

Northwestern

FOR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS OF NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY FALL 2017



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*The Block Museum of Art acquired a 1967 study portrait of trumpet player and bandleader Miles Davis by artist Jeff Donaldson, who earned a doctorate in art history from Northwestern in 1974. The Donaldson study is currently on loan from the Block Museum to the Tate Modern in London for inclusion in the exhibition Soul of a Nation: Art in the Age of Black Power. Art history professor Rebecca Zorach, who helped acquire the sketch, co-wrote the forthcoming book *The Wall of Respect: Public Art and Black Liberation in 1960s Chicago* (Northwestern University Press).*

HONORING THE WALL OF RESPECT

In 1967 a group of African American artists, including the noted muralist William Walker, joined together to create the Wall of Respect, a montage of more than 50 African American heroes and leaders.

Located on Chicago's South Side on land marked for redevelopment, the Wall was conceived as a celebration of African American contributions to American culture. While the "guerrilla-style" mural was short-lived, razed by the city in 1971, the Wall inspired a movement that portrayed the politics of the era in vivid colors on walls across Chicago and beyond.

That movement was captured in the Block Museum of Art exhibit *We Are Revolutionaries: The Wall of Respect and Chicago's Mural Movement* (spring 2017). Organized to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Wall, the spring exhibit was collectively curated by first-year art history seminar students.

Throughout winter quarter the students worked with Rebecca Zorach, the Mary Jane Crowe Professor in Art and Art History, and Corinne Granof, the Block Museum's curator of academic programs. They explored Chicago's mural movement and used photographs and documents relating to the Wall of Respect and the other murals that followed to understand the historical context of the city's public art.

The exhibit also marked the first presentation of a recent Block Museum acquisition: a 1967 study portrait of trumpet player and bandleader Miles Davis by artist Jeff Donaldson '74 PhD. The sketch is one of the rare remaining traces of the Wall and the process of its creation. Donaldson, who died in 2004, was the first African American to earn a doctorate in art history at Northwestern.

"Intellectually and artistically, Jeff Donaldson was central to the Black Arts Movement. He chaired the Visual Artists Workshop of the Organization of Black American Culture, so he was really one of the key figures" in creating the mural, says Zorach, who helped facilitate the acquisition.