



NORDIC UTOPIA?

AFRICAN AMERICANS IN THE 20TH CENTURY

OCTOBER 2024
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



NORDIC UTOPIA? AFRICAN AMERICANS IN THE 20TH CENTURY

An exhibition exploring the experiences of African American artists, musicians, and writers in the Nordic countries opens this November at Scandinavia House

New York, NY—An exhibition exploring the untold stories of African American artists who sought new possibilities, inspiration and environments in the Nordic countries in the 20th century opens at **Scandinavia House** on **November 26, 2024**. *Nordic Utopia? African Americans in the 20th Century* looks at the significance of Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden as destinations for cultural figures including **Ronald Burns, Doug Crutchfield, Herb Gentry, Dexter Gordon, William Henry Johnson, Howard Smith** and **Walter Williams** through a range of artifacts, artworks (music, paintings, drawings, sculpture, ceramics, textiles), and documentary evidence (photography, film, and journalistic writing). Organized by the National Nordic Museum in Seattle by co-curators and ASF Fellows **Ethelene Whitmire** and **Leslie Anne Anderson**, where it debuted in March 2024, the exhibition will now be on view at Scandinavia House through **March 8, 2025**.

During the 20th century, African Americans visited, performed, studied, and lived in the Nordic countries for a variety of reasons: a sense of adventure, love, seeking educational and occupational opportunities, freedom to explore their sexuality, freedom from Jim Crow segregation, among many other reasons. Drawing from paintings, photographs, textiles, film, music, and dance, this exhibition captures their journeys as their sense of who they were was transformed through their Nordic encounters. *Nordic Utopia? African Americans in the 20th Century* is the first comprehensive examination of the stories of these African American visual and performing artists, and features loans from the Smithsonian American Art Museum and National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC; the David C. Driskell Center at the University of Maryland, College Park; SMK—the National Gallery of Denmark; and Moderna Museet in Stockholm, among other public collections. It also assembles art and artifacts from private collections, including those of the artists.



William H. Johnson
Danish Seaman, ca. 1935–38, Smithsonian American Art Museum

The exhibition will be accompanied by a fully illustrated catalog co-edited by curators Ethelene Whitmire and Leslie Anne Anderson as well as a range of programs including guided gallery tours, workshops, panels and films.

Nordic Utopia? has been organized by the National Nordic Museum in Seattle. Presentation at Scandinavia House has been made possible in part by the following: The Heimbold Foundation, The Barbro Osher Pro Suecia Foundation, The Tova Borgnine Estate, The Birgitta Dill Estate, Arthur Zeckendorf, and Daniel and Ellen Strickler. Support has also been provided by the following ASF Funds: The Bonnier Family Fund for Contemporary Art, The F. Donald Kenney Fund for Visual Arts, and The Kronquist Mesaros Memorial Endowment Fund. The national tour has been made possible through generous support from The Terra Foundation for American Art, Laurie C. Black, Nordic Kulturfond Globus Grant, Microsoft, City of Seattle, Hugh and Jane Ferguson Foundation, and ArtsFund Guendolen Carkeek Plestcheef Fund for Decorative and Design Arts.

WHEN

November 26, 2024 through March 8, 2025

WHERE

Scandinavia House
58 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10016

GALLERY HOURS & ADMISSION

November 26, 2024 through March 8, 2025
Tuesday through Saturday, 12–6 PM; Wednesdays, 12–7 PM
Also open Sundays in December

ABOUT THE CURATORS

Ethelene Whitmire is the Director of Graduate Studies and a professor in the Department of African American Studies at the University of Wisconsin – Madison. Dr. Whitmire received American-Scandinavian Foundation Fellowships in 2012 and 2015 and was a Fulbright Scholar and a Visiting Professor at the University of Copenhagen's Center for Transnational American Studies in 2016-2017. She has also received a fellowship from the Lois Roth Endowment.

Leslie Anne Anderson is Chief Curator of the National Nordic Museum. She was an American-Scandinavian Foundation Fellow in 2012 and has also been a Fulbright scholar at the University of Copenhagen. For her curatorial work, she received the Association of Art Museum Curators Award for Excellence in Exhibition.

PROGRAMMING

Related programming will include ongoing guided gallery tours, as well as adult and children's workshops, panels and films.

PUBLICATION

The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue co-edited by curators Ethelene Whitmire and Leslie Anne Anderson, featuring essays by Dr. Temi Odumosu (University of Washington) and Dr. Ryan T. Skinner (Ohio State University).

SUPPORT

The national tour of *Nordic Utopia?* has been made possible through generous support from The Terra Foundation for American Art, Laurie C. Black, Nordic Kulturfond Globus Grant, Microsoft, City of Seattle Office of Arts & Culture, Hugh and Jane Ferguson Foundation, and ArtsFund Guendolen Carkeek Plestcheef Fund for Decorative and Design Arts. Presentation at Scandinavia House has been made possible in part by the following: The Bonnier Family Fund for Contemporary Art, The F. Donald Kenney Fund for Visual Arts, The Kronquist Mesaros Memorial Endowment Fund, The Barbro Osher Pro Suecia Foundation, The Tova Borgnine Bequest, and The Birgitta Dill Estate.

THE AMERICAN-SCANDINAVIAN FOUNDATION

The American-Scandinavian Foundation (ASF) promotes firsthand exchange of intellectual and creative influence between the United States and the Nordic countries: Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden. A publicly supported American nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization, ASF has an extensive program of fellowships, grants, intern/trainee sponsorship, publishing, and cultural activities. Headquartered in New York City, ASF has members throughout the United States, and alumni and donors worldwide. **For more information:** amscan.org

SCANDINAVIA HOUSE

Scandinavia House was created by the American-Scandinavian Foundation to promote the artistic and intellectual influence of the Nordic countries. As the leading center for Nordic culture in the United States, Scandinavia House offers enriching programs that illustrate and illuminate the culture and life of the Nordic countries. The diverse programs include exhibitions, film series, concerts and other performances, readings, lectures, language courses, and activities for kids and families.

For more information: scandinaviahouse.org | Facebook | Twitter @ScanHouse

For visual materials and press information, please contact: Lori Fredrickson, Director of Communications, Marketing, & Digital at 212-847-9727 or lori@amscan.org.