



## Clementine Hunter

*Panorama of Baptism on Cane River*  
Oil on windowshade

### About the Artist

Clementine Hunter was born in 1886 (or 1887) on Hidden Hill Plantation in Northwestern Louisiana. The granddaughter of a slave, Hunter received minimal education before moving at the age of 14 to Melrose Plantation, where she would remain for the rest of her life. Founded by a former slave in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, Melrose became a small artist colony under owner Cammie Garrit Henry in the early to mid-twentieth century.

Hunter worked picking cotton and pecans before moving into domestic service on Melrose. Married twice (her first husband died unexpectedly in 1914), Hunter raised five children. Her life revolved around work, family and church. In 1939, the artist had her first calling to paint – on a linen window shade. Artists and writers staying at the plantation encouraged her painting. Before she died at the age of 101, Clementine Hunter completed 4-5,000 works. In addition to paintings, she created quilts and dolls. Clementine Hunter has become one of the most important African American artists in history. Her life spanned over 100 years literally encompassing the changes of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – segregation, world wars, economic depression, the Civil Rights Movement, and more.

### About the Artwork

Clementine Hunter referred to her works as “memory paintings” because they depict scenes of everyday life around the plantation and her church. She was particularly interested in spiritual themes based on activities at St. Augustine Catholic Church on Cane River. Her works indicated African influences in the use of bold color, pattern, stylized imagery, and stacked perspective.

### Sample Classroom Activity

#### **Compare and Contrast Country Life**

Grades 3-5 (Social Studies, Art Criticism)

Compare and Contrast – Clementine Hunter, *Panorama of Baptism at Cane River*, 1945, and Theora Hamblett, *Makin’ Sorghum*, 1964.

#### Discussion:

Divide students into small groups. Ask groups to respond to the two works of art on the placemats. Using a Venn Diagram or plain piece of paper invite groups to chart responses about each work of art under the headings **alike** and **different**. Post the charts to discuss as a class.

#### Writing:

Subject Matter – These two women artists have depicted everyday life in their own way. Ask students to respond to the following questions: What story are they telling about their lives in Louisiana and Mississippi? They each observed an everyday scene. What were they? Why do you think these activities were important to the artists?

Although the works depict scenes of everyday life, they are also special activities taking place during certain times of the year. What’s a special occasion your in your everyday life? Create a work of art to depict it.