African American Art and Artists

Grades: 4-12 | 45 minutes

This tour takes students chronologically through the collection as they discuss the history of African American people in the South. All groups will begin with a discussion of the Triangular Trade. There are 6 stops in this tour with 7-8 minutes at each.

Tour Objectives

o Discuss the history of African Americans in the American South.
o Determine how artists depict historical events in their artwork.
o Learn how artists infuse personal memories, values, or family histories in their paintings.
o Examine how the time period a person lived in & the events current to that time affects his/her life.
o Study a variety of paintings created during different time periods using varying techniques.

Props

Triangular Trade Diagram
Old photographs (cabinet cards)
Cotton Drag Sack
Ben Shahn Photograph
Cotton Examples

Rotations:

1	2	3
Foyer: David Drake	Southern Stories: *The Price of Blood*	The Southern Landscape: *Georgia Landscape*
Nineteenth-Century Portraits: *Portrait of an African American Woman*	Contemporary Art in the South: *Preacher* and *Andrews Family Tree*	Southern Stories: *The Price of Blood*
Southern Stories: *The Price of Blood*	The Southern Landscape: *Georgia Landscape*	Contemporary Art in the South: *Preacher* and *Andrews Family Tree*
The Southern Landscape: *Georgia Landscape*	Nineteenth-Century Portraits: *Portrait of an African American Woman*	Foyer: David Drake
Contemporary Art in the South: *Preacher* and *Andrews Family Tree*	Foyer: David Drake	Finish Early

Procedures

As timing is critical, **please refrain from stopping at or discussing works that are not included on the tour plan.** If you are asked by the teacher or students to do so, invite them to return to the galleries after the tour

or activity themselves. When the teachers sign up for this tour, they are informed that their students will not see the entire museum.

Introduction [This can be done at any of the three starting points.]

The Morris Museum of Art's permanent collection holds many stories. The South's rich history can be found in the multitude of artworks that relate the memories and opinions of the artists using a variety of subject matter and styles. Included within these narratives is an extensive tale of the Southern African American experience. Some images are subtle reminders of where African Americans have been, or joyous representations and celebrations of cultural heritage, while others are depictions of the atrocities suffered throughout the region.

Interpretive Questions

1. Define the Triangular Trade using the diagram. How did this process have an effect on the American South and the lives of the people who lived there? [review historical background pg. 11]
2. What is slavery and forced labor? [Slavery is the practice of forced labor and restricted liberty. It is also a regime where one class of people - the slave owners - could force another - the slaves - to work and limit their liberty. Forced labor, is any work, in which people are employed against their will with the threat of destitution, detention, violence including death, or other forms of extreme hardship to either themselves or members of their families.]

Foyer

Stoneware storage jar, 1857

David Drake

Prop: Triangular Trade Diagram

Key Facts
- Born into slavery around 1800 on a South Carolina plantation owned by the Drake family, Dave, who lived and worked as an enslaved potter in Edgefield, South Carolina

- Some scholars believe that he produced 40,000 pots in his lifetime. He is particularly acclaimed for his production of alkaline-glazed stoneware, ranging from jugs, crocks, and pitchers to large storage jars, some of which held up to forty gallons—a size that only the strongest potters could produce.

- How he learned to read and write is a mystery, though some scholars speculate that he was taught by the Reverend John Landrum who may have taught him how to read the Bible.
- His work stands out because he often signed it. He also inscribed forty or more of his pieces with poems, brief rhyming couplets that often reference the Bible. At a time when the vast majority of enslaved persons were illiterate, he was not. (South Carolina's "Negro Act" of 1740, prohibited teaching the enslaved to read and write. It was a crime punishable by a fine of 100 pounds and six months in prison.) He is generally recognized as the first enslaved potter to sign and inscribe his own work.
- This piece does not have a poem. It is inscribed "Lm may 27 1857 Dave." LM stands for Lewis Miles David Drake's second owner and the owner of the pottery factory.

Interpretive Questions

1. What did it mean to be an enslaved person?
2. What does it mean to have freedom?
3. What is identity? What are some ways in which we are similar and different?
4. How does being free influence shape one's identity? How does being enslaved shape one's identity?
5. How would you describe this jar? What skills do you think it takes to make one of these jars? What do you think his jars were used for?
6. Why do you think David Drake wrote his name and poetry on jars he made?
7. Why do you think David Drake wrote his name and poetry when he was not allowed to?
8. What does David Drake's role as an enslaved potter tell us about his own identity?
9. What does it mean to write your name on something?
10. How does it feel to write about yourself?
11. How would it feel if you were not able to express yourself?
12. Do you choose what makes up your identity, or do others play a part in making you unique?

