Life in the City

The Art of Joseph Delaney

Life in the City

THE UNIVERSITY of TENNESSEE

Life in the City: The Art of Joseph Delaney

Editor: Sam Yates

This catalogue accompanies the 2004 exhibition at The University of Tennessee Downtown Gallery, Knoxville, Tennessee, and is meant to provide greater insight and historical perspective of the artist's life and work. Some of the images reproduced herein are not included in the exhibition.

September 10-October 31, 2004.

ISBN: 0-9761663-0-5

Life in the City: The Art of Joseph Delaney is organized by the Ewing Gallery, The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Tennessee.

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Cover: *Saint Patrick's Day Parade*, Oil on canvas, 1961, 24 x 30 inches
Collection of Ewing Gallery, The University of Tennessee

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Except as noted, all reproduced artworks are by Joseph Delaney and are in the collection of the Ewing Gallery. Dimensions are given in inches; height precedes width.

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Catalogue Design: Brian Norman

Copy Editor: Adam Alfrey

Printed by The University of Tennessee Graphic Arts Services

The University of Tennessee is an EEO/AA/Title VI/Title IX/Section 504/ADA/ADEA institution in the provision of its education and employment programs and services.

RO1-1007-015-001-05

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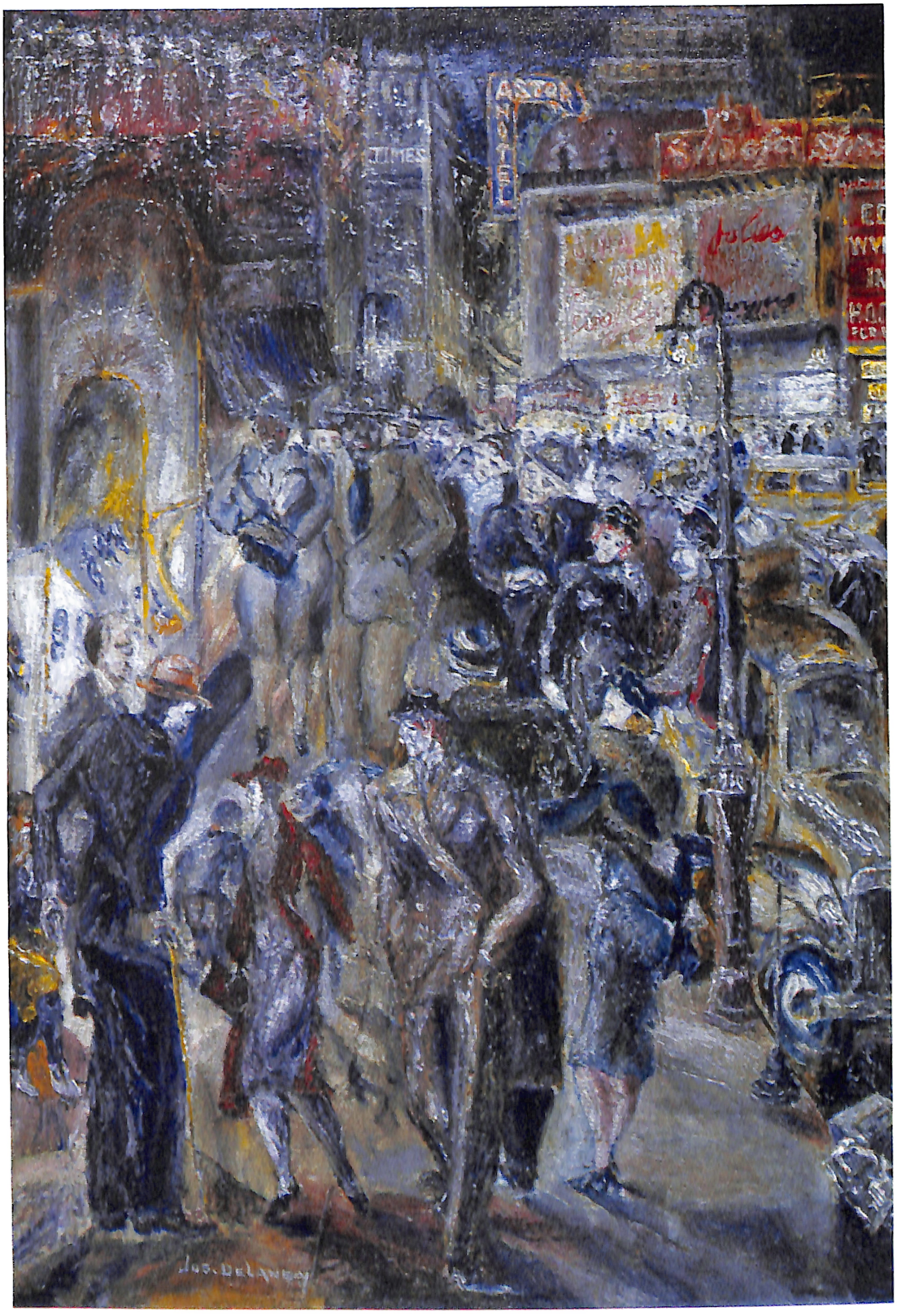

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City Life
Oil on canvas, ca. 1938
21 x 14-1/4 inches
Courtesy of Aaron Galleries, Chicago, IL

Joseph Delaney at his 1986 retrospective exhibition in the Ewing Gallery of Art, The University of Tennessee

"In the fine arts field, the mountain is not coming to Mohammed. [...] Many a black Daniel Boone is clearing rugged terrain and thick swamps and jagged cliff-sides with pallet (sic) and brush." Joseph Delaney, from ***The Negro Painter in the Past Century***

"Any kind of supremacy which fails to give divine right to every human being in their honest pursuit in all walks of life, deals death to democracy."
Joseph Delaney, from ***How To Make Democracy Live***

"Will science now and in the future come to the rescue of the poor people of the world while decadent systems are stalemated in the scramble for selfish control in the fortunes of man?"
Joseph Delaney, from ***International Trade***

"Nothing in the color of any man or woman is guilty of crime in any form. [...] Color is not guilty of hate. [...] As a Negro, I take pride in the native instincts of my race—pride, dignity, reverence, and hard work. [...] Hate and war is the sound of ignorance and fear..."
Joseph Delaney, from ***Color Is Not Guilty***

Preface
By Sam Yates

Life in the City: The Art of Joseph Delaney is the first major exhibition of the artist since his University of Tennessee Ewing Gallery Retrospective in 1986. After Delaney's death in 1991, I was able to peruse his estate and to study thousands of drawings and paintings. These art works demonstrate his lifelong commitment to figurative art and affirm his love of the urban environment. New York City provided the stage for his favorite subject, human interaction: people walking on the sidewalk, people sitting or playing in a park or at the beach, people meeting in protest or in celebration, and people watching or marching in a holiday parade. These human activities inspired the artist for over six decades.

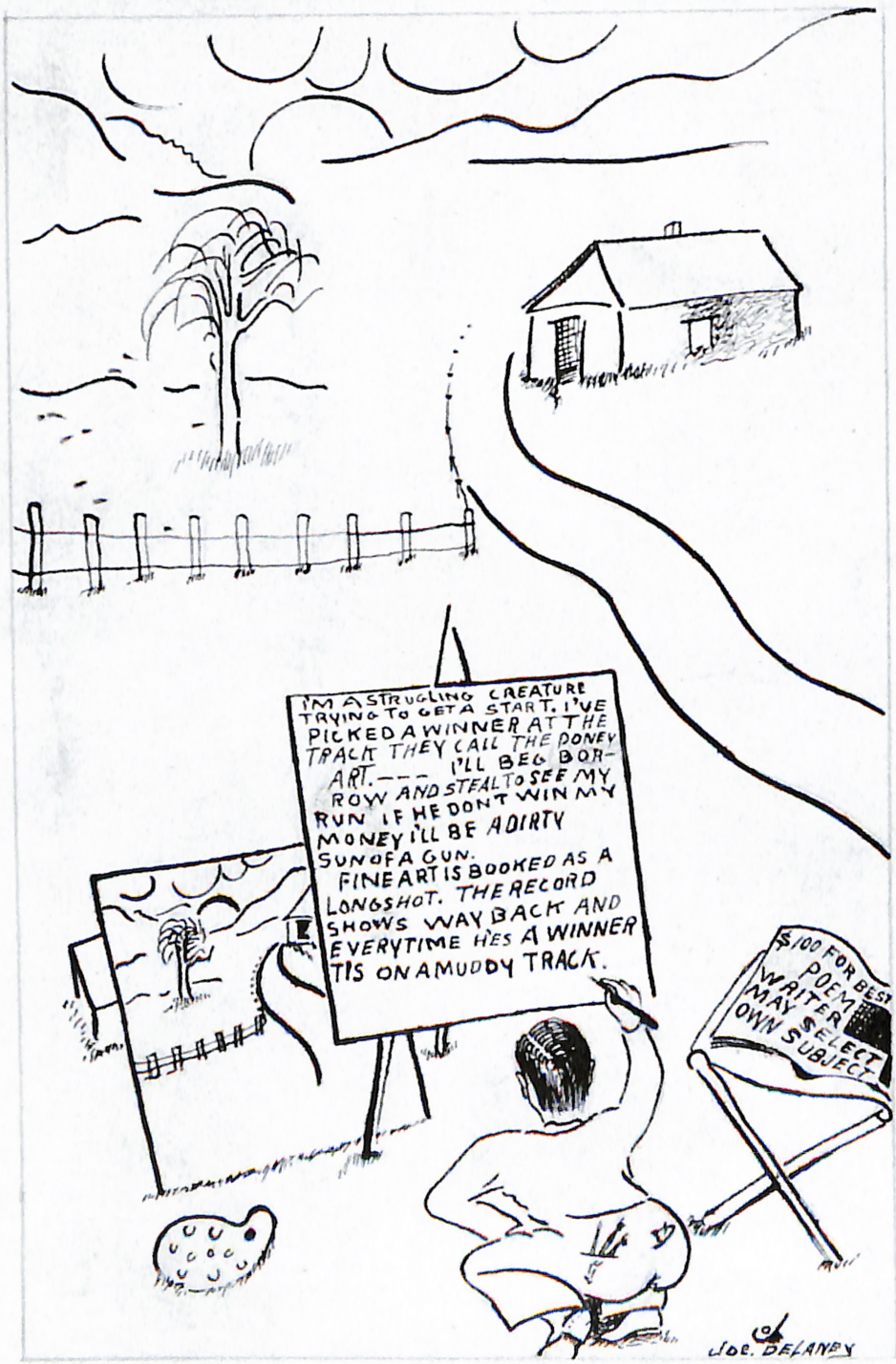
In reviewing his life's work, I have developed a new appreciation for Joseph Delaney's mastery of materials and techniques as revealed in his use of graphite, pen and ink, ink wash, watercolor, gouache, and oil. The Delaney estate contained numerous unpublished poems and essays that reveal in a special way the artist's perspective on the political, social, and racial issues of his day. As an author, Joseph brandishes a wry wit and demonstrates a keen insight into his subjects. Like much of his art, some of Delaney's descriptive writing can be impersonal, wherein he takes the position of the observer or reporter, not the participant. As an essayist and poet, however, his expressed sentiments and opinions are more often poignant and of a philosophical nature. He is foremost the protagonist in such essays as *The Negro Painter In The Past Century*, *Color Is Not Guilty*, *International Trade*, *How To Make Democracy Live*, and many other writings. In such poems as *Stumbling Along*, *Gold*, *Liquor*, *Stonegriller Orders His Breakfast*, and *Adventure*, one perceives a rich layering of humor, mystery, and religion.

Above all else, it was the urban experience, its constantly changing environment, its human vitality and continuous interaction, as well as its optimism that inspired and molded Delaney's creative spirit. As Joseph once said about living in Manhattan, "Everyday is a new day."

In Delaney's 1986 retrospective catalogue, I wrote that the artist was recognized but never celebrated and that he deserved a more clearly established identity in the history of American Art. Since then, paintings and drawings by Joseph Delaney now grace the collections of major American museums. These include The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, New York; The Chicago Art Institute, Chicago, Illinois; The Indianapolis Museum of Art, Indianapolis, Indiana; The Knoxville Museum of Art, Knoxville, Tennessee; The Greenville County Museum of Art, Greenville, South Carolina; The Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC; and the list is forever expanding. Although belated, Delaney is now being accepted for the talented artist he was and is finally taking his rightful place in the history of American art. As Joseph once said, "Someday my day will come." It has, and today he is receiving the recognition enjoyed by other artists of his generation.

ACT SIMPLY
By Joseph Delaney.

If people would just act simply
It would do them a lot of good.
Because when we try to act otherwise
We are never really understood.
The efforts we put forth to be impressive
Are only the mistakes we make
And those mistakes build our woe
And we blame it all on fate.
Nature is always beautiful because
She don't put on no airs
She simply comes and goes her way
And minds her own affairs.
When mankind gets it into his head
To be a simple soul
All knowledge on earth above and
Below will to him unfold.


I'M A STRUGLING CREATURE TRYING TO GET A START. I'VE PICKED A WINNER AT THE TRACK THEY CALL THE DONEY ART.--- I'LL BEG BORROW AND STEAL TO SEE MY RUN IF HE DON'T WIN MY MONEY I'LL BE A DIRTY SUN OF A GUN.
FINE ART IS BOOKED AS A LONGSHOT. THE RECORD SHOWS WAY BACK AND EVERYTIME HES A WINNER TIS ON A MUDDY TRACK.
$100 FOR BEST POEM WAITER MAY SELECT OWN SUBJECT
JOE. DELANEY

DIVERSION

Acknowledgments

Life in the City: The Art of Joseph Delaney inaugurates The University of Tennessee's auxiliary gallery on South Gay Street in historic downtown Knoxville. The concept for locating a gallery in a replenished urban area was advanced by Paul Lee, School of Art Director and enthusiastically supported by Philip Scheurer, The University of Tennessee's Vice President for Operations. Both are to be individually commended for their commitment to the betterment of Knoxville's cultural environment.

As the Gallery's opening event, the Delaney exhibition could not have been achieved without the contributions of many dedicated individuals. First, I thank Frederick Moffatt, Professor of Art History, the School of Art, for his astute research and scholarship in the authorship of the catalogue text. I am grateful to Brian Norman for his commitment to achieving an exemplary design for this catalogue, while retaining sensitivity and respect for the art of Joseph Delaney. I also acknowledge the staff of the Ewing Gallery for their diligent and professional contributions to this exhibition project: Cindy Spangler, Registrar and Publicity Coordinator, for her consistent accomplishment in a wide range of responsibilities; Adam Alfrey, Preparator, for his skills in matting and preparation; and Calvin Chappelle IV for his photography of Delaney items in the collection of the Ewing Gallery.

I would also like to recognize and express sincere gratitude to The University of Tennessee Office of Equity and Diversity; Patrick Albano of Aaron Galleries, Chicago, Illinois; Robert and Marie Alcorn, Knoxville, Tennessee; James Bibee, Weimer, Texas; Harvey D. Peyton, Charleston, West Virginia; The University of Tennessee African and African-American Studies Program, and Jerry's ARTARAMA for their support of the exhibition and catalogue.

The Knoxville Museum of Art, Bob and Marie Alcorn, and Avon Rollins, Director of the Beck Cultural Center, are acknowledged for the loan of materials to the exhibition and the catalogue.

Diversion
Ink on paper
10 x 7 inches
Collection of Ewing Gallery
The University of Tennessee

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EXTRA

Drawing Upon the Urban Experience: Joseph Delaney's New York

Frederick C. Moffatt

VJ Day Parade, Times Square
Oil on canvas, 1961
96 x 120 inches
Collection of The University of Tennessee

V-J Day

In 1961, the painter Joseph Delaney completed *V-J Day, Times Square*, a summary view of the pandemonium that shook New York City's Times Square during World War II victory celebrations sixteen years earlier.[1] By the noon hour on May 7, 1945, a crowd of 500,000 people filled the square and its diverging tributaries, Broadway and Seventh Avenue, catching city officials completely unprepared. There can be no mistake about the setting. From the approximate location of the Father Francis P. Duffy statue on 46th Street, one views the Claridge and Astor hotels, the accompanying strip joint and cinema marquee, the stately headquarters of Bond's clothiers, and the wedged-shaped Times Building. A clock and street sign lend further authenticity. But the fantasy image of flying crucifixes and the prayerful salutation that lights up the sky assures us the painting was meant to do more than document a remarkable milestone.

