

THE BMA AND LOS ANGELES-BASED ART + PRACTICE PRESENT
SPIRAL PLAY: LOVING IN THE '80s

The first of four BMA/A+P exhibitions features three-dimensional collages by Loving

BALTIMORE, MD (September 12, 2017)— The Baltimore Museum of Art (BMA) presents 12 exuberant collages by the late African American artist Al Loving in *Spiral Play: Loving in the '80s*, on view October 18, 2017 through April 15, 2018. The exhibition reveals the artist working free from the constraints of academic taste, conventional thought, commercial reward, and the four corners of the canvas with three-dimensional works that nearly leap off the wall with their brilliant colors and radical forms. The exhibition is presented by the BMA and the Los Angeles-based arts and education nonprofit, Art + Practice (A+P), which debuted the show in April 2017.



Loving (American, 1935–2005) was one of the most innovative abstract artists in history, experimenting with materials and processes, drawing on everything from free jazz to his family’s quilting tradition, to expand the definition of modern painting. Loving’s collages reject the dominant art history in favor of a personal experience, intuition, formal recklessness, and a deliberate embrace of unknowing. The large-scale works expand into space, reconciling geometry and an expression of life force through profound and playful organic form. In the artist’s words, “I chose the spiral as a symbol of life’s continuity. It became an overall wish for everyone.”

Spiral Play is the first in a series of four exhibitions to be presented by the BMA and A+P, two vastly different institutions at opposite ends of the country who share a conviction that art must be made accessible to the broadest demographic.

“The collaboration between BMA and A+P represents an alignment of vision and ambition to serve urban communities who are too often ignored by museums,” said Christopher Bedford, BMA Dorothy Wagner Wallis Director. “The exhibitions we will undertake together intend to correct the 20th- and 21st-century canon, quite literally changing the face of that story, making it clear that art is a place of conversation and inclusion that can participate meaningfully in changing the world for the better.”

Spiral Play: Loving in the '80s is co-curated by Christopher Bedford and Katy Siegel, BMA Senior Curator for Research and Programming and Thaw Endowed Chair at Stony Brook University.

Special thanks to the Estate of Al Loving and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.

ABOUT AL LOVING

Born in Detroit in 1935, Loving relocated to New York in 1968. Unlike other African American artists whose art focused on the racial politics of the era, Loving was a staunch abstractionist. His works were built upon strict yet simple geometric shapes—often hexagonal or cubic modules. Inspired by Hans Hoffmann (who taught Loving’s mentor Al Mullen), Loving concentrated on the tension between flatness and spatial illusionism. He explored this tension using a hard-edged geometric vocabulary related to Minimalism—as in *Untitled*, 1969, which uses a strategic layering of cubic forms and juxtaposition of warm and cool colors to create an optical play of three-dimensionality.

Throughout his career, Loving had solo exhibitions at many well-known institutions, including: Gertrude Kasle Gallery in Detroit; William Zierler, Inc., Fischbach Gallery, The Studio Museum in Harlem, Diane Brewer Gallery, June Kelly Gallery, and Kenkeleba House in New York City; and the Neuberger Museum of Art in Purchase, New York. His work was also featured in many important group exhibitions, such as *L’art vivant aux États-Unis* (Fondation Maeght, Saint-Paul, France), *Contemporary Black Artists in America* (Whitney Museum of American Art), *Lamp Black: Afro-American Artists, New York and Boston* (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston), *Another Generation* (The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York), *Afro-American Abstraction* (P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center, Queens), and *The Appropriate Object* (Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo), among others. Most recently, Loving’s work appeared in *High Times, Hard Times: New York Painting, 1967–1975* (Weatherspoon Art Museum, University of North Carolina, Greensboro), *Target Practice: Painting Under Attack, 1949–1978* (Seattle Art Museum), *America is Hard to See* (Whitney Museum of American Art), and Marrakech Biennale 6 (Morocco). Loving’s work is featured in the collections of Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, Arkansas; the Detroit Institute of Arts; the Metropolitan Museum of Art; the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; The Museum of Modern Art; the National Gallery of Art; the Pérez Art Museum, Miami; the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia; the Philadelphia Museum of Art; The Rose Art Museum, Waltham, Massachusetts; and the Whitney Museum of American Art.

ART + PRACTICE

Conceived and founded by artist Mark Bradford, philanthropist and collector Eileen Harris Norton, and community activist Allan DiCastro, Art + Practice (A+P) is an arts and education private operating foundation based in Leimert Park, Los Angeles. A+P’s mandate is to create a developmental platform that, on one hand, supports the acquisition of practical skills for foster youth, and, on the other, stresses the importance of creative activity within a larger social context. Admission to all exhibitions and public programs are free and available to the public. To learn more, visit www.artandpractice.org.

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.

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Image: Al Loving. *Humbird*. 1989. Courtesy the Estate of Al Loving and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York