BMA ANNOUNCES APRIL 2015 REOPENING OF RENOVATED AND EXPANDED GALLERIES DEDICATED TO AFRICAN AND ASIAN ART

BMA’s Multi-Year Renovation to Revitalize the Visitor Experience Nearing Completion

BALTIMORE, MD (April 30, 2014)—The Baltimore Museum of Art (BMA) announces that it will reopen fully renovated galleries dedicated to the new presentation of the museum’s African and Asian art collections on April 26, 2015, marking the completion of the next major phase of the BMA’s multi-year renovation and collections reinstall. The reinstalled African and Asian art collections will occupy expanded galleries on the first floor of the museum’s landmark neoclassical building designed by leading American architect John Russell Pope. The new presentations of both collections represent significant expansions from previous installations—more than tripling the gallery space for African art and doubling the galleries for Asian art.

The reopening of the African and Asian art galleries mark a significant milestone in the BMA’s $28 million renovation to provide visitors with a more open and welcoming environment and more fresh and inspiring encounters with art. The first phase of the BMA’s ambitious multi-year renovation was realized when the Contemporary Wing reopened in November 2012. The next major milestone will take place during the museum’s 100th anniversary in November 2014 with the reopening of the BMA’s historic Merrick Entrance, the renovated Dorothy McIlvain Scott American Wing, and the new presentation of the BMA’s outstanding collection of American painting, sculpture, and decorative arts.

“The BMA has one of the preeminent collections of African art in the U.S. and an important collection of Asian art,” said BMA Director Doreen Bolger. “We are excited to showcase these remarkable collections in renovated galleries that foster an environment of reflection, inquiry, and engagement with the works of art. A variety of thematic exhibitions and installations will also provide visitors with a fresh and ever-changing experience.”

The BMA’s African collection reinstall has received significant support from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts. Both the African and Asian collections have received funding from the State of Maryland and bonds approved by the City of Baltimore.

Alan and Janet Wurtzburger African Art Gallery and New Installation of African Art

Located on the first floor of the BMA’s historic Pope building, the new galleries for African art will occupy over 4,000 sq. ft., more than three times the size of its former space. The expanded and renovated galleries will have improved methods of display, with new casework promoting viewing works in the round, more objects displayed individually, and higher ceilings that will more effectively suggest the scale of the artworks in their original contexts. Curated by BMA Associate Curator for African Art Kathryn Wysocki Gunsch, the new installation will include over 100 objects, many of them large-scale, and will address the impact of region, history, and culture on African art traditions to encourage visitors to engage with the unique experience and cultural expression that each African art object offers.

The reinstall is organized around three central themes: the artist, which will emphasize the different types and levels of training for African artists and their preparation in different African cultural traditions; the audience, which will juxtapose art works created for the public setting with those created for private use in order to explore the —more—
different intentions and impact of patronage; and the period, which will focus on artworks created from the mid-20th century and into the 21st century to explore how African art was shaped by the political, social, and cultural changes that affected the continent in the late 20th century.

“Through the structural improvements of the renovation and a rethinking of our installation strategy, the BMA’s new galleries for African art will demystify the works in this renowned collection by emphasizing the relationships between objects and the lives of the people by and for whom the objects were made,” said BMA Associate Curator for African Art Kathryn Wysocki Gunsch. “We look forward to sharing this collection in a way that supports fresh connections to these incredible artworks and to the social, political, and cultural history of the continent more broadly.”

The BMA is one of the earliest American museums to acquire African art. In 1954, a transformative gift of 125 African objects from prescient Baltimore collectors Alan and Janet Wurtzburger included wood, stone, bronze and ivory sculpture from West and Central Africa dating from the 16th to the early 20th centuries. Today, the BMA holds more than 2,100 objects from ancient Egypt to contemporary Zimbabwe, ranging from items produced for performances, royal courts, and religious use to pieces created for the traditional art market. Several 19th- and 20th-century masks and figurative sculptures from West and Central Africa are recognized internationally as the best of their type. Highlights of the museum’s African art collection include the majestic *Great Mother Headdress (D’mba)* from the Baga region of New Guinea, a finely sculpted *Mask (Mbuya)* from the Pende chiefdoms of the Democratic Republic of Congo, and two Sande Society helmet masks sculpted by the celebrated Nguabu Master, an artist working in the Mende region of Sierra Leone.

