african american designers in chicago:

Art, Commerce and the Politics of Race.



Figure 1
Russell Lee, “Candy stand run by Negro. Southside, Chicago, Illinois” (April 1941). Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection, LC-USF34- 038629-D [P&P] LOT 1082.

A THING OF BEAUTY IS A JOY FOREVER

A Short History of African American Design in Chicago

The first black designer in Chicago was likely a sign painter—or a milliner, hairdresser, tailor, barber, printer, typographer or bricklayer.[1] When African Americans began to enter the city in significant numbers at the turn of the 20th century, many brought along artistic and practical talents. They opened printing shops, beauty salons, barbershops and millineries that served the small black community, although at first they relied on more numerous white clientele. At the time they may have thought of themselves as "artisans," but in retrospect we recognize them as designers: They applied aesthetic talents and sensibilities to make the world more functional and beautiful. Although early black designers put their stamp on Chicago's people and landscape, their work remained largely invisible to the public. Because white-controlled unions and craft guilds forbade African Americans from entering the design trades, and because black life and labor were denigrated in Jim Crow America, early black designers in Chicago faced an uphill battle for clients and recognition—even from the most sympathetic outside eye. "Not many Negro skilled laborers here," observed W. E. B. Du Bois, a prominent African American scholar and activist, of the Chicago scene in 1912. "The Negro artisan is losing."[2]

They would not be losing for long. By the middle of the century, generations of black commercial artists had made Chicago a major center for the black design profession in the United States. The images they made became icons of black style from the age of the New Negro to the age of Black Power. The institutions they built, among them the South Side Community Art Center and the Johnson Publishing Company, endure as symbols of solidarity and success. The products they fashioned shaped the daily lives of millions—white and black—with magazines, posters, toys, textiles and household goods. Their art and activism profoundly shaped African American culture and the mainstream design professions in ways that still resonate today.

This exhibition celebrates the lives and works of African American designers, who created a future for the "Negro artisan" beyond what Du Bois could envision. It was a future shaped by the professionals as well as by everyday designers, such as the operator of a candy stand whose hand-painted display captures the spirit of African American design in Chicago: "A Thing of Beauty Is a Joy Forever" (**fig. 1**). This photograph reflects the ironic mood of the white photographer. The rough-hewn shack is not conventionally beautiful, and the candy won't last forever, yet the image captures the aspirations of the candy man in addition to the everyday ways black people made beautiful things in Chicago. The search for joy and permanence in beautiful things is a capacious definition of design, but it helps us see graphic illustration and industrial manufacturing in the same frame as everyday life. From this angle, African American design appears less as an unchanging set of aesthetic idioms and practices than as a dynamic field that black designers and consumers were transforming in tandem, from city streets to corporate boardrooms.

The social history of African American design includes both black designers who pursued their practice in the mainstream professions and those who designed for African American people and communities. In Chicago, one of the major hubs of American capitalism and major terminus of the Great Migration, those dimensions of African American design were intertwined. By the end of the century, Chicago's African American designers had helped to build the cultural and economic landscape of the Southside; and they forged careers that put them at the center of the American design profession. At every turn, they confronted racism that still marks Chicago, the design professions, and consumer capitalism. To challenge a multitiered racism—racist caricatures, residential segregation, professional discrimination, economic exploitation—African American designers created their own foundations of power for individual success and group achievements. They also confronted divisions of gender and class within their fields and within their community, as women and working-class designers challenged the authority of elite men over the meaning of design for American and African American life. As individual artists, African American designers represented a staggering diversity of training, politics, ambition, and style, all of which they expressed in a wide range of media and professional venues, inside and outside the Southside community. That they exercised their powers of design to transform a city, and a world, made by race and capitalism unites them in a collective story.

I. Futures

At the turn of the 20th century, Chicago was a city of a million people. It announced its place at the forefront of civilization with the World's Columbian Exposition, a spectacular demonstration of American industry, science, culture and technology held on the Jackson Park lakefront in 1893. It was also a spectacular demonstration of racism. The fair's organizers and many vendors excluded African Americans from all aspects of planning and programming, except in the most demeaning roles. On the Midway, a pancake manufacturer debuted Aunt Jemima, a racist caricature of a black plantation mammy that became one of the most ubiquitous corporate brands of the 20th century.

As workers and fairgoers, however, African Americans demanded recognition as citizens and members of the modern age. Chief among them was anti-lynching activist Ida B. Wells, a newspaper editor who had recently fled Memphis over white threats to her life. She published *The Reason Why the Colored American Is Not in the World's Columbian Exposition* (**fig. 2**), and the frontispiece projects an image of order and refinement in sync with the fair's beaux-arts style and in sharp contrast to the minstrel iconography within the fair. The contents were designed to make a political case. Cleanly laid-out statistics documented the sheer number of antiblack lynchings, and the reproduction of a postcard picturing a black man hanging from a tree in Alabama showed that lynching was a spectacle at home in modern America. Wells designed the pamphlet to shock fairgoers' celebration of progress and move them to action on behalf of African American civil rights. It was an indictment of the racism that festered within the industrial society that had triumphed over Southern slavery. It also reflected Wells's beliefs that mass-produced print media would raise the nation's consciousness, and that there were entrepreneurs and tradespeople in Chicago to trumpet her political vision.[3]

The publication of *The Reason Why* illuminates the deep roots of African American design in Chicago. Wells produced and printed the pamphlet with prominent lawyer (and her future husband) Ferdinand L. Barnett, who had been editing the radical *Conservator* newspaper in Chicago since 1878. Born in Nashville in 1859, Barnett was among the first wave of free people of color and freed slaves who settled in Chicago after the Civil War. These early settlers supported themselves as merchants and domestic workers who provided services to a mostly white clientele. After the fair, Chicago became a destination for ambitious African Americans from the South and the Midwest, and the city's black population grew to 15,000 by 1900. Repairman Charles F. Gardner was so proud of his accomplishments that he submitted a photograph of his storefront at 2933 South State Street to W. E. B. Du Bois for inclusion in an exhibit of the "American Negro" to be held at the Paris Exposition in 1900 (**fig. 3**). The photograph shows the important place of the electrician and the sign painter in Chicago's growing black community—to say nothing of the tailor who sewed Gardner's suits, the barber who styled his hair, the photographer who took his picture and the customers who needed to fix cameras, umbrellas and gramophones.

While the photograph of Gardner's repair shop offered a glimpse of Chicago's future as a center for African American modernity, it was a future envisioned and debated on the pages of magazines and newspapers. In addition to the lavishly illustrated and urbane *Voice of the Negro*, which survived just a year in Chicago after fleeing an outburst of anti-black violence in Atlanta in 1906, Chicago was home to several black newspapers. Most notably among them was the Chicago *Defender*, which would define African American mass communication throughout the first half of the 20th century. It was published by **Robert Abbott**, who had learned the newspaper trade while studying at the Hampton Institute in Virginia. When he moved to Chicago in 1897, he sought out Barnett. Inspired by the militant stance of Barnett and Wells, and perhaps taking advantage of their connections to local printers, Abbott published the first issue of the *Defender* in May of 1905. Because Abbott relied primarily on community subscribers, which allowed him to maintain editorial independence from political parties and white businesses, the advertising pages of the first issues provide a cross-section of local businesses. Barbers, butchers and undertakers supported his enterprise, as did Ford's Original Ozonized Ox Marrow, which featured a before-and-after picture of "kinky" and straightened hair.[4]

The ads in the *Defender* shed light on social grounds for African American design distinct from that of the small black professional class of Wells, Barnett and Gardner. These ads catered to the needs and tastes of working people. While the designers of the ads are unknown (they may have been stock images or made by the business owners themselves), they suggest that at least a few black business owners knew (or could hire people who knew) how to put together a press notice. Whereas the frontispiece design of *The Reason Why* appealed to elite tastes, the *Defender* ads targeted working-class black consumers patronizing urban venues popping up on South State Street, such as Robert T. Mott's Pekin Theater, where ragtime musicians rehearsed the sounds and fashions of the coming Jazz Age. Although the market for beauty products was at first dominated by white-owned cosmetic companies, businesspeople such as Anthony Overton, Annie Malone and Madam C. J. Walker began to open their own firms in the early 1910s. They took advantage of growing commercial and publishing networks to cater to black consumer demands through advertisements and beauty regimens.

Entrepreneurship and mass consumerism crystalized in two public events—the Grand August Carnival of 1912 and the Lincoln Jubilee Exposition of 1915. The latter was visited by 12,000 people on its opening day of August 22, and estimates for total attendance by the closing day of September 16 range from 135,000 to 800,000. Although organized by members of the black upper class, working-class Black Chicagoans found meaning in the exhibits, electrified demonstrations and wares for sale.[5] The turnout was a rebuke to the captains of American industry who saw little value in marketing to black consumers. Earlier that year a writer for Advertising & Selling magazine dismissed black consumers as an "unprofitable public," inspiring Albion Hosley, an official at Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute, to refute the claims in a letter that was published in New York Age newspaper and republished in *Advertising & Selling*. Black people in "one Southern community" subscribe to *The Ladies' Home Journal* and buy products by mail order from Sears, Hosley explained. "The negro spends annually over $2,000,000,000, and of this fully 70 percent goes to white business houses."[6] His message to black merchants was clear: African Americans could empower themselves by buying from black-owned businesses, which would cater specifically to black needs. A version of this argument would animate numerous cultural enterprises in Chicago, from the most conservative businesses to the most radical art cooperatives. It was not a matter of whether to sell to the race, but how.

Claude A. Barnett (no relation to Ferdinand) was surely paying attention. He was raised in Chicago but Tuskegee was his alma mater; Hosley, soon head of the National Negro Business League, would be a lifelong correspondent. By the end of the decade Barnett had applied Hosley's insights with gusto in the formation of the Associated Negro Press and his own advertising agency. He cut his teeth, however, in the business of black beauty culture. As marketing director of Nile Queen cosmetics (renamed from Kashmir after a similarly-named company sued), Barnett made graphic design central to the operation. In a campaign of full-page advertisements that ran on the back covers of *The Crisis*, the monthly journal of the NAACP, Barnett commissioned illustrators to design the Nile Queen not as a respectable "after" image to the "kinky" before, but as an icon of modern style ensconced in Egyptian splendor (**figs. 4-5**). The intention was to liberate black women from the mask of Aunt Jemima, if not from the male gaze. Although the identity of Barnett's designer is unknown, it is plausible Barnett hired one of the several African

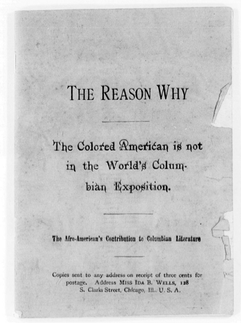


Figure 2
Ida B. Wells, ed., *The Reason Why the Colored American Is Not in the World's Columbian Exposition* (Chicago, 1893), frontispiece.



Figure 3
Unknown photographer, "Only Negro store of its kind in the U.S., at 2933 State St., Chicago, Ill." (c. 1899). Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, LC-USZ62-68358.



Figure 4
Kashmir Chemical Company, "Nile Queen for Hair and Skin," *The Crisis* (Dec. 1919), back cover. Digitized by Modernist Journals Project: http://www.modjourn.org/



Figure 5
Unknown designer, Nile Queen logo and packaging (c. 1917). Claude A. Barnett Visual Materials Collection, Chicago History Museum.



