

Allan Rohan Crite:
Urban Glory
Large Print Labels

Artist Allan Rohan Crite (1910–2007) glorified the sense of community he found in his Boston neighborhoods of Lower Roxbury and the South End. A quiet radical, he reveled in the beauty and sanctity of everyday life.

This exhibition is the first retrospective of Crite's career. Crite abandoned oil painting early, choosing instead to make works on paper that he could distribute directly to a broad public. He produced art for worship in churches and books that depicted holy figures as Black and multilingual, reflecting the diversity of congregants. As a writer, he sounded the alarm about destructive urban development and argued for women's dignity and rights. He mentored countless artists in Boston's creative community.

Crite's art-filled home served as a museum and a space for learning and civic dialogue. In this way, it resembled the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, which Crite had visited and admired since childhood. His art and influence suffuse all three of the Gardner's exhibition spaces. Here in the Hostetter Gallery, a survey of his work illustrates the

depth and range of his subjects. On the Anne H. Fitzpatrick Façade of this building, painter Robert T. Freeman pays tribute to his love of neighborhood. In the Fenway Gallery of the Palace, Crite's work accompanies one of his favorite Gardner objects, a Black Madonna made of glass.

A concurrent exhibition at the Boston Athenaeum—another institution Crite loved—explores Crite's role as a storyteller and knowledge keeper in his community. Whether you knew Mr. Crite or are learning about him for the first time, we hope you discover in these exhibitions the generous spirit that characterized his life and work.

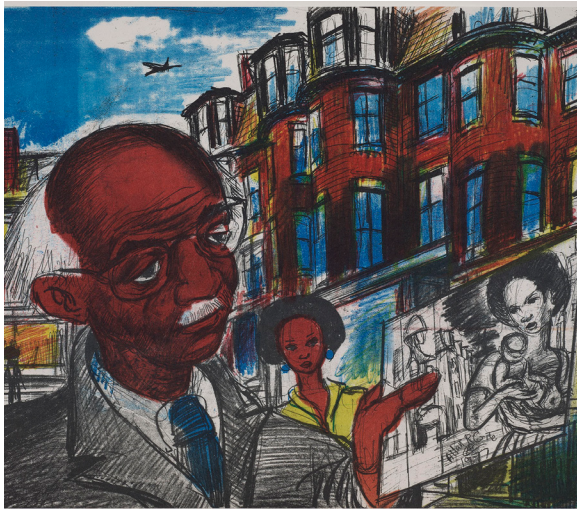


Self-Portrait

about 1932

Charcol and pencil on paper

National Center of Afro-American Artists (NCAAA), Roxbury



410 Columbus Avenue (from An Artist's Sketchbook of the South End: A Walking Tour about Black People)

1977

Offset color lithograph
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. The Living New England Artist Purchase Fund, created by The Stephen and Sybil Stone Foundation

[Vertical Timeline]

[Crite Side]

1910 — Born in North Plainfield, NJ, to Annamae and Oscar Crite. The family soon moves to Boston.

1936 — Graduates from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts.

1940 — Starts working as an engineering draftsman at the Charlestown Navy Yard, a job he holds for the next three decades. His art is featured in a show at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

Late 1950s — Crite purchases a printing press to reproduce drawings and make art for worship

1968 — Earns a bachelor's degree from Harvard University's Extension School.

1971 — Displaced by urban redevelopment plans, Crite and his mother are forced to move from their longtime home at 2 Dilworth Street in Lower Roxbury. They move to a brownstone at 410 Columbus Avenue, his home for the rest of his life and a key gathering place for Boston's Black arts community.

1979 — Crite organizes the Boston Collective, a group of Black artists in Boston. This establishes his position as the "Dean" of the city's African American arts community. Now retired from the Navy Yard, he exhibits widely and mentors many fellow artists.

1993 — Marries Jacquelyn Cox, who dedicates herself to caring for Crite and his legacy.

2007 — Crite passes away at home in the South End at the age of 97.

[Boston/National Side]

1929–39 — The Great Depression engulfs Boston and the United States. The government launches initiatives to boost employment, including for artists like Crite.

1941 — The United States enters World War II. Wartime production fuels the growth of employers like the Charlestown Navy Yard.

1948 — The Massachusetts Department of Public Works releases the Metropolitan Master Highway Plan and begins building highways through Boston's neighborhoods. Residents organize to oppose the plans as early as the 1950s.

1951–55 — Martin Luther King Jr. completes his doctorate at Boston University. He lives and preaches within a 20-minute walk of Crite's home in Lower Roxbury.

1958–60s — The newly created Boston Redevelopment Authority demolishes Boston's West End neighborhood. Thousands of residents are evicted, destroying one of the most diverse working-class communities in the city.

1967 — The Boston-based advocacy group Mothers for Adequate Welfare stages a sit-in to demand initiatives like school lunches for children. Reactions to the peaceful protest escalate into riots.