Details

Born into slavery (around 1800) on a South Carolina plantation owned by the Drake family, Dave, who lived and worked in Edgefield, South Carolina, most of his life was a master potter with a poetic streak.

The first legal record of him, dated June 13, 1818, describes "a boy about 17 years old country born." ("Country born" identifies a slave who was born in the United States.) His first owner, Harvey Drake, owned a large pottery business in partnership with Abner Landrum in Edgefield, South Carolina.

Edgefield was home to a thriving pottery industry. Before the Civil War, 76 enslaved persons were known to work in one of Edgefield's 12 pottery factories. There, Dave, one of the most prolific and talented American potters of the 19th century, mastered his craft and produced work that is still revered today. He defied expectations to make his mark on history.

Some scholars believe that he produced approximately 40,000 pots in his lifetime. He is particularly acclaimed for his production of alkaline-glazed stoneware, ranging from jugs, crocks, and pitchers to large storage jars, some of which held up to forty gallons—a size that only the strongest potters could produce.

His fame does not result just from his extraordinary skill. His work stands out because he often signed it. He also inscribed forty or more of his pieces with poems, brief rhyming couplets that often reference the Bible. At

a time when the vast majority of enslaved persons were illiterate, he was not. (South Carolina's "Negro Act" of 1740, prohibited teaching the enslaved to read and write. It was a crime punishable by a fine of 100 pounds and six months in prison.) He is generally recognized as the first enslaved potter to sign and inscribe his own work.

At a time when slaves were not even allowed a sense of their own identity—let alone the ownership of their own bodies or the fruit of their labors—David Drake made his work his own, and proudly indicated that with signature. How he learned to read and write is a mystery, though some scholars speculate that he was taught by the Reverend John Landrum who may have taught him how to read the Bible.

When he was bought by Lewis Miles in 1849, he entered the most productive phase of his creative life, and he produced the largest number of pieces that included poetry. Dave sometimes signed his pots with an "Lm" which stands for "Lewis Miles," indicating that it was made at the Miles factory. The Morris Museum's jar is signed "Lm."

With the end of the Civil War, he became a free man. It was then that he took the surname "Drake" from his first owner, Harvey Drake. He is recorded in the 1870 United States Census as "David Drake, Turner." Since the names "David Drake" and "Dave Drake" do not appear in the 1880 census, he is thought to have died sometime during the preceding decade in Texas where he had gone to pursue his craft, a free man.

David Drake's work is owned by numbers of museums, including the Greenville County Museum of Art, the McKissick Museum at the University of South Carolina, the National Museum of American History in Washington DC, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Museums of Fine Art in San Francisco, in addition to Augusta's Morris Museum of Art.

Nineteenth-Century Portraits
Portrait of an African American Woman, (undated)
James Hamilton Shegogue
Prop: Old Photographs

Key Facts

- (Previously titled *Portrait of an African American Woman* and dated between 1825 & 1833)
- Oil on panel, found in travelling case. Inscribed on slip of paper in the case:
- "Colored slave – whom my Grandfather James Hamilton Shegogue – the artist, raised and of whom they were all very fond – he painted this portrait."
- James Shegogue was a well-established portrait artist who traveled regularly for commissions in the 1800s. It is said what he would carry this miniature (which he painted) with him in his carrying case, whenever he traveled.
- Miniatures were usually intimate gifts given within the family, or by hopeful males in courtship, but some rulers, gave large numbers as diplomatic or political gifts. They were especially likely to be painted when a family member was going to be absent for significant periods, whether a husband or son going to war or emigrating, or a daughter getting married.

Interpretive Questions

1. [Ask before introducing the work.] Look around the gallery. Which painting is different from the others? What makes it different? How is it the same?
2. Slavery was not abolished until the 13th Amendment was enacted in 1865. This portrait was painted between 1825 and 1833. Why is the subject so unusual? Why do we not normally find many formal Southern portraits of African American people created during this time period? [note: we do not have any images of the enslaved David Drake]
3. This portrait was kept in a specially-made velvet traveling case. Why would someone want to carry a painting with them? How do you think the artist felt about the woman in the portrait? How can you tell?

Details

James Shegogue, of Northern Irish (Londonderry) descent, was born in Charleston, South Carolina, on February 22, 1806. Several works which he completed in Charleston suggest that he received professional training there. An oil miniature of one of the Shegogue family's household slaves is in the Robert P. Coggins Collection. The artist's self-portrait was also executed when Shegogue lived in Charleston.

Apart from several trips to Europe, Shegogue lived in New York City from 1833 to 1862. He exhibited at the American Academy in 1833 and at the National Academy of Design nearly every year from 1834 to 1861. He was elected an Associate of the National Academy in 1841, a full member in 1843, and at various times served on the Academy's Council and on the Arrangements Committee for the annual exhibition. From 1849 to 1852 Shegogue was Corresponding Secretary of the National Academy of Design.

