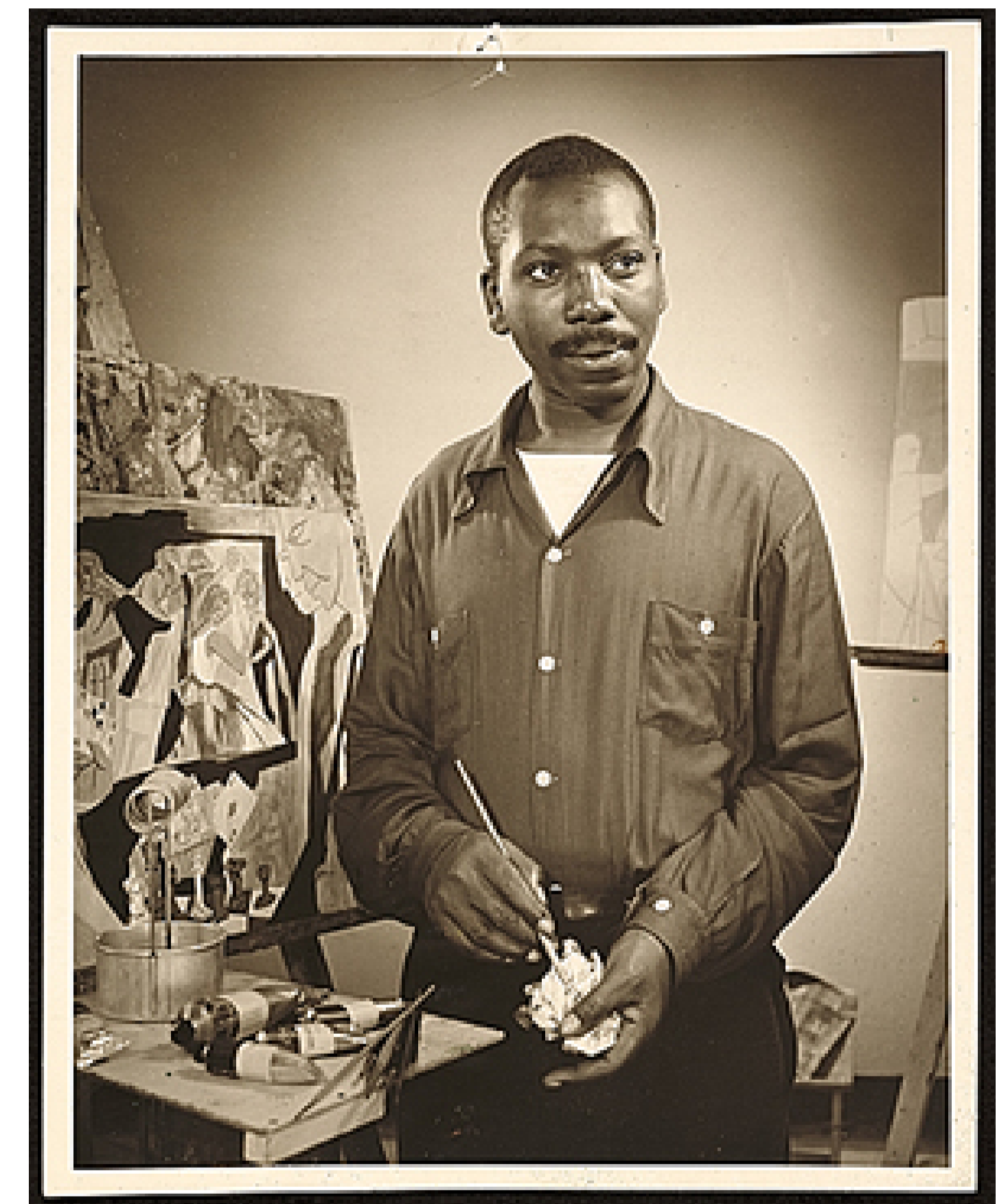


JACOB LAWRENCE

Jacob Lawrence (1917 – 2000) was an African-American artist from New Jersey who was best known for his involvement in art movements such as Cubism, Contemporary Art, Social Realism, Modern Art, most notably, the Harlem Renaissance. His palette was black and browns juxtaposed with vivid colors to represent the African-American culture.



Curated by Daniela Addamo. Designed by Aliana Prior.
Funding provided by Council Member Daniel Dromm, Peter Koo and Jimmy Van Bramer



Photograph of Jacob Lawrence. WikiArt: Visual Art Encyclopedia.

“COMMUNITY,” JACOB LAWRENCE IN JAMAICA

In the 1980s Lawrence was commissioned along with seven other artists to create a mural that depicts themes of community for the Joseph P. Addabbo Federal Building in Jamaica. Lawrence was enthusiastic about the project since he was a huge supporter of the black community and acknowledged their value. When describing his experiences in Jamaica, he once said “I was aware of the warmth, rapport, and the exciting movement and counter movements of its many inhabitants. The geometric and organic structures of the doors and various kinds of apparel and facial expressions give an overall special quality to a stimulating and unique environment.”

John Beardsley, who was at the time the adjunct curator of Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington and the chairman of the selection panel, expressed that it was important that the eight artists were black. Since the location of the building was in South Jamaica, he stated “everyone wanted us to take the nature of the community into account. We decided on the strong representation of black artists. Then we felt, why not make it more forceful — a permanent installation dedicated to the creativity of black artists.” Beardsley went on to explain how this commission was an effort to shift away from imperious art and represent a need to be responsive to some of the racial issues in art patronage.

The commissions were part of the Art-in-Architecture program of the General Services Administration. Under this program, one-half of 1 percent of the estimated construction cost of a Federal building could be spent on art for the site.



Jacob Lawrence, *Community* (study for mural, Jamaica, NY), 1986, gouache on paper, Smithsonian American Art Museum.



Community by Jacob Lawrence (1989) Joseph P. Addabbo Federal Building in Jamaica, Queens. Photo Credit: Carol Highsmith, 2009, NEA, Library of Congress.



Community and Family (1989) at Joseph P. Addabbo Federal Building, Jamaica, Queens. Photo Credit: Carol M. Highsmith, 2009, Library of Congress. Photographed as part of an assignment for the General Services Administration. Ceramic tile, glazed.