BALTIMORE MUSEUM OF ART ACQUIRES SIGNIFICANT WORKS BY MARK BRADFORD, PAUL CHAN, NORMAN LEWIS, AND ELLSWORTH KELLY

First Works by Bradford Enter the BMA's Collection to Coincide with the Artist's Representation of the U.S. at the 2017 Venice Biennale

BALTIMORE, MD (March 23, 2017)—The Baltimore Museum of Art (BMA) today announced the acquisition of major works by Mark Bradford, Paul Chan, Norman Lewis, and Ellsworth Kelly. Spanning a range of media, the acquisitions complement the BMA's holdings of contemporary art, from mid-20th-century American abstraction to the art of today, and demonstrate the museum's commitment to expanding the narrative of art history through the representation of diverse artists.

Marking the first works by the artist to enter the museum's collection, the Mark Bradford acquisitions represent the historic collaboration between the BMA, co-organizer of the U.S. Pavilion at the 2017 Venice Biennale, and Bradford, the representative for the U.S. in 2017. Bradford's monumental painting *My Grandmother Felt the Color*, 2016, is currently on view at the BMA in a gallery dedicated to social abstraction, alongside other artists who have turned to abstract imagery to convey the humanity, complexity, and ongoing impact of specific cultural experiences, such as Jack Whitten and Ross Bleckner. *Niagara,* a video by Bradford that examines the urban landscape through both formal principles and societal roles, will go on view in Baltimore in the summer of 2018. The BMA has also acquired an outstanding example of an oil on canvas by Norman Lewis, an African-American pioneer of the Abstract Expressionist movement and an important figure of the Harlem Renaissance, who can be seen as a predecessor to Bradford's approach to abstraction.

The museum also introduces its first digitally animated installation to the collection, created by a trailblazer of the medium, Paul Chan. Chan's celebrated *1st ~~Light~~*, 2005, with its elegiac and critical reflection on America in the wake of 9/11, will build on the BMA's strong collection of politically engaged art. It will be installed at the museum in the fall of 2017. Additionally, the museum's first photograph by leading American artist Ellsworth Kelly deepens the BMA's already robust holdings of works by the artist. Represented by painting, sculpture, collage, drawing, and print, Kelly is a touchstone of the BMA's collection.

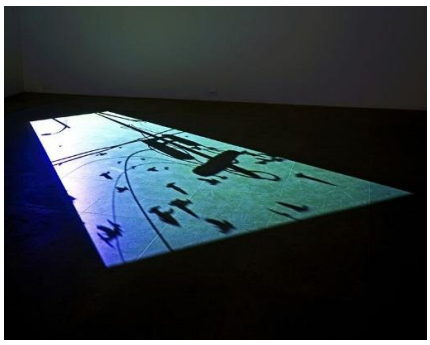
"Each of the works entering our collection is produced by artists fundamental to the development of American modern and contemporary art, and many are in direct dialogue with the social and political conditions of their day," said Christopher Bedford, BMA Dorothy Wagner Wallis Director and Commissioner for the U.S. Pavilion at the 2017 Venice Biennale. "We are pleased to enrich the experience of our collections for our audiences and to continue to expand the narrative of art history through the presentation of these significant works spanning painting, video, and photography. We aim to develop a new and inclusive view of the history of American art, and these acquisitions help us establish that vital course."

The acquisitions include:

My Grandmother Felt the Color, **Mark Bradford, 2016:** This large-scale mixed media painting is closely related to works that Bradford will exhibit at the U.S. Pavilion at the 2017 Venice Biennale. The painting is made with bleached paper that is scored and molded by hand to produce a sculptural surface, renewing the traditions of abstract and materialist painting for the 21st century.

Niagara, **Mark Bradford, 2005**: A powerful media work by Bradford, *Niagara* is a video recording of a little over three minutes long, featuring a single tracking shot of a black man seen from the back walking down a city sidewalk. The video touches on the issues of race, gender, sexuality, and socioeconomic status in present-day America.

Autumn Flight, **Norman Lewis, 1956:** *Autumn Flight* is an exemplary painting by the influential artist. It evokes a flock of birds moving through a mottled autumnal sky, referencing the natural world through the artist's signature brand of abstraction. The paint was applied to the canvas in several layers by brushing and spraying, either directly or with the use of a sharp stencil.



1st ~~Light~~, **Paul Chan, 2005:** Considered one of Chan's most influential works, *1st ~~Light~~* is the first digital animation installation to enter the BMA's collection. It uses the digital medium to capture the cultural memories and complex emotions of life post-9/11. A 14-minute video loop is projected onto the gallery floor to produce an elongated trapezoid slowly changing color to evoke the course of the day from dawn to dusk. As the loop progresses, silhouettes of objects ascend skyward, while the forms of people fall to the ground. The work questions the priority placed on consumer goods in today's society and is generally considered one of the most significant moving image works to be produced in recent decades.

***Stairway, St. Martin*, Ellsworth Kelly, 1977:** Marking the first photograph by Kelly to enter the BMA's collection, this gelatin silver print strengthens the BMA's substantial collection of works by Kelly. The photograph is an excellent example of Kelly's interest in the play between light and shadows, as well as in architectural details. Evoking the artist's paintings, the photograph flattens a stairway crisscrossed by diagonal shadows into a seemingly two-dimensional plane.

Images (from top): Mark Bradford. *My Grandmother Felt the Color*. 2016. The Baltimore Museum of Art: Purchased as the gift of Anonymous Donors, BMA R.17881. Photo: Joshua White, Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth; Mark Bradford. *Niagara*. 2005. Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth; Norman Lewis. *Autumn Flight*. 1956. The Baltimore Museum of Art: Purchased as the gift of Keith Lee; Edward Joseph Gallagher III Memorial Fund, Frederick R.Weisman Contemporary Art Acquisitions Endowment, Dr. Max Stern Trust Fund, and Anna Elizabeth Fehl Acquisitions Endowment, BMA R.17880; Paul Chan. *1st ~~Light~~*, 2005 digital video projection. 14:00. Courtesy the artist and Greene Naftali, New York. Photograph: Jean Vong; Ellsworth Kelly. *Stairway, St. Martin*. 1977. The Baltimore Museum of Art: Nathan L. and Suzanne F. Cohen Contemporary Art Endowment, BMA R.17873.

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 95,000 objects—including the largest public holding of works by Henri Matisse. Throughout the museum, visitors will find an outstanding selection of American and European painting, sculpture, and decorative arts; works by established and emerging contemporary artists; significant artworks from China; stunning Antioch mosaics; and an exceptional collection of art from Africa. The BMA's galleries also showcase examples from one of the nation's finest collections of prints, drawings, and photographs, and exquisite textiles from around the world. The 210,000-square-foot museum is distinguished by a grand historic building designed in the 1920s by renowned American architect John Russell Pope and two beautifully landscaped sculpture gardens. As a major cultural destination for the region, the BMA hosts a dynamic program of exhibitions, events, and educational programs throughout the year. General admission to the BMA is free so that everyone can enjoy the power of art. For more information, visit www.artbma.org.

Media Contacts:

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

National Media:
Resnicow and Associates
Megan Ardery / Barbara Escobar / Andrea Cihlarova
212-671-5178 / 5174 / 5164
mardery / bescobar / acihlarova@resnicow.com