A mural more than it is an easel painting, *V-J Day* inherits a public and epic character. After thirty years of drawing crowd scenes into small sketch pads, Delaney was anxious to stage a grand performance. His dingy Depression-era compositions dealt with picket lines and other moments of social discontent. Now he was inclined toward upbeat motifs, satirical realism, and a bright palette. Even so, Delaney subjects his crowd to a virulent strain of satirical realism. One confronts in the middle ground a cartoon-like tapestry of gleeful faces, flung objects, party horns, and movie cameras. But "satirical realism" hardly does justice to the hideously disfigured creatures and laughable objects at the crowd's leading edge, for these are more the products of self-mockery and feigned incompetence than of clever caricature. A hand, a headless torso, leg, or arm seem to come out of nowhere. Scale and perspective are cavalierly misrepresented. Enormous faces zoom forward from middle distance, while selective foreground objects are impossibly dwarfed. Aside from several areas of nondescript colors, and a few disruptive zones of dark violet that have been applied to the faces and arms of African Americans, the painting is infused with soft gay colors. Soupy stains of oil color impregnate the surface, but it is a busy quilt work of line, not color, that articulates what is seen. At certain points, a linear edge sweeps into a broad curve, or collapses

into serried dashes that curiously resemble Van Gogh's calligraphic signature. In an ecstasy of rage, Delaney drastically changes his drawing of faces; the corpse-like heads of the intoxicants in the lower right corner mock the innocent happy face that pops into view above them. No less jarring is the contrast between the formally attired gentleman at the far right who exits the "Hunting Room" – he is Delaney's "Mr. Charlie," the generic emissary of white power – and the auxiliary policeman or shoeshine boy whose features have been grossly distorted. In regard to this and other Delaney paintings, Tim Elledge described the "oddly contorted crowds of men and women . . . (whose faces) could be masks, grotesquely twisted into something that is almost ordinary," and of "portraits that seem like amalgams of folk art and stylized studio paintings." James Ensor's agonizing religious fantasy *Christ's Entry into Brussels in 1889* (1888) comes immediately to mind.[2]

V-J Day, Times Square incisively illustrates differing human reactions and dispositions, whether sensuous abandonment, contemplation, reverence, or a simple earthbound desire to survive. The latter motivates the pigeons, a scraggly feline, and the shoeshine boy, who is a proxy for Delaney's younger self. Among the hedonists are lusting couples who dance with abandonment, the glassy-eyed drunks who polish off a bottle of "Kentucky Gentleman," and the revelers who fondle the woman they triumphantly hoist over their heads. Closely shadowed by a camera man, a gushing master of ceremonies prepares to put the happiest of spins on the proceedings for his viewing audience. Thoughtless wastrels throw debris in every direction. A young black woman in the company of an adolescent and an older and wiser companion, aims her party horn at a policeman's ear. A miniature one-man minstrel show scoots through the melee. A youth who bolted up the street pole in a moment of enthusiasm, now desperately looks to escape an embarrassing and injurious consequence. But the crucifixes and hovering logo are having a sobering effect on others. A triad of khaki-clad servicemen extend their hands in wonderment. A slender woman prays. The shoeshine boy reacts with incomprehension.

Detail, **VJ Day Parade, Times Square**
Oil on canvas, 1961
96 x 120 inches
Collection of The University of Tennessee

James Ensor
Christ's Entry into Brussels in 1889
Oil on canvas, 1888
99-1/2 x 169-1/2 inches
Courtesy of The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, CA
© Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/SABAM, Brussels

Youth – The Circuit

Joseph Samuel Delaney, or "Kokomo," was born on September 13, 1904, in a small frame house at 815 East Vine Avenue in Knoxville, Tennessee. He was the youngest of the four surviving sons of Rev. John Samuel and Delia (Johnson) Delaney. He was closest in age to Beauford (1901-1978), the future painter and bon vivant of New York and Paris. Another brother, Samuel Emery (born 1891), a graduate of Morristown College who became a vocalist and educator, was the paterfamilias after the father's death in 1919. Of mixed racial parentage, the soft-spoken Rev. Delaney (1859-1919) was free-born in Bristol, Tennessee. Delia Delaney (1865-1958), a domestic servant, was born into slavery in Richmond, Virginia, and grew up among the same oyster gathering communities of Chesapeake Bay that had nurtured Harriet Tubman. The pleasure Delia took in singing spirituals and reciting spell-binding plantation stories, along with her mastery of the art of sewing and quilt making, more than compensated for her illiteracy.[3] The father was possessed of the same "galloping spirit" that would stir Joseph, while Delia was the family's emotional anchor.[4] As Joseph discovered, his mother was more than a match for his father when a Delaney child needed a sermon.

Joseph's parents moved to Knoxville in 1885, soon after their marriage in western Virginia. They chose to live at the heart of Knoxville's black community. Occupying the slope of Temperance Hill since Reconstruction, this dense settlement of residences, tenements, shops, churches, schools, and a park was bounded on the north and west by the Southern Railroad Depot and Central Avenue.[5] A Carnegie library reserved for black patrons was added in 1917. A few doors west of the Delaney home was the East Vine Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church (South), which Rev. Delaney administered, and just beyond it, at Vine and Central, the barbershop where he practiced his second profession trimming white men's hair. Here also was the Vine Street Café that employed Joseph and Beauford after school. Having won the respect of their neighbors, the Delaney family became a pillar of what Beauford Delaney's biographer describes as a "particularly sophisticated and educated black community."[6]

The Circuit Preacher
Watercolor on paper, 1943
13-3/4 x 18-1/2 inches
Collection of Beck Cultural Center, Knoxville, TN

Among its residents was the lawyer, political activist, author, and educator Charles W. Cansler, who was a long-time principal of the Knoxville Colored High School. Cansler associates Roland Hayes, a vocalist and Civil Rights activist, and essayist James W. Johnson also lived here. It reassured some observers to know that African Americans had numbered no more than sixteen percent of the town's population at any given time, and that a majority of this population descended from "free persons of color," and thus had time to naturally adjust to a life of self-governance.[7]

Targeted by a consorted city, state, and federal "slum clearance" project that enacted population relocation and interstate expressway construction between 1938 and the late 1950's, the original East Vine community was gradually replaced by freeway ramps, sprawling public parks – one commemorates Alex Haley, the Tennessee-born author of *Roots* (1976) – and the landscaped boulevards, Summit Hill Drive and Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue.[8] At the time a resident of New York's Greenwich Village, Joseph was naturally saddened when the Delaney homestead was raised. However, unlike other East Vine alumni, in particular the poet Nikki Giovanni, he retained a characteristically circumspect view of the way "Mr. Charlie" went about erasing the "collective historical memory" of similar black communities throughout the country.[9] True, the disrepair of old buildings threatened the health and safety of contemporary residents and, Joseph believed, were best taken down. Yet, he reasoned, it was only because a prosperous white population had fled Temperance Hill for the suburbs in the first place, that poor émigrés like his parents were able to enjoy a semblance of modern living comforts. "The ghettos we have today," Delaney wrote, "were once fashionable white residential sections," and thus exemplified the ungovernable migratory exchange of the races.[10]

By East Vine Avenue standards, Rev. Delaney's 400-member church was moderately conservative, appealing in its orthodoxy to what Joseph described as "aristocrats" and older families.[11] Established in America in 1785, the Methodist Church parented several offspring that catered to the African American. British founder John Wesley's original abolitionist stance, his simple message of salvation, his preference for the evangelical format – there was no such thing as too much hymn singing – and his determination to allow black parishioners to share responsibility for preaching and administration assured the church's popularity among this country's freed and enslaved blacks. The attachment increased in the ante-bellum years, even as presiding white Methodist bishops, bowing to the cotton industry and to prevailing prejudice, silently reversed the church's original anti-slavery stance and as impassioned abolitionists and pro-slavers proceeded to divide the church into its southern and northern components. By stepping up efforts to evangelize the plantation slave, the white-administered church was able to maintain a fruitful alliance with the next generation's burgeoning population of African Americans.[12]

In accordance with Methodist-Episcopal policy, Rev. Delaney, with a growing family in tow, was summoned by the Chattanooga Methodist conference church, Wiley Memorial, to develop the East Tennessee - Western Virginia circuit between 1905 and 1915. This required him to assume temporary pastorates at Jefferson City, Cleveland, and Harriman, Tennessee, and in Needmore, a suburb of Pulaski, Virginia. These poorly paid assignments required the father to take jobs at barbershops in each location to supplement Delia's small income. During his five-year tenure at Jefferson City, the minister was also detailed to build new settlement churches at Mascot, Strawberry Plains, Sunrise, and Rocktown, a daunting assignment that like thousands of African-American artisans before him, he took in stride. Joseph recalled that his father "had a great love for the ax handle, a team of mules and some new ground to clear for a church site."[13]

In his 1951 biography of his father, Joseph describes family life in these towns in picture-book fashion. With the exception of Cleveland and Harriman, where the boy saw his first dance hall, a building that was barely a stone's throw from the church, these settlements resembled the ideal frontier communities of independent farmers and artisans that had dotted the pre-industrial American landscape. Horse and buggy was the usual conveyance. Barbershop gossip, not the radio or telephone, was the primary news source. In Jefferson City, along a country road that led from the family's cottage to the train tracks and main street, Joseph appraised the eccentric villagers he encountered on the way. The most colorful character was a singing blacksmith, of whom he wrote, "We would look over the fence at this sturdy power pulling red hot horse shoes out of the fire and beating them, and dashing them into the water . . . I enjoyed the steam and sound of the hot iron." Pulaski, the final stop on the circuit, was even more impressive for the "enchanted hills and valleys" that brought the ten-year old, and his older brother Beauford, as close as they would ever come to nature in the raw.[14]

Much of a typical week was spent in services, choir rehearsal, Sunday school, or in adult strategy sessions aimed at curbing the spread of gambling, pool playing, dancing, and drunkenness among local blacks, whether or

Delaney Family, ca. 1908
Standing: Samuel, Jr., Rev. Samuel Delaney, Mrs. Delia Delaney
Seated: Joseph, Ogust, Beauford, Naomi

not they were parishioners. All hope for progress rested on the effectiveness of Rev. Delaney's Sunday sermons. These were intense performances that began with a Scripture reading, for example the passage from the Book of Ruth that expounds, "For where thou goest I will go and where thou livest I will live and thy people shall be my people thy God my God and where thou diest I will die and there will I be buried." As Joseph describes it, the monologue progressed to a point when "words [would] lose their meaning" and the spirit began to take hold. Against Rev. Delaney's louder intonation would rise a male response that chanted, "Lord Have Mercy!" and "Preach It Brother, Preach It!" At the sermon's conclusion, the choir, under the pastor's direction, would burst forth with an all consuming stanza of, "Oh, Why Do You Wait, Dear Brother?"[15] Despite his warm recollections of such interaction, Joseph later concluded the Methodist evangelical style had preferable limits. With regard to the extreme theatrics of Knoxville's "Holy Rollers," for example, he castigated all disrespectful public demonstrations of faith that were intended for show only. This applied as well to confrontational political demonstrations that would soon become standard fare for activist black groups.

Yet young Delaney would have been able to confirm William McClain's contention that legitimate instances of evangelical sermonizing and singing were best understood in aesthetic terms.[16] The momentary intoxication of the conversion experience, not the final goals of repentance and regeneration, was what mattered in the long run. By personally visualizing the nature of sin and salvation, the preacher helped parishioners "see the beauty of the Father seeking after the son who is the prodigal . . . like an artist, (the preacher) drew a picture on the canvas of the minds of the hearers. This was an emotional and appealing word for the converted heart; a reminder of the day and hour 'when the dungeon shook and the chains flew off.'"[17] In like manner, Rev. Delaney's softly uttered reassurances that "if any man sins, he has an advocate with the Father," and " I am with you always, even unto the end," were picture-like in their simple, uncomplicated, beauty.[18] But to appreciate the full effect of the abundant visual and oral banquet that the ministry consumed each Sunday, one need only imagine the resplendent colors of the women's dresses that would have set the rude church interiors aglow.[19] The long hours spent in the pews had another, albeit unplanned, aesthetic impact upon the Delaney children. Joseph and Beauford began enlivening the hours by drawing pictures on Sunday School cards. No doubt other children resorted to the same means of escape, but for the Delaney brothers, drawing, like eating and sleeping, soon became a necessary part of everyday life, as did clay modeling and the copying of pictures.[20]

GASOLINE

Challenging Community Life

Knoxville, the city to which his family returned in 1915, was for Joseph another, albeit somewhat longer, stop on the circuit. With the sprawling Southern Railway Depot at its gateway, its streets crowded with trucks and trolleys, and its small industries straining to keep pace with pre-War production demands, Knoxville was the largest urban center he had yet encountered, and the transition left the boy momentarily homesick for Pulaski. Upon his arrival, Joseph was an over-sheltered youth; when he left Knoxville in early November 1922 for Kentucky in the aftermath of another drinking binge, he had become a wily street kid with an impressive police record.[21] Emery was called to retrieve him from the local jail on a number of occasions, and considering the low incidents of juvenile delinquency among the town's black youth, Joseph's wry confession that he had become a "challenge to community life" was not overstated. He attended elementary school near his home, possibly the one connected with the Mayers Industrial School on Payne Street, a Presbyterian affiliate that doubled as a reformatory.[22] Aside from his drawing – he took first prize for a sketch of a sparrow – Joseph seems to have done poorly in school and dropped out after the ninth grade.

He lived to regret this. When later employed as an art instructor for inner-city children, Delaney warned them not to "miss the boat" as he had done, and thus "be a goat." However, the deficiency did not prevent him from maintaining a regular correspondence with family and friends, or from continuously composing colorful historical essays, short stories, poems, ballads, aphorisms, and assorted musical lyrics which he hoped to someday publish. He typically hand-printed his texts, highlighting thoughts with abbreviated icons and, like the cartoonist Milt Gross, took delight in the ludicrous ironies that sometimes resulted when words were spelled phonetically.[23] Whether a breezy limerick, a dramatic short story in the vein of black writers Rudolf Fisher and Jean Toomer, or a long speculative essay, his writing was, in Delaney's estimate, a craft that like drawing and painting could only be mastered through constant practice.

Delaney held down a variety of menial jobs: shining shoes, cleaning tables, washing windows, and caddying at Knoxville's Cherokee Country Club. But it was after

Vine Avenue Service Station, ca. 1929
Courtesy of Beck Cultural Center, Knoxville, TN

he landed a bellhop job at the Admiral Farragut Hotel on Gay Street in 1919, that his profligacy began in earnest. In a dry town, alcohol joined gambling and prostitution as a lucrative underworld commodity. In anticipation of extra tips, a willing bellhop became a link in a chain of the illicit procurement and a convenient facilitator of any kind of illegality a hotel guest desired. Like other young men in the trade, Delaney could not resist indulging in that which he facilitated: gambling – pool hustling and cards – drinking alcohol, and a feverish pursuit of women, especially big women, who became consorts and models. Looking back in later years, Delaney reminisced: "In the old days all I wanted was a bottle of wine, a model, and some material to work with, and to hell with tomorrow." [24] While he did maintain several long-term relationships, marriage was never an option. He thus began cultivating a reputation for heterosexual promiscuity at a time when his brother Beauford first exhibited homosexual tendencies.[25]

Between 1915 and 1922, Knoxville's subdividing inner core took on the mean and squalid specter of a northern ghetto.[26] From the Delaney family perspective, 1919 was the *annus mirabilis* of this ominous decline. Rev. Delaney died of a heart attack on April 30 and, during the last days of August, while the family yet grieved, the alleged robbery-murder of a white woman by a local black man, sparked an armed uprising that left seven dead, hundreds injured, the commercial district looted, and belatedly forced some 1,500 black residents to flee the town for northern destinations.[27] The conflict began as white mobs stormed the town jail, supposedly in search of the alleged murderer, one Maurice Hays, who jailors had already spirited to Chattanooga. But thereafter, Vine Avenue and Central Street became the epicenter of a tense standoff between armed groups of blacks and whites that, as one commentator maintains, ended only after a detachment of white Tennessee National Guardsmen came between the groups. Underlining their belief that Knoxville's races were predisposed to live together harmoniously, some black observers contested the actions of the guardsmen. One was Cansler, who in his essay, "Negro Life in Knox County and Knoxville" (1946), insisted the white

pillagers of the jail were not after Hays at all, but wanted an excuse to free some imprisoned comrades and liberate a supply of confiscated liquor.[28] Falsely believing an attack was imminent, Cansler maintained, the state militia needlessly launched a preemptive strike against East Vine Avenue blacks. The Delaneys believed Hays, who was eventually executed, to have been falsely accused.[29]

Like the other racial wars he would live through in New York City – the one of 1964 especially stands out – this confrontation traumatized Delaney. He would produce no paintings or drawings bearing the title "Knoxville Race Riot," a subject the prominent black artist Jacob Lawrence included without apology in his *The Migration of the Negro* series (1940). Nor did Delaney make reference to the event in his usually detailed biographical accounts. Instead, accepting Cansler's positivist outlook, he preferred to remember Central and Vine as the center for Knoxville's interracial entertainments. After the Gem Theater opened to a blacks-only and children-accepted audience at West Central and Vine in 1913, this intersection became an integrated amusement center and public gathering place. One of Delaney's most outrageous *dessins anime*, an oil entitled, *Vine and Central, Knoxville, Tennessee* (1940), pictures the cortege of minstrel showman Al G. Fields passing through the intersection on its way to Staub's Theater, with the orgiastic, black-face dancers and top-hatted horn players prancing and spinning past a business block hung with banners. From the mid-1890's to 1919, the Fields parade had become the local theatrical season's annual rite of passage.[30] Staub's, however, was racially restricted, thus the best opportunity Knoxville blacks had for seeing the minstrels was when the parade, progressing from the train terminal, reached this all-important corner. The performers themselves recognized this, for as Delaney later reminisced, no matter how unrestrained the procession appeared to be at other points along its route, "all hell broke loose" at Central and Vine.[31] The resulting irony of the situation led Delaney to later observe that "the real community is out there in the street where everyone is equal, before they are herded off into groups."[32]

Race had a relatively small role to play in what was to be Joseph Delaney's moral destination. He later credited his strict rearing for having implanted within him a welcome forbearance during stressful times. Yet, unlike his more docile and dutiful brothers, he would not live under the rules of family and church without protest. That people residing on the west side of Central were white and relatively affluent was something he had no

Sylvester McBee Poses at his Vine Avenue Fruit Stand, ca. 1930
Courtesy of Beck Cultural Center, Knoxville, TN

power to change, but that they appeared to live exactly as they pleased, was a source of deep frustration.[33] If, like Beauford, he were to give up freedom for duty, how could he otherwise distinguish himself and develop strength of character? What advocate did God grant the non-sinner? Beauford, like Emery before him, was an attentive and reliable son, a good student and a righteous and steadfast churchman. He properly introduced himself to the Cansler circle, commenced taking art lessons with the local academician Lloyd Branson, and won notice within the white community for his creative efforts.[34] But next to the conflicted Prodigal that Joseph so ably portrayed, Beauford was a featureless puppet.

