Celebrating the Grand Opening of the New Schomburg Center

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The new Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture has opened. After more than 18 months of construction and renovation activity, the 21st century edition of the Schomburg Center—the center of knowledge on the global black experience—has opened its doors to the public. Included in its newness are a new façade and lobby, a new Latimer/Edison Gallery, a new electronic resource center and reading room in the Jean Blackwell Hutson General Research and Reference Division, and a new state-of-the-art Scholars Center. Those of you who attended the members’ previews had a chance to see some of these new features first hand. Those of you who missed the previews should put a visit to the new Schomburg Center on your list of must-dos.

Two new exhibitions are on display that you also won’t want to miss. The first, the inaugural exhibition in the new Latimer/Edison Gallery, is entitled Black Art: Treasures from the Schomburg. A selection of some 60 classical and contemporary works from the Center’s Art and Artifacts Division, Black Art is a wonderful introduction to the breadth and depth of the Center’s art holdings. In our main exhibition hall is Stereotypes vs. Humantypes: Images of Blacks in the 19th and 20th centuries. This provocative and controversial show confronts the stereotypical images of people of African descent that proliferated in the 19th and early 20th centuries with vintage photographs and realistic portrayals of black people during the same period. Throughout the complex you will find other selections from the Center’s art collections including the four stunning and historic murals by Aaron Douglas entitled Aspects of Negro Life, which are hanging in the main reading room of the General Research and Reference Division.

I would like to take this opportunity to again thank former City Councilman (now State Senator) Bill Perkins, former Council President Gifford Miller, City Council Member Inez Dickens, The New York City Council, and Mayor Michael Bloomberg for providing more than $11 million in city support to make the renovation project possible.
On February 14th, the birth date adopted by Frederick Douglass, the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission unveiled a plaque marking an important site in Douglass’s freedom journey. “Today we honor the sacrifices of the men and women whose courageous work at this site contributed to the emancipation of 4 million people in the United States,” said Commission Chairman Robert B. Tierney. “Their heroism and unwavering conviction will be known to everyone who passes by this plaque for generations to come.”

“The roots to freedom run deep in America, particularly in New York City,” said Commissioner Christopher Moore, who also serves as research coordinator for the Schomburg Center. “And nowhere were they more meaningful or fruitful than at 36 Lispenard Street. The house that once stood on this spot was too small for huddled masses, but it did protect many who were yearning to breathe free.”

When he first arrived in New York City in 1838, after escaping slavery in Maryland, Frederick Douglass stayed for several days at the Underground Railroad site, operated by African American abolitionist David Ruggles. The building, which is no longer standing, served as the headquarters of the New York Vigilance Committee, one of the nation’s most active anti-slavery campaigns, assisting more than 1,000 fugitive men, women, and children.

New York City Underground Railroad Site Honored

Undergraduate Schomburg-Mellon Humanities Summer Institute

The following students will be participating in the 2007 Summer Institute:

Christopher J. Bonner
Howard University

Marjuan Canady
Fordham University

Melanie Chambliss
Howard University

Liana Alicia George
New York University

Omare Kinsey
Howard University

Shannon D. Malone
Tougaloo College

Ianna Hawkins Owen
Hunter College

Keondra Prier
Barnard College

Taqwaa Falaq Saleem
Savannah State University

Courtney B. Sanders
Hampton University

Sheena Stringer
Fordham University

Elsie F. Gibbs
In Memoriam: 1919-2007

Longtime Schomburg Center Volunteer Coordinator, Elsie F. Gibbs passed away on March 15, 2007. She was 87 years old. Gibbs was born in Perth Amboy, New Jersey on September 19, 1919. During the 1940s, she was a member of the American Negro Theatre company that began in the basement of the Schomburg Center’s landmark building, forming lifelong friendships with alums including Harry Belafonte, Sidney Poitier, and Ruby Dee.

For 38 years, Gibbs worked for the National Board of the New York City YMCA. She was an active member of the NAACP throughout her life, and served as President of the NAACP Youth Council. Gibbs attended the first Festival of Negro Arts in 1966 in Dakar, Senegal, where she met numerous dignitaries, public officials, and celebrities. She also visited the neighboring countries of Liberia, Nigeria, and Ghana.

