

LAW OFFICES  
JOHNSON & EDWARDS  
SUITE 600 STANLARA BUILDING  
211 UNION STREET  
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE 37201  
TELEPHONE 256-2187

L. KENNETH JOHNSON  
E. L. EDWARDS, JR.

February 15, 1980

Mr. Greg Ridley  
Tennessee State University  
1500 Centennial Blvd.  
Nashville, Tennessee 37209

RE: Aaron Douglas, deceased

Dear Mr. Ridley:

Ms. Bell has been kind enough to inform me that you are an appraiser of the type of art work that the late Aaron Douglas did.

Fisk University is interested in purchasing the works of art that were left by Mr. Douglas, and as Public Administrator of Metropolitan Nashville and Davidson County, Tennessee, I have been appointed by the Court to look after the estate of Aaron Douglas. I would appreciate at your earliest convenience your giving me a written appraisal on the sketches and oils and other works of art of the late Aaron Douglas, plus the many books that are in Mr. Douglas's apartment, and the paintings, sketches, books and art supplies which I would, also, appreciate your appraising are in his apartment. Ms. Shelia Trice Bell, University Counsel, has the keys to that apartment, and she very kindly informed me that she would be glad to go over there with you when the appraisal is made.

I would appreciate this at your earliest convenience so that I might proceed with the sale of the rest of the property, but I do want the paintings appreciated and kept by someone that would appreciate them, if at all possible.

Yours very truly,

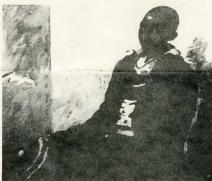


L. Kenneth Johnson

LKJ/cf

cc: Ms. Shelia Trice Bell

## AARON DOUGLAS 1999-1979



Boy with Stealing Cap

Oil

### *Statement from a Former Student*

In the middle forties, it was the work of Aaron Douglas that inspired me most. As a student of Douglas, I viewed constantly the gesticulating Negroid figurative murals that graced the walls of the Fisk University Library. Unlike that of other great artists of the day, the work of Aaron Douglas was full of African heritage. It showed fetish motifs, masks and artifacts that related to African culture. There was a special meaning communicated in the blues, pinks and grays that he worked with. The transparent quality of paint which helped to create two-dimensional narration put him ahead of Op art and many of the other experimental movements of our time. In his portraits, landscapes, still lifes and murals, every element plays its part well and the sense of movement in his compositions sometimes poised, reposeful, yet active and full of vigor, all come through to an aesthetic fulfillment to be found only in the work of a man blessed with an emphatic response to his African heritage.

One of the outstanding features of his murals is the absence of natural shadows. He employs the oriental quality of "laying up" the picture instead of using scientific perspective. The first quality certainly contributes to the dramatic effect found in his work.

It was in later years that I found through the work of Aaron Douglas a new direction. This new direction was a sense of being Black. The African mask and the fetish figure followed through into my own work. For me, his spirit in art has fostered the Afro-American idiom. It all came through clearly from Douglas, the artist, creator and professor long before we knew what he was about.

GREGORY D. RIDLEY, JR.

Greg Ridley  
TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY  
Nashville, Tennessee 37203

Art Department

March 21, 1980

Dear Art Collectors :

I've purchased through auction the private artifacts of Aaron Douglas (dean of the Harlem Renaissance painters) 1899-1979. I appraised the Art pieces left in his estate in a reasonable manner. Some of his major work will remain at Fisk University through a purchase made by the University.

The artifacts are : all of his private clothes, towels, linen, ties, bric-brac, some old sketches, notes, check stubs, his private case, shoes, utensils, brochures dated (1963 Fisk Festival).

After cleaning the apartment I discovered (in very bad condition) the "Boy with the Cap" oil painting. I understand he copied this composition two other times for Dr. John Hope Franklin, University of Chicago and Dr. James Lawson, former President and now of Washington, D.C. After careful drying the composition we discovered that my composition is the original "Boy With the Cap." The composition has written on the back "Street Urchin." We are supposing the name "Boy With the Cap" was given the painting at a later date than 1945.

If you are interested in any object from the Aaron Douglas artifacts please contact my manager:

Ms. Gloria Brooks Ridley  
1106 28th Avenue North  
Nashville, Tennessee 37208

Studio & Home PH. 327-0551

Office PH. 320-3660

*Note:*  
Where are all those rich people  
you know? Regards  
Greg + Gloria