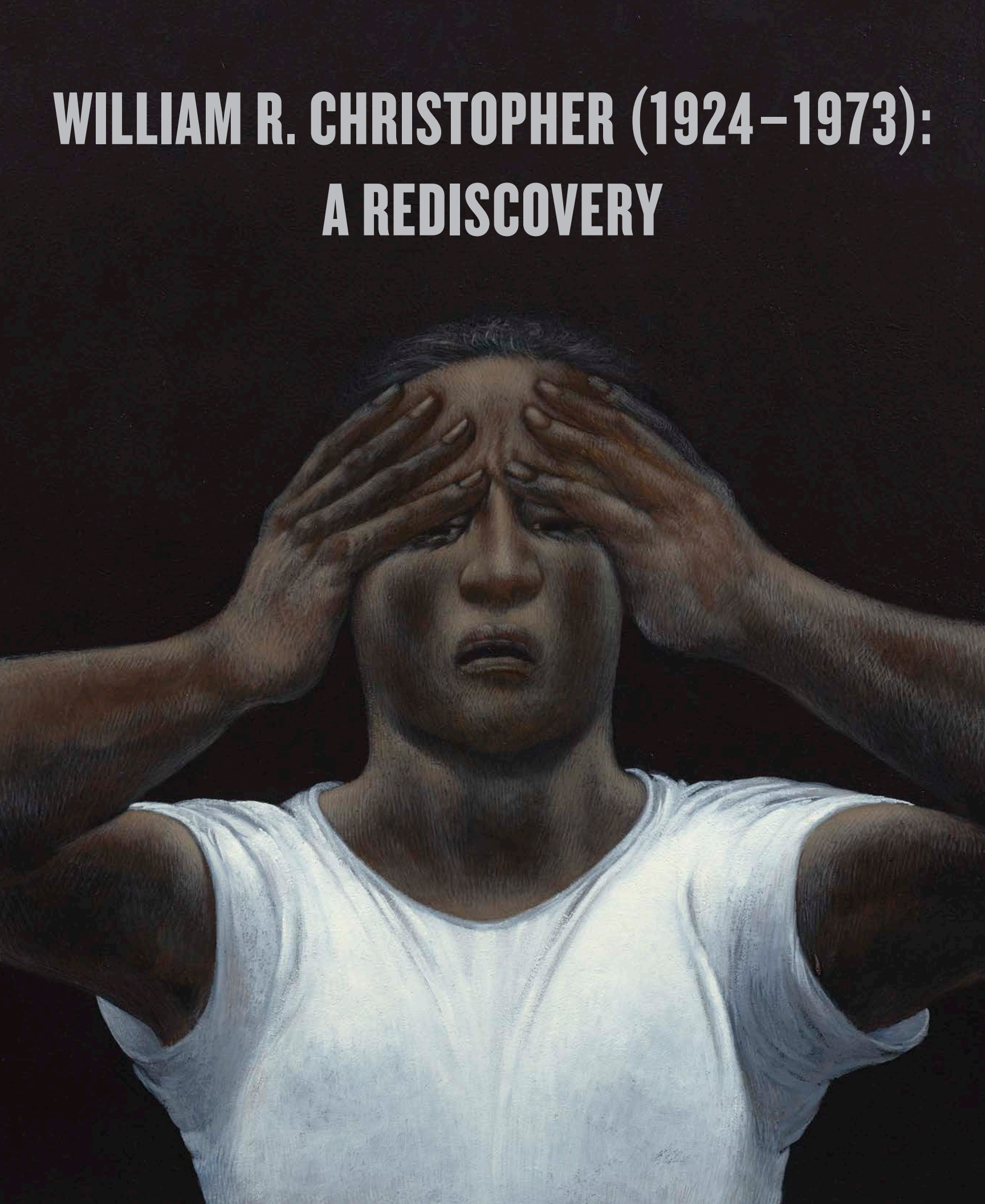
WILLIAM R. CHRISTOPHER (1924–1973): A REDISCOVERY



WILLIAM R. CHRISTOPHER (1924–1973): A REDISCOVERY

OCTOBER 12–DECEMBER 1, 2023

ESSAY BY DR. DIANA L. LINDEN

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William R. Christopher (1924–1973): A Rediscovery is the first exhibition of this important artist's work in over fifty years. Comprehensive in scope, it includes examples of Christopher's genre paintings and Magic Realist images from the 1950s, his nuanced treatments of the Black female of 1961, and multiple paintings created in 1963, and dedicated to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (1929–1968). Sixteen of the works were assembled by the late Henry H. Crapo (1932–2019), an accomplished mathematician, dance historian, art collector, and a devoted friend to both William Christopher—known as Bill—and his life partner, the Magic Realist painter George Tooker (1920–2011). Crapo met the two artists in 1957. In the introduction to Christopher's catalogue for a one-man exhibition at Dartmouth College in 1965, Crapo wrote of Christopher: "The painting is the emblem of the man. William Christopher's artistic statements convey the same intensity of feeling, depth of vision, steadiness of belief, and beauty of spirit as do the episodes of his life."[1]

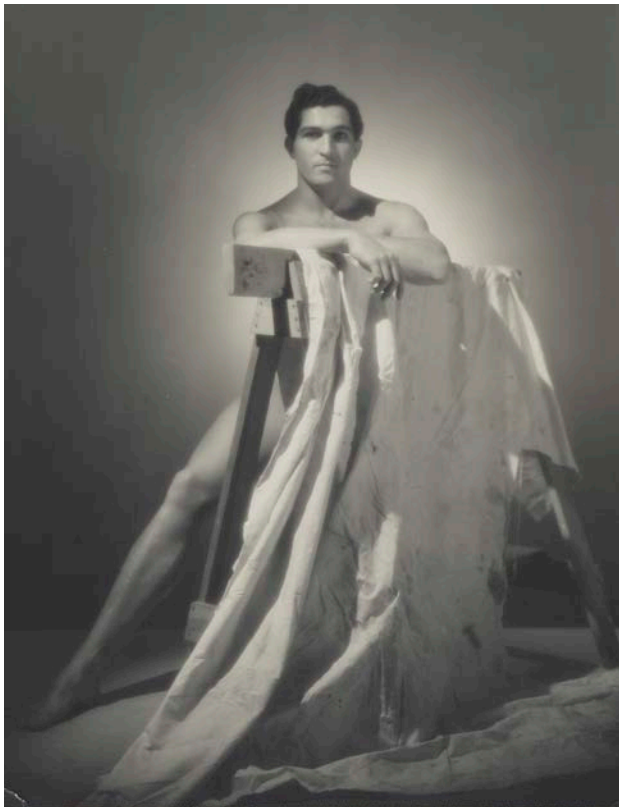
Although until lately the art world largely overlooked Bill Christopher's artistic statements and life, they deserve its attention and respect. He was a seriously accomplished artist and a dedicated Civil Rights activist. In 1964, with help from Tooker, he established a branch of the NAACP in New Hampshire, and in January of that year, he and Martin Luther King Jr. met at Boston University on the occasion of King's donation of a portion of his papers to the school's archives. One year later, the artist accepted King's personal invitation to join the Voting Rights March from Selma to Montgomery, perhaps the most important organized march of the Civil Rights Movement.[2] Throughout these years, Christopher kept journals chronicling the ways in which Martin Luther King Jr. inspired him as a painter, a political activist, and a Christian during the seminal era of the Black Freedom Struggle.[3] Given his relationship with King, his ongoing social and political activism, and his positive images of African Americans in his art, it is not surprising that the Archives of American Art (and others in the field) presumed that Christopher was an African American artist. In fact, he was a White Southern Baptist raised in Georgia.

