



PRESS RELEASE

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The Williams College Museum of Art announces Two Dance Programs by 360° Dance Company

Photos available upon request.

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Williamstown, Mass. – In conjunction with the exhibition *African Americans and the American Scene, 1929–1945* the Williams College Museum of Art (WCMA) and the Williams College Dance Department are pleased to announce two dance programs that explore the artistic innovations in modern dance from the 1930s and 40s. The first program, *Dialogues in Dance* will be held at WCMA on April 4, 2012, and will start with a viewing of the exhibition at 6:00 p.m. followed by a performance and discussion in the galleries with the 360° Dance Company. A public dance workshop will be taught by the 360° Dance Company at the '62 Center for Theater and Dance on April 5, 2012 from 4:00 to 6:30 p.m. Learn Jane Dudley's *Time is Money* (1934), a solo that explores oppression of the worker in society, performed to leftist poetry. Open to movers regardless of experience. Please call the '62 Center Box Office at (413) 597-2425 to pre-register for the April 5 workshop.

About 360° Dance Company

Current artistic director, Martin Lofsnes, who grew up in Norway and studied at the London School of Contemporary Dance/The Place, the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, and the Martha Graham Company, founded 360° Dance Company in 2006. With

a mission to showcase modern dance masterwork juxtaposed with original iterations of contemporary dance, 360° was created in order to preserve and foster the development of the modern dance lineage. 360° is comprised of former principal dancers from the prized Martha Graham Dance Company, and other professional artists. The company explores the innovation of today's modern dance world with grit, passion and fearlessness.

After a very successful premier season at Bærum Kulturhus in Oslo, 360° was subsequently featured in Lower Manhattan Cultural Council's Sidelines Festival and the Reverb, Philadelphia Fringe, American Dance Guild, and Colorado Summer Dance Festivals. They have performed at the Overture Center in Madison, WI, Sam Houston University, SUNY Purchase, Merce Cunningham Studio, Hofstra University, Ailey Citigroup Theatre, and Dartmouth College, and also had residencies at Kaatsbaan International Dance Center and Perry Mansfield Performing Arts Camp. Furthermore, the company has been featured in the Historic Dance Theater Foundation's "Dance is a Weapon" lecture demonstration series.

About the exhibition

On view through April 22, 2012, *African Americans and the American Scene* explores the role of African Americans in the visual and performing arts during the Great Depression.

Shaken by the economic collapse, the country experienced a profound crisis of national identity during the Great Depression. Artists began to picture the "American Scene," subjects culled from daily life such as farms, labor, picnics, and landscapes. African American culture was used as source material for depicting the American Scene. Furthermore, federal funding for the arts during the depression provided opportunities for white and black artists alike. Through visual art, dance, and film, *African Americans and the American Scene* endeavors to sift through the complexities of racial representation in art and the social inclusion and exclusion that affected black artists' and performers' access to their medium of choice.

Artists featured in this exhibition include Thomas Hart Benton, Walker Evans, Robert Gwathmey, Dorothea Lange, Aaron Siskind, and Marion Post Wolcott. Artwork by African American artists Samuel Brown, Jacob Lawrence, and William H. Johnson will highlight the ways that black artists engaged with the American Scene movement. The visual art from the 1930s and 40s will be paired with Barbara Morgan's photographs of African American modern dancer Pearl Primus and artistic storyboards from the film *Emperor Jones*, starring Paul Robeson.

Co-curated by Dalila Scruggs, Ph.D., Mellon Curatorial Fellow for Diversity in the Arts, and Sandra Burton, Lipp Family Director of Dance at Williams College, *African Americans and the American Scene* underscores the Williams College Museum of Art's commitment to multidisciplinary approaches to looking and thinking about art.

"What American artists created from 1929–1945 resonates now because the work represents a close examination of who we were then, and are still in the process of becoming," explains co-curator Sandra Burton. "Collaborating on this exhibition deepened my belief in the performing and visual arts as important historical documents."

"I'm excited to present an exhibition that examines an era where art and political activism were so passionately intertwined," expressed co-curator Dalila Scruggs. "The work from the depression-era is especially timely given the country's current economic problems and political movements like the Ninety-nine percenters."

This exhibition is made possible by the generous support of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation through the establishment of the Williams College Museum of Art Mellon Curatorial Fellowship for Diversity in the Arts.

The Williams College Museum of Art

The Williams College Museum of Art is located on Main Street in Williamstown, Massachusetts. It is open Tuesday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. The museum is wheelchair accessible and open to the public. Admission is FREE. For more information, contact the museum at (413) 597-2429 or visit wcma.williams.edu.

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