

MEDIA ALERT

Pulitzer Arts Foundation Announces Spring 2027 Exhibitions

- ***Fred Wilson: Irma, Ota, and I***
- ***Ideas of Africa: Portraiture and Political Imagination***

Mar 5–Aug 8, 2027

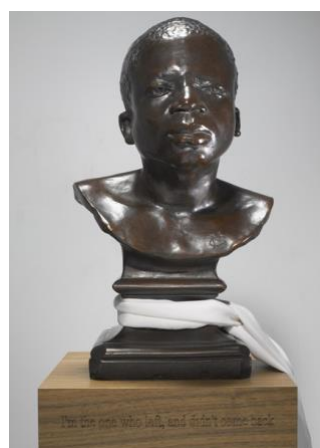
What

In Spring 2027 the Pulitzer Arts Foundation will present two exhibitions exploring histories of identity, representation, and cultural memory: *Fred Wilson: Irma, Ota, and I*, a site-responsive exhibition by renowned artist Fred Wilson (b. 1954) examining his familial history in St. Louis alongside the legacy of the 1904 World's Fair, and *Ideas of Africa: Portraiture and Political Imagination*, an exhibition organized by The Museum of Modern Art, New York, examining how photographers and their sitters contributed to the circulation of Pan-African solidarity during the mid-20th century.

Exhibitions

Fred Wilson: Irma, Ota, and I

Renowned artist Fred Wilson (b. 1954) explores the intertwined histories of the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition (World's Fair) held in St. Louis and his own familial history, which spans several generations in the city during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Wilson's engagement with the World's Fair dates to a 2008 bronze bust he created of Ota Benga—a Mbuti man who was captured from the Congo and exhibited at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition and later the Bronx Zoo. Wilson cast the sculpture from a plaster bust produced by The American Museum of Natural History, which commissioned life masks of Benga and dozens of people from around the world who were displayed at the 1904 World's Fair. At the Pulitzer, Wilson extends this exploration of Benga's legacy, drawing connections across observation, perception, self-fashioning, and nationhood.



Fred Wilson, *Ota Benga*, 2008

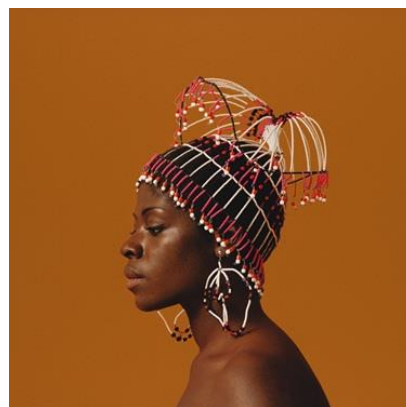
The exhibition brings together sculptures, paintings, and works on paper produced by Wilson over the past three decades. Alongside his own work, Wilson presents historic artworks from local collections related to the 1904 World's Fair and its legacy, as well as personal objects belonging to his paternal grandmother, Irma Dixon, who was born and raised less than a mile from the Pulitzer. Through these juxtapositions, Wilson's iconic flag paintings, Murano glass chandeliers, and mirrors enter into dialogue with historic objects, interrogating the construction of national and racial identity while inviting reflection on the African diaspora in a global context.

A MacArthur Fellow active since the 1990s, Wilson is known for challenging narratives on race and imperialism, beginning with *Mining the Museum*, an exhibition co-organized by The Contemporary and the Maryland Historical Society in 1994. His Venice Biennale project in 2003 marked his first use of Murano glass to engage themes of representation and perception with references that include Shakespeare's *Othello*.

Fred Wilson: Irma, Ota, and I is organized by Stephanie Weissberg, Senior Curator, Pulitzer Arts Foundation. Fred Wilson is represented by Pace Gallery.

Ideas of Africa: Portraiture and Political Imagination

Ideas of Africa, organized by The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), highlights how the photographic portrait has played a critical role in circulating ideas of Pan-African subjectivity and imagination, particularly when the "winds of decolonial change" swept the African continent in tandem with the Civil Rights movement in the United States. The exhibition presents core works from a gift of modern and contemporary African art made by collector Jean Pigozzi to MoMA in 2019, alongside a selection of recent acquisitions and key loans. Represented are 20th-century photographers including Jean Depara, Seydou Keita, Ambroise Ngaimoko, Malick Sidibé, and Sanlé Sory, who worked across West and Central Africa during the "golden age of African portraiture"; James Barnor and Kwame Brathwaite, who illuminate Pan-African modes of image-making across the African diaspora; and Njideka Akunyili Crosby, Samuel Fosso, and Silvia Rosi, who are among the featured contemporary artists of African descent. The exhibition also showcases ephemera drawn from the archive of the artist collective Air Afrique, which illustrates the circulation of these ideas across space and time.



Kwame Brathwaite, *Untitled (Sikolo with Carolee Prince Designs)*, 1964–68

Ideas of Africa: Portraiture and Political Imagination is organized by Oluremi C. Onabanjo, formerly the Peter Schub Curator, with the assistance of Chiara M. Mannarino, Curatorial Assistant, The Robert B. Menschel Department of Photography at MoMA. Onabanjo is currently Curator in the Department of Photographs at The Met. The Pulitzer Arts Foundation presentation is facilitated by Heather Alexis Smith, Assistant Curator.

When

March 5–August 8, 2027

Where

Pulitzer Arts Foundation
3716 Washington Boulevard, St. Louis, MO 63108

Admission

Free

Hours

Thursday through Sunday, 10am–5pm, until 9pm on First Fridays

About the Pulitzer Arts Foundation

Located in St. Louis, the Pulitzer Arts Foundation is dedicated to bringing world-class art and exhibitions to the region. Exhibitions include both contemporary and historic art and are complemented by a wide range of free public programs, including music, literary arts, dance, and cultural discussions. Open and free to all, the Pulitzer is a cultural and civic asset to the St. Louis community and a popular destination for visitors from around the world. The museum is open Thursday through Sunday, 10am–5pm, and until 9pm on First Fridays. For more information, visit pulitzerarts.org.

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Images

Fred Wilson, *Ota Benga*, 2008. Bronze with silk scarf and wood base, 59 1/2 × 12 × 12 inches (151.1 × 30.5 × 30.5 cm). © Fred Wilson, courtesy of Pace Gallery. Photography by: Kerry Ryan McFate

Kwame Brathwaite, *Untitled (Sikolo with Carolee Prince Designs)*, 1964–68. Inkjet print, printed 2018. The Museum of Modern Art, New York Committee on Photography Fund. © 2027 Kwame Brathwaite