1968 — In the wake of Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination, the federal government passes the Fair Housing Act, which prohibits longstanding racial and religious discrimination in the sale, rental, and financing of housing.

1974 — A federal court decision finds Boston Public Schools in violation of laws prohibiting segregation. Compulsory busing between predominantly white and Black areas of the city triggers years of protest and racial violence known as the Boston busing crisis.

1983 — State representative Mel King is the first Black candidate to be runner-up in a mayoral race in Boston, ultimately losing to Ray Flynn.

1990 — The Southwest Corridor Park, built on the site of a canceled highway project and a recently rerouted Orange Line, officially opens. The new park borders the South End, where gentrification accelerates radically.

All works are by Allan Rohan Crite (American, 1910–2007) unless otherwise noted.

Meet Mr. Crite

Allan Rohan Crite lived for almost a century. An artist, author, and voracious intellectual, he was **always** sketching and writing. He called his sketchbook "my brains." Radically, Crite abandoned painting as a young man and turned mainly to printmaking, even embracing the artistic possibilities of the Xerox machine. He could therefore produce enormous amounts of work and easily share it with his community. Crite's artworks filled his home and are preserved in many Boston-area institutions and private collections. His friends and mentees still call him "Mr. Crite," a testament to his impact and creative legacy.

This gallery introduces the breadth of his output. His art evolved throughout his long life, from an almost documentary naturalism to works inspired by African art to a graphic-novel-like approach to line drawing and bookmaking. Above all, in art and life, Crite was both boundlessly curious and enormously energetic—a potent combination that made him a great artist and beloved friend.



7:45 A.M.

February 1945

Watercolor and black ink
over graphite

Boston Athenaeum. Gift
of the Artist, 1971 (A U9
Cri.a. 1945)



Parade on Hammond Street

June 1935

Oil on canvas board
The Phillips Collection,
Washington, DC.

Acquired 1942 (0351)

Early in his career, Crite gained a reputation for being an “artist-reporter.” Carefully balancing line and color, he immerses us in scenes reflecting Black and multicultural middle-class life in Boston. Though not strictly documentary, these works skillfully conjure a specific time and place that Crite inhabited and loved.

Parade on Hammond Street shows the Elks, a social club and mutual aid group, parading in front of well-dressed spectators through Boston's Lower Roxbury neighborhood. Shortly after Crite painted this canvas, it was shown at New York's Museum of Modern Art.



Streetcar Madonna

1946

Watercolor with black ink and white gouache over graphite

Boston Athenaeum. Gift of the artist, 1971 (A U9 Cri.a. 1946)

A Black Virgin Mary and young Jesus appear amid apparently oblivious streetcar commuters. Crite's jewel-toned image reminds us that the holy can appear in the everyday, that the divine comes from perhaps unexpected quarters. Where others saw urban drudgery—and often growing urban poverty—he saw glorious community.

In this period, most artists depicted holy figures with light skin. Here, Crite demonstrates that they can be Black. He would return to this visual argument throughout his career and was particularly invested in helping viewers of all backgrounds see themselves in the divine.



Study of African Image, Goddess of Thunder "Shango"

1933

Watercolor and pencil on paper

National Center of Afro-American Artists (NCAAA), Roxbury



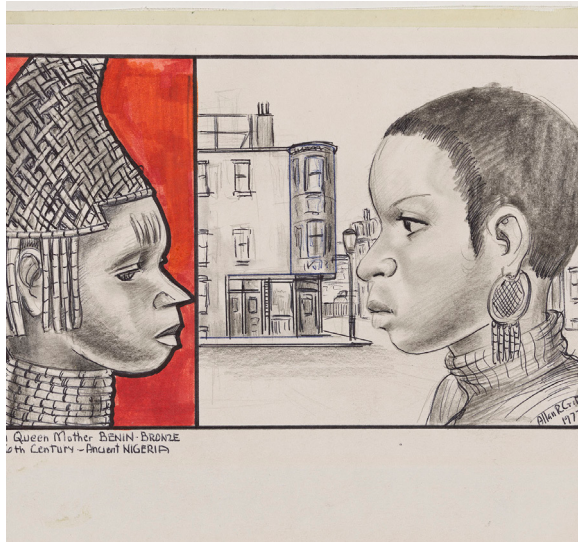
Untitled (Mother and Children)

1940

Oil on canvas board

Gift of William

Greenbaum and Ellen Solomon, Museum of African American History Boston | Nantucket



A Queen Mother, Benin Bronze, 16th Century, Ancient Nigeria

1977

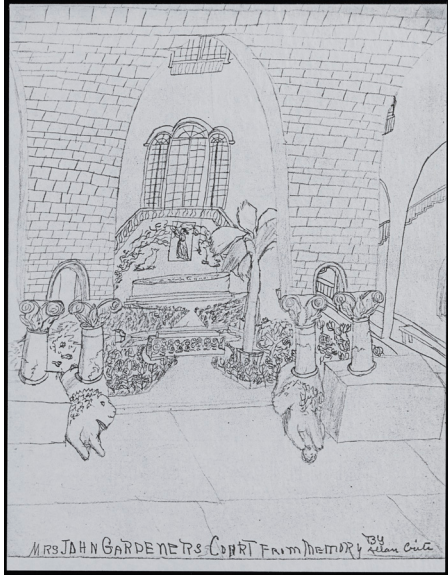
Graphite, pen and ink, and felt-tip pens on paper

