



BALTIMORE  
MUSEUM OF  
ART

## BMA Announces More than 100 New Acquisitions Across Media, Time, and Culture

Group includes first performance piece to enter the museum's collection and works by Native artists acquired in tandem with [Preoccupied: Indigenizing the Museum](#)

### For media in Baltimore

Anne Brown

410-274-9907

abrown@artbma.org

### For media outside Baltimore

Alina Sumajin

PAVE Communications

& Consulting

646-369-2050

alina@paveconsult.com

BALTIMORE, MD (January 11, 2024)— The Baltimore Museum of Art (BMA) announced today the acquisition of more than 100 works of art. The objects entering the collection represent a broad range of historical and contemporary material and reflect the BMA's ongoing efforts to diversify its holdings with works by women artists, artists of color, artists with ties to the Baltimore region, and those representing global cultures across time. Among these works are paintings by **Marie Bracquemond, Brenda Goodman, Alexander Harrison, Martha Jackson Jarvis, Hung Liu, Kylie Manning, Megan Rooney, James Alexander Simpson, Helen Torr, Susan Catherine Waters, and James Williams II**; sculptural works by **Rhea Dillon, Doyle Lane, Jiha Moon, Shahzia Sikander, and Chiffon Thomas**; video by **Justen Leroy and Sin Wai Kin**; and works on paper by **Merikokeb Berhanu, Darrel Ellis, Dindga McCannon, Peter Milton, and Wura-Natasha Ogunji**, and numerous others across media.

In a significant milestone, the acquisitions also include the first work of performance art to enter the BMA's collection: interdisciplinary artist **Jefferson Pinder's *Ben-Hur* (2012)**. Pinder (b. Washington, D.C., 1970) embraces the formal qualities of performance, moving image, sound, and sculpture to investigate constructions of race and history. *Ben-Hur* is a summative, stand-out work in Pinder's oeuvre that engages six Black men in actions that recall representations of labor in art. A detailed guide to the performance as well as video documentation supports ongoing stewardship of the work and will enable the BMA to stage it in the future. The acquisition also includes the first edition of Pinder's related, standalone video piece *Ben-Hur* (2013).

On April 21, the BMA will launch [Preoccupied: Indigenizing the Museum](#), a series of exhibitions and projects that centers the work, experiences, and voices of Native artists. In tandem with this important initiative, the BMA is continuing to expand its holdings of Native works with a specially commissioned work by **Mark Tayac**, the Maryland-based 29th-generation hereditary Chief of the Piscataway Indian Nation and member of the Beaver clan. *Traditional Beaver Pouch Bag* (2024) is made by hand with beaver hide and deerskin from animals that had previously died and adorned them with white clamshells, wampum shell beads, and deer toes. It was created using methods passed down through generations and emulates historical bags made to hold tobacco and an effigy pipe. The work connects to the tobacco history of the Maryland region, which is also the ancestral homeland of the Piscataway Indian Nation.

Other Native acquisitions include the single-channel, high-definition video *niwaniskān isi kiya | I Awake To You* (2023) by **Meryl McMaster** (nêhiyaw from Red Pheasant Cree Nation). McMaster's lens-based self-portraiture is often accompanied by her poetry and narration, which explores personal identity through themes of land, lineage, memory, colonialism, and the world beyond what we can see. In this film, we follow the artist on a dreaming journey through the Red Pheasant Cree Nation's reserve in Saskatchewan, Canada. *Aura* (2023) is an optically radiant basket by artist and ecological activist **Jeremy Frey** (Passamaquoddy), who is part of a long line of revered Native basket makers. Frey used a traditional Wabanaki porcupine pattern to create a textural geometry of red peaks over a turquoise foundation, generating a play of light on dye and form. All three of these newly acquired works will be featured in *Finding Home*, one of the nine *Preoccupied* exhibitions that explores the dynamic relationships between Native cultures and the land.

