

Baltimore Museum of Art and Saint Louis Art Museum Co-Organize Monumental Exhibition Exploring the Global Significance and Impact of Hip Hop

The Culture features contemporary art, fashion, and music, as well as cultural ephemera

BALTIMORE, MD (July 29, 2022)—The Baltimore Museum of Art (BMA) and Saint Louis Art Museum (SLAM) have co-organized a groundbreaking exhibition that examines the resounding impact of hip hop on contemporary art and culture across the past 20 plus years. *The Culture: Hip Hop and Contemporary Art in the 21st Century* captures the extraordinary influence of the movement, which has driven innovations in music, visual and performing arts, fashion, and technology and grown into a global phenomenon since its emergence in the 1970s. The exhibition features approximately 70 objects by both established and emerging artists, design houses, streetwear icons, and musicians working in a wide range of media to demonstrate hip hop’s proliferation from the street to the runway, the studio to the museum gallery, and countless sites in between. The exhibition also explores how hip hop has and continues to challenge structures of power, dominant cultural narratives, and political and social systems of oppression. *The Culture* is accompanied by a comprehensive catalogue with contributions from more than 50 artists, writers, scholars, curators, and arts leaders. The exhibition is on view at the BMA from March 26 to July 9, 2023, and SLAM from August 25, 2023, to January 1, 2024.

Conceived and developed as a collaborative effort that engages with both museums’ curatorial and education departments, *The Culture* emphasizes community access and engagement as core to the exhibition experience. It is co-curated by Asma Naeem, the BMA’s Eddie C. and C. Sylvia Brown Chief Curator and Interim Co-Director; Gamynne Guillotte, the BMA’s Chief Education Officer; Hannah Klemm, SLAM’s Associate Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art; and Andréa Purnell, SLAM’s Audience Development Manager. *The Culture* is further supported by an advisory committee comprising experts and artists across a wide range of disciplines, including Martha Diaz, Founder and President of the Hip-Hop Education Center; Wendel Patrick, professor at the Peabody Music Conservatory at Johns Hopkins University; Tef Poe, rapper and activist; Hélio Menezes, anthropologist and curator of *Afro-Atlantic Histories*; and Timothy Anne Burnside, public historian and Museum Specialist in Curatorial Affairs at the National Museum of African American History and Culture.

“Hip hop is among the most critical movements of our time. Its impact, meaning, and influence is both imperceivable and obvious, and is felt, in equal measure, across both mainstream culture and fine art in the U.S. and abroad. With this exhibition, we are developing a greater depth of scholarship about hip hop, and how it appears as its own canon in so many aspects of contemporary artmaking, allowing us to better understand its distinct qualities and the reasons why it has so deeply embedded itself in the global psyche,” said Naeem. “This exhibition is also an opportunity to celebrate the richness of creativity and innovation hip hop has catalyzed by exploring it through social, material, and art historical lenses. We are looking forward to engaging audiences with this exhibition, who, we’re sure, will bring their own experiences of hip hop to the presentation, adding new layers of individual and communal understanding,” added Guillotte.

Min Jung Kim, the Barbara B. Taylor Director of the Saint Louis Art Museum, said the exhibition is being developed through an innovative approach that draws on the expertise of the exhibition’s curators, as well as scholars, artists, and activists. “A collaborative project based on rigorous scholarship and objects of exceptional quality, *The Culture*

will center marginalized voices and community engagement, examine hip hop's origin and relevance through diverse narratives, and provide a visually stunning treat for museum visitors in Baltimore and St. Louis," she said.

Hip hop first emerged as music from Black, Latinx, and Afro-Latinx Americans living in the Bronx in the 1970s. It quickly proliferated through large-scale block parties to encompass an entire culture that includes MCing or rapping; DJing; breakdancing; and graffiti writing and arts. From its inception, hip hop critiqued dominant structures and cultural narratives and offered new avenues for expressing diasporic experiences and creating alternate systems of power. Over the decades, buoyed by the advent of the internet and other technologies, hip hop has grown in its complexity and its reach, taking on new regional styles across the United States and around the world.

The Culture focuses on the incredible impact of hip hop from the year 2000 to the present day, emphasizing pressing issues in the industry of hip hop such as sexuality and gender, race and class, luxury and poverty, and global capitalism and urbanism through a vast range of creative forms, including immersive installations, painting, sculpture, photography, and video. Among the artists featured in the exhibition are Nina Chanel Abney, Derrick Adams, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Jordan Casteel, Kudzanai Chiurai, William Cordova, Hassan Hajjaj, Lauren Halsey, Arthur Jafa, Deana Lawson, Julie Mehretu, Hank Willis Thomas, Kehinde Wiley, and numerous others. *The Culture* will also include significant examples of fashion, including looks from Virgil Abloh's collections for Louis Vuitton, legendary streetwear brand Cross Colours, iconic luxury brand TELFAR, as well as a wide range of music ephemera, including wigs from Lil' Kim's hairstylist Dionne Alexander.

To further illuminate hip hop's influence, the exhibition will incorporate artists with deep ties to their local communities. Works by Baltimore artists include Devin Allen, NIA JUNE with APoetNamedNate and Kirby Griffin, Monica Ikegwu, Amani Lewis, Megan Lewis, Charles Mason III, Murjoni Merriweather, and Ernest Shaw Jr., among others, as well as a newly commissioned mural by Shinique Smith. Works by St. Louis and Missouri artists include Anthony Olubunmi Akinbola, Damon Davis, Jen Everett, Aaron Fowler, Kahlil Robert Irving, Yvonne Osei, and Adrian Octavius Walker, among others.

Catalogue

The Culture is accompanied by a comprehensive catalogue organized into themes of self-presentation and adornment, representation, technology, and language. Contributors include author and scholar Todd Boyd (Notorious Ph.D.); multimedia producer and performer TT the Artist, poet Danez Smith, stylist Misa Hylton, choreographer Sean Bankhead, deaf hip hop dancer Shaheem Sanchez, Canadian rapper from the Muskoday First Nation Eekwol Lindsay Knight, Muslim poet/rap activist Mona Haydar, and visual artists Devin Allen, Jacolby Satterwhite, and Murjoni Merriweather. The catalogue also includes a transcript of a roundtable of national and international curators who have mounted exhibitions about hip hop in the last two decades: Franklin Sirmans and Lydia Yee, Valerie Cassel Oliver, René De Guzman, Martha Diaz, Carol Tulloch, and Aurélie Clemente-Ruiz.

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 95,000 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.

Saint Louis Museum of Art

The Saint Louis Art Museum (SLAM) is one of the nation's leading comprehensive art museums with collections that include works of art of exceptional quality from virtually every culture and time period. Areas of notable depth include Oceanic art, ancient American art, ancient Chinese bronzes and European and American art of the late 19th and 20th centuries, with particular strength in 20th-century German art. Admission to the St. Louis Art Museum is free to all every day.

BMA Media Contacts

Anne Brown, abrown@artbma.org
410-274-9907

Alina E. Sumajin, alina@paveconsult.com
646-369-2050

SLAM Media Contact

Matthew Hathaway, matthew.hathaway@slam.org
314-655-5493