

The Harlem Renaissance, a movement of the 1920's, marked the twentieth century's first period of intense activity by African Americans in the field of literature, art, and music in the United States.

The philosophy of the movement combined realism, ethnic consciousness, and Americanism.

Encouraged by the example of certain Americans of European descent such as Thomas Eakins, Robert Henri, and George Luks, who had included persons of African descent in their paintings as serious studies rather than as trivial or sentimental stereotypes, African American artists of this period set about creating a new portrayal of themselves and their lives in the United States.

As they began to strive for social and cultural independence.

Their attitudes toward themselves changed, and, to some extent, other segments of American society began to change their attitudes toward them.

Thus, though the Harlem Renaissance was a short-lived movement, its impact on American art and culture continues to the present.

The district in New York City known as Harlem was the capital of the movement.

In 1925 an issue of Survey Graphic magazine devoted exclusively to Harlem and edited by philosopher Alain Locke became the manifesto of the African American artistic movement.

Locke strongly suggested that individuals, while accepting their Americanism, take pride in their African ancestral arts and urged artists to look to Africa for substance and inspiration.

Far from advocating a withdrawal from American culture, as did some of his contemporaries, Locke recommended a cultural pluralism through which artists could enrich the culture of America.

African Americans were urged by Locke to be collaborators and participators with other Americans in art, literature, and music; and at the same time to preserve, enhance, and promote their own cultural heritage.

Artists and intellectuals from many parts of the United States and the Caribbean had been attracted to Harlem by the pulse and beat of its unique and dynamic culture.

From this unity created by the convergence of artists from various social and geographical backgrounds came a new spirit, which, particularly in densely populated Harlem, was to result in greater group awareness and self-determination.

African American graphic artists took their place beside the poets and writers of the Harlem Renaissance and carried on efforts to increase and promote the visual arts.