

Hale Aspacio Woodruff was born in Cairo, Illinois, on August 26, 1900, the only child of Augusta Bell Woodruff and George Woodruff, who died soon after his birth. Hale and his mother moved to Nashville, Tennessee in the early 1900s. To occupy her son while she was at work, his mother had him copy artwork from the family Bible. He soon made drawings from newspapers and history textbooks. "I learned wherever I could," said Woodruff, who later was the cartoonist for his high school paper. Woodruff was inspired to investigate modernism through the lens of traditional African art. He drew inspiration from many sources, ranging from African art to Renaissance frescoes.

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