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Gift of Jo-Ann Edinburg Pinkowitz and Richard Pinkowitz in honor of Patrick Murphy (2019.100)

Crite's paintings depicting middle-class Black life are often contrasted with work by artists associated with the Harlem Renaissance, who turned to African art as inspiration. In fact, Crite **did** engage with African art and a more abstracted aesthetic. This group of objects shows that he sketched African objects as early as the 1930s and in the 1940s made oil paintings with more abstracted figures and backgrounds.

Later in his career, he made drawings powerfully juxtaposing totemic African objects with images of people in his neighborhood. These images suggest he was interested in

ancestors and spiritual inspiration beyond the Christian tradition.



Mrs. John Gardner's Court from Memory

1921

Photocopy

Arts Department, Special
Collections, Boston Public
Library



St. Luke the Evangelist

1959

Gouache on paper

Arts Department, Special
Collections, Boston Public
Library



**Untitled (Annunciation
Scene with Angel
and Mary, Overlaid
on Emmanuel
Administration
Building and Simmons
College Academic
Building)**

1959

Gouache on paper
Arts Department, Special
Collections, Boston Public
Library

Crite first visited the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum as a child. He recalled in an oral history: “The collection they have there is just a blaze of color, the Courtyard. I made several drawings. One of them was sent to Mrs. Gardner and she was rather pleased.” His mother, Annamae Palmer Crite, even met Isabella. In 1993, after decades of time spent in the Gardner Museum galleries, Crite gave a wide-ranging lecture here about the collection—its creation, its effect, and some favorite pieces.

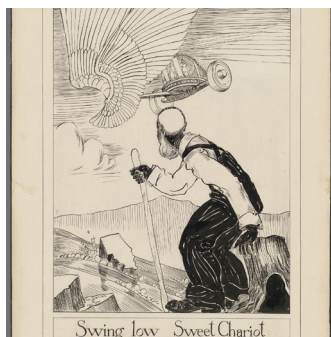
The current location of the original of this childhood drawing of the Courtyard is

unknown. The artist made and owned this photocopy, consistent with his appreciation of Xeroxes in addition to hand-drawn works. The Gardner remained a source of inspiration for Crite for the rest of his life, fueling his interests in historic art and house museums. In these watercolors, the exterior of the Gardner appears in holy scenes, one of Crite's sacred sites of Boston.

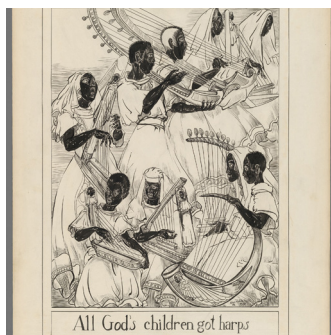
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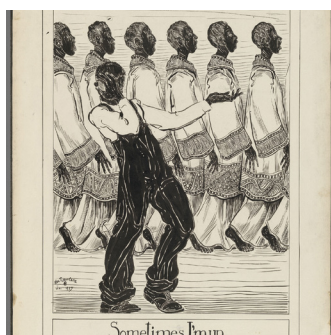
Everybody's talking about Heaven



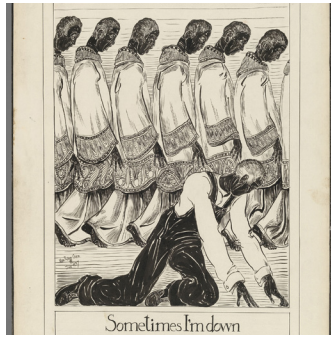
Swing Low Sweet Chariot



All God's Children got harps



Sometimes I'm up



Sometimes I'm down

All illustrations for **Three Spirituals from Earth to Heaven** (Cambridge, Mass., 1948)

1937

Ink on paper

Houghton Library, Harvard University

Crite made these drawings in the 1930s for one of his earliest publications: **Three Spirituals from Earth to Heaven**. This ambitious work sought to capture the emotional experience of listening to spirituals, folk hymns that retell biblical stories through their resonance with the experiences of American slavery. Crite illustrated songs line by line and depicted holy figures as Black. The published book is in the case below.

In a later oral history, Crite said: "People were speaking about 'Black is beautiful' in the 1960s as a sort of spark, and I'd been saying that since the 1930s."

