



Baltimore Museum of Art Announces Diverse Array of Acquisitions, with 54 Objects Added Across Museum Departments

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Among the highlights are contemporary works by Leonardo Drew, Jacob Lawrence, Joyce J. Scott, Nari Ward, and Marie Watt, as well as a wide selection of historic paintings, sculpture, textiles, and works on paper

BALTIMORE, MD (January 25, 2022)—The Baltimore Museum of Art (BMA) announced today that it has acquired, through both purchase and gift, approximately 54 objects and suites of works across its encyclopedic holdings. The group captures an incredible range of contemporary production, including works by **Mel Bochner**, **Leonardo Drew**, **Jacob Lawrence**, **Shahzia Sikander**, **Nari Ward**, and **Marie Watt**. The BMA also added to its extensive holdings of historic American and European paintings, sculpture, and prints with a 17th-century etching by **Paulus Pontius**, a magnificent oil on paper by Weimar-era artist **Lotte Laserstein**, a bronze by celebrated Harlem Renaissance sculptor **Richmond Barthé**, and a photograph by Surrealist artist **Kati Horna**, among other works. Three works on paper by Nigerian artist **Uche Okeke** that capture the experience of an independent Nigeria and the artist's changing aesthetic add new depth to the museum's African collection. With acquisitions of works by **Jerrell Gibbs**, **Earl Jones**, **Nia June** with **Kirby Griffin** and **APoetNamedNate**, **Monica Ikegwu**, **Ernest Shaw**, **Joyce J. Scott**, **James Voshell**, and **Kandis Williams**, the BMA continues its emphasis on collecting works by artists with ties to Baltimore.

The BMA also received a significant gift of 77 works on paper, including one set of 10 lithographs and two boxed portfolios of etchings, by renowned artist **Jasper Johns** from the museum's Board Chair Clair Zamoiski Segal and Thomas H. Segal in memory of Ellen Levi Zamoiski. The collection features an incredible selection of black-and-white editioned works from the first decade of Johns's printmaking and includes his first lithograph, *Target* (1960). With this group of works, the BMA will hold an iconographical representation of the major themes with which Johns has engaged throughout his multi-decade career, including flags, maps, targets, numerals, alphabets, and "device circles," and will allow the museum to delve more deeply into the significance of process to the artist's oeuvre.

"The acquisitions announced today represent an incredible spectrum of artistic vision and achievement. Many of the works engage with important social and political happenings, capture formal breakthroughs, and do the difficult work of dismantling arbitrary boundaries and hierarchies, within both society and art itself. It is an exciting slate of works that represent the BMA's ongoing commitment to bringing forward new voices and narratives within the history of art—not only within our

contemporary holdings but across the entire museum,” said Christopher Bedford, the BMA’s Dorothy Wagner Wallis Director. “I want to thank the BMA’s brilliant curatorial team for their work in identifying the artists and objects that fill critical gaps in our collections, and to the generous donors that support our efforts, especially Clair Zamoiski Segal for her pivotal gift of works by Jasper Johns.”

Acquisitions Highlights

Richmond Barthé. *Feral Benga*. (modeled 1935, cast c.1960)

Acclaimed Harlem Renaissance sculptor Richmond Barthé (American, 1901-1989) dedicated his body of work to representations of the Black nude, one of the few artists of his time to do so. *Feral Benga* is inspired by dancer and icon François Benga, who in his own career worked to redefine Black masculinity as a queer man. The graceful lines and the sensitive articulation of features in the sculpture capture the essence of the man and add new dimension to portrayals of the Black body.

Mel Bochner. *Random Lines (Transposed)*. (1968/2021)

Leading conceptual artist Mel Bochner (American, b. 1940) has an abiding history with the BMA and one of its dedicated patrons, Suzanne F. Cohen (1935-2018), who during her life and as part of a bequest expanded the museum’s holdings of the artist’s work. *Random Lines* (1968) embodies Bochner’s innovative use of blue carpenter’s chalk to create a painting that is inextricable from the wall itself. The work entered the BMA’s collection through Cohen’s bequest. The artist created a new work, *Random Lines (Transposed)* (1968/2021), in honor of Cohen for an exhibition currently on view that explores her collecting. An inverse of the original work, it comes to the museum as a “Gift of the Artist, In Honor of Sue Cohen, Dear Friend and Fearless Collector.”

