



PRESS RELEASE

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For immediate release

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WHITE HOUSE HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION ANNOUNCES ACQUISITION OF JACOB LAWRENCE PAINTING FOR THE WHITE HOUSE COLLECTION

The White House Historical Association announces today the acquisition of *The Builders*, a painting by Jacob Lawrence, the renowned 20th-century American artist. This 1947 painting (tempera on board, 20 x 24 inches) has been donated to the permanent White House collection and will be on display in the refurbished Green Room, one of three parlors on the State Floor of the White House.

“Jacob Lawrence is a terrific artist whose painting *The Builders* depicts the significance of people working together to build a brighter future,” said Mrs. Bush. “The White House is filled with artwork highlighting the unique history of the United States, and I’m delighted the White House Historical Association has added Lawrence’s extraordinary piece to the collection.”

Jacob Lawrence (1917-2000) was one of the first artists to represent Modernist depictions of African-Americans. Born in New Jersey, he grew up in the vibrant Harlem community that prepared him for his career, technically and thematically. His experiences and friendship with two cabinetmakers who worked with him at the WPA Harlem Art Workshop sowed the seeds of the Builders series – a theme he intermittently painted for half a century. This series had many meanings for Lawrence – the building of families and relationships; people working together on a single goal; and man’s struggle to create a better life. The White House painting is one of the earliest examples of the Builders series.

Art historian William Kloss writes: “The subject of building developed into an obsessive desire to show blacks engaged in the process of building – not constructing something specific, identifiable, but building as a communal activity of planning and making, an ongoing intellectual endeavor. The metaphor was not of pulling oneself up by one’s bootstraps, but of cooperative civil action, or working together for a people’s advancement.”



In describing the work for sale, Christie's wrote: "Lawrence skillfully used angular planes and fractured forms in bright oranges, yellows and blues as the workers cross horizontally, vertically and diagonally to disrupt the composition and change the way we would typically view the subject matter."

The painting was obtained from an early collector of American Modernism via auction at Christie's in New York. It was purchased for \$2.5 million by the White House Acquisition Trust, a non-profit charity wholly owned and subsidized by the White House Historical Association. The purpose of the trust is to raise money for the acquisition of important museum objects for the White House collection of fine arts and furnishings. For more information visit www.whitehousehistory.org.

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