Figure 6
William Edouard Scott, *Reflexus 1.1* (April 1925), cover. Moorland Spingarn Research Center, Howard University.



Figure 7
Charles Dawson, "O, Sing a New Song" (1934). Lithograph print. Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Reba and Dave Williams (1999.529.58). Image copyright © The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Image source: Art Resource NY.

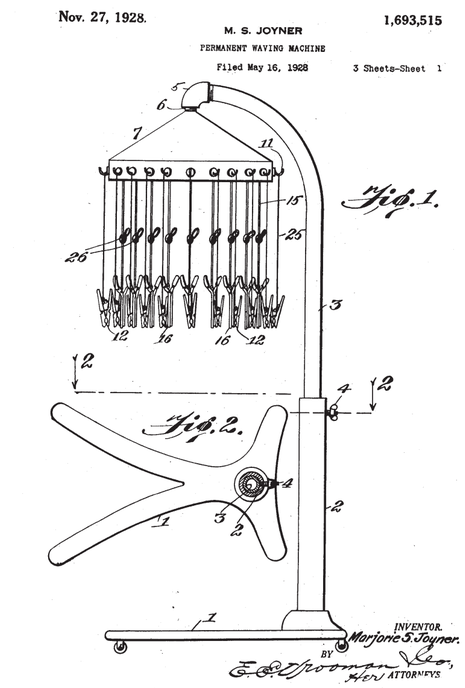


Figure 8
Marjorie Stewart Joyner, Permanent Waving Machine, US Patent no. 1,693,515 (May 16, 1928). Digitized by Google Patents.

American artists who had recently graduated from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC): **Charles Dawson**, **William McKnight Farrow** or **William Edouard Scott**, all of whom gravitated to the AIC because it was one of the few prominent art schools that accepted black students.

The Nile Queen offered modern black women reconnection to a mythic lineage of black beauty that stretched back to Africa. It also capitalized on graphic design that could serve as a necessary but vexed medium between everyday consumers and enterprises like Barnett's. While Barnett appealed to the urbane identities of black women consumers, he also stood for the professional order of a marketplace premised on male power. Nile Queen cosmetics was run by a consortium of white and black businessmen who competed with black women entrepreneurs such as Malone and Walker in the beauty market. Notably, the luxuriant Nile Queen was not presented as a worker herself, though most of Barnett's office and manufacturing staff were women, as were the models he scouted in State Street nightclubs. If the "Negro market" offered emancipatory prospects for black entrepreneurs and commercial artists it also raised questions about whether women and working people would be able to reap equitable rewards from the marketplace.[7]

At stake in the practices of black design was the future of African Americans in a burgeoning consumer economy. It was a future imperiled by white racism in the Midwest Metropolis. In addition to the ubiquitous presence of racist images in popular culture and discrimination in the marketplace, Black Chicagoans endured racist violence. During the cataclysmic 1919 riots, members of the white working class, abetted by the police, marauded the South Side for two weeks, leaving 38 dead and thousands injured. The rioters wanted to make known that there were limits to where black people could work and do business and, indeed, where and how they could live.

The emerging black community in Chicago was resilient, and so were its designers. The city continued to beckon African American migrants for greater opportunities for work, civic participation and life. "I am beginning life anew here in Chicago," wrote **H. George Davenport** to W. E. B. Du Bois in 1918, ostensibly to praise the activist and scholar's work but also to promote his own talents as a self-described "commercial artist." "I hope to accomplish the task of doing in pictures what you have been able to execute in editorials."[8] On stationery that showcased his talents in designing letterhead, newspaper advertisements, business cards and envelopes, Davenport claimed a place for himself, his craft and his city in the advancement of the race.

II. Renaissance

Following the Great War, African American designers claimed a greater role for themselves and their work in defining black life in Chicago. Hundreds of thousands of African Americans were leaving the Jim Crow South for what they hoped would be freer lives in Northern cities. Comprising middle-class professionals and a larger number of working-class men and women in search of factory and service jobs, these migrants envisioned themselves as "New Negroes." They brought with them talent and energy that would transform the black community on State Street into Bronzeville, the home for a Renaissance in African American culture that would rival the one in Harlem. Commercial artists broadcast the spirit of the Chicago Renaissance in forms ranging from



Edwin Rosskam, Barber Shop in the Black Belt, Chicago, Illinois (1941). Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection, LC-USF33- 005184-M2 [P&P] LOT 1082.

The Street

Black design happened on the streets just as it did on the printed page. For some, the beautification of Bronzeville was an essential component of black uplift. When sign painter Vernon Guider moved to Chicago from Memphis in 1937, he said he could tell when he was in a black neighborhood "by the cheap signs on the storefronts and windows." He turned the cheapness of Bronzeville signage into an opportunity to market his ability to design clean, precise and lively signs. "While the owner or operator of a store may not have sufficient funds to make his place as attractive as he would like, he can entice customers by the right kind of signs," he said, as well as "a well-lighted, clean interior." Guider would become one of Chicago's leading sign painters, producing signage and displays for Hank's Rib House, the Regal Theater, the Chicago chapter of the NAACP and Harold Washington's mayoral campaign.

Documentary photographs produced for the federal government during the early 1940s show some of Guider's early work at the Regal, along with a broader world of design on the South Side that included pickets, billboards, window displays and fashion. A generation later, record distributor and photographer Raeburn Flerlage recorded the flourishing of vernacular design practices. Signs of black business—from grand ballrooms to storefront markets—competed for visual space with those of white-owned businesses and corporate brands. Later, OBAC's Wall of Respect mural created a politicized streetscape that would be captured by African American photographers Robert Sengstacke, Billy (Fundi) Abernathy, Bob Crawford, Roy Lewis and Darryl Cowherd. Altogether the photographic archive reveals the street as a vital place where African Americans expressed and contested competing notions of black beauty.



Billy (Fundi) Abernathy, *Chicago* (1965). The Art Institute of Chicago, Gift of the Illinois Arts Council, 2017.444.



Robert Sengstacke, Wall of Respect and Johnny Ray's Radio and TV Repair (1967). Robert Sengstacke Photography Archive, University of Chicago. © Robert A. Sengstacke, 1967.

magazine layouts to hairdressing salons, all the while grappling with the unwieldy powers of American capitalism in boom and bust.

In 1925 a few leaders among these New Negroes celebrated their growing aspirations, power and prosperity by founding a new magazine, *Reflexus*. The name responded to a need felt among young black urbanites for a new form in which to see themselves: something that "reflects us." *Reflexus* was an early venture in linking popular literary and visual production to the consumer tastes of a growing black middle class. Editor John McKinley addressed the publication to "The New Negro and the New Age," specifically to the growing ranks of black strivers and entrepreneurs. "For we live in a commercial age," he wrote, and "business enterprise is the order of the day." The writing and the images were designed to convey the buoyancy of success and endless possibility for black readers. McKinley solicited poems from young black writers such as Langston Hughes, who composed a few short poems for the first and only issue, and hired **William Edouard Scott**, **Charles Dawson** and prominent commercial artist **Gus Ivory** to illustrate the magazine. It included a mix of fiction, cartoons and a photo essay on "Homes We Live In."[9] "Light verse and fanciful lyrics are always welcome," as McKinley wrote to Hughes, while "poetry of a more serious vein is hardly in keeping with the nature of our publication."[10] As with Barnett's Nile Queen and the popular visual culture of the age, Scott's cover design announced the enterprising spirit of the New Negro with a portrait of a young woman, at once acknowledging and objectifying the role of women in making Bronzeville (**fig. 6**).

Reflexus lasted one issue before Robert Abbott forbade his editors from working on it; he would soon capitalize on the same idea by launching *Abbott's Magazine*. At the center of both publications was **Charles Dawson**, who parlayed his formal training at SAIC into a career as a freelance commercial artist for white and black clients. As a designer and impresario, he expertly captured the spirit of what Adam Green calls "the rising tide of youth" in Bronzeville, a tide that flowed out of a growing number of southside high schools: Englewood High School (opened 1873), Wendell Phillips (1904), William Rainey Harper High School (1911) and DuSable High School (1935). He designed posters, advertisements and books for black audiences—including two volumes of Frederic Robb's *Intercollegian Wonder Books* (1927, 1929) that celebrated the achievements of African Americans in Chicago. For this generation uplift meant self-improvement, in addition to engagement with the logistics and politics of the market, whether as entrepreneur, wage worker or consumer. In a signature technique that he would hone over the course of his career, Dawson decorated the *Wonder Books* with "Egyptological motifs at page headings and in the advertising section in order to link black antiquity with the race's enterprising future."[11]

It was a motif he would repeat in his public and commercial art during the Great Depression. His most accomplished piece was a poster for *O, Sing a New Song*, a revue of contemporary African American music held on the grounds of the Century of Progress exhibition in 1934 (**fig. 7**). Perhaps his most widely distributed works during this period were the many advertisements and packaging he designed for Valmor Products. Owned by white chemist Morton Neumann, Valmor was a novelty and beauty product company that sold pomade, hair straighteners, skin lighteners and love potions directly to black consumers. Although it is easy to dismiss Dawson's Valmor designs as an expression of the black bourgeoisie's self-deluding desire for "whiteness," or overlook them as an insipid consumerism, both his intentions and his strategy were more complex. For Dawson, Valmor was a rare company that not only hired black designers (cartoonist Jay Jackson also did work for them) but also saw value in representations of "pleasing Negro types, my specialty." His figures of elegant men and women can be said to echo the Egyptian profiles of his work for black businesses and periodicals, and evidently appealed to black consumers "in spite of the ravages of the depression." By cultivating and capturing a market for "pleasing Negro types" through Valmor's mail-order enterprise, Dawson was able to produce ABCs of Great Negroes (1933), a self-published children's book that celebrated black achievement through a series of 26 linocut illustrations.[12]

While Dawson would fall back on older arrangements of white patronage to sustain his practice during the Depression, other black designers experimented with corporate and collective forms of organizing black cultural production. **Marjorie Stewart Joyner**, for instance, worked to professionalize the hair-care system that had been grown from the ground up by her mentor, Madam C. J. Walker. Walker was based in Indianapolis and thrived in the 1910s by challenging male authority in the beauty industry, from Claude A. Barnett to Booker T. Washington's powerful National Negro Business League. Walker pitched her products directly to black women as consumers as well as potential entrepreneurs, for whom she stood as an example of improvement and independence. As historian Davarian Baldwin shows, Walker "used her wealth to create a space where she and other women could exist outside of prevalent gender and class restrictions," a space that extended from her network of beauty colleges to her formation of the Hair Culturalists Union of America in 1917. Between 1910 and 1920 the number of black women hairdressers in Chicago increased from 3,093 to 12,608. Among them was Joyner, who became Walker's protégé and took over as national supervisor of Madam C. J. Walker Beauty Colleges after the founder's death in 1919.[13]

