



BALTIMORE
MUSEUM OF
ART

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BMA to Open Exhibition of New Work by Martha Jackson Jarvis Inspired by Artist's Ancestral History

What the Trees Have Seen features monumental mixed-media paintings that contribute an important Black narrative to the chronicles of the Revolutionary War

BALTIMORE, MD (March 6, 2023)—This May, the Baltimore Museum of Art (BMA) will open an exhibition of new works by Washington, DC-based artist Martha Jackson Jarvis that explores her great-great-great-great-grandfather Luke Valentine's service as a free Black militiaman in the American Revolution. The cycle of 13 abstract paintings from her *Adaptation: Luke Valentine's Sonic Journey* series are produced at grand scale on 300-pound sheets of paper to evocatively trace her ancestor's movements on foot across shifting, and at times treacherous, terrain. The paintings capture Jackson Jarvis's distinct approach to layering her own foraged walnut ink with watercolor, oil, and acrylic paint, and collaged strips of paper to produce formally and conceptually complex works. The exhibition, which also includes smaller paintings on paper inspired by the meditative form of the mandala, reveals the experiences of one individual from within little-discussed African American narratives of U.S. history, adding nuance and perspective to our understanding of the origins of this country. *Martha Jackson Jarvis: What the Trees Have Seen* will be on view from May 7 through October 1, 2023, and will mark the artist's first solo museum exhibition since 1996, introducing new audiences to her compelling vision and work.

"Martha Jackson Jarvis is an artist deserving of considerably more study and understanding, and we are delighted to have the opportunity to engage museum audiences with her practice. *What the Trees Have Seen* captures the material intricacy of her paintings and installations, while also offering new, poignant insight into American history, revealing anew that the full American story has not yet been told," said Asma Naeem, the BMA's Dorothy Wagner Wallis Director. "As the BMA continues in its mission, we look forward to bringing to the fore both artistic and historic voices that inspire new ways of looking and considering history, our present moment, and the future. We are also pleased to continue our support for artists with strong ties to Baltimore and the region."

Jackson Jarvis first embarked on the journey to create this body of work in 2019 when she discovered the testimony Valentine gave to the United States Congress to receive his veteran's pension. The transcript in which he describes his involvement in multiple battles allowed her to personally retrace the route by which he traveled on foot from Virginia to South Carolina over the course of nearly 12 months. In her own travels, the artist paid particular attention to the topography of land, with its towering trees, dense thickets, and waterways, giving a new depth of meaning to his experience. In January 2020, she returned to her studio to produce the monumental mixed-media paintings that comprise the *Adaptation* series, sequencing each work

with precision to speculatively capture her ancestor's experience as he traversed the land. The BMA's installation of the works will be accompanied by a pulsing sound composition by musician Herman Barney, amplifying the sensory experience and offering audiences a greater appreciation of Valentine's experience. Jackson Jarvis also worked collaboratively with poet Carol Bean, who composed a collection of speculative impressions of Valentine's journey to pair with the soundscape, which will also be accessible online. Visitors will be invited to engage with the tactility of Jackson Jarvis's practice through a 'touch sample' made from the artist's studio materials.

Martha Jackson Jarvis: What the Trees Have Seen is curated by Jessica Bell Brown, Curator and Department Head of Contemporary Art; Leila Grothe, Associate Curator of Contemporary Art; and Cecilia Wichmann, Associate Curator of Contemporary Art.

Martha Jackson Jarvis

Martha Jackson Jarvis was born in 1952 in Lynchburg, VA, and raised in Philadelphia, PA. She studied at Howard University and Temple University's Tyler School of Arts and has been based in Washington, DC since 1970. Her work was selected by the late acclaimed artist and curator David Driskell for the inaugural exhibition of the Smithsonian Anacostia Museum in 1987, and was included in *The Decade Show: Frameworks of Identity* at the New Museum in New York, NY in 1990. She is the recipient of numerous prestigious awards, including the United States Artists Project Grant (2011), Creative Capital Grant (2000), and National Sculpture Grant of the National Endowment for the Arts (1986). Jackson Jarvis also collaborated as an artist designer on the set of Julie Dash's *Daughters of the Dust* (1991). Her previous solo exhibition was *Structuring Energy* at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in 1996.

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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