When Gibbs retired from the YMCA, she became a volunteer at the Schomburg Center. She accepted the position of Volunteers Coordinator in 1990—growing the corps from 10 volunteers to 130. Under her dedicated leadership, the Schomburg Center Volunteer Corps attained a contribution level of more than 6,000 hours annually to the Center’s activities. Her contribution to the Schomburg Center is immeasurable. Elsie Gibbs was truly one of a kind.
The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture held a ribbon-cutting ceremony on May 10, 2007 to launch the Grand Opening of its new and renovated facilities. For the past two years, the Center has kept all five of its collection divisions open and presented exhibitions and cultural programs while upgrading to meet 21st century challenges. The new and improved Schomburg is truly the Center of Knowledge on the Global Black Experience, offering on-site, online and outreach opportunities to access its wealth of information.

The new spaces, designed by Richard Dattner & Partners, Architects PC, include: the reconfigured Jean Blackwell Hutson General Research and Reference Division; a new glass façade; a new Latimer/Edison Gallery; a new Scholars-in-Residence Center; and a state-of-the-art video wall viewable from Malcolm X Boulevard. The Latimer/Edison Gallery’s inaugural exhibition is Black Art: Treasures from the Schomburg, which will feature selected art pieces from the Art and Artifacts Division. The Scholars-in-Residence Center has individual offices for scholars as well as one for the program’s director, a conference room, and a general meeting area. The Scholars Center is the perfect environment for academic and professional growth befitting a program that has nurtured the scholarship of more than 90 fellows since 1986.

In addition to the cosmetic changes are the upgraded services available in the Jean Blackwell Hutson General Research and Reference Division. One of the most important elements is a quieter reading room, which will allow patrons to research without any outside interference. Hanging in the reading room are four murals in the Aspects of Negro Life series created by Harlem Renaissance artist Aaron Douglas in 1934 under the sponsorship of the WPA: The Negro in an African Setting, An Idyll of the Deep South, From Slavery through Reconstruction, and Song of the Towers.

The reading room is equipped with four computer stations granting access to the Center’s catalog as well...
as those of the other NYPL research libraries and branch libraries. Two electronic message boards will alert patrons when the research materials they have requested are available for use. Patrons will now be able to call in requests in advance of their visits, and to schedule one-on-one consultation with a General Research and Reference Division librarian if they need help on a specific topic. Other new services include more computers with access to the Center’s databases and full Internet access; docking stations for laptop computers, so patrons can take advantage of the building-wide wireless Internet access; and for the visually impaired, the division now has the ability to convert text into voice.

According to Genette McLaurin, Curator of the Jean Blackwell Hutson General Research and Reference Division, many people are not familiar with the wealth of information that is available. The division holds and provides access to books, serials and microforms containing information by and about people of African descent throughout the world, concentrating on the humanities, social sciences, and the arts. Today the collection encompasses 166,000 books, CDs and Maps; 31,085 microfilm reels; 52,204 microfiche; and subscriptions to more than 485 newspapers from Africa and throughout the African Diaspora. Although English is the predominant language of the division’s holdings, there are also works in French, Portuguese, Spanish, German, Russian and other European languages, as well as works in over 200 indigenous African and Creole languages and dialects. There are also bilingual texts, dictionaries, and translations of African-American literary classics in Asian languages such as Japanese and Chinese.
Grand Opening Exhibitions

Black Art: Treasures from the Schomburg
May 12, 2007 — October 28, 2007
Latimer/Edison Gallery

To help commemorate the Grand Opening of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture’s renovated facilities, this exhibition offers a sampling of the diverse forms of artistic expression and trends documented in the Center’s collection. Part of a long and enduring tradition of art-making in the African world, these works eloquently attest to the fact that African peoples, like all members of the human family, have been actively and creatively involved in producing art of extraordinary beauty, meaning, and power, regardless of where and under what circumstances they have lived.