The Artist: Biography, Training, and Influence

Still, his childhood informed his oeuvre. Born in Columbus, Georgia, Christopher was brought up in the 1920s, surrounded by African American servants. In a 2007 interview, Tooker explained that his partner had been "... largely raised by blacks, who worked for his family. He felt very... he identified with them."[4] In his 1963 diary, now part of the Martin Luther King Jr. Archives at Boston University, Christopher explores his early experiences with racial bias growing up in the rigorously segregated deep South, clarifying how seminal his relationship with those servants, especially his nurse, had been: "Perhaps the best place to begin is in the beginning—I was born—the first song I heard was from Francis my Negro nurse—what could be a better starting point than rebirth."[5] As he began to trace his experiences as a White man from the South and to document the United States' treatment of Black citizens, his feelings and reactions became manifest in his art.

Christopher recognized his artistic talent early. He also realized that he was gay and that in order to live the life he wanted, he would have to leave the South. Paris was his first stop, where he studied at the Sorbonne from 1946–1947, also enrolling at the Academie Julian (1946–1948) and the Ecole des Beaux-Arts (1947). The following year, he moved to New York City, where he trained under the French Cubist and Purist painter Amedee Ozenfant (1886–1966) from 1948 to 1950, and under Abstract-Expressionist painter and teacher Hans Hofmann (1880–1966) in 1950.[6]

In both Paris and Manhattan, Christopher was part of artistic and social groups composed of gays and straights, and Blacks and Whites, who mixed with great fluidity. In a diary entry from 1963, he gratefully acknowledged the many African American visual and performing artists who had positively impacted his life and encouraged his desire to become a professional artist. He wrote: "My past, all of the memories of hate, hasn't it been that most of the people helping me to be an artist have been Negroes. Richmond Barthe, Osceola Archer, Jimmy [sic] Daniels, Sidney Poitier. . ."[7] He discussed artists like the Modernist painter Beauford Delaney (1901–1979), who had awakened the young Southerner to the harsh realities of racism in the North.[8] Meeting Harlem Renaissance sculptor Barthe (1901–1989), Christopher recalled, was a "turning event" in his life. He cherished Barthe's interest in his work and encouragement to continue



George Platt Lynes (1907–1955)
William Christopher, 1950
WILLIAM CHRISTOPHER PAPERS, CIRCA 1920s–1972, ARCHIVES OF AMERICAN ART SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION, WASHINGTON, DC
USED WITH PERMISSION OF THE GEORGE PLATT LYNES ESTATE

his artistic training.[9] Indulging in a spate of proud name dropping, Christopher noted that he had socialized with Lena Horne (1917–2010), Poitier (1927–2022), and the vocalist, jazz dancer, and cabaret owner, Ada "Bricktop" Smith (1894–1984).

The Artist and George Tooker

Early in his career, Christopher, who was a handsome young man with thick, dark, wavy hair, served as a model for the photographer George Platt Lynes (1907–1955) and along with Lynes, became a member of a close knit, largely gay circle that included artists Paul Cadmus (1904–1999), Jared French (1905–1988), Pavel Tchelitchew (1898–1957), and George Tooker, who was then Cadmus' lover.[10] Another member of their set and Cadmus' brother-in-law, the influential collector and impresario Lincoln Kirstein (1907–1996), promoted the careers of Cadmus, French, and Tooker.[11] In 1949, when Cadmus and Tooker separated, Christopher and Tooker soon recognized that they were soulmates and became a couple. They would remain together until Christopher's early death in 1973.

The Artist: Magic Realism

In the 1940s and 1950s, Tooker, Cadmus, Christopher, and other artists in their circle chose to eschew the prevailing trend toward Abstract Expressionism and forged a path in the representational world of Symbolic and Magic Realism. Painting in tempera on panel and creating jewel-like tones reminiscent of those seen in early Italian Renaissance paintings (circa 1400–1500), they blended fantastical themes with the detailed brushwork of Realism.[12]

In 1943, Dorothy Miller (1904–2003) and Alfred Barr Jr. (1902–1982), the authors of *American Realists and Magic Realists,* which accompanied an exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), wrote: "Magic Realists try to convince us that extraordinary things are possible simply by painting them as if they existed."[13] The catalogue listed twenty-six contemporary Magic Realists, including Cadmus and French, linked with fourteen historical artists, including Thomas Eakins (1844–1916), Raphaelle Peale (1774–1825), and William Michael Harnett (1848–1892). According to Miller and Barr, humor, trompe l'oeil, satire, and a generally Realist style made these two disparate groups a peculiarly American whole. At a time when historians were asking what makes American art American, the MoMA essayists provided one answer—the combined art of reality and mystery.

Not every American viewer was charmed by the combination. Art historian Anthony J. Morris (b. 1976) argues that what offended Naval officials and viewers alike about Cadmus' *The Fleet's In!,* 1934 (Naval Art Collection, Naval History and Heritage Command, Washington, DC) and *Coney Island,* 1934 (Los Angeles County Museum of Art) was the artist's embrace of the carnivalesque as pure fun and satire, eschewing the moralistic lessons in the work of artists like William Hogarth (1697–1764).[14] As Morris explains: "…Hogarth was the master of a tradition that equated beauty and manners with virtue, and ugliness and vulgarity with moral depravity, as epitomized by his eight image morality tale, *A Rake's Progress.*"[15]

Cadmus' less than moralistic subject matter and interest in revelry was shared by William Christopher. The younger artist found inspiration on the boardwalk and at the side shows of Coney Island and produced a number of paintings set in this locale, including *Side Show* (1953), *Happy Jenny* (1956),

Happy Jenny, 1956, oil on canvas, 50½ x 35¼ in.

The Cage (1954), and *La De Da* (1953), all united by high-key, vivid colors, closely cropped spaces, and the direct gazes of the figures depicted.

Side Show, which depicts a stage divided into three sections, each featuring a different performance, demonstrates the artist's long-standing interest in trios and triptychs. The Medusa-like woman in the center, with multiple limbs behind her, is draped in writhing snakes, which echo the outstretched hands of the male crowd reaching up towards the stage. The frenzied energy of the crowd contrasts with the neutral expressions of the scantily dressed performers. Only one of them—a male—does not directly engage the viewer. All is both magic and real; as electric light bulbs illuminate the stage, fireworks erupt behind a vast crowd.

In *Happy Jenny*, the artist focuses on a single performer from the Coney Island boardwalk—a fleshy giantess perched on a cushioned chair. Is she ready to take the stage or is she resting in her dressing room after wowing the crowd? *The Cage* features a similar figure, but this time, there is more magic than realism. This performer is depicted along with a dwarf, a large snake wrapped around a bird's nest, and two caged monkeys. In *La De Da,* the grotesque is again on display, this time in a nightclub or bar, where the patrons smoke, drink, and gesture with elongated hands and exaggerated facial expressions. Under Christopher's brush, the crowd of bodies blend together in a scene of debauchery.

