

Alice Neel, Uptown

18 May – 29 July 2017

Victoria Miro · 16 Wharf Road · London N1 7RW

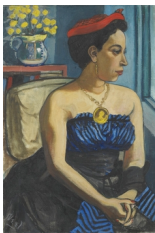
Gallery I, Lower floor



Girl with Pink Flower
1940s
Oil on canvas
61.3 x 45.4cm
24 1/8 x 17 7/8 in



Building in Harlem
1945
Oil on canvas
86.4 x 61.3 cm
34 x 24 1/8 in



Alice Childress
1950
Oil on canvas
75.9 x 50.8 cm
29 7/8 x 20 in

Alice Childress (1916 - 1994) was an actor, playwright and novelist. As Hilton Als writes in his 2011 prologue on Childress in *The New Yorker*, “Childress moved to Harlem to live with her grandmother, in 1925. Dreaming of becoming an actress, she joined the American Negro Theatre in 1941, and in 1944 she was nominated for a Tony as Best Supporting Actress, for her role in the Broadway production of *Anna Lucasta*... But, after that, Childress found little dramatic material that represented the lives of black women she knew, so she began writing it herself.” In addition to her work in the theatre and as a writer, Childress was involved with social causes and helped form an off-Broadway union for actors, working alongside the Actor’s Equity Association and the Harlem Stage Hand Local Union.



Ballet Dancer
1950
Oil on canvas
51.1 x 107 cm
20 1/8 x 42 1/8 in



Harold Cruse
c.1950
Oil on canvas
94 x 55.9 cm
37 x 22 in

Harold Cruse would go on to become a key intellectual figure in civil rights and black nationalist movements, and is best known for his widely published academic book *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual* (1967). In the 1940s and early 1950s, he wrote plays and was a member of the Communist-affiliated Committee for the Negro in the Arts (CNA). After meeting and travelling to Cuba with LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka) in the early 1960s, Cruse taught at Jones’ (Baraka’s) Black Arts Repertory Theatre/School in Harlem. Neel likely knew Cruse from political and literary circles.



Julie and the Doll
1943
Oil on canvas
71.4 x 51.4 cm
28 1/8 x 20 1/4 in



Anselmo
1962
Oil on canvas
76.2 x 55.9 cm
30 x 22 in

Anselmo was a neighbour who assisted Neel with handiwork in her apartment, helping her to build bookshelves.



Horace Cayton
1949
Oil on canvas
76.8 x 61 cm
30 1/4 x 24 in

Horace Cayton (1903 - 1970) was a sociologist, educator, author and columnist. He is most well known as the co-author (with St. Clair Drake) of *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City*, a history of Chicago's South Side from the 1840s to 1930s. The book was groundbreaking when it was published in 1945 and remains a landmark study of race and the urban experience. Cayton moved to New York from Chicago in 1949, the year this portrait was painted.

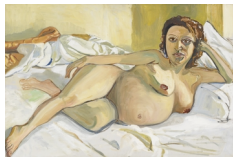
Reception



Abdul Rahman
1964
Oil on canvas
50.8 x 40.6 cm
20 x 16 in

Abdul Rahman was a taxi driver and self-described Black Muslim nationalist. He sat for Alice twice in 1964, on the second occasion wearing a kufi, a trench coat and with one glove on and one off.

Gallery I, Upper floor



Pregnant Maria
1964
Oil on canvas
81.3 x 119.4 cm
32 x 47 in

Maria was a friend of students who attended Columbia University who lived in Neel's building on West 107th Street.



Stephen Shepard
1978
Oil on canvas
81.3 x 61 cm
32 1/8 x 24 1/8 in

Stephen Shepard (who sometimes went by the name Étienne) was an art student at the time of the sitting.



Ed Sun
1971
Oil on canvas
106.7 x 76.2 cm
42 x 30 in

Ed Sun was a medical school associate of Neel's son Hartley. His parents immigrated from China to the United States in the 1920s where they later met and married.



Kinuthia
1973
Oil on canvas
101.6 x 76.2 cm
40 x 30 in

In 1973 Neel travelled to Africa with her son Hartley and her life-long friend John Rothschild, where an exhibition of her work had been arranged by Peter Kinuthia, a local radio host and business associate of Rothschild's, at the Paa Ya Paa Art Gallery and Studio in Nairobi. This portrait was painted by Neel later that year, when Kinuthia visited New York.



Woman
1966
Oil on canvas
116.8 x 78.7 cm
46 x 31 in

The sitter in the portrait is Ujjaini Khanderia who is the daughter of the Indian social-realist novelist Bhabani Bhattacharya (1906 - 1988). At the time of the portrait, Ujjaini Khanderia was enrolled as a student at the University of Michigan, and spending a week in New York visiting family. In March 2017, Saudamini Jain met with and interviewed Khanderia for *Scroll.in*. Now in her seventies, she faintly remembers when the portrait was made and reflected on how she was, at the time, "terribly homesick and wanted to go back to India". Fifty years on, Khanderia still lives and works in Michigan.



Ron Kajiwara
1971
Oil on canvas
172.4 x 89.2 cm
67 7/8 x 35 1/8 in

The son of Japanese immigrants, Ron Kajiwara (1944 - 1990) and his family were detained in a California internment camp during World War II. He later became a design director for *Vogue* and worked as a set designer for a number of productions for the Theater for the New City and the Stuart Pimsler Dance and Theater, among others. In 1990, Kajiwara died of an AIDS-related illness.



Benjamin
1976
Acrylic on board
75.9 x 52.7 cm
29 7/8 x 20 3/4 in

Benjamin was the son of the superintendent of Neel's apartment building on West 107th Street, south of Morningside Heights, where she lived and worked from 1962 to until her death in 1984.