During the current academic year, the National Portrait Gallery’s Education Department and Stuart-Hobson Middle School in Washington, D.C., are collaborating on the creation of a moveable mural at Stuart-Hobson based on the eighth-grade U.S. history curriculum. Amy Trenkle, an eighth-grade history teacher at Stuart-Hobson, approached Geri Provost, youth and family program coordinator at NPG, about this project. Provost was thrilled to provide her expertise.

How did this exciting project get started?
Trenkle wanted to replace the old history posters on the walls in her classroom with work done by students by revisiting a lesson on murals that Provost taught during the 2003–4 school year. Trenkle wrote a grant proposal to the Capitol Hill Community Foundation requesting funds for the materials to create a large-scale U.S. history mural. Both Trenkle and Provost felt that this project would demonstrate how collaborations between schools and cultural institutions can create life-changing experiences for young people.

Who is involved in the creation of the mural?
Twelve eighth-grade students wrote application essays and were chosen to work on this project for three hours on alternate Fridays. During each meeting, students participate in writing, reflection, and hands-on activities in order to become familiar with key figures in American history. Trenkle and Provost co-teach students—Trenkle concentrates on American history while Provost focuses on visual arts techniques and highlighting portraits from NPG’s collection.

I would like to make a mural for Stuart-Hobson because it would be [like] making a part of history. Student essay

and family program coordinator at NPG, about this project. Provost was thrilled to provide her expertise.

continued on page 2

Inside...
* Read about the exciting Retratos Teen Ambassador Program
* Learn about both Langston Hughes and Isamu Noguchi
* See why Geri Provost, NPG’s youth and family program coordinator, loves education
* Look at one of our new acquisitions

Smithsonian
National Portrait Gallery
Special Exhibitions: Retratos
Teen Ambassador Program

As part of the programming for the Retratos exhibition—which is coming to the Smithsonian’s S. Dillon Ripley Center in the fall of 2005—the NPG Education Department is initiating the Teen Ambassador Program. Members of the Education Department staff are partnering with the Latin American Youth Center (LAYC), Arena Stage, and Bell Multicultural High School in order to create this exciting opportunity for young people.

During fall 2004, NPG educators began a partnership with Bell through an outreach program on portraiture and self-portraiture. It is from this group of students that NPG will select eight Teen Ambassadors. The relationship will continue this spring as each ninth-grade English class creates a mural on the changing faces of Columbia Heights. In preparation, Bell students are creating “snapshots in time” of several buildings in the Columbia Heights neighborhood, focusing on three time periods: 1940s–1960s, 1970s–1990s, and 1990s–2006. LAYC will conduct oral history and interview workshops for this program. Prior to the mural lessons, NPG will provide Bell teachers with a professional development workshop associated with the mural lesson.

Eight selected Teen Ambassadors will begin work on a community portraiture program during the summer of 2005. With the guidance of the NPG Education Department staff, the Teen Ambassadors will curate an exhibition on portraiture featuring sitters from their local communities. NPG will then host “Portrait Studio” days at LAYC, at which Teen Ambassadors will serve as studio photographers.

Teen Ambassadors will then curate a community portraiture exhibition in conjunction with the Retratos exhibition this fall.

In September, the Teen Ambassadors will participate in museum theater training at Arena Stage, which will help them create original performances. These performances will take place at scheduled “Family Days” during the Retratos exhibition, with the guidance of NPG Education Department staff. Family Days are tentatively scheduled for October 29, November 19, and December 3.

To request a Retratos Teacher Resource Guide, please contact Geri Provost at (202) 275-2617.

What’s New with Outreach?

Students will soon begin designing and painting the mural.

When will this project be completed?
The moveable mural should be finished in May 2005, culminating with a reception for the artists,

I have a wonderful imagination! I am creative and love new opportunities. Even though I am not the best artist, I will try my best.

Student essay

their families, school administrators, Capitol Hill Community Foundation staff, and NPG staff.

