



NOTE TO EDITORS The Spencer will hold an exhibition preview and lunch for members of the press on Wednesday, Sept. 5, at 11 AM. For media traveling to Lawrence from out of state, inexpensive same-day roundtrip flights are available on a number of airlines. The museum will arrange for shuttle service from Kansas City International Airport. Please contact Bill Woodard (listed below) if you plan to attend, or if you seek to arrange a different time to view the exhibition and conduct interviews.

For immediate release

Aaron Douglas: African American Modernist **Major retrospective opens at Spencer in September 2007; travels to Nashville, Washington, D.C. & New York**

MEDIA CONTACT

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PROMOTIONAL IMAGES AVAILABLE

Lawrence, KS— The Spencer Museum of Art this fall will present a major exhibition celebrating the life, art and legacy of **Aaron Douglas**, an African American artist from Kansas who went on to become the most important visual artist of the Harlem Renaissance. The Spencer-organized exhibition, some seven years in the making, is the first-ever national traveling retrospective of Douglas's work, and brings together nearly 100 works from public institutions and private collections across the country.

Opening September 8 and continuing through December 2 at the Spencer, ***Aaron Douglas, African American Modernist*** will also have venues in Nashville (Frist Center for the Visual Arts), Washington, D.C. (Smithsonian American Art Museum), and New York (Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture). For more information about the exhibition, national conference and public programming, please visit www.aarondouglas.ku.edu.

Born to laborer parents in Topeka, Kansas, Aaron Douglas (1899-1979) overcame many obstacles to pursue his passion for art and ideas. He was one of the first African American artists to portray racial themes within the context of modern art, and his ambitious pursuit of justice through his paintbrush continues to influence artists today. After earning a BFA degree in 1922 from the University of Nebraska

and teaching at Lincoln High School in Kansas City, he migrated to New York in 1925 to join in the cultural flourishing that has variously been called the New Negro Renaissance or the Harlem Renaissance. He later taught art at historically black Fisk University in Nashville.

A socially conscious artist, Douglas vividly captured the spirit of his time and established a new black aesthetic and vision. Working from a politicized concept of personal identity, he combined art-deco dynamism with African and African American imagery to produce a new visual vocabulary that evoked not only current realities but also hope for a better future. His work is the most powerful visual legacy of the Harlem Renaissance and has had a lasting impact on the art and cultural heritage of the nation.

Of special interest to the Spencer's exploration of Douglas and the Harlem Renaissance is the Midwestern origin of artists associated with what seems a distinctly urban and East Coast phenomenon. Douglas and his good friend Langston Hughes both spent their childhoods in Kansas, while other important writers such as Claude McKay and Countee Cullen both had Midwestern ties. The exhibition will illuminate not only the Midwestern roots of the "New Negro" outpouring in Harlem, but also how Douglas's influence extended far beyond the Harlem neighborhood and the years most closely associated with the Harlem Renaissance.

The exhibition is accompanied by a scholarly catalogue edited by Susan Earle, the exhibition curator and the Spencer's Curator of European & American Art, with contributions by leading scholars of African American art. Yale University Press is co-publishing the exhibition catalogue with the Spencer. Support for the exhibition and catalogue comes from the Henry Luce Foundation, with additional exhibition support from the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency.

Support

Aaron Douglas: African American Modernist is supported The Henry Luce Foundation; the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency; the Capitol Federal Foundation; the Office of the Chancellor of The University of Kansas; Kansas Arts Commission, a state agency; Judith Rothschild Foundation; Breidenthal-Snyder Foundation; KU Interdisciplinary Jazz Studies Group; The World Company; Richard J. Stern Foundation for the Arts; Hall Center for the Humanities; Franklin D. Murphy Lecture Fund; Kress Foundation Department of Art History; University Theatre; Price R. and Flora A. Reid Foundation; Footprints; Aquila; A.G. Edwards & Sons; John and Nancy Hiebert in memory of Judge Cordell D. Meeks, Jr.; Ann Thompson; and the *Kansas City Call*.

Key Information

Organizer:	Spencer Museum of Art, The University of Kansas, Lawrence
Website:	http://www.aarondouglas.ku.edu
Curator:	Dr. Susan Earle, Curator of European and American Art, Spencer Museum of Art
Coordinator:	Stephanie Knappe, Spencer Museum of Art
Schedule/Highlights:	
September 8–December 2, 2007	Spencer Museum of Art

Friday, September 28, 2007	Opening reception at the Spencer Museum
September 28–29, 2007	“Aaron Douglas and the Arts of the Harlem Renaissance” national conference at the Spencer
Saturday, October 27, 2007	Fisk Jubilee Singers performance at Liberty Hall in downtown Lawrence
January 18–April 13, 2008	Frist Center for the Visual Arts, Nashville
May 9–August 3, 2008	Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.
August 30–November 30, 2008	Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York

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Spencer Museum of Art

The University of Kansas

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Lawrence 66045-7500

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Also find the Spencer...

- On the Web: www.spencerart.ku.edu
- E-mail: spencerart@ku.edu

Gallery hours

Tues., Wed., Fri., & Saturday 10 AM—5 PM

Thurs. 10 AM—9 PM

Sun. Noon—5 PM

Closed Monday

Museum Shop closes 30 minutes before the galleries close.

- Free parking in Lot 91 after 5 PM on weekdays and all day weekends, excepting home football games.
- Parking garage adjacent to Kansas Union is \$1 per hour weekdays, free on Saturdays and Sundays (but unavailable on home football games).