



**AUGUST WILSON AFRICAN AMERICAN CULTURAL CENTER
ANNOUNCES NEW DETAILS AND EXPANDED VISION FOR
*AUGUST WILSON: A WRITER'S LANDSCAPE***

**First-ever permanent exhibition dedicated to the life of
Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright
August Wilson and impact of his body of work to open fall 2021**

February 24, 2021 – Pittsburgh, PA – The **August Wilson African American Cultural Center**, one of the largest non-profit cultural organizations in the country focused exclusively on the African American experience and the arts of the African diaspora, today announced an expanded vision for ***August Wilson: A Writer's Landscape***, the first-ever exhibition dedicated to the life and works of Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright **August Wilson**. With major support provided by the Hillman Foundation and the Henry L. Hillman Foundation to support the design, creation, and implementation of the exhibition and additional support from BNY Mellon Foundation of Southwestern Pennsylvania for virtual programming and future upgrades, the multi-sensory exhibition will now span 3,600 square feet, nearly doubling the originally planned size, and will be re-envisioned to ensure all elements of the exhibition can be explored without the use of touch, including motion sensor activation and more. Concurrently, the Center also announced that the University of Pittsburgh, which recently acquired August Wilson's archives from his Estate, and New York Public Radio, which produced the audio recordings of the Wilson's acclaimed *American Century Cycle*, have joined as new collaborators on the project. Originally scheduled to open in April 2020, due to the pandemic and the expansion, the exhibition is now scheduled to open fall 2021.

August Wilson: A Writer's Landscape, which will be free of charge for admission, will explore Pittsburgh where Wilson was born and raised, and which had a profound impact on shaping his worldview and inspiring his unprecedented 10-play *American Century Cycle*. The exhibit also examines his writing and creative process. *August Wilson: A Writer's Landscape* expands the non-profit organization's mission to offer programs and resources that advance Wilson's legacy and reflect the universal issues of identity that the playwright tackled, celebrate Black culture, and inspire future innovators in arts and culture.

In addition to objects that the Center has already acquired from August Wilson's Estate for use in *August Wilson: A Writer's Landscape*, AWAACC will collaborate with the University of Pittsburgh and library archivists on cross-organization programming with the Center, expanding both organization's materials to be used as an educational and community resource. The University of Pittsburgh will work with the exhibit design teams, Eisterhold Associates, Inc. and Display Dynamics, Inc. on the fabrication of rare items from the archives, allowing the Center to further highlight an array of Wilson's prized possessions.

Recently, AWAACC was designated as one of the 15 cultural institutions across the nation that will archive the professional audio recordings of the *American Century Cycle*, recorded in 2013 by New York Public Radio and the August Wilson Estate in collaboration with the project's artistic director Ruben Santiago-Hudson. These recordings will be utilized throughout *August Wilson: A Writer's Landscape*, helping to bring Wilson's words to life as visitors move through the exhibition in addition to being made available onsite to scholars, historians, and artists as an educational resource.

“The August Wilson African American Cultural Center is looking to the future with great excitement for *August Wilson: A Writer’s Landscape*. While the pandemic forced us to postpone the opening of the exhibition, this additional time has allowed us to expand the original vision and reimagine the ways in which all who come to the Center will be able to immerse themselves in Wilson’s world and his art, and to provide us the time to create a robust digital corollary for those unable to see the exhibition in person,” said **Janis Burley Wilson, President and CEO of August Wilson African American Cultural Center**. “We’re incredibly grateful to the Hillman Foundation and Henry L. Hillman Foundation for their generous support as we create this exhibition for the Center’s namesake, as well as to BNY Mellon Foundation of Southwestern Pennsylvania and the Allegheny Regional Asset District, the University of Pittsburgh, and New York Public Radio for their generous collaboration as we work together to extend Wilson’s legacy even further and celebrate the Pittsburgh community that inspired him.”

“The Henry L. Hillman Foundation is pleased to have the opportunity to partner with the August Wilson African American Cultural Center on the development of *August Wilson: A Writer’s Landscape*. The popularity of Wilson’s narratives, characters and the places and times that he captures are so uniquely American—only an essential American city like Pittsburgh, with all of its opportunities and challenges, could have shaped such work,” said **David K. Roger, President of the Henry L. Hillman Foundation**. “The exhibition has been brilliantly crafted and designed to educate, entertain, and better understand Wilson’s influences and inspirations, and continues to celebrate Wilson’s important contributions to theater and literature and ensures they will be recognized around the world.”