**Julius Levy Memorial Gallery and New Installation of Asian Art**

The BMA’s collection of Asian Art will be reinstalled in two renovated galleries on the first floor of the museum’s historic Pope building. The new presentation of Asian art is curated by BMA Associate Curator of Asian Art Frances Klapthor and will include approximately 150 works of art from China, representing the major highlights from a collection of 3,100 objects. The north gallery will present a thematic survey of the BMA’s renowned Chinese high-fired ceramics representing 1,000 years of innovation from white stoneware of the 9th and 10th centuries to imaginative monochromatic works created in the 17th through 19th centuries. The installation will focus on the home, inviting visitors to consider how the ceramic vessels were used in a domestic setting, in addition to where, when, how, by and for whom they were made. The south gallery will be focused on the importance of the temple and the tomb in Chinese artistic tradition through the presentation of mortuary wares and images related to China’s Taoist, Confucian, and Buddhist spiritual traditions. Particularly notable works in the collection are the life-sized gilt bronze *Water-Moon Guanyin*, a large 15th-century stoneware storage vessel, and a Ming dynasty brushwasher.

“The two new galleries dedicated solely to Asian art provide us with the opportunity to better showcase the beauty and strengths of this collection,” said BMA Associate Curator of Asian Art Frances Klapthor. “This reinstallation wonderfully expands the geographic and aesthetic scope of the museum’s presentation of Asian art.”

The BMA has a long history of collecting and presenting Asian art, with the first acquisition taking place in 1922 when the BMA purchased an Indian metalwork object from the collection of American artist Lockwood De Forest. In 1927, as the museum was planning the Pope building, a gift in memory of founding trustee Julius Levy provided the funds for the acquisition and display of Asian art in a dedicated gallery. For nearly 100 years, the BMA has steadily grown and refined the Asian art collection through gifts from generous donors such as Dr. Claribel and Miss Etta Cone, Saidie A. May, and Elizabeth and Frank Goodnow, as well as select acquisitions.
Go Mobile

In conjunction with the African and Asian collection gallery reopenings, the BMA is adding new content to Go Mobile, the museum’s free mobile interpretation guide designed to provide visitors with content-rich experiences and additional points of entry through audio and video interviews with artists, curators, conservators, scholars, and community voices. Accessible through a website optimized for visitors’ mobile devices or through iPod Touches available free-of-charge at the museum, users will be able to explore the BMA’s African and Asian art collections through multiple navigation options, including the ability to search by artist or culture. The BMA’s first Go Mobile content was launched with the reopening of the Contemporary Wing in November 2012 and will be expanded with content related to the reopening of the Dorothy McIlvain Scott American Wing in November 2014.

PROJECT ARCHITECT: Ziger/Snead Architects

Ziger/Snead Architects has provided original design solutions and superior service for public and private clients in the Baltimore region and beyond for more than 28 years. Their expertise includes work for academic campuses, cultural institutions, non-profit headquarters and community centers, religious spaces, urban redevelopment and mixed-use projects, and custom residential design. Previous projects include the Maryland Historical Society, the Brown Center at the Maryland Institute College of Art with Charles Brickbauer, and Frederick Douglass-Isaac Myers Maritime Park and Museum.

CAMPAIGN: In a New Light: The Campaign for The Baltimore Museum of Art

In a New Light is the most ambitious philanthropic campaign in the BMA’s history. Since announcing the leadership phase of the campaign in 2008, the BMA has received commitments of more than $73 million. The campaign includes six key fundraising areas: endowment funds for core artistic and educational programs, immediate impact funds to support new initiatives during the campaign, capital support, annual operating support, planned gifts, and gifts of art to enhance the collection. Recognizing the need for long-term financial stability, the museum prioritized the endowment first and has raised $31.1 million or 104 percent of the $30 million endowment goal.

ABOUT THE BALTIMORE MUSEUM OF ART

The Baltimore Museum of Art is home to an internationally renowned collection of 19th-century, modern, and contemporary art. Founded in 1914 with a single painting, the BMA today has 90,000 works of art—including the largest holding of works by Henri Matisse in the world. The BMA has a long tradition of collecting art of the day, beginning with the Cone sisters, whose avid acquisitions from living artists signaled the museum’s commitment to collecting contemporary art. Throughout the museum, visitors will find an outstanding selection of European and American fine and decorative arts, prints and drawings from the 15th century to the present, works by established and emerging contemporary artists, and objects from Africa, Asia, the Ancient Americas, and Pacific Islands. The museum is located in a park-like setting in the heart of Charles Village and adjacent to the main campus of The Johns Hopkins University. The BMA’s 10-building complex encompasses 210,000 square feet and is distinguished by a grand historic building designed in the 1920s by renowned American architect John Russell Pope. Two beautifully landscaped gardens display an array of 20th-century sculpture that is an oasis in the city. Since 2006, the BMA has eliminated general admission fees so that everyone can enjoy the power of art.

###

Media Contacts:

**The Baltimore Museum of Art**

Anne Mannix Brown
443-573-1870 / 410-274-9907
abrown@artbma.org

**Resnicow Schroeder Associates**

Maria May/Hanna Gisel
214-207-6082/5162
mmay/hgisel@resnicowschroeder.com