

Oakland Museum of California



CONTACTS:

Lindsay Wright, 510-318-8467
lwright@museumca.org

Claire Cornell, 510-318-8483
ccornell@museumca.org

Oakland Museum of California Announces Reopening Date of June 18, 2021, Following Major Campus Renovation Project & Reinstallation of Its Sculpture Garden Led by Walter Hood and Mark Cavagnero

Oakland, CA—MAY 19, 2021— The Oakland Museum of California (OMCA) announced today that the Museum and its campus will reopen on June 18, 2021 with three free community access days. This reopening follows a long period of closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic and more than a year of construction work for OMCA’s campus renovation project, including the reinstallation of its sculpture garden. In its initial phase, the Museum will be open to the public Friday through Sunday from 11AM to 5PM.

Led by the landscape architect Walter Hood (Hood Design Studio) and project architect Mark Cavagnero (Mark Cavagnero Associates), along with general contractor Cahill Constructions, the campus renovation focused on enhancing access to the multi-terraced campus, improving visitor amenities, and significantly updating and refreshing the planting scheme in order to make these outdoor spaces an even better destination and community gathering place. OMCA is also pleased to share that the Museum is on track to meet the goal of its \$85 million *All In! The Campaign for OMCA* capital campaign, which was announced in September 2019 as part of its 50th anniversary celebration. A portion of funds from the campaign support the architectural and landscape improvements, as well as providing operating, endowment, and investment funds to support OMCA’s current and future financial sustainability.

Additionally, OMCA has commissioned local Oakland-based artist Binta Ayofemi to create sculpture and artists edition furniture for the exterior spaces of its newly renovated campus. Supporting the Museum’s vision to provide visitors with a more welcoming environment, Ayofemi’s works, which are inspired in part by the culture and history of Oakland, are intended to encourage a more comfortable and longer visitor experience. Her seating, tables, and other furniture – which she refers to as “Portals” – will be positioned in the garden and other outdoor public spaces on the Museum’s campus. The renovated campus will also include a new café by Tanya Holland, the celebrated Bay Area chef and restaurateur, founder of Oakland’s Brown Sugar Kitchen, and former *Top Chef* contestant.

“We are thrilled to finally be reopening, and to welcome back the community that has done so much to help sustain us during this challenging time,” said OMCA director and CEO Lori Fogarty. “We’re excited to share the updates that have taken place on campus during the closure, which have enhanced the Museum’s role as a public gathering place by creating new spaces for the community to convene. In addition to seeing favorite sculptures reinstalled in our garden, visitors can enjoy their favorite works in

our galleries, and soon, dine in our new cafe, Town Fare by Tanya Holland, opening later this summer. Also opening this summer will be the first major temporary exhibition since our closure: *Mothership: Voyage Into Afrofuturism*, a much-anticipated celebration of Black imagination and the ways in which Afrofuturism is present in our everyday lives.”

OMCA’s Campus Renovation Project

In September 2019, work began on a campus renovation plan designed by Hood Design Studio and Mark Cavagnero Associates to enhance OMCA’s seven-acre campus by improving access to the Museum and better integrating the campus with its surroundings. Completed work includes the removal of an exterior border wall along the Museum’s northern side, facing Oakland’s Lake Merritt, and the creation of a new entrance on 12th Street which physically opens the campus to this major pedestrian corner. Alterations have also been made along 10th Street, to the south, providing direct entry into Town Fare and public event space and further creating better pedestrian access, including two new ADA-accessible ramps onto the campus.

At the heart of the renovation are OMCA’s iconic terraced gardens, positioned at each of the Museum’s three stories and originally conceived by landscape architect Dan Kiley in collaboration with architect Kevin Roche. The gardens are currently being refreshed with new, environmentally sensitive plantings native to California: each terrace will represent an ecoregion of California, containing plants found throughout the state, in a free and accessible space for the public to enjoy. Upgrades to the infrastructure will better integrate the gardens with the in-gallery exhibitions and activities and make OMCA’s outdoor sculptures, which have been reinstalled, more visible. A number of the sculptures have undergone renovation, including Betty Gold’s *Monumental Holistic 1* (1978), George Rickey’s *Two Red Lines* (1966), and Peter Voulkos’ *Mr. Ishi* (1969). Other internationally renowned California artists featured in the garden include Ruth Asawa, Bruce Beasley, Beniamino Bufano, Mark di Suvero, and Viola Frey.

