

***Race and the Design of American Life: African Americans in Twentieth-Century Commercial Art***

Images of African Americans have adorned a wide variety of consumer goods throughout the twentieth century, from Aunt Jemima's pancakes to the Air Jordan basketball shoe. But these images did more than sell things: they put questions of race and racism in the heart of the American dream. Drawing from collections of food packaging, advertisements, children's books, album covers, and other household goods, this exhibit traces the vexed history of African Americans in commercial art—as images and as makers of their own image—and their vital role in shaping the rise and establishment of our modern consumer society.

Industries, entrepreneurs, and commercial artists capitalized on and gave powerful form to widely-held racist attitudes among white Americans throughout the twentieth century. Gradually, however, African Americans used commercial art as an instrument to claim a place in American society—from the nadir of Jim Crow racial segregation to the advent of the Civil Rights Movement. As a marketing tool, an aesthetic practice, and a language of visual communication, graphic design was a tangible and often intimate form that wove the politics of race into the fabric of everyday life.

Racial imagery has shaped the meaning and practice of American consumerism in a multitude of ways: as brands for mass produced industrial goods; as consumables for the decoration of American bodies and homes; as faces for the commercialization of African American culture; and as declarations of African American claims for consumer rights and identity. By exploring these modes, this exhibit traces a broad historical arc in which the graphic design of race—in no small part due to the work of African American designers and consumers—changed from hateful racist caricature to models of black aspiration. Yet it also highlights the tensions between race and consumerism that bear upon our present day. The otherwise ordinary stuff here illuminates the complex and often ambiguous ways that racial imagery continues to be associated with our dreams of the “good life.”

Chris Dingwall  
PhD. Candidate  
Department of History

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## **I. Of Black Books and the Souls of Black Folk**

W. E. B. Du Bois (1868-1963)  
*The Souls of Black Folk, Essays and Sketches*  
Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co., 1903  
Rare Books Collection

## **II. Of Race and the Meaning of Progress**

### **The Blackface Industry**

*Christy's Bones and Banjo Melodist....*  
New York: Dick & Fitzgerald, undated  
Fred W. Atkinson Collection of American Drama

*George Christy's Ethiopian Joke Book no. 3*  
Philadelphia: A. Winch, 1860  
Fred W. Atkinson Collection of American Drama

Ed James  
*The Amateur Negro Minstrel's Guide....*  
New York: Ed James, 1880  
Fred W. Atkinson Collection of American Drama

Charles Townsend  
*Negro Minstrels ... Instructions for Getting up Darky Entertainments*  
Chicago: T. S. Denison, 1891  
Rare Books Collection

Jack Haverly (1837-1901)  
*Negro Minstrels: Burnt Cork Specialties*  
Specialties Chicago: Frederick T. Drake & Co., 1902  
Fred W. Atkinson Collection of American Drama

Harry L. Newton (1872-?)  
*A Bundle of Burnt Cork Comedy....*  
Chicago: T. S. Denison & Co., 1905  
Fred W. Atkinson Collection of American Drama

William De Vere (1844-1904)  
*De Vere's Negro Sketches and End-men's Gags*  
Chicago: Regan Publishing Corp., 1924  
Celia and Delia Austrian Study Collection of Drama, 1600-1800

### **Ethiopian Drama**

George H. Coes (c.1828-1897)  
*Badly Sold, a Negro Act in Two Scenes*  
Boston: Walter H. Baker & Co., 1893

Fred W. Atkinson Collection of American Drama

*De Darkey's Dream, an Ethiopian Interlude*  
New York: Happy Hours Company, 1874  
Fred W. Atkinson Collection of American Drama

*The Old Kentucky Home, a Darkey Sketch*  
New York: Walter H. Baker, 1874  
Fred W. Atkinson Collection of American Drama

### **Blackface Machinery**

*The Demon Phonograph, or the Battery and the Assault....*  
Chicago: Dramatic Publishing Co., 1898  
Fred W. Atkinson Collection of American Drama

Frank Hockenbery  
*Prof. Black's Funnygraph or, Talking machine....*  
Chicago: T. S. Denison, 1886  
Fred W. Atkinson Collection of American Drama

Postcards

"We don't got de 'DOMESTIC,' we has!" Domestic Sewing Machine, Co.

"We Never Fade!!" J & P Coats' Black

Undated

William M. Yoffee Collection of Ephemera

### **D. B. Heller & Co.**

Zanzibar Brand Bitter Almond Flavor  
c. 1924  
B. Heller & Company Collection

Zanzibar Brand Pure Ground Nutmeg  
c. 1920  
B. Heller & Company Collection

Heller's Deodorizer  
c. 1921  
B. Heller & Company Collection

Album, "Bull Meat Brand Binder"  
Chicago: B. Heller & Company, undated  
B. Heller & Company Collection

### **The Black Figure and Industrial Design**

*27 Chicago Designers*  
Chicago: The Designers, 1939  
Rare Books Collection, Gift of R. R. Donnelley & Sons, Co.

