

# Spencer Museum, artist Dave Loewenstein launch re-imagination of downtown mural

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LAWRENCE — The Spencer Museum of Art, in partnership with local artist Dave Loewenstein and First Management Inc., has commissioned the re-imagination of the “Pollinators” mural at Ninth and New Hampshire streets in downtown Lawrence. The original mural was commissioned by the Museum in 2007 as a project relating to the Museum’s major exhibition on Topeka native and African-American painter Aaron Douglas. A community meeting to begin planning the reimaged mural is set for Sunday, Feb. 12, from 1 to 3 p.m. at Loewenstein’s studio, located at 411 E. Ninth St. Anyone interested in helping with or learning more about the project is welcome to attend.

“The ‘Pollinators’ mural was conceived to celebrate the ideas of Aaron Douglas and bring them to life in the present. The original mural was highly significant on both local and national levels, and we are delighted that it is going to rise again and resume its place in this community,” said Spencer Curator Susan Earle, who organized the 2007 exhibition “Aaron Douglas: African American Modernist.”

In addition to paying homage to Douglas and his painting style, the mural also honored six other African-American artists from the Harlem Renaissance with Kansas roots: Gordon Parks, Gwendolyn Brooks, Langston Hughes, Oscar Micheaux, Hattie McDaniel and Coleman Hawkins. Creating the mural was a community collaboration, and it became a celebrated feature of downtown Lawrence.

“Pollinators” was painted on the side of the building at the northeast corner of Ninth and New Hampshire streets, which was sold and later demolished in March 2015. Through a series of conversations about the mural’s significance to the community, the Spencer

Museum, the city of Lawrence, and property owner First Management reached an agreement to recreate the mural at the same site.

Loewenstein is assembling a core design team for the new mural that includes Kansas City artist Nedra Bonds, KU student Eugene Sarmiento and Lawrence High School student Janada Birdling.

“Our plan is to honor the mural that came before, but we’re not just going to paint the same thing,” Loewenstein said. “We’re re-imagining it based on the new circumstances of location, the time that has passed, and a new group of people with new experiences and ideas.”

**Image:** A photograph of the downtown "Pollinators" mural by Dave Loewenstein taken in June 2014. Image courtesy of the Spencer Museum of Art.

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