The same existential question pertained to the father's church: what would have been the fate of Methodist Episcopal, its aesthetics and spiritual uplift, if drunkenness, fornication, gambling, truancy and every aspect of criminality were suddenly eradicated? Joseph, obviously, concluded that impropriety brought a welcomed tarnish to the soul's shining surface. Having momentarily made his decision, he could later draw upon the Prodigal's moral benefits. In an 1986 interview he asserted, "You can't drink all the whiskey in town and hang out with all the women in town and keep doing that for too long before it begins to eat away at whatever you've got inside yourself that's worth hanging on to. I did a considerable amount of over-living before figuring out when it was time to stop."[35] And when he did stop, the old fundamentalist straightjacket became a protective vest.

Joseph and Beauford were swept up in the Great Migration, the post-World War I resettlement of thousands of southern blacks in northern industrial cities. But the two took very different routes. Conceding to Delia he had brought shame on the family, Joseph left Knoxville on a northbound train in November 1922. Embracing a hobo's life, he ventured via the Kentucky coal fields to Cincinnati, Columbus, Detroit, Pittsburgh, and finally Chicago, before returning to Knoxville in 1928. Between 1923 and late 1929, a week after the Stock Market began its disastrous plunge, Beauford lived in Boston, communing there with socially prominent black activists and their wealthy white supporters, both Du-Boisian radicals and Booker T. Washington moderates. He cultivated his interest in jazz and blues as well as in the symphony, theater, opera, and performing arts. He attended a multitude of schools. At the Massachusetts Normal Art School, the Copley Society, and the South Boston School of Art, he concentrated on portraiture and on strengthening academic techniques. He

Self-Portrait
Graphite drawing, July 3, 1932
11 x 8 inches
Courtesy of Aaron Galleries, Chicago, IL

was a resourceful gagster and entertainer. At intellectual soirees, Beauford's engaging personality made him the perfect sounding board for various social advocacies, even though he ever remained the hard-headed pragmatist.[36] His journals are filled with the restless musings of an epicurean. In 1938, for example, he observed, "There seems to be growing in me that possibility of becoming aware of the inner things deep within, but in order for this kind of inner clarity to take place I seemed to have been placed within my own custody where many reorientations are necessary for me to achieve the ability and power of activity."[37]

Joseph's immediate destination was bread lines, soup kitchens, gambling dens, hobo jungles, and an occasional flop house. He was unwashed, his long hair was unkempt, and his clothing tattered. Vagrancy imposed its own uncompromising demands, and when later describing his "romance" of the open road, Joseph brandished the tough guy discourse of the dime novel.[38] One waited for "the next man" (the next freight); one "hit the road," "hopped a freight," or rode between the blinds to avoid the conductor – "you had to time it just right. You ate for twenty-five cents, and slept anywhere for fifty cents." Next to winning a stake, the menial job was the easiest way of making spare change without otherwise stealing it, which forever remained an option. The lawman, "who was paid to kill you," was just around the next corner, a grim truth brought home when a guard fired a pistol at Delaney on a Kentucky coal train.[39] When seasoned with a scrape with the law, hoboism was a wonderful purgative for the insipidity and dependency that overshadowed Joseph's early youth. In an obvious critical reference to Beauford's cosmopolitan tastes, Joseph compared a hobo chorus of *John Henry* overheard on a freight train, to "the best opera or any other put-together entertainment."[40] Nothing about the nomadic life was more reassuring than his discovery that personal misfortunes had nothing to do with the color of his skin. A stint driving spikes on a Pennsylvania railroad was made tolerable when he realized that northern white men also regularly worked at hard labor, and did so without recourse to the restoratives of singing and chanting that were the rule for the laboring southern black artisan or construction worker.[41] No drawings or paintings survive from Delaney's hobo years, even though he claimed to have sketched his fellow travelers with considerable satisfaction.

With typical bluster, Delaney described for an interviewer the circumstances of his arrival in Chicago in 1925: "[it] was the roarin' twenties, baby, Chicago had no peer except Sodom and Gomorrah."[42] Nevertheless, during his four years in that city (1925-28), he backed away from the more extreme aspects of his freedom and individuality thesis. A three-year enlistment in Company C of the Eighth Illinois National Guard Regiment visited upon him some of the dividends of citizenship. Dressed in uniform and marching to a drum beat down Michigan Avenue with this all-black detachment, Delaney said, "gave me the real love of keeping step, when we would get the command eyes right when we were passing the receiving stand."[43] It was a fascinating, even magical, phenomenon, this sustained ability for humans to act in unison, one Delaney likened to the instinct that enabled birds or insects to instantly move with the group. The sound of people marching together, like the coordinated sounds of a pastor's voice and the strains of the church choir when the spirit was aroused, was an apt metaphor for the social and racial harmony that Joseph increasingly envisioned for American society.

The drum to which Delaney kept time belonged to eighteen-year-old Albert C. Ammons, who in civilian life played solo piano in South Chicago jazz clubs. At the time of their meeting, Ammons was developing a syncopated rhythmic style, governed by a pulsing left hand, that later defined "Boogie Woogie."[44] Through Ammons, Delaney met other musicians who were then making their names in the annals of the South Chicago jazz renaissance: Joe Turner, Pete Johnson, and blues-vaudeville vocalist Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, the taskmaster of a much-recorded touring ensemble, the Georgia Jazz Band.[45] Working the cabarets and clubs, and sitting in on sessions at Chicago night spots, Delaney, as well as hundreds of other southern black emigrés to the city, was privileged to witness the first flowering of classical jazz, an impressive manifestation of an inherent black African sensibility and craftsmanship. Classical music and dance paled beside jazz, gospel, blues, and the wild dance styles they inspired. But Delaney did not seem particularly interested in Chicago's contemporary art scene. At the time of his residency, such promising African-American painters and sculptors as Archibald J. Motley, Jr., Richmond Barthé, and Ellis Wilson were students at the Chicago Art Institute, but it would not be until the early 1930's when all were residing in New York that Delaney got to know and to appreciate them.[46]

Drawing New York

In March 1930, after an intervening year in Knoxville when he was employed at The Andrew Johnson Hotel and during which he organized a local troop of black Boy Scouts,[47] Joseph embarked for New York City. Beauford, who traveled to the city from Boston the previous October, was Joseph's trailblazer in this new adventure. While the brothers differed on many issues, not the least being Beauford's apparently reckless drift toward expressionism, Joseph accepted his older brother's moderate political views. There were also distinct social and professional advantages in Beauford's determination to specialize in portraiture, especially celebrity portraiture. They were to live relatively close to one another in various city locations and briefly shared an apartment, accepting the predictable results this arrangement would have on an already fragile relationship. To both men it became immediately obvious that Harlem, a preferred destination of the Great Migration, was far too radicalized and competitive an environment for their purposes. They elected to live instead in lower Manhattan, in the Greenwich Village - Union Square area, the city's foremost racial, social, and political melting pot. Here, in a small town atmosphere, being black was a distinction that offered the Delaney brothers occupational advantages, especially during the presidency of Franklin D. Roosevelt (1933-1945). Roosevelt's "New Deal" priorities were channeled into racially integrated public art programs, first under the Public Works of Art Project (PWAP), 1933-34, then the Federal Art Project, a sub-classification of the Works Projects Administration (WPA), 1935-43. In the winter of 1930, it was a downtown white clientele that gave Beauford his first important break, a one-person exhibition at the Whitney Studio Galleries on West 8th Street. He accepted a custodial job on the same premises that provided him with a rent-free apartment and studio. Beside securing another exhibit at the Harlem branch of the New York Public Library, Beauford's Whitney debut also helped to ease Joseph's own way into the New York art world. From the younger brother's perspective, Beauford's most useful decision was to enroll in the studio classes of Thomas Hart Benton and John Sloan at the Art Students League.[48] Even though Beauford was not enthralled with Benton, and his association with the school was brief, Joseph was to make

Cityscape
Graphite, ink, and watercolor on paper
12 x 18 inches
Collection of Ewing Gallery
The University of Tennessee

the League his second home for half a century.

Joseph Delaney resided in Manhattan from 1930 to 1986, but took frequent excursions to points south and north, including frequent returns to Knoxville. After 1953, when Beauford relocated to Paris and tensions between the two subsided, Joseph visited him on a half dozen occasions before the former's demise in an asylum in 1979. Joseph's choice of living quarters about the city was naturally limited, but the garrets and lofts he was to occupy were concentrated in a small area in the Village, or in the adjoining area south of Houston Street (Soho), or on the Lower East Side.[49] Between 1931 and 1934, he lived in a decaying row apartment on Downing Street, near Washington Square. In the middle thirties, he was in the East Village on Bond Street. During the next decade, it was Sullivan Street near West Third Street. From 1944 to 1959, Joseph lived at 69 Grand Street, adjoining Wooster and Greene, near West Broadway in Soho. This address was perhaps too close for comfort to 181 Greene Street, where Beauford, now a full-fledged celebrity, played court to such notables as Teddy Wilson, W.C. Handy, Paul Jenkins, James Baldwin, Alain Locke, and Henry Miller. In 1952, while working as the United States Coast Guard's chief journalist, Alex Haley wrote a vivid description of Joseph's Grand Street abode, to which he appended an appreciation of its resident.

> Hanging or stacked in his studio are probably 200 canvases, most of his life's work. Besides these are his easels, a battered upright piano, a guitar, an old console-type, winding Victrola; a pot-bellied stove for heat and a flat one on which he cooks such filling staples as "hoppin-john," a viscous mixture of rice, beans and whatever meat is at hand. (His fuel is broken packing crates regularly available outside neighboring new-and-used machine dealers) There is also an assortment of old funiture. some of it may be antique, much of it is handmade, inlaid with ivory and whatnot; God only knows how it progressed there. And Joseph Delaney is conversationally such a moving composite of faithful endurance, humor and deep thought that I have at many times wished I could record the gamut of an evening, to savor it later.[50]

Joseph intermittently occupied relatively luxurious accommodations while engaged on Federal projects. In 1936, for example, when assisting Edward Laning with a FAP mural at Hudson River Pier 72, he had free reign of a spacious work space at 43rd Street and Lexington Avenue. Between 1978 and 1980, he was quartered at the historical Henry Street Settlement Houses on the Lower East Side – the Arts for Living Center – while employed as an artist-in-residence under the Federal Comprehensive Employment and Training

Madison Square
Charcoal on paper
12 x 18 inches
Collection of Ewing Gallery
The University of Tennessee

Domino Sugar (Lower Manhattan, East River)
Oil on board, ca. 1950
24-1/2 x 39 inches
Courtesy of Aaron Galleries, Chicago, IL

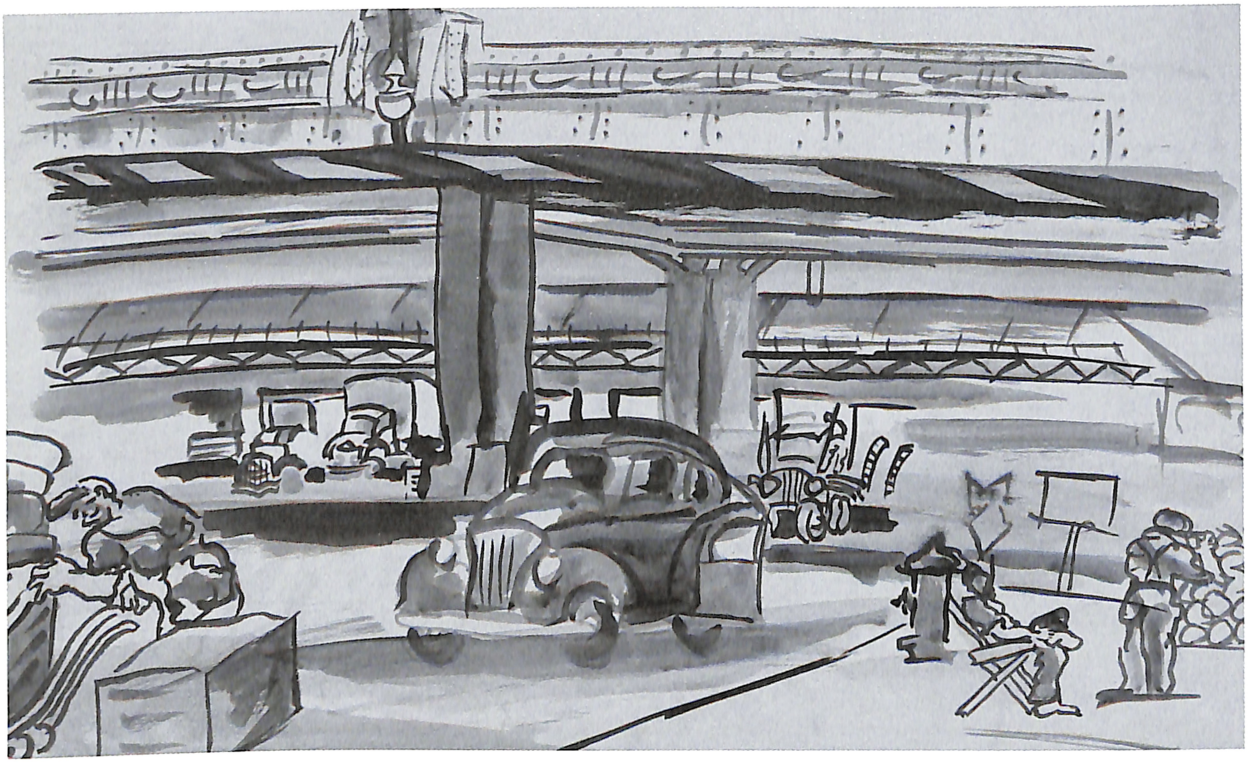
Act (CETA). From 1972 to 1986, Joseph's last years in Manhattan, the ninth floor studio apartment he occupied at 33 West Union Square was no more genial than the other spaces had been, but in so far as the history of New York painting was concerned, this address had crowning significance.

Delaney more than loved New York, he consumed it. On a given day, when inspired by the "galloping spirit," he packed drawing materials, perhaps a late edition of the *New York Daily News*, and set off on foot. In the course of a working season, he covered almost every foot of lower Manhattan. These daily wanderings between Battery Park and Central Park can be followed in numerous ballpoint-pen jottings – few are dated – that fill small sketch books in the Ewing Gallery collection. Retracing Broadway's dog-leg course through lower Manhattan, he navigated between City Hall Park, the Bowery, Washington Square, Union Square, Madison Square, Herald Square, Times Square, Columbus Circle, and the pastoral expanse of Central Park. There were many side excursions east to the New York Public Library and Bryant Park, and west to Chelsea Park. He continually visited the beaches, Pelham Bay Beach or Coney Island. One of his most select detours was Laight Street on the west side waterfront which he colorfully describes in a short story written before 1960.

> The surrounding neighborhood is clogged with jammed up trucks, vans, and everything that rolls and pulls, including old Dobbin. Big and little men of all colors and shades are sweating it out down there to ground out the day, and at times traffic congestion in this loading and unloading section is so intense

Opposite Page:
Washington Square Park
Graphite and chalk on paper, ca. 1931
11 x 14 inches
Collection of Ewing Gallery
The University of Tennessee

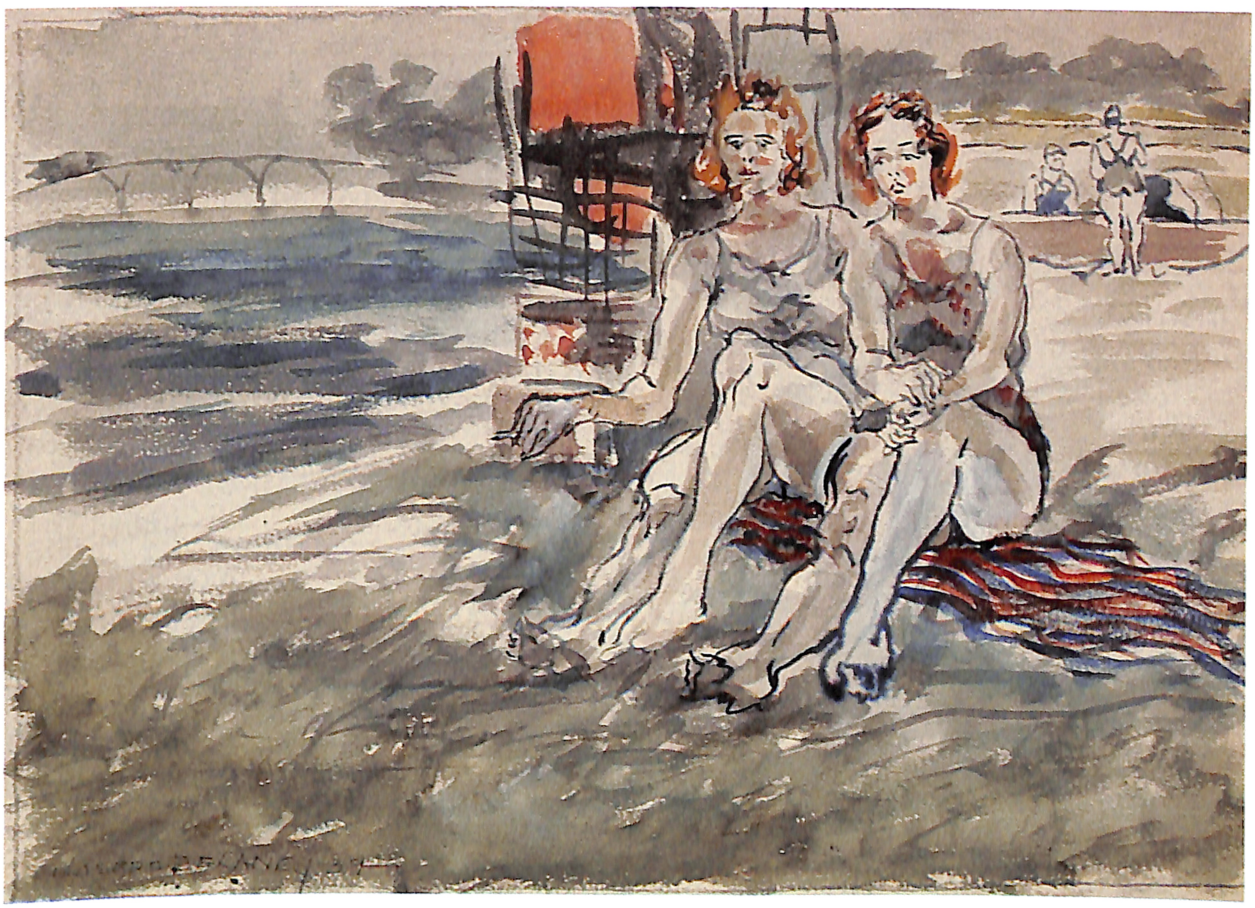
Central Park Skating
Oil on board, 1968
31 x 29 inches
Collection of Bob and Marie Alcorn, Knoxville, TN



