

## THE BALTIMORE MUSEUM OF ART PRESENTS MAJOR RETROSPECTIVE OF VISUAL ART BY JOHN WATERS

*John Waters: Indecent Exposure* examines the artist's influential career  
and experimentation across media

**BALTIMORE, MD (March 21, 2018)**—From October 7, 2018, to January 6, 2019, The Baltimore Museum of Art (BMA) presents *John Waters: Indecent Exposure*, the first major retrospective of the artist's visual art in his hometown of Baltimore. Through more than 160 photographs, sculptures, soundworks, and video made since the early 1990s, Waters' renegade humor subverts mainstream expectations of representation and reveals the ways that mass media and celebrity embody cultural attitudes, moral codes, and shared tragedy. Waters freely manipulates images of less-than sacred, low-brow references—Elizabeth Taylor's hairstyles, Justin Bieber's preening poses, his own self-portraits, and pictures of individuals brought into the limelight through his films—to entice viewers to connect to his astute and provocative observations about society.



“We are thrilled to organize the first retrospective of John Waters work in his hometown,” said BMA Dorothy Wagner Wallis Director Chris Bedford. “The wide-ranging influences and products of his work speak succinctly to popular culture within the context of the history of art. I’m excited for visitors to experience this exhibition and find frequent homages to Baltimore across his works.”

Waters' first artwork, *Divine in Ecstasy* (1992), immortalized the peak of his favorite muse's rapture by using a still camera to capture a split-second's worth of movie footage on a television monitor. Since then, he has transposed some of his most provocative themes and motifs concerning race, sex, gender, consumerism, and religion into photographs, montages, and sculpture. By bringing “bad taste” to the walls of galleries and museums, Waters tugs at the curtain of exclusivity that can divide art from human experience. *Children Who Smoke* (2009) embraces taboos with an image of eight child film stars of the 1930s and 40s with lit cigarettes and *Congratulations* (2014) pokes fun at the contemporary art world's jargon of success with a riff on the red dots once used in galleries to indicate a sale. Waters' *Campaign Button* (2004) encourages amorous encounters as an alternate use for voting booths. These works and others present a call to viewers to overthrow hierarchy and interrogate the value systems in which we all participate.

*John Waters: Indecent Exposure* is organized around themes of popular culture, the movie industry, the contemporary art world, the artist's childhood and identity, and the transgressive power of images. Among the exhibition's highlights are a photographic installation in which Waters explores the auras and absurdities of famous films, their directors, and actors; a suite of photographs and sculpture that use humor to humanize dark moments in history from the Kennedy assassination to 9/11; and *Kiddie Flamingos*, a 2014 video work of children reading a G-rated version of *Pink Flamingos* (Waters' notorious 1972 celebration of all things outsider and extreme). Other bodies of work explored in the exhibition include Waters' renegade versions of abstractions, still lifes, and readymades and iconic cult film images that constitute a photographic reunion of Waters' Dreamland Productions actors and crew. The exhibition concludes with a selection of ephemera and some of Waters' earliest films presented in a peep-show format.

“Waters is highly admired for his career as a filmmaker, but is less known for his work as an artist,” said BMA Senior Curator of Contemporary Art Kristen Hileman. “It has been incredibly rewarding to develop an exhibition that highlights his influence as an artist, and participant and critic of contemporary culture. His work has had a huge impact on an evolving and more encompassing idea of American identity, and provides an important perspective on how we assert ourselves as individuals contributing to a community that embraces difference.”

#### **TICKET INFORMATION**

Tickets are available through [artbma.org](http://artbma.org) and at the BMA Box Office beginning Wednesday, September 5. Prices are \$15 for adults, \$13 for seniors, \$12 for groups of 10 or more, \$10 for students with ID, and \$5 for youth ages 6-18. BMA Members and children under the age of 6 are admitted free. For more information, call 443-573-1701.

#### **EXHIBITION CATALOGUE**

The exhibition is accompanied by a new monograph co-published by The Baltimore Museum of Art and The University of California Press. It features essays by BMA Senior Curator of Contemporary Art Kristen Hileman; art historian and activist Jonathan David Katz; and critic, curator, and artist Robert Storr; as well as an interview with Waters by artist Wolfgang Tillmans.

