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The Phillips Collection presents *Frank Stewart's Nexus: An American Photographer's Journey, 1960s to the Present*

Award-winning photographer's first museum retrospective features over 100 photographs spanning a six-decade career



WASHINGTON, DC — The Phillips Collection presents *Frank Stewart's Nexus: An American Photographer's Journey, 1960s to the Present*. This dynamic retrospective of Stewart's photography centers on his sensitive and spontaneous approach to portraying world cultures and Black life in many forms—including music, art, travel, food, and dance. His work over the years captured intimate and empathetic images of lives experienced and observed across subjects, cities, and countries. **The exhibition will be on view June 10–September 3, 2023.**

"The Phillips Collection is delighted to present the expressive and compelling photography of Frank Stewart," states **Vradenburg Director and CEO Jonathan P. Binstock**. "The exhibition is the long-overdue recognition of the depth, breadth, and extraordinary impact of Stewart's visionary practice—his powerful examinations of our ever-changing landscape and his influence on American visual culture."

Organized into thematic groupings, *Frank Stewart's Nexus* traces both his explorations of life on the road and the trajectory of his stylistic journey. The exhibition brings together a comprehensive visual autobiography through over 100 black and white and color photographs and includes a selection of cameras Stewart has used over the years. Born in 1949, Stewart's nomadic life and vision can be traced to his childhood, with his shifts back and forth from Memphis, Chicago, and New York. Presenting the retrospective in Washington holds special significance, as some of Stewart's first photographs in the

exhibition were taken as a teenager photographing and documenting the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.

“We look forward to premiering Stewart’s art in the city that inspired him,” shares Phillips Collection **Associate Curator Renee Maurer**. “Not only were his first images taken in Washington, DC, but some of his enduring portraits show his longstanding relationship with the District and his close ties with artists, including David C. Driskell and Alma W. Thomas.” *Frank Stewart's Nexus* will explore Stewart’s avid experimentation, cropping with the camera, to capture numerous subjects over the course of half a century. His photographs of the many aspects and rituals of Black culture, explored through the senses of touch, sound, and taste, suggest the joys and pains of everyday life. An interest in world cultures is visible throughout his practice, particularly the impact of his many trips to Africa and Cuba over the years, including his first visit to Africa in 1974 while he was a student at The Cooper Union. At the center of his varied practice is a familiarity Stewart creates with the people and places that inhabit his works.

“With this exhibition, we have a chance to get a sense of the unlimited range and depth of a contemporary genius,” enthuses **Co-curator Fred Moten**. “Frank Stewart’s combination of loving care for his subjects and thoughtful consideration of his medium is singular and invaluable.”

Music—gospel, blues, and jazz—is one of his overarching influences. Stewart traveled internationally with the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra as their senior staff photographer from 1990-2020. Throughout his time with the orchestra, Stewart captured both public performances and candid, personal moments, creating an intimate portrait of some of the most celebrated musicians of our time. Stewart’s well-known photographs of jazz legends Miles Davis, Ahmad Jamal, and Wynton Marsalis are a highlight of the exhibition, on display with candid shots of other artists in their workplaces.

The exhibition also provides a window into less-explored aspects of Stewart's practice, including his more abstract and painterly *Drawings* series. Inspired by his global travels, the *Drawings* capture reflections, walls, cars, and children at play that showcase Stewart’s experimentations with the medium of photography. Stewart photographed in color from the start of his career, but with the shift to digital photography, color has dominated his work for the past two decades. He also has embraced inkjet printing and has increased the sizes for many of his images. As a student, his studies included painting classes, with the celebrated Jack Whitten being of particular importance. In more recent images, Stewart captures the ever-changing landscape and environmental catastrophes, including the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans between 2005-07 and the devastating fires in California and the Pacific Northwest.

“This exhibition explores Stewart’s celebratory attitude to life, often with a touch of irony,” shares **Co-curator Ruth Fine**. “The theme of intimate and subtle relations between and among people is essential to Stewart’s art. His responses to the human dilemma reflect his ability to gain trust from those with whom he interacts—both friends and strangers.”