The BMA also received several important gifts, including 10 prints, two photographs and two decorative arts objects from Darnell Burfoot, a longtime BMA supporter and president of the museum's Prints, Drawings & Photographs Society. Burfoot focused his collecting on BIPOC artists long before mainstream institutions shared his priorities. His gift includes four lithographs by **John Biggers**, a limited-edition screen print by acclaimed contemporary artist **Obey (aka Shepard Fairey)**, a pristine example of **Frank Gehry's** *Wiggle Side Chair* (1969-72, this example 2004), and a silk skirt collaboratively produced by **Kara Walker** and avant-garde Belgian fashion designer **Ann Demeulemeester**.

Los Angeles-based collectors Gail and Tony Ganz gave the BMA 13 photographs from **Gordon Parks'** "The Atmosphere of Crime" series. Over the course of six weeks in 1957, Parks focused his lens on crime, policing, and criminality in New York, Chicago, San Francisco, and Los Angeles. Twelve of these images were published in *Life* magazine, though with misleading captions. The works in the gift to the BMA are estate reprints from 2019 selected by the Gordon Parks Foundation from several hundred negatives created for the *Life* project—the majority of which were never published or printed during Parks' lifetime.

"The acquisitions announced today reflect the BMA's vision to continue to stridently expand our collection through both the artists represented and the global narratives that can be shared with these objects. The works entering our collection activate broader understandings of our moment, our communities, and our histories while creating space for new and underappreciated voices and experiences," said Asma Naeem, the BMA's Dorothy Wagner Wallis Director. "Our mission at the BMA is to tell stories that are both rooted in our local context and offer a lens into global cultures and expressions that reveal our shared humanity. This selection of works beautifully represents this effort and I am grateful to our curatorial team for their insight as we continue forward."

Additional details about highlight works follow below.

**Merikokeb Berhanu. *Untitled IV and Untitled V (2007-2009)*.** Merikokeb Berhanu (b. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 1977) gained widespread recognition following the inclusion of a group of her large abstract paintings in *The Milk of Dreams* at the Venice Biennale in 2022. *Untitled IV* and *Untitled V* are from one of the few bodies of work that the artist brought with her when she moved to Maryland in 2016. These works on paper with a thick, painted surface capture Berhanu's otherworldly blend of seemingly organic and ethereal imagery. While her visual language seeks a more universal approach to form, certain

characteristically Ethiopian influences are present that derive from the region's long tradition of sacred painting and Coptic manuscript illumination.

**Marie Bracquemond. *Flower Vases at Sèvres (c. 1880-1885)*.** Marie Bracquemond (French, 1840-1916) is regarded as one of the three great French female Impressionists, alongside Berthe Morisot and Eva Gonzalez. Her works capture her interest and experimentation with color variation, loose brushwork, and *plein air* painting. Though she exhibited in the Impressionist shows of 1879, 1880, and 1886, friction with her husband led her to abandon painting and she produced only a small body of work. This rare panel painting shows a delicate scene of potted plants in a garden conservatory, most likely a view of Bracquemond's home garden. Its cropped composition, low point of view, and feathered brushwork reveal the influence of Japanese art. This painting adds significant depth to the BMA's Impressionist holdings.

**Brenda Goodman. *Untitled (1973)*.** Brenda Goodman (b. Detroit, MI, 1943) has been fearlessly making complex and evocative self-portraits for more than 50 years. Over the course of her career, Goodman has experimented with and pushed the boundaries of both figuration and abstraction, creating distinct works that emphasize the visual vocabulary of emotion and psychology. *Untitled* was presented in her first solo exhibition in 1973 and poignantly captures the artist's struggle to emerge from the traumas of her relationship with her mother following her death. Produced during a critical moment in the artist's life, the painting expands the BMA's holdings of representational work from the 1970s by women artists.

**Martha Jackson Jarvis. *Reconfiguring Flag (2021)*.** Martha Jackson Jarvis (b. Lynchburg, VA, 1952) is among the most important American artists working today. Over the course of her four-decade career, she has created numerous public commissions across the country and her work has proven transformative to watershed creative productions such as Julie Dash's important film *Daughters of the Dust* (1989). *Reconfiguring Flag* culminates Jackson Jarvis's monumental cycle of abstract works through which she chronicled the story of her great-great-great-great grandfather, a free Black militiaman who fought in the American Revolutionary War. The cycle was presented at the BMA in *Martha Jackson Jarvis: What the Trees Have Seen*.

