

## THE BMA PRESENTS CONVERSATION WITH TA-NEHISI COATES ON MAY 17 AS PART OF *NECESSITY OF TOMORROW(S)* SPEAKER SERIES

BALTIMORE, MD (March 30, 2017)—The Baltimore Museum of Art (BMA) will present a conversation with Ta-Nehisi Coates, Pulitzer Prize-nominated writer and author of Marvel’s *The Black Panther* comic book series on Thursday, May 17 from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. The program is part of **The Necessity of Tomorrow(s)**, the BMA’s free series of creative conversations and social events featuring nationally recognized artists, writers, and thought-leaders to consider key ideas at the intersection of art, race, and social justice—and imagining the futures we want. The discussion with Coates and BMA Dorothy Wagner Wallis Director Christopher Bedford will be centered on Afrofuturism and its role in today’s cultural landscape.



Ta-Nehisi Coates. Photo by Gabriella Demczuk

The event includes music by Ancestral Duo and DJ Trillnatured, a comic book reading room organized by Atomic Books, art-making activities, light refreshments, and community conversation. Coates will discuss his work on the *Black Panther* comics, as well as on the recent blockbuster film of the same name. Tickets for the free event will be available beginning at 6 p.m. on May 17, and seating is provided on a first-come, first-served basis. Admission is free. The event will also be live-streamed in several locations throughout the museum along with overflow seating.

“We developed the Necessity of Tomorrow(s) because we believe that, as Baltimore’s civic museum, it is incumbent upon us to use our exhibitions, collections, and public programs as platforms to engage the most urgent questions of our time,” said BMA Director Christopher Bedford. “Ta-Nehisi was a natural choice for the next iteration of the series. He is this generation’s voice on issues of race and black identity, which is especially topical with his involvement in the cultural phenomenon that is *Black Panther*, and the museum is honored to host him.”

The Necessity of Tomorrow(s) borrows its title from an essay by science fiction author Samuel Delany that argues for the role of creative speculation in making a more just future. The first event featured artist Mark Bradford in conversation with Christopher Bedford explored how he changed the course of his life when he was 30 years old to eventually become one of the most accomplished artists of his generation. Bradford also discussed Art + Practice, the nonprofit he co-founded in South Los Angeles to supports the needs of local foster youth.

The next Necessity of Tomorrow(s) event will take place in October 2018.

The Necessity of Tomorrow(s) is generously sponsored by Suzanne F. Cohen and the Cohen Opportunity Fund.

### TA-NEHISI COATES

In his work as a National Book Award-winning writer and a National Correspondent for *The Atlantic*, Ta-Nehisi Coates has emerged as an essential voice for our times. His award-winning writing combines reportage, historical analysis, and personal narrative to address some of America’s most complex and challenging issues pertaining to culture and identity. Exhibiting a preternatural ability for articulating the ways in which America’s history has informed its current condition, Coates has been compared to James Baldwin and praised as “required reading” by Nobel Prize winner Toni Morrison. He addresses audiences across the country on urgent cultural topics, including discriminatory housing policies, mass incarceration, deleterious interpretations of history, and his personal experiences growing up as an African American male

in the United States. Coates's newest book, *We Were Eight Years in Power: An American Tragedy*, is a collection of his writing from the Obama era, including never-before published essays. Since 2016, Coates has also written Marvel's [The Black Panther](#) comic books. His 2015 book *Between the World and Me* was a #1 *New York Times* bestseller, as well as required or recommended reading at over 400 colleges and universities across the country. Structured as a letter to his teenage son, it moves from Baltimore to Howard University to New York City to Paris, addressing what it means to inhabit an African American body in today's America. Ta-Nehisi Coates grew up in West Baltimore and attended Howard University. He currently lives in New York with his wife and son, and is a Distinguished Writer in Residence for New York University's Carter Journalism Institute.

### **CHRISTOPHER BEDFORD**

Christopher Bedford is the Dorothy Wagner Wallis Director of The Baltimore Museum of Art (BMA) and the 10th director to lead the museum, which is renowned for its outstanding collections of 19th-century, modern, and contemporary art. Recognized as an innovative and dynamic leader for building greater community engagement and creating programs of national and international impact, Bedford served as director of the Rose Art Museum at Brandeis University for four years prior to joining the BMA and was appointed as Commissioner for the U.S. Pavilion for the 2017 Venice Biennale, the world's most prestigious contemporary art fair, which debuted an exhibition of new work by American artist Mark Bradford. Previously, Bedford held the positions of chief curator and curator of exhibitions at the Wexner Center for the Arts at The Ohio State University (2008-2012), where he organized a nationally travelling exhibition of the work of Mark Bradford. He also served as assistant curator and curatorial assistant in the Department of Contemporary Art at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (2006-2008) and consulting curator in the Department of Sculpture and Decorative Arts for the J. Paul Getty Museum (2006-2008). Born in Scotland and raised in the United States and the UK, Bedford has a Bachelor of Arts from Oberlin College, received a master's degree in art history through the joint program at Case Western Reserve University and the Cleveland Museum of Art, and has studied in the doctoral programs in art history at the University of Southern California and the Courtauld Institute of Art at the University of London. Bedford is also a noted author and contributor to publications including *Art in America*, *ArtForum*, and *Frieze*, among others. He is currently a trustee of Art + Practice, Greater Baltimore Cultural Alliance, and Maryland Citizens for the Arts.

### **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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