He also exhibited at the American Art Union, and was a member of The Old Sketch Club, The Century and the Artists Sketch Club. In 1862 he moved to the banks of the Mount Hope River in Warrenville, Connecticut, where he lived until his death on April 7, 1877.

He was an excellent linguist and is reported to have enjoyed a good income throughout his artistic career. His works are in the collections of the city of New York, the New York Historical Society and the Brooklyn Museum.
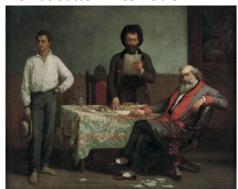
Shegogue painted portraits, landscapes, history and genre scenes.
In 1860 he painted "Zouave Encampment" - qui vive, which was exhibited at the National Academy in 1861 as the property of one Mr. Gilbert. There was also a watercolor study done for this painting. The term "Zouave" is derived from the Zouaoua tribe who served as light infantry troops in French colonial Algeria about 1830. After the Crimean War, Elmer E. Ellsworth and others popularized the Zouave idea in the United States, and at the outbreak of the Civil War a number of Union and Confederate regiments modeled themselves on the Zouaves. The prime attraction was the Zouaves' distinctive, bright-colored uniform, which instilled a sense of pride and military bearing in the wearers. It consisted of baggy trousers, gaiters, turban or fez and short, open jacket. Emulation of the Zouave idea extended to mastering the firing and re-loading of a musket in the prone position. The uniform, however, proved to be impractical under field conditions. When torn or faded it was not easily replaced, and it made a splendid target for the enemy. Most units abandoned it fairly quickly.
Source: askart.com via the Charleston Renaissance Gallery

Southern Stories

***The Price of Blood*,** 1868
Thomas Satterwhite Noble

Key Facts

- This work portrays a slave owner selling his mixed-race son., having just completed negotiations with a slave agent.
- The elegantly-dressed man stares coldly at the viewer, while the boy stands barefoot, hopelessly resolved to his fate. Even though men are united by blood, they are disconnected by race, underscoring the relationship of the slave and the master. Although tame by modern standards, this image was highly inflammatory and offensive to Northern nineteenth century audiences, as it highlighted the coldness and inhumanity of the institution of slavery.
- Title of the work is drawn from Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*; it is taken from Stowe's character Cassy who, when shown the money obtained from the sale of her children by their master, calls it "the price of their blood.'
- The pose of slave is reminiscent of Gainsborough's blue Boy, a gesture that would have been regarded as ironic by 19th century viewers.
- The painting on the rear wall, is of the sacrifice of Isaac by his father Abraham underscores the relationship of the slave and master; Pennington suggested a further connection between Abraham and miscegenation: Abraham abandoned Ishmael, a son born of a miscegenetic relationship with his servant Hagar.

- Thoms Noble served as a captain in the Confederate Army his belief in states-rites overriding his belief in abolitionism. Bu t began a series of painting depicting the inhumanity of slavery after serving in Civil War.

Interpretive Questions

1. Considering that Noble created a series of paintings depicting the inhumane treatment of enslaved individuals in the South, what do you think is going on in this scene? Who are the different people?
2. Which character do you look at first [i.e. who is the focal point]? How does the artist draw your eye to this individual? What are some other methods Noble used to move your eye around the scene?
3. Which character do you look at first [i.e. who is the focal point]? How does the artist draw your eye to this individual? What are some other methods Noble used to move your eye around the scene?
4. Describe the mood [taking the subject matter into account]. What techniques did the artist use to heighten the mood? If the painting had been rendered in a brighter, lighter palette, how would it have affected the mood?
5. Although Noble proclaimed himself to be a proponent of abolition, he chose to serve as a Confederate soldier during the Civil War. Why might he have done this?

Details

Although Noble served as an officer in the Confederate army during the Civil War, the artist was a self-professed proponent of abolition. However, his stringent belief in the South's right to determine their own laws overrode his desire to end slavery. Perhaps the atrocities of the war combined with his early childhood experiences with slaves working in his father's rope factory prompted Noble to begin a series of paintings depicting the inhumane treatment of African Americans at the hands of white owners. This work portrays a slave owner selling his mixed-race son. The elegantly-dressed man stares coldly at the viewer, while the boy stands barefoot, hopelessly resolved to his fate. Even though men are united by blood, they are disconnected by race, underscoring the relationship of the slave and the master. Although tame by modern standards, this image was highly inflammatory and offensive to Northern nineteenth century audiences, as it highlighted the coldness and inhumanity of the institution of slavery.