“BNY Mellon Foundation of Southwestern Pennsylvania is proud to support the *August Wilson: A Writer’s Landscape* exhibit and virtual education experiences. We understand the arts are a critical investment in our future – economically and culturally. It’s a magnet for the best minds and most compassionate people,” said **Kenya Boswell, President of the BNY Mellon Foundation of Southwestern Pennsylvania**. “Support for this exhibit will enrich the lives of tens of thousands of children and families through imaginative learnings that will shine a light on August Wilson as a literary genius with a unique perspective as an African American playwright.”

The permanent exhibition is being designed and fabricated by Eisterhold Associates, Inc., a firm that specializes in the planning and design of museums and interpretive experiences for civic institutions and private organizations, whose work includes the Rosa Parks Museum in Alabama, the Harry S. Truman Presidential Library & Museum in Missouri, and the African American Museum in Pennsylvania. Display Dynamics, Inc., a full-service custom exhibit design company working in both the cultural and private sector and the only Black-owned company of its kind, is assisting with the fabrication. Display Dynamics, Inc. has worked on projects including the National Museum of Nuclear Science & History in New Mexico and the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force’s NASA CCT in Ohio. In addition to the exhibition’s Lead Advisor, Constanza Romero Wilson, Wilson’s widow and executor of the August Wilson Estate, the Center is also collaborating with Scholar-in-Residence, Dr. Sandra Shannon, Professor of African American Literature at Howard University, the foremost scholar of Wilson’s work, and founder of the August Wilson Society; as well as longtime Wilson collaborator and Tony Award-winning scenic designers David Gallo and Viveca Gardner. In addition to the Hillman Foundation, the Henry L. Hillman Foundation, and the BNY Mellon Foundation, generous support for *August Wilson: A Writer’s Landscape* is provided by Allegheny Regional Asset District.

August Wilson: A Writer’s Landscape

Born and raised in Pittsburgh’s Hill District, August Wilson drew his greatest inspiration from the city and its people. Many of his works in the *American Century Cycle*, which almost exclusively take place in

Pittsburgh and represent each decade of the 1900s, were largely informed by Wilson's observations of the environment that surrounded him.

To bring Wilson's story to life, *August Wilson: A Writer's Landscape* will guide visitors through an interactive experience of the American Century Cycle, and will showcase the universal themes the prolific playwright tackled and the enduring relevance of his work through reproductions and artifacts from Wilson's life and notable productions of his work; elements that invite patrons to address the issues of race, representation, family, and community; and interactive digital components that showcase each play in the *American Century Cycle*. The Wilson experience will unfold in three acts that include "**The Coffee Shop**," inspired by a local coffee shop in the Hill District, where a young Wilson frequently went to observe the day-to-day interactions of its diners and which subsequently provided the basis for many of his characters and the inspiration for his storytelling; "**The Office**," a replica of Wilson's home office that will showcase his working environment and items that he prized; and "**The Street**," a symbolic walk through Wilson's *American Century Cycle*, that will feature a section dedicated to each of Wilson's ten plays, utilizing video, props, and costumes from notable Broadway productions of his work; and will provide insights on the decades they are set in and events that took place in Pittsburgh and across the nation at those times. To learn more, please click [here](#).

To learn more about the August Wilson African American Cultural Center, its year-round activities, and *August Wilson: A Writer's Landscape*, please visit <https://aacc-awc.org/>.

ABOUT AUGUST WILSON AFRICAN AMERICAN CULTURAL CENTER

The August Wilson African American Cultural Center is a non-profit cultural organization located in Pittsburgh's cultural district that generates artistic, educational, and community initiatives that advance the legacy of Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright August Wilson. One of the largest cultural centers in the country focused exclusively on the African American experience and the celebration of Black culture and the African diaspora, the non-profit organization welcomes more than 119,000 visitors locally and nationally. Through year-round programming across multiple genres, such as the annual Pittsburgh International Jazz Festival, Black Bottom Film Festival, AWCommunity Days, TRUTHSayers speaker series, and rotating art exhibits in its galleries, the Center provides a platform for established and emerging artists of color whose work reflects the universal issues of identity that Wilson tackled and which still resonate today.

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