Joyner was born in Virginia in 1896, moved to Chicago in 1911 and in 1916 was the first black woman to graduate from the A. B. Molar Beauty School. In addition to continuing Walker's fusion of beauty culture with political activism, she also wanted to establish the company's hold on the industry and professionalize its system. She set about reforming the Walker college curriculum to turn aspiring hairdressers into disciplined saleswomen and beauticians. She also sought to rationalize and standardize hair culture with laborsaving tools. Her permanent-wave machine (**fig. 8**) was as much a contribution to African American design as Dawson's "pleasing" illustrations. But rather than referencing mythological roots of beauty, Joyner drew inspiration from everyday life and the expectations black women had for themselves in the machine age. "It all came to me in the kitchen when I was making a pot roast one day, looking at these long, thin rods that held the pot roast together and heated it up from the inside," she said. "I figured you could use them like hair rollers, then heat them up to cook a permanent curl into the hair." Joyner credits quotidian origins, but her device influenced the beauty culture industry. Because the patent was owned by the Walker company, however, she received no profits, even though her invention became widely adopted by salons for both black and white clientele.[14]

In Chicago, the Great Depression transformed not only the economics but also the politics of African American design. Mass unemployment depleted the coffers of many black-owned businesses and made work even scarcer for artists. Among these



***Jet* 9.15 (February 16, 1955), cover.**

Jet

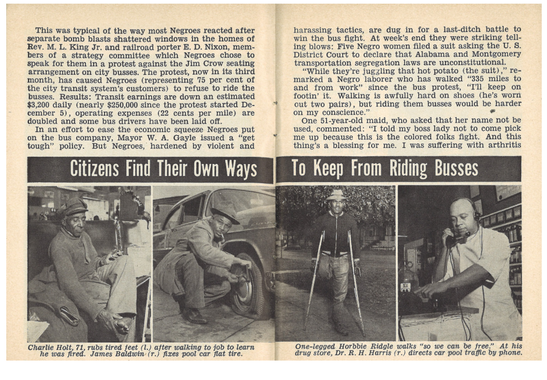
How the Johnson Publishing Company gained such an intimate hold on African American readers during the postwar years can be immediately understood by flipping through an issue of *Jet*. John H. Johnson launched the magazine in 1955 after temporarily discontinuing *Negro Digest*. Designed by LeRoy Winbush, *Jet* was a weekly magazine that surveyed seemingly all of contemporary African American life, from the most trivial events to the most harrowing traumas to the most transcendent achievements. Full of photographs, breezy articles and bullet-point morsels of information, the magazine was meant to be affordable to everyone and carried everywhere.

Nearly always featuring a beautiful actress or model on the cover, along with a swimsuit centerfold, *Jet* presented black women through an unabashedly prurient male gaze while also registering the importance of the values and tastes of black women consumers to Johnson's enterprise. *Jet*'s distinctive logo, reminiscent of a sign painter's brush, suggested Winbush based his design strategy on his training as a commercial artist. The magazine grabbed attention on the newsstand with bold, uncluttered and dynamic design. Interior layouts worked more subtly, allowing the reader to open to any page and be instantly drawn into that week's black life.

The "Weekly Almanac" crystallized *Jet*'s purpose and appeal. Presenting the seemingly random happenings of everyday black people across a spread of three pages, it fostered a sense of community among African Americans across the nation, as well as the feeling of a people experiencing a common moment simultaneously.

In perhaps its most daring move, the September 15, 1955 issue of *Jet* featured photographs of the funeral of Emmett Till, a southside teenager lynched in Mississippi for the offense of whistling at a white woman. His mother, Mamie, insisted publicizing the open-casket funeral in the Defender and in *Jet* in order to galvanize the shared outrage of a national African American readership into a political force that could topple Jim Crow. Through *Jet*'s weekly coverage of the investigation of Till's murder and the trial of Till's killers, readers could build a sense of solidarity against racism through the act of collective witnessing.

Mamie Till's cultural activism helped to awaken support among the Northern black middle class for a Civil Rights Movement already burgeoning in the South. *Jet* translated the anger provoked by Till's lynching—and the exoneration of his killers by an all-white jury—into focused attention on the Montgomery Bus Boycott, a multifaceted protest against segregation that *Jet* characteristically portrayed through the individual experiences of working-class black Montgomerians.



"Citizens Find Their Own Ways to Keep from Riding Buses," *Jet* 9.15 (February 16, 1955).

visionaries was **William McBride**, who eventually found support among the Art Crafts Guild and took advantage of New Deal programs that provided work for unemployed artists. Born in New Orleans in 1912, McBride was a generation younger than Joyner and Dawson and did not arrive in Chicago until the 1920s. He graduated from Wendell Phillips High School as the Depression hit. Facing limited job options and with slim chances of getting formal art training, he turned to the guild, which offered him opportunities for education, resources to create art and camaraderie with such artists as **Margaret Burroughs**, George Neal and **Charles White**. The guild was committed to making art about and for the people.[15]

The Art Crafts Guild shared in the egalitarian spirit of the Popular Front, a flowering of art movements that sought to transform American capitalism and establish social democracy. The Popular Front garnered financial support from the Works Progress Administration (WPA), but McBride and the Art Crafts Guild were at first excluded from government largesse. Increase Robinson, the state director of the Federal Art Project in Illinois from 1935to 1938, deliberately kept black artists away. Joyner advised New Deal programs how to reach black women, but Dawson was dropped from the WPA for failing to demonstrate financial need, even though he continued to do important design work for black civic events. The WPA enabled SAIC to hold weekend and evening classes that accepted African Americans, which Burroughs and Neal attended, but the students didn't receive direct support for their work. "The WPA was not hiring too many blacks," McBride later remembered. "The WPA was sort of prejudiced. They were trying to say they weren't, but they were. They had directors in there and the directors picked their favorites, of course. They were picking most of the heavy white favorites."[16] That changed when Robinson left her post, and the Art Crafts Guild mobilized to secure funds through the agency for the establishment of a permanent center for black artists in Chicago: the South Side Community Art Center (SSCAC).[17]

SSCAC supported the arts in Bronzeville by mounting exhibitions and offering classes for men, women and children. Under McBride's direction, artists working in the silkscreen shop produced colorful posters and souvenir programs for the Artists and Models Ball, SSCAC's annual fundraising gala where Bronzeville society showed support for proletarian art. Meanwhile, the enormous American Negro Exposition was organized by Barnett and designed by Dawson to showcase the visions of black entrepreneurs for the community.

The highest aspirations of the era were captured by cartoonist **Jay Jackson** in his 1942 cover for the *Defender*'s "Victory Through Unity" issue. Jackson's illustration of the Double V Campaign (coined by the Pittsburgh Courier) amplified the demands of African American activists, leaders and artists for the government to link its war aims to the enforcement of racial democracy at home. It was an ideal that would be severely tested after the war. When envisioning the postwar future, McBride himself appeared to waver between the buoyant Artists and Models Ball posters he supervised in his shop and his commitment to Popular Front politics. In his poem "The Solid Side" he reflected on the dire economic conditions that constrained black life in Chicago: "Ninety per cent of the gold mines / Are worked by the pales / Race owned businesses / Eighty per cent fails."[18] McBride lingered on the failure of African American commerce to claim an equitable share

of American wealth, but he also implied the role of a designer such as himself in redressing the economic and social inequity. His insight, and experience, during the Depression would resonate all the more in an era of mass consumer plenitude.

III. Abundance

As a hub of American capitalism and culture, postwar Chicago offered expansive new opportunities for black designers. Wartime industry and a booming consumer economy drew African Americans to Chicago in ever greater numbers. Between 1940 and 1950 the black population in Chicago surged toward half a million people; over the next decade that number was nearly a million. Many veterans took advantage of the GI Bill to gain college education and entry into the professions that served Chicago's growing black population. In established newspapers such as the *Defender* and in new magazines such as *Ebony* and *Jet*, Chicago became the trendsetter for African American modernity. Cartoonists such as Chester Commodore and Jackie Ormes would chronicle (and satirize) both the political activism and material aspirations of the rising black middle class. In his "Home Folks" series (**fig. 9**), cartoonist Jay Jackson captured the youthful dynamism of postwar Black Chicago that sought to reap the rewards of an expanding consumer economy.

Black ambition would profoundly challenge the enduring constraints of American racism. After World War II the federal government, labor unions and corporate leaders helped rebuild an American capitalism premised on mass home ownership and consumerism, which promised to extend the nation's newfound abundance to workers, women and African Americans. As historian Lizabeth Cohen has shown, however, hierarchies of race, gender and class continued to define this consumers' republic. The government moved against the Popular Front, women were encouraged to leave work to become homemakers and many working- and middle-class whites violently resisted efforts by blacks to gain purchase on rewarding jobs, wealth and homes. As a result, Black Chicago's enormous population growth was confined to the relatively static borders of the South and West Sides. With illegal real estate covenants and predatory lending practices, whites enforced racial segregation and even profited from it, exacerbating often cramped and miserable housing conditions. It was on this terrain, however, that the Civil Rights Movement mounted its transformative protest against Jim Crow, and African American designers gave tangible shape to modern black life.[19]

LeRoy Winbush did not waste any time. Born in Memphis in 1915 and raised for a while in Detroit, Winbush and his mother settled in Chicago in 1928. They lived in a cramped apartment on the corner of 58th Street and South Parkway (now King Drive), but Winbush was a dreamer. At the 1933 Century of Progress expo he marveled at the futuristic sights and said that "the visual impact was mind-boggling." Soon after, while a senior at Englewood High School, Winbush learned how to make visual impact of his own as a part-time sign painter in Frank Phillips's shop. "That guy worked me right down into the ground, you might say, but it was good," recalled Winbush. He also met **Vernon Guider**, a newcomer to Chicago from Memphis, who likewise found an outlet for his artistic talent in sign painting. Under Phillips's tutelage, Winbush and Guider mastered the "delicate feather touch of lettering" and gained entry into the social networks of Bronzeville businesses. Winbush did displays for the Regal Theater and the Savoy Ballroom before landing a steady gig at Goldblatt's department store at 47th Street and Ashland Avenue. He quickly moved up the ranks to become the company's first African American art director, a status that allowed him to avoid the draft and to benefit from the lack of professional competition.[20]

Winbush savvily positioned his design practice at the intersection of local black cultural enterprise and the mass consumer economy. He was an active member of SSCAC, which continued to thrive as a space where African American artists could study art, exhibit their work and increasingly find clients. It was in this milieu of black art and commerce where Winbush may have met **John H. Johnson**, who tried to secure the designer's long-term services for his newly formed Johnson Publishing Company (JPC). Winbush valued his professional independence, however. He worked part-time for JPC while also building his own design firm, Winbush Associates. He grew his company by winning major corporate clients, particularly downtown banks that commissioned him to design window displays that often featured themes of flight and space travel.

