



BMA Announces Launch of Major Environment-Focused Initiatives, Fostering Dialogue and Modeling Change in Museums

Initiatives include citywide eco-challenge, sustainability planning for the museum, and a wide range of exhibitions dedicated to environmental themes

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BALTIMORE, MD (May 16, 2024)—The Baltimore Museum of Art (BMA) announced today a series of major initiatives that model commitments to environmental sustainability and foster discourse on climate change and the role of the museum. Collectively referred to as *Turn Again to the Earth*, a title inspired by the writing of environmental activist Rachel Carson, the interrelated efforts will unfold over the remainder of 2024 and throughout 2025. Following months of climate-driven protests at museums across the U.S. and abroad, the BMA’s environmental initiatives offer opportunities for more productive dialogues and actions within the museum context. As the museum celebrates its 110th anniversary, it is fitting that it considers its future in part through the lens of this critical subject.

Turn Again to the Earth includes an evaluation of internal BMA practices for environmental impacts and to support the creation of a sustainability plan for the museum; a series of exhibitions and public programs that capture the relationships between art and the environment across time and geography; and a citywide eco-challenge led by the BMA that invites Baltimore and regional partners to engage in environment-related conversations and enact their own plans for a more sustainable future. The National Aquarium and Maryland Zoo—both in Baltimore—have already signed on to the challenge, with more partners to be announced.

“The realities and repercussions of climate change have become part of our daily discourse and experiences. As a civic-minded institution, we hear the call from our communities to find meaningful ways to engage with this urgent topic,” said Asma Naeem, the BMA’s Dorothy Wagner Wallis Director. “*Turn Again to the Earth* is an opportunity to move the museum from being a site of potential protest to a site of active dialogue and action. By engaging with artists and city leaders, we are working to transform the BMA into a locus for creativity and conversation, capturing the role that the museum can play in illuminating difficult issues and inspiring organizations and communities to positive change. I can think of no better way to set the museum up for another 110 years of success.”

BMA Sustainability Plan

The BMA is working with the Baltimore-based sustainability consulting firm [Lorax](#) to assess and make recommendations regarding water and energy efficiency, indoor environment quality, and needed structural upgrades and changes to achieve green

building certifications, among a range of other environmental improvements. Lorax is also developing sustainability goals for each department in the museum. Additionally, the BMA is convening a community advisory panel comprised of artists, academics, activists, and city leaders to guide both in-gallery presentations and out of gallery work. Together, these evaluations and recommendations will result in the creation of a sustainability plan that will allow the museum to establish real benchmarks for achieving a more environmentally friendly museum over the coming years. The BMA anticipates that the sustainability plan will be completed by the end of 2024, with efforts to realize the recommendations beginning in 2025.

Citywide Eco-Challenge

In 2023, Maryland Governor Wes Moore announced the goal of achieving 100% clean energy in the state by 2035. To support this critical and ambitious goal, the BMA is establishing a citywide eco-challenge, which invites civic and cultural leaders throughout the Baltimore region to commit to making one sustainably driven operational change and developing one program to raise environmental awareness in 2025. To foster dialogue and support engagement, the museum will host two convenings for partners, allowing participants to share information about fieldwide protocols and experiences. The vision behind the eco-challenge is to harness the expertise, voices, and resources of a wide range of partners to spur real citywide action in 2025 and well into the future. The National Aquarium and Maryland Zoo in Baltimore, both leaders in the field with their own sustainability plans, have already signed onto the eco-challenge, with many more organizations in conversation about participation.

Exhibitions and Public Programs

From November 2024 and through 2025, the BMA will open 10 exhibitions that engage with ideas and themes related to the environment. Exhibition subjects range from examinations of both exploitative and sustainable techniques and materials used to create artworks to the influence of pollution on the emergence of European Modernism, and to the study of cultural differences in considering humanity's role and position within the broader ecosystem, with a focus on the art of China, Korea, and Japan. Exhibitions will be augmented by a broad selection of public programs to further engage audiences and encourage active dialogue.

Among the exhibition highlights is ***Black Earth Rising***, a group exhibition guest curated by British writer and curator **Ekow Eshun** that explores the complex ties between race, colonialism, and the climate crisis. Opening in spring 2025, the exhibition will bring together compelling works by African diasporic, Latin American, and Native American artists to consider and address questions regarding social and environmental injustices as fueled by the European settlement of the New World and its ongoing legacy. Another highlight, opening in February 2025, is the recent acquisition of **Justen Leroy's** three-channel video installation ***Lay Me Down in Praise***, which poses melisma—a form of Black musical utterance—as a rallying cry for environmental crisis. The film features slow-moving footage of geological events like volcanic eruptions, glacial melt, and turbulent seas that melds with a transfixing soundtrack informed by blues, R&B, gospel, and jazz music. In November 2024, the BMA opens **LaToya Ruby Frazier's *More Than Conquerors: A Monument for Community Health Workers of Baltimore, Maryland 2021-2022***. Featuring a series of portraits and related interview excerpts, the

acclaimed installation captures the tireless efforts of community health workers in Baltimore during the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine and sets their advocacy and self-determination amidst harmful environmental and socio-political factors resulting from historical disinvestment in Black communities.

The BMA will also reinstall its Contemporary Wing with works that address environmentally related subjects such as social protest, ecology, and migration. Artworks will include collection cornerstones as well as recent acquisitions on view for the first time, such as **Nari Ward's *Peace Keeper* (1995/2020)** and **Jowita Wyszomirska's *The Light That Got Lost 1* (2020)**. Additionally, the BMA is commissioning new works for the Contemporary Wing by two artists whose practices speak to environmental and political conditions: Lebanese artist **Dala Nasser** and Baltimore- and New York-based artist **Abigail Lucien**. The commissions will debut in February 2025.

A selection of artworks in every BMA collection gallery will receive interpretive interventions with new label copy and audio entries that draw visitors' attention to the links between creative forms and environmental change. The artworks with new environmentally focused interpretation will be identified by a special brand, establishing opportunities for engagement across the whole of the museum. More information regarding upcoming exhibitions and updates about the BMA's Sustainability Plan and Eco-Challenge will be announced over the coming 12 months.

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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