

**University Galleries of Illinois State University is pleased to present
Cecil McDonald, Jr.: *In the Company of Black* from August 16
through October 14, 2018.**



- August 16 through October 14 at Milner Library: *Life, learning, and healing*, an exhibition of books by Candor Arts
- Saturday, August 25 at 1pm: Exhibition tour and workshop co-presented with the Children's Discovery Museum
- Friday, September 7, from 5 to 7pm: Public reception
- Thursday, October 4 at 12pm: Panel discussion with Cecil McDonald, Jr. and Matt Austin
- Lecture by Matt Austin (Candor Arts): Thursday, October 4 at 4pm at Milner Library
- Saturday, October 6 at 10am: Family photography workshop with Chrissy LaMaster
- Curator-led tours and workshops available by appointment throughout the exhibition

In the Company of Black presents selected photographs from a recent series of the same name by artist and educator Cecil McDonald, Jr., as well as the premiere of a new video. Over the course of seven years, McDonald photographed people he describes as “extraordinarily ordinary.” He explains, “When it comes to Black people, America is fascinated with extreme poles: either showing victims of violence, pain, and poverty (Black misery) or famous athletes and entertainers, and icons of popular culture (Black exceptionalism). This false dichotomy denies Black people the individuality and full spectrum of humanity that is so readily offered to the white population in this country. The photographs I’ve been making ask the question: *where are the people who make up the space in between*. Here they are, they are important, they must be seen.” The imagery ranges from tender moments between, and with, his daughters, to informal portraits of friends and collaborators that are filled with references to music, art history, and popular culture—including an *Artforum* magazine featuring a painting by Barkley L. Hendricks on the cover; record albums by Marvin Gaye, Billie Holiday, Miles Davis, and Prince; an exhibition catalogue for Kerry James Marshall; and books about Malcolm X, Aaron Douglas, and the black male in contemporary art.

McDonald worked with Candor Arts, a Chicago-based independent art book publisher, to produce an *In the Company of Black* publication. The 144-page book, which includes poems by avery r. young and a text by Tempestt Hazel, was nominated for the 2017 Paris Photo-Aperture Foundation PhotoBook Award. Illinois State University’s Milner Library recently acquired a copy of the handmade first edition for its Special Collections area.

This exhibition will also premiere McDonald’s *No One Ever Really Dies*, a 2018 video featuring a projected image of the artist’s late father-in-law and a narration consisting of six voices reading the eulogy that American Civil Rights activist, historian, and writer W. E. B. DuBois (1868–1963) wrote for himself six years before his death. An excerpt from the moving address reads, “I have loved my work, I have loved people and my play, but always I have been uplifted by the thought that what I have done well will live long and justify my life. That what I have done ill or never finished can now be handed on to others for endless days to be finished perhaps better than I could have done. And that peace will be my applause.” The soundtrack was composed by McDonald’s collaborator, Lionel “Brother El” Freeman.

Cecil McDonald, Jr.’s work has been exhibited at Chicago Cultural Center, Chicago; Philadelphia African American Museum, Philadelphia; Hyde Park Art Center, Chicago; New Orleans Museum of Art, New Orleans; Terrain Exhibitions, Oak Park, Illinois; and Catherine Edelman Gallery, Chicago. McDonald has received grants, fellowships, and residencies from 3Arts; Artadia; LightWork, Syracuse, New York; Latitude, Chicago; Hyde Park Art Center, Chicago; and Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events, Chicago. In 2018, he received the MAKER Grant | Coney Family Fund Award, presented by Chicago Artists Coalition, OtherPeoplesPixels, and the Coney family to artists “who demonstrate a commitment to a socially conscious, progressive, and sustainable artist practice and career development.” McDonald’s work is included in the collections of the Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland; Bank of America’s LaSalle Bank Photography Collection, Chicago; The Joyce Foundation, Chicago;

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Prairie Center for the Arts, Peoria, Illinois; and the Chicago Public Library, among others. He received a BA in fashion merchandising and an MFA in photography from Columbia College, Chicago, where he currently teaches photography.

Cecil McDonald Jr.: In the Company of Black is organized by University Galleries' Director and Chief Curator Kendra Paitz, former University Galleries Curator Jason Judd, and University Galleries' curatorial intern and School of Art graduate student Chrissy LaMaster. Programs at University Galleries are sponsored in part by a grant from the Illinois Arts Council Agency.

All events are free and open to the public. Contact gallery@ilstu.edu or 309.438.5487 to schedule exhibition tours.

Events

- **August 16 through October 14 (Milner Library)**

Life, learning, and healing presents a survey of books produced by Chicago-based publisher Candor Arts, including McDonald's *In the Company of Black*.

Candor Arts is an independent art book publisher based in Chicago. While the spectrum of media published varies widely—from memoir to photography, from dance collectives to poets—the authors are making work rooted in lived experiences and offering perspectives in how they have healed or what they have learned. Working closely in collaboration, each edition is driven by the author's vision and the books and objects are produced mostly by hand in the Candor Arts studio. Each project is approached equitably, in that the author and publisher equally split all financial responsibilities of production, as well as the profit of each edition. To create as little financial risk for the author as possible, it is typical for Candor Arts to front the production costs and the authors and artists pay their share through book sales. This collection of books consists of everything Candor Arts has published in the two years that they have been in operation.

- **Saturday, August 25 at 1pm (Children's Discovery Museum + University Galleries)**

Exhibition tour and workshop co-presented with the Children's Discovery Museum. Participants (ages 7-10) will meet at the CDM, come to University Galleries for an exhibition tour, and return to the CDM for an exhibition-related artmaking activity. Registration is required for this free program: childrensdiscoverymuseum.net. This program is made possible by an Illinois Prairie Community Foundation—Mirza Arts and Culture grant awarded to the CDM.

- **Friday, September 7, from 5 to 7pm (University Galleries)**

Public exhibition reception

- **Thursday, October 4 at noon (University Galleries)**

Panel discussion with artist Cecil McDonald, Jr., and Candor Arts Director and co-founder Matt Austin.

- **Thursday, October 4 at 4pm (Milner Library)**

Lecture by Candor Arts Director and co-founder Matt Austin.

- **Saturday, October 6 at 10am (University Galleries)**

A Day in the Life: Photographing the Familiar is an all-ages family photography workshop presented by School of Art graduate student Chrissy LaMaster. No registration is required for this free program. Youth must be accompanied by a caregiver. Workshop participants should bring a camera or cell phone with which they are already comfortable. A limited supply of digital cameras will also be available.

- Curator-led tours and workshops available by appointment throughout the exhibition. Contact gallery@ilstu.edu or 309.438.5487.

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University Galleries is located at Uptown Station at the corner of Beaufort and Broadway streets. Parking is available directly above in the Uptown Station parking deck, and the first hour is free, as well as any time after 5:01pm. If you need special accommodations to participate in any event, please contact University Galleries at 309.438.5487 or gallery@IllinoisState.edu. All events at University Galleries are free and open to the public.

For more information, visit galleries.IllinoisState.edu or call 309.438.5487. Find us on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Sign up to receive emails by clicking the Newsletter link on our website.