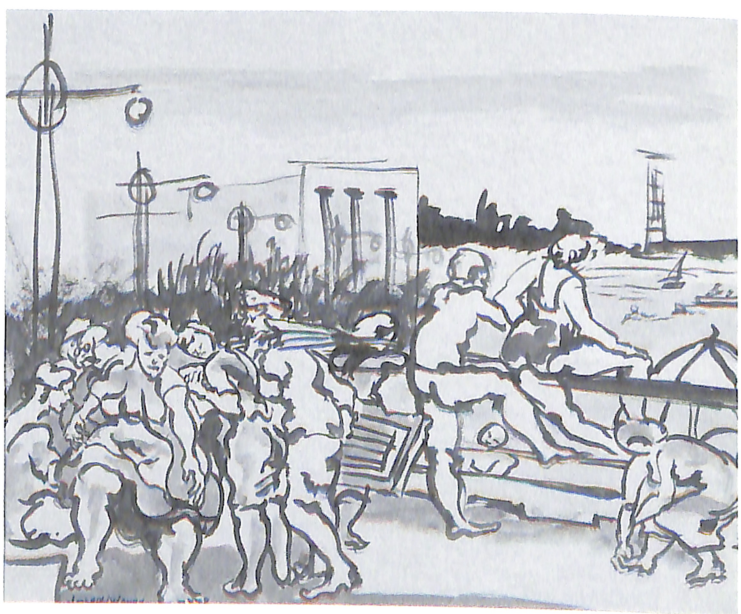
Under the 'L'
Ink and ink wash on paper, ca. 1940
10-1/2 x 16 inches
Collection of Ewing Gallery
The University of Tennessee

> that the roar of machine power that constantly assails your ear, and the smell of oil and gas in your nostrils would dare to tremble the dignity of the ever fresh, proud Hudson River, at the bank of Manhattan's lower west side.[51]

No sketch is without the human presence. Bent and twisted cartoon figures, to which are affixed either overly large or excessively small heads and swollen bodies, are seen sporting, relaxing, showing off, working, or congregating. Delaney was careful to include in his drawings those landmarks that unequivocally identified a location: the tiny bump off Battery Park indicating Frederic-Auguste Bartholdi's *Statue of Liberty*; Stanford White's *Washington Arch* in Washington Square; Henry Kirk Brown's solemn bronze equestrian of Gen. George Washington that rises in mock glory over a reconditioned Union Square Park; Daniel Burnham's *Flat Iron Building*, jutting prow-like above the tree banks and curving walks of Madison Square Park; and in Herald Square, the restored bell and clock that memorialize a famous newspaper and its publishers.[52] Delaney's spirited drawings of Frederick



At the Beach
Watercolor on paper
11-1/2 x 15-1/2 inches
Collection of Ewing Gallery
The University of Tennessee



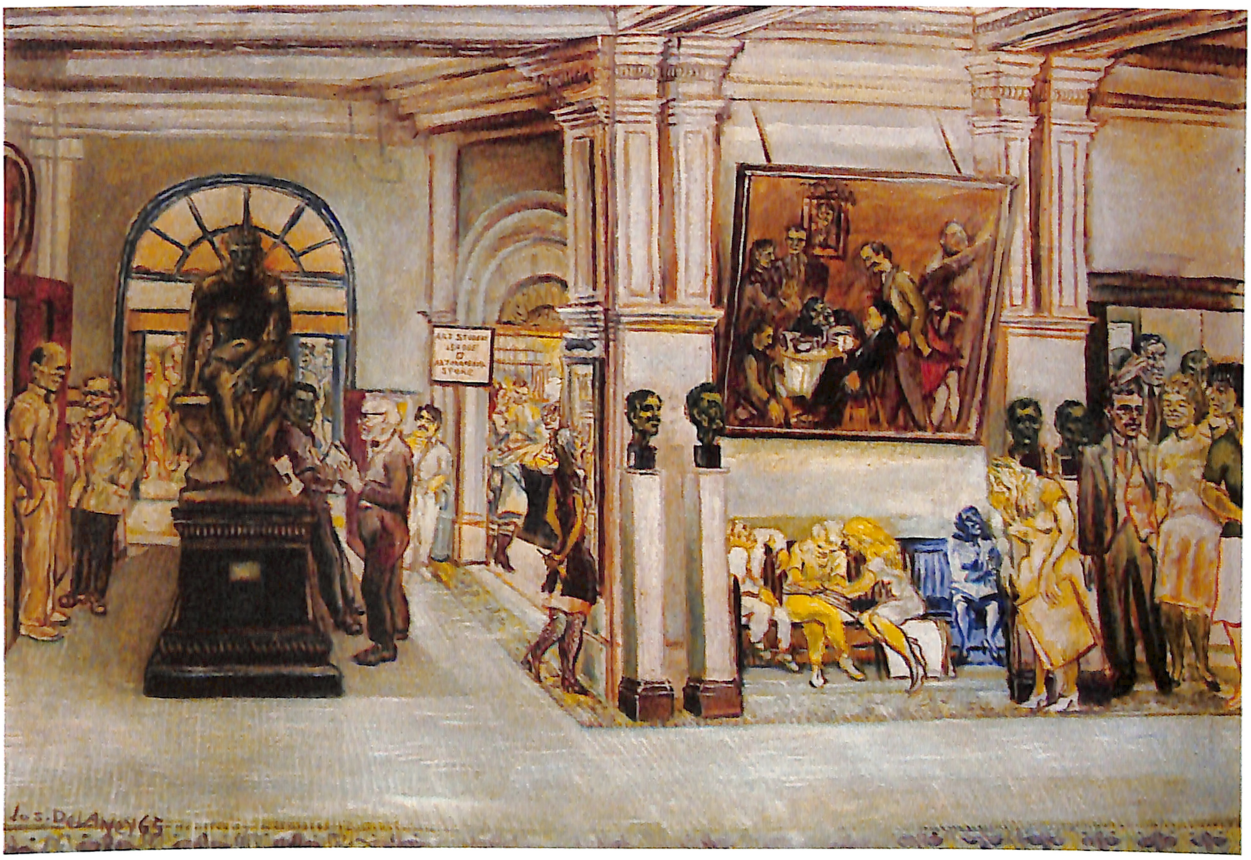
Beach Scene
Ink and ink wash on paper
13-1/2 x 17-1/2 inches
Collection of Ewing Gallery
The University of Tennessee

MacMonnies's niche statues *Truth* and *Beauty* (1920) at the Library on Fifth Avenue express not only an abiding historical curiosity about the city's heirlooms, but also a profound sympathy for the forgotten civic ideals that motivated public artists during America's Beaux-Arts era. Whether it was the Marble Collegiate Reformed Church on Fifth Avenue – a church he occasionally attended – Pennsylvania Station, the Empire State Building, Ebbets Field in Brooklyn, the Dakota Apartment Building near Columbus Circle, the Metropolitan Life Tower, or City Hall, New York's older architectural monuments were often the subjects of searching analysis. While Delaney all but ignored the modernist glass tower, he closely scrutinized Richard Upjohn's Trinity Church (1848) at the head of Wall Street; his straight-line renderings of every detail of this neo-Gothic landmark would have satisfied the most critical architectural historian. Strategically spaced between the parks, monuments, and buildings were the neighborhood saloons and eateries – Chelsea Bar, George's Bar, Waldorf Cafeteria on Sixth Avenue, and the all-night pool hall on Laight Street known as Hoppin' John's – where Delaney toasted old friends, gambled, and gossiped through the evening hours. Unlike his architectural studies, his paintings and drawings of hangouts, each crammed with what appear to be the same hilarious habitués, drew not upon clear-headed calculation but an intoxicating introspective playfulness.

The most critical stop on the Delaney circuit was a French Renaissance-styled palace on 57th Street, between Broadway and Seventh Avenue, that housed the Arts Students League. Delaney was a full time student here from 1930 to 1933, and thereafter, as a perpetual life member, faithfully attended life drawing sessions. Open to all, regardless of race, economic status, or artistic ability, the League was to be his ideal training ground and social center. The school was the subject of at least two oils. *The League's Lunchroom* (1941) describes the comedic chaos of the noon-hour recess.[53] A 1965 painting, *Entrance to the Art Students League*, depicts in stage-set fashion, the grand foyer during calmer moments. Here some hip students, a few older instructor types, and what appear to be prospecting art patrons, pass a few moments before their next appointments.[54] A certain austerity is visited upon the room by the elevated classical statue, the bronze busts in wall niches, and the old banquet scene that hangs on the wall. Elsewhere, the incidental cares of the moment are uppermost. A student pauses before a bulletin board. Beyond the arched opening that encircles the statue's head, the school's supply store bustles. For Delaney, obviously, the institution's physical environment perfectly synthesized past and present, and nothing that had transpired in the New York art scene between 1941 and 1965 had apparently threatened that equipoise.

Founded in New York in 1875, the school's first directors espoused a policy, since credited to the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, that permitted only practicing professional painters and sculptors – not trained educators – to instruct other would-be artists. From this determination it followed that the quality of performance, not a diploma, or the academic mastery of educational theory, were the proper goals of a modern art school. Also consistent with the French system was the League's low tuition costs. But the Ecole's New York counterpart did not impose entrance standards. Thus, as William Zorach observed, a League instructor might one day find in class the struggling Sunday painter beside a brilliant prodigy, and at the next session, the same dauber, but no prodigy.[55] Such was the price of democracy. Yet, if the League was philosophically egalitarian, it held to conservative aesthetic standards. No matter that a modernist non-objective art had gained a foothold in America after the infamous New York Armory Show of 1913. All indications were that School of Paris abstraction was on its way out, and that those who supported it were proving themselves to be nothing more than fakirs, elitists, anarchists, and/or Communists. Instead, the League counseled, true art, which forever combined the unique contributions of the human mind, heart, and hand, was ultimately directed at representing the human body and its prevailing condition. As such, only true art could be trusted to legitimately express the artist's social and natural environment at any given time. Furthermore, the best artists of any age did not attempt to break with tradition, but sought to attach what they would accomplish to the chain of masterworks that linked the present day to the dawn of civilization. In 1930, no League student or instructor doubted they were part of a great new renaissance that, thanks in part to their own efforts, was rising up from the American soil. No one except Modernists laughed when the influential League instructor Kenneth Hayes Miller pictured a group of ordinary New York women in a Union Square dress shop as majestic fifteenth-century Florentine aristocrats, or when Benton painted an old handyman he knew on Martha's Vineyard in the guise of an El Greco saint.[56]

In his first three years at the League, Delaney studied under Alexander Brook, George Bridgman, and Benton. Brook was of lesser interest to him than the latter teachers, whose pedagogical philosophies neatly complemented one



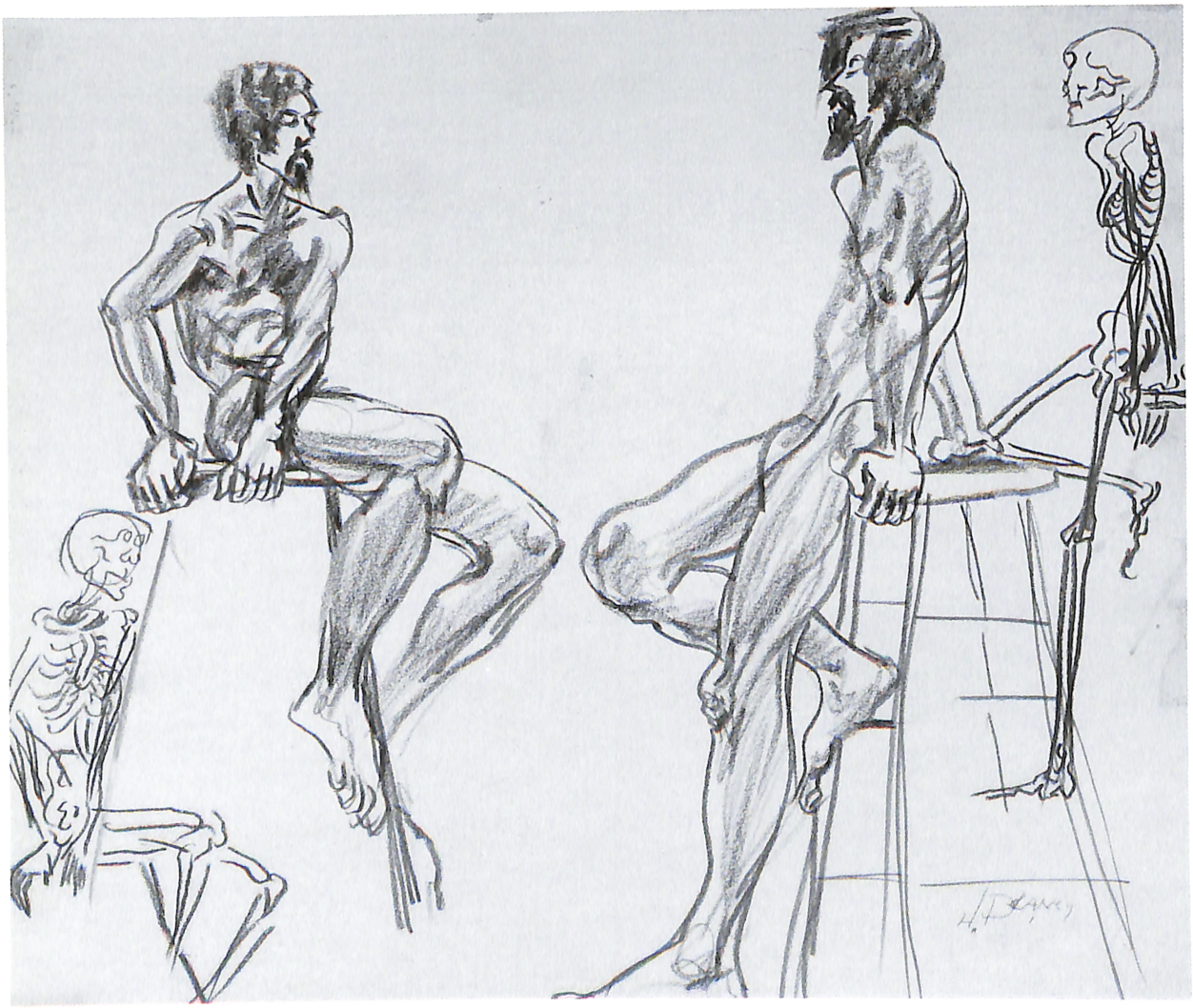
Lobby of the Art Students League
Oil on canvas, 1965
37 x 52 inches
Collection of Ewing Gallery
The University of Tennessee

Marble Collegiate Church
Oil on canvas, 1974-75
72 x 50 inches
Collection of Knoxville Museum of Art, Knoxville, TN

Opposite page, top:
Anatomical Study
Graphite on paper, ca. 1931
11 x 8-1/2 inches
Collection of Ewing Gallery
The University of Tennessee

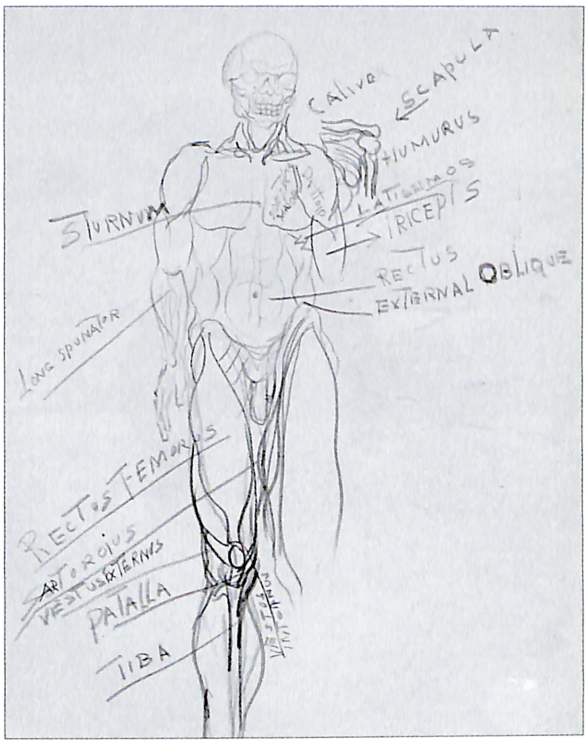
Opposite page, bottom:
Anatomical Study
Graphite on paper, ca. 1931
11 x 7-1/2 inches
Collection of Ewing Gallery
The University of Tennessee

