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April 28, 2008

## **“Aaron Douglas: African American Modernist” Fact Sheet**

### **Exhibition**

“Aaron Douglas: African American Modernist”  
May 9 – Aug. 3

### **Location**

Smithsonian American Art Museum  
Eighth and F streets N.W.

### **Description**

“Aaron Douglas: African American Modernist” presents the first nationally touring retrospective of Aaron Douglas (1899-1979), one of the most influential visual artists of the Harlem Renaissance. Douglas vividly captured the spirit of his time and established a new black aesthetic and vision. He combined angular cubist rhythms and a seductive Art Deco dynamism with traditional African and African American imagery to develop a radically new visual vocabulary. Douglas’ forceful ideas about social change and distinctive artistic forms produced a powerful visual legacy through paintings, murals and illustrations for books and progressive journals and made a lasting impact on American modernism. This exhibition brings together more than 80 rarely seen works by the artist, including paintings, prints, drawings and illustrations. Susan Earle, curator of European and American art at the Spencer Museum of Art, organized the exhibition; Virginia Mecklenburg, senior curator at the Smithsonian American Art Museum, is the coordinating curator.

### **Public Programs**

A wide array of free public programs is being offered at the museum in conjunction with the exhibition, including a major symposium, gallery talks, films, performances, family programs and lectures. Details and complete program descriptions are available online at [americanart.si.edu](http://americanart.si.edu) and in a separate press release.

### **Publication**

A major monograph on Douglas accompanies the exhibition with an introduction by Kinshasha Holman Conwill, deputy director at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of African American History and Culture; essays by a number of prominent scholars, including Earle; David Driskell, professor emeritus at the University of Maryland; and Richard Powell, professor of art and art history at Duke University; among others and a chronology. It is available in the museum store for \$45.

### **Credit**

“Aaron Douglas: African American Modernist” was organized by the Spencer Museum of Art at the University of Kansas in Lawrence. The exhibition and accompanying catalog are made possible, in part, with support from the Henry Luce Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts. The Diane and Norman Bernstein Foundation Inc. and PEPCO are proud to partner with the Smithsonian American Art Museum on the exhibition in Washington, D.C.

The Smithsonian American Art Museum is located above the Gallery Place/Chinatown Metrorail station. Open daily from 11:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. except Dec. 25. Admission is free. Smithsonian Information: (202) 633-1000; (202) 633-5285 (TTY). Museum information (recorded): (202) 633-7970. Web site: [americanart.si.edu](http://americanart.si.edu).

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