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**Media website:** [americanart.si.edu/pr](http://americanart.si.edu/pr)

**Media preview:** Tuesday, May 2, 10 a.m.

## **Smithsonian American Art Museum Debuts Exhibition “American Visionary: John F. Kennedy’s Life and Times” May 3**

### *Exhibition Opening Is Première Event in a Yearlong Centennial Celebration*

A new exhibition commemorating President John F. Kennedy’s life and work will be on view at the Smithsonian American Art Museum’s main building from May 3 through Sept. 17. “American Visionary: John F. Kennedy’s Life and Times” brings together 77 images culled from the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, the John F. Kennedy Library Foundation, Getty Images, private collections and the Kennedy family archives that capture the dramatic scope of Kennedy’s life. The exhibition is one of the most exhaustively researched collections of Kennedy photos ever assembled. “American Visionary” is based on the forthcoming book *JFK: A Vision for America*.

The museum’s presentation of “American Visionary” is the première event in the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum’s yearlong, nationwide celebration that commemorates Kennedy’s centennial year. The exhibition opens in time for what would have been Kennedy’s 100th birthday on May 29.

“The Smithsonian American Art Museum is proud to host one of the first centennial celebrations to honor the legacy of President John F. Kennedy,” said Stephanie Stebich, The Margaret and Terry Stent Director of the Smithsonian American Art Museum. “The aptly named exhibition ‘American Visionary’ is a fitting tribute to the 35th President, who understood the importance of the arts in American society and the power of images to convey the spirit and aspirations of a country.”

Kennedy’s administration coincided with a golden age of photojournalism in America. No single politician was photographed more than Kennedy—from his first congressional bid as a decorated war hero in 1946, his fairytale marriage to Jacqueline Bouvier in 1953, his run for the White House in 1960 and role as commander in chief, to the tragedy of his death in Dallas in 1963. Documentary photographers such as Ed Clark, Ralph Crane, Philippe Halsman, Jacques Lowe, Steve Schapiro and Sam Vestal captured the optimism and challenges of the early 1960s in some of the finest and most vivid images of the period. Many of the photographs on display are iconic.

The exhibition is organized and curated by Lawrence Schiller of Wiener Schiller Productions; John Jacob, the museum's McEvoy Family Curator for Photography, is coordinating the exhibition in Washington, D.C. The exhibition will travel to several cities across the United States following its opening at the Smithsonian American Art Museum.

"John F. Kennedy is still seen as a symbol around the world, representing and espousing the best and most universal elements of the American character," said Stephen Kennedy Smith, Kennedy's nephew and co-editor of *JFK: A Vision for America*. "It is our hope that the compelling images of President Kennedy's life and work on view in this exhibition will remind visitors not only of the values that defined his presidency, but also will introduce him to new audiences and future leaders."

As part of the "JFK 100 Centennial Celebration," the Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum is spearheading a series of events and initiatives across the nation aimed at inspiring new generations to find meaning in the enduring values that formed the heart of the Kennedy presidency—courage, freedom, justice, service and gratitude. In Washington, the museum is part of a citywide celebration with other cultural organizations, including the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery and the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History, the Library of Congress, the National Archives, the White House Historical Association and the Newseum.

Visitors can join the conversation about the centennial celebrations at #JFK100. Information about centennial activities across the country is available online at [jfkcentennial.org/events/](http://jfkcentennial.org/events/).

## **Book**

The forthcoming book, *JFK: A Vision for America*, features Kennedy's greatest speeches alongside essays by historians, leading political thinkers, writers and artists. The book presents Kennedy at his best—thought-provoking, inspiring, eloquent and wise—on a number of wide-ranging topics, including civil rights, the race to the moon, the environment, immigration, the Cuban Missile Crisis and more. *JFK* demonstrates the deep relevance of his words today and his lasting power and influence as an American leader and orator.

The list of contributors includes Samantha Power, Rep. John Lewis, Sen. Elizabeth Warren, the Dalai Lama, Robert Redford, Conan O'Brien, David McCullough, George Packer, Henry Louis Gates Jr., Drew Faust, Tariq Ramadan, Paul Krugman, Kofi Annan, Don DeLillo, Jorge Domínguez and many others.

*JFK: A Vision for America* is edited by Smith and Douglas Brinkley, professor of history at Rice University; it is published by HarperCollins and will be available for purchase beginning May 2 the museum store (\$45).

### **Free Public Programs**

The museum is organizing a number of free public programs in conjunction with the exhibition. A conversation with White House photographers Dennis Brack, Sharon Farmer, Lawrence Schiller and Diana Walker will take place Wednesday, June 7, at 6:30 p.m. The Serendip Piano Trio will present a selection of works by George Gershwin, Leonard Bernstein, Aaron Copland and others that were performed at White House concerts during the Kennedy administration Sunday, June 11, at 3 p.m. Information about additional exhibition-related programming will be available online at [americanart.si.edu/jfk](http://americanart.si.edu/jfk) when details are confirmed.

As part of its annual “America Now” series, the museum will present performances that honor Kennedy’s vision and commitment to the arts. Dancers from The Washington Ballet will perform excerpts from the new ballet “WHO WHEN WHY” and the hip-hop group Liner Notes will create a multimedia performance as part of the “America Now: JFK 100” programming. “America Now” is a three-museum collaboration with the National Portrait Gallery, National Museum of American History and Smithsonian American Art Museum and made possible by the generous support of the Robert and Arlene Kogod Family Foundation. More information about the festivities and performances is online at [americanow.si.edu](http://americanow.si.edu).

### **National Tour**

“American Visionary” will travel to additional cities in the U.S. following its opening first in Washington and then in New York City; it opens at the New-York Historical Society June 23. The tour is being circulated by Wiener Schiller Productions in association with the John F. Kennedy Library Foundation.

### **State Department Tour**

The 77 images in “American Visionary” have been sent to 13 embassies through the Cultural Diplomacy Division of the U.S. Department of State. The participating countries include Australia, Brazil, China, Ethiopia, Germany, Honduras, Kosovo, Poland, Romania, South Korea, Thailand and Venezuela. The exhibitions will travel across each country for the next 20 months. These traveling exhibitions serve as a centerpiece for “JFK 100” activities in each respective country.

## **Credit**

“American Visionary: John F. Kennedy’s Life and Times” is presented by the Smithsonian American Art Museum in cooperation with the John F. Kennedy Library Foundation and with the generous support of the Governance Institute and the Blanche & Irving Laurie Foundation. Additional support has been provided by Stephen Kennedy Smith, Wiener Schiller Productions and Getty Images. The presentation in Washington, D.C., is made possible by the Margery and Edgar Masinter Exhibitions Fund and the Bernie Stadiem Endowment Fund.

## **About the Smithsonian American Art Museum**

The Smithsonian American Art Museum celebrates the vision and creativity of Americans with artworks in all media spanning more than four centuries. Its National Historic Landmark building is located at Eighth and F streets N.W., above the Gallery Place/Chinatown Metrorail station. Museum hours are 11:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily (closed Dec. 25). Admission is free. Follow the museum on [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#), [Tumblr](#), [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), [Flickr](#), [Pinterest](#), iTunes U and [ArtBabble](#). Museum information (recorded): (202) 633-7970. Smithsonian information: (202) 633-1000. Website: [americanart.si.edu](http://americanart.si.edu).

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