William Christopher and George Tooker in front of their Brooklyn Heights brownstone, circa 1953
WILLIAM CHRISTOPHER PAPERS, CIRCA 1920s–1972, ARCHIVES OF AMERICAN ART, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION, WASHINGTON, DC

The Artist: Urban Realism

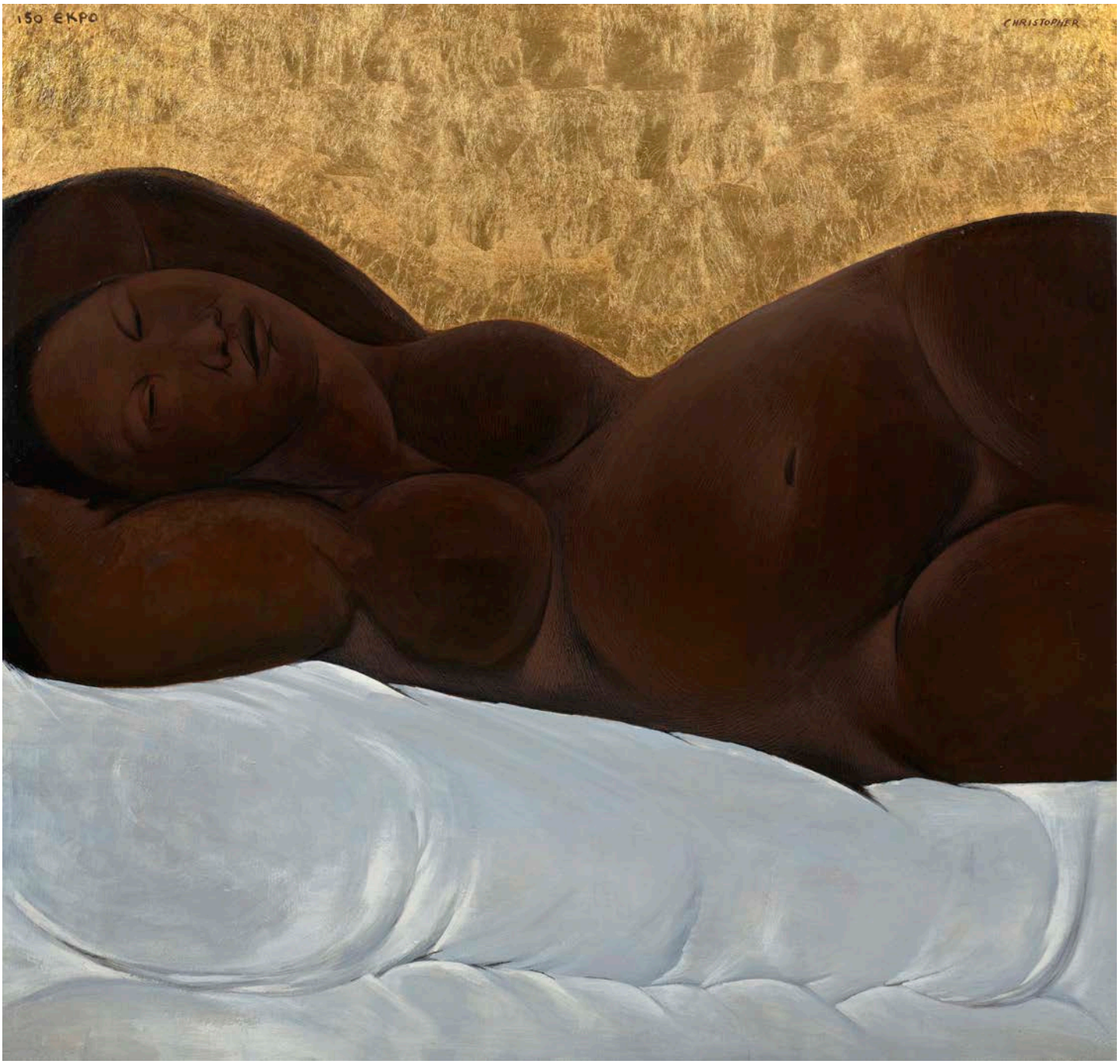
In the mid-1950s, Christopher and Tooker relocated from the cold-water flat they had been sharing on West 18th Street in Manhattan to a derelict former rooming house in Brooklyn Heights. The large windows of their brownstone looked out over busy streets and provided the artists ample opportunity to observe their multi-racial neighborhood.[16] In 1956, Christopher responded by painting *Shoe Parlor*. In this work, two Black cobblers gaze out toward the viewer, while at the rear of the store, two other Black men read newspapers. There is nothing extraordinary about the shop or its patrons, yet the painting is itself extraordinary. In 1956, few White artists chose to create a straightforward image of working-class Black life.[17]

The Artist: African Inspirations

The Brooklyn painting was the beginning of Christopher's turn toward Black subject matter. In the 1960s, the harsh realities of American racism, his childhood memories, and his empathy for African Americans pushed him toward political activism and a new artistic direction. His trio of large-scale, powerful works depicting Black women, *Benin, Ife,* and *Iso Ekpo*, were painted in 1961.[18] That year, Irving H. Sandler (1925–2018), the noted art historian of Abstract Expressionism, addressed these works in a review in *Art News*.[19]

In *Benin*, a nude Black woman reclines on a lightly creased white sheet with crumbled gold leaf in the background. The gold brings warmth and luster to the woman's dark skin and highlights her beauty. Jewels woven crown-like into her hair create a powerful aura of majesty. Holding her head high, the subject turns her torso away from the viewer, maintaining control and privacy. In addition to African American subject matter and memorable technique, this work displays Christopher's knowledge of European painting in its references to Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres' (1780–1867) Neoclassical masterpiece, *La Grande Odalisque* of 1814 (Louvre Museum, Paris).

In a respectful reference to the genealogy of African Americans, the paintings bear titles drawn from African culture. *Benin* was a kingdom in what is now southern Nigeria known for its advanced artistic traditions. *Ife* is an ancient Yoruba city in southwestern Nigeria and is also a woman's name meaning love. The artist, a collector of wooden African masks, titled the third



Iso Ekpo, 1961, mixed media on board, 36 x 38 in.

work *Iso Ekpo* after a type of Nigerian mask that he had received as a present. The Black artistic community took notice and Christopher wrote in 1963: "Since the New York and Boston exhibitions in 1961 my negro paintings have certainly caused a great deal of comment. I am very proud of them. Bernard Weinbaum told me about James Baldwin's seeing them and certainly in *Another Country* I hear things that I have said."[20]

The Artist: The King Series

In 1960, Tooker and Christopher moved on from Brooklyn to Hartland, Vermont, and Christopher became a part-time painting instructor at nearby Dartmouth College. It was while living there that Christopher would chronicle in text and images, the Black Freedom Struggle in the deep South and in particular, the activism of Martin Luther King Jr. In his studio, Christopher painted with the radio on, listening to accounts of Southern violence and King's peaceful protests and organized boycotts in response. He dedicated all of 1963 to painting and writing about it, making sketches and plans for a King Series and writing down his artistic and political intentions for this seminal year in the struggle for Civil Rights.[21]

Christopher did not paint portraits of King or other Civil Rights leaders nor document the important events of Project C for Confrontation.[22] Instead, he created a personal reckoning with the violent response to Civil Rights activism in the form of a collage titled *Birmingham or Memories of my Childhood—Then—Now*, 1963 (location unknown).[23] In other works, Christopher painted anonymous African American figures accompanied by masks and mirrors. In these paintings, white masks and hand-held mirrors convey oppression and ultimately, resistance. Reflections symbolize consciousness, truthfulness, and the attainment of freedom from the perception of others. Christopher's images clearly resonated with their audience. *Dark Mirror* (location unknown), which Christopher dedicated to writer Langston Hughes (1901–1967) and gifted to Martin Luther King Jr., hung for many years in King's office at the Southern Christian Leadership Council in Atlanta.