Stereotypes vs. Humanotypes: Images of Blacks in the 19th and 20th Centuries
May 12, 2007 — October 28, 2007
Main Exhibition Hall

For much of the 19th and early 20th centuries, stereotypical images of people of African descent dominated the public media, especially in the United States. Black men, women and children were portrayed as “coons,” “mammies,” and “pickaninnies” in the press, in children’s and comic books, in marketing and advertising promotions, as well as film and television. Many of these mythological images persist today in the public consciousness and public eye. This exhibition uses vintage photographs of black people, as well as representational paintings, sculptures and other artworks to challenge these mythological images and present accurate, humanistic depictions of these maligned black folk. It also poses the question of why certain whites in western culture found it necessary to create such stereotypical images of their human forbearers.

DON’T MISS!
Aaron Douglas: African American Modernist
Spencer Museum of Art
The University of Kansas
Lawrence, Kansas
September 8, 2007 – December 2, 2007

This special exhibition will feature the four murals from the Schomburg Center Reading Room, along with other works of Douglas. A traveling version will tour in 2008, arriving at the Schomburg Center in September. For more information, please visit www.spencerart.ku.edu.

Dance Composition, 1976, by Eldzier Cortor
Amistad Begins Freedom Tour

The Amistad America will embark on a transatlantic journey, Amistad’s Atlantic Freedom Tour. The yearlong voyage will trace the slave trade triangle as well as visit ports with ties to the slave trade as part of the International Commemoration of the Bicentennial of the International Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade in the United Kingdom. The Amistad departs its homeport of New Haven, CT on June 21 and makes its first stop in Shelburne and Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. It will return to New Haven in July of 2008, marking the bicentennial of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade in the United States. For more information about the Amistad’s Atlantic Freedom Tour, visit www.amistadamerica.org.

Amistad Tour Schedule:

- Shelburne and Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada
  - June 2007
- Hull, London, Liverpool, and Bristol, United Kingdom
  - August – September 2007
- Lisbon, Portugal
  - October 2007
- Freetown, Sierra Leone
- Dakar, Senegal and Praia, Cape Verde
  - February – March 2008
- San Juan, Puerto Rico
  - April 2008
- Charleston, SC, Washington, DC, and New York City
  - June 2008

Map of the Amistad’s Atlantic Freedom Tour journey.
A Look at Major Events Throughout the African Diaspora

Ghana at 50

Ghana, the first country in Sub-Saharan Africa to gain its independence, celebrated its milestone 50th Anniversary of Independence on March 6, 2007. The yearlong celebration dubbed “Championing African Excellence,” will include lectures and discussion, photo and art exhibitions, concerts, carnivals, parades, children activities, documentary and film presentations, and much more. Each month has a theme ranging from “Our Wealth and our Prosperity” in May to “Knowledge and Ghana’s Development” in October.

Ghana’s jubilee is as much about the past as it is the present and the future. The country three main objectives for this milestone according to the Ghanaian government are: “To celebrate and commemorate Ghana’s landmark achievement as the first country in Black Africa to attain independence from colonial rule; to reflect on the evolution, development, achievements and, drawbacks of our country over the past 50 years; and to look forward to the future, to our vision of excellence in all fields of endeavor in the next 50 years toward our centenary birthday as a nation.”

If you want more information about Ghana’s yearlong 50th Anniversary celebrations, visit www.ghana50.gov.gh.

Ethiopia to Celebrate its Millennium

Although most countries celebrated the new millennium back in 2000, Ethiopians will be celebrating theirs from September 12, 2007 until September 11, 2008. The reason for the almost eight year difference is quite simple—Ethiopia uses its own ancient calendar. The Ethiopian calendar, which has 12 months of 30 days and a 13th month of five days (six days every four years), is not based on the timeline of the Western Gregorian Calendar. The theme for this milestone is “Celebrating our Millennium Hand in Hand,” and will feature countrywide celebrations as well as immense outreach to citizens of other nations to visit Ethiopia during this time.

For more information about Ethiopia’s Millennium, visit the official site at www.ethiopia2000.com.

Join us at the Schomburg Center on Sunday, June 10 for a special film screening and panel discussion celebrating the Ethiopian Millennium. See calendar insert for more details.

