



The Baltimore Museum of Art Appoints Dr. Asma Naeem as Director

Naeem becomes the first person of color to lead the museum, following key roles as Interim Co-Director and Chief Curator

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BALTIMORE, MD (January 24, 2023)—The Baltimore Museum of Art’s (BMA) Board of Trustees announced today that they have appointed Dr. Asma Naeem as the Museum’s new director following a 10-month international search. Naeem has served as the BMA’s Interim Co-Director, alongside Christine Dietze, since June 2022, and as the Museum’s Eddie C. and C. Sylvia Brown Chief Curator since 2018. She is widely recognized for her advocacy of women and underrecognized artists, for her scholarship in contemporary and American art, and for her vision and work in collections diversification. She succeeds Christopher Bedford, who served as director from 2016 until 2022. Naeem will begin in her new role as the BMA’s Dorothy Wagner Wallis Director on February 1, 2023, becoming the first person of color to lead the institution.

“The BMA is committed to bringing diversity and equity into every aspect of its work, from the exhibitions and programs we develop to the works we acquire to our internal working culture. Since she joined the museum in 2018, Dr. Naeem has been integral to shaping this vision and to the strides we have made to realize it. Her dedication to this effort and her distinct perspective on how we can continue to create change made her the ideal choice to lead the BMA into the future. We are inspired and excited by the possibilities for our beloved museum with Dr. Naeem as our new director and look forward to our work together,” said James D. Thornton, chair of the BMA’s Board of Trustees.

Naeem will be the 11th director of the BMA, which has come to be known for organizing ground-breaking exhibitions and programs that question traditional art historical narratives and forefront new and underrepresented voices. The museum is actively working to expand the breadth of the collection with more works by women and artists of color, and earlier this month announced the [acquisition of 162 historic and contemporary works](#) that support the closing of critical gaps across the full range of its collection departments. In recent years, the BMA has also completed several major renovations, most notably the Stanley Mazaroff and Nancy Dorman Center for the Study of Prints, Drawings and Photographs and Ruth R. Marder Center for Matisse Studies, which both opened in 2021.

“It has been my great pleasure to work with the BMA team and board over the past four and a half years. I am excited to now lead the BMA as we continue to explore,

experiment, and envision what a museum can be and mean to its immediate community and broader networks of artists and partners,” said Naeem. “As we move forward, there is an incredible opportunity to bring a greater depth of local and global voices into the dialogues about the history and evolution of art, about museums as community spaces, and about the relationship between internal culture to external experience—and in doing so create meaningful change in the field. I am looking forward to working with the exceptional team here and with our many current and future collaborators.”

Since she joined the staff of the BMA in 2018, Naeem has organized a wide range of exhibitions, including on the work of such artists as Candice Breitz, Isaac Julien, and Valerie Maynard, for which she also edited a publication surveying the artist’s career with curator of print, drawings, and photographs Leslie Cozzi. Her exhibition *Salman Toor: No Ordinary Love*, which is accompanied by an expansive catalogue, recently closed at the BMA and will travel to three additional museum venues across the country. Naeem’s upcoming curatorial projects include an exhibition on the social and art history of the hip hop movement both as an American and global phenomenon, titled *The Culture: Hip Hop and Contemporary Art in the 21st Century* and opening at the BMA in April 2023 before traveling to the Saint Louis Art Museum.

Prior to the BMA, between 2014 and 2018, she served in multiple curatorial roles at the Smithsonian’s National Portrait Gallery, where she expanded its collection with both acclaimed and underrecognized artists and developed several exhibitions. Two award-winning exhibitions, recognized by the Smithsonian and the American Association of Museum Curators, include a retrospective of the work of Titus Kaphar, and *Black Out: Silhouettes Then and Now*, an exploration of the silhouette in historical and contemporary art works through the lens of gender and race. Accompanying the latter was a richly illustrated catalogue organized by Naeem and published by Princeton University Press.

Before entering the museum field, Naeem had an extensive career in law. She served as an Assistant District Attorney in the Manhattan District Attorney’s Office, where she focused on domestic violence. Her last position as an attorney was as an Assistant Bar Counsel at the Office of Bar Counsel in Washington, D.C., where she investigated and prosecuted cases involving ethics allegations against attorneys in national and international matters.

“I very much look forward to seeing Dr. Naeem continue to shape her vision as the new director of the Baltimore Museum of Art and to witnessing the ways in which she will positively influence museum culture,” said Thelma Golden, Director and Chief Curator at The Studio Museum in Harlem. “I have watched Dr. Naeem work to change the field. She is a thoughtful and innovative scholar, whose personal mission has been to bring forward and uplift the voices of artists who have traditionally been overlooked and understudied. Her passion for illuminating new narratives in the history of art is equal to her commitment to community and to ensuring that museums are serving their publics in meaningful ways.”

Naeem was born in Karachi, Pakistan, and immigrated to the United States as a young child with her parents. She grew up in Baltimore city and county. She holds a Ph.D. in art history from the University of Maryland, an M.A. from American University, a J.D. from Temple University, and a B.A. in art history

and political science from the Johns Hopkins University. Naeem has lectured and written widely on contemporary art, social equity and power, identity and migration, American art, the Asian diaspora, and museum studies. She recently wrote for the exhibition catalogue *Art and Activism at Tougaloo College*, interweaving the local and national histories of social justice with objects in the world-class art collection at the historically Black college in Jackson, Mississippi.

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.

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