Winbush was among the first to challenge prejudices the design profession had long enforced. He became the first black president of the Chicago Art Directors Club and posthumously won the 2008 American Institute of Graphic Arts (AIGA) medal. As art director at JPC, he was instrumental in interpreting and shaping the tropes of postwar consumerism for African American audiences. As Johnson said in an editorial, he founded *Ebony* magazine "to mirror the happier side of Negro life—the positive everyday achievements from Harlem to Hollywood. But when we talk about race as the number one problem of America, we'll talk turkey." Under Winbush's design direction, the magazines fulfilled Johnson's grander ambition to create "a grammar for postmigration black existence," as historian Adam Green puts it. "One matching new realities of urban challenge, societal complexity and material change."[21] Although Johnson would later take credit for nurturing "a new stratum of black magazine editors and photographers," he depended on designers like Winbush and illustrators like Jay Jackson who had cut their teeth in the cultural enterprises of the Black Chicago Renaissance. Winbush left Johnson Publishing to serve as art director of the short-lived *Duke* (**fig. 10**), a magazine for urbane African American men in the style of Hugh Hefner's Playboy. *Duke* folded in 1957 after only a few issues, but it remains a testament to the ingenuity and ambition of a postwar generation of African American go-getters.[22]

JPC, meanwhile, became legendary. *Negro Digest*, *Ebony*, *Jet* and *Hue* defined black style and set the agenda for black discourse across the nation for decades. With sleek layouts, playful illustrations and lush photography, these magazines encouraged readers to project themselves into an urbane African American lifestyle at a moment of dramatic social, political and economic transformation. Eunice Johnson (John's wife) developed the magazine's fashion section into a platform for the Ebony Fashion Fair and her line of cosmetics. **Freda DeKnight**'s monthly food column encouraged African American women to consider their homes and kitchens as sites for design. Above all, *Ebony* and *Jet*'s political journalism and photography helped link the consuming habits of rising middle-class blacks to the social movements for civil rights emerging from rural and union grass roots. By the end of the 1960s John and Eunice Johnson had turned JPC into a chronicle of black politics and a brand that symbolized black success in the United States, thanks to art directors **Herbert Temple**, **Norman Hunter** and **Fitzhugh Dinkins**.

Johnson's success marked a broader corporate turn in African American design for which Black Chicago provided a uniquely welcoming home. Johnson looked outside of the black community for financial support. To show the "happier side of Negro life"—an aspirational image of middle-class prosperity—Johnson solicited advertising dollars from major corporations. In *The Secret of Selling the Negro Market* (1954), a 20-minute film sponsored by JPC and the US Department of Commerce, African Americans were presented as middle-class professionals and housewives whose collective $15 billion in purchasing power warranted their recognition as consumers and, implicitly, as citizens. It was an appeal that resonated with the liberal model of racial integration preferred by the State Department, in which blacks joined the consumer republic while relinquishing any race-based claims for special protection, let alone reparations, from the government.[23]

Those who pursued careers in the mainstream professions, however, did not always find a welcoming reception. In the 1950s, a new wave of highly-trained African American designers made careers at major firms and studios: **Thomas Miller** (at design firm Morton Goldsholl Associates), **Charles Harrison** (at retailer Sears Roebuck), **Andre Richardson King** (at architecture firm Skidmore, Owings & Merrill) and **Eugene Winslow** (at marketing firm IMPAC). Many of these men were veterans who took advantage of the GI Bill to enroll at SAIC, ID and the Ray-Vogue School, all of which prepared students for work in the booming fields of graphic design, product design and marketing. Yet they would all have to pry the doors open, whether by leveraging corporate America's tentative embrace of racial liberalism or by more directly challenging long-standing practices of anti-black discrimination. Miller and Harrison would spend their entire careers at their firms. King and Winslow, however, would find their careers stymied by color-lines—spoken and unspoken—that forbade the promotion of black employees above certain pay grades.

Winslow was especially vexed by the tensions between corporate design and the ethos of social egalitarianism honed during the Depression, to say nothing of the loudening calls for racial justice coming out of the Civil Rights Movement. Like many African American designers of his genration, Winslow sought to marry his art with antiracist activism through various avenues of design education. He taught and socialized at the SSCAC and took courses at the newly opened Institute of Design (ID). Along with innovative training in the disciplines of graphic and industrial design, ID promoted the socially egalitarian design philosophy of its Hungarian émigré founder, László Moholy-Nagy. For Moholy-Nagy, modern industrial design was a means of collective social betterment rather than private profit, and he struggled to reconcile his democratic ethos with the more pragmatic concerns of his corporate funders.[24] The philosophy was especially attractive for ID's many African American students, especially in Chicago, where design work had long been tied to politics of collective uplift and protest (**fig. 11**). How to reconcile progressive racial politics with the corporate conditions of design work was a particularly acute dilemma for ID graduate Winslow, who felt racially ostracized at IMPAC despite his success in ascending the corporate ladder. He would quit in 1963 to form the Afro-American Publishing Company, dedicated to the design and mass distribution of educational texts for African American students and teachers.

Even outside the corporate world, the mass market expanded the scope and the transformative potential of African American designers. For cartoonist **Zelda "Jackie" Ormes**, the mass market was very much a means to realize an expanded future for black people within the consumers' republic—a future for black women and girls in particular. When Johnson dreamed of the *Ebony* reader he might have imagined figures like Patty-Jo and Ginger, cartoon characters created by Ormes that ran in the *Pittsburgh Courier* from 1945 to 1956. With stylish Ginger and her precocious little sister Patty-Jo, Ormes presented a picture of black life and racial politics as seen from the point of view of young black women. Patty-Jo 'n' Ginger made fun of the foibles of the black middle class, but often Ormes showed the prosperous black household as a scene of radical critique. In one cartoon from June 26, 1948, as Ginger is about to leave the house to raise funds for the United Negro College Fund, Patty-Jo asks stridently for federal funding for public schools: "Gosh—Thanks if you're beggin' for me—But, how's about getting our rich Uncle Sam to put good public schools all over, so we can be trained fit for any college?" That Patty-Jo is clearly not wanting for money herself (Ormes decorated the scene with an upholstered couch, an art deco coffee table and a framed abstract print) suggests how Ormes conceived of a common interest of working- and middle-class African Americans within the postwar consumers' republic.

Patty-Jo 'n' Ginger was grounded in Ormes's own experience as an elite woman in Black Chicago society. Her attention to the arts of women's fashion reflected a world of style driven by black women designers, such as the Cecilian Specialty Hat Shop run by Selma Barbour and Minnie Coleman on 47th Street, whose ebullient hats were immediately recognizable to black churchgoers on Easter Sunday.[25] Ormes's career would traverse the realms of fashion, art and mass consumerism. Born in 1911 in Western Pennsylvania, she tied her career and her creative ambitions to the Great Migration and the cultural enterprises growing in Bronzeville. She got her start as a cartoonist at the *Pittsburgh Courier* in 1937, where she created the strip Torchy Brown in 'Dixie to Harlem.' When she moved to Chicago in 1942, her husband, Earl, had a job as a hotel manager that gave the couple social status and financial security. But Ormes quickly made a place for herself among the institutions of black art and design in the Loop and the South Side. In addition to writing a society column for the *Defender*, she took art classes at SAIC and began to join artist meetings at SSCAC, where she would be elected to the board in 1953. As a freelancer Ormes would never earn the same pay as her male colleagues, who were hired as staff cartoonists and layout men. But talent and fashion sense earned her public fame and attention, and her appearances were mentioned and her outfits photographed in the *Defender* society pages throughout the 1950s.[26]

Ormes's career illuminates how African American designers in the postwar period attempted to apply their socially egalitarian politics to the mass market. If Ormes embodied the "happy side of Negro life" sold in *Ebony* and in the society pages of the *Defender*, she also remained committed to progressive politics. Although she denied having ever been a Communist, she "aligned herself" with them, as she explained to an FBI agent in 1953, since the Communist Party "offered humanistic, social and economic advantages to the Negro people." Nevertheless, Ormes was not shy about her place among "the upper strata of Negro society" and appeared noticeably pleased when one FBI agent counted her "as an intellectual and a leader among the Negro people."[27] Her role as a popular cartoonist for one of the nation's leading black newspapers and her place at the epicenter of the cultural life of Black Chicago made her a beguiling figure. As biographer Nancy Goldstein put it, "It is not clear what comrades may have thought about this stylish woman in her Dior-inspired designer clothes, leopard jacket and iridescent green fingernails."[28]

While her personal style may have clashed with the "proletarian grotesque," it would not have been incongruous to the working-class artists and elite patrons who had gathered to support SSCAC at the Artists and Models Ball. The limits to her politics were less aesthetic than economic, as Ormes would discover when she tried to capitalize on her cartoon's popularity by marketing a Patty-Jo doll directly to black girls. Ormes had to hustle to bring her doll design to life. In 1947 she contracted with the Terri Lee doll company in Nebraska to make a doll according to her stringent criteria: "Patty-Jo must first of all be a Negro doll of which Negroes could truly be proud and proud to own."[29] Following Kenneth and Mamie Clark's doll experiments published in 1939 and 1940, which would later be cited in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) as reason to desegregate public schools, many black consumers welcomed the alternative to the caricatured black dolls on the market. Its price, however, made it out of reach for even the middle class. For sociologist St. Clair Drake, Ormes's Patty-Jo doll symbolized both an answer and a larger problem with racism in the marketplace. While Patty-Jo was clearly a better option than "the junk … on the Aunt Jemima and Topsy side," he wrote, neither Drake nor anyone in his set could afford it. The expense of the Patty-Jo doll illustrated a pernicious way racial inequality festered within the market. For doll makers, as for other producers of goods, black consumers were largely invisible. "Doll makers, attention!" Drake implored. "Even the Negro manufacturers act as if they think a really dark brown baby doll won't sell."[30]

In the postwar period, the political aspirations of African American designers ran up against the constraints of economics and the limits of the white liberal imagination. While corporate America sought to join the Civil Rights Movement and expand black protest in the marketplace and the public sphere, it contained that protest within the corporate version of "racial integration" and techniques of race-relations "management." How should businesses address "the growing militancy and power of Negro groups" while seeking to capitalize on the "value of Negro markets"? According to one management manual, written by a team of Harvard marketing experts in 1964, one answer was hiring "Negro marketing executives" and "Negro salesmen" to mediate between businesses and "the Negro community." Another answer was *Ebony*, a "good-quality mass publication" that provides "a source of continuing contact with events which the editors feel to be significant to the Negro community." The study advised that "a subscription to *Ebony* or a similar magazine might prove valuable to the personnel man."[31]

The diverse practices of African American designers would exceed the narrow political and economic functions prescribed by marketing executives and by the federal government. As the politics of race and the economy reached a revolutionary moment in the late 1960s, African American designers working within mainstream firms and within the community would innovate new aesthetic practices and social formations that would impact modern American design and modern African American life.



Emmett McBain (cover design), *Playboy Jazz All-Stars* (Chicago: Playboy Records, 1957). Chicago Jazz Archive, Regenstein Library, University of Chicago. James Prinz Photography, Chicago.

Album Covers

In the postwar period, one of the few mainstream outlets for African American design was the record album cover. Record companies had long consigned popular black music ("race records") to the margins. By the 1950s, however, they began to capitalize on the growing cultural prestige of jazz and the popularity of rhythm and blues, genres that had been developed by generations of African American musicians. Although major record companies relied on white commercial artists to design the album sleeves for black music, smaller record labels in Chicago were receptive to pitches by African American designers. LeRoy Winbush designed jazz and gospel records for Mercury and Agro, as did Emmett McBain, who as assistant art director at Playboy designed the packaging for the Playboy Jazz All-Stars. Sylvia (Laini) Abernathy designed several album covers for Delmark Records; her assertive style, often incorporating the photography of her husband, Billy (Fundi) Abernathy, complemented the avant-garde jazz of Sun Ra as well as the Art Ensemble of Chicago. Working independently of both professional design fields and the Black Arts Movement, Pedro Bell made his career as the official designer of Funkadelic, whose psychedelic soul ballads took visual form in Bell's lurid, overflowing compositions of a futuristic black life.



LeRoy Winbush (cover design), Ramsey Lewis Trio, *Down to Earth* (Chicago: Mercury Records, 1958).