[Case]

All Glory: Brush Drawing Mediations on the Prayer of Consecration

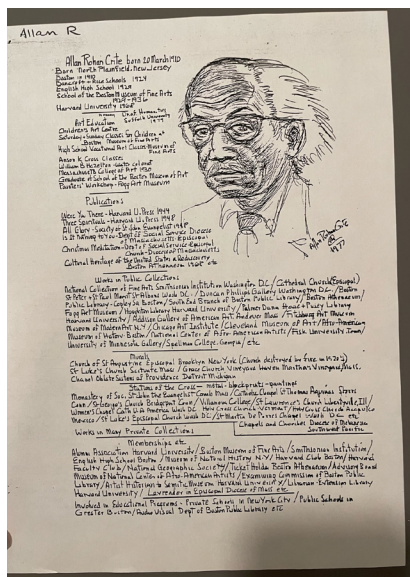
1947

Published by the Society of Saint John the Evangelist

Three Spirituals from Earth to Heaven

1948

Published by Harvard University Press



Allan Rohan Crite: Autobiographical Sketch

after 1970

Hand-bound book
Private Collection



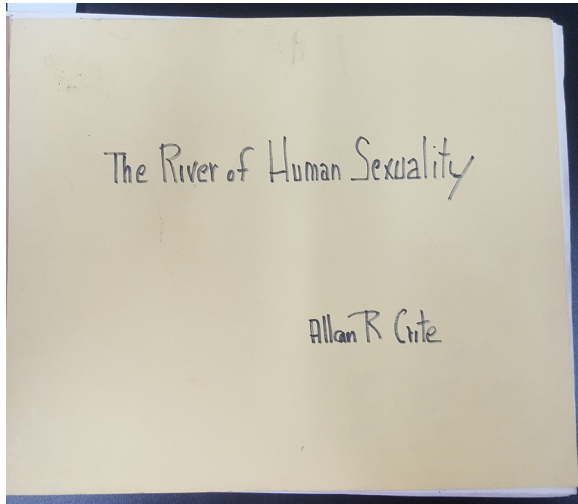
The Cultural Foundations of America: The Indian
The Cultural Foundations of America: The Spainard
 1968

Self-published pamphlet
 Arts Department, Special Collections, Boston Public Library



The Cultural Foundations of America: The African
The Cultural Foundations of America: The English
 1969

Self-published pamphlet
 Arts Department, Special Collections, Boston Public Library

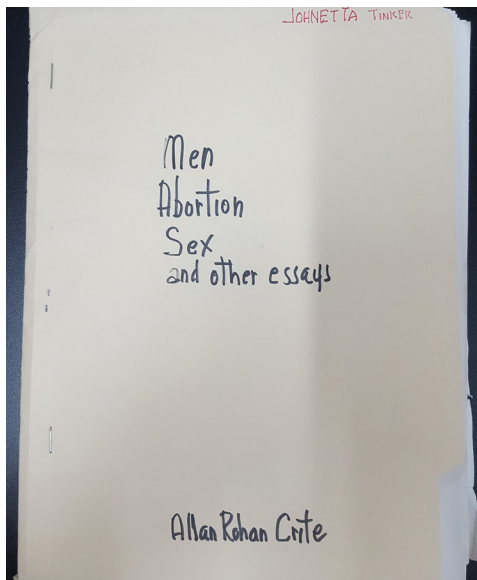


The River of Human Sexuality

1992

Hand-bound book

Courtesy of the private collection of Johnetta Tinker



Men Abortion Sex and other essays

1990

Handmade book bound in a manila folder

Courtesy of the private collection of Johnetta Tinker

[End Case]

Crite published in many venues: national magazines, books produced by university presses, and his home press. These books were vehicles for his rich illustrations, as well as his ideas about history, politics, and society. For example, on display here is a self-published collection of essays from the 1990s in which Crite vigorously argued for women's reproductive rights. He was constantly curious about human relationships, from the political to the intimate to the spiritual.

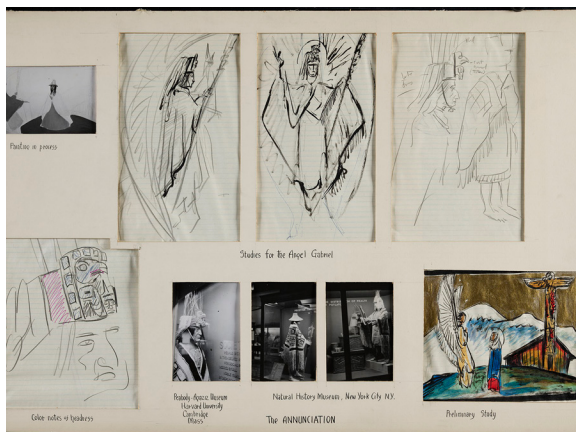


**Washington Square
NYC Background
Repose in Egypt;
Haitian Background —
Flight Into Egypt; New
England Mountains for
Background Return to
Palestine**

1950–69

Watercolor, gold paint,
marker, pencil, and ink
on lined paper

Arts Department, Special
Collections, Boston Public
Library



**The Annunciation—
Preliminary Studies**

1957

Pencil, photograph, print
Arts Department, Special
Collections, Boston Public
Library

Crite matted works together and displayed
them in his brownstone to show how he
turned ideas into finished pieces. In one

example shown here, he shares inspiration from museums, preliminary studies, and a more finished sketch. In another, he shows how religious imagery can be set in different geographical settings.