*27 Chicago Designers*  
Chicago: The Designers, 1937  
Rare Books Collection, Gift of R. R. Donnelley & Sons, Co.

*27 Chicago Designers*  
Chicago: The Designers, 1936  
Rare Books Collection, Gift of R. R. Donnelley & Sons, Co.

## **F. Aunt Jemima and the Printing Press**

Phamplet, "Negroes at Donnelley's"  
Undated  
R. R. Donnelley & Sons Company Archive

REPRODUCTION  
James Apperson  
"Donnelley's Now Using Negroes—But to Fight Strike Only"  
*Chicago Defender*. June 30, 1945

"Lemon Pies or Wash Tubs, number 4"  
Chicago: R.R. Donnelley and Sons Company, 1935  
R. R. Donnelley & Sons Company Archive

"A Recipe no other Mammy Cook Could Equal"  
Chicago: Quaker Oats Company, 1932  
R. R. Donnelley & Sons Company Archive

## **III. Of the Training of White Americans**

### **A. Childhood**

#### ***Uncle Tom's Cabin***

Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811-1896)  
*Uncle Tom's Cabin*  
New York: Gosset and Dunlap, 1900  
Historical Children's Book Collection, Gift of Stephen Duffy

Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811-1896)  
*Uncle Tom's Cabin*  
Chicago: M. A. Donahue & Co., 1910. *Young Folks Edition*  
Historical Children's Book Collection

Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811-1896)  
*Uncle Tom's Cabin*  
New York: Gilberton Company, 1944. *Classics Illustrated*  
Dopierala Comic Book Collection

#### ***Uncle Remus***

Joel Chandler Harris (1848-1908)  
*Uncle Remus, His Songs and Sayings, the Folk-Lore of the Old Plantation*  
New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1884  
Rare Books Collection

Joel Chandler Harris (1848-1908)  
*Plantation Pageants*  
Westminster: Archibald Constable, 1899  
Regenstein Library, General Collections

Joel Chandler Harris (1848-1908)  
*Tar Baby & Other Rhymes of Uncle Remus*  
New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1904  
Encyclopaedia Britannica Collection of Children's Literature

Joel Chandler Harris (1848-1908)  
*Walt Disney's the Wonderful Tar Baby*  
New York: Gossett and Dunlap, 1946  
Historical Children's Book Collection, Barbara and Bill Yoffee Collection

Joel Chandler Harris  
*Uncle Remus: His Songs and Sayings*  
New York: Limited Editions Club, 1957  
Rare Books Collection

### ***Little Black Sambo***

Helen Bannerman (1862-1946)  
*The Story of Little Black Sambo*  
Chicago: The Reilly & Britton Co., 1905  
Historical Children's Book Collection, Barbara and Bill Yoffee Collection

"Little Black Sambo," in *Kellogg's Story Book of Games, no. 1.*  
Battle Creek, Mich.: Kellogg Co., 1931  
Historical Children's Book Collection, Barbara and Bill Yoffee Collection

Helen Bannerman (1862-1946)  
*Little Black Sambo*  
New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1943  
Historical Children's Book Collection, Barbara and Bill Yoffee Collection

*Little Black Sambo*  
New York City: Music You Enjoy, 1941  
William M. Yoffee Collection of Ephemera

*Brave Little Sambo*  
New York: Teddy Bear Records, 1949  
William M. Yoffee Collection of Ephemera

*Little Brave Sambo*  
Ambassador Record Collection, United States, 1971

William M. Yoffee Collection of Ephemera

*Little Black Sambo*

New York: Castle Films, c.1948

William M. Yoffee Collection of Ephemera

**The Golliwog**

Golliwog Figurines and Eraser

c.2000

William M. Yoffee Collection of Ephemera

**B. Adulthood**

Toothpaste, Tin, Pipe, Cigarette Stand, Doorstop, Keyholder

Undated

Lent by Dennis Adrian, Chicago

**IV. Of the Sorrow Songs and the Politics of Culture**

ANDO CASE (LARGE FLOOR-TO-CEILING CASE)

**A. High Class Design and Low Down Rags**

Frank Gurney

*A Frolic of the Coons, a Piccaninny Gambol*

New York: M. Witmark & Sons, 1895

John Steiner Collection

Isidore Witmark (1871-1941)

*The Witmark Minstrel Overture*

New York: M. Witmark & Sons, 1904

John Steiner Collection

Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872-1906)

and Ernest R. Ball (1878-1927)