Sylvia (Laini) Abernathy (cover design), Roscoe Mitchell, *Sound* (Chicago: Delmark Records, 1966). Chicago Jazz Archive, Regenstein Library, University of Chicago. James Prinz Photography, Chicago.



Pedro Bell (cover design), Funkadelic, *Cosmic Slop* (Detroit: Westbound Records, 1973). James Prinz Photography, Chicago.

IV. Revolutions

The late 1960s and early 1970s were a revolutionary time both for African American designers working within the mass consumer economy and for those who continued to work within the black community. For designers who sought mainstream recognition, the revolution was groundbreaking if imperceptible to the public. **Tom Miller** and **Charles Harrison** had been working in the mainstream since the 1950s: Miller at the integrated Morton Goldsholl Associates, which embraced the egalitarianism taught at ID (**fig. 14**); and Harrison, a graduate of SAIC, for clients such as Popeil Brothers, Sawyer Manufacturing and Sears Roebuck, where he broke the company's unspoken color line and become lead designer. Miller and Harrison overturned racial segregation in corporate marketing and industrial design. They attained lofty positions and designed products used by millions. In addition to creating notable corporate logos and TV ads, Miller led the 1975 redesign of 7-Up, using supergraphics with bright colors and bold fonts to transform an unremarkable soda into an eye-catching symbol of effervescent, youthful fun (**fig. 15**). He was an innovator in graphic design and marketing who left his mark on dozens of corporations, from Motorola to GATX (**fig. 16**). At Sears in the 1960s and 1970s, Harrison designed aesthetically pleasing, functionally ingenious household goods like coffee percolators, chairs and garbage bins that rivaled Herman Miller's furniture and the products of IBM's industrial design lab (**fig. 17**). Miller and Harrison's work was revolutionary in subtle but profound ways. They charted new paths for African American designers beyond the black community; they helped to beautify, streamline, and humanize the look and feel of a global consumer culture. But it likely would have startled many white consumers to know that the 7-Up can in their hands or the record players in their living rooms had been made by black professionals.

For some of the rising generation of black designers, however, the path to mainstream success no longer appeared welcoming or even desirable. The assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. was a major turning point. It crystalized contradictions in the politics of race after the accomplishments of the Civil Rights Movement: Although the movement had dismantled the legal apparatus of Jim Crow, American racism resurged in open white backlash and in deeper structures of the political economy. King himself had shifted the focus of the movement toward economic

issues, organizing in Chicago in 1966 in support of public housing and in Memphis (at the time of his death) in support of striking sanitation workers. In uprisings in cities such as Detroit, Newark and Chicago—before and following King's murder—ordinary African Americans sought immediate redress to racial injustice. The police assassinations of Black Panthers Fred Hampton and Mark Clark further alienated many Black Chicagoans from the status quo of the consumers' republic.[32]

President Richard Nixon capitalized on the moment to subvert the gains of the Civil Rights Movement. In his first year in office, Nixon replaced Lyndon B. Johnson's Office of Economic Opportunity ($2 billion budget) with a much smaller Office of Minority Business Enterprise ($2 million budget), which offered subsidies for entrepreneurial ventures within black communities. These measures were inadequate as if by design. Black-owned businesses could hardly thrive in black neighborhoods that were being ruined by government neglect and mass unemployment, as Nixon withdrew government services and as corporations closed factories in search of cheaper labor elsewhere. Rather than seek to redress systemic racial inequality with economic redistribution, as King had advocated and as Johnson had begun to implement, Nixon prescribed black capitalism as an answer to Black Power.[33]

The age of Nixon proved to be a heyday for African American design in Chicago, an irony distilled in the soaring success of the Johnson Publishing Company. By the late 1960s, JPC had become firmly established as a nationwide center for black design. In 1972, 30 years after its founding, the company solidified its place in African American life and in American capitalism when it moved from Bronzeville to new headquarters in the South Loop. John and Eunice Johnson commissioned architect John Moutoussamy and interior designers William Raiser and Arthur Elrod to design and decorate the building as an embodiment of their vision for black cultural enterprise. The move represented a deeper shift in the economic basis of black cultural production toward the national and global corporate economy. By now Johnson Publishing was producing several lines of beauty and lifestyle products as well as magazines. A hybrid of modernist form and a distinctly black aesthetic, the new headquarters was a home for the magazine as well as the center for style, business and political voice for the nationwide black community.[34]

Yet the pages of *Ebony* hosted wide-ranging debates about the future of African Americans in American capitalism. Its seminal "Black Revolution" special issue (August 1969; **fig. 12**) featured contrasting essays by Bayard Rustin on the myth of black capitalism; by Alex Poinsett on the economics of black liberation; and by Huey P. Newton on socialism as the means to overthrow white supremacy. In the final volume of *Ebony Pictorial History of Black America*, a four-volume set that chronicled black history from slavery to the present, editor and historian Lerone Bennett Jr. attempted to square the circle. The years 1971 and 1972 were "the fork in the road," he wrote, marked by the "reversal" of the Civil Rights Movement and the "continuation of racism and economic inequalities" that turned black people into "prisoners." But while Bennett and other contributors perceptively critiqued Nixon's disingenuous program for black capitalism, they hailed their own capitalized enterprise as a source of protest and renewal. Johnson Publishing Company, along with Motown Records and Supreme Life Insurance, were "among the leading black institutions which established new models of self-assertion," according to Bennett. With these "alternative forms for the black spirit," "millions of nameless and anonymous blacks held their grounds and sharpened their weapons, preparing for the victory to come."[35]

Bennett's revolutionary rhetoric matched the self-image of many black cultural enterprises of the day, especially in publishing and advertising and especially in Chicago. Although many black-owned advertising firms would not survive the severe economic recession of the mid-1970s, Chicago's Vince Cullers Advertising (founded 1956), Burrell McBain (1971; now Burrell Communications) and Proctor and Gardner (1970) thrived. Whereas black-owned New York agencies struggled to attract clients for more than token campaigns, Chicago firms were able to position themselves as gateways to the "Negro market" during revolutionary times, and cultivated long-term accounts with corporations such as Philip Morris, McDonald's and Kraft Foods. They appeared to corporate America as racial experts who could sell to those "who viewed themselves as foot soldiers in a cultural revolution against white supremacy," as an article in *Marketing/Communications* put it in 1969.[36]

Such a formulation would have been anathema to African American designers for whom the cultural revolution against white supremacy was inseparable from the social revolution against corporate capitalism. Founded in Chicago in May 1967, the Organization of Black American Culture (OBAC) declared the autonomy not only of African American aesthetics from white critical standards but also of African American cultural production from the white-controlled marketplace. That summer, the Visual Arts Workshop of OBAC completed the Wall of Respect, a mural on 43rd Street and Langley Avenue that celebrated African American leaders and heroes, painted by artists such as **Jeff Donaldson**, **Barbara Jones-Hogu** and muralist William Walker. It was in many ways a visual reclamation of black urban space otherwise colonized by corporate advertising.[37] The collective enterprise could not be completed without the eye of a commercial artist, however. It was **Sylvia (Laini) Abernathy**, a graphic designer trained at IIT, who "presented the most workable and sensible design" for the wall, as Walker remembered.[38]

Several members of the OBAC Visual Arts workshop formed their own communal enterprise with the African Commune of Bad Relevant Artists (AfriCOBRA). But while the AfriCOBRA artists refused to follow the corporate careers pursued by Tom Miller and Charles Harrison, their careers took shape in the same world of design education and black cultural enterprise. Donaldson earned a master's degree in art education from IIT in 1963 and a PhD in art history from Northwestern in 1973, Jones-Hogu was trained in printmaking at ID and **Jae Jarrell** exhibited her textiles at the Ebony Fashion Fair and sold men's and women's clothing in her Hyde Park boutique. Their work was celebrated on the pages of *Ebony* and *Negro Digest*, and exhibited in the galleries of the South Side Community Art Center.

AfriCOBRA sought to make images that celebrated a distinctly black consciousness premised on African heritage, contemporary urban experience and Black Power politics. In important ways, the design practices of AfriCOBRA and the Black Arts Movement were directed by the talents and politics of black women. Although the Black Power movement in general was rife with male chauvinism, black women took key roles in shaping its everyday operation and defining its ideology. In Chicago's Black Arts Movement, Jarrell, Jones-Hogu and Abernathy put the social and cultural needs of black women—long the domain of largely invisible milliners, hairdressers and seamstresses—on the agenda of African American art and design. Jae Jarrell's *Revolutionary Suit*, a suede and tweed dress decorated with a bandolier, honored Chicago's history of black women's design and projected that tradition into a revolutionary future. Using ultrabright "Kool-Aid colors," Jones-Hogu produced vivid silk-screen prints that showed African American women in defiant protest. As the only expert printmaker in the group, she took command in organizing the communal work process that ensured AfriCOBRA's prints were high quality, affordable and stylish (**fig. 13**). Importantly, AfriCOBRA men and women also pushed back against African American design that presented women as objects of male desire. For AfriCOBRA, black women were coequals in art, work and activism.[39]

For the AfriCOBRA artists, anticapitalism did not mean anticommerce. They sought to exhibit and sell their work in a way that could be controlled by and enrich black people on a mass scale. "The images are designed with the idea of mass production," Donaldson wrote in *Black World* in 1970. "An image that is valuable because it is original or unique is not art—it is economics, and we are not economists. We want everybody to have some." Using graphic techniques and forms of mechanical reproduction, AfriCOBRA artists sought to reach as broad an audience as possible, to reform the visual and material world according to a revolutionary black consciousness. Allied artists would seek commercial outlets for their work. Abernathy designed album covers for the avant-garde jazz released by Chicago-based Delmark Records, while fabric artist **Robert E. Paige** marketed West African–inspired drapes and scarves to African American consumers via Sears Roebuck and Carson Pirie Scott.

The designer who most closely braided the politics of the Black Arts Movement with the institutions of mass consumer capitalism was **Emmett McBain**. Born and raised in Chicago and trained at the Ray-Vogue School and ID, he had already made his mark in the profession as art director for Playboy in the late 1950s and then for J. Walter Thompson, where he led the advertising campaign for the first model of the Ford Mustang. After returning from an extensive European and African voyage in 1968, precipitated in no small part by his disillusionment with American racism, McBain threw himself into Black Chicago's cultural revolution. McBain is most famous for his campaigns for Lorillard Tobacco and McDonald's, two of the first corporate advertisers to feature Black Power motifs and represent contemporary black urban experience. For the Kent Smokes campaign (**fig. 18**), model Cherri Wilkinson's assertive gaze echoed AfriCOBRA's representations of militant femininity and contrasted with Barnett's languid Nile Queen. McBain's work was an early instance of the mass commodification and corporate appropriation of Black Power iconography, yet his deep involvement with the Black Arts Movement tends to be overlooked by historians of design and African American art.[40]
A key interlocutor was his third wife, Barbara D. Mahone, who was a member of Hoyt W. Fuller's OBAC Writers' Workshop. In addition to designing the cover for Mahone's Sugarfields chapbook (1970), he made the text of her poem "What Color Is Black?" into the image of his new advertising firm, Burrell McBain, as if his enterprise would furnish the answer to Mahone's rhetorical question.