Leonardo Drew. *Number 304*. (2021)

Leonardo Drew (American, born 1961) is known for large-scale assemblages made from found and made materials, particularly wood, that examine the relationship between object, wall, and space. Following his public installation, *City in the Grass*, in Madison Square Park, Drew’s work has grown in both scale and breadth, and indeed *Number 304* spans 12 by 16 feet. The installation, which Drew describes as a “family tree,” surveys the artist’s works over the decades, with earlier works refashioned as small-scale maquettes that orbit around a new two-part wall relief. The acquisition of the work fulfills a longstanding strategic goal to bring Drew’s work into the BMA’s collection.

Kati Horna. *Remedios Varo wearing a mask designed by Leonora Carrington*. (1957)

During the Spanish Civil War and World War II, Surrealist artist Kati Horna (Hungarian-Mexican, 1912-2000) traveled throughout Europe, chronicling how war affected women and children in an approach that she termed “gendered witnessing.” Following WWII, Horna settled in Mexico City and connected with a group of relocated European artists, including Spanish painter Remedios Varo and British artist Leonora Carrington. This photograph captures Varo wearing a mask designed by Carrington, illustrating the creative and emotional bond shared by the three Surrealist artists. The work also emphasizes the role of craft and object-making in the Surrealist movement and reflects a particular female perspective—one that has been overlooked in traditional art historical narratives.

Nia June, Kirby Griffin, and APoetNamedNate. *A Black Girl's Country*. (2019)

This four-minute, 24-second video was created by Baltimore-based artist Nia June (American, b. 1995), in collaboration with cinematographer Kirby Griffin (American, b. 1988) and APoetNamedNate (American, b. 1994). June is a filmmaker, dancer, educator, and published poet who uses her voice to illuminate the lives and faces of her community. *A Black Girl's Country* uses spoken word poetry, music, and dance to celebrate the multifaceted experience of Black womanhood across generations, providing a renewed gaze on the Black woman and what she embodies. The video was prominently featured in the BMA's 2020 Screening Room initiative that highlighted time-based media works by Baltimore artists on the museum's website.

Lotte Laserstein. *Traute asleep on a sofa*. (before 1937)

One of the first women to attend the Berlin Academy of Fine Art, Lotte Laserstein (German-Swedish, 1898-1993) was a rising star in the art scene of Weimar Germany who garnered critical praise before her career was cut short after the Nazis took power in the 1930s. Her work was only brought back to broader attention with a retrospective in Berlin in 2003. *Traute asleep on a sofa* features her close friend Traute Rose and reflects Laserstein's characteristic approach to oil on paper. A dark tan paper provided a middle tone onto which she sketched out broad strokes of darker oil paint for structure and light opaque colors for highlights. Traute's androgynous appearance also contributed to Laserstein's portrayal of her as the embodiment of the New Woman, embracing newfound independence and gender fluidity.

Jacob Lawrence. *Five Builders with Toolbox; Ten Builders; Two Builders Playing Chess*. (all 1996)

Jacob Lawrence (American, 1917-2000) was largely trained by the Black artistic community in Harlem, where he studied with Charles Alston, Augusta Savage, and Henry Bannarn. An ambitious artist from an early age, Lawrence exhibited his series on the Haitian revolutionary war figure *Toussaint L'Ouverture* at the BMA in 1939, at the age of 21. A specialist in water-based media, Lawrence's paintings and prints are recognized for their innovative use of flat shapes, silhouettes, and patterns of bright colors. He created works with a "builders" theme for over 50 years, capturing his embrace of American worker culture and aspirations for African American economic advancement.

Uche Okeke. *Three Mallams and the Moon* (1962); *Monster* (1962); *Ana*. (1981)

Uche Okeke (Nigerian, 1933-2016), a pioneering Nigerian modernist, came of age in the years surrounding Nigeria's independence in 1960. Okeke advocated for a new style of artmaking that he called "natural synthesis." *Three Mallams and the Moon* and *Monster* come from one of Okeke's most famous and important series, the *Oja Suite*, in which he translated the historic Igbo artforms into paintings and drawings that reflected a new independent Nigeria and its diverse population. *Ana* is an artwork from the prime of Okeke's artistic career, when he was particularly focused on capturing Igbo culture and the natural world.

Paulus Pontius after Nicolaas van der Horst (c. 1586/87-1646). *Portrait of Mulay Hasan*. (1645)

Paulus Pontius (Flemish, 1603-1658) is best known as a reproductive printmaker. This rare posthumous portrait reveals the complex narrative of the political alliance between Sultan Abû 'Abd Allâh Muhammad V al-Hasan, the Berber Hafsîd caliph of Tunis (r. 1526-1543), and the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V

(1500-1558). It functions as an important historical document that chronicles the international power struggles across the Mediterranean when the Holy Roman Empire exerted its influence on conflicts between local dynasties in North Africa and the Ottoman Empire. The work's portrayal of a non-European historical figure is an important addition to the BMA's holdings of 17th-century prints.

