

## Lois Mailou Jones 1905-1998

### Words We Will Use Today

- **Motif: a distinctive feature or dominant idea in an artistic composition**
- **Cubism: a movement in art in which a subject is painted from multiple perspectives at the same time**
- **Africa: the second largest continent in the world, made up of many diverse countries and cultures**

**Lois Mailou Jones** Lois Mailou Jones, African-American artist, was born in Boston in 1905. During her long and remarkable life in art and education, she painted, designed masks, textiles and stained glass windows, painted hundreds of portraits of the famous and infamous, traveled the world, and never stopped learning and teaching.

**The Ascent of Ethiopia, 1932, Oil on Canvas** Ten years before this painting, King Tut's tomb had been discovered. This picture is an expression of Jones' multilayered cultural identity, depicting both the American fascination with this discovery along with her connection to Africa as a black woman.

**Les Fetiches, 1938, Oil on linen** This was painted during her studies in Paris and gives a nod to the Cubism movement popular at the time. Jones portrays five African masks (symbolic of five different African cultural groups), a white pendant charm, and a standing, red figure. When Jones brought Les Fetiches to her professors at the Academie Julian, they criticized the change of style and subject matter from her usual Impressionist landscapes and still lifes:

*"I had to remind them of Modigliani and Picasso and of all the French artists using the inspiration of Africa, and that if anybody had the right to use it, I had it, it was my heritage, and so they had to give in."*

**Moon Masque, 1971, Mixed Media on Canvas** In 1970, Jones visited 11 African countries to do research on African artists. Jones describes her trip to Africa as "a revelation and a rich experience." This picture represents Jones' effort to "combine the motifs from various regions of Africa" in one composition.

**Ubi Girl From Tai Region, 1972, Acrylic on Canvas** This painting depicts a young woman from the Tai Region of Liberia whose face is painted for the initiation into womanhood. Although Jones was an accomplished and successful painter, she once said, “I discovered that not only being black, but being a woman created a double handicap for me to face...” But by 1983, her paintings could be found in 16 of the most prestigious museums, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Boston Museum of Fine Arts.

Now it's your turn to create a mask in the style of Lois Mailou Jones!