McBain attempted to reconcile the powers of global capitalism with his embrace of an African diasporic consciousness. At Vince Cullers and Burrell McBain, Emmett McBain emphatically declared that "Black Is Beautiful" (**fig. 19**). McBain brought the same social commitment and graphic eye to community-oriented projects such as *First World*, Fuller's journal of radical black thought, and the posters for BlackFolkUS, an annual conference organized by the Afrikan Information Center to promote the diasporic consciousness in Chicago. In 1974 McBain opened several rooms in his condo in Hyde Park as a gallery, where he organized an exhibition with Paige and Calvin Jones called *Creative Juices*. Jones was a fellow adman who quit the business to pursue painting and curating full time, and his AFAM gallery on Kinzie and LaSalle was one of the few in Chicago outside of SSCAC that exhibited AfriCOBRA artists.[41] The group effort in McBain's home included an eclectic range of work, from paintings and illustrations to clothing and furniture; "compositions in wood and rock" to silk screens and "liquid media." On the silver foil invitation to the opening, the men wrote under the collective name of The Black Eye, and declared themselves the "Visual Messiah of the 20th Century." In a manifesto printed on the back, McBain marked a sharp distinction between his art and his commercial work while adopting the rhetoric of advertising. "The Black Eye provides a visual need that you didn't know existed," he wrote. "Many are thirsty for meaningful works of art that they can understand and relate to. They want to use their own judgement and not feel they have to buy 'a name' because they don't know any better, or just make a pseudo-monetary investment. They want art that will fit in this inflation and function within their everyday lifestyles."[42] In some respects, The Black Eye echoed the AfriCOBRA program, especially in its call for art that was deeply rooted in a rich heritage, unpretentious in concept and functional for everyday life. Yet unlike the AfriCOBRA artists, McBain would not articulate a source for these deep-rooted needs beyond a personal lifestyle. What attachment he envisioned his art having to a political movement or social struggle, let alone a broad African heritage, was left unsaid.

McBain is an emblematic figure for his prolific and iconic design work as well as the nimble if beguiling way he sought to recast the relation between black community and American capitalism on more equitable terms. Although McBain would continue to do advertising work as a freelancer until the 1990s, his career embraced the possibilities of the era as he moved between doing work for the market, for himself and for the community, including collaborations with sociologist Carol Adams on prison rehabilitation pamphlets for black women.



Figure 9
Jay Jackson, "Home Folks" (1954). James Prinz Photography, Chicago.



Figure 10
LeRoy Winbush (art director), *Duke* 1.2 (July 1957). Special Collections, Regenstein Library, University of Chicago. James Prinz Photography, Chicago.



Figure 11
Robert Benyas, Students at the Institute of Design (1948). Courtesy of Bauhaus Chicago Foundation, Gift of Robert Benyas.

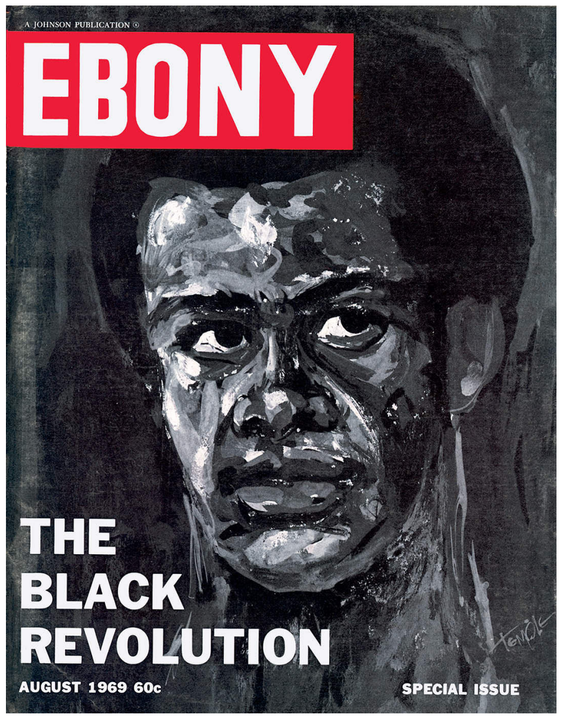


Figure 12
Herbert Temple, "Black Revolution," *Ebony* magazine cover (August 1969).



Figure 13
Barbara Jones-Hogu, *When Styling* (1973), screenprint. Collection of David Lusenhop.

V. Coda

When Harold Washington was elected Chicago's first African American mayor in 1983, it was the culmination of a generation of grassroots political organizing and generations of institution building within the black community. It also burnished the work of local African American designers who had made themselves indispensable to the politics, economy and everyday life of Black Chicago. Vernon Guider painted campaign signs, Emmett McBain contributed graphic design and SoftSheen, the beauty-product giant, implemented a sophisticated voter registration operation. The ascent of black designers to the top of their professions and in their communities was surely a moment of triumph, but it also confronted African American design with new practical and political challenges. Throughout the twentieth century, African American designers in Chicago have opened many paths between the mainstream professions and community activism; now, a new generation is raising new questions about the politics of race in the field of global capitalism.

From the turn of the 20th century, when the future of the "Negro artisan" seemed in doubt, to the dawn of our contemporary moment, African American designers have played a central role in shaping the image and institutions of black cultural life in Chicago and across the United States. Yet the advent of cable television, the internet and the financial revolution in global capitalism upended the conditions for African American design and life once again. Like Chicago design in general, black design in Chicago lost some of its distinctiveness as its basis shifted from local enterprises to multinational corporations headquartered in New York and Los Angeles.[43] The centrality of Johnson Publishing, for instance, gave way to the cable giant BET, and now to a diverse array of internet publications, social media platforms and digital technology. The digitization of design work not only amplified the broadcast capacity of African American design but it also granted more people access to the tools of design practice.

While technological progress realizes the egalitarian ideals of African American design, underlying economic conditions have helped to reproduce American racism in more pernicious forms. The Age of Reagan intensified the structural racial inequalities set in place in the Age of Nixon. Reaganomics defunded social welfare programs in largely black urban neighborhoods already reeling from mass unemployment, as major American industries departed in pursuit of cheaper labor and higher profits in the South and overseas. While corporations now embrace the African American consumer market (valued at $1.2 trillion in 2018) and prize African American culture as a valuable commodity in itself, American racism endures in forms ranging from "color-blind" liberalism and economic inequity to police violence and a resurgence of white supremacism organized via social media.[44]

In this world, designers continue to claim a critical role both in the mainstream design professions and within African American communities. In addition to gaining overdue recognition from AIGA and other professional organizations, African American designers institutionalized their collective purpose on a national scale with the Organization of Black Designers in 1990 which continues to promote inclusion and multiculturalism in the professional design fields. In Chicago, black designers and artists are developing diverse practices that commune between the world and the neighborhood. While Chicago-trained designer Virgil Abloh (IIT) sets worldwide design trends, Amanda Williams and Andres L. Hernandez's *A Way, Away (Listen While I Say)* project, Theaster Gates's Stony Island Arts Bank and Vernon Lockhart's Project Osmosis are in different ways combining art, design and entrepreneurship as a locus for grassroots black activism. Contemporary African American designers now embrace intersectional formations of race, gender and class, while extending their practices from traditional forms of illustration, product fabrication and architecture to the design of large-scale systems that advance the cause of racial justice in computer programming and environmental resource management.

The roots of these new African American design practices grow very deep in Chicago. Margaret Burroughs had described the South Side Community Art Center, for instance, as an institution necessary for "the defense of culture."[45] If culture is worth defending it is as the very medium that binds our collective being to the ever-growing, ever-transforming structures of society and economy that otherwise appear immutable and out of reach. In myriad ways, African American designers have put their practices at the center of this defense. The history of black designers in Chicago is worth the telling for celebrating how African Americans asserted their power in the design professions in addition to understanding how they politicized design for the defense of humanity. A thing of beauty can be a joy forever.

-Chris Dingwall
Co-curator

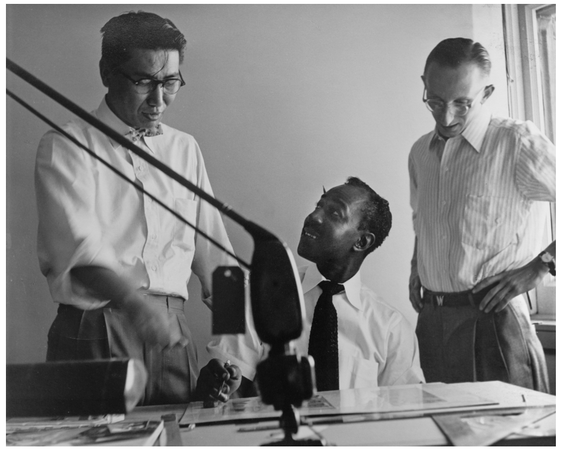


Figure 14
Unknown photographer, Tom Miller at Goldsholl Associates, Chicago (c. 1975). Thomas H. E. Miller Design Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Illinois at Chicago.



Figure 15
Tom Miller, 7-Up product line (1975). James Prinz Photography, Chicago.

Endnotes

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[14] Joyner quoted in http://blackinventor.com/marjorie-joyner/; Baldwin, *Chicago's New Negroes*, 86-88.
[15] Washington, *The Other Blacklist*, 77.
[16] William McBride, Interview by Carol Adams (Archives of American Art, Oct. 1988), 26.
[17] Mullen, *Popular Fronts*, 81-83, 91, 98-101
[18] William McBride, "The Solid Side" (c. 1942), 3, in box 2, folder 3, William McBride, Jr., Papers, Vivian G. Harsh Collection, Carter G. Woodson Branch, Chicago Public Library.
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[22] John H. Johnson with Lerone Bennett, Jr., *Succeeding Against the Odds* (New York: Warner Books, 1989), 193.
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Designer Directory

This exhibition features only a small selection of African American designers who were active in Chicago during the twentieth century. We know of about two hundred more from census records and newspaper accounts; there are no doubt hundreds more who did not rise to public notice but whose work nevertheless sustained the larger field of everyday design activity in Chicago. This directory is meant to highlight the individuals featured in the show but also to give a sense of the wider collective story of which they were a part. (Birth and death dates in parenthesis if known.)

Robert Sengstacke Abbott (1870–1940)
Born on the Georgia sea islands, Abbott trained as a printer at the Hampton Institute in Virginia before moving to Chicago to pursue law at Kent College in 1898. After a peripatetic law practice he dedicated himself to Chicago and to journalism by founding the *Chicago Defender* in 1905. *The Defender* would be instrumental in advocating for racial justice in the age of Jim Crow and in drawing African American migrants from the rural South to the urban North. It also became a home for generations of African American illustrators, cartoonists and designers such as Jay Jackson, Chester Commodore and Jackie Ormes.

Sylvia (Laini) Abernathy
A graduate of IIT, Abernathy was most active in the late 1960s as an album designer for Delmark Records, one of the main outlets for avant-garde jazz musicians such as Sun Ra and the Art Ensemble of Chicago. In 1967 she joined the Organization of Black American Culture and designed the layout for the Wall of Respect mural. Along with her husband, Billy (Fundi) Abernathy, a celebrated photographer associated with OBAC, she designed *In Our Terribleness* (1970), an experimental photo book featuring a long poem by Amiri Baraka.

