

## **BMA OPENS BEYOND FLIGHT: BIRDS IN AFRICAN ART ON DECEMBER 20**

*The exhibition illustrates the honored place birds hold within numerous African cultures*



**BALTIMORE, MD** (December 6, 2017) — The Baltimore Museum of Art (BMA) presents approximately 20 works from sub-Saharan artists who drew inspiration from the birds that occupied their world in *Beyond Flight: Birds in African Art*. On view December 20, 2017 through June 17, 2018, this exhibition explores the varied roles of birds across 19<sup>th</sup>- and 20<sup>th</sup>-century African states, societies, and cultures. From the largest ostrich to the smallest warbler, the works on view highlight the

symbolic meaning and aesthetic appreciation of birds in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria, and Uganda.

"Birds make up less than one percent of all living things. Yet, they play a role in numerous artistic works, both in and out of Africa," said Kevin Terval, Associate Curator of African Art. "There is something about birds that speak to who we are as humans. By representing birds, we are somehow able to represent ourselves."

Some of the birds in the exhibition played a role in the spiritual life of their creators, while others were simply made to be beautiful. Each section of the exhibition begins with a story that explains how an artist, individual, or society used art to relate to the avian world. While the work is rooted in everyday African life in the 19th and 20th centuries, *Beyond Flight* presents a universal narrative that encourages visitors to think about how birds—both real and represented—play a role in their own day-to-day lives.

"*Beyond Flight* documents the beauty of birds in African art, but also helps narrate the story of how the presence and influence of birds has remained a long-standing tradition," said Christopher Bedford, BMA Dorothy Wagner Wallis Director. "This is an opportunity for us to share some of the diverse and fascinating works in the BMA's collection of African art."

*Beyond Flight* is co-curated by former Associate Curator of African Art Shannen Hill and Associate Curator of African Art Kevin Terval.

## 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:** Culture: Pende (Democratic Republic of the Congo). *Gitenga Mask*. Mid-20th century. The Baltimore Museum of Art: Purchased as the gift of Amy Gould and Matthew Polk, Gibson Island, Maryland, BMA 2015.148