About the Artist

Emma Amos (1937 – 2020) was an important educator, painter, printmaker and weaver. She lived in New York for most of her life, but she was born in Atlanta and considered it her hometown.

Amos made large works of art that often include African fabrics. Her art tells stories about her odyssey as an artist. An odyssey is a long journey or adventure. Based on Amos’ works of art in this guide, what stories do you think Amos is telling?

Amos believed in equal rights for all genders, races and ethnicities. Her works of art and the way she lived her life challenged racism and sexism. Amos once said, “for me, a black woman artist, to walk into the studio is a political act.”

The exhibition at the museum includes about 60 works by Amos. Visit the museum to see it in person through April 25, 2021.
Emma Amos
"Equals." 1992
Acrylic on linen canvas with African fabric borders
76 × 82 inches
Private collection
Take a closer look at these mixed-media paintings here and on the previous page. (Mixed media means that they include different materials like fabric as well as paint.) Many of Amos’ works include bodies in motion. What are the figures in these works doing?

“Equals” shows Amos in front of an American flag. A photograph of a southern shack appears in the upper left corner. Stars dance across pink stripes. African fabric and printed portraits of Malcolm X frame the work. Malcolm X was a black activist during the civil rights movement. What do you think the equals sign in the middle means?

“Runners with Cheetah” celebrates women athletes. Layers of cut and frayed fabric frame the canvas and the cheetah. The braided hair worn by the runner on the right flies outside the edge of the canvas. Why do you think Amos included a cheetah with the runners?

Emma Amos
“Runners with Cheetah,” 1983
Acrylic on canvas with hand-woven fabric
96 x 76 inches
Private collection
Emma Amos started art lessons when she was 11 years old. One of her favorite things to make was paper dolls. This activity is inspired by Amos’ love of paper dolls and her paintings of bodies in motion.

You will need the following supplies included in the art kit (or found at home):

- blank canvas banner*
- paper doll template*
- cardstock*
- glue stick*
- fabric*
- Tacky Glue*
- paint*
- paintbrushes*
- mixing palette*
- scissors

1. Lay out newspaper or kraft paper on your work surface for easy clean-up.

2. Cut out the paper doll shapes.

3. Arrange your paper doll into interesting poses. Try making your figure upside down or flying.

4. When your figure is in your favorite pose, glue stick the pieces onto the cardstock. When the glue is dry, cut out the figure.

5. Decide what you want behind your figure. Paint that background on the canvas panel.

6. When the background is dry, use Tacky Glue to attach the figure to the canvas. Use plenty of glue, and flatten with a heavy book on top until dry.

7. Cut the fabric into shapes you like. Use Tacky Glue to stick it onto and around your figure to make interesting details like hair, clothes or a frame.

8. Paint clothes or details on and around your figure. What details can you add to help tell a story?

9. When you are finished, make up a title for your work of art and let your painting dry.

TIP: Want more than one figure? Make copies of your paper doll template.

We’d love your feedback! Please take a few minutes to complete a survey about this program.

Once you’re finished, share with us! Tag @georgiamuseum