

# The Washington Post

## For pioneering African American painter Lois Mailou Jones, a retrospective

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Lois Mailou Jones, the artist and professor, tended to bark at her friends and students in a sharp voice that was heavily tinged with a French accent, acquired during her years of inspiration in Haiti, West Africa and France. But as soon as she had made her point, and the visitor turned to the walls in her Northwest home and atelier, the sting was gone.

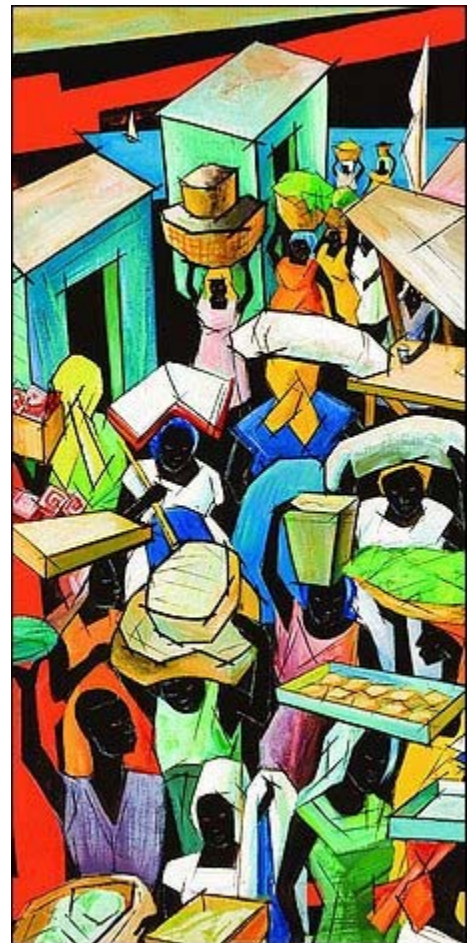
Mailou Jones's great gift was transporting the viewer into the daily lives of her subjects. Her work was colorful, soaked with the shades of skin, sunshine, textiles, fruit and other objects of art. When she did a mask, the eyes moved with you. When she showed an African American girl cleaning fish, the strokes were rhythmic.

Mailou Jones taught at Howard University for 47 years. She had plenty of lessons to share, not only about technique, but about fighting for acceptance in the white art world. Despite rejections and racism, she pursued her own path and is considered a forerunner of several black art movements. She was the first African American to have a solo show at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, in 1973. Jones, who died in 1998 at 92, is represented in many major museums and collections.

Her decades of work have been gathered in an exhibit that opens Oct. 9 at the National Museum of Women in the Arts. "[Lois Mailou Jones: A Life in Vibrant Color](#)" includes 70 paintings and other works, representing an output of 75 years.

"Marche, Haiti," a 1963 painting in acrylic, follows the deliberate stroll of market women and shoppers as they fill a twisting street in Haiti. The faces are blank, but Jones has positioned them to show the activity of a typical Haitian market. Mailou Jones paints as if standing on a balcony, looking down on the scene of figures balancing trays and baskets. It's dense, soft and angular, but accurately dynamic.

-- Jacqueline Trescott, cultural reporter



(Courtesy Of Lois Mailou Jones Pierre-noel Trust/national Museum Of Women In The Arts)