Selma Barbour and Minnie Coleman
Barbour and Colemen were milliners who managed the Cecilian Specialty Hat Shop at 454 East 47th Street during the 1940s, the "height of Chicago's millinery scene" according to fashion historian Mary Beth Klatt. Although their history follows the general movements of migration and enterprise that shaped African American design in Chicago (Barbour, for instance, was born in New Orleans), their products have not been archived with the same attention as has recently been given to graphics and printed ephemera. Elaborate hat designs were a vibrant part of the Bronzeville sensorium, especially during Easter church services, and their enterprise suggests a larger world of millinery as craft and vital form of women's cultural labor.

Claude A. Barnett (1889–1967)
Born in Florida and raised in and around Chicago, Barnett returned to his hometown after graduating from Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute in 1906. Recognizing the commercial potential of black consumerism and the persuasive power of advertising, he left his job as a postal worker to try his hand at several marketing endeavors, including Douglas Specialties, a mail-order enterprise that sold photographic prints of African American heroes and celebrities. His skill in mass marketing made him an attractive hire for Kashmir Cosmetics, later renamed Nile Queen, which specialized in selling beauty products to black women. He would go on to found the Barnett Advertising Service and then the Associated Negro Press, which would give him a leading role as a power broker in Bronzeville.

Pedro Bell (born 1950)
After graduating from William Rainey Harper High School, Bell attended Bradley College in Peoria, Illinois, for a year before being thrown out for his association with the Black Panthers, whose rigid organizational structure in turn alienated Bell. He found his calling at Roosevelt University as a cartoonist for the school newspaper and eventually for New York's *Village Voice*. Taking classes in marketing and advertising while working by day as a bank teller, he wrote persistently to his musical heroes offering to design their album covers, enclosing samples of his work. In 1973 George Clinton, the bandleader for Funkadelic, retained Bell as the band's dedicated graphic designer. By the end of the decade, Bell had set up his own studio, Splankwerks. Since then he has overseen a dazzling number of projects, from commercial album covers to videogames.

Margaret Burroughs (1915-2010)
Born to working-class parents in Louisiana, Burroughs moved to Chicago in 1920 and graduated from Englewood High School. A member of the Art Crafts Guild, Burroughs was a leading light of the Chicago Renaissance and founder of its most lasting institutions, the South Side Community Art Center and the DuSable Museum of African American History. As an institution builder, Burroughs exemplified a socially egalitarian philosophy of art and design, seeking to support the work of artists and to make art readily available to the community. Earning a BA in fine arts and an MA in art education from SAIC, Burroughs was an accomplished artist in her own right. Her woodcut prints celebrating the African Americans life and history are still displayed in many of Chicago's public schools.

E. Simms Campbell (1906–1971)
Although his career in the city was brief, Campbell was admired by many African American designers in Chicago for his talent and accomplishments in the field of cartooning and commercial art. He moved to Chicago from St. Louis after the death of his father, and attended Englewood High School, the University of Chicago and SAIC. He left the city in 1929 to pursue his career in New York, where he quickly made a name illustrating books by African American authors Sterling Brown, Arna Bontemps and Langston Hughes as well as mainstream magazines like *Playboy*, *The New Yorker* and *Esquire*, where he designed the mascot, Esky. Chicagoans closely followed his career. William McBride, for one, revered Campbell and reportedly preserved a copy of every cartoon he published.

Chester Commodore (1914–2004)
One of the most successful and prolific cartoonists of his generation, Commodore's career did not begin until 1948, when a printers' strike made his talents as a commercial artist newly attractive to the editors of the *Defender*. Commodore had been pitching his work to the Defender since he was a student at Tilden Technical High School. While the pressures of the Great Depression compelled him to drop out and find work as a day laborer and eventually as a Pullman porter, he continued to practice his craft, and quickly rose the ranks at the *Defender* from layouts to illustrations to cartoons. Although the exhibition does not feature Commodore's work, his cartoons are worthy of an exhibition all their own for their sharp political satire and racial advocacy from 1950 until his death in 2004.

Vince Cullers (1924–2003)
In 1956, together with his wife, Marian, Cullers founded Vince Cullers Advertising, the first full-service black-owned advertising agency dedicated to black consumers. A veteran of the Marine Corps and a graduate of DuSable High School, the University of Chicago and SAIC, Cullers followed in the footsteps of Claude A. Barnett and John H. Johnson in recognizing the enormous commercial and political potential of the African American consumer market. Employing the talents of art director Emmett McBain, Vince Cullers Advertising made its mark in its campaigns for Lorillard's brand of Kent cigarettes beginning in 1968. After Cullers retired in 2002, the firm reorganized as the Vince Cullers Group.

H. George Davenport (died 1949)
Davenport worked as a sign painter in New Orleans before moving to Chicago in 1919. Here his career as a successful commercial artist was eclipsed by his notoriety as the publisher of *Dynamite!*, a short-lived and incendiary anti-integrationist 1930s broadside.

Charles C. Dawson (1889¬–1981)
Dawson was born and raised in coastal Brunswick, Georgia, where he cultivated his talents as an artist as well as his ambition to make a name for himself in New York and Chicago. His career would indeed take him there and to the "fringes of greatness," as he would later title his unpublished memoir. His training was extensive: drafting and architecture at the Tuskegee Institute, drawing at the Art Students League in New York (the first African American to be admitted) and then at SAIC, where he helped organize the Arts and Letters Society, the city's first black artistic collective, with Archibald Motley and William McKnight Farrow. After serving in the Great War, Dawson threw himself into the work of a commercial artist, first for a white-owned engraving company and then as a freelancer for white and black clients. His advertisements for Valmor Products, Overton Hygienics and Poro Beauty Colleges became ubiquitous on the South Side and in African American communities across the nation. He also used his craft to advocate for African American community interests and political causes, above all as the lead designer of the American Negro Exposition in 1940.

Freda DeKnight (1909–1963)
Beginning in 1946, *Ebony* food editor Freda DeKnight penned "Date with a Dish," a monthly column that offered recipes and cooking advice to black homemakers. Like many food columnists of the postwar years, DeKnight sought to expand the middle-class palate within a workable budget, with heavy emphasis on canned fruits and vegetables and inexpensive cuts of meat, each recipe outlined in luxuriant step-by-step photographs. For DeKnight, who had previously worked as a professional caterer, the column held greater significance. Departing from the stereotype of the black domestic servant, DeKnight presented herself—and by extension her readers—as creative professionals and coequal managers of the household economy. She would become the home services director of Johnson Publishing Company, and she helped to stage the first Ebony Fashion Fair.

Fitzhugh Dinkins (1919–1993)
After training at IIT, Dinkins worked as a staff artist at the Johnson Publishing Company with LeRoy Winbush and Herbert Temple before ascending the ranks to become art director. He maintained an independent art practice and served on the SSCAC board for decades.

Jeff Donaldson (1932–2004)
Donaldson was a leader of the Black Arts Movement in Chicago. Arriving to Chicago from rural Arkansas, where he had trained and taught art to African American students, Jeff Donaldson taught at Chicago high schools while earning his MS in Art Education from IIT in 1963. He would take a leading role the Visual Arts workshop of OBAC and in forming AfriCOBRA. In addition to his dynamic artistic practice, he had a prestigious career in the field of African American art history, as the first African American to earn a PhD in art history (from Northwestern in 1973) and then as chair of the art history department at Howard University, where he reorganized the curriculum to address the social needs of black people in the African diaspora.

William McKnight Farrow (1885–1967)
Born in Dayton, Ohio, Farrow moved to Chicago to study at SAIC from 1908–1918, where he would meet Charles C. Dawson. Whereas Dawson embraced commercial work, Farrow balanced his work as a commercial artist with his ambitions as a fine artist. Farrow wrote a column in the *Chicago Defender*, "Art and the Home," and worked on the exhibition staff at AIC and as the head of the museum's printing shop.

Vernon Guider (1920–2007)
When he was 17 years old, Guider left Memphis for Chicago, where he secured an apprenticeship with Bronzeville sign painter Frank Phillips. Along with LeRoy Winbush, Guider learned the craft of and gained work experience designing signage and displays for the Regal Theater and Goldblatt's department store. After World War II, Guider formed Design Associates and became the leading sign painter on the South Side, designing signage for local businesses as well as for the political campaigns of the NAACP, Harold Washington and Jesse Jackson Sr.

Charles Harrison (born 1931)
Born in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and raised in Phoenix, Arizona, Harrison pursued a career in the field of industrial design after studying at SAIC with furniture designer Henry Glass and industrial designer Joe Palma. After time in the military, Harrison secured jobs with various design firms in Chicago during the late 1950s, including Robert Podall Associates, where he redesigned the classic View-Master. Harrison broke the color line at Sears Roebuck when he became the company's first African American designer and created iconic household products from sewing machines to record players to garbage cans.

Norman L. Hunter (1932–1992)
Born in Forkland, Alabama, Hunter served in the Army before studying art in first Detroit and then Chicago, at SAIC. As designers, he and Herbert Temple were instrumental in establishing the iconic identity of the Johnson Publication Company. In addition to illustrating and producing layouts for its magazines, Hunter designed product packaging for the company's cosmetics and hair-care lines as well as covers for its book publishing arm.

Gus Ivory (c. 1898–1959)
Ivory was a graduate of SAIC and the art director in 1925 for the only issue of *Reflexus* magazine. He was one of the first African Americans in Chicago to run his own ad firm, Ivory Studios Advertising, which produced newspaper ads and billboards.

Jay Jackson (1905–1954)
Jackson was born in Oberlin, Ohio, and moved to Chicago in the late 1920s to pursue a career as a cartoonist. He rose through the ranks at the *Defender* and earned additional money designing advertisements and catalogs for Valmor Products along with Charles Dawson. Jackson developed a distinctive and versatile style well-suited to a variety of projects, from action and adventure cartoons to patriotic war propaganda to mercenary commercial work. His talent also gave him the ability to reflect and interpret the youthful black middle class of the postwar era as a cartoonist in his syndicated "Home Folks" series, made just before his untimely death in 1954.

Jae Jarrell (born 1935)
Inspired by her grandfather's work as a tailor and her uncle's work as a haberdasher, Jarrell moved from Cleveland to Chicago to study at SAIC and pursue her passion for fashion design. After showing her work on the runway of the Ebony Fashion Fair and in her Chicago storefront, Jae of Hyde Park, Jarrell sought outlets outside of the market. Along with her husband, Wadsworth, Jarrell was among the founding members of AfriCOBRA. In garments such as the Revolutionary Suit (1968) and the Urban Wall Suit (1969), Jarrell incorporated the motifs of Black Power politics and the black urban sensorium into wearable and provocative outfits.

John H. Johnson (1918–2005)
Johnson was born in rural Arkansas and moved with his mother to Chicago in 1933. He graduated as valedictorian from Wendell Phillips High School and served as editor of the student yearbook and newspaper. Work experience at Supreme Liberty Life Insurance gave him early exposure to Bronzeville's social and business networks. He founded Johnson Publishing Company in 1942 with a loan from his father-in-law and editorial assistance from Ben Burns, the respected white editor of the Defender. Together they launched *Negro Digest* (1942) and *Ebony* (1945). Over the next three decades, Johnson's enterprise grew to field half a dozen magazines, a series of cookbooks and history books, cosmetic and hair-care product lines and a touring Ebony Fashion Fair directed by his wife, Eunice.