Teaching and mentorship were core to Crite's practice. He welcomed groups of children to tour his home and published pamphlets intended for a young audience.



A Child's Prayer

1 minute 8 seconds

Organ: Andrew Jameson

Engineering: Danny Rivera

Sanctuary of the Soil

2 minutes 13 seconds

Engineering: Danny Rivera

Holy, Holy, Holy

3 minutes 35 seconds

Piano: Andrew Jameson

Festured Vocals: Danny Rivera

Engineering: Danny Rivera

Artist Danny Rivera composed the three tracks of music in this gallery in response to Crite's work and vision. He braids sounds from the street and the spiritual. Children shout, organs and pianos resonate, bells ring, variations of lines from the Episcopal hymn **Holy, Holy, Holy** praise the divine in community.

Street Scenes

Crite is perhaps best known for his vibrant scenes depicting life in 1930s and 1940s Boston. Dapper women, men, and children form vibrant communities amid the recognizable row houses of Boston's South End and Roxbury. In parks, at parades, and on the sidewalk, people chat, scamper, and play. Collectively, they capture the joys of urban life.

Though not strictly documentary, his paintings testify to specific people and places in Boston. They also represent the artist's hope for an integrated multicultural urban society—something he advocated for through art and other forms of community engagement. Crite stopped painting in oil by 1950, trading canvases for works on paper that could be reproduced and broadly distributed.



School's Out

1936

Oil on canvas

Smithsonian American Art
Museum. Transfer from General
Services Administration

I can hear **School's Out** just as clear as I can see it. The ring of the bell. Pent up energy released into laughter, skipping, running. And for others, into biting words, a loud stomp. This scene feels familiar, joyful, charged.

Crite later illustrated **Streets**, a book of poetry by Mel King, a fellow resident of the South End neighborhood. King wrote, "From time to time you have to live in the Street. I mean be alive in the place that is defined by you..." To me, that is the magic that Crite creates in his art. He captures the people that shape a space with their care, their stories, their laughter and invites us to reflect on the spaces and people we change through our unique presence and life.

crystal bi
multimedia artist, educator, Gardner Museum
Luminary



Columbus Avenue
 1937
 Oil on canvas
 Gift of William
 Greenbaum and Ellen
 Solomon, Museum of
 African American History
 Boston | Nantucket



Harriet and Leon
 1941
 Oil on canvas
 Boston Athenaeum.
 Gift of the artist, 1971
 (UR235)



Ice

May 1939

Oil on canvas

Courtesy of Museum of
African American History
Boston | Nantucket

Harriet and Leon is a double portrait of the artist's friends: architect Leon Bailey and soprano Harriet Jackson. Crite relishes in the details of their elegant clothing: the plaid of Harriet's green coat and the contoured felt of Leon's hat. Here, the artist reflected the character of people he knew well and resisted what he considered a self-exoticizing impulse in other Black artists' works. Crite was not, in his words, focused on showing the "jazz person up in Harlem." He sought to avoid creating caricatures.

Yet **Harriet and Leon** is only half the artistic story. Painted two years earlier, shows the same snowy street scene, but here the man and woman are more sculptural and less

recognizable as specific people. This dabbling in a more abstract approach complicates Crite's statement that he resisted the style of his fellow Black artists of the 1930s and 1940s.

Holy City

Starting in the 1940s, Crite fused his practice of making art for worship with his depictions of Boston's neighborhoods. These works show apparitions of holy figures with a range of skin tones around the city, from the brick fronts of the South End to the Old State House to transport hubs. While a selection of these works is presented here, this fusion of the holy and the everyday—a glorification of neighborhood—is present throughout the exhibition.



Our Lady of the Elevated Station

1946

Watercolor and gouache
on paper

Private Collection



**The Tax
Announcements (Old
State House)**

1954

Gouache on paper
Arts Department, Special
Collections, Boston Public
Library



**Our Lady of the R. R.
[Railroad] Station**

1953

Gouache on paper
Arts Department, Special
Collections, Boston Public
Library



**Madonna of Dudley
Station (Curve in the
Tracks), No. 4, from
the series **Madonnas of
Transportation****

March 1987

Multilith print
Private Collection



The Stations of the Cross: I-XIV

1947

Linoleum cut with hand-applied watercolor and metal leaf on Japanese paper

Museum of Fine Arts,
Boston. Fund in memory
of Horatio Greenough
Curtis

I see red; I see Black and I see green. I see
us children
shoulder to shoulder in that narrow hallway,

rosaries in hand every morning of Lent on
Mission

Hill, killer hill back then. I see a mother,

a son; his feet—he wants us to see his feet
every step of the way. A revolutionary, a
burden,

a blessing—I see our own. I see an
articulation of faith
despite a machine of power, prisons. What if I
was there?