This project is generously funded by the Capitol Hill Community Foundation in Washington, D.C.
Geri Provost, NPG’s youth and family program coordinator, began working with the Gallery’s Education Department in November 2002. She loves her work and the unique opportunity it provides her to interact with youth and adults.

A native of Massachusetts, Geri spent 1986 through 1998 in the San Francisco Bay area working as an office manager for a small computer software firm. Geri, a former member of the Art Guild of Pacifica, California, shared studio space at the Sanchez Art Center and showed her work regularly. Geri has worked in various mediums, including her favorite, oils.

Geri graduated with a B.A. from Smith College in 2002, majoring in studio art with a minor in education and child study. Although she considered teaching art at the secondary level, she discovered her passion for museum education during a museum studies course at Smith. Subsequently, Geri earned her M.A.T. in museum education from George Washington University in 2003.

Geri traveled to Paris this past summer to watch the end of the Tour de France bicycle race. There, she enjoyed picnics by the Seine and visiting as many museums as possible. Her seven-year-old daughter Juliette also keeps her busy. In the future, Geri hopes to spend more time in France, create more art, and inspire Juliette and others to do the same.

Special thanks to the following contributors:
Tia Powell Harris, Outreach Program Manager
Briana Zavadil White, School and Teacher Program Coordinator
Geri Provost, Youth and Family Program Coordinator
April Salomon, Assistant to the Director, NPG
Carol Wyrick, Director of Education
Dru Dowdy, Head of Publications
Caroline Wooden, Graphic Designer

Highlighting Recent Acquisitions

Red Grooms created this three-dimensional paper sculpture of popular New Orleans singer Fats Domino in 1984. Domino’s hits spanned more than fourteen years and evolved from a pounding rhythm-and-blues–style piano to the rolling boogie-woogie sounds of rock and roll. After hours of listening to songs like “Ain’t That a Shame,” “I’m Walkin’,” and “Blueberry Hill,” Grooms and printer Bud Shark produced this lively pop-up print that contains elaborate portrait work on Domino’s face. “Oooh-whee, baby,” we’re glad to have you, Fats!

Fats Domino by Red Grooms. Color lithograph, 1984
© 1984 Red Grooms / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

This newsletter is made possible through support from the Freedom Forum, a nonpartisan foundation dedicated to free press, free speech, and free spirit for all people.
I, too, sing __________.

I am the ____ brother.

They send me to eat in the ____

When company comes,

But I laugh,

And eat well,

And grow strong.

Tomorrow,

I’ll be at the table

When _______ comes.

Nobody’ll dare

Say to me,

“Eat in the __________,”

Then. ______

Besides,

They’ll see how beautiful I am

And __________.

Isamu Noguchi was born in Los Angeles, California. Although his father

was a Japanese poet and his mother an American writer, Noguchi

loved ________ sculptures. He used _____ different types of materials

from nature to make his sculptures including: _____, _____, _____,

_____, and wood. Noguchi blended the aesthetics of two different

cultures—those of the U.S. and Japan. He designed playgrounds for

________ children, stage sets for _______ dancers, portrait heads for

_______ Hollywood stars, and _________ furniture for exhibitions.
Langston Hughes (1902–1967)

by Winold Reiss (1886–1953), pastel on illustration board, 1925; National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution; gift of W. Tjark Reiss, in memory of his father, Winold Reiss
Langston Hughes was born in Joplin, Missouri, in 1902. He was raised by his grandmother, but when he became a teenager he moved to Cleveland, where his mother lived.

Hughes began writing poetry in the eighth grade. He wrote his first published poem, “The Negro Speaks of Rivers,” when he went to visit his father in Mexico. As an adult, Hughes traveled to many countries in Africa, Europe, and the West Indies, including Senegal, Nigeria, Cameroon, the Belgian Congo, Angola, Guinea, Italy, France, Russia, and Spain. He loved going to clubs and listening to blues and jazz, the inspiration for a large part of his work.

After living in many places, including Washington, D.C., Hughes moved to Harlem in New York City and called it his home during what is known as the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s. Hughes wrote about ordinary black people. He wanted to tell the stories of his people in ways that reflected suffering, love of music, laughter, and the language itself. “I tried to write poems like the songs they sang on Seventh Street... [These songs] had the pulse beat of the people who keep on going.”