Landscape

Georgia Landscape, 1889-1890

Henry Ossawa Tanner

Key Facts

- America's first internationally renowned African-American artist: first black artist elected to the National Academy and was made a Knight of France's Legion of Honor, and in 1995, a painting by Tanner was purchased for The White House, making him the first African-American artist in the collection
- Briefly and unsuccessfully ran a photography studio in Atlanta, but by 1891 he turned back to painting
- In 1891 Tanner sailed for France, where he lived out the rest of his life.
- This painting is in the Tonalist style made while Tanner lived in Georgia, it is believed to have been painted in the Blue Ridge Mountains in the fall of 1889 while Tanner was living in Atlanta (although some scholars dispute this).
- Tonalism: an artistic style that emerged in the 1880s when American artists began to paint landscape forms with an overall tone of colored atmosphere or mist

Interpretive Questions

1. Study this work, comparing it to others nearby. Can you determine the artist's race by the subject matter? [The answer is no.] Why or why not? [The point is that Tanner was a preeminent artist, who was highly praised in Europe, but not readily accepted in the United States during the late 1800s due solely to his race rather than his painting ability.]

2. Why was Tanner's work not appreciated in the United States during the late 1800s? Why do you think he choose to go to Europe instead of staying in America to paint? What would have been the differences between the two continents that made one more accepting of his work than the other?
3. Describe the painting's mood. How has Tanner conveyed it?

Details

In 1879 Tanner enrolled at the prestigious Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia and studied under Thomas Eakins. Between 1882 and 1887, Tanner lived in Philadelphia with his parents, attempting to establish himself as a painter and illustrator. Although he gained confidence as an artist and began to sell his work, racism was a prevalent condition in Philadelphia. Although painting became a therapeutic source of release for him, lack of acceptance was painful. In his autobiography *The Story of an Artist's Life*, Tanner describes the burden of race:

> *"I was extremely timid and to be made to feel that I was not wanted, although in a place where I had every right to be, even months afterwards caused me sometimes weeks of pain. Every time any one of these disagreeable incidents came into my mind, my heart sank, and I was anew tortured by the thought of what I had endured, almost as much as the incident itself."*

Tanner moved to Atlanta, Georgia, in 1887. He briefly taught drawing at Clark Atlanta University and opened a small photography studio and gallery. While there Tanner met Bishop and Mrs. Hartzell, who became his primary patrons over the next several years. In the summer of 1888 Tanner sold his small gallery and moved to Highlands, North Carolina, where he hoped to study and earn a living by selling his photography. He returned to Atlanta in the fall of 1888. After discussing his ambitions to travel abroad with the Hartzells, they arranged the first solo exhibition of Tanner's works in Cincinnati in the fall of 1890. When no paintings were sold, the Hartzells bought the entire collection. This endowment allowed Tanner to sail for Rome in January 1891, eventually making his way to Paris. In France the artist developed a reputation as an academic and religious painter and won some of the country's most prestigious art awards. Paris was a welcome escape for Tanner; within French art circles the issue of race mattered very little. Tanner acclimated quickly to Parisian life. Except for occasional brief returns home, he would spend the rest of his life there.

It is believed that Tanner painted this work in the fall of 1889 while living in Atlanta. However, some scholars argue that this work was created while the artist still resided in the Philadelphia area. Whether or not the work is indeed Georgian, it does provide a link to the artist's brief Southern sojourn. (themorris.org)

The Académie Julian was part of the European Art School located in Paris, France, and founded in 1868. At this formal art education institution, students would start with the study of model casts then move on to drawing from a live model. The goal was to become familiar with the ideal proportions of the human figure, known as the ancient canon. Students were encouraged to enter the School of Fine Arts, to compete for the Prix de Rome (scholarship for art students), or to present their work at the Paris Salon. The Julian Academy is considered to have trained the avant-garde artists in Paris. What is unique about the academy is that women were accepted but were trained separately. The characteristics of the Académie Julian were the focus on the human figure and the ancient scenes.

