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Nightlife Reflection

Artist: Archibald Motley

Artwork: Nightlife



Nightlife by Archibald Motley, 1943



Me presenting during ATL

The work *Nightlife* shows a vibrant nightclub with city residents dancing and drinking together. Motley used a burgundy tone of paint to give the art piece an intense, unnatural light. The nightclub is located in Bronzeville, a neighborhood area in Chicago, Illinois. Even though the bar is hopping with energetic people, the clock reads 1 o'clock, showing that it is never too late or early to have a good time. Two bartenders on the left side are pouring drinks into the city dweller's cups and stocking the shelves with multi-colored alcoholic drinks. The orange head on the jukebox was a peanut dispensing machine, that when you put in a coin and pull the tongue, a peanut is dispensed.

The reason I chose this art piece and did not wait to choose one at the museum, is because I fell in love with how Motley used his colors. I have never seen a piece of art so vibrant and energetic. *Nightlife* instantly gave off a positive quality which is also another reason I admire this art-piece. It demonstrates the beauty of being surrounded with your peers and having a good time, no matter what time of day it is. When I looked at Motley's other piece of work, I noticed how he always incorporated a big group of people together, celebrating life. He was one that always painted something dynamic and vivacious, to show a positive representation of African-Americans.

Since this artwork was painted during a time where segregation and racism was widespread, it gives a different, more positive side to segregation. Usually when racism is mentioned, there are a lot of negative connotations associated with it, but this painting shows the positive, sophisticated and lively side of it. The scene is very colorful, dynamic and spirited, and does not emphasize the bad side of segregation. Because of this artwork, I have seen a different side to racism and it makes me feel better because I know that racism wasn't all about unfairness and maltreatment.

In Ellison's *Train Station*, the painting also depicts segregation during that time, in the 1930s-1940s, but it gives off a more critical feeling. When one views *Train Station*, they can understand the division between blacks and whites. Whites were the only ones who were given assistance in terms of carrying their luggage. The blacks were also

shown moving to the North to find better jobs and lives, which was a movement named the Great Migration. While they were moving up North, the whites were going to the South for a vacation which exhibits the whites having a privileged lifestyle.