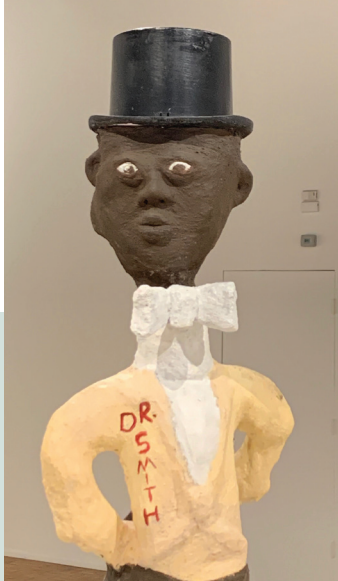


Dr. Charles Smith: Aurora

July 14, 2019–January 31, 2021



Who is Dr. Charles Smith?

Dr. Charles Smith (b. 1940) is an artist, activist, minister, veteran, and historian. He creates **figural sculptures** about Black history to educate and create a more equitable **representation** of the untold histories of African-American people.

His sculptures show famous events in history, such as the Civil Rights Movement, and scenes from everyday life, such as a family eating dinner together. He often adds details to the sculptures in the form of **found objects** like hats, broken glass, and fabric. Dr. Smith's artwork, displayed outside his home—first in Aurora, Illinois, and currently in Hammond, Louisiana—is an **artist-built environment** that he titled *African-American Heritage Museum + Black Veterans Archive*. His museum is always open to visitors.

Words to Know

Figural Sculpture: Three-dimensional art that represents or has elements of real forms, particularly the forms of humans and animals.

Representation: Generally, representation is a verbal, written, or visual description of a person, event, culture, place, or objects. Cultural representation means the history of all people is taught and shared truthfully and equally.

Found Object: Items that are used as nontraditional art-making tools or materials. Often, a found object is something that was discarded or no longer usable for its original purpose. It can also be something from nature that can be collected, such as driftwood and rocks. Sometimes a found object is functional for its original purpose, but it is used in a different way in an artwork. For example, buttons can become a texture that covers a sculpture.

Artist-built Environment: A unique place—usually a home—that is transformed by an artist. Often inspired by the life experiences of the artist, they typically are made using nearby and easily accessible materials.

**John Michael
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Dr. Charles Smith, *Dr. Smith (self-portrait)*,
c. 1985–c. 1999; mixed media; 63 1/2 x 15
x 14 in. John Michael Kohler Arts Center
collection, gift of Kohler Foundation Inc.

Age Group: 10+

Learn more about the historic figures Dr. Charles Smith sculpted.



Louis Armstrong (1901-1971)

Louis Armstrong was a musician and singer. He was born in New Orleans, and first learned how to play the cornet, an instrument similar to the trumpet, when he was young. As an adult, he sang and played trumpet with jazz groups in New York City and Chicago. He was also an actor and appeared in many movies. His songs can still be heard today on the radio, television, and in movies.

Dr. Charles Smith, *Horn Player: Louis Armstrong Series*, c. 1985–c. 1999; mixed media; 32 3/4 x 9 1/2 x 13 1/2 in. John Michael Kohler Arts Center collection, gift of Kohler Foundation Inc.



Rosa Parks (1913-2005)

Rosa Parks wanted everyone to be treated the same, no matter the color of their skin. In 1955 she refused to give up her seat for a white passenger on a bus. At that time, there was a rule Black people had to sit in the back of the bus. Her action helped change the rule so that people were treated equally on buses, no matter the color of their skin.

Dr. Charles Smith, *Rosa Parks*, c. 1985–c. 1999; mixed media; 40 x 18 3/4 x 29 in. John Michael Kohler Arts Center collection, gift of Kohler Foundation Inc.



Florence Griffith Joyner (Flo Jo) (1959-1998)

In 1988, Flo Jo set world records for the 100-meter dash with a time of 10.49 seconds and the 200-meter dash with a time of 21.34 seconds. She won three Olympic gold and two silver medals during her career.

Dr. Charles Smith, *Flo Jo*, c. 1985–c. 1999; mixed media; 45 3/16 x 23 1/2 in. John Michael Kohler Arts Center collection, gift of Kohler Foundation Inc.



Serena Williams (b. 1981)

Serena Williams is a professional tennis player. She has won many tournaments, including a record four Olympic gold medals she earned with her sister, Venus. The Women's Tennis Association has ranked her number one eight times during her career.

Dr. Charles Smith, *Serena Williams*, c. 1985–c. 1999; mixed media; 52 x 16 x 14 in. John Michael Kohler Arts Center collection, gift of Kohler Foundation Inc.

John Michael Kohler Arts Center

Visit your local library or search online to learn more about these historical figures and moments in history.

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