**Doyle Lane. *Three Weed Pots (c. 1960-1978)*.** Doyle Lane (American, 1925-2002) was a seminal figure in the post-war Los Angeles art scene. Despite his prolific ceramics practice, Lane has, until now, remained an underrepresented Black artist. Throughout his career, he produced countless ceramic beads, tiles, murals, "clay paintings," and weed pots—gem-like vessels that could be used to hold a dried sprig of greenery. As reflected in the three weed pots acquired by the BMA, Lane was recognized for his experimentation with colors and variegated glazes, which can assume a mottled or ombre effect through a purposeful overfiring in the kiln. Within the BMA collection, Lane's work complements drawings by his close friend Charles White, as well as California ceramics by Peter Voulkos and Marguerite Wildenhain.

**Megan Rooney. *Your Wind for my Mirror (2022-2023)*.** In the past few years, Megan Rooney (b. Toronto, Canada, 1985) has emerged as a compelling voice in gestural abstract painting, performance, and installation. Her dreamlike abstractions engage with place, memory, and storytelling. Born in Cape Town and raised between South Africa, Brazil, and Canada, Rooney applies the energy of her entire body to investigate the nuance and impact of color harmonies on canvases scaled to her wingspan. *Your Wind for my Mirror* was presented in the artist's first solo gallery show in Paris and captures her distinct style

and approach. The acquisition also continues the BMA's work to diversify its holdings with the work of women artists from around the globe.

**Shahzia Sikander. *Touchstone* (2021).** Shahzia Sikander (b. Lahore, Pakistan, 1969) is an internationally acclaimed Pakistani-American artist, celebrated for bringing Indo-Persian manuscript-painting traditions into dialogue with contemporary art. Through her multidisciplinary practice, she interrogates cultural exchange, migration, colonialism and war, race, gender, and dominant histories. *Touchstone* is a substantial glass mosaic inspired by the artist's 2020 animated film *Reckoning*. With immense detail and color, *Touchstone* depicts an Indian woman holding a *chalawa* (a Punjabi term for a type of spirit) that escapes her grasp and cannot be confined—a concept that relates to many of the themes that define the artist's career.

**James Alexander Simpson. *Portrait, probably of Mary Ann Tritt Cassell. (c. 1839).*** The significance of this promised gift to the BMA lies in its early and sensitive depiction of a biracial young woman living in Georgetown around 1840. It is believed to depict one of the two daughters of Henrietta Steptoe (1779-1850), a free Black midwife in Georgetown, and is likely of her younger daughter, Mary Ann Tritt Cassell (1807-1867). Through the familial history of the sitter, the portrait embodies complex narratives around race, identity, family, and regional history. James Alexander Simpson (American, 1805-1880) was a self-taught portraitist who worked in Georgetown and later in Baltimore. His 1822 portrait of Yarrow Mamout (c. 1736-1823), a formerly enslaved African Muslim man, was on view at the National Portrait Gallery (2016-2019) as a long-term loan organized by now-BMA director Asma Naeem.

**Helen Torr. *Shell, Stone, and Feather with Bark. (1931).*** Like many women artists of her generation, Helen Torr (American, 1886-1967) attained critical and commercial success posthumously. Torr was a central figure in the "Stieglitz Circle" of American modernist artists and her abstract work is often inspired by nature and the landscape. Married to artist Arthur Dove, she spent much of her career, from the 1910s through 40s, alternating between periods of creative productivity and caring for Dove during his illnesses. Her work was rediscovered following her death through the efforts of her sister and Eva Gatling, the director of the Hecksher Museum, and is now represented in many major museum collections. *Shell, Stone, and Feather with Bark* reflects many characteristics of Torr's painting style with its muted palette and balance of observed representational detail and rhythmic abstraction.

### **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](http://artbma.org).

# # #