

Northwestern

MARY AND LEIGH
BLOCK MUSEUM OF ART

For Immediate Release
April 2017
Communications Manager: Lindsay Bosch
lindsay.bosch@northwestern.edu
847.467.4602



Covering a mural on Los Comales on 18th. Part of A Day Without Public Art in Pilsen, October 2013.
Photo Nicole Marroquin. Photo by Nicole Marroquin.

Exhibition and symposium trace colorful legacy of the Wall of Respect

Northwestern joins Chicago-wide effort in commemorating mural's 50th anniversary

- 1967 mural inspired a community movement across Chicago and beyond
- Student curated exhibition runs April 21 to June 18 at Block Museum
- Two day symposium, 'Art, Publics, Politics' will be held April 28 and 29
- Block Museum acquires original study for Wall of Respect by Jeff Donaldson

EVANSTON, ILL. --- "We Are Revolutionaries: The Wall of Respect and Chicago's Mural Movement," a student-curated exhibit inspired by a mural that grew out of the Black Liberation Movement in the 1960s, will open April 21 at the Block Museum of Art.

"Art, Publics, Politics," a related two-day symposium, will be held April 28 and 29 at the Block Museum, 40 Arts Circle Drive on the Evanston campus.

Controversial from the start, the "guerrilla-style" mural that was created in 1967 by a group of visual artists on the South Side of Chicago. Referred to as "The Wall of Respect," the mural inspired a community movement that went on to mimic the politics of the times in vivid colors painted on walls across the city and beyond.

Marking the wall's 50th anniversary, the Chicago area will commemorate that significant moment in the city's history with "The Wall of Respect: Vestiges, Shards and the Legacy of Black Power," an exhibition at the Chicago Cultural Center.

Northwestern contributions to the anniversary include the upcoming exhibition and symposium at the Block Museum, and the forthcoming book "The Wall of Respect: Public Art and Black Liberation in 1960s Chicago," coauthored by Rebecca Zorach, Northwestern Mary Jane Crowe Professor in Art and Art History, with Abdul Alkalimat (University of Illinois) and Romi Crawford (School of the Art Institute of Chicago).

"Many of the characteristics of the Wall of Respect -- an assertive, pro-Black, grass-roots, collaborative project, intervening and making itself visible without authorization in public space -- continue on in contemporary art and activist projects that appear on walls and in streets, as well as in social media and other virtual spaces," said Zorach.

"We Are Revolutionaries" was collectively curated by first-year seminar students in the Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences, working with Zorach and Corinne Granof, Block Museum Curator of Academic Programs

"Most of these students are not art history majors, but they plunged enthusiastically into research on the murals," Zorach said. "Chicago's mural movement provides a crucial lens through which our students can begin to understand the complexities of Chicago's history."

Throughout Winter 2017, the students explored Chicago's mural movement, past and present, and used photographs and documents relating to the Wall of Respect and other murals to understand the unique historical context of the city's public art. They interviewed artists, used historical newspaper sources and created maps based on Census data.

"The Block Museum is committed to serving as a laboratory for research and the exploration of contemporary life and visual culture," notes Lisa Corrin, Block Museum's Ellen Philips Katz Director. "This student-curated exhibition, in conjunction with this significant anniversary, demonstrates the way in which the museum can serve as an innovative space for teaching, learning and meaning-making, connecting the classroom to larger initiatives taking place throughout the city."

Block acquires study portrait by Jeff Donaldson

The exhibition will be the first presentation at the Block Museum of an important acquisition for the museum's permanent collection. The museum has purchased a 1967 study portrait of trumpet player and band leader Miles Davis by artist Jeff Donaldson (1932-2004). The work is one of the rare remaining sketches for the Wall of Respect and provides valuable documentation of Donaldson's process in thinking about his portion of the mural. In the final version of the Wall, Donaldson included his portrait of Miles Davis among other portraits of African American musicians, including John Coltrane, Charlie Parker and Sonny Rollins. The painting also has significance for Northwestern University, as Donaldson earned a Ph.D. in Art History from Northwestern in 1974, the first African American to do so.

"This is a relatively early work by Donaldson, and it shows a fresh and immediate approach to representation. It's exciting to see how the work also hints at a fracturing of the background space, a practice that became a signature of the artist's later work," states Kathleen Bickford Berzock, the Block Museum's Associate Director of Curatorial Affairs.

