



**ELIZABETH
CATLETT**

EARLY LIFE

- Alice Elizabeth Catlett - born April 15, 1915, in Washington D.C.
- Her mother and father were the children of freed slaves
- Her father passed before she was born
- A wood carving that resembled a bird fascinated Catlett when she was younger - it was made by her late father
- First African American woman to earn a degree in Fine Arts at the University of Iowa



CATLETT'S BEGINNINGS IN ART



- Attended multiple universities to study art - denied admission from Carnegie Institute of Technology due to her race - enrolled into Howard University
- Began to study drawing, painting, and sculpting
- Grant Wood - one of Catlett's mentors; told her to create art that reflected what she knew best - Catlett sculpted pieces of African American women and children
- Really the first artist to celebrate the black woman in art
- Ossip Zadkine - Russian sculptor; influenced Catlett to create more abstract work
- Studied in Mexico for wood sculpture with Jose L. Ruiz
- Moved to New York - more opportunities would arise



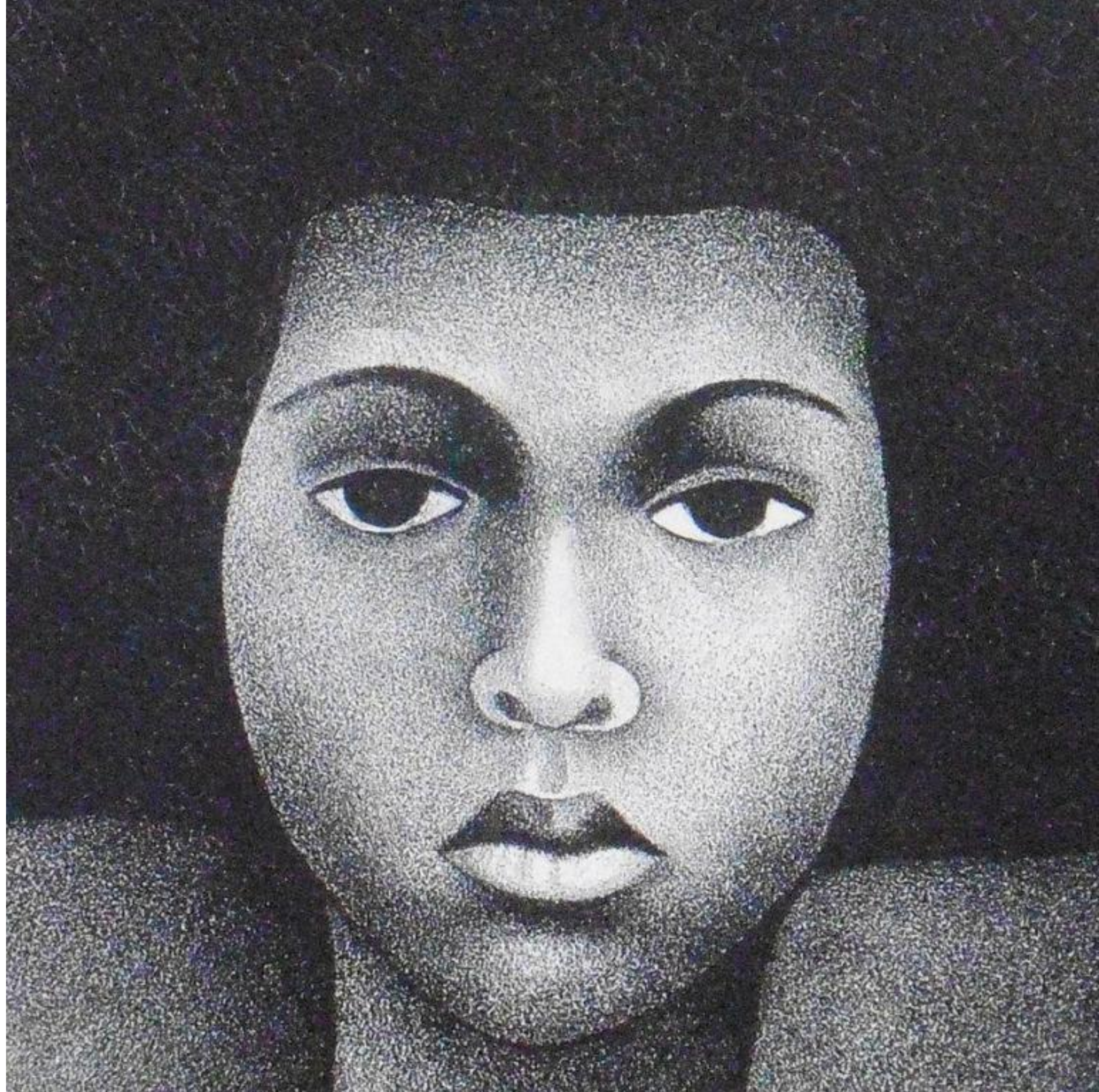






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Shelton 1987



A CAREER IN TEACHING

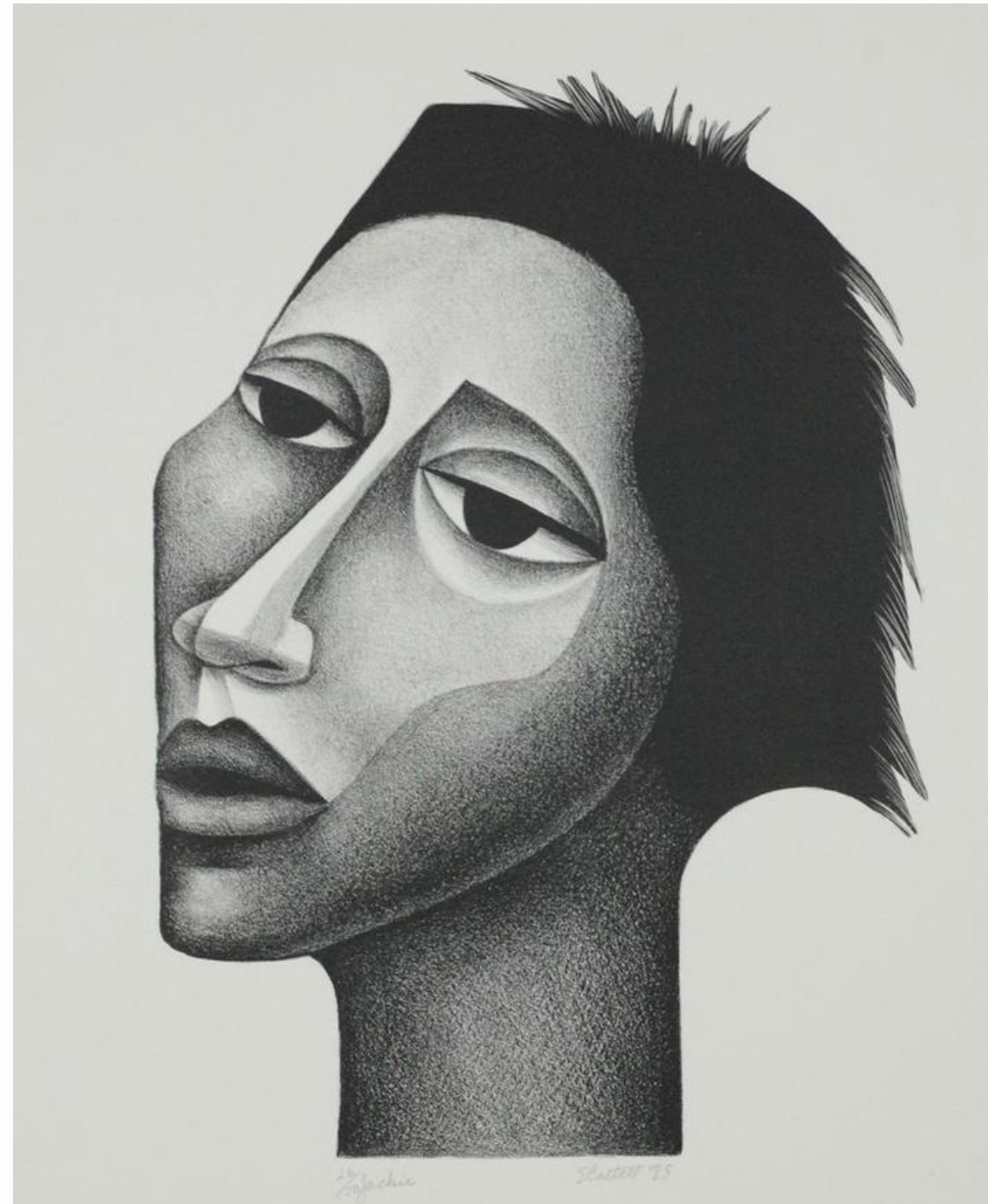


- At Hillside High School, Catlett was angry at the unequal pay due to her race, so she held a campaign for equal pay, but it was unsuccessful

- Throughout her career, Catlett taught art at many schools - Hillside High School, Dillard University, George Washington Carver School, and the National Autonomous University of Mexico