The powerful Empire of Ghana (ca. 300-1200) was located in present-day Mali, Senegal, and Mauritania. The modern country of Ghana took that name in honor of the old Empire but there is no geographic or historic connection between the two.
During the 19th and early 20th centuries, stereotypical images of people of African descent became a widespread phenomenon. These images were used on food products, postcards, illustrations for books and sheet music, and sometimes simply as propaganda. For their creators, stereotypical images served a variety of purposes—like fueling racial hatred, segregation, and colonization, not to mention further dehumanizing a whole race of people. By contrast, realistic portrayals of people of African descent, during the same time period, existed in both art and photography. Unfortunately, both stereotypical and realistic images continue to be used today. Here is a selection of the kind of images and artifacts that are a part of the remarkable new exhibition—Stereotypes vs. Humantypes: Images of Blacks in the 19th and 20th Centuries.
“Un Griot Jouer de Kora.”

Wedding Day photograph, ca. 1900s.

An image of a young girl from the 19th century, ca. 1880s, photography by V. Herman.

Humantypes


“University Singers of New Orleans,” ca. 1880s.
Three generations of Liberians at the Town Hall Meeting and Awards Ceremony held at the Schomburg Center on September 15, 2006. Liberian President H.E. Madam Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf (far left) presented an award to Angie Brooks (seated), a long time Liberian U.N. diplomat who became the second female President of the 24th session of the General Assembly.

From left, New York State Senator Bill Perkins, Schomburg Chief Howard Dodson and President of Liberia H.E. Madam Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf looking at various items from the Center’s collections on Liberia.

Diana Lachatanere, Schomburg Center Assistant Director for Collections and Services and Curator, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, shows Cuban Vice President of the Council of State Estaban Lazo Hernández special selections on Cuba from the Center’s collections on September 22, 2006.


Two members of the African American Jazz Caucus/HBCU Student All-star Big Band performing at a special tribute concert to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. on January 14, 2007.

Former Jamaican Prime Minister Edward Seaga spoke at the annual CIN Caribbean Lecture Series about the Folk Roots of Jamaican Culture on October 19, 2006.


On February 17, Macy’s in Boston hosted a special panel with Schomburg Chief Howard Dodson; Dr. Lois Brown, Mount Holyoke; and L’Merchie Frazier, Museum of African American History, as part of their in-store exhibition to celebrate Black History Month.

The Department of Public Information, the Caribbean Community Member States, and the Schomburg Center organized a special month long exhibition of *Lest We Forget: The Triumph Over Slavery* in the United Nations visitors lobby to observe the International Day for the Commemoration of the 200th Anniversary of the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade. Schomburg Chief Howard Dodson explains portions of the exhibition to U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon at the opening reception on March 1, 2007.
**AVAILABLE NOW!**

**Migrations: 366 Days of Black History 2008 Wall Calendar and Engagement Calendar**, by the Schomburg Center, IOKTS Productions and Pomegranate Communications

Focusing on the theme of Migrations, the 2008 wall and engagement calendars incorporates images, paintings, sculptures along with important people, places, and events in African-American and African Diasporan history. These calendars make beautiful gifts and collectibles. Don’t wait until the last minute to get yours—2007’s engagement calendar sold out in record time.

Calendar, price: $13.99; Engagement Calendar, price: $14.99


The second edition of *The Encyclopedia of African-American Culture and History* (Thomson Gale) is a six volume, comprehensive compendium of knowledge on the historical and cultural development of people of African descent at the beginning of the 21st century. A product of the most recent scholarship on the African-American and African Diasporan experience, *The Encyclopedia* offers a convenient introduction to this vast array of information. Note: Limited sets are available to Schomburg Society members beginning at the Supporter level ($100 and above) at a special price of $300 (Regular price is $695).

**Lest We Forget: The Triumph Over Slavery**, a postcard book by the Schomburg Center and Pomegranate Communications

This beautiful postcard book captures some of the highlights of the international exhibition bearing the same name. It features 30 cards made up of photographs, art, and documents that tell the story of a people’s journey to freedom.