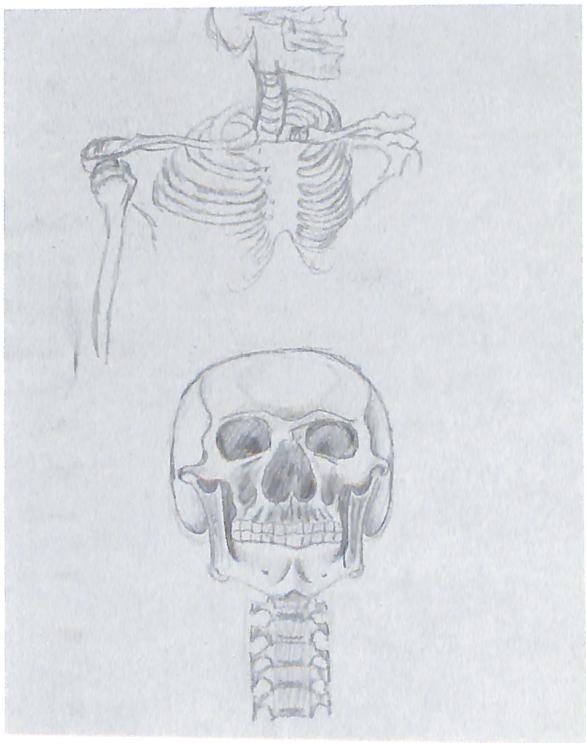
Untitled
Charcoal on paper, ca. 1931
14 x 17 inches
Collection of Ewing Gallery
The University of Tennessee



another. Bridgman first published his popular handbook in 1924, and by 1930, had been teaching life drawing and artistic anatomy at the League for forty years, with another ten to go.[57] It is easy to see which Delaney drawings connect with his instruction. In many respects Bridgman resembled an engineer in his concern for visualizing the mechanical linkages that made muscles, flesh, cartilage, and the body's boney framework resemble a perfectly constructed machine. However, there was nothing mechanical about the swift, free-handed illustrations with which Bridgman broached that understanding or about the sometimes bitter ridicule he heaped on his students. Faced with the particularly complex task of illustrating the radius-ulna, Bridgman constructed a movable mechanism of wood and wire that turned on its axis and activated imitation fingers in a life-like way.[58] In accordance with time-honored academic procedures, his students learned to draw the skull and each bone, properly labeled, in outline on large pieces of foolscap. Next, the basic sections of the living body were blocked in. The head, he made his students understand, was an upright cube with "the ears opposite each other on its sides or cheeks and the line from ear to ear (was) a spit or skewer running through rather than around the head."[59] Once, while preparing his own anatomy demonstration, Delaney marveled at the way foreshortened muscles transformed themselves as they moved in contrary directions under variable light across the bone; then, when stretched to their furthest point, would suddenly recoil backwards.[60] Bridgman retreated from science just enough to admit that when one had thoroughly learned the rules, it was then permissible, even advisable, to forget them, so as to "keep a certain mystery" in the resulting drawing.[61] Delaney likewise gave his prospective students to understand that the precise knowledge of how muscles and bones operate was at best only a guide to "help you say what you want to say with the figure. Like words."[62]

From 1926 to 1932, the dynamic Benton taught painting, drawing, and composition on the fifth floor, five evenings a week, and a mural painting course six mornings a week, while feverishly completing several mural projects in the Village for the New School of Social Research and the Whitney Museum of American Art. Even though enrollment in his classes dropped after 1930 as Benton increasingly isolated himself from the urban scene art community, his instruction was exactly what the neophyte needed. Delaney credited Benton with being more the artist who encouraged the student "to find something to add to what came out of the studio class."[63] Like the anatomist, Benton exhorted his students to begin by blocking in the body. But he also





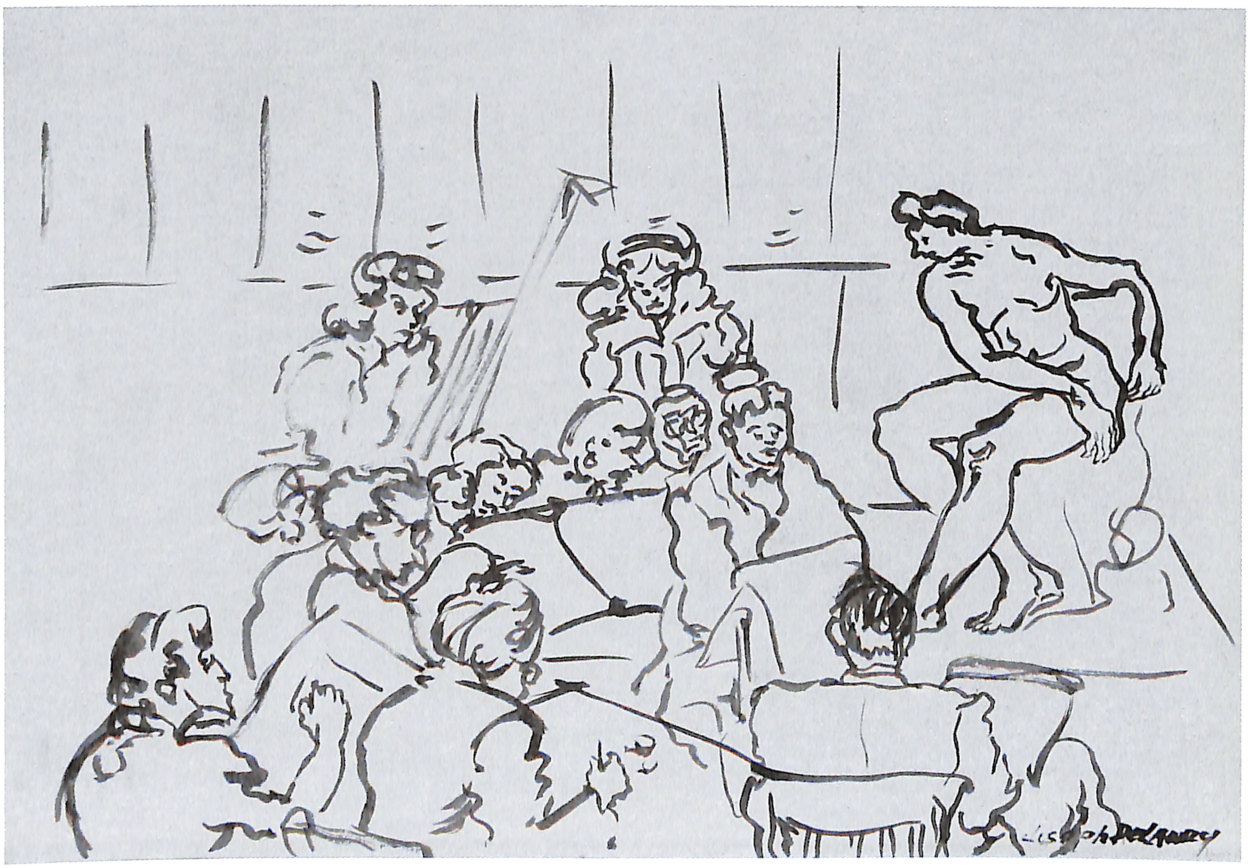
Top, left:
Figure Study
Ink and ink wash on paper
24 x 16 inches
Collection of Ewing Gallery
The University of Tennessee

Above:
Figure Study
Charcoal on paper, ca. 1931
16 x 20 inches
Collection of Ewing Gallery
The University of Tennessee

Bottom, left:
Leap Frog
Ink on paper
20 x 16 inches
Collection of Ewing Gallery
The University of Tennessee

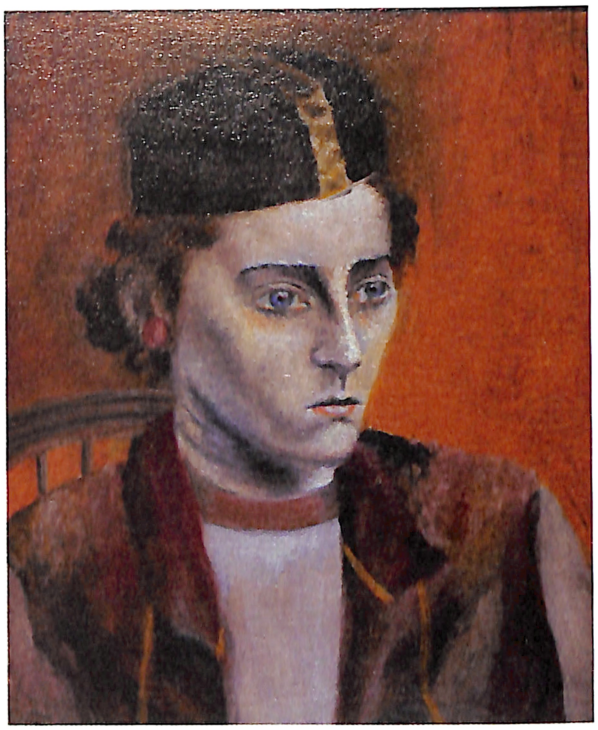
Opposite page:
Drawing Class
Ink on paper
20 x 16 inches
Collection of Ewing Gallery
The University of Tennessee

Student Copy of Raphael's *Entombment*
Graphite on paper, ca. 1931
20 x 16 inches
Collection of Ewing Gallery
The University of Tennessee



insisted that multi-figured compositions derived from works by Raphael, Michelangelo, Tintoretto, Rembrandt, Rubens, Daumier, Goya, and El Greco, among other masters, be diagramed in schematized geometric scaffolds.[64] Through such exercises, Delaney and his colleagues gained an important side benefit: an introduction to the history of Western art that measured their efforts against those of long-deceased artists whose names they did not soon forget. Small clay sculptures of posed figures, their actual shadows and lights reinforced by black and white paint, kept the draftsman ever mindful of prevailing masses. Once the preliminaries of form, composition, volume, and space were mastered, one proceeded to replace the test scaffold's angled volumes with forceful freehanded curves that have been familiarized as "hollows and bumps." These formations were the basic components of Benton's signature style, a figurative equivalent to the "feel" of one's own body that musically-inclined artists of the day like Delaney could well appreciate. Benton's design adjustment ensured that no matter how wayward and undisciplined a curving contour might become, the resulting composition would retain a certain "fixed" stability and balance.

Benton was more the expressionist than the technocrat. The hollow and bump was not anatomical truth, but a broad imitation of late Renaissance styling he associated with the inexhaustible energy of grassroots America. Delaney's colleagues added their own discriminating analysis. Axel Horn affirmed the wobbly curve "had a symbolic significance like 'yin and yang.' It expressed for us the polarity from negative, recessive softness to positive, solid, projecting forcefulness." [65] The allusion conjured an extraneous social type that Joseph Delaney could also accept: the "authentic" artist was a masculine, red-blooded sort, who drew and painted the raw urban scene without apology. If he was overly fond of alcohol, was sexually promiscuous, and had western or southern agricultural origins, then so much the better. In conformity with this



Thomas Hart Benton (1889-1975)
Study for the Painting Romance
Mixed media with tempera, 1931-32
12 x 11 inches
Courtesy of Aaron Galleries, Chicago, IL

brave, rebellious type, Delaney sometimes thought of himself as a wild mustang racing across a meadow "in this asphalt and steel and stone canyon."[66] And very often this mustang was inebriated, for Delaney believed that when he was intoxicated his subconscious feelings came more freely to the surface and thereby enriched the content of his paintings and drawings. That he sometimes painted "myself sober," helped him explain why so many observers discovered overt references, especially in his crowd scenes, about which he was totally unaware.[67]

It is no wonder that Joseph and Beauford reacted so differently to the Benton character, for in terms of its Spencerian construction, the inadequate artist was conceived to be a constrained, ineffectual, effeminate creature who typically exalted School of Paris abstraction. Jackson Pollock's presence in Benton's classes – he was class monitor the last year – further underscored the myth. Even though he was fifteen years away from his national notoriety as the leading Action Painter of the New York School, Pollock already laid claim to a reputation as a two-fisted, harddrining, brawling, wild Westerner. His working class antipathy toward eastern intellectuals and academics, and the deviants who seemed to govern the New York art world, perfectly accorded with Benton's evolving chauvinistic regionalist views. When sober, Pollock was unusually mild and reticent; but a first drink inevitably transformed him into a raging drunk, a "hollow," a colleague suggested, that had become a "bump." [68] Despite their differences, Delaney openly discussed his association with Pollock, their meetings at George's, and their comradeship during the Washington Square Outdoor Art Exhibit in the early 1930's. He drew the other's portrait and included Pollock's features in at least one bar scene.[69]

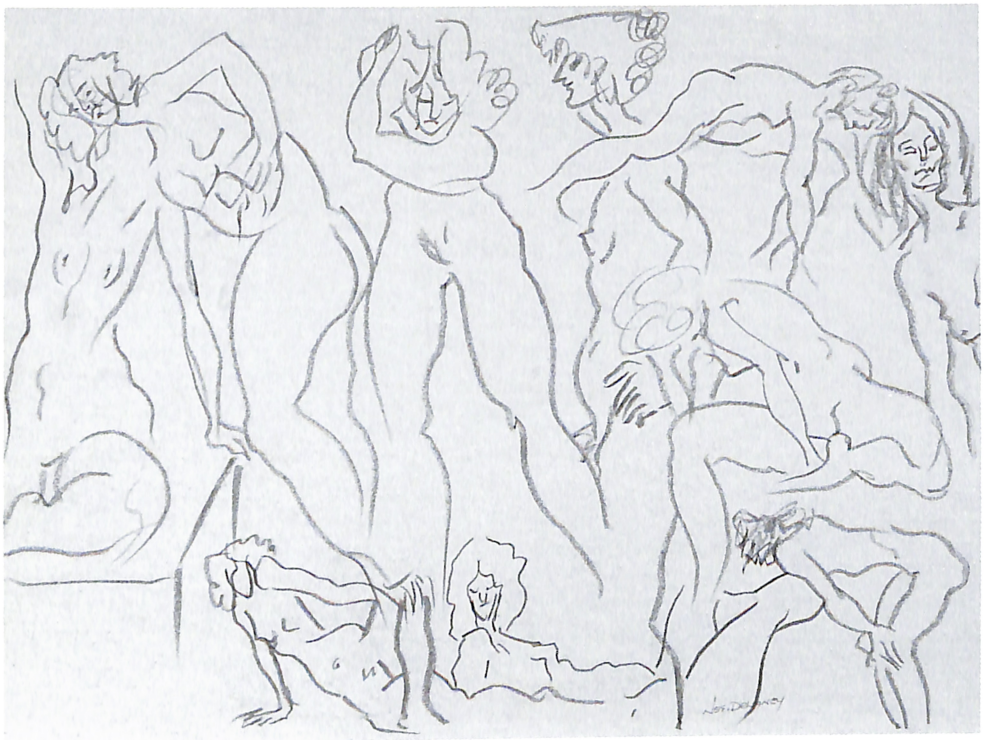
Delaney regularly attended the League's Friday afternoon drawing classes which he was privileged to do as a life member through 1985.[70] In these classes practice went ahead of precept, justifying Benton's notion that an individual's actual work with materials, not concept, finally determined the character of an art form. Perhaps as strong a draw for Delaney was the opportunity the classes gave him to socialize with other regulars; during breaks he drew friendly carica-

Model With A Hat
Oil on board, ca. 1931
20 x 16 inches
Courtesy of Aaron Galleries, Chicago, IL

Figure Study
Ink on paper
18 X 12 inches
Collection of Ewing Gallery

tures of this rag-tail group onto the end boards of sketch books.[71] Beside a relatively small number of single sheets, the Ewing Gallery owns some 150 standard-sized (twelve by eighteen inches) sketch books Delaney used during the classes. Most of the images they contain are of brushed ink or black conté crayon, sometimes with the addition of ink wash. Charcoal, pastel, graphite, felt pen, and pen and ink were more sparingly utilized. Black and white, young or middle aged, male or female, alone or in pairs, the models assume every conceivable pose. But in these thousands of undated drawings, it is predominantly a young female who appears alone on the stand, a model whose head is characteristically small and pointed, and whose hips swell outward to sometimes monstrous proportions. But for their timely references to hair styles, makeup, or jewelry, these agile drawings could well be mistaken for the repertoire of a sixteenth-century Florentine Mannerist.

Delaney affirmed that "drawing is the life of any painting . . . when you plan your canvas, you plan with drawing, carefully refine it, and then you come back with color." The drawing class was a performance that required the gesture of his drawing hand to be instantly responsive to the "action" of the model's body.[72] Poses at the regular League life classes were fixed at one, five, fifteen, and twenty-five minute periods; the shorter limits correlating with action poses that could only be caught on the fly; the longer ones being geared to more finished tonal renderings of the seated or recumbent model.[73] In commemoration of a Leonardo da Vinci obsession, the longer exercises reinforced Delaney's awareness of how light and shadow, irregardless of a momentary effect, ideally move as a whole unit around the body, thereby spinning an alluring web over all its disparate parts. For convenience, but also obviously in consideration of arriving at an interesting compositional "event," Delaney placed the one-minute sketches – the vigorous single-line variety – side by side in multiple tiers on single pages. Even though intended as learning devices, these clustered sketches remarkably resemble Picasso's classical single-line studies of female bacchantes. Delaney's minute sketches often show the twisting and turning figures engaging one another, sometimes embracing, leading us to suppose they have at last broken free of their conceptualized compartments and now frolic in a single continuous space on a Mediterranean shore. In the most remarkable examples of this linear ballet, it appears as if the artist's hand was occasionally seized by some inner compulsion; a line meant to separate an arm from a breast suddenly veers into a meaningless, but won-



drously exhilarating, skein. Almost before one is aware of this transgression, however, the line, without breaking, recovers its mimetic function and moves onward. Some drawings of the recumbent model excel in this ability to ride the edge between "mess" and order. Flattened into a heap on the stand, with only a leg, or an arm, or the outer edge of the hip protruding beyond the central mass, the foreshortened model looks to have fallen from a great height before impact, and now utterly exhausted, sprawls motionless. It was only after much practice, obviously, that Delaney was able to adapt the minute-long drawing maneuver to the task of effectively and efficiently summarizing this challenging pose.