Where is here: Roxbury, Judea, Palestine? I
see
an act of love, I see an Act of Contrition:

**O my God I am heartily sorry for having
offended thee—**

johnette marie
Gardner Museum Luminary—poet, sower,
ancestor in training

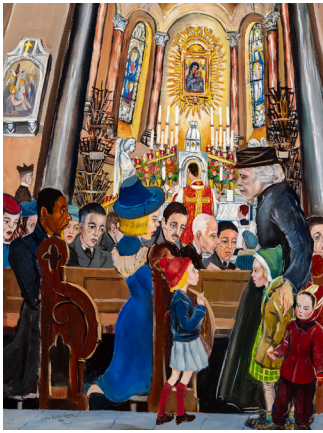
Art for Worship

Allan Rohan Crite was a devout Episcopalian, a Protestant denomination with a rich tradition of art made for worship. He painted a range of scenes of religious tradition, not just of formal Episcopal practice but also of Catholic congregations, informal Bible study, and street preachers.

Starting in the 1930s, Crite made artwork that facilitated Christian rites and prayer. The nearby **Stations of the Cross**, for example, invite worshippers to contemplate and identify with the last days of Jesus's life. Crite also made pieces explicitly for churches or priests. He continued this practice for decades, and his art can be found in churches across New England and beyond.

"The liturgical drawings—those of the Mass, the story of the Way of the Cross, and so forth—I was telling the story of man through a Black figure."

[Left to right]



Faith of Our Fathers

1940

Oil on canvas board

Gift of William Greenbaum and
Ellen Solomon, Museum of
African American History Boston
| Nantucket



And the Lord Said

1934

Oil on canvas

Gift of William Greenbaum and
Ellen Solomon, Museum of
African American History Boston
| Nantucket



Study for "And the Lord Said"

1934

Graphite on paper

National Center of Afro-
American Artists (NCAAA),
Roxbury



Untitled (Annunciation Scene)

1945

Pressed gilt copper with
paint additions

Society of Saint John the
Evangelist

Crite made this small, gilded metal panel to commemorate an Episcopal priest joining the Society of Saint John the Evangelist, a monastic community in Cambridge where he and Isabella Stewart Gardner both worshipped. This is just one of dozens of works Crite made during his career to adorn churches, to be used in worship, or to celebrate important events in the Episcopal community of which he was a part.



The Children's Mass

1936

Oil on canvas

Church of St. Augustine
and St. Martin, Boston

As an Episcopalian of European heritage Crite's work is both familiar and challenging. Scenes such as these are familiar to my religious experience. Crite takes what is familiar and makes them unfamiliar to me by portraying the Black experience. As a white Christian, this forces me to look again at the images and examine my own assumptions, think who I am, and what my understanding of the divine is. Crite's work is not simply art. It is an expression of who he is, how he understands God, and the world around him, as an Episcopalian, a Christian, an African American and a person of African descent.

How do these images invite you to think of yourself, the world around you, and your understanding of the divine in new ways?

Brother James Koester, Society of Saint John the Evangelist

Sacred Spaces

Crite loved churches. He worshipped in them, made paintings of them, and made art to enliven them—from murals to stations of the cross to the plaque nearby on the pedestal. He was, as his friend and exhibition co-curator Theodore Landsmark described, a true Christian: caring, compassionate, and never judgmental.



The Choir Singer

October 1941

Oil on canvas

Church of St. Augustine
and St. Martin, Boston

Crite's composition invites you to join a choir singer on the balcony of a church. This painting, and the nearby **Children's Mass**, show the interior of the Church of St. Augustine and St. Martin in Lower Roxbury. The church is one of a group of vibrant Black Episcopal congregations in Boston where Crite worshipped. Many of them own his works.

[Case rail]

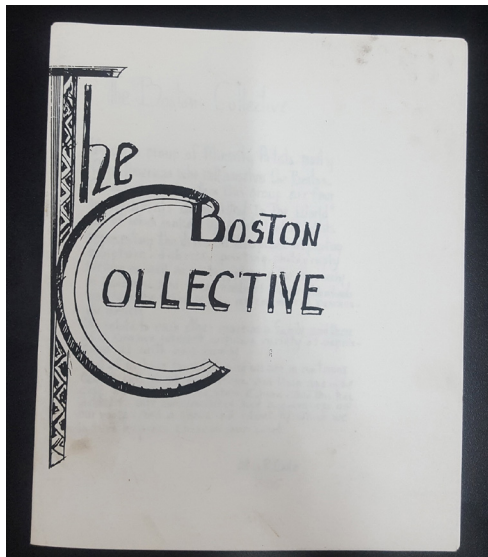
The House

According to one friend, a person would “just go into a different orbit stepping into [Crite’s] house.” Packed with art, most of it made by Crite himself, the brownstone was a hub of aesthetic experience, artistic education, and civic discussion. It was the home base of the Boston Collective, a vibrant group of Black artists. It hosted offices for the Rainbow Coalition, organized by the politician and community advocate Mel King, who lived down the street. This space aims to conjure that special feeling of Crite’s South End brownstone.