Contemporary

This is the Andrews Family Tree (Andrews Family Tree), 1991
George Andrews

Prop: drag sack, Ben Shahn photograph, cotton

Key Facts

- George Andrews was born to an Irish plantation owner, and a mixed-race Native-American/Black woman. He spent most of his life as a sharecropper on his father's plantation.
- George was the father of ten children, including Benny and Raymond Andrews.
- In 1989 Andrews initiated a long-term project devoted to painting the history of the Andrews family; a series of portraits were painted of individual family members as well as a family tree.
- The most ambitious painting in this series was completed in October of 1991. *This Is The Andrews Family*, usually called *The Family Tree* by George, presents the children of George and Viola Andrews filling the branches of a sturdy tree. The picture came to him, he has stated, in a dream. Rather than a complex genealogical chart or the type of family tree diagram so well known to Southern families, George literally painted a tree and filled it with his children.
- In the foreground beneath the tree, George the hardworking farmer, wearing coveralls and his trademark cap, works a plow being pulled by his mule. "Get up Nellie Bell" he yells to a spotted mule pulling a red plow. Behind him, closer to the tree and its root system, is Viola Andrews, shown holding a baby wrapped in a blanket inscribed with "a nought baby" across its surface. Five children are shown on the heaviest branch of the tree, which is growing out toward the right edge of the picture plane. Harold, Raymond, Benny, and Harvey are seated, legs dangling, while Valeria stands, waving out to the viewer. On the upper left branch Johnny, Dolores, Veronica, and Shirley are more precariously placed.
- *The Family Tree* is filled with George's family and with an extensive range of his favorite subjects and visual motifs. In the lower right corner, the Andrews family cabin in Plainview, shown with its welcoming front porch and smoke filtering from the chimney. Below it is written, "The is the Andrews family 4 girls 6 boys Douno Benny and George Andrews October 4 1991 So look all you want." Creeping vines and flowering shrubs form the side borders. Floating over George's head are his bluebirds and a pair of hanging tree pigs. A somewhat abstract, cloudlike element at the top is meant to suggest leaves. Dots and waving lines fill all remaining vacant spaces, pulling all of these elements together into a unified composition.

About *The Andrews Family Tree*

In 1989, at the age of 78, George Andrews initiated an ambitious, long term project devoted to painting the history of the Andrews family in an extended series of portraits. The series began with a self-portrait which he completed for inclusion in "Folk: The Art of Benny and George Andrews," the touring museum exhibition of his art. His son Benny, who suggested that George consider painting the family, supplied stretched canvases for his father's use. Benny watched as his father expanded the concept from their initial conversation, including the painting of the Andrews family tree to accompany the series. Working from 1989 to 1991, he painted a significant number of portraits, but the series remains uncompleted. The paintings are being shown, together, for the first time in this exhibition.

The most ambitious painting in this series was completed in October of 1991. "This Is The Andrews Family," usually called "The Family Tree" by George, presents the children of George and Viola Andrews filling the branches of a sturdy tree. Though he had been painting family portraits and thinking about the family for almost

two years, George had not envisioned this type of group portrait. The picture came to him, he has stated, in a dream. Rather than a complex genealogical chart or the type of family tree diagram so well known to Southern families, George literally painted a tree and filled it with his children.

In the foreground beneath the tree, George the hardworking farmer, wearing coveralls and his trademark cap, works a plow being pulled by his mule. "Get up Nellie Bell" he yells to a spotted mule pulling a red plow. Behind him, closer to the tree and its root system, is Viola Andrews, shown holding a baby wrapped in a blanket inscribed with "a nought baby" across its surface. Five children are shown on the heaviest branch of the tree, which is growing out toward the right edge of the picture plane. Harold, Raymond, Benny, and Harvey are seated, legs dangling, while Valeria stands, waving out to the viewer. On the upper left branch Johnny, Dolores, Veronica, and Shirley are more precariously placed.

"The Family Tree" is filled with George's family and with an extensive range of his favorite subjects and visual motifs. In the lower right corner, the Andrews family cabin in Plainview, shown with its welcoming front porch and smoke filtering from the chimney, is included, almost a member of the family. Below it is written, "The is the Andrews family 4 girls 6 boys Douno Benny and George Andrews October 4 1991 So look all you want." Creeping vines and flowering shrubs form the side borders. Floating over George's head are his bluebirds and a pair of hanging tree pigs. A somewhat abstract, cloudlike element at the top is meant to suggest leaves. Dots and waving lines fill all remaining vacant spaces, pulling all of these elements together into a unified composition.

Details

George Andrews is the patriarch of a highly creative family of artists and writers, a family richly blessed with talent and deeply rooted in the soil of rural Georgia. By choice, the former sharecropper, father of ten, and lifelong artist never traveled outside Georgia's boundaries.

When his family moved from rural Plainview, Georgia to Atlanta in the 1950's, George relocated to Madison and became a sign painter for the City of Madison, where he spent the rest of his life. His passion for painting was evidenced in the brightly colored dot-filled rocks that soon began showing up around town. Adorning rocks, furniture, women's shoes and "anything that did not move," with bold, colorful dots, he became known as "The Dot Man".

