

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**RARELY SEEN SILKSCREEN PRINTS BY JACOB LAWRENCE AT THE PHILLIPS**

**Exhibition Showcases Lawrence’s Collaboration with Master Printmaker Lou Stovall**

WASHINGTON—Opening on January 7, The Phillips Collection presents an exhibition featuring 15 rarely seen silkscreen prints created by American artist Jacob Lawrence between 1986 and 1997. The series portrays the life of Toussaint L’Ouverture (1743–1803), the former slave turned leader of Haiti’s independence movement. L’Ouverture led the fight to liberate Saint-Domingue from French colonial rule and to emancipate the slaves during the 1791 Haitian Revolution, the first successful campaign to abolish slavery in modern history.

Lawrence had explored the same subject more than 40 years earlier in a series of paintings of the same title (now in the Amistad Research Center, New Orleans). The celebrated paintings, which were featured prominently at the Baltimore Museum of Art in 1939, laid the groundwork for Lawrence’s lifelong interest in the human quest for freedom and social justice.

While he based these later prints on the earlier paintings, Lawrence distilled the story to 15 works from the original 41 panels and significantly expanded their scale. He worked closely with DC-based master printmaker Lou Stovall to translate the colors and fluid movement of the original tempera paint to each composition.

In the print series, the narrative follows L’Ouverture from his birth to his rise as the commander of the revolutionary army to his eventual capture by Napoleon’s men. In the original painted series, Lawrence continued the story through the death of L’Ouverture as a prisoner of war in 1803, just one year before Haiti declared independence with the crowning of Emperor Jean-Jacques Dessalines.

In highlighting the life of the courageous leader Toussaint L’Ouverture, Lawrence invites us to reflect on Haiti’s transformation from an enslaved French colony to the first black Western republic. At the same time, the series reminds us of the country’s ongoing struggle to overcome poverty and political instability.



Jacob Lawrence, *Contemplation* (print based on No. 27, *The Life of Toussaint L’Ouverture*), 1989. Silkscreen on rag paper, 32 1/8 x 22 in. Printed by Workshop, Inc., Washington, DC. From the collection of Di and Lou Stovall

Since acquiring 30 panels of Lawrence's epic *Migration Series* (1940–41) in 1942, the Phillips has been dedicated to celebrating the life and furthering the legacy of the artist. Presenting works by Lawrence on loan from the collection of Di and Lou Stovall, this exhibition is on display while *The Migration Series* is on loan at the Seattle Art Museum for a reunion celebrating the 100th anniversary of Lawrence's birth. Learn more about *The Migration Series* at [lawrencemigration.phillipscollection.org](http://lawrencemigration.phillipscollection.org).

*Jacob Lawrence: The Life of Toussaint L'Ouverture* is on view January 7 through April 23, 2017.

### **ABOUT JACOB LAWRENCE**

Jacob Lawrence was born in Atlantic City, New Jersey, in 1917. The son of southern migrants, he moved with his mother and sister to Harlem in 1930 at the age of 13. During his participation in community art workshops there, Lawrence quickly discovered his love for art through the encouragement of such teachers as painter Charles Alston. Throughout the 1930s, Lawrence's art was inspired by the cultural visionaries of the Harlem Renaissance. In 1938, Lawrence had his first solo exhibition at the Harlem YMCA and started working for the WPA Federal Art Project. In 1940, he received a grant from the Julius Rosenwald Fund to create a 60-panel epic, *The Migration of the Negro* (now known as *The Migration Series*). The following year, when the series was exhibited at Edith Halpert's Downtown Gallery, the then 23-year-old artist catapulted to national acclaim.

In the following decades, Lawrence continued to create paintings drawn from the African American experience as well as historical and contemporary themes, such as war, religion, and civil rights. He taught with Josef Albers at Black Mountain College in North Carolina in 1946 and later at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Maine. He moved to Seattle in 1971, teaching at the University of Washington until 1983. During his later years, Lawrence worked in a variety of media, including large scale murals, silkscreen prints, and book illustrations. Until his death in 2000, Lawrence honed a unique visual language of abstraction that remained steeped in the human condition.

### **ABOUT LOU STOVALL**

Lou Stovall was born in Athens, Georgia, in 1937 and grew up in Springfield, Massachusetts. He studied at the Rhode Island School of Design and at Howard University. Since 1962, he has lived and worked in Washington, DC. His drawings and silkscreen prints have earned him grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Stern Family Fund. Stovall's own prints and drawings are part of numerous public and private collections around the world. He is also passionate about archival framing and furniture construction.

Stovall's studio, adjacent to his home in Cleveland Park, is a hub of his artistic energy. Under his direction, Workshop, Inc., founded in 1968, has grown from a small but active studio primarily concerned with community posters into a professional printmaking facility. Through Workshop, Stovall builds unity among artists in Washington, DC, and encourages service in the community.

### **IMAGE GALLERY**

High-resolution press images are available by request or by accessing the museum's online Dropbox here: <http://bit.ly/2h3sZ7m>

### **SPONSORS**

*Jacob Lawrence: The Life of Toussaint L'Ouverture* is organized by The Phillips Collection

### **ABOUT THE PHILLIPS COLLECTION**

The Phillips Collection, America's first museum of Modern art, is one of the world's most distinguished collections of Impressionist and Modern American and European art. Stressing the continuity between art of the past and present, it offers a strikingly original and experimental approach to Modern art by combining works of different nationalities and periods in displays that change frequently. The setting is similarly unconventional, featuring small rooms, a domestic scale, and a personal atmosphere. Artists represented in the collection include Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Vincent van Gogh, Edgar Degas, Henri Matisse, Pierre Bonnard, Paul Cézanne, Pablo Picasso, Paul Klee, Claude Monet, Honoré Daumier, Georgia O'Keeffe, Arthur Dove, Mark Rothko, Milton Avery, Jacob Lawrence, and Richard Diebenkorn, among others. The permanent collection has grown to include more than 1,000 photographs, many by American photographers Berenice Abbott, Esther Bubley, and Bruce Davidson, and works by contemporary artists such as Anselm Kiefer, Wolfgang Laib, Whitfield Lovell, and Leo Villareal. The Phillips Collection regularly organizes acclaimed special exhibitions, many of which travel internationally. The Phillips also produces award-winning education programs for K–12 teachers and students, as well as for adults. The University of Maryland Center for Art and Knowledge at The Phillips Collection is the museum's nexus for academic work, scholarly exchange, and interdisciplinary collaborations. Since 1941, the museum has hosted Sunday Concerts in its wood-paneled Music Room. The Phillips Collection is a private, non-government museum, supported primarily by donations.

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