

# Young Artist Project

Participants Share An Evening With Jacob Lawrence

Twelve year-old Silas Evers and his mother Margaret were special guests at the opening of Jacob Lawrence's "Migration Series" exhibit at the Portland Art Museum on April 19. Mr. Lawrence is one of the most renowned artists to emerge from the "Harlem Renaissance" in the 1940s. He produced the narrative, 60-panel "Migration Series" when he was twenty-three years old. Shortly after it was finished, 26 panels appeared in Fortune Magazine, and the entire series was shown at the nationally-known Downtown Gallery from 1941-1942. With this series, Mr. Lawrence was the first African-American artist ever to exhibit at the gallery. The series was then purchased in two parts by the Phillips Gallery and the Museum of Modern Art. With this exhibition, the series is being shown for the first time since 1972 in its entirety.

Silas, a student at Whitaker Middle School, attended as a participant of the Young Artist Project, an outreach program established three years ago by the Pacific Northwest College of Art. He was joined by 29 other Young Artists, family members and art teachers from Woodlawn Elementary and Whitaker Middle Schools in Northeast Portland, two of



the four schools sponsored by the project. "This is a thrilling event for us," said Donna Gamble, Young Artist Project Coordinator. "It was exciting for the students to be invited, to have the opportunity to hear both

Jacob Lawrence and his wife, painter Gwendolyn Knight Lawrence" she said. "They are wonderful role models."

Jacob Lawrence developed his artistic skills as a young teenager. After moving to Harlem when he was

thirteen years old, Lawrence immersed himself in the culture of the city and developed his talents under the mentorship of Charles Alston, who encouraged him to explore his ideas through books, drawing and through painting. Lawrence worked with Alston after school throughout his teenage years, first at the 135th Street Public Library, then at "Studio 306" at the WPA Harlem Art Workshop. Alston was a college student himself, and offered Lawrence intensive art education he could not be given at school. Lawrence speaks highly of this time with Alston, and frequently refers to the strong sense of community established in Harlem in the 1940s. The attention he received from the librarians and teachers who bought his early works encouraged him to pursue his efforts. Lawrence says he was quickly attracted to "the idea of doing something of worth someone else wanted."

Clearly, the attention Lawrence enjoyed as a young, developing artist shaped the artistic profile he later filled. It is this same type of attention—personal, intensive, accessible attention—which the Young Artist Project strives to give its students. In the long hours of the afternoon, the Project works to give these students the struc-

ture to explore their own talents.

The four-year old Young Artist Project engages and challenges 15 artistically talented students at Arleta, Kellogg, Whitaker and Woodlawn schools through high-quality visual arts education. The goal of the Project is to bring intensive arts instruction to the students' own schools, when large numbers of them would not be able to attend the same courses at the College's downtown campus. The Project seeks students who show exceptional artistic drive and promise, who often come from immigrant, English as a Second Language, or minority families. The students are expected to attend each session, to complete work at home, and continue their pursuits after the semester has finished. The students receive community support for their efforts at the end of each semester, when their works are exhibited at school and an opening night reception is held. At the receptions the students meet college, school, and community leaders, and show their works to family, friends, and the general support. As with Mr. Lawrence, community support is a critical aspect of their education.

The Young Artist Project is currently at two middle schools and two feeder Elementary schools. The coor-

dinators plan to expand the Project to two area high schools, then eventually to include scholarships to the Pacific Northwest College of Art BFA program for college-aged Project participants. Through their love of art and the effort of others to support them, these students can build for themselves futures which overcome difficult, preventive socio-economic barriers. With this, Greg Ware, the director of the PNCA Extension Program, hopes to complete the full structure he has sought for Project participants.

For his part, Silas judged the evening's event with reserved opinion. "He was okay", Silas stated about Lawrence. And about his own plans—immediate and long term—for his future in art, Silas pronounced simply, "I want to become an artist, maybe."

The "Migration Series" will be showing at the Portland Art Museum until June 12, 1994. Museum hours are 11:00am-5:00pm Tuesday through Saturday, 1:00pm-5:00pm Sundays. Admission is \$4.50 for adults, \$3.50 for seniors, and \$2.50 for students. Thursdays are free all day for seniors, and the first Thursday of every month is free for all, from 4:00pm-9:00pm.

## Students Take Part In African Art Exhibit

Fifteen Portland area high school and middle school art classes will participate in a unique educational tour of "Spirits in Stone," a stunning exhibit and sale of extraordinary Zimbabwe stone sculpture being presented for the first time in Portland, May 7-15, daily at Cheatham Hall, World

Forestry Center, 4033 S.W. Canyon Road. These special tours by the curator of the exhibit will take place each day prior to the opening to the general public.

Approximately 600 school age children will be given a demonstration in the Shona sculptures and a brief look into the culture of the Shona

people of Zimbabwe.

Schools attending include Gresham High School, Gresham Elementary School, Cleveland High School, Hosford Middle School, Marshall High School, Franklin High School, Mt. Tabor Middle School, Jackson Middle School, Wilson High School, Gregory Heights Middle School, Madison High School, Beaumont Middle School, Roosevelt High School, Jefferson High School, and Lincoln High School.

The art, mostly hand carved by self-taught Zimbabwean artists, in the varied serpentine stone found in their African countryside, has been lauded by critics for beauty, naturalism and

spiritual qualities of the work. Many of the artists began sculpting as young as 13 years old.

Proceeds of the sale will benefit Providence Medical Center's Gately Child and Adolescent Day Treatment, a non-profit community service program that has successfully treated severely emotionally disturbed children since 1986.

The exhibit, sponsored by Providence Medical Foundation and Zimbabwe Shona Sculpture, is free to the public from 12 noon to 8 pm daily.

For more information about the "Spirits in Stone" exhibit and sale, please call (503) 287-2672.

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