*Who Knows?*

New York: M. Witmark & Sons, 1909

John Steiner Collection

Roger Lewis (1885-1948) and Harry Olsen

*Jazzin' the Cotton Town Blues*

New York: M. Witmark & Sons, 1917

John Steiner Collection

Shelton Brooks

*Darktown Strutter's Ball*

Chicago: Will Rossiter, 1917

On loan from Tim Samuelson

Shelton Brooks  
*Darktown Strutter's Ball*  
New York: Leo Feist, 1917  
John Steiner Collection

Al W. Brown  
*Rag-a-Tag Rag*  
New York: Leo Feist, 1910  
John Steiner Collection

Duncan Sisters  
*I Never Had a Mammy*  
New York: Irving Berlin Music Corporation, 1923  
John Steiner Collection

Alex Rogers and Bert Williams  
*Nobody*  
New York: Gotham Attucks Music Pub. Co., 1905  
John Steiner Collection

J. A. Shipp, Alex Rogers, and  
Will Marion Cook  
*Bandana Lana*  
New York: Gotham Attucks Music Co., 1907  
John Steiner Collection

Al Bernard (1888-1949)  
*Shake, Rattle & Roll (Who's Got Me)*  
New York: Pace Handy Music Co., 1919  
John Steiner Collection

J. Russel Robinson and Spencer Williams  
*Ringtail Blues*  
New York: Pace Handy Music Co., 1918  
John Steiner Collection

## **B. Jazz and Abstraction**

Louis Armstrong (1901-1971)  
*Plays the Blues*  
RLP-1001. New York: Riverside Recordings, 1953. *Jazz Archives Series*  
Chicago Jazz Archive

King Oliver (1885-1938), Louis Armstrong (1901-1971) and Freddie Keppard (1890-1933)  
*New Orleans Horns*  
RLP-1005. New York: Riverside Recordings, c.1954  
Chicago Jazz Archive

Thelonious Monk (1917-1982)  
*Brilliant Corners*  
RLP-12-226. New York: Riverside Recordings, 1956

Chicago Jazz Archive

J. J. Johnson (1924-2001)  
*The Eminent Jay Jay Johnson*, vol. 1  
BLP-1505. New York: Blue Note, 1956  
Chicago Jazz Archive

Jimmie Smith (1938- )  
*At Club "Baby Grand,"* vol. 2  
BLP-1528. New York: Blue Note, 1956  
Chicago Jazz Archive

Kenny Burrell (1931- )  
*Kenny Burrell*  
BLP-1543. New York: Blue Note, 1956  
Chicago Jazz Archive

Dexter Gordon (1923-1990)  
*Doin' Alright*  
BLP-84077. New York: Blue Note, 1961  
Chicago Jazz Archive

**C. Delmark Records**

Joseph Jarman (1937- )  
*Song For*  
DS-410. Chicago: Delmark, 1967. *Chicago A.A.C.M. Series*  
Chicago Jazz Archive

Sun Ra and His Arkestra  
*Sound of Joy*  
DS-414. Chicago: Delmark, 1968. *Modern Jazz Series*  
Chicago Jazz Archive

Kalaparusha Maurice McIntyre (1936- )  
*Humility in Light of the Creator*  
DS-419. Chicago: Delmark, 1969. *Modern Jazz Series*  
Chicago Jazz Archive

Anthony Braxton (1945- )  
*For Alto*  
DS-420/421. Chicago: Delmark, 1970  
Chicago Jazz Archive

Roscoe Mitchell Sextet  
*Sound*  
DS-408. Chicago: Delmark, 1966. *Art Ensemble of Chicago Series*, vol. 1  
Chicago Jazz Archive

Archie Shepp (1937- )  
*In Europe*



DS-409. Chicago: Delmark, 1967. *Modern Jazz Series*  
Chicago Jazz Archive

Sun Ra (1914-1993)

*Sun Song*

DS-411. Chicago: Delmark, 1967. *Modern Jazz Series*.  
Chicago Jazz Archive

Ethel Waters (1896-1977)

*That Da Da Strain*

Black Swan 14120. New York: Black Swan, 1922  
Chicago Jazz Archive

### **E. Jazz Magazines**

*Jazz Quarterly*, vol. 2, no. 1

Chicago: publisher and date unknown  
Jazz Serial Publications Collection

*Jazz Quarterly*, vol. 2, no. 4

Chicago: publisher and date unknown  
Jazz Serial Publications Collection

*Esquire's Jazz Book*

Chicago: Esquire, 1943-1944  
Jazz Serial Publications Collection

*Platter Chatter*, vol. 1, no.3

Seattle: W.C. Boswell, 1945  
Jazz Serial Publications Collection

*Record Research*. Vol. 3, no. 5, issue 17

Brooklyn, New York: unknown publisher, 1958  
Jazz Serial Publications Collection

