On September 1, the Ulrich found a new home in the university administration. Formerly, the museum reported to the dean in the College of Fine Arts. We now report to the Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs and Research. Interestingly, the shift follows the preferred national model for university art museums. It aligns Wichita State’s philosophy about its art museum with the institutional reporting structure. And it better reflects what the Ulrich has been doing for quite some time.

A university art museum is a curious animal poised between many worlds, and a successful one performs as a vital gathering place for people from very divergent spheres. When an art museum gets it right, it draws people from all pockets on campus as well as from diverse corners of its broader community. The museum links people with a fascination about our world and how it is expressed visually. It provides an informal place for inquiry, learning and social interaction. It works best, in my opinion, when it is tossed into the mix. “Expect the unexpected” could be the Ulrich mantra. The campus art museum absolutely needs to reach and engage the freshman biology student, the engineering professor, the health sciences intern, as well as students and faculty from the humanities and visual arts. On top of that, the art museum should have appeal within its community.

Wichita State University serves a metropolitan area of some 600,000, and connection to and relevance for that community is a core part of its mission as an urban-serving, research institution. The Ulrich lives out that connection to Wichita and surrounds by acting as a bridge between the brain trust on campus and the broader populace. As we develop exhibitions and programs, we consider the resonance they will have to visitors. Finding those activities, speakers, artists and exhibitions that speak to people who live here and offer meaningful, even if sometimes beguiling experiences is the balance we seek.

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joined by the spirit of Gordon Parks.

I picked up a camera because it was my choice of weapons against what I hated most about the universe—politeness. I knew that none of the friends I knew or that were around me, and that I would have to go it alone. I chose not to go that way. I felt that I could somehow subdue these people by doing something beautiful that people recognize me by and thus make a whole different life for myself.

—Gordon Parks

This exhibition celebrates the life work of one of America’s most accomplished 20th-century artists. Photographer, poet, novelist, composer, music and film-maker Gordon Parks spent a lifetime shuttering barriers in his pursuit of social justice and artistic expression.

The 15th child of poor black tenant farmers in Fort Scott, Kansas, Parks was a self-taught photographer who began his career working for the Farm Security Administration in Washington, D.C., and went on to become the first Black staff photographer at LIFE magazine, producing powerful photo essays for more than 20 years. Parks’ work with photographs led to film, and the artist wrote and directed such notable movies as The Learning Tree (1969) and Shaft (1971). In addition, he authored works of fiction, nonfiction, poetry and composed the music for Martin Luther King Jr.’s I Have a Dream speech. Parks wrote about his experiences as an artist, “I felt that I could somehow subdue these people by doing something beautiful that people recognize me by and thus make a whole different life for myself.”

Crossroads: The Art of Gordon Parks
January 23 - April 11, Polk/Wilson galleries


Crossroads: The Art of Gordon Parks expands and enriches a nationally touring exhibition with photographs from the Ulrich, the Spencer Museum of Art at the University of Kansas and the Kansas African American Museum in Wichita. Also, the presentation will include archival material from the Gordon Parks Foundation.

Crossroads: The Art of Gordon Parks will include archival material from the Gordon Parks Foundation. Audiences will have a rich opportunity to encounter the range of subjects at which Parks aimed his career, from iconic portraits of boxing champion Muhammad Ali and jazz great Duke Ellington to encounters the range of subjects at which Parks aimed his career, from iconic portraits of boxing champion Muhammad Ali and jazz great Duke Ellington to streets of Paris at night, from iconic portraits of boxing champion Muhammad Ali and jazz great Duke Ellington to iconic portraits of boxing champion Muhammad Ali and jazz great Duke Ellington.

Above: Crossroads: The Art of Gordon Parks

With artworks from the Ulrich’s permanent collection, this exhibition explores the work of a generation of African American artists whose visions have been shaped by the civil rights movement as well as by the late-20th century African Diaspora and complex questions about national and ethnic identity in an increasingly globalized world. Three recent acquisitions—exceptional prints by Kerry James Marshall, Karl Waller and Julie Mehretu—will make their Ulrich debut in this exhibition.