The King Series consists of six works: *Dark Mirror*, *Contemplation of the Mask* (Hood Museum, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire), *Awakening (Arise Sweet Spirit)* (Boston University), *Removal of the Mask* (location unknown), *Confrontation of the Mask* (location unknown), and *Basin (No. 5—In Honor of Martin Luther King)*. In *Basin*, a man looks out to a mirror which doubles as the picture plane. His posture—hands on head—communicates the emotional heaviness and pain associated with America's racial struggles. In front of him, a water-filled bowl serves as another mirror, reflecting his anguished facial expression. This mirror symbolizes self-introspection and the struggle of African Americans as they strive for personal and societal change and healing.

William Christopher in his Hartland studio with *Dark Mirror*, 1963
WILLIAM CHRISTOPHER PAPERS, CIRCA 1920s–1972, ARCHIVES OF AMERICAN ART, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION, WASHINGTON, DC

Christopher and King corresponded and, aware of Christopher's dedication to racial equality, King invited the artist to attend the presentation of his papers to Boston University in 1964.[24] Significantly, the artist's King Series was on display in the University's library on the day. Activist and artist would meet again in March of 1965, when Christopher and Tooker participated in King's March for Voting Rights, a series of three marches from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama.

In another nod to the importance of Christopher's Series, Civil Rights activist Reverend Dr. C.T. Vivian (1924–2020), a close friend and aide to King, conveyed King's request that Christopher display the six works in Montgomery prior to the March.[25] Although it is not known where the exhibition took place, Christopher recalled that Vivian told him that "you have no idea what they have meant to us all, the search for identity. The search for beauty," and compared them to the poetry of Langston Hughes.[26] In his 1965 diary, Christopher expressed being overwhelmed by Vivian's praise. After the March, upon their return to Vermont, George and Bill were interviewed at Dartmouth College about their experiences as activists in the South, during which Christopher reaffirmed his commitment to the Civil Rights Struggle and further actions of resistance.

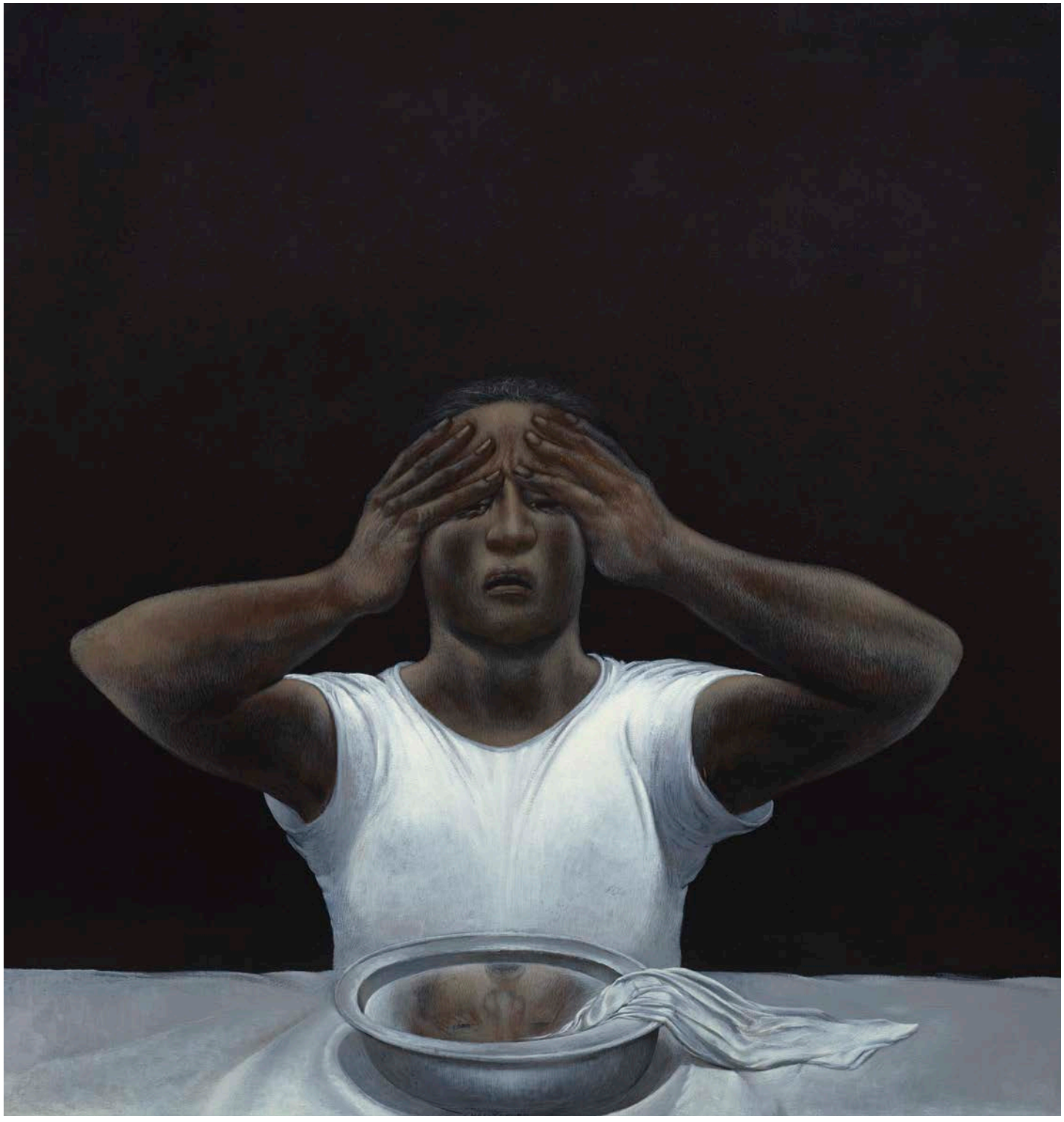
It is important to note that Christopher's works are depictions of African American self-liberation in which no White person enters the frame as savior or liberator. Neither as artist nor activist did Christopher ever envision himself in such a role. The King Series and indeed all of Christopher's oeuvre reflect a lifetime of interest in the experience of African Americans, and in so doing, broke from centuries-old stereotypes.

