

Diversity in Art. By Joe Da Rold, Director. Plainfield Public Library

History of the Collection: Most public libraries house some type of artwork, such as portraits, prints, labels, etc., but few have fine-arts collections of original works by contemporary artists. The Plainfield Public Library's fine arts collection was created in 1884, when benefactor Job Male donated the library building on the condition that others donate money and art works. The building was christened "*The Job Male Public Library, Art Gallery, and Museum.*"

In its early years, the Library Board of Trustees had an Art Committee and an art-purchase fund, both of which ceased to exist long ago. Without that means of acquisition, few paintings were added between 1935 and 1995. In the late 1990's the library began mounting gallery exhibits for local and NJ artists, and in lieu of requesting a commission on sales, requested that the artist donate a painting to its collection. In most cases the library has received mini-grants from the Plainfield Cultural & Heritage Commission to cover a part of the artist's listed sale price.

Although the collection includes many local artists, quality is the only requirement for inclusion; it is notable for original works by Winslow Homer, John F. Carlson and Jonas Lie. The Homer watercolor has been shown in nearly every important Homer retrospective mounted by American museums. One of the Carlson canvases traveled to Sweden as part of the U.S. Department of State's *Art In Embassies* program. The collection has developed over the years, with gifts from artists, estates, and collectors. Despite this variety of sources, the overall quality of the collection is exceptional, with works by award-winning New Jersey artists Riva Helfond, Donna Grande and Gerry Heydt, and noted contemporary photographers George Tice and Helen M. Stummer.

With the library's focus on Diversity Studies, and rapidly changing community demographics, the library has in recent years emphasized adding artworks by local African-American and Latino artists. Their works have brought depth and quality to the collection. The following artists are representative of the library's fine-arts diversity.

ALONZO ADAMS



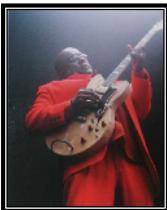
Alonzo Adams portrays contemporary Black lifestyles, "inspired by everyday sights and sounds that deserve immortality in a constantly changing world." His works hang in the collections of Bill Cosby, Rev. Jesse Jackson, Maya Angelou and Senator Bill Bradley, among others. The Plainfield Public Library owns ten of Adams' paintings and prints. **Fourth Position** was one of six donated by the artist in 2011.

INDIRA BAILEY

Plainfield artist Indira Bailey is known for her vivid drawings and colorful portrayals of African-American and African life. Her African paintings are based on her experiences and travels as a recipient of a Fulbright Hayes Fellowship. *The painting, **Initiation**, was a gift of the artist through a grant from the Plainfield Cultural & Heritage Commission in 2008.*



JOE BARNES



Born in Richmond, Virginia, African-American photographer Joe Barnes started taking photographs at age 11 with his Brownie camera. He moved to Plainfield in 1968. As a photographer he is self-taught. **Red, Black & Blues** was shot at the Vancouver Music Festival and was a blue-ribbon winner in the annual Plainfield Art Show. The photograph was a gift of the artist in 2011.

CLARENCE HASLAM

Jamaican-born sculptor Clarence "Fish" Haslam was a self-taught artist who immigrated to Plainfield in the 1980s. The wood sculpture, entitled **Missionary**, was a gift of the artist.



MEL HOLSTON

A life-long native of New Jersey, African-American artist Mel Holston works in a variety of media but is widely recognized for his finely detailed pen-and-ink renderings drawing on African themes and traditions. His drawings are enhanced by semi-abstract color washes which suggest elements of the setting. *The mixed-media drawing, **Rhinoceros**, was a gift of the artist through a grant from the Plainfield Cultural & Heritage Commission in 2006.*



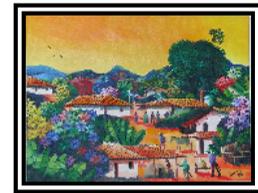
FERMIN MARTINEZ



Fermin Martinez has been creating art since he was a teen in his native Dominican Republic. His subjects are wide-ranging, but his palette and themes are rich with warm yet vibrant colors, predominantly depicting the tropical fauna of the Caribbean. A resident of Watchung, he is a founder of "RAICES: Hispanic Cultural Association." *The painting **Las Damas Balcony** was a gift of Joe Da Rold in 2007.*

JULIO ORTIZ

Inspired by the villages of his native country, Julio Ortiz is represented by an oil painting from his early *primitif* style. *Gift of Francisco (Paco) Ortiz in 2011.*



RAUL POVEDA



Ecuadorian-born artist Raul Poveda displays a wide variety styles and subjects, from still-lives and portraits to mountain village scenes of his native country. The library's most recent acquisition suggests the influence of Diego Rivera. *The painting, **La Candela**, was a gift of the artist through a grant from the Plainfield Cultural & Heritage Association in 2011.*

HELEN M. STUMMER

New Jersey photographer Helen M. Stummer has built a reputation for her photographic documentation of inner-city residents. Although primarily shot in New York City and Newark, these photographs inspire youth of all ages whenever and wherever they are exhibited.



FOLK-ART MASKS

Adding color and interest to the bulletin boards in the rainforest-inspired Children's Library is a collection of 27 folk masks from around the world donated by Library Director Joe Da Rold. The masks are from Mexico, Jamaica, New Guinea, Africa, India, China, and Sri Lanka.