Alongside *Frank Stewart's Nexus*, [Phillips@THEARC](#) –The Phillips Collection's workshop and gallery space at 1801 Mississippi Ave, SE – presents additional photographs by Stewart that focus on his strong connection to music, as well as personal memorabilia from the artist's archive that are on view June 14 - August 31, 2023. This marks the first time the museum's two spaces in DC are unified through one exhibition, deepening visitors' understanding of Frank Stewart's practice and encouraging further dialogue with the community through the exhibition's extensive programming.

EXHIBITION SUPPORT

The exhibition is co-organized by The Phillips Collection and Telfair Museums and curated by Ruth Fine, formerly of the National Gallery of Art in DC, and the legendary Fred Moten, poet, scholar, and professor of performance studies at NYU's Tisch School of Fine Arts.

Generously supported by Altria Group, Presenting Sponsor



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The coordinating curator for the presentation at The Phillips Collection is Renée Maurer, Associate Curator at the museum.

The exhibition is accompanied by the artist's first complete [monograph](#) published by Rizzoli Electa, which includes contributions by Frank Stewart, Mary Schmidt Campbell, Ruth Fine, Fred Moten, Cheryl Finley, and Wynton Marsalis.

Following The Phillips Collection, the exhibition will travel to Artis-Naples The Baker Museum, Naples, Florida, and Telfair Museums, Savannah, Georgia through 2024.

ABOUT FRANK STEWART

Born in Nashville, Tennessee, Frank Stewart grew up in Memphis and Chicago. He attended the Art Institute of Chicago, where he was a student of Garry Winogrand and received a BFA in photography from The Cooper Union in New York, where he studied with Roy DeCarava. Stewart became the assistant and photographer to the artist, Romare Bearden, after the two met in 1975 while filming the documentary *Two Centuries of Black American Art*, a project organized by David C. Driskell. Stewart has exhibited photographs at The High Museum, Atlanta; Cooper Union Gallery, Studio Museum in Harlem, Schomburg Center for Research, the International Center of Photography, in New York; Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, and Corcoran Gallery in Washington, DC. He was a member of the first team of North American journalists invited by the Center for Cuban Studies to visit Cuba in 1977. He was also invited by the Los Angeles Olympic Committee to photograph the 1984 Olympic games. He has twice been granted a photographic fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts, and a New York Creative Artist Public Service Award. He is a member of [Kamoinge](#), an African-American

photography collective based in New York. For three decades, he photographed the renowned performers for Jazz at Lincoln Center.

IMAGE GALLERY

High-resolution press images are available upon request. Please contact lcantrell@phillipscollection.org

IMAGES: (l.to r.) *Clock of the Earth, Mamfe, Ghana*, 1998, Inkjet print, 30 x 30 in., Guess Family Collection, Louisville, KY; *Katrina: Hammond B-3, 9th Ward, New Orleans*, 2007, Inkjet print, 30 x 40 in., Collection of The Medium Group, courtesy of Larry Ossei-Mensah; *Stomping the Blues*, 1997, Gelatin silver print, 16 x 20 in., Collection of Rob Gibson, Savannah

ABOUT THE PHILLIPS COLLECTION

The Phillips Collection, America's first museum of modern art, was founded in 1921. The museum houses one of the world's most celebrated Impressionist and American modern art collections and continues to grow its collection with important contemporary voices. Its distinctive building combines extensive new galleries with the former home of its founder, Duncan Phillips. The Phillips's impact spreads nationally and internationally through its diverse and experimental special exhibitions and events, including its award-winning education programs for educators, students, and adults; renowned Phillips Music series; and dynamic art and wellness and Phillips after 5 events. The museum contributes to global dialogues with events like Conversations with Artists and Artists of Conscience. The Phillips Collection values its community partnership with THEARC—the museum's satellite campus in Southeast DC. The Phillips Collection is a private, non-government museum, supported primarily by donations.

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