

Nathaniel C. Harris Jr.
Yard School of Art Scholarship

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(1941 – 2009)

In 1951, Nathaniel C. Harris Jr., a young African American student, and four other fifth graders from Glenfield Elementary School in Montclair, NJ were awarded scholarships to attend art classes on Saturday mornings at the Montclair Art Museum. More than fifty years later, when speaking about his experiences with MAM as a boy, Mr. Harris explained what a profound and meaningful opportunity he received in the form of that scholarship.

In a 2004 interview Mr. Harris recalled that he and his friends would walk from one end of town to the other to reach the Museum, and were awestruck by the beauty of the building and the opportunity to go inside. To Mr. Harris art classes at MAM were a source of creative inspiration, a lesson in self control, patience, and self reflection. He felt that now more than ever it is valuable for children to learn patience and self discipline, both encouraged when learning to create art, in a culture of instant gratification. He felt that these were critical lessons to have learned at a pivotal time in his childhood. Through his scholarship and weekly attendance at art class he was able to learn to appreciate aesthetics, and he felt that this helped him deal with challenging times in his life. Realizing that his world was bigger than his block, his school, and his neighborhood allowed him to see the other choices that were available to him in life. It was at this moment in his childhood that he made the decision to take the time to understand the beauty around him.

It was his wish that MAM continue to be a source of inspiration to the community, and that children who might not have the opportunity to be exposed to the arts should use MAM as a “fertile ground for the imagination.”

The scholarship that bears his name now provides many deserving students in need of financial assistance the opportunity to study at the Yard School of Art each year. To download an application, please visit <http://www.montclairartmuseum.org/scholarships/>