Freedom to Expand: Contemporary African American Art from the Collection
January 16 - April 18, Amsden Gallery

In his 1990 autobiography No Easy Walk in the Storm, artist Gordon Parks wrote about his experiences as an African American pursuing multiple creative pursuits: “...I had a fear of failure, and that fear compelled me to light off anything that might abort it. I suffered evils, but without allowing them to rob me of the freedom to expand.”

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Widely praised for his writing, photography, and letters—as a photographer, journalist, essayist, autobiographer, novelist, poet, film and video maker—Gordon Parks was a singular and transformative African American artist and cultural visionary. His legacy moves across all of the arts, from music and literature to the vernacular traditions from underground creative communities. This exhibition celebrates the complex and multifaceted work of the preeminent creator who has left a lasting legacy in the African American experience.


dr. j. william williamson

Public programs on Gordon Parks and Senior Wednesday events are supported by the Kansas Humanities Council, whose mission is to foster knowledge and appreciation of our diverse communities. For more information contact the Kansas Humanities Council at 785-357-0359 or visit online at kshumanities.org.

FILM SERIES:
Black Films That Challenge/Black Films That Matter
Film director, actor, and social activist Gordon Parks left his mark on the history of cinema with films spanning four decades. With little hope of breaking into Hollywood as an African American film director, Parks came out of nowhere to make his big break with the 1969 film adaptation of his book The Learning Tree. The book and film treated Parks’s Great Depression era upbringing, and his signature movie made him the first African American director working for a major film studio.

Black Films That Challenge/Black Films That Matter is a tribute to the pioneering Black filmmakers and explores the African American visual landscape from the time of the Underground railroad to the contemporary era of African American film. The series focuses on films that deal with the African American experience from the time of the Underground railroad to the contemporary era. The films include works by African American directors, with particular emphasis on the African American experience. The films include works by African American directors, with particular emphasis on the African American experience.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 6 P.M.
FILM SERIES:
Naked But a Man (1965)
20th Century Fox
WSU School of Art and Design

March 1-7, 2010

MEMBERS’ OPENING PARTY
Celebrate Gordon Parks’s lifetime of work, with good friends and win. Come early for the special performance by the Boys and Girls Club steel drummers and meet the Ulrich’s Curator of Exhibitions, Bobbi Baker Burrows. In 1948, in the portrait of the Ellion 1952 book jacket of Invisible Man was taken by Parks. In considering this photo, a new group will read Invisible Man, a masterpiece of American literature, and gather for a lively talk, short presentation and animated conversation.

Dr. Kimberly English will discuss the significance of Invisible Man, as well as the role of African Americans in this art form. She will also discuss the role of African Americans in this art form. She will also discuss the role of African Americans in this art form.

THURSDAY, MARCH 4, 6 P.M.
ARTIST TALK:
Harry James Marshall
John I. and Bonnie K. Hableskir Fund for Performing Arts
Cactus Theater

These are times of unprecedented change and rapid transformation. The artist’s relationship with the artistic contributions he made. This event will be followed by an artist talk with the artist. The artist. The artist. The artist. The artist.

THURSDAY, MARCH 11, 6 P.M.
FILM SERIES:
The Spook Who Sat by the Door (1972)
20th Century Fox
WSU School of Art and Design

March 14-28, 2010

FUTURE EXHIBITIONS

EXHIBITIONS

March 1-7, 2010

ART OF OUR TIME: SELECTIONS FROM THE ULTRICH MUSEUM OF ART

The Ulrich Museum of Art is featuring a wide range of exhibitions, including works by contemporary artists and traditional and folk artists from around the world. The museum is located at 1700 W. 15th St., and is open daily from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. The museum is open free of charge. The museum is open free of charge. The museum is open free of charge.

MEMBERS’ OPENING PARTY
Join us in celebrating the opening of Art of Our Time, the best work from the Ulrich vault, on view through the summer.

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