

## TEXAS COLLECTS: Curtis E. Ransom Collection

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Romare Bearden, *The Lantern*, lithograph on paper, 1979



Sam Gilliam, *Little Kickapoo (inset)*, etching on paper, 1974



Jonathon Romain, *Portrait of Curtis Ransom*, oil on canvas, 2008

**January 28 - March 25, 2023**

From SITE131:

“SITE131 opens its **Winter 2023** season on **Saturday, January 28, 2023, from 4 ~ 6pm** through **March 25, 2023**. **TEXAS COLLECTS: Curtis E. Ransom**, features forty artworks by African American artists. As a highly private African-American collector, Mr. Ransom has assembled his personal holdings for 30 years. The collection features mid-sized paintings and works on paper from the mid-1940s to present day.

The new SITE131 series presents highly motivated collectors who generously share their private holdings. The inventive series began in Fall 2021 with the private, unknown holdings of emerging artists in The Rachofsky Collection. The presentation of Rachofsky’s young art birthed the idea for SITE131 to feature other unknown generous collectors in North Texas willing to share their collections.

Curtis Ransom’s collection on view includes two major works by artist Jacob Lawrence exhibited at the Dallas Museum of Art (DMA) in 2010. In that exhibition of Lawrence’s work, Ransom lent 15 prints from the *Toussaint L Overture* series. Other more popular artists on view include Sam Gilliam, Romare Bearden, Norman Lewis, Elizabeth Catlett, Sam Middleton, and Dallas artists Frank Frazier and Johnice Parker.

Gathering about 100 artworks in an elegant home in north Dallas, Ransom “hopes people enjoy seeing the art as much as I’ve enjoyed collecting it. Art is always a very personal thing. We all have different tastes and different lifestyles. My collection deals with African American heritage and history.”

The most important influence for Ransom was the art collection at his alma mater, Hampton University. The university boasts of the world’s first collection of African American fine art. Ransom’s mother graduated from Wilberforce University in Ohio. She recommended Hampton to her son, the historically Black college founded in 1868.

Coming from this highly educated family, Ransom’s grandfather, Reverdy C. Ransome (1861 – 1959) was a significant Bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church. He was a founder and architect of the modern Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s. He was also an outstanding orator and founding member of the NAACP.

Currently Ransom is involved in restoring his grandparents’ home known as “Tawawa Chimney Corner” on almost six acres in Wilberforce, Ohio. Built in 1896, the home was officially listed in the National Register of Historic Places by the National Park Service in July 2020.

When Ransom began collecting art, there were no other friends at his college interested in art as he was. He chooses art carefully, never being attracted to artworks that claim to be “attributed to an artist.”

Ransom moved to Dallas in 1980 with Pro Line Corporation, a manufacturer of Black hair care products. His degrees in business and marketing led him to companies like SmithKline Products which merged with Glasco. Then in 1989, Ransom became a Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) franchise owner. With 30 years in business, Ransom’s holdings grew to 21 locations. In 2018, Ransom sold his KFC business in order to spend more time collecting art and restoring his family home in Ohio.

Ransom has noticed within the last ten years of collecting art, a significant focus and appreciation of African American art, has developed. Artists such as Alma Thomas, Norman Lewis, and Ernie Barnes have risen exponentially and continue to impact his expanding collection.

SITE131 beckons the North Texas art community initiating its new direction ~ presenting cherished private art collections to a public audience. Texas has a healthy community of collectors who have been exceptionally private with their holdings. Potentially, by sharing their resources with a larger audience, Texas may initiate a widening gathering of potential collectors.

SITE131 thanks Curtis E. Ransom for sharing his inventive lifetime art holdings with the North Texas community. During the exhibition, Mr. Ransom will appear in a special program to discuss his approach to collecting. Special thanks go to the SITE131 Foundation and founder Seth Davidow for its pivotal support of adventurous exhibitions of new art.