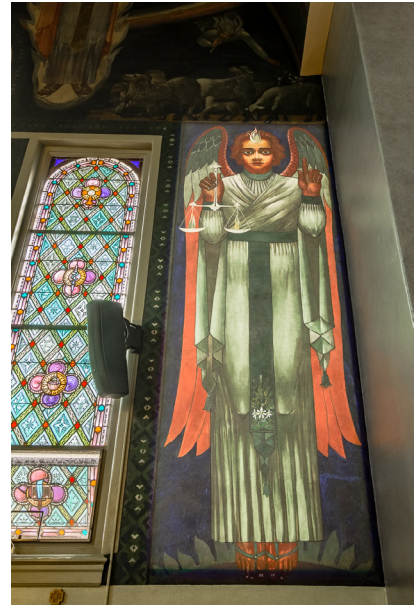


Chloe Persian Mills, Audrey Biega, William Daw, and Kathy Kienholz

## Arts and culture in the Paris of Appalachia

Pittsburgh abounds in national treasures

Pittsburgh will be thrilled to welcome the ACRL 2023 Conference from March 15 to 18, 2023. We want to introduce the vibrant arts and culture scene in Pittsburgh, AKA Paris of Appalachians, AKA the City of Bridges (clocking in with a total of 446 of these structural feats). Many of these sites are within easy walking distance of the conference center. Audrey Biega surveys the rich number of arts, architecture, and cultural institutions in our city. William Daw and Kathy Kienholz describe the history and impact of two of Pittsburgh's celebrated African American artists, August Wilson and Teenie Harris. And, finally, I must highlight one of my favorite hidden gems of Pittsburgh (or, well, Millvale), the Maxo Vanka murals (<https://vankamurals.org/>) at the St. Nicholas church. These church paintings, created by the artist Maxo Vanka in 1937 and 1941 with Vanka's bold socialist-informed and emotional style, will forever change how you think about ecumenical art and politics.—*Chloe Persian Mills, article editor*



Maxo Vanka, *Justice* (1941), paint on plaster wall, Save Maxo Vanka, August 16, 2022, <https://vankamurals.org/vanka-murals/>.

### Art and museums in Pittsburgh

*Audrey Biega*

While you enjoy your stay in Pittsburgh, we encourage you to take in the city's unique character as it is revealed through our eclectic range of neighborhoods, each with their respective artistic hubs. In anticipation of your tour of Pittsburgh's arts and culture offerings, and in the spirit of Mr. Rogers—"Won't you be my neighbor?"

#### Downtown

The meeting of the Allegheny and the Monongahela form the Ohio—and thus these three rivers create the peninsula which is Downtown Pittsburgh. Downtown's Cultural District (<https://culturaldistrict.org/>) offers several galleries to visit (all free and open to the public): Future Tenant, SPACE, Wood Street, 707 Penn Gallery, and 937 Gallery, to name a few. These spaces host seasonally rotating exhibitions, presenting a range of audiovisual, installation, and fine art, both local and global.

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## **The Northside**

Just a bridge away (as is often the case in Pittsburgh), the Northside is home to a bevy of uniquely Pittsburghian art attractions. Perhaps most famous is the Andy Warhol Museum (<http://warhol.org>). Get a chance to tour the world's largest archive of Warhol's art and artifacts and see Pittsburgh's wayward son become one of the most iconic Pop Artists of the 20th century. Further inland the Mattress Factory (<https://mattress.org/>), a truly unique art museum specializing in site-specific installation art, with alluring permanent pieces by Yayoi Kusama and James Turrell along with seasonally rotating exhibitions. While you're in the neighborhood, do treat yourself to a quick visit to Randyland (<https://positivelypittsburgh.com/randyland/>). Screaming colors, elaborately arranged curiosities, and dizzying collections of ephemera: Randyland is a public art landmark that vibrates with quirk, charm, and cheer. Drop by and see why it is affectionately called "The Happiest Place in Pennsylvania."

## **Troy Hill**

Should you choose to climb Rialto—one of Pittsburgh's steepest streets—you will find yourself in the small neighborhood of Troy Hill, home of Saint Anthony's Chapel (<https://pghshrines.org/about-st-anthony-chapel>). Consecrated in the late 19th century, this church holds approximately 5,000 relics—the world's largest collection second to the Vatican. A few streets over, you will happen upon the facades of some unassuming yet curious homes known as the Troy Hill Art Houses (<https://www.troyhillarthouses.com>). Beyond their front doors holds wildly imaginative transformed interiors, with each house a work of art by different artists. With the most recent third house completed in the fall of 2022, the Art Houses are an off-the-grid, unique experience that is a must-see for the arts enthusiast.