- Born in Plainview, GA; son of James Orr, a Scottish-Irish plantation owner, and Jessie Rose Lee Wildcat Tennessee, an African-Native American woman

- Received a 3rd grade education before entering into farm labor; George continued his education informally, reading newspapers and magazines
- Marries Viola Perryman at age 17; the couple had 10 children, including visual artist Benny Andrews and writer Raymond Andrews
- As a young man he used "bluing," a cleaning powder compound, to paint large images of biplanes on local barns; Benny Andrews remembered his father drawing in the dirt, commonly using nails as drawing tools
- Andrews's family lived in a 2-room wooden house near his mother's house and not far from James Orr's cabin, 1935-1943; family moved to a nearby farm to begin work sharecroppers, 1943
- George and Viola separated in 1953; viola moved to Atlanta with the remaining children
- In the early 1950s, George obtained a job street signs for the city of Madison; eventually contracted chemical poisoning from the lead-based paint; after a severe and lengthy illness, he was no longer able to work; he was offered, and accepted, living space in the city's government housing project; he remained in this home the remainder of his life.

- After his illness, he began to paint; he first painted rocks, decorating them with brightly colored dots; he soon expanded his range to include porch furniture and other items on his porch and around his yard; words and phrases soon began to appear on his work
- During the mid-980s, his son Benny began to provide him with fine arts materials and encouraged his father to paint on canvas
- Although his art was known in Madison, it was not until the early 1990s that his art was exhibited nationally through the efforts of his son Benny
- Was featured in a solo exhibition at the Morris Museum of Art, 1994
- Lived his entire life in the Madison, GA area, never leaving the state of Georgia
- Also known as "The Dot Man" because he would paint dots on anything.
- While initially known for his use of brightly color dots and patterns on objects, he eventually diversified his visual symbols to include words, phrases, animals 9pigs were a favorite motif), and more abstract patterns and compositions.
- Some of his work dealt with social issues, African-American themes, or his own mixed-race heritage.
- Dreams provided the inspiration for many of his paintings.

Benny Andrews, about his father George

"Often described by journalists as an 'impish fellow,' Dad, all of one hundred pounds or less, does have a cheery smile and a seemingly blessed, innocent aura about him. That's only one aspect of him though, believe me. Dad is a very complex container of much more than the casual observer sees or hears."
As the "survivor of an almost unbelievable past" George has become "one of the most tenacious and imaginative persons" his son has known: "Ideas just bubble out of his head like lava…He's the personification of the mythical artist/poet who sees beauty through every pore, who is driven to create regardless of the circumstances."

Artist Quotation
"All this artwork. It be on my mind. I lay down after saying my I lay down after saying my prayers, I get visions what to do."
"Since people been seeing the rocks I paint in houses of folks all over town, more and more people ask me about my work. I go to the post office to pick up my mail and they don't call me "G" anymore. The call me Mr. Andrews."

Preacher, 1994
Benny Andrews

Key Facts

- Benny Andrews was the son of George Andrews. He grew up as a sharecropper, growing cotton on his grandfather's plantation. While his father had to quit school and start working after the 3rd grade, Benny was able to go to college and get a Master of Fine Arts.

- In the "Revival Series" Benny captured the drama and the emotional intensity of the participants, including the focused energy and the gesticulations of the visiting preachers, as evident in a work like *Preacher*. A masterful composition, directly related to the clarity and concentrated intensity of his best drawings, every element of this work brings the viewer's eye forcefully to the center of the canvas, the empty chair—the centerpiece of the revival. It is this chair, the artist has indicated, that is waiting for the repentant sinner. "The preacher, Reverend John Henry, had the job of getting us sinners to come off the 'Mourners Bench' and take a chair, which was placed between us and the pulpit. Coming forward and sitting in this chair meant a sinner had made peace with God and wanted to be baptized."
    - This was, as he explained, a daunting experience, one that required forms of preparation from the participants. "Getting up from the 'Mourners Bench' and taking a seat in the chair was not easy. One was to have been praying for forgiveness of one's sins in privacy (often during the day out in the woods) and to have received some sign from God that he'd heard your prayers and forgiven you. Once in the chair you'd relate your experiences in making contact with God and then become a candidate for baptism on the last Sunday at the end of the revival meeting." As evident in the gestures of his arms and the stance of his legs, this preacher is pulling all of his own energies and those of his congregation into this field, calling toward the heavens, focusing everything on the waiting and still empty chair. His focused power and the spirit of the moment, if they were strong enough, would overpower a reluctant sinner and release him or her from the grip of evil spirits. By stepping forth, one was saved. With a compositional power and confidence that seems to reflect the artist's appreciation of the black and white abstract compositions of Franz Kline, Benny brings every line in this work—in the arms, fingers, legs, flowing tie, chair legs and back, shadows, even the stripes of the minister's pants—to bear on the focus of the painting, that empty chair which calls the viewer as it calls the sinner. The use of a limited and skillfully applied field of color contributes to the mood and tightness of the work.

