

"It's the perfect moment to rediscover Purifoy, an African-American artist who believed in art as a tool for social change, and whose work speaks directly to the climate of racial conflicts and unrest that's dominated the headlines in the past year."—Vogue

Columbus, Ohio—January 5, 2016—January 30–April 10, 2016, the Wexner Center for the Arts will present *Noah Purifoy: Junk Dada*, the first major museum retrospective devoted to this important artist and community activist. This is the exhibition's only other appearance outside of Los Angeles, where it enjoyed an acclaimed run at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Featuring more than 50 of Purifoy's vibrant three-dimensional works dating from the late 1950s to the early 2000s—along with photographs and ephemera that give added insight into his profound impact on West Coast culture—*Junk Dada* offers a fascinating and career-spanning look at the work of this significant, if overlooked, American artist, who the Los Angeles Times called "the least well-known pivotal artist of the last 50 years." The acclaimed exhibition was recently included in the New York Times's and Artforum's "Best of 2015" lists.

Notes Wexner Center Director Sherri Geldin, "Noah Purifoy spent his artistic life drawing upon such early 20th century art practices as Dada, collage, and the "readymade" and infusing them with a more contemporary aesthetic of assemblage fueled by social activism. In many respects, he was both of his time and ahead of it, deeply respected by such peers as Ed Ruscha and John Outterbridge, but largely unknown to the general public. We are pleased to contribute to his long overdue recognition and reception—not just on the west coast where he made his home, but nationally."

A legend in California's post-World War II art scene, Purifoy (1917–2004) emerged as a distinctive presence in the development of the West Coast's unique post-war creative ethos. As artist, designer, and social worker, he used the modest materials of everyday life to produce assemblage sculptures and mixed-media constructions of dazzling visual invention, embodying an aesthetic the exhibition's curators termed "junk dada." Purifoy was the first African American to graduate from what is now CalArts and, in addition to making art, was a founding director of the Watts Towers Arts Center, created to preserve and protect Simon Rodia's soaring—if humbly erected—monument of and to that neighborhood. Bill Horrigan, Wexner Center curator at large, says, "This extensive survey is a long overdue and compelling examination of a remarkable body of work that shines a clarifying light on Purifoy's inspiring work as an artist-educator."

Junk Dada is curated by Franklin Sirmans and Yael Lipschutz for the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and is accompanied by a major catalogue with a preface by Sirmans; essays by Lipschutz,

Lowery Stokes Sims, and Kristine McKenna; a Q&A with Purifoy excerpted from an earlier interview with C. Ian White; a chronology by Allison Glenn; and remembrances by Dale Brockman Davis, Judson Powell, Ed Ruscha, and Sue Welsh. Guests can explore selected works in the exhibition by using a special augmented reality app. The interactive program accesses photos, videos, and other content to deepen the experience with the work. Free iPad minis will be available to guests to access the additional content.

ABOUT NOAH PURIFOY

Born in Alabama in 1917, Purifoy earned a master's degree in social work in Georgia, and worked in Cleveland from 1948 to 1950 for the Cuyahoga County Department of Social Services. While developing his practice as an artist in Southern California, he also cofounded the Watts Towers Arts Center. Working alongside such artists as David Hammons and John Outterbridge, Purifoy developed art programs for underserved children and furthered his commitment to inspiring self-discovery among youth through artistic creation, regardless of available materials or formal instruction. Purifoy was a founding member on the California Arts Council and served on it for over a decade, retiring in 1987 and moving permanently to Joshua Tree two years later, where he produced dozens of astonishing and audacious outdoor sculptures still standing today.

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