William Christopher Meeting Martin Luther King Jr., September 14, 1964
WILLIAM CHRISTOPHER PAPERS, CIRCA 1920s–1972
ARCHIVES OF AMERICAN ART, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION, WASHINGTON, DC

The Artist: Mourning and Religion

In large letters, heavily underlined, Bill emblazoned in his diary on November 22, 1963, the words: **KENNEDY ASSASSINATED!!** He followed this exclamation with words from the Lord's Prayer. Christopher and Tooker had recently been to the White House and met the President, so Kennedy's death was both historical and personal. Overcome with emotion and grief, the artist then turned his strong feelings into a painting titled *The Lord's Prayer (In Honor of John F. Kennedy)*. His tribute is an abstract, mixed-media work in pencil, watercolor, and red ribbon (perhaps symbolizing blood) on paper. A large area of black dominates the upper portion of the work, bold yet bleak, suggestive of mourning. The ribbon divides the black from a cream ground, where the Lord's Prayer is inscribed.

The deeply devout Christopher produced several other paintings related to religion. *Underland,* 1968, is likely the artist's interpretation of Hell. In the painting's upper portion, pleasant blue skies are filled with soft clouds, while below, a matrix of sterile white geometric forms lead to slanted, shadowed passages downward, where sinuous figures seem to dance among the flames. These same writhing figures appear in *Mammon Altarpiece* of 1963 (Dartmouth College), a highly symbolic interpretation of Hell and the seven deadly sins, which resulted in Christopher being referred to as a "Master of Surrealism."[27]

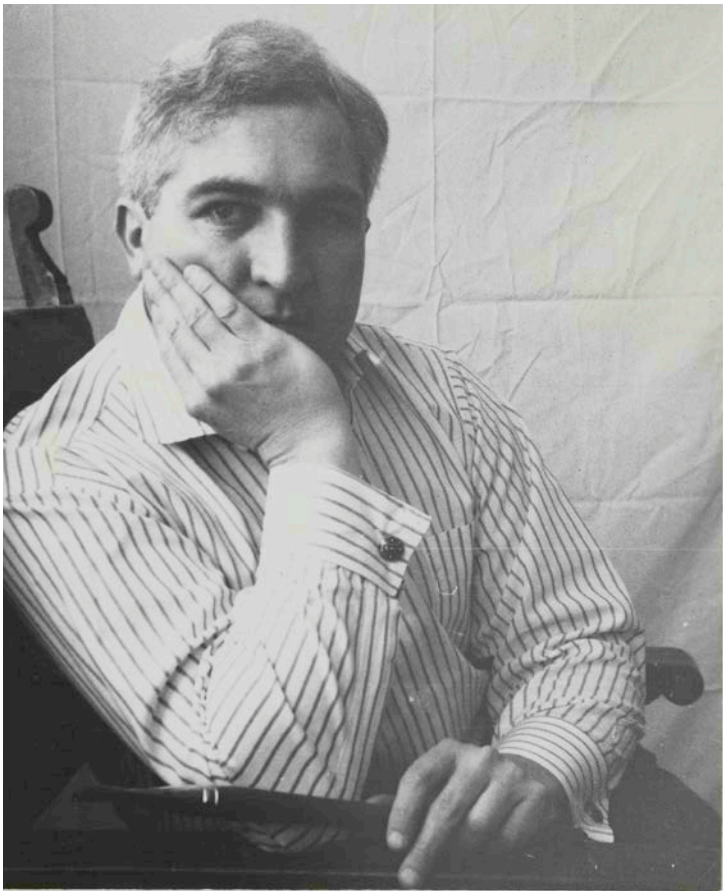


Basin (No. 5—In Honor of Martin Luther King), 1963, mixed media on board, 44⅝ x 42½ in.

William R. Christopher (1924–1973): An Artist Rediscovered

Christopher suffered a heart attack at age twenty-one and was never again in robust health. In the late 1960s, he and Tooker began spending winters in Spain to escape the cold and finally moved to Malaga in 1971, but Christopher's health did not improve. He died there at the age of 49. Tooker never had another partner and remained celibate for the remainder of his life. He memorialized his grief at the death of his soulmate in *The Lesson*, 1974 (private collection), a raw expression of personal sorrow.

For many years, William Christopher's limited oeuvre, early death, and divergence from the art historical mainstream have obscured the power of his art and his history of political activism. Now, a resurging interest in Magic Realism and works related to African American life and culture are shining a spotlight on this forgotten artist. His, a rare and powerful voice from the 1950s and 1960s, is now unsilenced and rediscovered.



William Christopher, 1963
WILLIAM CHRISTOPHER PAPERS, CIRCA 1920s–1972
ARCHIVES OF AMERICAN ART, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION, WASHINGTON, DC

GEORGE TOOKER (1920-2011)
The Lesson, 1974
egg tempera on gessoed panel
21 x 14 in.
PRIVATE COLLECTION

NOTES

1 See: Henry H. Crapo, *William Christopher: Paintings Collages Drawings* (Hanover, NH: Hanover Press, 1965), Introduction, n.p. Crapo continues: "The paintings of William Christopher present to our imagination the passages of spirit. Currents of his time, our time, are captured as they must be captured by any true artist. Abstraction into which life falls, whether automotive or born of a radical distinction, are humanized. Abstractions, returned to human focus, reveal the workings of our fate. Herein lies the beauty and necessity of William Christopher's work."

2 William Christopher Diary, 1965, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.

3 The Civil Rights Movement, also known as the Black Freedom Struggle, was an organized effort by African Americans to put an end to racial discrimination and guarantee equal rights under the law. The Movement started in the mid-1940s, with the greatest organizational efforts and results occurring in the 1960s.

4 Melissa Wolfe, Interview with George Tooker, July 28, 2007, Hartland, VT, unpublished.

5 William Christopher Diary 1963, Martin Luther King Jr. Collection, Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center, Boston University, Boston, MA.

6 Institute of Contemporary Art, *Art View 1960: New England Painting and Sculpture* (Boston: Institute of Contemporary Art, 1960), n.p.

7 For further information on African American performers, cabaret owners, models, and artists, see: Camara Dia Holloway, "Dark Stars: Re-inventing Blackness in the Interwar New York–London Circuit," *American Art* 37 (Spring 2023), vol. 1, pp. 3–31. Jimmie Daniels (1907–1984) was a well-known cabaret performer and owner, as well as an artist's model. Osceola Archer (1890–1983) was an acclaimed actress, one of the first Black actresses to appear on Broadway in a play titled *Between Two Worlds* (1934), an acting coach, and a theatrical director. A long-time friend of Bill's, the two maintained a rich correspondence that lasted for many years.

8 Of the many stories that Christopher recorded in his 1963 diary, one which is notable for its poignant discussion of racism in Greenwich Village, New York City's liberal, artistic bastion during the 1940s, was his remembrance of Beauford Delaney. Delaney famously held court at Connie's Calypso Cafe on McDougal Street, but Christopher asked to meet the older artist at a bohemian Italian café of his own choosing. As they arrived, they were told that a Black man was not welcome. Once outside, Christopher expressed his consternation, and Delaney calmly proceeded to enlighten him about Northern racism, having anticipated that the restaurant would not serve him; it was a lesson that Christopher never forgot.