Barbara Jones-Hogu (1938–2017)
Born and raised in Chicago, Jones-Hogu earned a BA from Howard University before embarking on training and career as a printmaker, earning degrees at SAIC, ID and IIT. As a member of the Organization of Black American Culture and as a founding member of AfriCOBRA, Jones-Hogu produced silkscreen prints that reflected both the militancy and the ebullience of African American life in a revolutionary age. Using bright "Kool-Aid colors," Jones-Hogu sold her prints widely at art fairs and black-owned small businesses.

Marjorie Stewart Joyner (1896–1994)
Joyner moved from Virginia to Chicago in 1911 and graduated from the A. B. Molar Beauty School in 1916, the first black woman to do so. As a beautician, inventor and businesswoman, Joyner would expand the boundaries of design for black women, first as the protégé of Indianapolis-based Madam C. J. Walker and then as the director of Walker's Beauty Colleges after the founder's death in 1919. In addition to patenting a permanent wave machine designed especially for black women's hair, Joyner reorganized Walker's enterprise into a new corporate direction, forging professional ties with the *Defender* and establishing herself as a leading businessperson and philanthropist on the South Side.

Andre Richardson King (born 1931)
After military service, where he learned the craft of lettering, King took advantage of the GI Bill to study at SAIC. In 1957, while still a student, he started work at Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM), one of the nation's leading architecture firms, where he would work in graphics and signage for 27 years. Embracing the ethos of collective design at SOM, which created visual signage and furniture as well as buildings for its clients, King developed symbols and informational systems for the Harris Trust Bank, the O'Hare airport and the federal highway system, among other clients, and reformed the firm's internal filing system. Although he rose to the level of associate, it became clear that SOM's informal color line would prevent King from rising any higher in the corporation. He quit to found his own firm, specializing in signage and environmental landscaping.

Emmett McBain (1935–2012)
Born and raised in Chicago, McBain began taking weekend classes at SAIC when he was merely 12 years old. Seven years later he started at the Ray-Vogue School, transferred to the American Academy of Art and took night classes at ID. In the remarkable career that followed, McBain worked on some of the most iconic ad campaigns of the day for white and black firms, from the Ford Mustang for J. Walter Thompson to Kent cigarettes for Vince Cullers Advertising. At Cullers and then with partner Tom Burrell, he became a leader in the burgeoning field of African American advertising in the late 1960s and 1970s, directing campaigns for McDonald's and Newport cigarettes. Inspired by the aesthetics and the politics of the Black Arts Movement, McBain committed his talents to community causes while doing freelance work for corporate clients.

William McBride (1912–2000)
Artist, designer, entertainer, entrepreneur and collector, McBride has been credited as a mentor by many of the postwar generation of African American designers. McBride moved to Chicago with his family in 1920 and graduated from Wendell Phillips High School. During the 1930s, he pursued his interest in the arts by taking classes at SAIC and by joining the Art Crafts Guild, a small collective of African American artists organized by painter George Neal. McBride found steady work as an artist through the Federal Art Project under FDR's Works Progress Administration. Along with Margaret Taylor Burroughs, McBride was an active participant in establishing the South Side Community Art Center, where as head of the printing shop he supervised the production of posters and souvenir booklets for the annual Artists and Models Ball.

Thomas Miller (1920–2012)
Miller spent his career at Morton Goldsholl Associates, one of the leading design firms in the nation, where he helped to shape many of its most iconic corporate accounts. Born and raised in Virginia, Miller moved to Chicago following combat service in World War II. With the help of the GI Bill he trained at the prestigious Ray-Vogue School. It was Miller's dream to study at ID, however, where László Moholy-Nagy and his socially egalitarian design philosophy reigned. Miller got the next best thing in Morton Goldsholl, a student of Moholy-Nagy who became one of Miller's key professional mentors. At Goldsholl, Miller would master nearly all aspects of corporate design and marketing, and his portfolio includes product packaging, advertising campaigns and TV commercials for corporate brands such as 7Up and Hamburger Helper. Outside of the office he was committed to supporting black community institutions, and executed a series of mosaics that is still on view at the DuSable Museum of African American History.

Zelda "Jackie" Ormes (1911–1985)
Born in western Pennsylvania, Ormes got her start as a cartoonist at the Pittsburgh Courier in 1937, where she created the Torchy Brown in "Dixie to Harlem" strip. When she moved to Chicago in 1942, Ormes made a place for herself among the institutions of black art and design on the South Side. In addition to writing a society column for the Defender, she took art classes at SAIC and began to join artist meetings at SSCAC, where she would be elected to the board in 1953. As a freelancer, Ormes never earned the same pay as staff artists Jay Jackson and Chester Commodore, but she achieved recognition with her Patty-Jo 'n' Ginger cartoon (marketing Patty-Jo as a doll from 1948 to 1956). Even though her appearances and outfits were applauded and photographed in the Defender society pages throughout the 1950s, her progressive politics still attracted surveillance from the FBI.

Robert E. Paige (born 1936)
A fabric artist allied with the Black Arts Movement, Paige trained at SAIC and worked at the architecture firm of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill. He traveled to Italy and Western Africa to learn the history and manufacturing techniques of textiles, and began producing scarves and drapings with the Fiorio Milano company to retail at department stores such as Carson Pirie Scott. Sears Roebuck sold his Dakkabar collection nationwide.

William Edouard Scott (1884–1986)
Scott moved to Chicago from Indianapolis in 1904 to study at SAIC. Although he was dedicated to the fine arts and studied in Paris with famed African American painter Henry Ossawa Tanner, he was also an early contributor to the emerging field of black print culture, including *The Voice of the Negro*, *The Crisis* and *Reflexus*.

Herbert Temple (1919–2011)
Born in Gary, Indiana, and raised in Evanston, Illinois, Temple was probably aware that the South Side Community Art Center was a gathering place for black artists when he returned to Chicago after World War II. After studies at SAIC and a stint at the Container Corporation of America, he was active in SSAC, where he met emerging designers Eugene Winslow and LeRoy Winbush and found a mentor in William McBride. The connection with Winbush proved decisive: Through him Temple landed a job at the Johnson Publishing Company in 1953, where he worked for 54 years. He took over the position of art director in 1967. With Norman Hunter, Temple designed nearly every aspect of JPC's visual identity, from the magazine layouts to the company logo, and they shepherded the company's visual identity from the buoyant 1950s to the revolutionary 1960s.

Charles White (1918–1979)
White was most famous as a fine artist, but he supported himself during the 1930s and 1940s by doing commercial work like sign painting and illustrating magazines such as the *Daily Worker* and the *New Masses*. He was active as a teacher at SSCAC and was committed to the politics of the Popular Front, and throughout his career he tried to make his art available to everyday people through murals, prints and occasionally commercial forms. In the 1960s, now in Los Angeles, he designed calendars for the black-owned Golden State Mutual Life Insurance Company.

LeRoy Winbush (1915–2007)
Winbush was born in Memphis and raised in Detroit before he moved to Chicago. He began his career inauspiciously as a part-time sign painter while a senior at Englewood High School, and slowly and surely grew to become a prominent designer and community leader. After creating signs for the Regal Theater, he worked as the first black art director at Goldblatt's department store, the first formal art director of the Johnson Publishing Company and the director of the SSCAC from 1945 to 1950. He was just getting started. Soon Winbush successfully established his own design firm, Winbush Associates, one of the few black-owned firms that served white-owned businesses. It specialized in window displays for downtown banks. He would become the first black president of the Chicago Art Directors Club and was posthumously awarded the 2008 medal from the AIGA.

Eugene Winslow (1919–2001)
Winslow's father was a sign painter in Dayton, Ohio, and his older brother, Vernon, was an artist and art instructor at Dillard University in New Orleans before becoming the education director at SSCAC. After studies at Dillard, service as a Tuskegee airman in World War II and work as a longshoreman in Virginia, Winslow returned to Chicago to study at ID. He found steady work at IMPAC, a white-owned marketing firm, where he was promoted to management. In 1963 he designed decals and calendars for A Century of Negro Progress, an exhibition celebrating African American achievement since the Emancipation Proclamation, and founded the Afro-Am Publishing Company with historian Russell L. Adams and David P. Ross.

This brochure is published in conjunction with the exhibition **African American Designers in Chicago: Art, Commerce and the Politics of Race** which took place at the Chicago Cultural Center from October 27, 2018 to March 3, 2019. The exhibition is funded in part by the Terra Foundation for American Art and The Richard H. Driehaus Foundation, as part of Art Design Chicago, an exploration of Chicago's art and design legacy.

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Work for this exhibition began over two decades ago with the research of Victor Margolin, professor emeritus of design history at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Victor's extensive interviews with many of the designers featured here provide the foundation for the exhibition. His primary research, blending the tools of art history and social history, was groundbreaking, and led directly to the formation of important archival collections at UIC's Daley Library and an important symposium on African American design at the DuSable Museum in 2000. At that point, few design scholars—to say nothing of the general public—had paid much attention to African American designers or to the racial politics that have historically shaped the design profession. And only recently had scholars of African American culture attended to the commercial arts as a site where black people intervened in the shaping of history—their own and the nation's—in what is now a dynamic field of inquiry. Victor's contribution to this project extends over every facet, from the selection of objects to the conception of the narrative. He established an ethos of research that emphasized the designers' voices and let us see their designs anew for the worlds they came from and the worlds they sought to create.

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Figure 16
Tom Miller, various brand designs, Goldsholl Brochure (c. 1970s). Thomas H. E. Miller Design Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Illinois at Chicago. James Prinz Photography, Chicago.

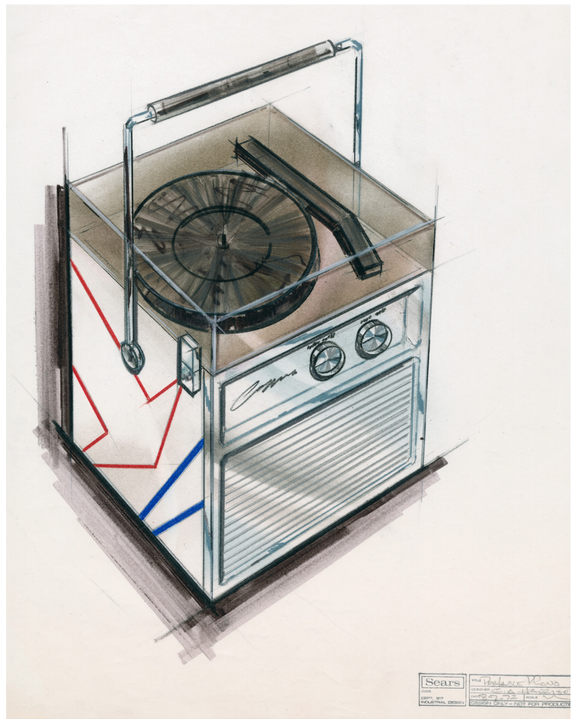


Figure 17
Charles Harrison, "Portable Phono" (Chicago: Sears, 1972). Charles Harrison Design Collection, Special Collection and University Archives, University of Illinois at Chicago.



Figure 18
Emmett McBain, "That's Where It's At" for Kent cigarettes/Lorillard (Chicago: Vince Cullers Advertising, 1968). Emmett McBain Design Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Illinois at Chicago. James Prinz Photography, Chicago.

Figure 19
Emmett McBain, "Black Is Beautiful" (Chicago: Vince Cullers Associates, 1968). Emmett McBain Design Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Illinois at Chicago