Janet Dees, the Block Museum's curator of global modern and contemporary art, adds, "The acquisition of this work supports important initiatives to document the Black Experience at Northwestern. For instance, the Northwestern University Black Alumni Association is establishing a more robust archive at the University of material by and about black alumni."

After its presentation at the Block Museum, the painted sketch will travel to London's Tate Modern to be part of the exhibition "The Soul of a Nation: Art in the Age of Black Power," which will be on view from July – Oct. 2017. "The Soul of a Nation" will also travel to the Crystal Bridges Museum in Arkansas and the Brooklyn Museum of Art. The painting was also part of the exhibition "The Freedom Principle: Experiments in Art and Music, 1965 to Now," which originated at the MCA in Chicago in 2016.



Jeff Donaldson, *Study for the Wall of Respect [Miles Davis]*, 1967, mixed media (including oil) on heavy cream wove paper 24x18, Collection Block Museum of Art, Courtesy of Artist's Estate.

“Art, Publics, Politics: Legacies of the Wall of Respect”

The historically-focused exhibition at the Block Museum will culminate with the two-day symposium that looks at echoes of the Wall of Respect in contemporary art and activism.

The April 28 and 29 symposium, “Art, Publics, Politics: Legacies of the Wall of Respect,” brings together artists and scholars of the generations that followed the Wall of Respect to address connections -- direct and indirect -- between the Wall and their work and research. The weekend will offer vigorous discussion of ways in which contemporary art and activism continue to engage with the issues and strategies the Wall embodied, as well as ways in which they diverge.

Admission to the museum and symposium is free and open to the public. Symposium reservations can be made online. For more information visit the Block Museum website.

The exhibition and symposium are presented in partnership between the Block Museum of Art and the Northwestern University Department of Art History with support by the Mary Jane Crowe Conference Fund, the Department of Art History, the Kaplan Institute for the Humanities, the Department of Art Theory and Practice, the Department of African American Studies, the Program in American Studies and the Northwestern Black Arts Initiative.

Symposium Schedule

Friday, April 28

10 AM Wall of Respect: An Introduction

Symposium welcome and introduction with Abdul Alkalimat (University of Illinois) and Romi Crawford (School of the Art Institute of Chicago), moderated by Amor Kohli (African and Black Diaspora Studies Program, DePaul University).

11 AM History in the Present Tense

Presentations by Andres Hernandez on Historical F(r)ictions; Nicole Marroquin on Faheem Majeed; Andrew Schachman on The Floating Museum and sound and visual artist Damon Locks on working in past, present and future tense, moderated by James Britt (Northwestern University).

2:15 PM Legacies

Presentations by Marcus Sterling Alleyne on art and inspiration and Juarez Hawkins (Chicago State University) on being a Child of the Wall, moderated by Tempest Hazel (Sixty Inches from Center).

3:45 PM Inter/national Resonances

Presentations by Alexis Salas on murals and street interventions in the Americas and Mechtild Widrich (School of the Art Institute of Chicago) on the international circulation of visual protest culture, moderated by Rebecca Zorach (Northwestern University).

5:30 PM Art and Affinity: Embedding cultural work in urban communities

Symposium keynote address with Dr. Adeola Enigbokan, University of Amsterdam.

6:45 PM Reception

Saturday, April 29**9:30 AM Roundtable: Murmurs, Echoes, Shouts**

A conversation with Maria Gaspar, Dread Scott and Scheherazade Tillet, moderated by Huey Copeland (Northwestern University).

11 AM Student Curator Presentation and Exhibition Tour**1:15 PM Walls**

Presentations by Desi Mundo (Community Rejuvenation Project) on Community Engagement vs Graffiti Abatement: Aerosol Murals in the 21st Century and Victoria Martinez on her urban installation experiments, moderated by Drea Howenstein (School of the Art Institute of Chicago).

2:45 PM Art as Direct Action

Presentations by Cauleen Smith on the Procession of Black Love and For the People (FTP) Artist Collective on making movement art, moderated by Thomas Love (Northwestern University).

4:30 PM Discussion and Closing Remarks

The Block Museum of Art is a member of the Northwestern Arts Circle, which brings together film, humanities, literary arts, music, theater, dance and visual arts. Search for events across all artistic disciplines at Northwestern Arts Circle.