



ALLAN ROHAN CRITE

URBAN GLORY

October 23, 2025–January 19, 2026

ISABELLA
SEWART GARDNER
MUSEUM

ALLAN ROHAN CRITE: URBAN GLORY

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HOSTETTER GALLERY

Allan Rohan Crite (1910–2007) was not simply an artist. As a community elder, writer, civic leader, and griot, or storyteller, he was a quiet radical who reveled in the beauty of everyday life and created art that glorified the Black community. For the first time, Crite is celebrated in a comprehensive career-spanning show at one of his favorite hometown museums.

Allan Rohan Crite: Urban Glory is a triumphant and moving tribute to an artist and the neighborhoods he treasured. Showcasing works from across Crite's decades-long career, the exhibition encompasses vivid depictions of life in Lower Roxbury and the South End, art for Christian worship, and later works that combined neighborhood scenes with religious vignettes. Crite created these works as he grappled with the gentrification and shifting demographics of the city he loved. Just as Boston underwent significant changes throughout the 20th century, so too did Crite's art, evolving from documentary naturalism to works inspired by African art to a graphic-novel-like approach to line drawing and bookmaking. Regardless of the medium in which he worked, Crite honored the divine in the everyday, guided by a "manifest love of humanity."

A vibrant retrospective, *Allan Rohan Crite: Urban Glory* pays homage to an artist whose legacy is still felt today, and gives everyone the opportunity to see their own humanity made sacred.

At the Boston Athenaeum—another institution Crite loved—the concurrent exhibition *Allan Rohan Crite: Griot of Boston* explores the works on paper that expanded Crite's audience and inspired those around him.

COVER: Allan Rohan Crite (American, 1910–2007), *School's Out* (detail), 1936. Oil on canvas. Smithsonian American Art Museum, Transfer from General Services Administration. Courtesy of the Allan Rohan Crite Research Institute and Library

EXHIBITION

Robert T. Freeman:

Allan Crite -

American Griot, 2025

October 14, 2025–

February 10, 2026

ANNE H. FITZPATRICK
FAÇADE

Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum Artist-in-Residence Robert T. Freeman (b. 1946, USA) is a figurative painter known for his bold gestural brushwork, vivid color palette, geometric forms, and abstract approach to his subjects.

This piece of public art, commissioned by the Gardner Museum, is Freeman's tribute to the life work of fellow artist Allan Rohan Crite. Freeman paints Crite as the dominant figure with smaller figures surrounding him. These were taken from a combination of Crite's paintings of street scenes in Boston's Lower Roxbury and South End neighborhoods (*Late Afternoon*, *Tire Jumping in Front of My Window*, *Harriet and Leon*, and *The News*). Crite was a storyteller, who delighted in chronicling the visual beauty of African American communities.

RIGHT: Robert T. Freeman: *Allan Crite - American Griot*, 2025 [rendering]
© Robert T. Freeman.



EXHIBITION

Visions of Black Madonnas

October 23, 2025–January 19, 2026

FENWAY GALLERY

Mary, the mother of Jesus, has appeared as a Black woman across different times, cultures, and geographies. These images, known as Black Madonnas in the Christian visual tradition, portray the Virgin Mary with dark skin for varying and evolving reasons—whether a consequence of prayerful touch and candle smoke or to assert the holiness of people of color. The exhibition *Visions of Black Madonnas* was born from an encounter between one artist and a particular 400-year-old devotional work.

The *Black Glass Madonna* (1570–1591) at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum was commissioned by Archduke Ferdinand II of Austria in the 1500s as a testament to his personal devotion to the dark-skinned, miracle-working Madonna of Loreto. Four centuries later, Boston artist Allan Rohan Crite (1910–2007) saw this piece regularly while visiting the Gardner Museum. A devout Episcopalian, he made dozens of his own Black Madonnas that exalted Black people, particularly Black mothers.

In juxtaposing these works, *Visions of Black Madonnas* examines varying motivations for presenting the Holy Family as Black, and especially casts light on how Crite's choice to create images of dark-skinned Madonnas glorified his diverse community.

RIGHT: Allan Rohan Crite (American, 1910–2007), *Streetcar Madonna* (detail), 1946. Watercolor with black ink and white gouache over graphite. Boston Athenaeum, Gift of the artist, 1971 (A U9 Cria. 1946). Courtesy of the Allan Rohan Crite Research Institute and Library



MEMBER PREVIEW DAY

Wednesday, October 22, 2025, 11 AM–5 PM

Members enjoy early access to the exhibitions before they open to the public.

