

The Speed Art Museum

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For Immediate Release

The Speed Art Museum Announces **The Most Famous People in the World: Karsh 100** March 12 to June 27, 2010

Louisville, Kentucky. The Speed Art Museum announces *The Most Famous People in the World: Karsh 100* on view from March 12 to June 27, 2010. Organized by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, this exhibition presents iconic portraits of many of the 20th-century's most famous people taken by world-renowned photographer Yousuf Karsh (1908-2002).

"The minute I saw this exhibition on its international tour in Seoul, South Korea, I knew the Louisville public would love it," said Dr. Charles L. Venable, Director of the Speed Art Museum. "If you like great photography, are interested in history, or are simply intrigued by famous and powerful people, this is an exhibition that you will not want to miss."

Yousuf Karsh, the man behind the lens of some of the 20th-century's most famous photographic portraits, is known internationally for his ability to capture the true humanity of an individual in his work. Appropriately titled, *The Most Famous People in the World: Karsh 100* was organized to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Karsh's birth. Included in it are many of the best known portraits of the era's most illustrious faces displayed alongside rarely seen earlier photographs that reveal how Karsh learned his craft. Represented are luminaries in the fields of art, music, science, theater, politics, and film, including Ernest Hemingway, Audrey Hepburn, Pablo Picasso, Mother Teresa, Jacqueline Kennedy, Queen Elizabeth II, Andy Warhol, and many others. This exhibition represents a visual biography of the photographer, who died in 2002.



Winston Churchill, 1941
Yousuf Karsh



Mother Teresa, 1988
Yousuf Karsh

Featured will be the iconic portrait of Winston Churchill that propelled Karsh to international notoriety as a photographer. This portrait, taken during the British Prime Minister's visit to Canada in 1941, launched Karsh's 60-year career. The outcome of that brief encounter is the bold and defiant portrait of a belligerent Churchill, which put a human face on the indomitable spirit of the British people during World War II.

Marked by his own life's history as much as the history he documented of others, the story of Yousuf Karsh is the epitome of what is thought to be the American dream. Karsh was born in Armenia in 1908 where he lived as a refugee in a world of civil unrest. At the age of seventeen he embarked on a 28 day journey to live with an uncle in Canada with no money and little schooling. It was in Canada where Karsh first learned the photographic skills that would begin his career as one of the most revered photographers of all time. He later settled in the United States.

Karsh's name became synonymous with the highest level of photographic portraiture. It came to be that sitters longed to be 'Karshed'. His ability to see the inward spirit of the individual in his portraits was a remarkability that placed Karsh apart from other portrait photographers. Karsh explained his intentions with great eloquence when he said that, "My desire was to photograph the great in spirit, whether they be famous or humble."

Anne Havinga, the Estrellita and Yousuf Karsh Senior Curator of Photographs at the MFA Boston remarked, "This exhibition is intended to show the range of Yousuf Karsh's work by including not only his famous portraits but also the early efforts that led to the definition of his style and the special assignment work that he undertook once he achieved international success."

Admission is free for museum members, \$10 for non-members.

This exhibition was organized by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Exhibition support in Louisville has been provided by Presenting Sponsor, PNC Bank. This exhibition is also made possible with the generous support of Martin K. Webb and Charles L. Venable.

About the Speed Art Museum: The Speed Art Museum is located at 2035 South Third Street in Louisville. For general information, call (502) 634-2700 or visit www.speedmuseum.org.

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The Kentucky Arts Council, the state arts agency, supports The Speed Art Museum with state tax dollars and federal funding from the National Endowment for the Arts, which believes that a great nation deserves great art.