

FP-002

AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSEUM

What is this building, which forms the shape of a cross and features a 60-foot-high dome? It is Dallas's African American Museum. The only museum of its kind in the Southwest, this institution is devoted to the preservation and display of African American materials that are artistic, cultural and/or historical.

The museum began operations in 1974 as a part of the Special Collections at Bishop College, a Historically Black College in Dallas that closed in 1988. The museum moved into this 7-million-dollar structure just after its completion in 1993.

Four vaulted galleries and a research library enable one to explore -- in depth -- the rich heritage of black art and history. The museum has a small but rich collection of African masks, sculptures, gold weights, and textiles. Many of the donations to this collection came from, among others, Stanley Marcus of Neiman-Marcus fame, and from former Housing and Urban Development Secretary Alphonso Jackson and his wife, Marcia.

The Museum's Fine Art collection includes works produced by African Americans from the 1800s to the present. Major gifts include works by Edward Mitchell Bannister, Jacob Lawrence, Benny Andrews, Sam Gilliam, Romare Bearden and John Biggers. The Folk-Art collection, meanwhile, is one of the finest collections of its kind in the nation. It features works from Clementine Hunter, David Butler, George White, Mose Tolliver, Sister Gertrude Morgan, Bessie Harvey, Johnny Banks, and Willard "The Texas Kid" Watson.

The building also houses the Texas Black Sports Hall of Fame. Established in 1996, the organization honors coaches and athletes of high character and athletic achievement, who are either Texans by birth or by athletic participation (collegiate or professional). Inductees must also have made recognizable contributions to African American culture and/or history. The general public submits the nominees, and a panel of judges (including sports journalists) makes the final selection.

Current members of the Texas Black Sports Hall of Fame include: football greats Tony Dorsett, Drew Pearson and Mel Renfro; the 1966 "Glory Road" basketball championship team from the University of Texas at El Paso; WNBA star Fran Harris; baseball great Ernie Banks; Olympian Rafer Johnson and track team coach Barbara Jacket.

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