



PRESS RELEASE: Weston Exhibit at Ferris Examines Living with HIV and as an African American

Sandy C Gholston to: Archive

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From: Sandy C Gholston/FSU

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Included below is a press release regarding a current exhibit that is on display at the Rankin Art Gallery at Ferris State University featuring alumnus Fred Weston. The exhibit is a personal and powerful exhibit that speaks loudly of aspects of Weston's life as he is an African American living with HIV in New York. Any questions regarding this press release can be directed to Sandy Gholston, interim assistant director of News Services.

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Weston Exhibit at Ferris Examines Living with HIV and as an African American

BIG RAPIDS – Fred Weston, who was instrumental in founding Ferris State University's first African American fraternity, will have his artwork highlighted at the Rankin Art Gallery through April 29 in conjunction with the 45th anniversary of the Alpha Phi Alpha Zeta Beta Chapter.

Currently a New York artist and living with HIV, the work of the Ferris alumnus will be on display in the university's Rankin Art Gallery from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday. Weston's prints, drawings and collages will highlight who he is as an African American and as a person living with HIV. Viewing the Weston exhibit is free and open to the public. He plans to visit campus April 28 through April 30 to personally share his work with the community and to celebrate the fraternity's continuous success.

"It is an opportunity to spotlight a prominent member of our fraternity. I am glad to see that Ferris is bringing back a member of our alumni community who is talented and passionate about spreading awareness of issues through his artwork," said Michael Wade, advisor of Alpha Phi Alpha and assistant director of the Office of Multicultural Student Services.

Weston will host a lecture April 28 in the Rankin Art Gallery from 11 a.m. to 12 p.m. and a roundtable discussion from 6 to 7 p.m. The closing artist reception will be held April 29 from 5 to 7 p.m. in the gallery. Images, programs and memorabilia will be on display from each era of the Zeta Beta Chapter dating back to 1966.

Carrie Weis, director of the Rankin Art Gallery, is excited for Weston's return to Ferris and hopes that his exhibit will be well received by the local community. She noted that part of Weston's work deals with the emotional and physical aspects of living with HIV.

“What I would like to see happen is to have people realize the humanity of the disease. Fred Weston is a really delightful person and there are such horrible stereotypes of people with HIV,” Weis said. “I am hoping that with this exhibit and the opportunity to meet Weston that people will have a different view of a person who has the disease and what their life is all about.”

She describes Weston’s work as “gorgeous” and hopes that dealing with strong social issues, such as HIV, will create understanding of the disease within Ferris community and beyond.

“Even though we are relatively untouched in our region, this is a disease that affects 33 million people globally,” Weis said. “I would like this exhibit to bring awareness and humanity to how we think and talk about this devastating issue.”

Weston also helped found the guerrilla artist group Underground Railroad in the mid-1990s, which produced street art and outdoor installations. Beyond HIV and his personal background, Weston’s art addresses the commercial male image, fashion, consumerism, conservation and recycling.

The exhibit, which opened on Tuesday, April 5, is sponsored by the Diversity and Inclusion Office mini-grant program. For more information contact Carrie Weis at (231) 591-2538 or weisc@ferris.edu.

To learn more about the Rankin Art Gallery, visit <http://www.ferris.edu/gallery/>.

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