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## PROFESSOR EMERITUS, FORMER SPENCER MUSEUM DIRECTOR TO BE HONORED THROUGH EXHIBITION, RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM<sup>1</sup>

Thu, 11/01/2018

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LAWRENCE — Charles Eldredge, Hall Distinguished Professor Emeritus of American Art and Culture, retired this past summer after serving the University of Kansas for 42 years. The Spencer Museum of Art and the Kress Foundation Department of Art History are honoring Eldredge's momentous career through the exhibition "[Soundings](#)<sup>2</sup>," open through Dec. 16, and the research symposium "[Homecoming: Five Decades of American Art Studies at the University of Kansas](#)<sup>3</sup>," Nov. 8-10.

Eldredge began his KU career in 1970 as a curator at the University of Kansas Museum of Art, was quickly promoted to director and went on to oversee the building of the Spencer Museum of Art. After leaving KU for six years to serve as director of the National Museum of American Art — now known as

the Smithsonian American Art Museum — Eldredge returned to KU as the Hall Chair in the Department of Art History. An expert on such artists as Georgia O’Keeffe and John Steuart Curry, Eldredge has published 16 books and exhibition catalogs as well as over 50 articles, essays and catalog entries, mentored dozens of students and directed 25 dissertations.

“Charlie has been an influential teacher and mentor to countless undergraduate and graduate students who benefited from his comprehensive knowledge of American art,” said David Cateforis, chair of the Department of Art History. “Charlie’s high intellectual standards inspired his best students to strive for excellence themselves.”

To honor his career, the Spencer Museum invited Eldredge to curate an [exhibition](#)<sup>4</sup> reflecting on some of his favorite works from the Spencer’s collection of American art. Many of the works were acquired during his tenure as museum director.

“Charlie has had such a profound influence at the Spencer Museum by expanding its collection, elevating its educational mission and contributing to its national profile,” said Spencer Director Saralyn Reece Hardy. “This exhibition is a unique opportunity for us to learn from his experiences and insights through art.”

More than 20 doctoral alumni will return to campus Nov. 8-10 to give talks on aspects of their research in American art as part of the [“Homecoming”](#)<sup>3</sup> symposium. Sponsored by the Franklin D. Murphy Lecture Fund and free and open to the public, the symposium will also feature lectures by Randall Griffey (doctorate, ’99), curator of modern and contemporary art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and Elizabeth Broun (doctorate, ’76), director emerita of the Smithsonian American Art Museum. The complete symposium schedule is [available online](#)<sup>3</sup>.

## **Related Programming**

### **Nov. 8**

#### **“The Yellow Brick Road to the Met: Reflections on Kansas, Art History, Then, and Now”**

**5:15-6:15 p.m. / Spencer Museum of Art, Auditorium**

Randall Griffey gives this Franklin D. Murphy Distinguished Alumni Lecture on his tenure at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, key professional turning points that paved the way, and the roles of KU and Kansas on his journey.

### **Nov. 9**

#### **Gallery Talk in the exhibition “Soundings”**



**2:15-3:15 p.m. / Spencer Museum of Art, Marshall Family Balcony**

Charles Eldredge shares insights regarding the works of American art that he chose to feature in the exhibition "Soundings."

**Nov. 9****Homecoming: Five Decades of American Art Studies at the University of Kansas, Session I****3:30-5 p.m. / Kansas Union, Alderson Auditorium**

This symposium celebrates KU's nationally recognized graduate program in American art history and honors Eldredge's career.

**Nov. 9****"Charles Eldredge: Action Figure on the Potomac"****5:15-6:15 p.m. / Kansas Union, Alderson Auditorium**

This keynote lecture by Elizabeth Broun, director emerita of the Smithsonian American Art Museum, focuses on Eldredge's transformative leadership of that institution.

**Nov. 10****Homecoming: Five Decades of American Art Studies at the University of Kansas, Sessions II-V****9:30 a.m.-5 p.m. / Kansas Union, Alderson Auditorium**

More than 20 KU doctoral alumni present their research at this symposium celebrating KU's graduate program in American art history and honoring Eldredge's career.

**Top image:** A photograph of Charles Eldredge from 1977 when he served as director of the Spencer Museum of Art.

**At right:** A portrait of Eldredge in the Spencer Museum's galleries in 2018.

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**Links on this page:**

1. <https://today.ku.edu/2018/11/01/professor-emeritus-former-spencer-museum-director-be-honored-through-exhibition-research>
  2. <https://spencerart.ku.edu/exhibition/soundings>
  3. <https://arthistory.ku.edu/homecoming-symposium>
  4. [https://youtu.be/yZgnDlgy\\_c8](https://youtu.be/yZgnDlgy_c8)
  5. [kunews@ku.edu](mailto:kunews@ku.edu)
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