

ART & STUFF

Gordon Parks Foundation exhibition exemplifies excellence in Black art

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Peter W. Kunhardt Jr. (Exec Director of the Gordon Parks Foundation); Derrick Adams (Featured Artist/Gordon Parks Foundation Fellow); Sherry Brewer Bronfman (actress); Danny Glover (actor); Deana Lawson (Featured Artist/Gordon Parks Foundation Fellow)

By Audrey J. Bernard

On Wednesday, October 10, 2018 at 9:00 AM **The Gordon Parks Foundation** — in partnership with **The National Gallery of Art** — hosted a special book preview reception for the foundation's latest cock-

Richard Wright, and Ralph Ellison. A fully illustrated catalog produced and published by the Gordon Parks Foundation and Steidl in association with the Gallery, features extensive new research and many previously unpublished images.

The foundation is working simultaneously with



Deana Lawson and Derrick Adams attend the *American Family* opening exhibition in Pleasantville, NY

artists — who both draw inspiration from Parks — explore *the complexity of the American character through familiar subjects with their own distinctive artistic approaches. On view concurrently with American Family will be a selection of Gordon Parks' family portraits made during the 1950s in U.S. cities including Columbus,*

fragmentation and manipulation of structure and surface, and the marriage of complex and improbable forms. His work examines the force of popular culture and the media on the perception and structure of the self-image. "It's natural for me to use my family as my subject," Adams says, "to create a framework for the

About Deana Lawson

Photographer Deana Lawson is currently working on prolonged series of portraits that continue her exploration of the body in diasporic spaces. Lawson received the prestigious Guggenheim Fellowship in 2013, which gave her the opportunity to photograph internationally. She has photographed in DR Congo, Haiti, Jamaica, Ethiopia, and most recently Swaziland and South Africa. Her work has been published in *ArtForum*, *TIME Magazine*, *The New Yorker*, *GARAGE* and *Aperture*. Lawson was included in the 2017 Whitney Biennial and recently had work on view at Sikkema Jenkins Gallery in New York. Deana Lawson's first monograph, with an essay by Zadie Smith and an interview by Arthur Jafa, will be published by *Aperture* on September 25, 2018. Lawson is currently an Assistant Professor in Photography at Princeton University.

About Derrick Adams

Derrick Adams is a New York-based, multidisciplinary artist. His practice is rooted in deconstructivist philosophies such as the fragmentation and manipulation of structure and surface, and the marriage of complex and improbable forms. Through these techniques, Adams examines the force of popular culture and the media on the perception and construction of self-image. Adams received his MFA from Columbia University, BFA from Pratt Institute, and is an alumnus of the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, and the Sharpe-Walentas Studio Program, as well as the recipient of the Joyce Alexander Wein Artist Prize, Louis Comfort Tiffany Award, S.J. Weiler Award, and Agnes Martin Fellowship. He's exhibited and performed at MoMA PS1, Brooklyn Museum of Art, PERFORMA, Studio Museum in Harlem, Brooklyn Academy of Music, The California African American Museum, The Metropolitan Museum of Art and The Museum of Arts and Design, among other notable galleries and institutions. Adams' work is in the permanent collections of Studio Museum in Harlem, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Birmingham Museum, Metropolitan Museum of Art, and Whitney Museum of American Art.

About The Gordon Parks Foundation

The Gordon Parks Foundation's mission is to permanently preserve the work of Gordon Parks, make it available to the public through exhibitions, books, and electronic media, and support artistic and educational activities that advance what Parks described as "the common search for a better life and a better world." The primary purpose of The Gordon Parks Foundation's exhibition space is to present focused exhibits of Parks' photography, as part of the Foundation's commitment to educating the public and preserving his work.