Free; advance timed general admission ticketing is required.

MEMBER OPENING CELEBRATION

Wednesday, October 22, 2025, 6:30–9 PM

Celebrate our new exhibitions, enjoy a glass of wine and a welcome from the curator.

Free for members, but space is limited. Advance registration is required.

MEMBER EXHIBITION INSIGHT TOURS

**Saturday, November 8, 2025; December 6, 2025;
and January 10, 2026, 9–10 AM**

Tour the special exhibitions in-person with a Museum Teacher and a small group of members. Space is very limited.

Tickets are required for member tours and are \$15 each.

URBAN GLORY: A VIRTUAL MEMBER MOMENT

Thursday, November 13, 2025, 12 PM—Live on Zoom

Join Diana Seave Greenwald, *William and Lia Poorvu Curator of the Collection*, for a virtual conversation about *Allan Rohan Crite: Urban Glory*.

Free for members; advance registration is required.

Allan Rohan Crite: *Urban Glory* and *Visions of Black Madonnas* are supported in part by Barbara and Amos Hostetter, the Abrams Foundation, the Barr Foundation, the Henry Luce Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the Wyeth Foundation for American Art, The Tom and Katherine Stemberg Fund for Exhibitions and Programs, Fredericka and Howard Stevenson, and by an endowment grant from the Mellon Foundation and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Robert T. Freeman: *Allan Crite - American Griot*, 2025 is supported in part by Barbara and Amos Hostetter, the Abrams Foundation, the Barr Foundation, the Henry Luce Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the Barbara Lee Program Fund, The Tom and Katherine Stemberg Fund for Exhibitions and Programs, and Fredericka and Howard Stevenson.

The Artist-in-Residence program is supported in part by Lizbeth and George Krupp and The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts and directed by Pieranna Cavalchini, Tom and Lisa Blumenthal Curator of Contemporary Art. Funding is also provided for site-specific installations of new work on the Anne H. Fitzpatrick Façade on Evans Way.

The Museum receives operating support from the Massachusetts Cultural Council, which is supported by the state of Massachusetts and the National Endowment for the Arts.

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PUBLIC PROGRAMS - Learn more about these programs and our speakers at gardnermuseum.org/calendar

Allan Rohan Crite:

The Dean of African American Arts in New England

Thursday, October 23, 2025, 7–8:30 PM

Join us to celebrate the life and legacy of Allan Rohan Crite, who prolifically documented the daily life of Black Bostonians. Through personal anecdotes and professional reflections, this conversation will honor the important work of a Boston notable who has long deserved greater national recognition.

“The Street is a Memory”: Resisting Boston’s Urban Removal

Thursday, November 13, 2025, 7–8:30 PM

Allan Rohan Crite was both a history keeper and anti-gentrification activist, using his renderings of his neighbors in the South End to document the displacement caused by urban renewal. Join us as we discuss this complex history through the work of community trusts, neighborhood activists, policy makers, and artists striving to preserve and protect Boston’s diverse neighborhoods and communities.

Black Madonnas: The Spiritual Made Visual

Thursday, December 11, 2025, 7–8:30 PM

Join us as vocalist Nedelka Prescod offers a musical opening to a discussion of the Black woman in Christian iconography. Crite’s celebration of the everyday woman, in tandem with his deep faith, led him to contribute beautiful and affecting imagery to the centuries-long tradition of the Black Madonna. Taking inspiration from *Visions of Black Madonnas* in the Fenway Gallery, this program examines that history from the *Black Glass Madonna* of 1500s Europe acquired by Isabella Stewart Gardner to Crite’s images of Mary as a Black mother on public transportation.

This program is supported by the Henry Luce Foundation.

Free First Thursdays | Thursday, November 6, 2025, 5–9 PM

Experience the sanctity of art and community with a vocal performance in the Courtyard, an art-making activity, and a visit to Crite’s exhibition.

Saturday Open Studio | Saturdays, 1–4 PM

Explore one of Crite’s favorite approaches to artmaking, “the multiple,” with a hands-on studio experience designed by Polly Thayer Starr Visiting Artist Crystal Bi.

