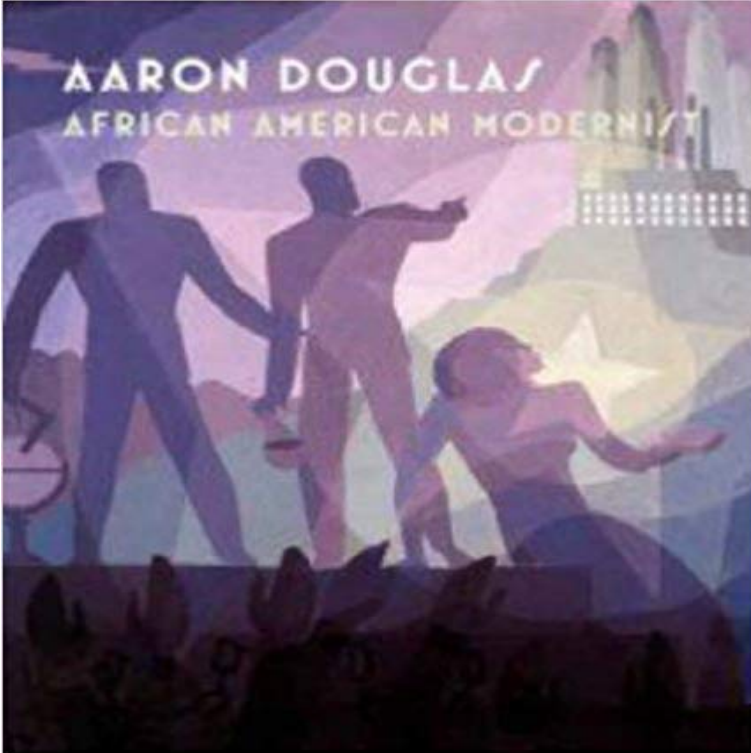


## Aaron Douglas: African American Modernist



In paintings, murals, and book illustrations, Aaron Douglas (1899-1979) produced the most powerful visual legacy of the Harlem Renaissance, prompting the philosopher and writer Alain Locke to dub him the father of Black American art. Working from a politicized concept of personal identity and a utopian vision of the future, the artist made a lasting impact on American art history and on the nation's cultural heritage. Douglas's role, as well as that of the Harlem Renaissance in general, in the evolution of American modernism deserves close scholarly attention, which it finally receives in this beautifully illustrated book. Douglas combined angular Cubist rhythms and seductive Art Deco dynamism with traditional African and African American imagery. The result was a radically new utopian visual vocabulary that evoked both current realities and hopes for a better future. Presenting more than ninety illustrations of Douglas's works and the commentary of leading critics and historians, this book focuses on the artist's career from the 1920s through the 1940s in relation to American modernism. Its authors argue that Douglas's bold work opened doors for African American artists in Harlem and beyond, and that it invited a dialogue with modernism that put African American life, labor, and freedom, along with African traditions and motifs, at its center. New information emerges from these pages, reflecting the rich interchange between the visual arts, music, dance, literature, and politics that shaped Douglas's work and also defined the Harlem Renaissance.

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