Those Benton drawings and paintings of the 1920's and 30's that picture street life around Union Square, City Hall, the Village, or the Stock Exchange made as strong impression on Delaney as they did on other League associates. Away from the class room, Delaney sought out the ubiquitous picket lines, the bathers, the crowded bus and subway interiors, bars, and restaurants that were coarse and gritty enough to qualify as urban scene. Delaney's 1936 pen, ink and wash drawing of a City Hall picket line in which snarling policemen square off against sign-carrying strikers, is a case in point. In conformity with Benton's caricatures, this sketch utilizes a sparing inventory of hats, coiffeurs, clothing, body types, and the language of gesture to distinguish the contending factions and individualize the protestors: we would not mistake the James Cagney type who holds the 'Jobs Not Guns' sign for the spunky woman who lets loose a tirade through a loud speaker. However, a forward glance to *V-J Day* assures us the policemen are early examples of an undistinguished icon of authority that would never change. Configured by lines that spin and skip in unsteady currents, figures (and horse) move concentrically around the plaza as if dancing, or riding on an invisible carousel. Theirs is the same sort of orderly chaos that inhabits the Baroque compositions of Rubens, whose work ranked especially high with Benton, and was the current favorite of such League cognoscenti as Miller, Reginald Marsh, and Isabel Bishop. [74] While costuming is essential to *Picket Line - City Hall*, one feels Delaney conceived each figure first as a nude model, then dressed it accordingly.

By the time Benton made his "sulking retreat" back to his native Missouri in 1935, Delaney had found a new inspiration for his New York work in the drawings of Reginald Marsh, the heir apparent of the Fourteenth Street

One Minute Figure Studies
Charcoal on paper, ca. 1931
12 X 18 inches
Collection of Ewing Gallery
The University of Tennessee

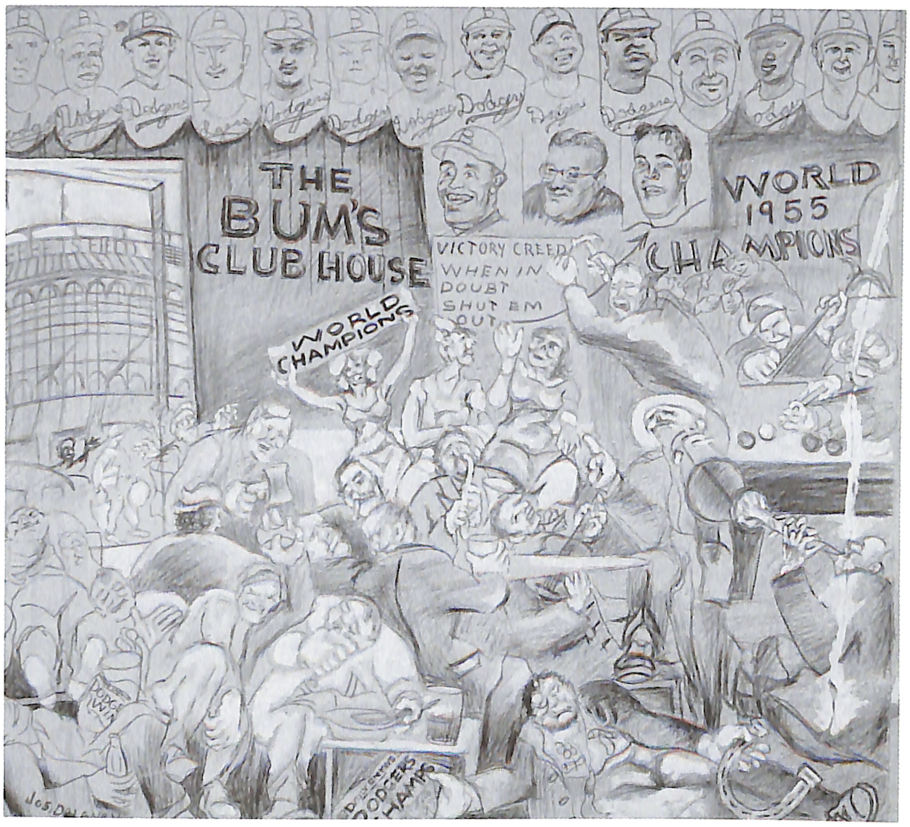
Picket LIne-City Hall: Jobs Not Guns
Ink and ink wash on paper, 1936
19 x 19 inches
Collection of Ewing Gallery
The University of Tennessee

School and, after 1935, a League faculty member. Born into money and trained at Yale, Marsh followed the much-traveled pathway in New York from populist newspaper illustrator to studio artist after study with Miller at the League in 1927/28.[75] Miller's demonstrations of Renaissance form and technique opened up aesthetic issues and opportunities Marsh believed to be au current. Drawing upon his *Daily News* experience, he became the League's most spirited and facile draftsman. Having moved in 1928 to his permanent address at Union Square, the League's off-campus Mecca, Marsh commenced a cycle of crowd scenes that glorified the vulgar burlesque queen and scantily clad Coney Island bather – sensual pictures, and some horribly direct ones of Bowery derelicts, that were aimed as much at the puritan sensibilities of his own class, as they were at serving up samplings of urban life to the public at large. Delaney may well have modeled for Marsh as he did for other League instructors. The sporty individual with rakishly tipped bowler in Marsh's *Twenty-Cent Movie* (1936) – he is perfectly cast as a pimp – much resembles Joseph Delaney.[76] We would not confuse a Delaney painting for a Marsh, but within the scope of their chosen subjects, the Rubenesque energy of line they shared, and the brusque way their unglamorous subjects confront the viewer, the white thoroughbred and black southern emigreé shared a great deal after all. Looking over such pictures as *Picket Line - City Hall* from the vantage point of 1991, Delaney, and other veterans of the Depression, could not help but see the 1930's through a golden haze. As he told Don Williams, "There, back in the 30's, stepping into the street was a new experience every day. Artists, actors, union leaders, atheists, anarchists, religious fanatics of one stripe or another, would climb up on crates and benches and inveigh against the evils of the day. Spectators cheered or laughed or ate sausage dogs."[77]

Confessions of neutrality before scenes of human conflict were doctrinaire for the League's Fourteenth Street entourage. There were always differences of opinion as to whether a painting's first purpose was social reform and political activism, or journalistic detachment. But like Marsh and the majority of the Union Square artists and illustrators, Delaney was determined to keep political demagoguery and unbridled religious advocacy out of the picture, however naive such a determination might seem by today's reckoning. The skin color of his human agents was the least of his concerns. But at a time when racial difference had become politicized, he knew his indifference to the radical cause risked censure. His purpose was simply to depict the human figure in its everyday moments, whether flirting, gossiping,

Opposite page, top:
Subway
Ink and ink wash on paper
24 x 16 inches
Collection of Ewing Gallery
The University of Tennessee

Opposite page, bottom:
Untitled Portrait
Charcoal on paper
18 x 11 inches
Collection of the Ewing Gallery
The University of Tennessee



The Bums' Clubhouse
Charcoal, chalk, and
pencil on paper, 1955
28 x 31 inches
Collection of Ewing Gallery
The University of Tennessee

dancing, kissing, embracing, toiling, picketing, swimming, or endlessly consuming food and drink. In a Delaney there is always on display a hint of foolishness, or pompous insensitivity, but his characters are never vicious or violent. There are no murderers or corpses. The urgency of a *Daily News* story aside, what the figure did was never more significant than eating a sausage dog, or sleeping. On the other hand, when it came to athletic events, Delaney could be extremely partisan. When the Brooklyn Dodgers pulled off their miraculous win over the New York Yankees during the 1955 World Series, the artist produced a commemorative drawing in which the quickly sketched faces of team members and staff appeared beside inset views of Ebbets Field and the Bums' orgiastic fans. But once the Dodgers exited Brooklyn for Los Angeles, Delaney was satisfied to take his appointed place as a Yankees stalwart.

When the outside world became too overbearing, the Art Students League itself – its functions, studio parties, its life classes, its faculty seen in the midst of teaching – became as viable a subject for Delaney and his colleagues as any other. His desire to be non-political did not require him to forgo readable texts in his pictures; Marsh could make an entire painting out of a composite view of signs and illustrated posters. So by incorporating a "Don't Telegraph, Write" picket sign in a painting, Delaney could express his support for Western Unions strikers without necessarily sacrificing his aesthetic integrity. In this manner, urban scene art served Delaney as a political filter .

Delaney had few opportunities to show his work in galleries or at museum exhibitions. As a quick sketch portraitist, however, he found considerable compensation for his professional disappointments. In 1931, both Delaney brothers participated in the first Washington Square Outdoor Art Exhibit, an event organized by Juliana Force, Gertrude Whitney, and Vernon Porter; and Joseph would faithfully contribute works to this semi-annual opening through the 1970's. For a token fee, artists were permitted not only to display studio paintings but also, thanks to Joseph's initiative, make quick-sketch portraits.[78] This exhibit offered the artist a golden opportunity to advertise

Don't Telegraph-Write
Ink on paper
12 X 12 inches
Collection of Ewing Gallery
The University of Tennessee

and make new contacts. Selecting pastel, charcoal, crayon, gauche, watercolor, or graphite – there are a few oils – Delaney also made portraits throughout the year, in his studio and elsewhere. One assumes the Ewing Gallery portrait collection – some works have modest prices affixed to their reverse sides – consists of some unsold Washington Square portraits. The dated ones range from the 1930's to 1970's. Most are bust length. They typically picture stylishly dressed women, and impeccably attired and coiffed white male professionals, who stoically regard the artist, or stare abstractly into the distance. There are young girls and fat-faced infants, and at least one drawing of a fearsome black skinhead, perhaps a stevedore or truck driver, which makes a fine comparison with the pastel of a blond teenager. There is a brushed ink drawing of a white man, the last word in confidence and savior faire, seated in a boot black's chair, who Delaney chose to view from knee level. Some portraits are sexy come-ons; others, like the somber long-haired women featured in a crayon and white chalk drawing of 1964, strive for soap opera melodrama. Said Delaney, "a portrait likeness is recording an expression of a human being. [It is] contact with a person who is exposed to you and trusts you."[79] Even more, the making of portraits enacted a social exchange that benefited both artist and subject. Captive of Delaney's gaze for an hour or so; not daring to move or blink; having to hold a desired expression beyond its natural limits; the sitter, who often claimed social superiority, became his virtual slave in time and space. But so Delaney, like some boot black kneeling obediently before his master, was expected to polish the vanity of an already advantaged sitter for a meager fee.

As Joseph learned from Beauford's example, the struggling portraitist gained another advantage: a celebrity roster. No matter what the degree of proficiency, one's success was popularly measured by the relative importance of the people he drew or painted. Joseph's list was a modest one that included, but was not limited to, Ertha Kitt, Arlene Francis, Eleanor Roosevelt, Mahalia Jackson, Tallulah Bankhead, New York Police Commissioner Edward P. Mulroney, Boy Scouts of America executive Stanley Harris, journalist Gladys Graham, and musician Eubie Blake, the latter being the subject of an elaborate poster portrait.[80] He tried in vain to add the boxer Joe Louis and President Roosevelt to his portfolio, but another pair of celebrity portraits fell into his lap.[81] These featured Chester Arthur III, a grandson of the President who had attained minor status in New York's

Shoe Shine Patron
Ink on paper
18 x 14 inches
Collection of Ewing Gallery
The University of Tennessee

Top, right:
Child
Charcoal on paper
16 x 10 inches
Collection of Ewing Gallery
The University of Tennessee

Untitled Portrait
Charcoal on paper
24 x 18 inches
Collection of Ewing Gallery
The University of Tennessee

Top, left:
Marie Woods
Watercolor on paper
18 x 14 inches
Collection of Ewing Gallery
The University of Tennessee

Top, right:
Untitled Portrait
Watercolor on paper
20 x 17 inches
Collection of Ewing Gallery
The University of Tennessee

Untitled Portrait
Watercolor on paper
21 x 15 inches
Collection of Ewing Gallery
The University of Tennessee

Opposite page:
Gracious Lord Hold My Hand (Mahalia Jackson)
Oil and chalk on canvas, ca. 1980
50 x 40 inches
Courtesy of Aaron Galleries, Chicago, IL

theatrical circle, and Olivia Wyndham, a goddaughter of Queen Victoria, who typified for Delaney all that was "charming and demure in the air of a British woman with her culture and background." In 1934, while on an early morning slumming adventure, the couple chanced to drop in on the artist at his disheveled Downing Street apartment.[82] Choosing to highlight the incident in an autobiographical essay, Delaney compared the surreal moment when the young aristocrats crossed his shabby threshold to a scene in a Noel Coward play.

Delaney's most supportive patron was the Federal Government. His affiliation with the Art Students League professionally qualified him for various assignments under WAP during the full extent of its tenure, 1934 to 1943. Adeptly playing the system, he was able to continuously reinstate himself in a new work category after receiving the dreaded pink slip termination notices. The first two years he taught inner-city children in Harlem, Brooklyn, and in "Hell's

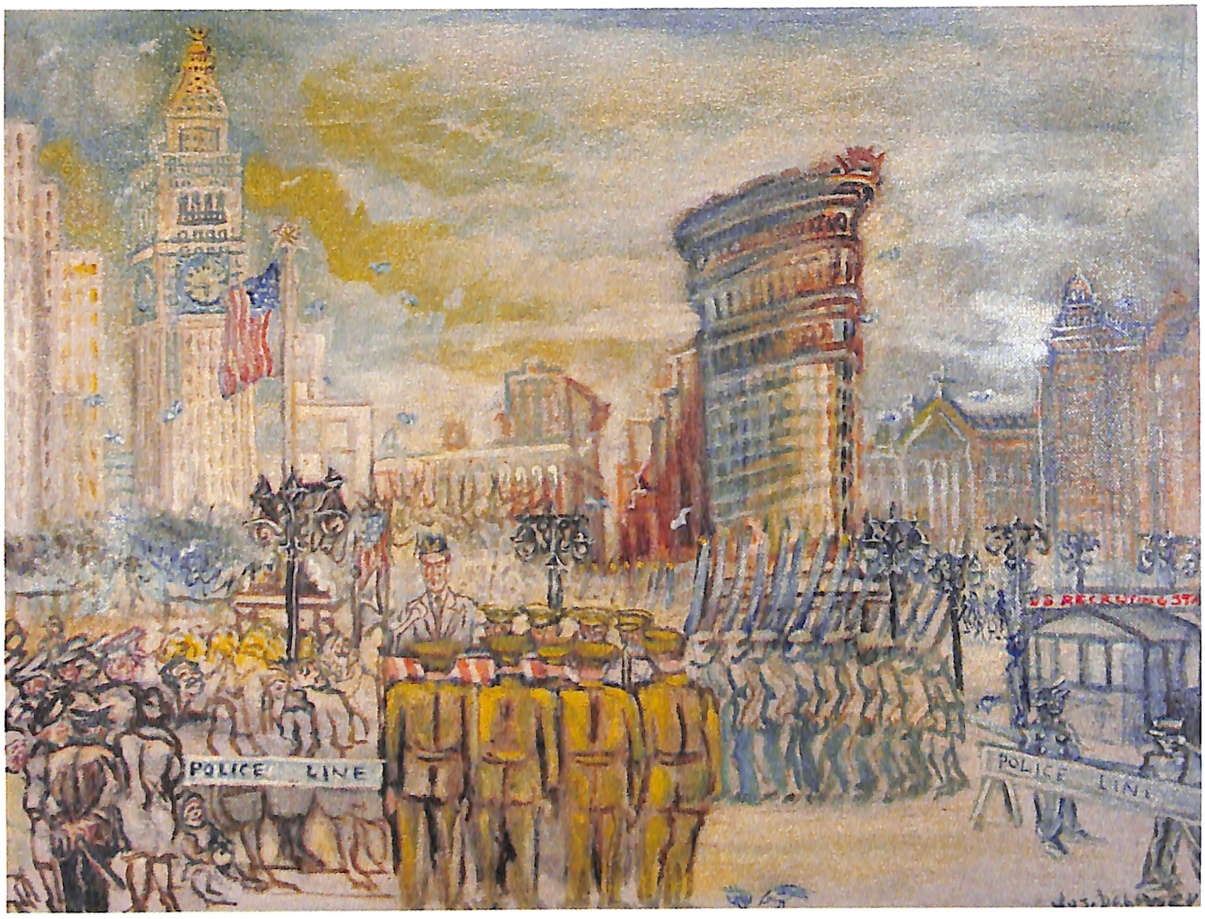
Vase Study
Gouche on paper
12 X 9 inches
Collection of Ewing Gallery
The University of Tennessee

Opposite Page:
Charleston Sweet Shop
Ink and ink wash on paper, ca. 1940
13 x 18 inches
Collection of Greenville County Museum of Art
Greenville, SC

Western Union Pickett Line
Ink and ink wash on board
12-1/2 X 17-1/2 inches
Collection of Ewing Gallery
The University of Tennessee

Kitchen" on the West Side.[83] He next transferred to the mural section. With a team commanded by Marsh's friend Edward Laning, Delaney worked on "The Story of the Recorded Word" for the wall of Hudson River Pier 71, a narrative since transferred to the New York Public Library. Moving from colossal scale and a broad pictorial approach to the highly restrictive confines of the miniature, Delaney signed on with the Index of American Design, an archival project directed for WPA by Holger Cahill, whose mission was to assemble facsimile reproductions of forgotten craft objects stored away in major museums. Delaney's contributions included watercolors of Paul Revere silverware, textiles, tapestries, and period furniture. Several fragile renderings the artist made of a nineteenth-century glass goblet in the Metropolitan Museum of Art remain with the Ewing Gallery collection.[84] After having taken his turn with the art project's Exhibits Committee, Delaney was ready for the most sought-after WPA category of all, the Easel Painting Division. His appointment in 1943 coincided most conveniently with his acceptance of a Julius Rosenwald travel grant for sketching local color scenes along the eastern and southern seaboards, from Maine to Charleston, South Carolina, where to his satisfaction he observed the "nightly parade of drunken sailors and prostitutes" that constituted the real essence of the place.[85] *Charleston Sweet Shop* is an ink and wash drawing that pokes fun at some flamboyant night-life characters gathered about a juke box. In these works Delaney was able to explore his picaresque cartooning approach to its full extent. With the expiration of WPA, the artist went on welfare and returned to the usual cycle of part time chores: washing dishes, pressing clothes, modeling in art classes, and tailoring. Thus Delaney's appointment as visiting artist at the Henry Street Settlement Houses under CETA in 1978 made him hopeful the good old New Deal days had returned at last. His appointment ended in 1980.

