

THE BMA PRESENTS MAJOR EXHIBITION EXPLORING DEVELOPMENT OF ABSTRACT ART THROUGH THE WORK OF BLACK ARTISTS

Artists include Kevin Beasley, Mark Bradford, Norman Lewis, Lorna Simpson, Alma Thomas, Jack Whitten, and many others

BALTIMORE, MD (May 15, 2019)—The Baltimore Museum of Art (BMA) presents *Generations: A History of Black Abstract Art*, an exhibition that captures the significant contributions that black artists have made to the development of abstraction from the 1940s to the present. On view September 29, 2019, through January 19, 2020, *Generations* explores the multifaceted power of abstract art as experimental practice, personal exploration, and profound political choice for decades of black artists. The exhibition features nearly 80 paintings, sculptures, and mixed-media installations by such notable artists as Mark Bradford, Jennie C. Jones, Norman Lewis, Lorna Simpson, Alma W. Thomas, and Sam Gilliam, and unveils a newly commissioned work by Kevin Beasley. *Generations* is curated by Christopher Bedford, BMA Dorothy Wagner Wallis Director, and Katy Siegel, BMA Senior Research & Programming Curator and Thaw Chair of Modern Art at Stony Brook University. The exhibition is co-organized by the BMA and the Ogden Museum of Southern Art.

Drawing on the extensive collection of Pamela J. Joyner and Alfred J. Giuffrida, which is recognized for its unparalleled holdings of works by historic and contemporary black artists, *Generations* builds on the previously touring *Solidary & Solitary* exhibition, doubling the show's scale and scope in the BMA's expansive galleries with new works from The Joyner/Giuffrida Collection, as well as select objects from the museum's contemporary collection. The exhibition highlights unexpected resonances and important distinctions between artists, across time and geographic contexts. In addition to solo presentations of work by Norman Lewis, Lynette Yiadom-Boakye, and Charles Gaines, *Generations* provides visitors with in-depth explorations of the work of Alma W. Thomas and Jack Whitten, as well as a broader selection of "duets" that juxtapose works between such artists as Gary Simmons and Lorna Simpson, Melvin Edwards and Leonardo Drew, and Kevin Beasley and Shinique Smith. These pairings are supported by expanded thematic groupings that emphasize the origins and futures of the genre, featuring landmark work by Frank Bowling, Al Loving, Julie Mehretu, Joe Overstreet, and Virginia Jaramillo.

"We find ourselves today in an important moment of cultural reckoning—one in which it is imperative for institutions like the BMA to re-examine the histories of art and to tell a truer and more multidimensional story. In working with the visionary Joyner/Giuffrida Collection, as well as the BMA's own growing collection, we have an extraordinary opportunity to expand perceptions of what contemporary art was and can be, and celebrate the spectrum and brilliance of artists who have redefined and given depth to abstract art into the present day," said Siegel. "With this expanded version of the exhibition, we are excited to dive deeper into the material dialogues within and across the work of the featured artists, introducing new audiences to their visions and practices."

The opening of *Generations* will follow the BMA's re-conceptualization of its contemporary galleries, in a presentation titled *Every Day: Selections from the Collection*. Opening July 14, 2019, the reinstallation highlights major works (and several new acquisitions) by such visionary artists as Howardena Pindell, David Hammons, Kara Walker, Nari Ward, and Jack Whitten, locating black artistic achievement at the center of a thematic overview of modern and contemporary art. This initiative underscores the BMA's commitment to collecting and presenting the work of artists that have typically been underrepresented in major institutions and exhibitions.

“The presentation of *Generations* is part of a broader vision to reshape the idea of the museum—who it belongs to and whom it represents. This effort occurs across our special exhibitions, collecting, and public programs. In this way, we can recognize historical shortcomings, and provide our audiences with a richer, more vibrant, and dynamic picture of art—one that speaks to different communities, perspectives, and realities,” said Christopher Bedford, BMA Dorothy Wagner Wallis Director. “We are very much looking forward to our upcoming exhibitions and to the important conversations they may spur.”

Catalogue:

The companion publication, *Four Generations: The Joyner/Giuffrida Collection of Abstract Art*, is also being expanded and reprinted by Gregory R. Miller & Co. It is edited by Courtney J. Martin, Director of the Yale Center for British Art, and features new research and writing from curators at some of the world’s leading institutions.

Sponsors:

This exhibition is generously sponsored by the Ford Foundation. Opening weekend free admission is generously supported by CareFirst. The *Solidary & Solitary* tour is made possible with the support of The Joyner/ Giuffrida Collection and is also supported by presentation sponsor The Helis Foundation, a private Louisiana foundation committed to advancing access to the arts.

Tour:

Solidary & Solitary has been presented at the Ogden Museum of Southern Art in New Orleans, LA; Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University in Durham, NC; Snite Museum of Art at the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, IN; and the David and Alfred Smart Museum of Art at the University of Chicago, IL. It will travel to the Perez Art Museum in Miami, FL, following the BMA’s presentation.

THE BALTIMORE MUSEUM OF ART

Founded in 1914, The Baltimore Museum of Art is a major cultural destination recognized for engaging diverse audiences through dynamic exhibitions and innovative educational and community outreach programs. The BMA’s internationally renowned collection of 95,000 objects encompasses more than 1,000 works by Henri Matisse anchored by the famed Cone Collection of modern art, as well as one of the nation’s finest holdings of prints, drawings, and photographs. The galleries showcase an exceptional collection of art from Africa; important works by established and emerging contemporary artists; outstanding European and American paintings, sculpture, and decorative arts; significant artworks from China; ancient Antioch mosaics; and exquisite textiles from around the world. The 210,000- square-foot museum is also distinguished by a grand historic building designed in the 1920s by renowned American architect John Russell Pope and two beautifully landscaped gardens featuring an array of 20th-century sculpture. The BMA is located in Charles Village, three miles north of the Inner Harbor, and is adjacent to the main campus of Johns Hopkins University. General admission to the BMA is free so that everyone can enjoy the power of art.

VISITOR INFORMATION

General admission to the BMA is free. Special exhibitions may be ticketed. The BMA is open Wednesday through Sunday from 10:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m. The museum is closed Monday, Tuesday, New Year’s Day, July 4, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. 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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