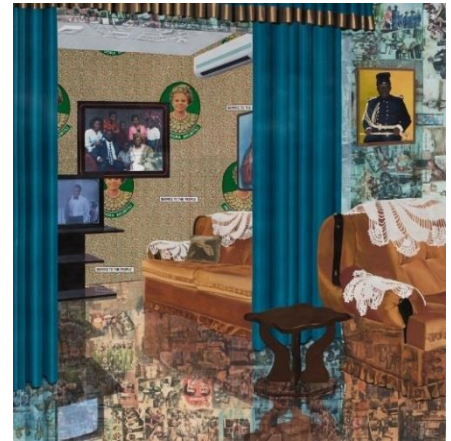


## **THE BMA DEBUTS NEW SUITE OF PAINTINGS BY ACCLAIMED ARTIST NJIDEKA AKUNYILI CROSBY**

*Akunyili Crosby will speak at MICA on October 25 at 6 p.m.*

**BALTIMORE, MD** (October 2, 2017)—This fall The Baltimore Museum of Art (BMA) presents a suite of new monumental paintings from Los Angeles-based artist Njideka Akunyili Crosby. On view in the contemporary wing from October 25, 2017 through March 18, 2018, **Front Room: Njideka Akunyili Crosby | Counterparts** includes six visually stunning mixed-media paintings on paper that draw upon the artist’s experience of moving from Nigeria to the United States, maintaining ties with her family in Nigeria, and building relationships in America. Akunyili Crosby will give a free talk about her work at the Maryland Institute College of Art’s Falvey Hall auditorium on Wednesday, October 25 at 6 p.m. The program is presented in partnership with Maryland Institute College of Art Painting Department.



Akunyili Crosby draws viewers into her personal world through almost life-sized transformations of domestic interiors created with layers of paint, collaged fabrics, and photographic transfers. The bold color, pattern, and texture of the artist’s paintings serve as a metaphor for the complex merging of relationships and cultural backgrounds that contribute to the artist’s sense of self. Images from Nigerian fashion and society magazines and commemorative fabric printed with portraits give the artist’s paintings a global context that connects viewers to the people with whom we share the world. Viewers see signs of both Nigeria and the United States through the images of hairstyles, fashions, architecture, and furnishings.

“Akunyili Crosby’s technical virtuosity, as well as her deeply considered observations of art and life, make her paintings an extraordinary testament to the dynamic and generative outcomes of cultural confluence,” said BMA Senior Curator of Contemporary Art Kristen Hileman. “These are the type of humanistic, creative results one most hopes for in a world in which technology, mass media, interdependent economies, and environmental concerns cause different races, religions, ethnicities, and nationalities to come into closer contact with every passing day.”

For her *Front Room* exhibition, the artist has created three visually and conceptually mirrored pairs of paintings. One of these juxtaposes a Nigerian interior with Akunyili Crosby’s Los Angeles home. In another, a Nigerian table setting is matched with an American example. The Nigerian image is centered around the trappings of afternoon tea, a custom brought to the country by its British colonizers that still incorporates European food products. The composition also includes a colorful plastic “Clonette” or “DeiDei” doll of a Caucasian girl in Western dress and a Kris Okotie album cover inspired by Michael Jackson, both symbols of a popular culture shared internationally.

The American counterpart to this still life offers a more troubling take on the interface of cultures. Embedded in the accoutrements of a Thanksgiving feast is a “blackamoor” serving dish, a disturbing decoration that trivializes the terrible history of African slavery in America.

The exhibition's two largest works isolate contemplative figures in architectural contexts that are alternately informed by Nigerian and American homes. In these gorgeously detailed images, Akunyili Crosby augments paint with Nigerian portrait fabrics produced for ceremonies such as weddings, burials, and political campaigns. (The artist's mother was a respected politician.) She also applies photographic transfers from Nigerian society magazines that connect traditional Nigerian styles, fabrics manufactured in the Netherlands, and Western trends.

Akunyili Crosby (b. 1983, Enugu, Nigeria) moved to the United States in 1999. She earned a B.A. from Swarthmore College, and received a Post-Baccalaureate certificate from the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, as well as an MFA in painting from Yale University School of Art. This fall, Akunyili Crosby's work is on view at the Contemporary Arts Center in Cleveland through October 1, 2017, the Tang Museum at Skidmore College from October 14, 2017 through December 31, 2017, and at Prospect.4 in New Orleans from November 18, 2017 through February 25, 2018. Her work has previously been exhibited in solo shows at the Hammer Museum and Art + Practice, both in Los Angeles, and the Norton Museum of Art, West Palm Beach, Florida, and has been featured at San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York. Her work is in the collections of museums around the world. Awards include the Pollock-Krasner Foundation Inc. Grant, the Joyce Alexander Wein Artist Prize, The James Dicke Contemporary Artist Prize Smithsonian Museum, and the Carol Schlosberg Memorial Prize for Excellence in Painting from Yale University.

#### **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:** Njideka Akunyili Crosby. *Home: As You See Me*. 2017. Courtesy the Artist and Victoria Miro Gallery, London.