

Follow the exhibition from the grand staircase outside the Museum and enter through the Museum's original doors, not opened in nearly 15 years.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MEDIA CONTACT:

Mary Patton  
Tara Fenlon  
410/396-6310

## **DYNAMIC COLLABORATION BETWEEN BMA AND MARYLAND INSTITUTE CELEBRATES 30-YEAR CAREER OF JOYCE J. SCOTT**

**December 28, 1999 (Baltimore, MD)** The Baltimore Museum of Art and Maryland Institute, College of Art have joined forces to present a landmark exhibition celebrating the 30-year career of Joyce J. Scott, an internationally recognized multimedia and performance artist who makes Baltimore her home. **Joyce J. Scott Kickin' It with the Old Masters** includes a retrospective, site-specific installations, and a newly commissioned performance piece, all showcasing the forceful vision, dazzling artistry, and biting social commentary of one of the most distinguished voices in contemporary art today. The artist's first one-person show at a major museum, the exhibition is on display at The Baltimore Museum of Art from **January 23 through May 21, 2000**.

**Joyce J. Scott Kickin' It with the Old Masters** illustrates the full range of Scott's work with fiber arts, jewelry, beaded sculpture, prints, site-specific installations, and performance art, revealing a lifelong dialogue with the BMA and its collections, with the Maryland Institute—her alma mater—and with the Baltimore community. Featuring nearly 100 beautifully designed objects and installation pieces, the exhibition fills the Museum—not just a few galleries, but the façade of the building, the lobby of the original 1929 neoclassical Pope Building, an interior court and exterior courtyard, and a path that winds through the BMA's collection, connecting the retrospective with an interpretive gallery on the Museum's lower level. Layered with a vibrant, aesthetic beauty and—at times—scathing humor, Scott's work offers her provocative interpretation of significant contemporary issues. From racism and violence to sexism and stereotypes, the exhibition explores gripping topics, standing as a bridge between the Old Master paintings visitors expect to see at art museums and contemporary American society.

This project marks a joint collaboration between The Baltimore Museum of Art and Maryland Institute, College of Art and is curated by George Ciscle, Curator in-Residence at the Maryland Institute. Developed with an inclusive approach by engaging the artist, the curator, the BMA and the Maryland Institute, Maryland Institute students, and the broader community, this year-long project transforms the traditional model of the museum exhibition.

According to BMA Director Doreen Bolger, "Underscoring the BMA's commitment to contemporary art, community, and collaboration, this exciting project brings together two of Baltimore's leading arts organizations in an effort to highlight a local artist of national importance. While incredibly beautiful and intriguing, Scott's astounding body of work creates an opportunity for us to discuss difficult issues that impact our everyday lives in a meaningful way, advancing the Museum as an active and innovative place that fosters dialogue. We want our visitors to experience something new every time they come here. For this reason, we have thrown open the front doors to the community ... literally, visitors will enter the Museum through the grand front doors of the original John Russell Pope Building, not opened in nearly 15 years, to experience the astonishing imagination of Joyce Scott and see the BMA in a new way."

Maryland Institute, College of Art President Fred Lazarus explains “the Maryland Institute and The Baltimore Museum of Art each bring a different perspective to the development of this project, and we are delighted to be a part of this unique joint effort. We are proud of the contribution our students have made to the exhibit and are enthusiastic about the incredible opportunity it has provided the students to be directly involved in the work of the Museum. George Ciscle’s philosophy combined with our students’ participation has added a new layer to the exhibition.”

According to Ciscle, “As a socially conscious artist, Joyce Scott raises questions that confront the pervasive injustices of society. She is the catalyst, energy, and driving force behind this unique collaboration among the Museum, the Maryland Institute, and their surrounding communities. We are excited by the idea of creating a stage where the artist will be viewed as a citizen within the society where she lives and works.”

According to Scott, “I’m flabbergasted to have the opportunity to share with my Baltimore family 30 years of my art-making. Art can be a life force. It’s important to me to use it in a manner that incites people to look and then carry something home—even if it’s subliminal—that might make a change in them.”

Born and raised in Baltimore, Joyce J. Scott (b.1948) is a descendant of African-Americans, Native Americans, and Scots, and is part of a long line of storytellers, artisans, and quiltmakers. Influenced by these family traditions, Scott borrows and adapts techniques and imagery from many cultures, particularly African, Native American, Mexican, European, and Asian. Her work has been showcased in more than 60 group and solo exhibitions and is found in the collections of major museums across the country, including The Baltimore Museum of Art, Detroit Institute of Arts, Mint Museum of Art, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philbrook Museum of Art, and Renwick Gallery, National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. She has been the recipient of major public commissions and of prestigious awards from the National Endowment for the Arts in 1988, the Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation in 1995, and Anonymous was a Woman in 1997.

## **PROJECT OVERVIEW**

### **Exhibition and Program Development**

Maryland Institute students participated in the development and implementation of the exhibition and its accompanying interdisciplinary programs and publications through *The Curatorial Experience*, a seminar that incorporates internships and work with the artist. Seminar students from the College’s degree and continuing education programs researched contextual information, wrote interpretive texts, investigated installation design, and explored Scott’s past and present work. Interns apprenticed at the BMA, worked in the artist’s studio and as research assistants, supported the curator’s work in mounting the exhibition, assisted the designer and editor of the exhibition catalogue, and developed programs at outreach sites in the community. For more information, see the **Exhibition Seminar Course Fact Sheet**.