Delaney participated in at least thirty exhibits, the most ambitious being "Parades." On view at the Henry Street Settlement House in the winter of 1982, this review showcased *Vine and Central, Knoxville, Tennessee*, 1940; *Thanksgiving Day Parade When Danny Kaye Was Young*, c. 1959; *V-J Day, Times Square, 1961*; *Saint Patrick's Day Parade*, 1961; *Armistice Day at Madison Square Garden*, c. 1963; *Easter Parade*, 1965; *Yankee Victory Parade*, 1979; *Iran*



Armistice Day at Madison Square Garden
Oil on masonite
26 x 32-1/2 inches
Collection of Ewing Gallery
The University of Tennessee

Opposite Page:
Yankee Parade
Acrylic and chalk on canvas, 1979
50 x 72 inches
Courtesy of Aaron Galleries, Chicago, IL

Hostage Day Parade, 1981; and *Macy's Parade*, 1974.[86] In the winter of 1941/42, he participated with Beauford, Charles H. Alston, William H. Johnson, and Palmer Hayden in an exhibit entitled "American Negro Art," which Edith Halpert organized for her Downtown Gallery. This showcase was coordinated by Alain Locke, who purchased nine Delaney works for the Alain Locke Manor collection at Princeton University.[87] Several of these oils were chosen to illustrate a new edition of Locke's classic study, *The New Negro*. Curator Henri Ghent accepted Joseph Delaney's *Village Studio Party*, *Waldorf Cafeteria*, and *Portrait of Clara* in the Studio Museum in Harlem's "Invisible Americans: Black Artists of the 1930's" exhibit of 1969. This hastily assembled display of the works of twenty artists was intended to admonish a recent Whitney Museum of American Art exhibition, "The 1930's: Painting and Sculpture in America," which omitted black art altogether.[88] A one-person exhibition of Joseph's portraits went on view at the Studio Museum in Harlem in 1971. The Locke Manor collection, along with *V-J Day* and *Sunday Morning in Harlem* (1946), was represented in a large review of black art that was mounted by the Princeton University Art Museum in 1976.[89] The drawing *The World Champion Dodgers, The Bums' Clubhouse*, 1955, appeared in the 1987 exhibit, "Grand Game of Baseball," at the Museum of the Borough of Brooklyn; and in 1985, the Bellevue (New York) Art Museum and Art Museum Association accepted Delaney's works for its review, "Hidden Heritage, Afro-American Art, 1800-1950," which eventually traveled to ten museums.

Meanwhile, Delaney remained in touch with his home town. In 1970, the Frank H. McClung Museum on the University of Tennessee campus staged a one-person exhibit consisting of thirty-five works, including *V-J Day*. In a gesture of gratitude Delaney made a gift of *V-J Day*, his largest canvas, to the University of Tennessee.[90] A second, more ambitious Delaney retrospective was hosted by the Ewing Gallery in 1986 . It was independently planned by gallery director Sam Yates after his chance meeting with Delaney who was visiting the University campus in 1982. The University of Tennessee eventually promoted

the Ewing exhibit as part of its contribution to Governor Lamar Alexander's state-wide celebration,"Tennessee Homecoming '86.'" Of further significance to Delaney was the fact that Alex Haley, the former Greenwich Village friend who had since been crowned with a Pulitzer Prize, was co-chair of the Homecoming celebration, a confidante of the governor, and was also serving as an adjunct instructor of American Studies and Journalism at the University. It was no doubt at the urging of Haley, and possibly the governor as well, that University officials extended Delaney an invitation to join the University Art Department as a non-teaching artist-in-residence. Thus in 1986, the painter was persuaded to leave his Union Square apartment for a brick house on the edge of the University's Knoxville campus. He resided here until his death at the University Hospital in November of 1991. In a will signed in April of 1988, Delaney divided his estate between the University of Tennessee, the Volunteers of America, "to be used exclusively to serve homeless individuals and families in Knoxville and the surrounding areas," and relatives.[91]

Delaney's most supportive critic was the art historian Robert A. Pincus-Witten, a member of the faculty at Queens College and the College of the City of New York. Pincus-Witten used the "Invisible Americans" exhibit at the Studio Museum as an opportunity to fault the white art establishment's obvious negligence of black art and artists.[92] Even though the Harlem show included a full gamut of contemporary styles, School of Paris to realism, Pincus-Witten exclaimed, "a single artist of tremendous merit was revealed to me in terms of a developed, tough, and by moments self-mocking expressionism." To its credit, Delaney's *Village Studio Party*, c. 1940, a canvas dating from the time of Pincus-Witten's birth, illustrated the once "daring option of a white girl dancing with a black man." He was pleased that *Waldorf Cafeteria* was populated with the prototypical hippy characters of its day, one reputedly being the eccentric poet Maxwell Bodenheim. The critic could not resist comparing this scene with Van Gogh's penitential *Night Café*, 1888, further describing it as "terrifically painted with a breadth and ease of caricature that would please an Ensor." He believed the Locke Society's *Portrait of Clara* caught the "wispy, meditative" strains of a Kokoschka character study, as well as something of Kuniyoshi's lyricism.[93]

In Delaney's urban drawings and paintings, buildings and monuments are cold and serious things. They quarter the city into its constituent parts and divide its history into designated epochs. The built environment is properly

Village Studio Party
Oil on canvas, 1940
38 x 47 inches
Collection of Harvey D. Peyton, Charleston, WV

Opposite Page:
Penn Station at War Time
Oil on canvas, 1943
34 x 48-1/8 inches
Collection of Smithsonian American Art Museum
Gift of Joseph Delaney

intractable. Yet the buildings and statues are often the least stable aspects of the urban scene. The architectural environment of 1975 Times Square was as unlike that of the Square of 1961, as the latter was of the one appearing in sketches Delaney made during the 1930's.[94] In 1955, when the Dodgers took the Series, the marble rotunda of Ebbets Field compared to a thousand-year-old cathedral. Within a year, team owner Walter O'Malley prepared for its demolition by uprooting the team and moving it to Los Angeles.[95] Pennsylvania Station, which occupied a full city block at 34th Street, was the setting for an intense 1943 Delaney oil, *Penn Station at Wartime*. The architects McKim, Mead and White based its design on a pre-Christian era Roman Bath.[96] Yet in 1964, after having stood a mere fifty years, the noble Beaux-Arts structure was replaced by what a disdainful New Yorker recently characterized as a "grimy glass and concrete box, the mortal twitch of a dying modernism."[97] No, in Delaney's drawings and paintings, what was essentially the city was not a building that awaited destruction but a human body that continuously reproduces itself. This picaresque creature is always out of sorts: it is too pompous, or too jovial, or prepossessing, or too drunk, or too sober. Delaney's human creature makes us laugh because it reminds us of ourselves. When he drew this ludicrous figure, he drew the city. As figure, the city was unified, renewable, and anachronistic; there were no epochs into which its past and present could be dissected. Today, the descendants of V-J Day yet mingle on 46th Street. New York's thoroughfares, its bridges, parks, tunnels, and streets were for Delaney its arteries and veins. The various civic spectacles – the parade, or the winning "out" in a ball game – represented for him the instant in which the city's corpus was renewed and reaffirmed. The human spirit surged as the populace overran the built environment and pressed onward into formerly reserved and licensed spaces. When the New York Yankees took their turn at capturing the Series in 1979, Delaney thought immediately not of the walled edifice of Yankee Stadium but of the team itself, a congregate mass of bodies that ascended into Heaven over City Hall.[98] The painting in question, *Yankee Parade*, is a divine comedy that celebrates the lifting power of human love, both divine and secular. In 1972, Delaney justly wrote, "One of my most prized blessings is that in my art talents I was given the sense of (the) divine comedy throughout my work. So many other soul brothers of all races who have to walk that lonely valley and move along that old highway whether with a guitar strumming a song or beating on skin drums or just

Sketch Artist
Charcoal on paper
18 x 12 inches
Collection of Ewing Gallery
The University of Tennessee

Park Bench
Ink on paper
12 x 14-1/2 inches
Collection of Ewing Gallery
The University of Tennessee

patting your feet. Somewhere in the moving of the spirit we strike up (a) rhythm and (beat) a common cord of love, for us all."[99] This was Delaney's apt definition of the city.

As his autobiographical essays make clear, the glass-is-half-full-or-half-empty conundrum haunted Delaney through the 1970's and 80's. On one hand he took pride in having accomplished as much as he did and was especially thankful for the critical support he had received from Knoxville's white-owned newspapers. His favorite slogans were "We Are All In This Together" and "Love is the Answer." His race had not been against him, he felt; indeed, it had secured for him more than a few benefits.[100] "Basically," he wrote, "I am a conservative conventionalist (sic) at heart. I have enough rebellion in me to break the rules and go all out for a new expression, but I don't care for sensationalism."[101] We occasionally find him in a considerably more sober and critical mood. In about 1973, he wrote an essay that criticized New York dealers and museum personnel for popularizing "phoney art" and "clever tricks" at the expense of good drawing, effective designing, and a color appliqué that was "by the book." [102] Pincus-Witten aside, regular readers of *New York Times* art critic John Canaday could affirm there was precious little written about black artists in the white press. On the other hand, those black celebrities like Aaron Douglas, Jacob Lawrence, and Romare Bearden who did receive the full commendation of the white establishment were from Delaney's perspective experimental abstractionists who had not bothered to learn the fundamental rules. It was enough for the black and white establishment to know that the design sources utilized by the "in" black artists were a natural outgrowth of tribal African traditions and thus legitimately connected with authentic African-American cultural impulses.[103] In 1982, at the time of his "Parades" exhibition, Delaney had even stronger words for the slow progress blacks were making in an "ethnic prejudiced society" in which the establishment "still knows the kind of blacks they want."[104] There should not be "black art," he said in opposition to the views of Langston Hughes,[105] because the "symbolism of ethnic separation is very wicked to me. A society geared to fake representation only feeds the poison."

(Endnotes)

1. Frank S. Adams, "Wild Crowds Greet News In City While Others Pray," *New York Times*, May 8, 1945, 1; "City Lets Go for 5-Hour Victory Fete," *New York Herald Tribune*, May 8, 1945, 1; "Mayor Chides Throngs, Bids Them Go Home," ibid., 6. Responding to radio broadcasts, Delaney took a subway to the Square from his Greenwich Village studio. It is doubtful that he was able to make sketches of the event at that particular moment. On *V-J Day*, see also Romare Bearden and Harry Henderson, *A History of African-American Artists, From 1792 to the Present* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1993), 290; and Anne J. Willis, "Joseph Delaney," in John Ralph Willis, *Fragments of American Life: An Exhibition of Paintings* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Art Museum, 1976), 25.

2. Roger Van Gindertael's description of the Ensor could apply equally to the Delaney: "The painting represents the tragi-comic swelling tide of a carnival crowd in which all the different characters involved in the human tragedy rub shoulders together." A sign bearing the motto "Vive la Sociale" stretches diagonally across the top of Ensor's composition. See Roger Van Gindertael, *Ensor*, Vivienne Menkes, trans. (New York Graphic Society, 1975), 71.

3. David Leeming, *Amazing Grace: A Life of Beauford Delaney* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 3-9. This publication extended material that first appeared in David Leeming, *James Baldwin: A Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994).

4. Joseph Delaney, "The Reverend John Samuel Delaney of Virginia and East Tennessee: Church Builder and Circuit Rider," ms. Delaney Collection, Ewing Gallery (hereafter, EG), 17.

5. Digital Sanborn Maps, Knoxville, Tennessee, 1917, zone 23; "A Church Census of the 134 Churches of the City of Knoxville, Tennessee, as of Date January 31, 1925," pamphlet (Knoxville: John F. Edington), 9.

6. Leeming, 10.

7. Federal Writers' Project of the Work Projects Administration, *The WPA Guide to Tennessee* (New York: Viking Press, 1939; as reissued by University of Tennessee Press, Knoxville, 1986), 233.

8. On measures that led up to the leveling of the old West Vine community, see "Expressway Plans Call for Leveling 10 Blocks," *Knoxville News-Sentinel*, June 2, 1957; Robert E. Jackson, "Road Network is Biggest US Public Project," *Knoxville News-Sentinel*, Dec. 16, 1956; "US, State OK Downtown Loop," *Knoxville News-Sentinel*, July 18, 1958, 11; "Purchase of Land to Begin," *Knoxville Journal*, Feb. 18, 1961; "Action Along First Creek," *Knoxville Journal*, Aug. 12, 1966; "Knoxville Housing Authority," editorial, *Knoxville Journal*, August 12, 1966; Bill Pierce, "Loop Leg to Take Five Buildings," *Knoxville News-Sentinel*, Sept. 21, 1969.

9. The poet Nikki Giovanni, who resided with her grandparents on Mulvaney Street in the East Vine Avenue community during its last years of existence, called Knoxville her home. Having returned to the town in 1970 for a speaking engagement at the University of Tennessee, her academic hosts drove her past the remains of the house that "like a majestic king dethroned, put naked in the streets to beg, stood there just a mere skeleton of itself." Her bitter-sweet reaction is recorded in the prose-poem "400 Mulvaney Street" (1970). See Nikki Giovanni, *The Prosaic Soul of Nikki Giovanni* (New York: Harper/Collins, 1971), 9-21. On Nikki Giovanni's memories of the last days of Knoxville's Gem Theater, see W. H. Fowler, "A 'Gem' of Black Heritage," *Knoxville Spectrum*, May 19, 1975.

10. *Joseph Delaney, "A Treatise on the Corruption of the Art World," ms., ca 1973, 12. EG.* Brother Emery foretold the raising of the house in Emery Delaney to Joseph Delaney, 18 October, 1965, EG; Joseph Delaney, "Treatise on the Corruption of the Art World," 12.

11. Joseph Delaney, "The Reverend John Samuel Delaney," 28.

12. William B. McClain, *Black People in the Methodist Church: Whither Thou Goest?* (Cambridge, MA: Schenkman Publishing Co., 1984), 26-63.

13. "The Reverend John Samuel Delaney," 16.

14. Ibid., 1-24.

15. Ibid., 19.

16. McClain, 24-30.

17. Ibid.. 27.

18. Ibid..28.

19. Leeming, 11.

20. Bearden and Henderson, 287.

21. Leeming, 8, and Sam Yates, "Joseph Delaney: Retrospective Exhibition," catalogue (Knoxville: Ewing Gallery of Art and Architecture, 1986), no pagination.

22. J. H. Daves, "A Social Study of the Colored Population of Knoxville, Tennessee," pamphlet (Knoxville: Free Colored Library, 1925), 11, 17. Records indicated that one black youth (under the age of eighteen) for every 612 African Americans residing in the city had been arrested at least once. In the white community, the ratio was one for every 225. Current statistics for adults of both racial groups were inversely related to those for juveniles. Daves listed moving pictures of a "bad type," the liquor traffic, "use of automobiles for improper purposes," and adult criminal companionship as being the leading factors for juvenile delinquency among blacks.

23. For a sampling of Gross's verbal-visual chicanery, see his "Hiawatta: Witt No Odder Poems" (1926), in Thomas Craven, ed., *Cartoon Cavalcade* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1943), 164-67.

24. Jeannine Hunter, "Farragut Hotel Bellhop Went on to Reside in the Art World," *Knoxville News Sentinel*, Feb. 10, 2003; Joseph Delaney, autobiographical essay, Ewing Gallery, 35; Yates, np.

25. Yates; Leeming, 9.

26. Federal Writers' Project, 237; William J. MacArthur, Jr., "Knoxville's History: An Interpretation;" W. Russell Briscoe, "Commerce and Industry;" and Edwin P. Patton, "Transportation Development," in Lucile Deaderick, ed., *Heart of the Valley: A History of Knoxville, Tennessee* (Knoxville: East Tennessee Historical Society, 1976), 53; 410-13; 226-29.

27. In 1919 racial tensions also caused rioting in Tulsa, Oklahoma; Elaine, Arkansas; and in Chicago. See Lee E. Williams and Lee E. Williams II, *Anatomy of Four Race Riots* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1972), 21-37; MacArthur, 58-9.