## **Point Breeze**

Italianate-style architecture, grand gardens, and a brimming collect of Romantic art: all of this and more is available to see at the Frick Estate (<https://www.thefrickpittsburgh.org/>).

## **Garfield**

Garfield is home to the Penn Avenue Arts District—along this 1.5-mile stretch, you'll encounter myriad local art and creative spaces, from Silver Eye Center for Photography (<https://silvereve.org/>) to the Irma Freeman Center for Creativity (<https://www.irmafreeman.org/>).

## **Oakland**

Eastward from Downtown is the bustling neighborhood of Oakland, host of several art and historical institutions, as well as the Universities of Carlow, Carnegie Mellon, and Pittsburgh. Oakland has some of the grandest architecture in Pittsburgh—The Cathedral of Learning (<https://www.tour.pitt.edu/tour/cathedral-learning>) and Heinz Chapel (<https://www.heinzchapel.pitt.edu/>) are honorable mentions—as well as a bevy of multicultural eats and leisurely parks. The Carnegie Museums (<https://carnegiemuseums.org/>) are the crown jewel of Oakland's cultural offerings, consisting of the Carnegie Museum of Art and the Carnegie Museum of Natural History. Spring 2023 will an opportunity to catch the last weeks of the 58th Carnegie International—the "longest-running North American



August Wilson African American Cultural Center, website photo , August 16, 2022, <https://awaacc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/building.jpg>.

exhibition of international art, second globally only to the Venice Biennale” (<https://cmoa.org/2022-carnegie-international/>). The International consists of contemporary works from both international and local artists; hold onto your ticket, as it includes admissions to the incredible Museum of Natural History within the east-wing of the building. Should your interests lean botanical, swing up from the museums to visit the Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens (<https://www.phipps.conservatory.org/>) where lush greenery, rare flora, whimsical glasswork, and an abundance of butterflies await.

### **Other areas**

This is merely a short review of the offerings closest to the conference site. You may wish to venture a little farther into Pittsburgh’s 90 distinct neighborhoods (<https://bit.ly/3Q2s4AH>). Be sure to find an ACRL 2023 Local Arrangements Committee member at the convention center who can give you some tips.

One option, not far east from central downtown Pittsburgh, lies the Hill District. Over the course of the 20th century, it became one of the city’s largest African American neighborhoods as well as an area of national influence through its vibrant arts, culture, and music scene. It was the home of the *Pittsburgh Courier*, one of the country’s most circulated African American newspapers. The Hill District and other parts of Pittsburgh were known for jazz clubs and African American social and business activity. Other African American areas in Pittsburgh, including East Liberty and Homestead, also had bustling entertainment districts, with natives including Errol Gardner, Maxine Sullivan, Billy Strayhorn, pianists Errol Hines and Ahmad Jamal, drummer Kenny “Klook” Clarke, horn brothers Stanley and Tommy Turrentine, bandleader and vocalist Billy Eckstine, and the First Lady of Jazz—pianist Mary Lou Williams. The African American communities of Pittsburgh have produced artistic and cultural legacies over a broad swath of the United States, especially in the 20th century.

Our guide now turns to two of the particularly important figures from this community, author August Wilson and photographer Teenie Harris.

## August Wilson

*William Daw*

Pittsburgh claims quite a few notable literary figures, but currently none of them loom larger than playwright August Wilson. Wilson was born in Pittsburgh in 1945 and spent a large part of his childhood in the city's Hill District neighborhood. While primarily considering himself a poet in his early adulthood, he helped found the Black Horizons Theatre in 1968 and became the director of some of that community theatre's performances. After moving to Minnesota in 1978, he became committed to writing plays and submitting plays to the O'Neill National Playwrights Conference. There he developed a partnership with Lloyd Richards, the artistic director of the Playwrights Conference and the Yale School of Drama.



Charles "Teenie" Harris self-portrait in Harris Studio, photograph, 4 x 5 in. (10.20 x 12.70 cm), Carnegie Museum of Art, Charles "Teenie" Harris Archive, 1940.

