



"Unfiltered Lens" Exhibit Reaches End at Jacoby Arts Center

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
March 22 2024 4:20 PM



ALTON - There are only a few days left to see the “Unfiltered Lens” exhibit at Jacoby Arts Center, which features photographs from the Civil Rights Movement and Vietnam War.

The exhibit is set up like a timeline with photos from 1963–1968, all taken by Robert J. Ellison. Ellison, a young photographer who lived briefly in Alton, became widely known for his photos before he was killed at age 23 in Vietnam. The exhibit will remain at Jacoby until March 27, 2024.

“The most powerful thing about this exhibition is all of together,” said Rachel Lappin, executive director of Jacoby Arts Center. “We displayed them like a timeline so they’re all in a row. We have markers for different time periods. I think that’s the impact for me, seeing them all in one place. You can go online and see some similar images and see these images, but to see them in person, blown up in gorgeous quality, and to be able to walk the timeline is interesting.”

Lappin explained that Jacoby partnered with Lewis and Clark Community College and the Hayner Public Library District to bring this exhibit to Alton. Bo Jackson, Ellison’s cousin, approached Lacy McDonald over a year ago and brought up the idea to display the photos.

McDonald, who serves as Hayner’s Genealogy and Local History Library manager, collaborated with Jackson and the Wisconsin Veterans Museum to process over 4,000 photos taken by Ellison throughout his career. She did a lot of research to match up each photo with its historical event so the pictures could be displayed properly.

“I got in touch with the Wisconsin Veterans Museum, and they were wonderful, but they didn’t have them organized. They just sent me 4,000 digital photographs not in order,” McDonald remembered. “I was doing everything from trying to figure out what shirt Martin Luther King, Jr. was wearing at different events and then hoping he didn’t repeat his outfits, to looking at street signs and highway markers and what was on people’s protest signs.”

After months of research, McDonald was able to piece together a timeline that takes viewers from the 1963 March on Washington, where King gave his famous “I Have a Dream” speech, to the Vietnam War up until Ellison’s death in 1968.

The exhibit got its start at Lewis and Clark Community College, but McDonald and Jackson wanted to find a place where they could display the photos for a longer period of time. Lappin and the rest of the board at Jacoby Arts Center were eager to welcome

the exhibit to their main gallery on Feb. 17, 2024, where it will remain until Wednesday, March 27, 2024. You can view the exhibit at Jacoby Arts Center from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Wednesday through Sunday.

The “Unfiltered Lens” exhibit is just one of the recent collaborations between Hayner Public Library District and Jacoby Arts Center. Jacoby Arts Center will host a [Writer’s Circle event](#) sponsored by Hayner on April 27, 2024, and there are also a few concerts in the works, starting with [“What a Wonderful World: An Evening with Mark Dvorak”](#) on May 7, 2024. For a full list of upcoming events, you can visit [HaynerLibrary.org/News-Events/Events](#).

“I see a lot more collaborations in the community since COVID, so that’s one positive,” Lappin added. “We love to collaborate. I think it helps each organization to maximize their resources. We all have different resources, different skill sets, different audiences, and it allows us to merge all of those things and be more powerful together, reach more people together.”

For more information about Jacoby Arts Center, their upcoming exhibits and classes, visit [JacobyArtsCenter.org](#). To learn about Hayner, visit [HaynerLibrary.org](#).