From Earth to Heaven: A Community Sing-Along to Celebrate the Art & Liturgy of Allan Rohan Crite

Monday, January 19, 2026, 1 PM

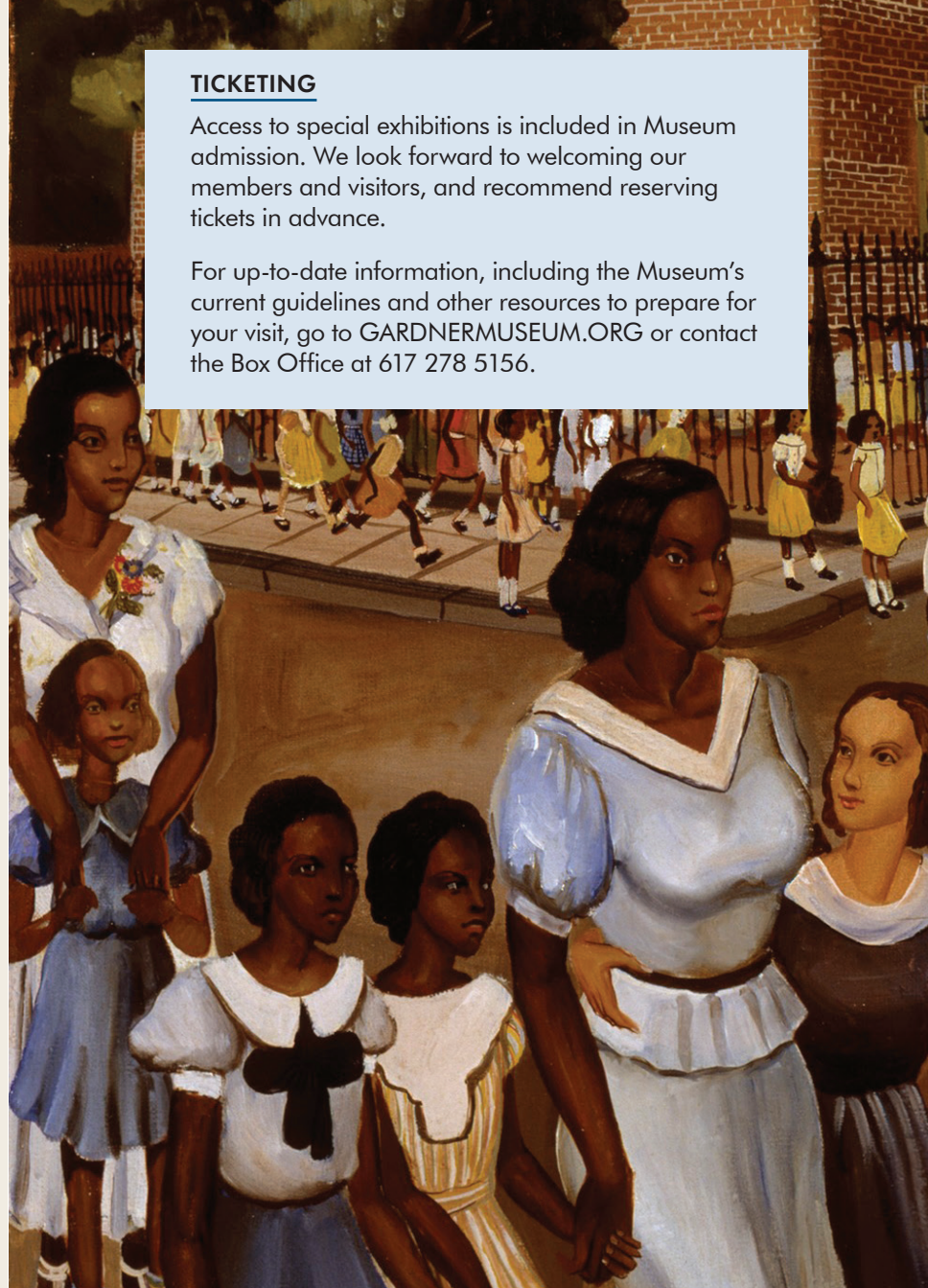
Come sing with us in the Courtyard on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service, also the final day of our exhibition. With our vocal partners, Boston City Singers Youth Choir, the Palace Courtyard will be filled with hymns beloved by Crite as we celebrate his life and legacy.

Advance tickets are required. Price of public program tickets includes admission to the Museum and special exhibitions. Pricing may vary. See [GARDNERMUSEUM.ORG](https://gardnermuseum.org) for individual program details. Seating in Calderwood Hall is first-come, first-served. Seating begins 45 minutes before the event. Late seating is not guaranteed. To request accessible or wheelchair seating please call the Box Office at 617 278 5156.

TICKETING

Access to special exhibitions is included in Museum admission. We look forward to welcoming our members and visitors, and recommend reserving tickets in advance.

For up-to-date information, including the Museum’s current guidelines and other resources to prepare for your visit, go to GARDNERMUSEUM.ORG or contact the Box Office at 617 278 5156.



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