#### **EXHIBITION TOUR**

Following its presentation in Baltimore, *John Waters: Indecent Exposure* will be on view at the Wexner Center for the Arts in Columbus, Ohio from February 2 through April 28, 2019.

#### **ABOUT JOHN WATERS**

It has been more than 50 years since John Waters (American, b. 1946) filmed his first short, *Hag in a Black Leather Jacket* (1964). The set was the roof of his parents' Baltimore home, and the action, shot on stock stolen by a friend, involved an interracial marriage. By the early 1970s, influenced by the experimental films of Andy Warhol, Jack Smith, and George and Mike Kuchar, Waters was presenting his work in underground cinemas. Over the following decades, his reputation as an uncompromising cultural force has grown not only in the cinematic field but also through his visual artwork, writing, and performances.

As a visual artist, Waters has had numerous solo and group exhibitions in the United States and abroad since 1992. A complete retrospective, *John Waters: Change of Life*, opened at the New Museum, New York (2004) and traveled to the Fotomuseum Winterthur in Switzerland, the Orange County Museum of Art in Los Angeles, and The Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh. Other solo exhibitions include *PC North*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2015); *How Much Can You Take?*, Kunsthau Zurich, Switzerland (2015); *Beverly Hills John*, Sprüth Magers, Berlin (2015) and Marianne Boesky Gallery, New York (2015); *John Waters: Bad Director's Chair*, Sprüth Magers, Berlin (2014); *John Waters: Neurotic*, McClain Gallery, Houston (2012) and Albert Merola Gallery, Provincetown (2009); *John Waters*, Arthur Roger Gallery, New Orleans (2011); *John Waters: Rush*, Rena Bransten Gallery, San Francisco (2010); and *John Waters: Rear Projection*, Gagosian Gallery, Los Angeles (2009). Waters was invited to guest curate an exhibition at The Walker Art Center in Minneapolis in 2011-2012 as part of their Event Horizon ongoing project and his *Absentee Landlord* exhibition was held over by popular demand. Waters' work is in the collections of The Baltimore Museum of Art and The Museum of Modern Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New Museum of Contemporary Art, and Whitney Museum of American Art in New York.

### **THE BALTIMORE MUSEUM OF ART**

Founded in 1914, The Baltimore Museum of Art is a major cultural destination recognized for engaging diverse audiences through dynamic exhibitions and innovative educational and community outreach programs. The BMA's internationally renowned collection of 95,000 objects encompasses more than 1,000 works by Henri Matisse anchored by the famed Cone Collection of modern art, as well as one of the nation's finest holdings of prints, drawings, and photographs. The galleries showcase an exceptional collection of art from Africa; important works by established and emerging contemporary artists; outstanding European and American paintings, sculpture, and decorative arts; significant artworks from China; ancient Antioch mosaics; and exquisite textiles from around the world. The 210,000- square-foot museum is also distinguished by a grand historic building designed in the 1920s by renowned American architect John Russell Pope and two beautifully landscaped gardens featuring an array of 20th-century sculpture. The BMA is located in Charles Village, three miles north of the Inner Harbor, and is adjacent to the main campus of Johns Hopkins University. General admission to the BMA is free so that everyone can enjoy the power of art.

### **VISITOR INFORMATION**

General admission to the BMA is free. Special exhibitions may be ticketed. The BMA is open Wednesday through Sunday from 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. The museum is closed Monday, Tuesday, New Year's Day, July 4, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. 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).

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**Image:** John Waters. *Beverly Hills John*. 2012. Rubell Family Collection, Miami. © John Waters, Courtesy Marianne Boesky Gallery

### **For media in Baltimore:**

Anne Mannix Brown / Sarah Pedroni  
The Baltimore Museum of Art  
443-573-1870  
[abrown@artbma.org](mailto:abrown@artbma.org) / [spedroni@artbma.org](mailto:spedroni@artbma.org)

### **For media outside of Baltimore:**

Stephanie Yeo / Andrea Cihlarova  
Resnicow and Associates  
212-671-5161 / 212-671-5164  
[syeo@resnicow.com](mailto:syeo@resnicow.com) / [acihlarova@resnicow.com](mailto:acihlarova@resnicow.com)