CATLETT'S OPPORTUNITIES IN MEXICO

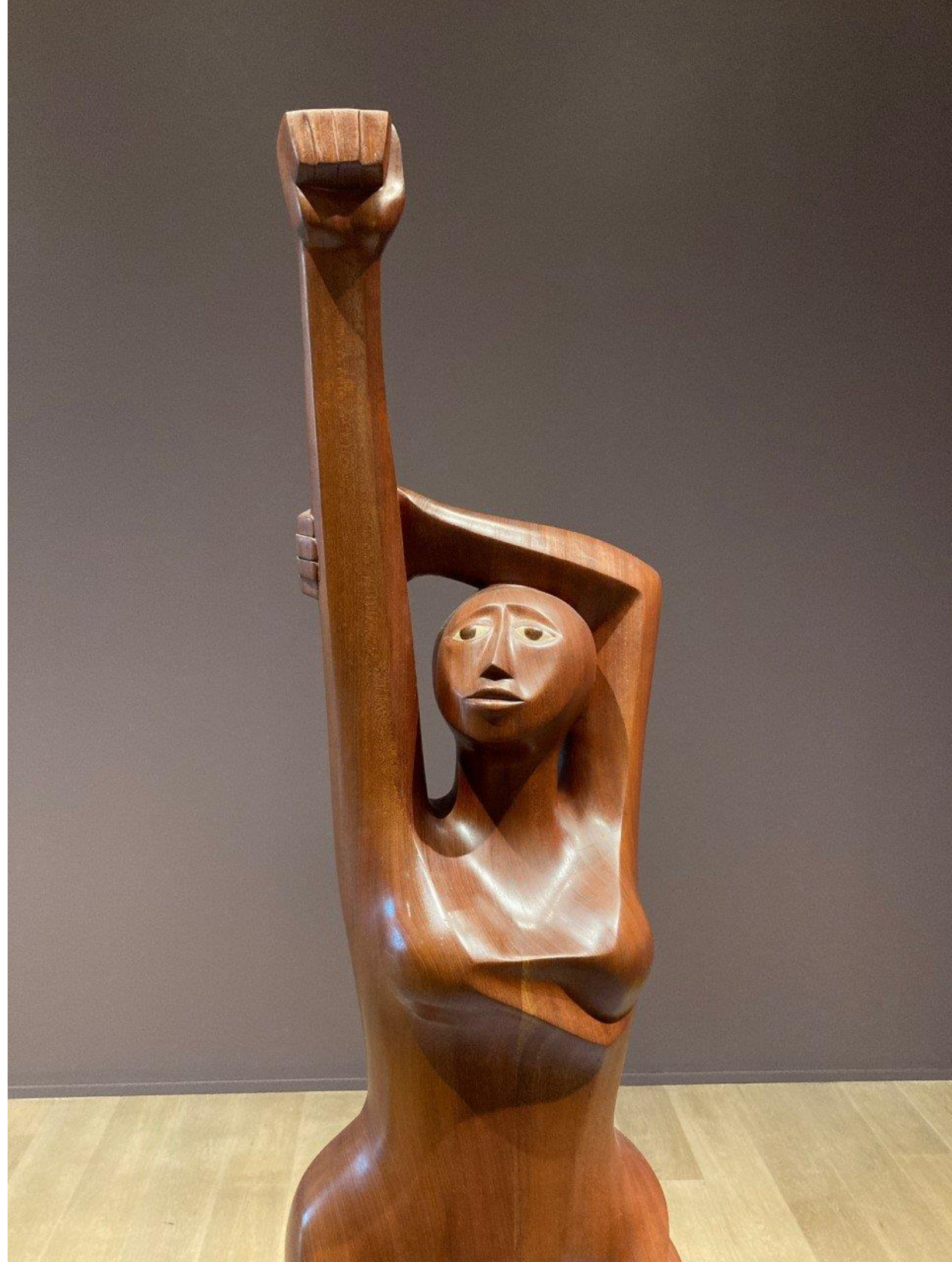


- Received a Rosenwald Fund Fellowship grant - allowed her to travel to Mexico to study
- Catlett met many other artists - influenced to study wood sculpture and ceramic sculpture
- She began to get more serious and dedicated to her work while in Mexico
- Catlett participated in a railroad strike in Mexico City - caused her to become prohibited from entering the US - Catlett renounced her American citizenship and became a Mexican citizen - her work was heavily influenced by social issues (later renounced her American citizenship again in 2002)

TALLER DE GRÁFICA POPULAR(TGP)

- A workshop in Mexico City that used printmaking to promote leftist causes and social issues
- Catlett worked with TGP to create prints that encouraged education and social change
- Linoleum cuts - printmaking technique in which clear lines are cut from linoleum to create an image
- Became more well-known for her printmaking
- Her work during this time also focused on social injustices going on in America during the Civil Rights Movement