Joyce J. Scott. *Lynching Necklace*. (1998)

The sculptural, figurative necklace embodies the free-form, off-loom seed bead weaving technique of virtuoso Baltimore-based artist Joyce J. Scott (American, b.1948). The artist's work has throughout her multi-decade career consistently engaged with craft traditions that she interprets through a spontaneous and improvisational approach. Her works across medium and genre engage with critical themes such as hunger, violence, sex, and race. *Lynching Necklace* brings these complex ideas to bear in a highly visible and wearable form, an unexpected turn that manifests Scott's activist engagement with her audience. The acquisition supports the BMA's strategic priority to expand its American decorative arts holdings through the acquisition of jewelry by women and Black makers.

Shahzia Sikander. *Empire Follows Art: States of Agitation 9*. (2020)

Over the course of three decades and on nearly every continent of the world, artist Shahzia Sikander (Pakistani-American, b. 1969) has developed a multi-media practice that probes migration, cultural exchange, and the spoils of colonialism and war. Her pioneering practice takes classical Indo-Persian miniature painting as its point of departure, inflecting it with contemporary American, Feminist, South Asian, and Muslim perspectives. This mesmerizing ink and gouache work on paper, part of a series that began in the early 2000s, is literally a conjuring of the artist's subconscious during the early months of the global pandemic: blood-red silhouetted figures, mysterious faces, biomorphic shapes, the stars of the American flag, and swirls of color that yearn to pool off the page.

Nari Ward. *Peace Keeper*. (1995/2020)

First exhibited in the 1995 Whitney Biennial, this installation features a hearse that Nari Ward (Jamaican, b. 1963) cut into two parts, tarred with black grease and feathers, and entrapped within a metal cage. The work was a standout at the Biennial, capturing Ward's evocative conceptual approach and engagement with reclaimed materials as poignant and powerful metaphors. After being partially destroyed by the artist, the installation was recreated by Ward in 2020 at the request of Okwui Enwezor for his final exhibition, a meditation on mourning and Black grief in America. *Peace Keeper* is among Ward's most important installations. It reflects his unflinching critique of racial oppression and is as timely and necessary today as it was more than two decades ago when it was first created.

Marie Watt. *Blanket Stories: Beacon, Marker, Ohi-yo*. (2015)

Marie Watt's (Seneca Nation of New York, born 1967) work draws from history, biography, Iroquois proto-feminism, and Indigenous teachings. Blankets play a central role in Watt's practice, and she has been creating works in the series *Blanket Stories* for more than a decade as a means of reclamation and as a symbol of positive connections to Native American community and history. *Blanket Stories: Beacon, Marker, Ohi-yo* captures Watt's ongoing engagement with blankets as a conceptual theme as well as a foundational material for her sculptures. The work also engages with the history and significance of the

Ohio River to Native American communities, drawing out the interrelated and complicated relationships between land, economy, politics, and heritage.

Additional contemporary acquisitions include paintings by **Chase Hall** and **James Voshell**; sculpture by **Hugh Hayden** and **Woody de Othello**; textile arts and mixed-media works by **Igshaan Adams** and **Sophia Narrett**; works on paper by **Jerrell Gibbs**, **Monica Ikegwu**, **Jasper Johns**, **Ernest Shaw**, and **Stephen Shore**; and video by **Kandis Williams**. Other historic works entering the collections of American and European art include works on paper by **William Baziotes**, **Elizabeth Catlett**, **Jacob Glushakow**, and **Chiura Obata**. New additions to the decorative arts collection include works by **Earl Jones**, **Graham Marks**, **Elsa Peretti**, and **Jomo Tariku**.

The BMA has also added a wide selection of textile and fiber arts works to its collections of arts from Africa, the Americas, Asia, and Pacific Islands, including those by unidentified artists from the **Diné** (Navajo) **culture** (Southwestern United States), **Mbuti culture** (Democratic Republic of Congo), **Paiwan culture** (Taiwan), and **Palestinian culture** (Al Khalil). A sculpture by **Judas Ullulaq** (Inuit) has also been acquired.

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. artbma.org

Visitor Information

General admission to the BMA is free. The BMA is open Wednesday through Sunday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Timed reservations, face masks, and answering two questions about COVID-19 exposure are required for all visitors. 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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