About Gordon Parks

Gordon Parks was a seminal figure of twentieth century photography. A humanitarian with a deep commitment to social justice, he left behind a body of work that documents many of the most important aspects of American culture from the early 1940s up until his death in 2006, with a focus on race relations, poverty, civil rights, and urban life. In addition, Parks was also a celebrated composer, author, and filmmaker who interacted with many of the most prominent people of his era — from politicians and artists to celebrities, and athletes. Best, Tonya



Book Cover — *Gordon Parks: The New Tide, Early Work 1940-1950*



Danny Glover reviewing works in the Gordon Parks Archives



Guests mingling at the opening of the *American Family* exhibition

tail table beautifier *Gordon Parks: The New Tide, Early Work 1940-1950* at Ginny's Supper Club in Harlem with generous support from iconic **Chef Marcus Samuelsson**. The book bash was hosted by publisher **Gerhard Steidl**, publisher and Gordon Parks Foundation Executive Director **Peter W. Kunhardt, Jr.**, with exhibition curator **Philip Brookman** and catalog author **Deborah Willis**, who jointly shared information about this landmark traveling exhibition and its accompanying catalog — the first to chronicle the formative first decade of Parks' career. The exhibition is on view in the West Building of the National Gallery of Art, Washington, from November 4, 2018, through February 18, 2019.

The traveling exhibition provides a detailed look at Parks' early evolution through some 150 photographs, as well as rare magazines, newspapers, pamphlets, and books. It also demonstrates how Parks influenced and was inspired by a network of creative and intellectual figures — including Charles White, Roy Stryker, Langston Hughes,

other exhibitions and recently mounted the *American Family* exhibition at the Gordon Parks Foundation's exhibition space in Pleasantville, New York featuring the works of 2018 Gordon Parks Fellows photography **Deana Lawson** (Rochester, NY) and multi-disciplinary artist **Derrick Adams** (Baltimore, MD) alongside works from Parks himself. The event was attended by special guests including celebrated actor **Danny Glover**, curator **Kimberly Drew**, Parks' wife **Genevieve (Gene) Young**, **Sherry Bronfman**, and many more.

In celebration of the exhibition, the Foundation hosted an artists' reception on Friday, October 19, 2018 from 6:00 – 8:00 PM which was free and open to the public. Both artists attended and as part of the evening's celebration, Lawson signed copies of her recently published book *Deana Lawson: An Aperture Monograph* and Adams signed copies of *The Tilton Gallery's monograph, Derrick Adams — Live and In Color*, originally published around his 2014 show at the gallery.

In *American Family*, the

Ohio; St. Louis, Missouri; and Chicago, Illinois. Lawson notes, "Like Parks, my motivation is to give meaningful texture and complexity to images of global black culture." Adams adds, "Parks' influence... goes beyond the visual, into the meaning and purpose of why I feel it's so important to show the many facets of black American life in ways that shed light onto the complexity and richness of our past, present and future."

Lawson states that she envisions her photographic portraits of Black persons as an "extended family" and an expression of "loving blackness," in which black life is reclaimed by the visionary artist from negative forces and perceptions. In a recent interview appearing in the artist's widely anticipated *Aperture* monograph *Deana Lawson*, she says, "I think about the capacity for human engagement, particularly in images and in pictures. I'm trying to conjure or direct the subject, in a way, to give me their full potential."

Adams, an artist who consistently works across disciplines, roots his practice in deconstructivist philosophies such as the

work I do."

"Deana and Derrick are two wonderful contemporary artists that are creating narratives about the American scene in much the same way that Gordon Parks did throughout his life," said Peter W. Kunhardt, Jr., executive director of The Gordon Parks Foundation. "They each take such bold approaches to exploring connections between people, and we're very excited to share their work as part of our fellowship program."

Now in its second year, The Gordon Parks Foundation Fellowship Program supports artists working across a range of artistic disciplines — in the visual arts and beyond — by providing short-term grants, and an exhibition at the Foundation's exhibition space in Pleasantville, New York. Fellowships are awarded to artists working within themes of social justice and representation. For more information about The Gordon Parks Foundation, please visit: gordonparksfoundation.org and follow on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. (Photos courtesy The Gordon Parks Foundation)