The Museum is on track to reach its \$85 million goal for *All In! The Campaign for OMCA* capital campaign by June 30, 2021. Spearheaded by OMCA director and CEO Lori Fogarty, the campaign aims to raise funds to expand the Museum’s role as a public gathering place, while providing critical unrestricted operating support and endowment and investment funds. Of the Museum’s *All In!* \$85 million goal, \$15 million of restricted capital funds have supported the Museum’s renovation of the gardens and campus, with \$30 million applied to OMCA’s curatorial, educational, and public programming initiatives over a five-year period. The remainder of the campaign funds, approximately \$40 million, will go toward growing OMCA’s endowment, in order to better secure the Museum’s long-term financial stability.

OMCA’s Upcoming Exhibitions

When the Museum reopens to the public on June 18, visitors will be able to see the special exhibition *You Are Here: California Stories on the Map*, which opened just before the Museum closed in March 2020. *You Are Here* showcases a diverse range of maps from Oakland, the Bay Area, and California—from environmental surroundings and health conditions to community perspectives and creative artworks—to demonstrate how maps can be a powerful tool to share unique points of view and imagine a better future. Visitors will also be able to see the ongoing exhibitions *Dorothea Lange: Photography as Activism* and *Black Power*.

In summer 2021, OMCA will open *Mothership: Voyage Into Afrofuturism*, which will explore the art, music, literature, and cinema associated with Afrofuturism, the visionary and generative movement which envisions a just future where Black people and Black ideas thrive. A celebration of Black imagination, the exhibition will feature work by author Octavia E. Butler, avant-garde jazz musician Sun Ra, and filmmaker Kahlil Joseph, among others. For more information about *Mothership*, please see the exhibition details at [this link](#).

OMCA's Recent Organizational Redesign

In April, OMCA announced an organizational transformation and staffing reductions required to bolster the Museum's financial stability following the impacts of the year-long closure caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. OMCA also announced that it would be implementing a new staffing structure, compensation philosophy, and internal processes to advance its commitment to becoming an anti-racist and equitable multicultural organization. Staffing reductions were made at every level of the organization, including senior management, ensuring that frontline staff and lowest-paid workers were not adversely impacted. In addition, the new compensation philosophy increased base level pay for the lowest-paid staff positions, raising pay levels to four times the federal poverty level, which is an increase of approximately \$9 per hour. The restructuring was implemented to reduce OMCA's annual operating budget from approximately \$16.6 million to \$14 million, ensuring that the Museum can continue to fulfill its mission and serve the community in the long-term following major losses in earned revenue due to the COVID-19 pandemic. While resulting in the reduction of 20 staff positions, the organizational redesign will not result in significant impacts to the Museum experience for visitors upon reopening and, over time, is intended to strengthen the Museum's capacity to serve as a dynamic and relevant community resource that is reflective of the diversity of Oakland.

OMCA director and CEO Lori Fogarty added, "We are so grateful to those who have not only supported us through these times but have also invested in making sure we can continue fulfilling our role in the future through the *All In!* campaign. The importance of this campaign as a means of securing our long-term financial stability is even more clear in light of the recent restructuring we had to make to reduce our operating budget. While the past year has been very difficult, it has also reinforced the tremendous value of arts and culture and the importance of ensuring that our institutions are able to withstand unexpected difficulties to continue serving our communities."

More about Hood Design Studio

Hood Design Studio, Inc. (HDS), founded in 1992 in Oakland, CA, is a social art and design practice. The studio's practice is tripartite: art + fabrication, design + landscape, and research + urbanism. This breadth allows Hood Design Studio to understand each place in its scale and context, and to respond, not with a standard design, but with an approach adaptive to the particulars and specifics of a space. The studio strengthens endemic patterns and practices both ecological and cultural, contemporary and historic, particularly those that remain unseen or unrecognized. Urban spaces and their objects act as public sculpture, creating new apertures through which to see the emergent beauty, strangeness, and idiosyncrasies around us.

Hood Design Studio frequently roots their design work in collaboration, seeing projects thrive under the joint efforts of design teams and through engagement with constituents and local communities. The studio has received numerous awards and accolades including the AIA Award for Collaborative Achievement,

the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Award in Landscape Design, and the Academy of Arts and Letters Architecture Award.