*Metronome Year Book 1958*

New York: Metronome Corp., 1958  
Jazz Serial Publications Collection

### **F. Print Blocks**

Print Blocks

John Steiner Collection

*Heroes of the Blues*

New York: Yazoo Records, 1980  
John Steiner Collection

*Early Jazz Greats*

New York: Yazoo Records, 1982

John Steiner Collection

## **V. Of the Kingdom of Commerce**

### **A. Charles Dawson**

*Songs and Spirituals of Negro Composition....*

Chicago: Progressive Book Co., 1928

On loan from Tim Samuelson

Overton's Talc Tin

Undated

On loan from Tim Samuelson

*Nation Auditions Annual, Century of Progress, Afro-American Pageant, Aug. 25.*

Chicago: [The Pageant], 1934

R. R. Donnelley & Sons Company Archive

*American Negro Exposition Official Guide and Program*

Publisher unknown, 1940

Rare Books Collection

Draft Designs for Valmor Products

Undated

On loan from Tim Samuelson

Slick Black Poster and Container for  
Valmor Products

Undated

On loan from Tim Samuelson

Lucky Brown Hair Dressing, Madame Jones Bleach Ointment, Sweet Georgia Brown  
Lucky Hair Fix

Undated

On loan from Tim Samuelson

iPAD

***Ebony: The Emancipation Proclamation. Vol. 18, No. 11***

Chicago: Johnson Publishing Co., 1963

Regenstein Library, General Collections

### **C. Eugene Winslow**

Album Page

Undated

Eugene Winslow Papers. Courtesy of University of Illinois at Chicago, Richard J. Daley Library, Special Collections

Photograph

Undated

Eugene Winslow Papers. Courtesy of University of Illinois at Chicago, Richard J. Daley Library, Special Collections

Progress Exposition, 1963

Eugene Winslow Papers. Courtesy of University of Illinois at Chicago, Richard J. Daley Library, Special Collections

Brochure and Decal for the Century of Negro Progress Exposition, 1963

Eugene Winslow Papers. Courtesy of University of Illinois at Chicago, Richard J. Daley Library, Special Collections

Designer's Mock-up and 1964 Calendar for the Supreme Life Insurance Company of America

Eugene Winslow Papers. Courtesy of University of Illinois at Chicago, Richard J. Daley Library, Special Collections

Eugene Winslow (1919-2001)

*Afro-Americans '76: Black Americans in the Founding of Our Nation*

Chicago: Afro-American Publishing Co., 1976

Eugene Winslow Papers. Courtesy of University of Illinois at Chicago, Richard J. Daley Library, Special Collections

Designer's Mock-up and 1964 Calendar for the Supreme Life Insurance Company of America

Eugene Winslow Papers. Courtesy of University of Illinois at Chicago, Richard J. Daley Library, Special Collections

Brochure and Decal for the Century of Negro Progress Exposition, 1963

Eugene Winslow Papers. Courtesy of University of Illinois at Chicago, Richard J. Daley Library, Special Collections

Amiri Baraka (1934- ) and Fundi

*In Our Terribleness*

Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrills Company, 1970

Regenstein Library, General Collections

#### **D. Laini and Fundi (Sylvia and Billy Abernathy)**

PEDESTAL CASE AND iPad

Amiri Baraka (1934- ) and Fundi

*In Our Terribleness*

Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrills Company, 1970

Regenstein Library, General Collections

#### **E. Emmett McBain**

Advertisement for Phillip Morris  
Emmett McBain Design Papers. Courtesy of University of Illinois at Chicago, Richard J. Daley Library, Special Collections

Advertisements for McDonald's  
Emmett McBain Design Papers. Courtesy of University of Illinois at Chicago, Richard J. Daley Library, Special Collections

“What Color is Black?” (Photostat Proof)  
Emmett McBain Design Papers. Courtesy of University of Illinois at Chicago, Richard J. Daley Library, Special Collections

*First World: An International Journal of Black Thought*, vol. 1, no. 1  
Emmett McBain Design Papers. Courtesy of University of Illinois at Chicago, Richard J. Daley Library, Special Collections

Carol Adams Henry, editor  
*Afterjail*  
[Chicago: Women's Educational Resource Center, undated]  
Emmett McBain Design Papers. Courtesy of University of Illinois at Chicago, Richard J. Daley Library, Special Collections

## **VI. After-Thought**

REPRODUCTION  
Advertisement for Nike Air Jordan Shoes  
December 30, 1996 - January 6, 1997 issue of *Sports Illustrated*.

Shepard Fairey  
*Hope*  
Undated  
The Barack and Michelle Obama Collection

Murray's Pomade  
Undated  
On loan from Tim Samuelson

Poster, “Chief Keef: Finally Rich”  
Los Angeles: Interscope, 2012  
On loan from a private collection