9 Christopher Diary, 1963.

10 See: David Leddick, *Intimate Companions: A Triography of George Platt Lynes, Paul Cadmus, Lincoln Kirstein, and Their Circle* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000).

11 Justin Spring with George Tooker, "An Interview with George Tooker," *American Art* (Spring 2002), vol. 16, no. 1, pp. 60–81.

12 See: James Wechsler, "Magic Realism: Defining the Indefinite," *Art Journal* (Winter 1985), vol. 45, no. 4, pp. 293–298.

13 See: Dorothy C. Miller and Alfred H. Barr, *American Realists and Magic Realists* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1943), Introduction, n.p.

14 Anthony J. Morris, "Paul Cadmus and Carnival, 1934: Representing the Comic Grotesque," *American Art* (Fall 2012), vol. 2, no. 3, pp. 86–99.

15 Ibid., p. 87. The series of paintings was done in 1743 and is in the collection of the Sir John Soane's Museum, London.

16 The view from their Brooklyn home, along with the rooming house across the street, inspired George Tooker's *Windows* series (1950s–1970s), which communicates urbanity, isolation, and a sense of desolation.

17 In creating his own genre painting of cobblers taking a pause from their work, Christopher drew inspiration from the premier genre painter William Sidney Mount's (1807–1868) treatments of African American subjects, writing of Mount's work ". . . paintings of Negroes, beautiful pictures." Christopher Diary, April 21, 1963.

18 See: Zaria Ware, *Blk Art: The Audacious Legacy of Black Artists and Their Models in Western Art* (New York: Harper Design, 2023).

19 Irving H. Sandler, "Reviews and Previews: New Names This Month," *Art News* (December 1961), vol. 60, no. 8, p. 64.

20 The Boston exhibition most likely was at Joan Peterson Gallery (1958–1980), which represented Christopher for several years. Bernard Weinbaum (1913–2001) was a long-forgotten poet, based in New York City, who was associated with poets W. H. Auden (1907–1973) and James Merrill (1926–1995). James Baldwin (1924–1987), *Another Country* (New York: Dial Press, 1962). Christopher Diary, January 30, 1963.

21 Christopher Diary, January 30, 1963.

22 King's Project-C for Confrontation was a series of well-planned non-violent sit-ins, marches, and boycotts that occurred in Birmingham, Alabama.

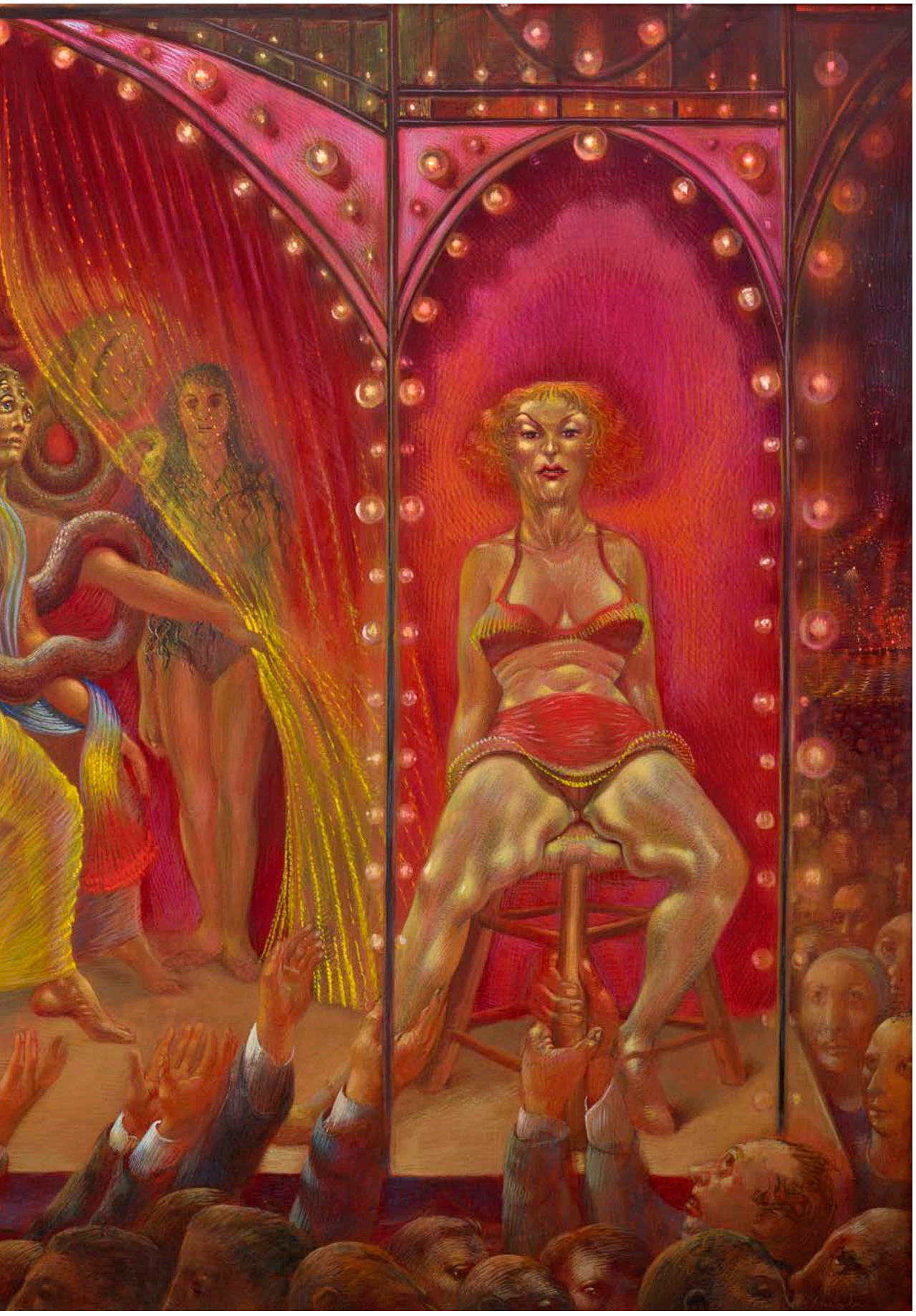
23 Martin Luther King Jr., *Letter from Birmingham*, April 16, 1963. See: Jonathan Rieder, *Gospel of Freedom: Letter from Birmingham Jail and the Struggle that Changed a Nation* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013).

24 King received his doctorate in Systematic Theology from Boston University in 1955.

25 It is unclear if the paintings were on display or if photographs of the works were shown.

26 Christopher Diary, 1965.

27 Frederick Byrd, "Master of Surrealism," *The Dartmouth* (November 8, 1965), vol. CXXV, no. 33, p. 1. This engaging exhibition included Christopher's interpretations of the Berlin Wall and the Holocaust.