Interpretive Questions

1. Read the quote. What do you think is going on in this work? Who is the man? What is he doing with the chair? Besides the title of the work, does the artist provide any visual clues as to his identity or profession?
2. What is the focal point? How does the artist move your eye around the canvas?
3. Andrew's artwork was often inspired by his personal memories. How can you tell this? Was the event portrayed in this collage a happy or sad memory? How can you tell?
4. Locate *Andrew's Family Tree* by George Andrews. This work was done by Benny Andrew's father, who was also an artist. How is the work different? How are they the same? Why do you think the two styles vary so drastically? [Benny was academically trained, George was self-taught.]
5. How have the two artists related personal memories, feelings, and values? List things that you believe were important to the Andrews family, and explain your reasoning.

Details

Benny Andrew's collage *Preacher* is part of the artist's "Revival Series," which is made up of works based on activities that occurred during the Plainview Baptist Church's annual summer revival. Pieces in this series evoke strong, personal childhood memories including the artist's own conversion and baptism in the 1940s. Andrews himself described the event:

   "A revival meeting has a particular set-up; the Deacons (male) are seated over in one corner. The

Sisters (older women) sit in the opposite corner. The Preacher is in the pulpit and the Congregation (general members) are in the main area of the church. In front of the congregation on what was called the 'Mourners Bench' sat the ones (sinners) not yet baptized, facing the pulpit. The preacher, Reverend John Henry, had the job of getting us sinners to come off the 'Mourners Bench' and take a chair, which was placed between us the and pulpit. Coming forward and sitting in this chair meant a sinner had made peace with God and wanted to be baptized. Getting up from the 'Mourners Bench' and taking a seat in that chair was not easy. One was to have been praying for forgiveness of one's sins in privacy (often during the day out in the woods) and to have received some sign from God that he'd heard your prayers and forgiven you."

Although difficult to tell from a distance, *Preacher* is a collage. Both the chair and the main figure have been painted in oil on canvas, then carefully cut out and attached to a secondary surface. Andrews has captured the minister's intensity and focused energy, as he calls towards the heavens, as if asking for the power to move the sinners into the empty chair. The elongated figure's thrown back stance, along with the flying necktie, all allude to a strong sense of movement. This is in contrast to the wooden chair and the heavy, static shadows.

Historical Background

This information is intended to provide docents with sufficient source material to craft a well-rounded tour. You are not expected to relate all the content in the "Historical Background" sections to tour groups.

The Slave Trade

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the Southern United States was booming economically. Designated as an exemplary region for growing crops such as rice and tobacco, landowners had a rapidly increasing demand for cheap labor. As large rice plantations became widespread, plantation owners required inexpensive and permanent workers to clear swamps and cultivate crops. A highly profitable and easy solution to the problem came in the trade and sale of humans.

Enslaved Africans brought in through port cities along the entire Eastern seaboard were routinely sold as goods through open slave markets. Many arrived as a result of the Triangular Trade. Although the African slave trade had been in existence since the early 1500s, the practice flourished in the continental United States during the 1600's and 1700's centuries, coordinated predominantly by Dutch, French, and English companies. European merchants arrived in the African Gold Coast with manufactured goods, which were exchanged for shiploads of captured African men, women, and children. The live cargo was transported to and sold through open markets in the Americas and Caribbean in exchange for sugar, tobacco, rum, rice, cotton, and other goods, which would then be sold throughout Europe. This one-way trip, referred to as the *middle passage*, was a veritable nightmare. Overcrowding was common and countless people died of hunger or disease while on board the ship. It is estimated that 11-12 million Africans were transported across the Atlantic into slavery until the practice was outlawed in the early 1800s. Countless others died during capture or transportation (www.understandingslavery.com).

Once in the United States, the enslaved people's fates were in the hands of their new owners. They tended fields, worked in factories, or acted as house servants. There were few laws protecting the treatment of slaves, and those that existed were easily ignored by owners who knew there were negligible consequences for breaking them. Physical and emotional abuse was widespread, and slaves had little protection. By 1808 the international slave trade ended. However, this move neither condemned nor slowed the practice within

America. Instead, the country turned to its existing self-reproducing slave population and developed its own domestic slave trade (Franklin, 1980, p. 123). This had a devastating impact on enslaved African American families, as individual members were sold as property, never to be seen again.

During the beginning of the 1800s, the South experienced a new economic transition with the widespread availability of the cotton gin. The device, coupled with the growing demand for cotton from industrialized Northern mill towns, sparked a dramatically increased need for slaves to tend the new cash crop. "King" Cotton became the premiere harvest of the American South. The number of slaves grew, with almost 2 million by 1830, an increase of 1.3 million in just over 40 years. The institution of slavery came to dominate the political and economic thinking of the entire South. (Franklin, 1980, p.133).

