



BMA Launches New Brand Identity Today

New Logo to Feature Visitor and Collaborator Contributions,
Embracing the Museum's Role Within Its Community

For media in Baltimore

Anne Mannix Brown
The Baltimore
Museum of Art
410-274-9907
abrown@artbma.org

For media outside Baltimore

Alina E. Sumajin
PAVE Communications
& Consulting
646-369-2050
alina@paveconsult.com

BALTIMORE, MD (May 3, 2021)—The Baltimore Museum of Art (BMA) today unveiled its new brand identity, developed in collaboration with the agency Topos Graphics + Post Typography. The brand components—which are being implemented across all of the museum's print and digital assets—visually articulate the BMA's commitment to inclusivity, particularly in the way it signifies how the museum's identity comes from its community. To realize this brand vision, the BMA has developed a digital system that allows the public to contribute their own unique marks to the new logo, making it an ever-changing manifestation of its audiences and their engagement with the institution. The last significant change to the BMA's visual identity was in 2005.

To launch the branding process, BMA Chief Innovation Officer Melanie Martin and the Marketing and Experience team spent four months in 2019 interviewing colleagues, trustees, docents, volunteers, museum visitors, Baltimore residents, and tourists to better understand how the museum is perceived. The team conducted conversations at and around the museum as well as at its branch location at Lexington Market and other high-traffic locations in Baltimore such as the Inner Harbor and Penn Station. The team gleaned information about what compels people to see art and visit the museum, the artistic encounters they most vividly recall, and any moments of challenge or pain that they may have experienced at the museum. This led the museum to determine that its work should be guided by and its branding speak to four essential traits: honesty, vibrancy, empathy, and fearlessness.

The effort also solidified the BMA's vision to create a logo that actively embraces its community, resulting in a two-part structure developed by the design team comprised of Topos Graphics and Baltimore-based designer Bruce Willen. The first part positions the museum's name, Baltimore Museum of Art, beneath a dashed line, communicating that the museum serves as a platform for creativity. The second portion, which is situated above the line, captures the museum's acronym, BMA, as created by staff, visitors, and collaborators. To collect contributions, the BMA has installed iPads in its East Lobby, inviting visitors to submit their handwritten articulations of the letters, "B", "M", and "A" through an app. These letter marks will be entered into a repository from which the museum will continuously draw to complete its logo. The number of handwriting marks included in the logo will vary in each application, with some selected for recency and others because they resonate visually with a particular collateral. BMA staff have already submitted their letter

markings for general use and for their business cards, and visitors will soon be able to design postcards with their marks and print them at the museum.

In determining this logo approach, Martin said, “We all make marks. We doodle, we sketch, and we write—and like the best art, these marks we make uniquely visualize our thoughts, feelings, and ideas. Museums have a mandate to welcome their communities and respond to their needs. We like to think of this approach to a logo as a promise to do exactly that. With each mark, we respond and evolve just a little bit. We are committed to being a platform for creativity, to evolving with and because of our community.”

As part of the rebrand, the BMA also worked with Topos Graphics and Bruce Willen to establish new color and typography systems. All of these elements are envisioned to articulate the BMA’s essential traits. The website content management system was created by Aaron Buckner, an independent web applications developer.

The designers at Topos Graphics said, “One of the most inspiring early moments came when visiting the BMA’s *2020 Vision* exhibition. The artworks on display were honest, empathetic, vibrant, fearless—the traits we came to understand as central to the museum. We sensed a clarity of the BMA’s vision and took note of the works’ roots in process and tactility. This experience, combined with fruitful exchanges with the BMA’s staff and community, informed our work tremendously and led to our process-oriented design results.”

About The Design Team

The process was led by design studio Topos Graphics in collaboration with Baltimore designer Bruce Willen of Public Mechanics and Post Typography. The team’s unique perspective paired Topos Graphics’ extensive experience in branding cultural institutions with Post Typography’s decades of work in Baltimore’s arts and cultural communities, including several prior projects for the BMA.

Topos Graphics, founded in 2005 by Seth Labenz and Roy Rub, is a collaborative design studio with offices in New York and Atlanta. They answer client challenges holistically through multiple means: logo design, branding, motion graphics, print collateral, publications, signage, social media, environmental graphics, and objects. Guided by ideas, they create positive impact with thoughtful and formally precise work. In addition to the Baltimore Museum of Art, Topos’ recent cultural clients include the Brooklyn Museum, the Jewish Museum—New York, Oolite Arts, Knight Foundation, Westbeth Artists Housing, O, *Miami*, Columbia University GSAPP, MoMA PSI, New York Public Art Fund, and Key West Literary Seminar. They previously served as Creative Directors at New York’s Jewish Museum from 2014–2019.

Bruce Willen is a multidisciplinary designer, artist, and the founder of Public Mechanics—a design and art studio working in public and cultural spaces. Prior to Public Mechanics, Willen co-founded the acclaimed design agency Post Typography with Nolen Strals, working on high-profile projects that have shaped the visual language of Baltimore and beyond. His work has appeared on the covers of *Time Magazine*, *The New York Times*, and ESPN, and in dozens of design books and periodicals, including a Post Typography monograph. He is the co-author of the book *Lettering & Type* and has written for the *Washington Post*, *Design Observer*, and other publications.

The 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 (weather permitting). The museum and gardens are closed New Year’s Day, 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.

Connect with us through social media.

#ARTBMA • Stories • Facebook • Twitter • Instagram • YouTube