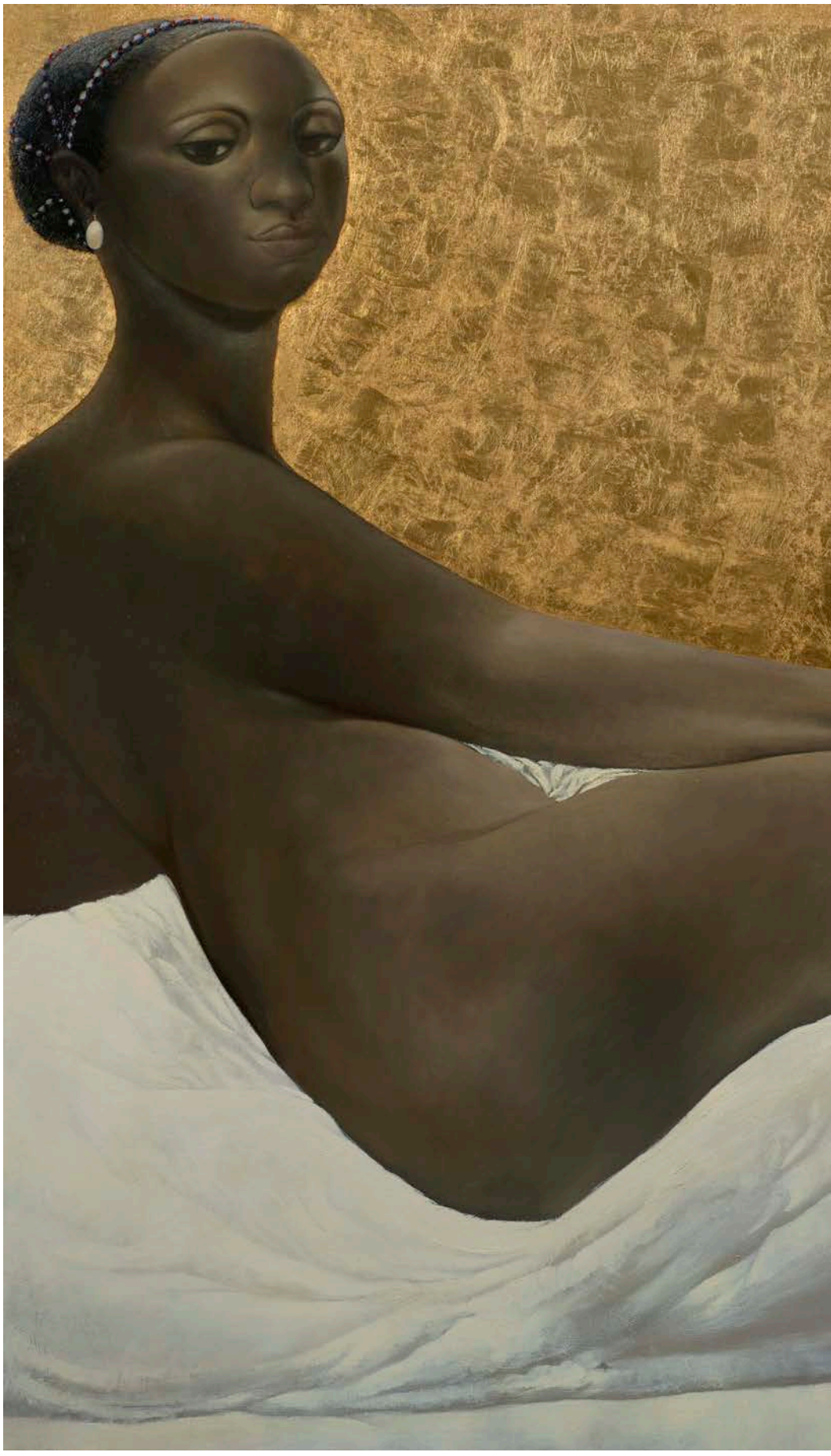
Side Show, 1953
tempera on Masonite
28⅛ x 39⅛ in.

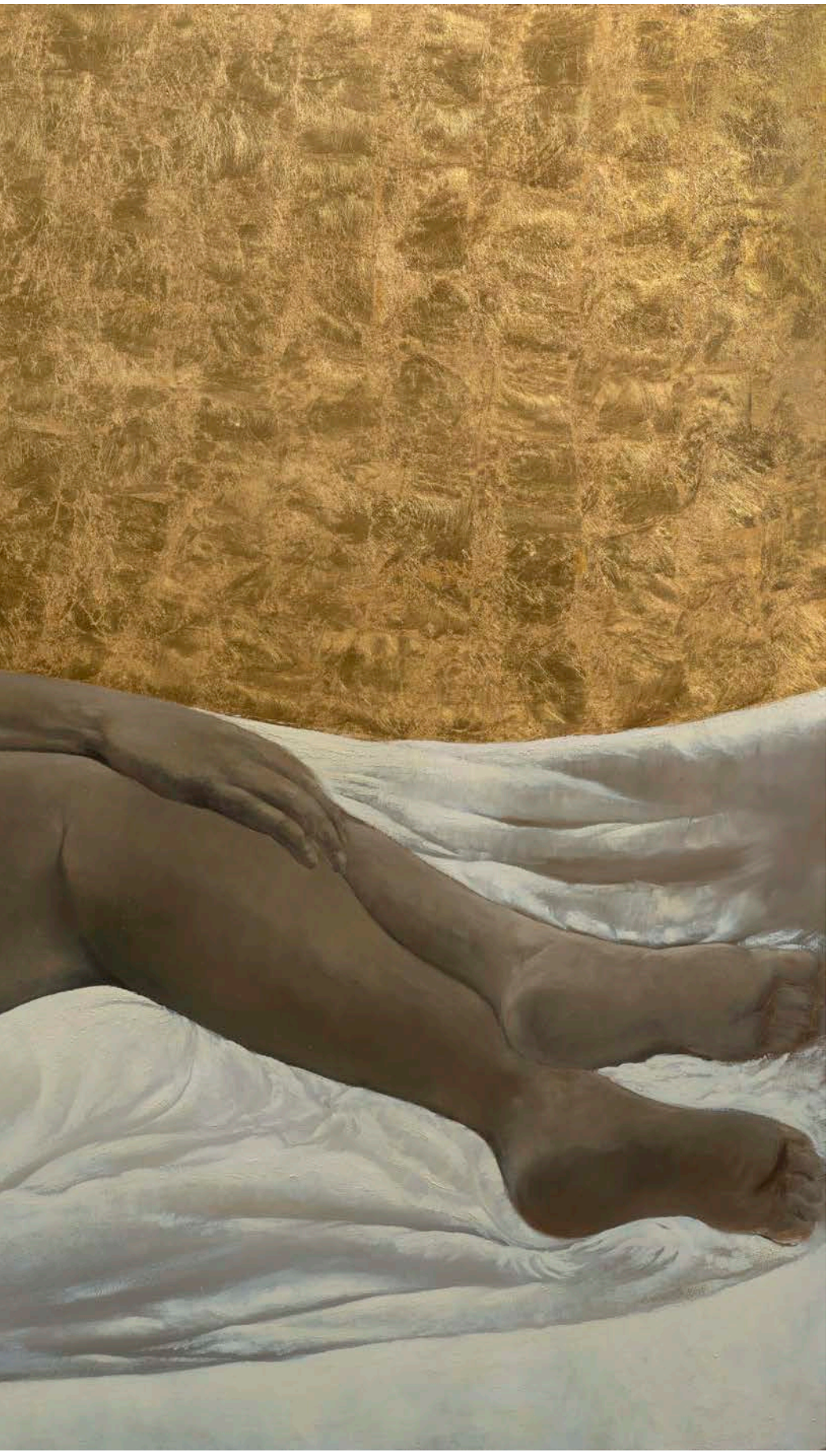
La De Da, 1953, oil on canvas, 29½ in. diameter

Black Venus, 1954, tempera on Masonite, 27⅞ x 32 in.

