

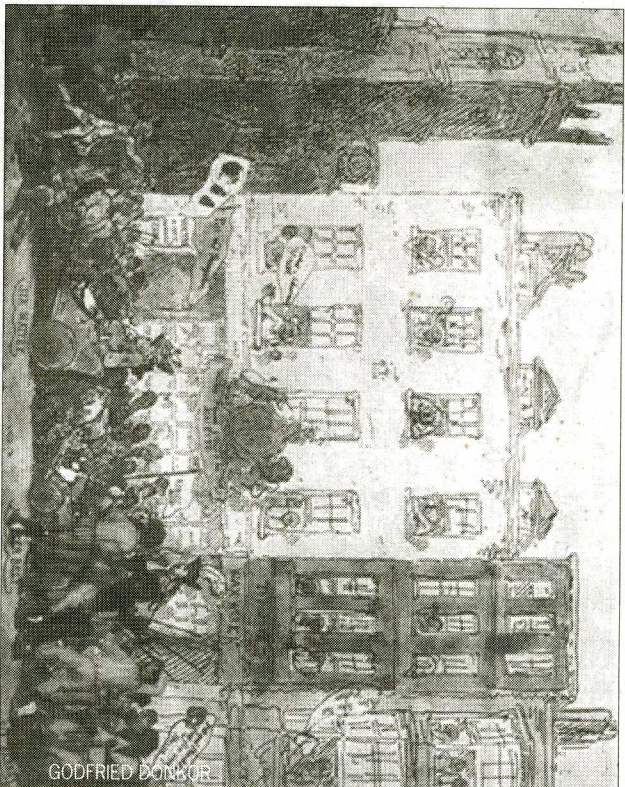
28 Days: Reimagining Black History Month

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With the arrival of February, preparations for Black History Month are underway in Toronto. Black History Month is meant to celebrate the social, cultural and political accomplishments of members of the African diaspora in the face of adversity.

One of many showcases in Toronto is a collective visual arts exhibition titled *28 Days: Reimagining Black History Month*, presented by Third Space Art Projects. *28 Days* features the work of several international contemporary artists who explore Black History Month and its themes through their artistic media. The exhibit includes photography, film, and sculptural pieces that explore the meaning of Black History Month in contemporary Canadian society.

Given the variety of media employed and each artist's unique style, the different art pieces face the challenge of relating to one another. In spite of this, the work featured in *28 Days* undeniably form a cohesive image, providing an understanding of African cultural heritages. This is demonstrated by Wangechi Mutu's hauntingly captivating sculptures titled *Black Thrones*; an assemblage of chairs,



London Mob, 2001

feather boas, garbage bags, and other materials that are sculpted into towering throne-like shapes. These sculptures are designed by Mutu to reflect the "hush arbour" – an area surrounded by trees where African American slaves would gather to mourn their losses in song and prayer.

Similarly, the photographer Carrie Mae Weems highlights the legacies of African-American culture with a series of blurred images of iconic African-American female

entertainers of the "Old South" such as Nina Simone and Eartha Kitt. More significantly, the blurring effect that Weems uses symbolically demonstrates the loss of these women's legacies, and in doing so, highlights the gradual loss of African-American cultural history in modern society.

The showcased artworks also provide insights into societal issues encountered by members of the African diaspora. For example, Roshini Kempadoo's *State of Play*

is a brilliant series of photographs and computer-generated images that explore the colonial and post-colonial struggles faced by African peoples living in Britain and the Caribbean.

Exclusive of the vibrant and creative artworks, this exhibition provides insights into traditional African cultures and illustrates how people of African descent have struggled to maintain their identity in the face of social inequality. Moreover, many of the art pieces challenge modern society to address the causes and effects of modern day racism and to resolve existing social inequalities.

The showcase is currently being held at the Justina M. Barnicke Gallery in Hart House until 19 Feb, and will then be relocated to the Georgia Scherman Projects until 29 Feb. Other interesting Black History Month exhibitions in the city of Toronto include the Kuuumba festival, "Afrotropolis-wanderland: Black history through fashion," and "Black to the future: identity politics in the modern Americas."