

**Allan Freelon:
Pioneer African American Impressionist**

March 7- April 23, 2004

**Opening Reception:
Sunday, March 7, 2004
2:00 -4:00 pm**



Allan Freelon: Pioneer African American Impressionist will open at the North Carolina Central University Art Museum March 7 and run through April 23, 2004. The exhibition will be the artist's first exhibit in the South and is curated by Kenneth Rodgers, Director of the NCCU Art Museum.

Allan Freelon was born and raised in Philadelphia on September 2, 1895. After completing four years of study on scholarship at the Pennsylvania Museum and School of Industrial Art in 1912, he continued graduate studies in education at the University of Pennsylvania and received his MFS at the Tyler School at Temple University. In 1919, he joined the faculty of the Philadelphia Board of Education as an instructor and, in 1922, was appointed Art Supervisor for elementary, and, later, secondary education, a position he held until his retirement. Freelon participated in the Works Progress Administrations' Public Art project in the 1930s. His work within the Philadelphia public school system and at his own private studio school in Telford, Pennsylvania attracted a significant following of artists from the late 1930s through the 1950s. Although Freelon had studied etching with Earl Horter, he did not follow his teacher's growing interest in modernist abstraction and African art, but instead remained more closely linked to the late impressionist style of other teachers, Hugh Breckenridge and Allan Gruppe.

Allan Freelon initially came to prominence while exhibiting in the Harmon Foundation exhibitions in the 1930s. Soon after he produced a body of paintings and prints that depicted familiar scenes located in his native Philadelphia and in Gloucester, Massachusetts where he summered. He increasingly became dedicated to more traditional subjects in spite of influences to pursue other directions. Freelon painted portraits of neighbors in such works as *Old Woman*. and captured farm scenes based on familiar people and places. Freelon also produced etchings and other intaglio prints that occasionally incorporated some of the social content heralded by the Harlem Renaissance. He was an active member of the Philadelphia group of artists and writers associated with the New Negro Movement and served as the editor of the short-lived magazine *Black Opals* (1927-28). Alain Locke, Dean of the New Negro Movement, placed Freelon among the group of "traditionalist" artists with William E. Scott, William Farrow, Laura Wheeler Waring and Edwin A. Harleston who emphasized painting technique over "an art of social interpretation and criticism."

Freelon's works are included in the permanent collections of the Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Howard University Art Gallery among others. In addition to exhibiting with the Harmon Foundation, Freelon had solo exhibitions at Atlanta University in 1934, the Warwick Galleries, Philadelphia in 1935, and Temple University and Howard University in 1940. During the mid-1930s, he participated in group exhibitions such as the Whitney Museum's Regional Exhibition, in 1934; and the Harmon Foundation cooperative showings

of work by Negro artists with the College Art Association in 1934-35 and the New Jersey State Museum, Trenton, in 1935. Freelon served as an administrator and juror for hundreds of art exhibitions focusing on art produced by Philadelphia's youth. He remained an important figure in the Philadelphia art scene until his death in 1960.

Admission for the exhibition is free. Museum hours are Tuesday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. Group visits may be arranged by calling (919) 530-6211, Tuesday - Friday from 10 A.M. to 4 P.M., or by leaving a message at other times.