Crite—and later his widow, Jackie—tried to convert the home into a museum, but the many bureaucratic and financial obstacles proved insurmountable. The house was ultimately sold after his death.

Recreating a whisper of his home at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum highlights racial disparities in wealth and privilege. Isabella, a wealthy white woman, had the

financial and legal resources to ensure her innovative homelike museum could exist in perpetuity. Crite, a Black man, faced deep structural barriers to turning his own remarkable home into a museum.

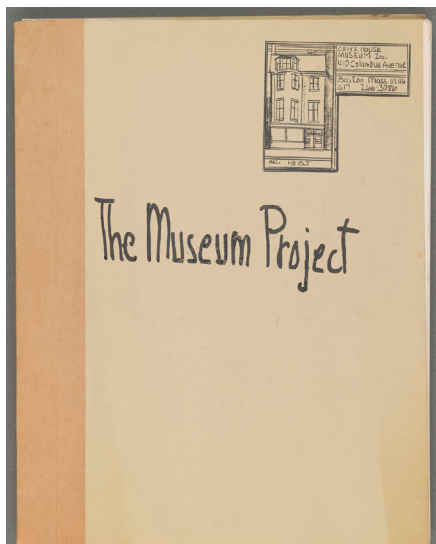


The Boston Collective

1985

Xeroxed booklet

Private Collection



The Museum Project and Organization of the Crite House Museum

about 1986

Hand-bound book

Private Collection



The Nativity According to St. Luke

about 1947

Linoleum cuts, with hand-applied transparent and opaque watercolor, metallic paint, and metal leaf on paper

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, fund in memory of Horatio Greenough Curtis (47.1395-47.1406)



Thus Saith the Lord

1935

Oil on canvas

Gift of William

Greenbaum and Ellen

Solomon, Museum of

African American History

Boston | Nantucket

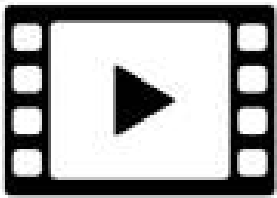
In his home, Crite installed art densely and usually without labels, not unlike the Palace of the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum. Three of Crite's friends who knew and loved him—Johnetta Tinker, Susan Thompson, and Ted Landsmark—curated this installation.

Crite made the vast majority of works shown here on his home Multilith press, a type of printing that could easily create a large number of prints. He colored many by hand. Almost all of the pieces are from a local private collection. Two works are from the collection of Johnetta Tinker—and one of these is a portrait of Crite made by Tinker.

[End of case rail]

“Every drawer, every wall, every crevice had some drawing or book that he had produced. And so walking into the house was like walking into a culture that he had created . . . his vision of what Boston was.”

—Ted Landsmark, professor, civil rights advocate, and friend



Videography courtesy of Aukram Burton, RamImages.com

Audio recollections from interviews conducted by Arielle Gray, courtesy of WBUR

This video presents black and white footage of kids from the Positive Images Summer Camp visiting Crite’s house in 1981 and color footage of the art installed in Crite’s home in 1984, combined with recollections of Crite’s home from:

Susan Thompson, artist and mentee
Napoleon Jones-Henderson, artist and mentee
Johnetta Tinker, artist and mentee
Theodore Landsmark, exhibition co-curator

Changing Neighborhoods

Crite's Boston changed radically during his lifetime. By the mid-1900s, waves of new migrants—including Black people moving from the American South—and immigrants from all over the world had made Crite's Lower Roxbury and South End neighborhoods home. Government-sponsored efforts targeted this part of the city to clear paths for transit systems to connect Boston to its growing (mostly white) suburbs. The government called it urban renewal; Crite called it "urban removal."

By 1971, urban planners forced Crite and his mother to move out of their home of 46 years so that the building could be demolished to make way for a highway system that was never completed. Later, gentrification and skyrocketing property values threatened communities that were still living in the South End. Still, Crite continued to convene artists and advocates in his home to enact creative preservation.

Throughout his career, Crite documented

and responded to change in his city. He was occasionally melancholic about the loss of physical neighborhoods and their social cohesion but often optimistic about the potential and resilience of a community.



Sunlight and Shadow

1941

Oil on board

Smithsonian American
Art Museum. Museum
purchase

This painting depicts a small moment: three generations of women gathered along the paths under the dappled light of Madison Park's once-verdant tree canopy. Through Crite's fidelity to architecture as a draftsman and his accuracy in the angle of the sunlight, we can place this image near the former intersection of Marble Street & Warwick Street. Crite celebrates this passing hour of elegant repose and congregation, rendered faithfully and tenderly, capturing the best of intergenerational communication and illustrating a setting that would soon be wiped from the map.

