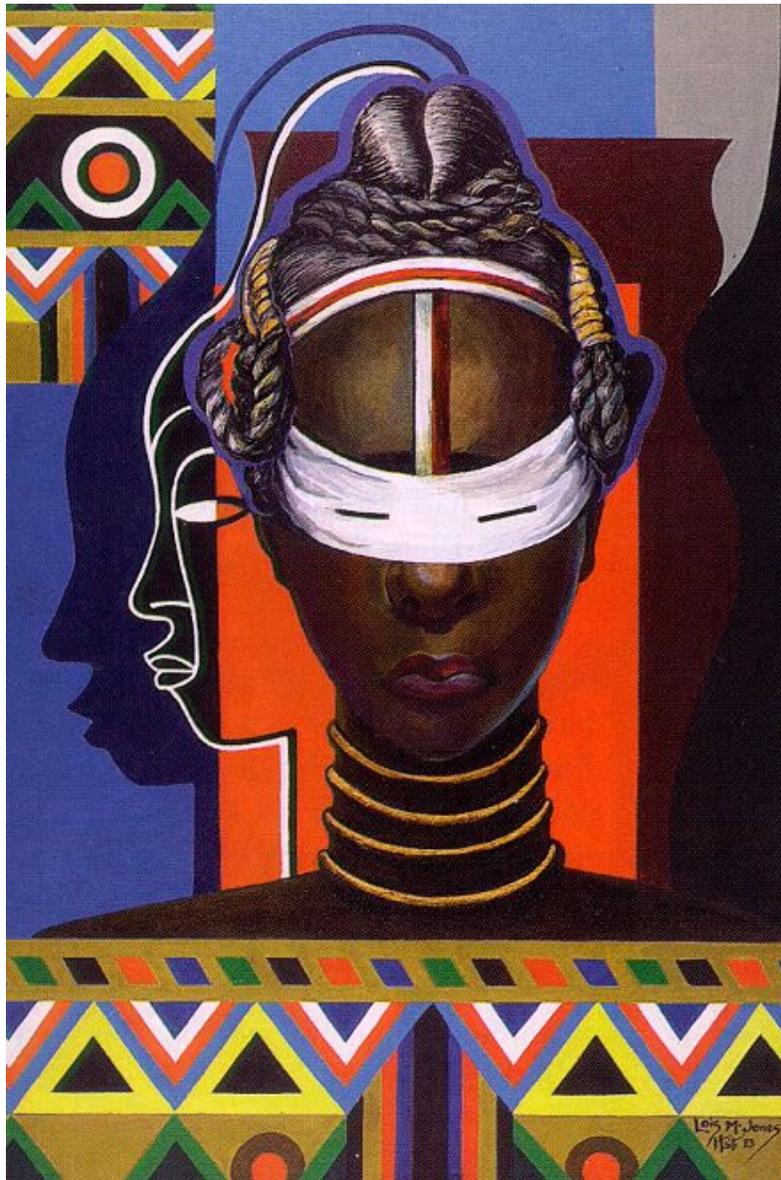


# Lois Mailou Jones: Harlem Renaissance Painter



Moon Masque (1971). Oil and collage on canvas: 41 x 30 1/8 in. (104.1 x 76.4 cm), Smithsonian American Art Museum (Washington, D.C.).



Initiation, Liberia (1983). Acrylic on canvas: 35 1/4 x 23 1/4 in. (89.6 x 59.1 cm), Smithsonian American Art Museum (Washington, D.C.).

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Suriname (1982). Acrylic on canvas: 36 x 24 in. (91.4 x 61.0 cm), Smithsonian American Art Museum (Washington, D.C.).

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*Lois Mailou Jones* (artist-painter, art instructor, professor, lecturer, professor emeritus) was an active participant in the development of the African-American influence in the arts in the U.S. She was a trailblazer, a respected college professor, an artist ambassador, and an international expert on culture who documented everything she saw and did as a painter in the Harlem Renaissance, as an illustrator for Carter Woodson, a colleague of Alain Locke and Langston Hughes, an educator and mentor, and a champion of Black artists in Africa and the Caribbean.

Born in Boston in 1905, Jones showed an early interest in art. She created drawings and storybooks as a young girl with art materials provided by her parents. She attended the High School of Practical Arts in Boston, winning scholarships for special classes at the Boston Museum School of Fine Arts, which she attended after school and on Sundays. After graduation, she enrolled in the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. She finished with honors and continued her education, receiving a master's degree in textile design.

In 1928 Jones formed and chaired the art department at the Palmer Memorial Institute in North Carolina, and two years later was recruited to teach at Howard University in Washington, D.C. Jones taught design and watercolor painting at Howard University for forty-seven years.

Along with being an award-winning artist, she became known as a tireless advocate for international artists, especially for people of African heritage who would not have been known outside of their own countries without her help. Her first four-month visit to eleven African countries (Ethiopia, Sudan, Kenya, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria, Benin, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Sierra Leone and le Sénégal) resulted in new cultural understandings for Americans and people in Africa, and she continued making those personal and political connections for the rest of her life. Her archive of over 1000 slides and other information are an important source of African and Caribbean art history. She was fond of saying, "At 90, I arrived!" She was invited to the White House eight times (she was honored by President Jimmy Carter for outstanding achievements in the arts in 1980); she received an honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from Suffolk University in Boston, Massachusetts, and honorary degrees from Colorado State Christian University, and the Massachusetts College of Art; she visited and spoke at 15 foreign embassies, many dozens of college campuses and international events. She was one of the longest living artists of the Harlem Renaissance, but is only recently being recognized and studied as a trailblazer in the Civil Rights movement. She knew many heads of state personally, painted their official portraits, and received their awards and citations. Today her work is in public buildings, museums and private homes all over the world.

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