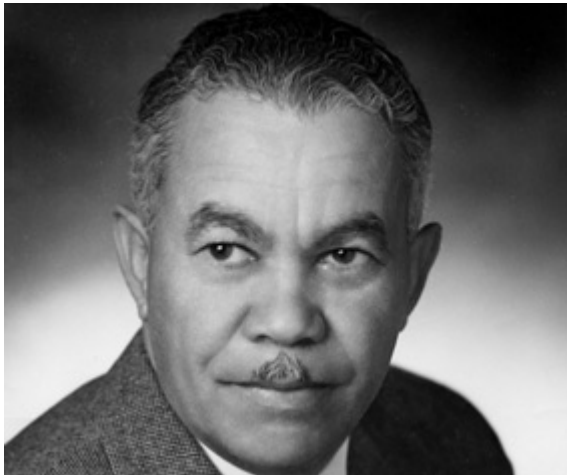


**Contract Magazine**

## **Memphis AIA Launches Paul R. Williams Project**

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[-By Stacy Straczynski](#)



In an attempt to further public knowledge on the life and accomplishments of African American architectural pioneer Paul Revere Williams, the Memphis Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA), the University of Memphis, and the Memphis Chapter of the National Organization of Minority Architects (NOMA) launched this week The Paul R. Williams Project.

Supported by grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Institute of Museum and Library Services, and the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts, the multifaceted collaboration includes an educational scholarship, an online bibliography and photo gallery at [paulwilliamsproject.org](http://paulwilliamsproject.org), and curriculum development in schools across the country.

“Paul R Williams is an important architect, and considered the preeminent African American architect,” says Jimmie Tucker, managing principal of Memphis-based **Self Tucker Architects**. “Primarily, we see him as someone who was able to overcome obstacles and really excel in his profession. He is a role model for young people, to those interested in architecture or any other field.”

The project began back in 2006, originally aimed at building a one-time exhibition to honor Williams’ life and work. However, the project’s supporters quickly found that very few resources were currently available on the architect, and the project quickly grew.

“During the course of the last several years, we’ve been doing some fundraising and have been able to catalog a lot of information about Williams’ projects to just getting a better understanding of his scope both nationally and internationally. We want to use that as a springboard to grow interest and even for there to be other research done from some of the research that we’ve already started,” Tucker says.

Armed with a growing list of information and resources, The Paul R. Williams project exhibition is scheduled to open September 25 at the Art Museum of the University of Memphis (AMUM) and will showcase new and period photographs, short films, new models, historical ephemera, and interactive stations. The exhibit will run through January 2011, after which time it will be modified into a traveling exhibition.

Los Angeles native Paul R. Williams received his degree from the Los Angeles atelier of the Beaux Arts Institute of New York in the early 1990s and continued his studies in architectural engineering at the University of Southern California. His 60-year career includes projects such as the Roosevelt Naval Base in Long Beach, CA, the Los Angeles International Airport, the Beverly Hills Hotel, and the St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis. As "Architect to the Stars," he also designed homes for celebrities such as Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz, William Paley, and Frank Sinatra.