In the forty-odd years between his first book in 1926 and his death in 1967, he devoted his life to writing and lecturing. A prolific writer, Hughes wrote sixteen books of poems, two novels, three collections of short stories, four volumes of what he called editorial and documentary fiction, twenty plays, children’s poetry, musicals, operas, three autobiographies, a dozen radio and television scripts, and many magazine articles. In addition, he edited seven anthologies. Hughes is regarded as one of the most significant American authors of the twentieth century.

A Closer Look:

Winold Reiss’s portrait of Langston Hughes is filled with symbols. Show the image provided to the students, telling them they have thirty seconds to take a closer look. Then cover the image and ask the students what they saw. Write all of the items on the blackboard. When they are finished, show the students the portrait again and compare it to the list. Pose such probing questions as: How would this portrait be different if the background color was different? (The blue background is significant because Hughes was inspired by jazz and the blues.) What type of expression does Hughes have? In what direction is Hughes looking? What do you think this means?

A Closer Look Lesson Extension:
Using the list of items that students found in the portrait, have students write a museum label that mentions several of the symbols.

Suggested Lesson:

Elementary, middle, and high school: Demonstrate the lyrical nature of Hughes’s poetry. Locate the Langston Hughes poem “Same in Blues” and provide copies to all students in the class. Using the following key, read the poem aloud to students, asking them to use the gestures in the key when they see matching punctuation marks.

Key:
, = snap
. = clap
! = stomp
refrain = class selects a freestyle movement
Isamu Noguchi (1904–1988)
By Winold Reiss (1886–1953), pastel on paper, c. 1929
National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution;
gift of Joseph and Rosalyn Newman
Born in Los Angeles to an American mother who was a writer and a Japanese-poet father, Isamu Noguchi spent most of his childhood in Japan. At the age of fifteen, he traveled alone to Indiana to attend high school. In 1924, he began to study sculpture in New York, focusing on academic classical figures and realistic portraits.

By 1927, Noguchi was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship to study modern art in Paris, where he came under the tutelage of Constantin Brancusi, the Romanian abstract sculptor who meticulously hand-carved stone and wood. As a result, Noguchi learned a great deal and was invigorated by new ideas.

Noguchi’s life changed abruptly during World War II, however, when he voluntarily spent seven months in a Japanese-American internment camp. There he designed landscape-like sculptures, including playgrounds and gardens. During the 1940s, Noguchi created his famous interlocking totems, mostly in gray slate and wood, as metaphors for global interdependence: no one element can stand without the others.

Returning to Japan after the war, Noguchi merged forms derived from traditional rice paper lanterns (akari) with modern abstract forms to create what he called “sculptures of light.” Toward the end of his life, he created stone sculptures that represented his continued exploration of dualism, allowing his work to transcend national borders, language barriers, and cultural and ethnic differences.

Isamu Noguchi: Master Sculptor is on view at the Smithsonian’s Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden from February 10 through May 8, 2005.

A Closer Look:
Using the image provided, lead students through a question-and-answer session. Sample questions might include: How would you describe the sitter? (List the answers on the board.) What kind of expression does he have? What is he wearing? What can the portrait tell us about him that a biography could not?

Suggested Lessons:
Elementary (fourth grade and up), middle, and high school: Noguchi designed many public spaces, several of which were playgrounds. Have students invent their own playground equipment by sketching different shapes such as triangles, cylinders, spirals, and lines. Do they recognize shapes that are also letters? Have the students share their work, then compare and contrast their playground equipment with Noguchi’s.

Middle and high school extension: Ask older students to brainstorm about issues that would affect the actual manufacturing of their playground design: safety, size, durability, and location. What kinds of materials would need to be used? What colors would make it more playful? How will people interact with it—can they run, jump, rock, slide, balance, or swing on it? Creating a three-dimensional model playground or writing a proposal are great ways to complete this project.