



PRESS RELEASE

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Art Librarians Honor *John Wilson: Witnessing Humanity* with 2025 George Wittenborn Memorial Book Award

WESTFORD, Massachusetts – *John Wilson: Witnessing Humanity* has been recognized by the Art Libraries Society of North America (ARLIS/NA) for excellence in art publishing. This publication was submitted for consideration by Diana Sibbald, Publications Coordinator, MFA Publications at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Established in 1980, the Wittenborn Award honors the memory of George Wittenborn, a premier New York art book dealer and publisher who was a prominent supporter of the Society in its formative years.

The monographic catalog *John Wilson: Witnessing Humanity* highlights the American artist John Wilson (1922-2015), who created artwork in a variety of media that spoke to his life as a Black American artist and his ongoing quest for racial, social, and economic justice. Published in conjunction with the exhibition, *Witnessing Humanity: The Art of John Wilson*, this catalog was produced by MFA Publications, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and edited by Jennifer Farrell, Leslie King Hammond, Patrick Murphy, and Edward Saywell, with contributions from Michele Cohen, Leslie Farrington, Lisa Farrington, Destinee Filmore, Edmund Barry Gaither, Elisabeth Hodermarsky, Ekua Holmes, Shelley R. Langdale, Lizzetta LeFalle-Collins, Theresa Leininger-Miller, James Manigault-Bryant, Martha Richardson, Lowery Stokes Sims, and James Stroud. It also includes reflections by Derrick Adams, Tyrone Geter, Michael Jones, Napoleon Jones-Henderson, Joseph Norman, and Amy Sherald. The exhibition was organized by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Wilson's work as a draftsman, printmaker, painter, and sculptor is brought to light through this exhibition and monograph, which celebrates his lifelong dedication to depicting what he described as the "reality of being Black in this impossible world." His poignant illustrations for the children's books *Becky*, *Striped Ice Cream*, and *Malcolm X* highlight both everyday and iconic heroes. In a similar way, his sculptures *Father and Child Reading* and *Martin Luther King, Jr.* are monuments to important figures in public spaces.

The Wittenborn Memorial Book Award recognizes only books that demonstrate the highest achievement in art publishing. *John Wilson: Witnessing Humanity* is an outstanding example of scholarship and design that excels in all the required categories of content, documentation, layout, and format. The bold red cloth cover of this beautiful book frames an inset reproduction of an ink and chalk drawing with collage on paper. The cream and black used for the title match the tones of this artwork. Throughout the book, the strong and consistent design allows the faithful reproductions to shine. The scholarly essays explore specific media, series, and commissions while placing his work in the context of social and artistic movements. Reflections by Wilson's contemporaries highlight the role he played in his community. A detailed chronology is richly augmented with archival photographs, materials, and sketches. The end matter also includes notes, a list of works, and an index.

The committee would also like to acknowledge two honorable mentions. First, *Bruce Goff: Material Worlds*, edited by Alison Fisher and Craig Lee with contributions by Lawrence Chua, David G. De Long, Penelope Dean, Alison Fisher, Scott Herring, Janna Ireland, Hadley Jerman Bruss, Kelly Keegan, Craig Lee, Paula Lupkin & Nolan Vallier, and published by the Art Institute of Chicago, distributed by Yale University Press. This catalog accompanies an exhibit at the Art Institute of Chicago, the first major retrospective of Bruce Goff's (1904-1982) work in thirty years. Goff's strong ties to the Midwest through his groundbreaking architecture and design are celebrated through the bold design and scholarly rigor of this title. Additionally, we recognize *Karamu Artists Inc.: Printmaking, Race, and Community*, by Britany Salsbury and Erin Benay with contributions by Jacqueline Francis, Richard J. Powell & Curlee Raven Holton, published by the Cleveland Museum of Art and distributed by Yale University Press. This catalog accompanies the Cleveland Museum of Art exhibition that places Black printmakers in Cleveland known for their contributions to the Works Progress Administration era in the broader context of American art during the 1930s and 1940s. Great care and attention to detail are apparent in the quality of scholarship and gathering of sources that make this catalog an important resource.

The members of the 2025 ARLIS/NA George Wittenborn Memorial Book Award Sub-Committee, representing the Ohio Valley chapter, were: Bridget Retzloff (chair), Stefanie Hilles, Karyn Hinkle, Michele Jennings, and Courtney Stine.

About the Art Libraries Society of North America

Founded in 1972, the Art Libraries Society of North America (ARLIS/NA) is a dynamic, international organization of close to 1,000 individuals devoted to fostering excellence in art and design librarianship and image management in the United States, Canada and Mexico. The membership includes architecture and art librarians, visual resources professionals, artists, curators, educators, publishers, students, and others interested in visual arts information. To serve this diverse constituency, the Society



provides a wide range of programs and services within an organizational structure that encourages participation at every level.

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