Wilson went on to publish ten plays, which are referred to as the *American Century Cycle* as each of the plays is set in a specific decade in the twentieth century. The plays depict the lives of African Americans, and 9 of the 10 plays are set in the Hill District of Pittsburgh (the exception being *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*). All ten of these plays have been staged on Broadway as well as hundreds of other productions throughout the United States and abroad. Included among Wilson's many awards and accolades are two Pulitzer Prizes in Drama for *Fences* and *The Piano Lesson*. In the Summer of 2020, the University of Pittsburgh Library System acquired the August Wilson Archive (<https://augustwilson.library.pitt.edu>). The archive contains a wide array of materials including audio recordings, awards and degrees, correspondence, newspapers, magazines, notebooks, writing tablets, photographs, posters, production designs, props, scripts, and video recordings. Wilson's personal collections of music, films, and books are also contained in the archive. Most importantly, the archive provides insight into Wilson's creative process via the numerous iterations of each of his plays' scripts. The archival collections also highlight some of the other Pittsburgh artists and writers that he collaborated with and such as Bob Johnson, Rob Penny, and Vernell Lillie.

The University of Pittsburgh (Pitt) and the University of Pittsburgh Library System is committed to connecting the local community to the Wilson Archive via a wide array of programming. The library has already been a part of multiple programming events at locations in Homewood and the Hill District. With the advantage of a Pitt facility within the neighborhood, the library can plan to present programming featuring the Wilson Archive within the neighborhood itself and not require those interested to travel to Pitt's campus. Together with August Wilson House (<https://augustwilsonhouse.org>), the August Wilson African American Cultural Center (AWAACC, <https://awaacc.org/>), and other organizations, the University of Pittsburgh will actively share the rich resources of the Wilson Archive with the public and celebrate his literary achievements. AWAACC's permanent exhibit, August Wilson: The Writer's Landscape (<https://awaacc.org/exhibition/august-wilson-the-writers-landscape/>), is convenient to the conference and well worth a visit. The August Wilson

House has very recently opened to the public and will be having events and programming starting in September 2022.

The University of Pittsburgh Library System is proud to work with these other organizations to ensure that not only will Pittsburgh continue to celebrate this literary giant but will be a hub for August Wilson scholarship in years to come.

## **The color photographs of Charles “Teenie” Harris: An undeveloped archive**

*Kathy Kienholz*

Charles “Teenie” Harris was the staff photographer for the *Pittsburgh Courier*, one of the nation’s most influential Black newspapers, from 1936 to 1975. In addition to serving as a press photographer, Harris had his own studio where he took portraits and wedding photos. He also took photographs of sports figures, entertainers, and everyday work and family life in the Hill District of Pittsburgh.

Today, the Charles “Teenie” Harris Archive is an integral part of the collection of the Carnegie Museum of American Art. In 2019, after many years of planning, the museum opened a permanent collection gallery for the photographer. Visitors can sit and contemplate a small portion of the collection framed and on the walls. They can also visit an interactive screen in the gallery to look at thousands of digitized photographs by Harris (<https://cmoa.org/art/teenie-harris-archive/>). Devoting a significant amount of precious exhibition space to the photographer indicates the museum’s commitment to Harris’s legacy; the archival processing of the collection is ongoing, and his color works are still being digitized and made available to the public. There are potentially thousands of new images and many new facets of Harris to discover in Carnegie Museum of Art’s collection.

For many, the color photographs will be a revelation. Mixed within the thousands of color negatives are also numerous printed versions of Harris’s images. These can be viewed as both art and artifact. While they represent a small fraction of the color images, we can view the printed images in their own right and as a harbinger of things to come. The images are printed primarily on small-format, commercial paper and appear to be in relatively good condition, although some appear to have darkened over time. Although we cannot know the extent of the fading of the color images, we do know that fading does not occur in a uniform way. The dyes in color prints are inherently unstable, and there is bound to be a loss of color integrity. When we look at a faded photograph, we cannot “correct” the alterations in tonal value and hue because the fading of one or another dye is so great that we do not have a broad enough range of colors to make the comparisons that would enable us to compensate.<sup>1</sup>

Although loss of color integrity is a concern for any photographer, an art photographer is particularly sensitive to the loss or fading of color. When the negatives are digitized, museum professionals will need to make a judgement call about the each photo’s quality and fidelity to their original colors. Nevertheless, the digitized color photographs will offer the viewer a whole new insight into Teenie Harris, the photographer.

Teenie Harris’ narrative approach to his photography depict a perspective on the lives of the African American community that was largely hidden from those outside his world. Harris’s Pittsburgh was teeming with energy, culture, friendship, and family. In jazz clubs, Little League games, beauty contests, church functions, boxing matches, political events,

protest marches, and everyday scenes, Teenie Harris captured the essence of African American life in Pittsburgh. 🦋

## Note

1. Kayley Vernallis, “The Loss of Meaning in Faded Color Photographs,” *Journal of the American Institute for Conservation* 38, no. 3 (1999): 462.