

## Main Lines

# Chicago Exhibit Honors Haverford Trailblazer

**M**ichael Moses was three years old in March 1966 when his father, **Paul Moses '51**, a University of Chicago assistant professor of art, was killed in a carjacking after he offered two young men a ride.

Paul Moses was Haverford's first African American student and at the time of his death was an expert on Edgar Degas, as well as a curator, author, painter, and critic. Widely praised by students and colleagues for his enthusiastic teaching and passion for life, he was just 36 when he died.

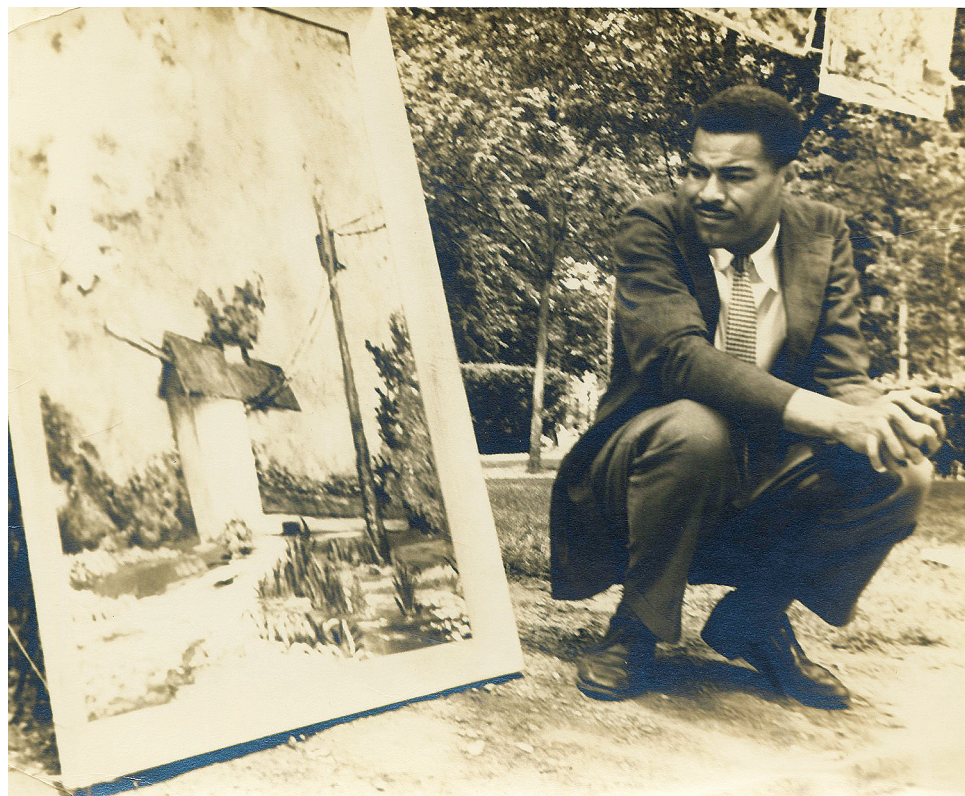
Michael knew little about his dad until decades later, when he started combing through boxes of Paul's papers and mementoes. He pitched the idea of an exhibit to several Chicago galleries, but it wasn't until he met an art history student three years ago that the idea came to life.

*Paul B. Moses: Trailblazing Art Historian* runs through Dec. 16 in the Special Collections gallery at the University of Chicago's Regenstein Library. Through letters, paintings, research notes, and photos, it follows Paul's path from Lower Merion High School to Haverford and through his career, documenting an extraordinarily rich personal and professional life. The exhibit also includes his oils, sketches, and watercolors, including several that he did at Haverford. (His college yearbook is also on display.)

An artist whose talent was recognized early, Paul grew up in Ardmore, one of eight children in a working-class family. At Haverford, he worked at the Barnes Foundation and was awarded a scholarship his junior year to study at the Sorbonne and the Ecole de Louvre in Paris. He played varsity football and majored in French and Latin, graduating magna cum laude. He served two years in the U.S. Army, then taught at an international school in Rome, which dedicated its yearbook to Paul in his final year teaching there.

"One has many teachers and many friends," wrote one student after Paul's death. "Paul was more than that. He was a man who combines these qualities of guidance and companionship in such a way, with such basic integrity and zest for life, that he created admiration and love wherever he went."