More about Mark Cavagnero Associates

Mark Cavagnero Associates was founded in 1988, oriented around a strong focus on public and institutional work and a firm belief in the power of collaboration and community building. The firm's wide-ranging portfolio of built work includes large- and small-scale institutional, non-profit, commercial, residential, and office architecture — contemporary facilities that are contextual, timeless, and offer a dignified presence to the communities they serve. The organization's vision is sensitive to the ever-evolving needs of the built environment. The firm pursues design solutions that will ensure long-term benefits for the communities they work in, resulting in legacies that will last for generations. Founder Mark Cavagnero is especially sensitive to the cultural heritage and historic significance of place, deliberately honing throughout his career his talent for preserving it. Adhering to this philosophy, the firm carefully investigates the cultural roots and social patterns of each place to arrive at a response appropriate for a site's larger context. Their extensive portfolio features notable projects such as the SFJAZZ Center, the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, and upgrades and enhancements to the California Palace of the Legion of Honor. Mark Cavagnero Associates produced OMCA's original master plan in 1999 and designed the major renovation and expansion to the landmark building from 2008 to 2012.

More about Tanya Holland

OMCA's new restaurant, Town Fare by Tanya Holland, will be owned and operated by Executive Chef Tanya Holland. More than a restaurant, Town Fare at OMCA will be a community institution and destination: a gathering place with values that reflect Holland's and OMCA's commitment to community, creating experiences where diners feel a sense of belonging.

Acclaimed for her inventive take on modern soul food, as well as comfort classics, Tanya Holland is the Executive Chef/Owner of the internationally renowned and beloved Brown Sugar Kitchen restaurant, in Oakland, California. The author of *The Brown Sugar Kitchen Cookbook* and *New Soul Cooking*, Holland competed on the 15th season of *Top Chef* on Bravo, was the host and soul food expert on Food Network's *Melting Pot*, she appears on the new HBO Max show *Selena + Chef* featuring Selena Gomez, and is the host of "Tanya's Kitchen Table" on OWN: Oprah Winfrey Network.

She is a member of the Board of Trustees, a frequent contributing writer and chef at the James Beard Foundation, and Brown Sugar Kitchen has received multiple Michelin Bib Gourmand awards. She is an in-demand public speaker and lecturer who frequently leads the conversation on inclusion and equity in the hospitality industry.

More about Binta Ayofemi and "Portals"

Oakland-based visual artist Binta Ayofemi shapes new urban forms and urban materials. Ayofemi is known for her activation of vacant sites, from an urban meadow to a reimagined cornerstore, which suggest a state of transformation. Ayofemi's "Commons" is her first building as artwork opening in downtown Oakland in Summer 2021, along with the exhibitions Black Space and Black Monuments opening in Summer 2021. Ayofemi shifts accepted narratives around urban voids, seemingly abandoned structures, and economic displacement, while limning notions of fugitivity, freedom, duration, and Black radical imagination. She explores urban material, movement, making, manufacturing, and authorship of public and private space.

"I wanted to respond to how the museum opens to the Lake, which leads to the Ocean. The Museum becomes a portal open to a layered ecosystem, amplifying the present and the future at these thresholds

where the building becomes open to a natural flow,” says Ayofemi of the “Portals” she created for OMCA. “My installation responds to the Museum’s distinctive pavilions as portals to activate the senses, and expresses Black and Indigenous spaces through regenerative power and Oakland’s built environment.”

Each of Ayofemi’s “Portals” evoke a sense of restoration and transformation, and create collective space for gathering. This is suggested through seating as a base of restoration, as well as plinths, tables, and benches built from local cedar and redwood which are framed by moments of iridescent steel and mounds of herbaceous plants and herbs.

Ayofemi’s work has been featured by Untitled, Kadist Foundation, SFMOMA, the Carpenter Center, the Wattis Institute, the Asian Art Museum, the New Museum, at dOCUMENTA, the British Arts Council, Rebuild Foundation, AIA, City of Oakland, and as a 2021 YBCA Fellow and YBCA 100.

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For more information, please contact:

Sascha Freudenheim / Aga Sablinska
PAVE Communications & Consulting
sascha@paveconsult.com / aga@paveconsult.com
917-544-6057

Lindsay Wright
Oakland Museum of California
lwright@museumca.org
510-318-846