Portrait of a Dwarf, 1956, mixed media on Masonite, 43¾ x 19⅞ in.

Shoe Parlor, 1956, mixed media on Masonite, 27¾ x 32 in.





Benin, 1961
mixed media on Masonite
42 x 48 in.

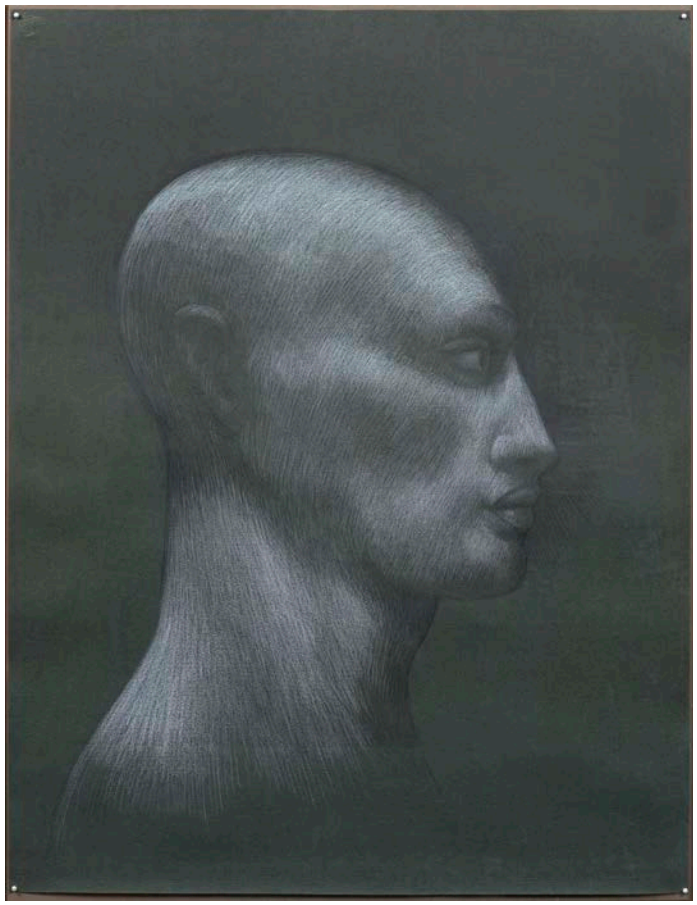
The Cage, 1954, tempera on Masonite, 48 x 48 in.

Ife, 1961, mixed media on board, 36 x 38 in.

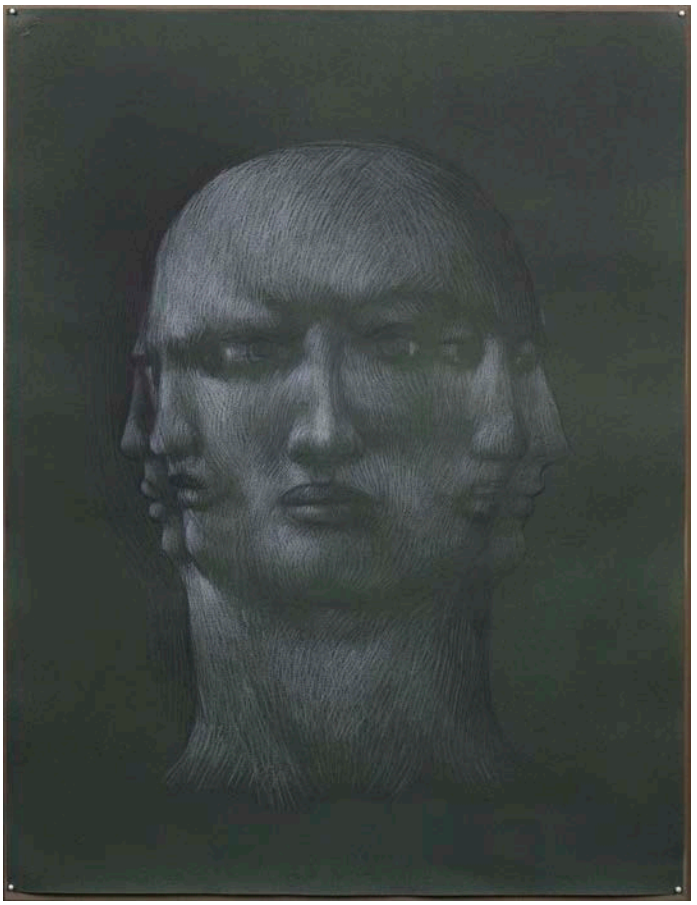
The Lord's Prayer (In Honor of John F. Kennedy), 1963, watercolor and pencil on paper with ribbon, 47 x 32¼ in.

Underland, 1968, oil on Masonite, 32¼ x 28⅛ in.

Lovers #2, 1961, mixed media on board, 36 x 38 in.



Triptych Drawing No. 1, 1962, graphite and chalk on paper, 25½ x 19¾ in.



Triptych Drawing No. 3, 1962, graphite and chalk on paper, 25½ x 19¾ in.

Drecht, 1965, assemblage, 20½ x 26½ in.

The Author

Dr. Diana L. Linden is a scholar of American twentieth-century art. She is the author of *Ben Shahn's New Deal Murals: Jewish Identity in the American Scene* (Wayne State University Press, 2015) and has contributed to many magazines, journals, and exhibition catalogues. This essay is based upon her article, "'In Honor of Dr. Martin Luther King': White Privilege and White Masks in William Christopher's Paintings of 1963," *American Art* (Fall 2019), vol. 33, no. 3, pp. 56–73, which was awarded The Patricia and Phillip Frost Award for Excellence in American Art (2019). Dr. Linden holds a BA in Art History from the State University of New York at Binghamton, a MA in Art History from Williams College, and a PhD in American Art History from the City University of New York, the Graduate Center. She was awarded post-doctorates from the University of Pennsylvania and the Getty and has taught at the University of Michigan—Ann Arbor; she is currently teaching at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CONTROL NUMBER: 2023917745

EDITOR: Ann E. Berman

PHOTOGRAPHER: Roz Akin Photography

DESIGNER: BTDNYC/Beth Tondreau

PRINTER: Meridian Printing

FRONT COVER
Basin (No. 5—In Honor of Martin Luther King) (Detail), 1963
mixed media on board
44⅝ x 42½ in.

INSIDE FRONT COVER
Side Show (Detail), 1953
tempera on Masonite
28⅛ x 39⅛ in.

INSIDE BACK COVER
Shoe Parlor (Detail), 1956
mixed media on Masonite
27¾ x 32 in.

BACK COVER
La De Da, 1953
oil on canvas
29½ in. diameter

WILLIAM R. CHRISTOPHER (1924–1973): A REDISCOVERY

OCTOBER 12–DECEMBER 1, 2023

Debra Force FINE ART, INC.

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