Price: $9.95

The Schomburg Shop is having a special clearance on books. Don’t miss this opportunity to get dozens of books at a discounted price. Stop by The Schomburg Shop today!

**EXHIBITIONS**

**Black Art: Treasures from the Schomburg**

May 12, — Oct. 28, 2007

Latimer/Edison Gallery

To help commemorate the Grand Opening of the Schomburg Center

**Stereotypes vs. Humantypes: Images of Blacks in the 19th and 20th Centuries**

May 12, 2007 — October 28, 2007

Main Exhibition Hall

For much of the 19th and early 20th centuries, stereotypical images of people of African descent dominated the public media, especially in the United States. Black men, women and children were portrayed as “coons,” “mammies,” and “pickaninnies” in the press, in children’s and comic books, in marketing and advertising promotions, as well as film and television. Many of these mythological images persist today in the public consciousness and public eye. This exhibition uses vintage photographs of black people, as well as representational paintings, sculptures and other artworks to challenge these mythological images and present accurate, humanistic depictions of these maligned black folk. It also poses the question of why certain whites in western culture found it necessary to create such stereotypical images of their human forbearers.

**New from The Schomburg Center**
Rental Service Available

In addition to our research services and programs, the Schomburg Center has an active rental service. The beautiful facilities are professionally equipped and can accommodate a wide range of special events from concerts, theater, and cocktail receptions to educational seminars and conferences. The Schomburg is a truly unique and special place to host an event. For rates and more information, contact:

Damond Haynes
Events Coordinator
Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture
515 Malcolm X Boulevard
New York, New York 10037
212.491.2257
schomburgcenterevents@nypl.org

Join Our E-Mail List Today!

The Schomburg Center would like to send our members e-mail announcements and updates about upcoming program events. To join our e-mail list, please visit our Web site www.schomburgcenter.org, look under “New and Noteworthy,” (see image of our homepage below), and enter your information.
A Message from the National Membership Chair

Knowing our legacy—undistorted by others and documented by those who lived it—correctly aligns you and me and our children in the continuing struggle to fully claim our dignity in all areas of life.

Please join with me and thousands of others who are making certain that the Schomburg has the funds not only to continue its unique mission, but to expand its outreach into every home, school, and library.

Please join me as a Schomburg Society Member now!

Dr. Maya Angelou

Schomburg Society Benefits

ASSOCIATE - $35
($35 tax deductible)
• A year’s subscription to the Schomburg Center newsletter
• A 20% discount in the Schomburg Shop
• A quarterly program calendar
• A personalized membership card
• Up to 20% discount on tickets to select Center-sponsored programs

FRIEND - $50
($35 tax deductible)
All Associate benefits, plus:
• Invitations to members-only exhibition previews, lectures and seminars

SUPPORTER - $100
($70 tax deductible)
All Friend benefits, plus:
• An annual subscription to the Quarterly Black Review of Books
• Invitations to VIP events

PATRON - $250
($195 tax deductible)
All Supporter benefits, plus:
• A complimentary copy of a major Center publication

SUSTAINER - $500
($410 tax deductible)
All Patron benefits, plus:
• Two tickets to a select Schomburg Center concert or performance

CONSERVATOR - $1,000
($910 tax deductible)
All Sustainer benefits, plus:
• Acknowledgment in the Schomburg Center newsletter and the Library’s Annual Report

HERITAGE CIRCLE - $2,500 ($2,410 tax deductible)
All Conservator benefits, plus:
• A private behind the scenes tour led by the Center’s Chief

CHIEF’S CIRCLE - $5,000
($4,810 tax deductible)
All Heritage Circle benefits, plus:
• An invitation to an annual luncheon with the Chief

Please make check or money order payable to the Schomburg Center/NYPL. Mail to:
The Schomburg Society • 515 Malcolm X Boulevard • New York, NY 10037-1801. To charge call The Shop: (212) 491-2206, Tuesday through Saturday, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Visit the Schomburg Center On-Line at www.schomburgcenter.org

The Schomburg Center is available for space rental.
For further information contact: (212) 491-2257.