

Tony Smith

I am a photographer/filmmaker, and photography instructor. I have a keen interest in shooting short documentary film projects, featuring iconic African American Artists. One of my favorite films on the Black Arts Movement in Chicago, is "Black is Beautiful." This documentary film/solo exhibition features reflections on the cultural, racial, political and historical significance of creating the Wall of Respect.

This public art mural painted on 43rd and Langley Blvd in 1967, was inspired by Bill Walker, and Jeff Donaldson. It was painted, photographed and written about by poets and activists of OBAC. This film explored how the Black Arts Movements heroes, and she-roes who were featured on the Wall of Respect contributed to Black Pride in Chicago, and ultimately inspired the muralists movement here and around the country. It is my goal, that this film will provide further evidence to support the significance of the visual and literary artists contributions, and their impact on murals, and the birth of Black Arts Movement in America.

I have a coffee table book titled "Black is Beautiful" which features some of Chicago's most vibrant African American cultural leaders. This project is in conjunction with my solo exhibition "Black is Beautiful" held at the South Side Community Center in 2018, and my current permanent installation "Artists, Activists & Scholars at Mariano's in 2020, Bronzeville, both of these projects were curated by Dorian Sylvain.

I have had two solo photography exhibits at the SSCAC. Over the past two decades, I have participated in over 20 group exhibitions throughout the Chicagoland Area. I have collaborated with the Theaster Gates, Amanda Williams, Dawoud Bey, Masequa Myers, Haki Madhubuti, Oscar Brown Jr., Robert Sengstacke, Faheem Majeed, Rebecca Zorach, Juarez Hawkins, Dorian Sylvain, and Arlene Turner Crawford to name a few.

As a curator and filmmaker:

"Soul of a Woman," was an exhibit held at the South Shore Cultural Centers featuring 45 women of color. In this exhibit and film, I feature their art, prose, music and cultural experiences as artists living in Chicago. This film

was screened at the Black Harvest Film Festival, and was nominated for an African America Alliance Award.

<https://youtu.be/NCD00ndBE4E>

"Black is Beautiful" is a tribute to the artists and muralists who painted and performed at the Wall of Respect. In this film I share their reflections their opinions on the importance of preserving the legacy of the Wall of Respect. This film was featured in the "Project Respect," group exhibition held at the DuSable Museum in 2017.

<https://youtu.be/TQxYgDVw65E>

"Bill Walker: Urban Griot" tells the story of a 'prolific muralist best known for creating the iconic *Wall of Respect* on Chicago's South Side in collaboration with the Organization of Black American Culture (OBAC). This mural inspired community-based public artworks all over the country, and is a cornerstone of socially engaged art practice. He acted as co-founder of the Chicago Mural Group, now the Chicago Public Art Group, and his murals remain an essential part of the fabric of the city. This exhibition joins programs across Chicago celebrating the 50th anniversary of the *Wall of Respect*.'

<https://www.hydeparkart.org/exhibition-archive/bill-walker-urban-griot/>

As a publisher I was the CEO of Oyster Knife Press:

I co-published Oscar Brown Jr's., "What It Is," featuring his most famous poems, and "Sons of Lovers" an anthology of poetry, which featured poems by Amiri Baraka and Reggie Gibson.

Education:

Mendel Catholic Prep 79'

Morehouse College class of 83' Marketing

The School of the Art Institute of Chicago class of 2015' Masters in Art Education

Multimedia Arts Instructor:

1. Hyde Park Art Center - Photography Instructor
2. After School Matters - Urban Vision and Oakwood Shores Multimedia Arts
3. Chicago State University - Talented Tenth - Photography Instructor
4. South Side Community Art Center - Photography Instructor

Websites:

<https://www.tonymithphoto.com/film>

<https://asmith2996.wixsite.com/tonysmith>