



## **BMA Announces Raúl de Nieves Selection as Second Meyerhoff-Becker Artist for East Lobby Commission**

**Biennial Commission created to improve diversity in museum field**

**Installation will feature 27-pane faux stained-glass window and other highly adorned works inspired by transformation in the natural world**

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BALTIMORE, MD (June 1, 2023)—The Baltimore Museum of Art (BMA) has selected Raúl de Nieves (b. 1983, Michoacán, Mexico) as the second artist to receive the Robert E. Meyerhoff and Rheda Becker Biennial Commission. The commission was established in 2018 to foster the creation of new works by international contemporary artists, cultivate aspiring curators from underrepresented backgrounds through a parallel fellowship, and activate the BMA’s two-floor East Lobby with publicly accessible art. De Nieves is a multimedia artist, performer, and musician who often creates joyful, interactive installations that investigate notions of beauty and transformation. His new work for the BMA will engage with ideas of metamorphosis in the natural world through a 27-pane faux stained-glass window, a multi-tiered chandelier, light box installations, and opulently decorated figurative sculptures. Together, these vibrant works will immerse audiences in de Nieves’ distinctive visual language, which draws on Mexican craft traditions, costumes and adornment, religious iconography, mythology, and folktales. The installation will be on view November 19, 2023, through May 2025.

“As the first named public art commission for a U.S. museum, the Meyerhoff-Becker Biennial Commission supports the BMA’s vision to engage our community with the work of pathbreaking artists and to offer points of creative connection across our public spaces,” said Asma Naeem, the BMA’s Dorothy Wagner Wallis Director. “During *Mickalene Thomas: A Moment’s Pleasure*—the inaugural commission—we saw firsthand how her redesign of the East Lobby captivated audiences and transformed the space into a place of gathering. We are delighted to now have the opportunity to present Raúl de Nieves’ evocative work, which embraces a range of artistic and cultural traditions and speaks powerfully to the experience of change.”

De Nieves’ installation for the BMA will transform the East Lobby with dazzling new and existing works inspired by themes of emergence and becoming. The central component is a 27-pane faux stained-glass window inspired by the wonder, beauty, and chaos of the natural world. The large-scale work will evoke the migratory patterns of Monarch butterflies across the United States and Mexico, a Crested Caracara falcon who came to the artist in a dream, and Brood X (or Great Eastern Brood) cicadas, among other symbolic imagery that reflects wild transformation. This vibrant work will be presented in dialogue with a multi-tiered chandelier suspended from the ceiling that depicts a beaded figure encased in a cocoon, awaiting its future flight. Lavishly adorned bead-encrusted seated figures designed for direct visitor interaction

will also be placed on benches on both levels of the East Lobby. Additionally, the artist will create faux stained-glass lightbox installations that continue the theme of the larger window for the front of the East Lobby visitor services desk. This vivid, awe-inspiring space will be further activated through community events.

The Meyerhoff-Becker Curatorial Fellowship complements the Biennial Commission by providing an opportunity for a rising curator from an underrepresented background to work directly with the chosen artist on the development and implementation of the installation. Fellows receive direct mentorship from senior museum staff in addition to practical experience working with contemporary artists, along with a stipend. Inaugural fellow Cynthia Hodge-Thorne will continue in this position, working closely with the artist and BMA staff.

This exhibition is curated by Leila Grothe, BMA Associate Curator of Contemporary Art.

### **Raúl de Nieves**

Raúl de Nieves (b. 1983, Michoacán, Mexico) is a New York-based interdisciplinary artist, performer, and musician who draws on both classical Catholic and Mexican vernacular motifs as well as aspects of queer identity to create his own unique mythology. Through processes of accumulation and adornment, the artist transforms readily available materials into spectacular objects, which he then integrates into immersive narrative environments. Recent solo exhibitions of his work have been presented at ICA Boston, MA; Museum of Contemporary Art North Miami, FL; and SCAD Museum of Art, Savannah, GA. De Nieves' work has also been featured in group exhibitions at The Highline, MoMA PS1, 2017 Whitney Biennial, Documenta 14, Performa 13, ICA Philadelphia, The Watermill Center, and other venues. Public collections with de Nieves' work include Institute of Contemporary Art Boston, Whitney Museum of American Art, and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles.

### **Robert E. Meyerhoff and Rheda Becker**

Baltimore philanthropists Robert E. Meyerhoff and Rheda Becker are committed to reshaping the city's institutions around access and inclusivity in education and art. They are supporters of Teach for America, Thread, and the Baltimore School for the Arts. They were founding donors of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra's OrchKids program. They initiated the Diversity and Inclusion Fund at the Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University to build access and diversity in faculty, staff, and student body. They seeded the *Books for Me* program at the Enoch Pratt Free Library to enable families to grow a personal library of free new books for their children.

### **Baltimore Museum of Art**

Founded in 1914, the Baltimore Museum of Art (BMA) inspires people of all ages and backgrounds through exhibitions, programs, and collections that tell an expansive story of art—challenging long-held narratives and embracing new voices. Our outstanding collection of more than 97,000 objects spans many eras and cultures and includes the world's largest public holding of works by Henri Matisse; one of the nation's finest collections of prints, drawings, and photographs; and a rapidly growing number of works by contemporary artists of diverse backgrounds. The museum is also distinguished by a neoclassical building designed by American architect John Russell Pope and two beautifully landscaped gardens featuring an array of modern and contemporary sculpture. The BMA is located three miles north of the Inner Harbor, adjacent to the main campus of Johns Hopkins University, and has a community branch at Lexington Market. General admission is free so that everyone can enjoy the power of art.

### Visitor Information

General admission to the BMA is free. The BMA is open Wednesday through Sunday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., with extended hours on Thursdays until 9 p.m. The Sculpture Gardens are open Wednesday through Sunday, 10 a.m. to dusk. The museum and gardens are closed New Year's Day, Juneteenth, July 4, Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas Day. The BMA is located at 10 Art Museum Drive, three miles north of Baltimore's Inner Harbor. For general museum information, call 443-573-1700 or visit [artbma.org](http://artbma.org).

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