After earning a master's in fine arts from Harvard University in 1961, he took a job as a teaching fellow there and started



—  —  
*Paul Moses '51 with his painting Ice House (oil on board, 1956).*

work on his Ph.D. He traveled to France several times for dissertation research on Degas, and a postcard to his wife reflects his excitement:

"A collector finally let me see some of his Degas prints. None of them are extraordinary but one or two show me states I hadn't seen before. Today he let me photograph them. While I was there he also let me see a Degas sketchbook his family has. To my knowledge it is unpublished and he says that no one, except an editor, has seen it in recent years. He did not give me permission to do an article on it, but he did not refuse. ... and I shall try to talk him into letting me publish something on it."

Though he died before completing his dissertation or the book on Degas's prints he had been commissioned to write by the National Library of France, his research for both was the basis for the authors of the 1973 book *Degas: The Complete Etchings, Lithographs, and Monotypes*.

Moses and his wife, Alice Johnson, moved to Chicago in 1962 when he was hired by the University of Chicago's Department of Art as an instructor, teaching such courses

as “French Graphics of the 19th Century” and “French Impressionism and Its Aftermath.” He was later promoted to assistant professor of art, taught several classes in the humanities, and became well-known for refusing to teach Mark Twain’s *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, an incident explored in the exhibit.

According to a 1988 book by the late literary critic Wayne Booth, *The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction*, Moses said he objected to “the whole range of assumptions about slavery and its consequences, and about how whites should deal with liberated slaves, and how liberated slaves should behave or will behave toward whites. ... That book is just bad education, and the fact that it’s so cleverly written makes it even more troublesome to me.”

“Paul was one of the most sensitive and enthusiastic teachers that I can recall,” said one University of Chicago colleague, in a campus radio show tribute recorded soon after his death. (It’s available to listen to at the exhibit.) “He had a remarkable capacity to communicate to students not just the sort of rational content of what he was saying about art, but his own wonderful feeling for it.”

In 2012, with boxes of his father’s notes, photos, sketches, and other work, Michael Moses came up with the idea of an exhibit. “I never had the guts to ask my mother about my dad for fear that talking about him would be devastating to her,” says the longtime physical education teacher and former varsity soccer coach at the University of Chicago Laboratory Schools. “But ... having saved everything that she could possibly save about him, I felt at some point she knew I’d be going through these boxes and find out about him. The exhibit was ultimately a way to get to know my dad.”

In 2020 at a neighborhood dog park, he met Stephanie Strother, a University of Chicago art history student working on her doctorate. He told her about the idea, and she eventually co-curated the exhibit. (Planning is underway to bring the exhibition to Haverford’s Lutnick Library in fall 2023.)

“My father lived such a short life, but he literally accomplished more than most people accomplish in 80-90 years, so I can only surmise what he could have accomplished had he lived longer,” said Michael. —Anne Stein

More information on the exhibition: [hav.to/cf1](http://hav.to/cf1)

[Editor’s note: The Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship program, which works to remedy the shortage of faculty of color in higher education, dedicated its annual Mid-Atlantic Regional Conference—held at Haverford in November—to Paul Moses.]

PHOTO: BRAD LARRISON (CLASS)

## COOL CLASSES

**Course Title:** “Communicating Psychological Science”

**Taught By:** Professor of Psychology and Associate Provost for Faculty Development Benjamin Le

**What Le has to say about the course:** This course is designed as a “writing lab,” in which students discuss and employ techniques to improve their writing, give and receive feedback, and practice academic and non-academic writing and presentation skills. The goal is to prepare students for senior thesis research and other forms of writing they may do in their careers at Haverford and beyond. It is a skill-building workshop in the many forms of communication central to psychological science, including writing funding requests, Institutional Review Board applications, research proposals, empirical research reports, research reviews, and peer reviews. We also explore science journalism, academic blogging, and leveraging social media for science education.

The course was conceived out of necessity when Sharpless Hall was being renovated and we didn’t have access to our typical lab spaces for a semester. So I designed this as a “writing lab” to take the place of the previous lab I taught. It was very successful, and I ended up deciding to keep it in our curriculum permanently.

Unlike other labs in our department, this one isn’t tied to a particular area of psychology (e.g., cognitive psych, personality psych). Instead, it cuts across topics in psychology and focuses on how psychology students can improve their writing skills no matter what area they are researching.

*Cool Classes* is a recurring series on the Haverblog. For more, go to [hav.to/coolclasses](http://hav.to/coolclasses).