Lolita Parker Jr. & London Parker-McWhorter,
researchers and caretakers of United

Neighbors of Lower Roxbury Garden



G.W. Bromley & Co. (founded Philadelphia, about 1870), **Atlas of the city of Boston : Roxbury** (detail), 1931. Norman B. Leventhal Map & Education Center



The intersection of Warwick Street and Marble Street, about 1968. Boston Redevelopment Authority, "Campus High: General views." City of Boston Archives, Boston



Burning and Digging: South End Housing Project

January 1940

Watercolor with ink and
white highlights

Boston Athenaeum. Gift
of the artist, 1971 (A U9
Cri.a. 1940.b)

In early 1940, Crite painted heavy machinery demolishing buildings. Given the subtitle of this watercolor, it may show the construction of some of the first low-income housing accessible to Black families in the city of Boston.

Eerily beautiful and seemingly focused on the power of the construction equipment, Crite's vibrant watercolor depicts some of these earliest moments of government-sponsored physical change to the neighborhood.



Come On, Gramps
1940
Oil on board
Boston Athenaeum.
Gift of the artist, 1971
(UR82)



The Handy Street Bridge
1939
Oil on board
Boston Athenaeum.
Gift of the artist, 1971
(UR80)

As a pair, **Come On, Gramps** and **Handy Street Bridge** signal the diversity of lived experience within Crite's neighborhood. In one, an elder and two children play in the snow—well-dressed and seemingly carefree. In the other, two barefoot boys pull a cart full of scraps of wood past a "No Dumping" sign, evidence that people—possibly from other

neighborhoods—had been throwing trash in the empty lot at the center of this scene.

In subtle ways, Crite's canvases echo the ways in which the vibrant communities of Roxbury and the South End were on the verge of becoming increasingly segregated and would suffer from disinvestment and destructive urban planning that compounded poverty throughout the twentieth century.



St. Augustine and St. Martin, from *An Artist's Sketchbook of the South End: A Walking Tour About Black People*

1977

Offset color lithograph
Boston Athenaeum. Gift
of the artist, 1977 (UT.9
U9 Cri.a. 1977)

The Church of St. Augustine and St. Martin, the site shown in the two church interior paintings in this exhibition, remains a vibrant congregation today. Crite made this scene for a project he completed as an artist-in-residence at the Museum of African American History on Beacon Hill. The group of 13 illustrations represents a tour of sites that were important for the broader Black community in the South End and Lower Roxbury. Crite also included personally significant sites, including his childhood home that had been demolished years before. The walking tour blends past and present, nostalgia and reportage.



**Untitled (Empty
College Campus Facing
Street, with Choirs of
Yellow Robed Angels
in the Sky)**

1959

Gouache on paper
Arts Department, Special
Collections, Boston Public
Library

This fantastical image of angels in the sky above a recognizable building demonstrates Crite's interest in showing holy apparitions in the city. This shows the exterior of Jordan Hall, New England Conservatory's performance space, built in 1903, alongside a just-completed campus expansion. While much of Crite's work is focused on historic architecture, in paintings like these he documents and celebrates Boston's changing cityscape.

Susan Thompson (American, born 1946) and
Johnetta Tinker (American, born 1947)
**Study for In the NeighborHOOD, Homage to
Allan Rohan Crite**
2021
Fabric
Susan Thompson

Legacy and Inspiration

Allan Crite lives on through the work and memories of the many, many people he inspired. These include artists he mentored, academics and activists with whom he exchanged ideas, and the kids who had the privilege of visiting his house museum. The piece displayed above, **Deeply Rooted in the NeighborHOOD, Homage to Allan Rohan Crite** (2021), was created by two of his mentees, Johnetta Tinker and Susan Thompson. It celebrates Crite's love for people and community—his vision for what Boston should be.

Crite was devoted to documenting life around him—the art, music, spirit, language, and divine. As his legacy carries on, look for the interpreter and preserver of your own community. Could it be you?



Ancestors and Our Neighborhood

1984

Multilith print collages in
hand-bound book

Private Collection

The juxtaposition in this piece between the ancestors and Crite's community is so emotionally moving to me because it's a reminder. Our past and present aren't two separate events in time—they are intimately interconnected. Crite knew the power of passing down knowledge, and I feel that this was as much a part of his art practice as the works he created.

In his later years, Crite played with different artistic styles that resemble sequential art or a graphic novel. This piece shows this side of Crite, beyond his famous oil and watercolor paintings. It's another reminder that Crite, as a person, was just like his art—nuanced with many layers.

Arielle Gray

Journalist and Gardner Museum Luminary

Artist

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[Response Station]

Allan Rohan Crite was a generous mentor and inspired many young artists.

How does he inspire you?

Create a page to add to the book on the wall to your left—or take it home to share. Pass along the inspiration.