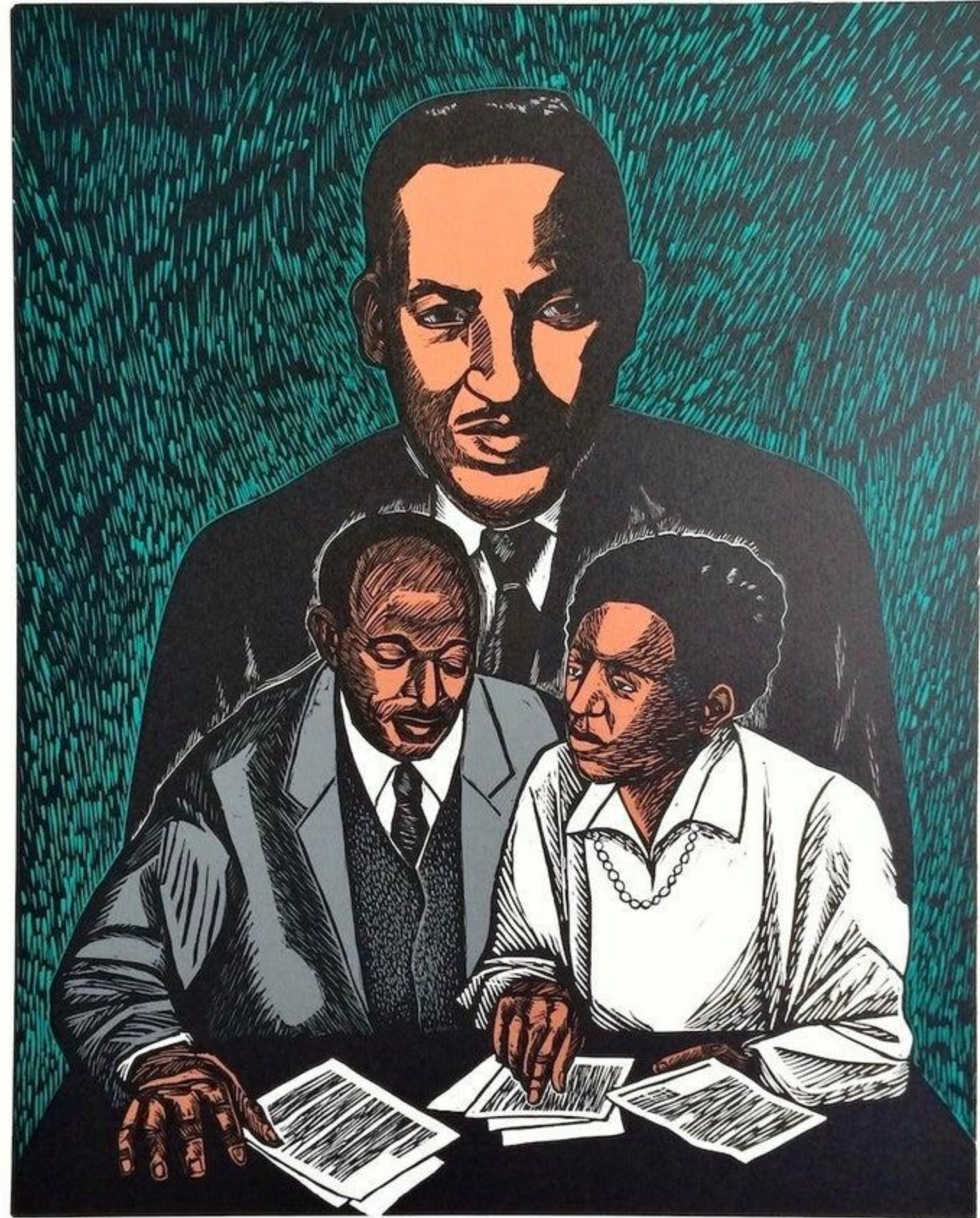






$\frac{11}{20}$ My role has been important
in the struggle to organize the unorganized.

Stallatt '47



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EXHIBITIONS AND AWARDS



- 1960s-70s - Catlett's work was shown regularly in museums and exhibitions (gained attention in the US at the spark of the Black Arts Movement - art movement that promoted Black pride)
- The Studio Museum (Harlem, NY), Howard University, Miller Gallery at Carnegie Mellon University, and much more
- Received many awards for her activism through art - NAACP Image Award, Art Institute of Chicago Legends and Legacy Award, and much more

CATLETT'S ARTISTIC STYLE

- Often used contrasts of light and dark shading
- Known for her strong use of value - how light or dark something is (on a scale of white to black) to bring attention to a focal point
- Influenced by African and pre-Hispanic art traditions
- Sculptures are known for being provocative and powerful
- Figurative pieces - social realism: art that focuses on real socio-political issues within the working class; Harlem Renaissance Artist





SHARECROPPER - 1952



THE FAMILY - 2002



CATLETT'S DEATH

- April 2, 2012, Catlett passed at 96 in her studio home in Cuernavaca, Mexico
- Passed away peacefully in her sleep
- Catlett continued to make art until she died

SIGNIFICANCE

- One of the most important African American artists of the 20th century
- Powerful and influential artist of the Civil Rights Movement
- Her art is a testament to belonging for oppressed groups
- Showcased how crucial art can be to promote change and equality
- One of the first artists to raise up Black women through her strong depictions of them