28. Charles W. Cansler, "Negro Life in Knox County and Knoxville," in Mary U. Rothrock, ed., *The French Broad-Country: A History of Knox County, Tennessee* (Knoxville: East Tennesee Historical Society, 1946), 320.

29. Leeming, 16.

30. Charles V. Patton, "Weather-Beaten Old Knox Theater Once Scene of Gay Musical Shows," *Knoxville Journal*, May 18, 1953; Idem,"Turn of the Century Brought Many Changes to the Entertainment World," *Knoxville Journal*, August 2, 1956; "Memories Haunt Rebuilt Theater," *Knoxville Journal and Tribune*, Feb. 20, 1923; G. Allen Yeomans and Paul S. Soper, "The Theatre," in Deaderick, 466-68. The authors claim that at some point Staub's allowed blacks to occupy its gallery space.

31. Yates, end note 43.

32. Joseph Delaney, autobiographical essay, c. 1972, 30, EG.

33. Yates.

34. Leeming, 14, 15.

35. Tim Elledge, "To Come Home Again," *Context*, 3 (June 25, 1986), 8.

36. Leeming, 20-33.

37. Ibid., 58.

38. "Roamin' Fever," *New York*, 8 (May 26, 1975), 63.

39. Joseph Delaney, "As I tell this story of this dream of the years of the thirties," ms., np., EG.

40. Yates, en. 49. While Joseph was visiting Paris in 1969, Beauford escorted him to a performance of the Paris opera. By way of pointing to the lingering cultural differences that separated the two, Joseph confessed to an interviewer he would have preferred patronizing the Moulin Rouge. See Bearden, 287.

41. "As I tell this story of this dream . . ."

42. "Roamin' Fever."

43. Joseph Delaney, "Magic of the Parade," unpublished ms., July 18, 1981., EG.

44. Other South Chicago pianists similarly engaged were Jimmy Yancey, Clarence "Pine Top" Smith, Meade Lux Lewis, Clarence Lofton, Cow Cow Davenport, Montana Taylor, Charlie Spand, Wesley Wallace, and Will Ezell. See William H. Kenney, *Chicago Jazz: A Cultural History, 1904-1930* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 153.

45. Kenney, 47. In his survey of music, Alain Locke comments that the African

American "never had a jazz age – he was born that way." See Alain Locke, *The Negro and His Music: Negro Art Past and Present* (New York: Arno Press, 1969), 87.

46. See biographical listings in David C. Driskell, *Two Centuries of Black American Art*, catalogue(Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1976).

47. Yates., On Delaney's return to the hotel business, see Joseph Delaney,"Looking Forward to the Future,"ms., 2, EG.

48. Leeming, 39, 40.

49. "Roaming Fever."

50. Leeming, 96. Alex Haley to Lestar Markel, Editor, *New York Times Magazine*, November 8, 1952., EG.

51. Joseph Delaney, "Hopin' Johns," unpublished ms., 1. EG.

52. Reproduced as *Herald Square at Night*, oil/board, 1963, in Yates.

53. Illustrated in "*Art Students League News*," 23(Jan.-Feb. 1970), 1

54. Bearden and Henderson (287) assert that one of the figures was intended to be Delaney's artist friend Stewart Clonis and another, the building's superintendent Chris Buchert.

55. A sculptor, Zorach taught at the League from 1929 to 1960. See William Zorach, *Art is My Life* (Cleveland: World Publishing Co., 1967), 126-27.

56. A sketch of the League appears in Sara D. Kimbrough, *Drawn From Life: The Story of Four American Artists Whose Friendship and Work Began in Paris During the 1880's* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1976), 146-151. Reference is to Kenneth Hayes Miller , *The Fitting Room*, oil, 1931, Metropolitan Museum of Art, and Thomas Hart Benton, *The Lord is My Shepherd*, tempera on canvas, 1926, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

57. George B. Bridgman, *Bridgman's Life Drawing* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1971).

58. Kimbrough, 148.

59. Bridgman, 103

60. Joseph Delaney, "Drawing the Figure," ms., np. EG. Bearden and Harrison (292) indicate Delaney began a text book on artistic anatomy in 1974.

61. Kimbrough, 148

62. Delaney, "Drawing the Figure."

63. Ibid.

64. This academic practice can be traced back to the Italian Baroque artist Luca Cambiaso and forward to the American Synchromists with whom Benton was briefly associated. See Henry Adams, *Thomas Hart Benton: Drawing From Life* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1990), 78.

65. B. H. Friedman, *Jackson Pollock: Energy Made Visible* (New York: De Capo Press, 1995), 25; Kirk Varnedoe, "Comet: Jackson Pollock's Life and Work," in Kirk Varnedoe, ed., *Jackson Pollock* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1998), 24-5.

66. Joseph Delaney, "Treatise on the Corruption of the Art World," 6.

67. Susan Fleming, "Parades," catalogue (New York: Arts for Living Center, Henry Street Settlement House, 1981), np.; Yates, en. 42.

68. Friedman, 25.

69. Yates, caption for reproduction of *Artist's Party*, oil, 1942.

70. Joseph Delaney, "Drawing the Figure." With these sessions in mind, Delaney once commented, "I believe drawing keeps me fresh with the body, which is important for a figure painter." He would frequently walk over to Times Square between sessions. See Bearden and Harrison, 290.

71. Joseph Delaney, "Drawing the Figure."

72. Ibid.

73. Ibid.

74. Adams, 78-9; Edward Laning commented that he had "made my first trip to Europe, in 1929, searching for Renoir but finding Rubens." See Edward Laning, *East Side; West Side; All Around the Town: A Retrospective Exhibition of Paintings, Watercolors and Drawings by Reginald Marsh* (Tucson: University of Arizona Museum of Art, 1969), 90. A Rubens oil sketch for the *Triumphal Entry of Henry IV into Paris; c.* 1628, entered the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1942. See Karl Lunde, *Isabel Bishop* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1975), 35

75. Laning, 90.

76. A tempera measuring 30" x 40," the Marsh painting is in the collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art. See also Joseph Delaney, *Self-Portrait*, graphite, 1932, in Aaron Galleries, *A Collection of Works on Paper by Joseph Delaney and Other African-American Masters*, catalogue, 8 (Fall 2002), fig. 3.

77. Don Williams, "Joe Delaney is Content with His Own," *Knoxville News-Sentinel*, June 2, 1991.

78. Yates.

79. Ibid.

80. Elsa H. Fine, *The Afro-American Artist* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, Winston, 1973), 135.

81. Joseph Delaney, "The Early Thirties Were Full Years," 15. In a letter he wrote to Pres. Roosevelt in 1944, Delaney enclosed a drawing of a presidential parade against the backdrop of City Hall. He wrote, "Your parade up Broadway I will always remember with great joy." He thoughtfully added, "I know you are a good portrait painter and I am a little shy to risk any style." EG.

82. Ibid., 27.

83. Ibid.

84. Ibid. This nineteenth century piece was attributed to the craftsman Helen A. McKovin.

85. Yates, en. 18.

86. Joyce Howe, "Delaney Captures Hum and Rhythm of the City Throngs in His Art of Parades," *The Villager*, 50 (Feb. 18, 1982), 8, and *New York Times*, Feb. 12, 1982.

87. Works purchased were *Watch Over This Till I Get Back* (1938), *Massa in the Cold, Cold Ground* (1931), *Walkin' Ball (George Gumby)* (1933), *Portrait of Clara* (1937), *Crow's Nest*, n.d., *Virginia Local*, n.d., *Albert Ammons* (1943), *Lady in a Hat With Veil* (1944) and *Lady in Green Stockings* (1945). See Willis, 16-26.

88. Willis.

89. See William C. Agee, *The 1930's: Painting and Sculpture in America* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1968).

90. Bearden, 290. The painting was initially placed under the care of the University Libraries. It has lately hung in the Student Services Building.

91. For a description of Delaney's final years and the contestation that surrounded the dispersal of his and Beauford's estates, see Jack Neely, "Artistic Integrity," *Metro Pulse* 7 (April 3-9, 1997): 9-25.

92. Robert Pincus-Witten, "Black Artists of the 1930's; Studio Museum in Harlem," *Artforum* 7(February 1969): 65-66.

93. Ibid. See also Bearden and Harrison, 291.

94. Joseph Delaney, "Treatise on the Corruption of the Art World," 10. He wrote that the corroded dome of "the most celebrated Astor Hotel has now given way to a new winged shaped spire design."

95. Peter Golenbock, *Bums: An Oral History of the Brooklyn Dodgers* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1984), 428-51.

96. Driskell, 164-5. The painting is in the collection of the Smithsonian Museum of American Art.

97. Jason Epstein, "Way Uptown," *New York Times Magazine*, April 11, 2004, 53.

98. Yates, illustration caption.

99. Joseph Delaney, untitled essay, 25. EG.

100. "The Early Thirties Were Full Years," 30.

101. Ibid., 27.

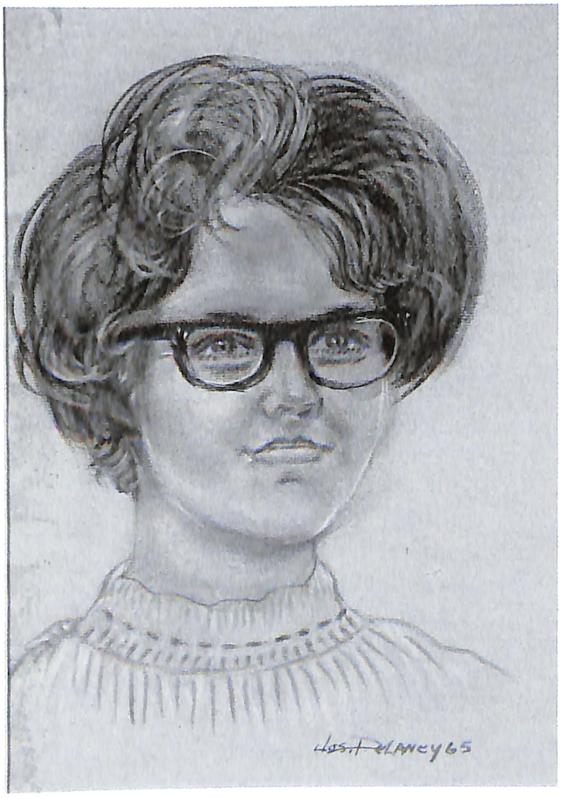
102. Howe, 8.

103. Langston Hughes, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain," *The Nation* 122 (June 23, 1926): 693.

104. Howe.

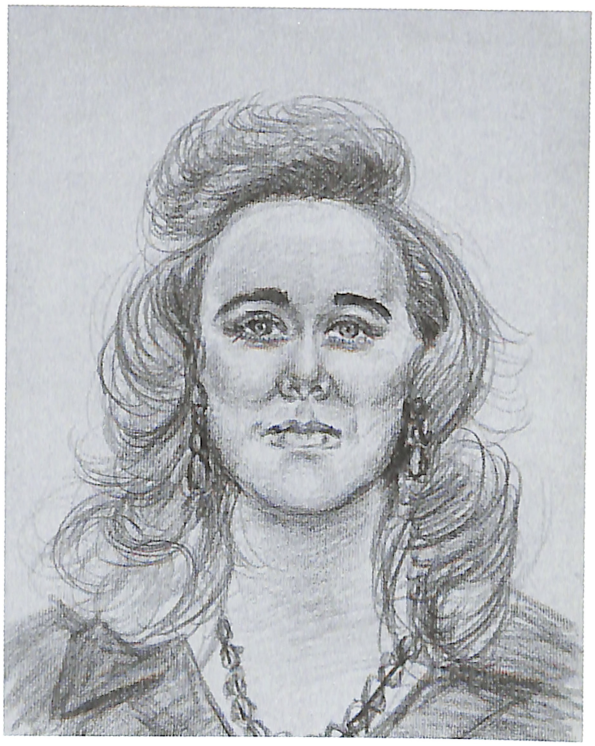
105. In his "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain," ibid, Hughes, a respected Harlem Renaissance literati, reacted strongly to a young black poet's expressed wish to be like a white poet. Hughes answered that he and his black colleagues needed to "express our dark-skinned selves without fear or shame. If white people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, it doesn't matter. We know we are beautiful. And ugly too."

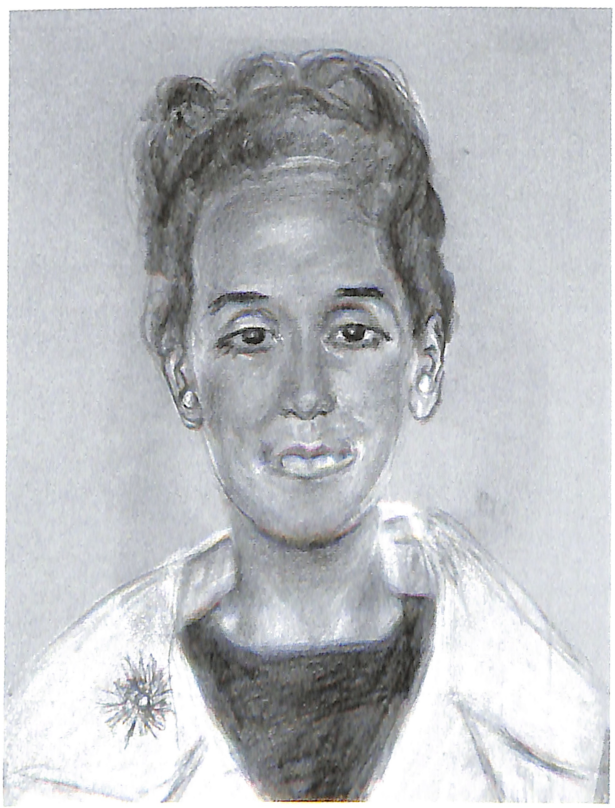
Portrait Sketches



Top, left:
Delaney at Washington Square

Untitled Portraits
Charcoal and/or pastel on paper
Approximately 18 x 12 inches
Collection of Ewing Gallery
The University of Tennessee





Other Works on Paper

Well Done
Watercolor on paper
10 x 7-1/2
Collection of Ewing Gallery
The University of Tennessee

Bar Scene
Watercolor on paper
20-1/2 x 13-1/2 inches
Collection of Ewing Gallery
The University of Tennessee

Party Scene
Ink on paper
10-1/2 x 13-1/2 inches
Collection of Ewing Gallery
The University of Tennessee

JOE DELANEY
WELL DONE!

Poems By Joseph Delaney

ADVENTURE

Blacker than hell one night, and cold
I would not take a dare
A roaring monster bold
was flaming over there.
His road is steel his sound is grind
The best companion I could find.
His gate mouth spread from ear to ear
while black bread fell from the upper tear
His churning jaws still grinding coke
and wild sparks leaping through the smoke
He belched and wincked his searching eye
with chills and thrills I had to sigh
Then leaping like a frightened toad
He's madly tossing up the road
Then flinching to a main of steel
adventure cold without a shield.

-January 27, 1936-

STONEGRILLER ORDERS HIS BREAKFAST.

The soft of the calf, back to back:
With pig-meat two streaks in the middle,
Throw the flour in the pan and let it ride-
Stomp about nine eggs,-
Bring on the cow:
Shake up well-
Let a black cup stream like Engine 72.
Rareback on both sides,
And let Stonegriller too!

STUMBLING ALONG

Stumbling along is alright to
let what may change to block your shoe

Anything might be in your way
So blindly stumbling might well pay

Fortune comes straight to the blind
Who neither path nor road can find

Stumbling up or down just so
stumble on you never know

If moving forward is our goal
God bless a seeking stumbling soul.

-January 24, 1936-

GOLD

For all the good that gold doth do
and debts remain unpaid
We drill the earth for revenue
and never rest our spade.

Gold cannot pay the price we owe
or meet the balance due
No pound or weight can peace bestow
except in virtue true.

Oh gold I wonder where you'll be
when mankind learns to love you less
Oh tinkling symbol let me see
You'll probably have a chance to rest.

-January 27, 1936-

LIQUOR

I came to know very intimately a stranger, someone I never dreamed could get so close to me; not by any means can this found personality be called an intrusion in my life, to be quiet honest.

Family background denied me the opportunity to grow up knowing this fellow. Let's say I knocked on his door, to be frank, broke in. I am still trying to get out...or do I want out. I don't think we fully realize what we are doing at the time--habits which will mold the course of our lives to a great extent. The pros and cons about alcohol are inexhaustible, the records will confuse any hard and fast rule. History gives glory to many people through the ages who have indulged in drinking to extreme excesses while carving their names in the annals of time. These people, too numerous to list here, knew how to handle their liquid companion.

By the same token, countless numbers have yielded to the dreaded power of the grip liquor can get on its victims. Temperance in all things, more especially when the hand is heavy with the bottle. I love my old friend, John Barleycorn. My respect for the whollop he packs won't let me get tangled up with him anymore I hope.

If experience means anything, now is a good time to say "nice knowing you." But a good old pal is hard to let go. I am with you.

Self-Portrait
Charcoal and pastel on paper, 1965
20 x 16 inches
Collection of Ewing Gallery
University of Tennessee

The University of Tennessee

Dr. John Petersen, President
Dr. Loren Crabtree, Chancellor

College of Arts and Sciences

Dr. Stuart Rigsby, Dean
Paul Lee, Director, School of Art

Ewing Gallery of Art

Sam Yates, Director and Curator
Adam Alfrey, Exhibitions Coordinator
Cindy Spangler, Collections Manager
Special thanks to Calvin Chappelle IV for his assistance with this project

Frederick Moffatt

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Joseph DeLaney