By the mid-eighteenth century, Colonists were yearning to gain independence from England, a monarchy they believed was withholding their freedom as independent Americans. Many Colonists recognized that their acceptance of slavery was contradictory to their fight to gain independence from England (Franklin, 1980, p. 83). This idea was further reiterated with the passage of the Declaration of Independence, and its assertion that all men, being created equal, were endowed with certain unalienable rights, including freedom. The words stirred uneasiness between Northern and Southern states. Abolitionists and anti-slavery individuals, who were mainly located in the American North, believed that slavery went against new American ideals. Pro-slavery leaders of the South, where the practice was tightly intertwined in the region's economic stability, desired to maintain the rights of each individual state to create laws governing slavery. Over the next several decades, the contentious disagreement grew, and eventually led to the American Civil War in 1861.

Sharecropping

After the Civil War ended in 1865, although the region had been ravaged both physically and economically by the years of warfare, the South still needed inexpensive laborers to tend fields, clean houses, and work in factories. In response to the constant demand for farm workers, the idea of sharecropping emerged. This agricultural labor system, which was used by both white and black populations, became widespread throughout the South during Reconstruction, the time period that immediately followed the Civil War, approximately 1865–1877. Under the arrangement, landowners allowed individuals to farm their property in return for a share of the resulting crop. Initially developed as a resolution to the failed Land Reform Program, in which the federal government would divide Confederate-owned plantations into smaller plots to be given to former slaves, sharecropping was considered a solution to providing freed slaves the opportunity to work while giving the landowner a cheap labor force.

In addition to renting the land, the sharecropper was often required to purchase the seed, tools, and fertilizer directly from the landowner, usually on a line of credit. After the harvest, the tenant received a small portion of the crop, while the landlord retained the majority. Oftentimes the sharecropper had to sell his portion directly to the landowner at a fixed rate as well. Any outstanding debts also had to be settled at this time, which resulted in the tenant being left with little or no income. Although the system was meant to provide employment to freedmen and poor white families after Emancipation, it was quickly corrupted, and essentially became a legal form of slavery. The tenant's life was more or less possessed by the landowner through a vicious cycle of debt. The Agricultural Adjustment Act of the New Deal in 1933, coupled with later mid-century advancements in farming technologies that replaced laborers, virtually ended the institution of sharecropping.

Jim Crow Laws and the Civil Rights Movement

During Reconstruction freedmen in the South were protected by Federal law. However by the 1870s, white Democrats gradually returned to power in most of the Southern states. Strongly opposed to civil rights for African Americans, the Democratic Party legislated Jim Crow laws aimed at segregating black people from the white population (Franklin, 1980, p. 266). These laws affected many of the rights African Americans had been granted with the Emancipation Proclamation, including voting, education, and freedom of movement. Required literacy tests and residency requirements prevented many freedmen, as well as poor whites, from participating in elections. Although segregated schools for black children were federally mandated, they were severely underfunded and neglected. African Americans were restricted from businesses and segregated from white society. Consequences for disregarding segregation rules were stiff and severe, often resulting in inflated jail sentences or vigilante justice.

Jim Crow laws existed well into the mid-twentieth century. After World War II, black Americans began to actively challenge segregation. Many had served in the military, fighting alongside white counterparts, defending America. They believed they had the right to be treated as full citizens (Franklin, 1980). As a result, the Civil Rights Movement gained momentum. Initially the courts were used to attack Jim Crow statutes, however, in the South, the system was dominated by white politicians determined to maintain segregation. Courageous African American individuals joined in the fight for racial equality, often risking their own lives and personal safety to conduct public sit-ins of white-only businesses and other peaceful protests.

The first major court ruling to legally mandate desegregation was Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka in 1954 (Franklin, 1980, p. 409). Many other Jim Crow laws were overturned in the Federal court system based on constitutional grounds. However, small local businesses, political parties, and private individuals countered these rulings by creating their own Jim Crow arrangements, barring African Americans from doing such things as buying property or entering white-only areas. Additionally, vigilantes, who were growing in number and strength, simply ignored laws. Some groups, such as the Klu Klux Klan, were highly organized, while others were angry mobs. Regardless of their make-ups, these groups were exceedingly sadistic. Lynching and mob violence against black people was common and widespread throughout the South until the early 1960s.

In 1964, Congress passed the Civil Rights Act, which was a concerted government effort to end racial discrimination (Franklin, 1980, p. 473). Considering the long history of disenfranchisement, African Americans continued to face racial discrimination long after the bill passed. Unfortunately no law can change individual beliefs. As a result, pockets of intolerance and inequality still exist today. However there is also a lengthy, valuable legacy created by African Americans. They have contributed to every facet of Southern life, from music to food, to technological advances and innovative discoveries. This rich cultural heritage is often depicted in the artwork of many influential and established Southern black artists.

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