

Where Art and History Intersect: Epcot Welcomes the Kinsey Collection, A Celebration of African-American Achievement and Contribution

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. – Guests to the American Adventure pavilion at Epcot can journey “between the pages” of history at a new art exhibit representing over 400 years of African-American achievement and contribution.

“Re-Discovering America: Family Treasures from the Kinsey Collection,” which opened March 8, draws from an extensive collection of rare art, documents, books and artifacts amassed by philanthropists Bernard and Shirley Kinsey, who share a passion for African-American history.

Their private collection has been displayed throughout the U.S., including in the Smithsonian National Museum of American History. Approximately 40 pieces will be on display for Epcot guests at any given time on a rotating basis during the exhibit run.

“We always wanted to extend the reach of the Collection to a larger, more international and diverse audience,” explained Bernard Kinsey. “So we are delighted to be collaborating with Disney to share the stories of our remarkable ancestors.”

Overseeing the collection is the Kinseys’ son, Khalil, whose school-age curiosity about the Kinsey family tree inspired his parents to build their collection.

The exhibit – themed to hope, belief, courage, imagination and heritage – provides optimistic and empowering stories from American history from voices that are not commonly seen or heard. Art and artifacts pay homage to African-Americans who helped build and transform a nation. Their stories of determination and courage, from the nation’s early days to the present, are at the heart of the exhibit.

To enrich the immersive storytelling experience of the exhibit, Walt Disney Imagineers added interactive displays in which Epcot guests can deepen their knowledge of the American heritage that the Kinsey holdings represent. Epcot guests will be able to use touch screens placed throughout the exhibit to further explore the art, artifacts and history. Guest-activated lanterns will help bring the history to life, with narration provided by Academy Award-winner Whoopi Goldberg (“The View”), Diane Sawyer (“ABC World News with Diane Sawyer”), and actors Chandra Wilson & James Pickens, Jr. (“Grey’s Anatomy”), Kerry Washington (“Scandal”), Zendaya Coleman & Roshon Fegan (“Shake It Up”), China Anne McClain (“A.N.T. Farm”), Tyrel Jackson Williams (“Lab Rats”).

“We are thrilled to bring the Kinsey Collection to Epcot guests,” said Jim MacPhee, senior vice president, Walt Disney World Parks. “Epcot is such a rich cultural tapestry that it serves as the perfect showcase for this powerful collection, with its celebration of the human spirit.”

Among highlights of each themed gallery:

HOPE

- By age 19, Phillis Wheatley became internationally known as the first African-American ever to publish a book of poetry (1773). She wrote poetry about hope and freedom and is now known as The Mother of African American Literature. (Document on display: Phyllis Wheatley’s first book).
- Other Hope Gallery highlights: Samuel Francis Smith, *My Country ‘Tis of Thee* lyrics (1895); “*Untitled*,”

Hughie Lee Smith (1951); Almanack, Benjamin Banneker (1796)

COURAGE

- Harriet Jacobs, an enslaved young black woman often called an “American Anne Frank” stayed seven years in a tiny attic until she could escape to freedom. She later chronicled her story in an autobiography. (Document on display: Harriet Jacobs’ book, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, 1862)
- Other Courage Gallery highlights: *Sea Island Woman*, fiber art, Bisa Butler (2006); *Loss*, sculpture, Michael Chukes (1998);

BELIEF

- In 1870, only seven years after Emancipation, Hiram Rhodes Revels became the first African-American to represent Mississippi in the U.S. Senate. Josiah Walls became the first African-American to represent Florida in the House of Representatives. (Document on display: “Senator Hiram Rhodes Revels Cabinet Card Photograph”)
- Other Belief Gallery highlights: Buffalo Soldiers Parade Flag (1889); *What Mrs. Fisher Knows About Old Southern Cooking*, Abby Fisher (1881); *A Negro Explorer at the North Pole*, Matthew Henson book (1912) and article.

IMAGINATION

- Alain Locke not only became the first African-American Rhodes scholar in 1907, but his book “The New Negro” helped inspire the Harlem Renaissance, a period in American culture that produced artists, musicians, writers and thinkers that showed the world how American greatness comes from all of its citizens. (Document on display: *The Negro in Art*, by Alain Locke).
- Other Imagination Gallery highlights: Harmon Foundation Catalogs (1931-1935); American Beach Negro Ocean Playground, Florida – Steel plaque (1930); “Untitled” (Kadir Nelson, 1992)

HERITAGE

- History can be shared through many types of artifacts. Sometimes it’s as simple as a timeworn letter written by Carrie Kinsey (Bernard’s cousin) to President Roosevelt. Or an old sewing machine passed down through generations by Shirley’s grandmother, Susie Plummer Pooler. (Document on display: “Letter to President Roosevelt,” by Carrie Kinsey)
- Other Heritage Gallery highlights: Bill of Sale-William Johnson (1832); Schedule of Over 500 Slaves (1820); Sewing Machine (1900), Susie Plummer Pooler

The American Adventure pavilion is in the heart of the World Showcase area of Epcot. “Re-Discovering America: Family Treasures from the Kinsey Collection” is included in Epcot admission. For more:

<http://thekinseycollection.com>

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