### **Site-Specific Installations**

Beginning with colorful banners hung from the façade of the BMA’s original 1929 neoclassical John Russell Pope Building, the exhibition encompasses several areas of the Museum. Visitors will enter the Museum (and the Scott exhibition) through the Pope Building’s grand front door. As a child, Scott entered the Museum through this door with her mother, the artist and quiltmaker Elizabeth Talford Scott.

The exhibition begins in the BMA's original lobby, which is surrounded by monumental pillars. Here, visitors encounter several large glass installations that serve as an introduction to the thematic elements in the exhibition. Expressing the human potential for destruction, the central installation of a lynched figure—entitled *Somebody's Baby*—hangs above the BMA's bronze cast of Rodin's *Thinker*, originally designed in smaller scale as part of his monumental work *The Gates of Hell*, Rodin's *Thinker* ponders the suffering that surrounds him and recognizes it as his own. Man is shown to be both the victim and the perpetrator of his own corruption. Scott's placement of *Somebody's Baby* is meant to make the viewer face his or her own prejudices in order to enter the new millennium with hope for the future. Visitors are led to a glistening beaded installation in an outdoor garden that suggests the theme of rebirth. Circling around the garden, visitors are brought to the entrance of the retrospective.

### **30-Year Retrospective**

Visitors are drawn into the retrospective's foyer by a stunning, full-length self-portrait in glass, *Clear and Present*, 1999, which is also the cover image to the exhibition catalogue. Surveying the artist's career to date, the retrospective spotlights more than 70 works from public and private collections and is divided into 10 thematic sections: *Family Heritage*, *Techniques and Imagery*, *Cultural References*, *Storytelling and Containers of Memory*, *Skeletons and Rituals*, *Nannies: How Prejudice Feels*, *Stereotypes*, *Violence*, *Lost Love*, and *Evolution and Genetics*. See the **Retrospective Walk-Through** for more details.

Illustrating the development of her symbolic imagery, the first gallery is dedicated to Scott's early work with jewelry, fashion, and textiles as influenced by her family traditions and explorations of pop culture. The focal point of the gallery is a densely-patterned narrative quilt, *Three Generation Quilt I (Passing the Silver Needle)*, 1983, which embodies the artist's family tradition of quilting and the influences of other cultures. Scott's interest in Native American and African beadwork is reflected in an exquisite group of beaded body ornaments, including *Mulatto in South Africa* and *Spanish Saint*.

The second, larger gallery presents works that demonstrate how Scott absorbed familial and cultural influences to create a unique aesthetic using a wide range of techniques, including sculpture, prints, body ornaments, and performance work. Pieces such as *Dying Cambodian Child* and *Buddha Supports Shiva Awakening the Races* reflect Scott's world-view. She has stated, "[this is] the one life we know we have. I can't be complacent about the world I live in."

### **Interpretive Program**

In partnership with the artist herself, the BMA and the Maryland Institute have developed interpretive tools to help educate and inform visitors of diverse ages and backgrounds about issues Scott explores. Visitors are advised about the exhibition's contents at the outset and are given the option of approaching the exhibition in different ways. With the goal of helping visitors understand Scott's work, themes are explained with wall labels, many of them in Scott's own words. The Museum has put together a general Exhibition Guide and Map to the show and a special guide for families, and will jointly publish with the Maryland Institute a catalogue with essays by such scholars as Mel Watkins, an authority on African-American humor. An Activity Center for visitors of all ages builds on the experience of Scott's work in the exhibition. There is also an extensive roster of public programs focused around the exhibition. Please refer to the **Programs & Events Fact Sheet** for more details.

### **Activity Center**

Visitors are led to the Activity Center from the retrospective by following a trail of Scott's work paired with eight objects from the BMA's collection. The trail is marked with objects Scott selected to compare and contrast with her own work, giving the viewer an opportunity to see familiar and rarely displayed pieces in the collection through the artist's eyes. These objects also provide the visitor with a visual path to follow to the Museum's lower level interpretive gallery. This gallery—developed in collaboration with the artist and Maryland Institute students—offers the opportunity to further explore the challenging issues addressed in Scott's work and allows viewers to bring their own voices to the experience of looking at art. Easily appreciated activities like storytelling and craft workshops provide a forum for discussing some of the sensitive themes Scott raises in her art such as stereotypes and racism.

### **Performance Art**

A consummate artist on stage, Scott will debut a new performance piece—entitled *Virtual Reality*—commissioned in conjunction with the exhibition at the BMA. In the 1980's, Scott partnered with Kay Lawal to present the *Thunder Thigh Revue*, a performance about obsessive behaviors—from overeating to drugs—that exposed society's prejudices and problems. *Generic Interference, Genetic Engineering* was Scott's first one-person performance—a two-hour piece that she wrote, directed, and performed from 1992–1995. The characters she portrayed used humor alongside brutality to unleash devastating truths about morality. For example, as Rodney Dangerous-in-the Field, the first stand-up slave comic, she appeared before a “captive” audience reminding them of a tragic past when slavery was condoned.

### **Artist Outreach**

Scott's outreach and teaching continues in workshops and residences conducted in communities locally and nationally. Both the BMA and the Maryland Institute have developed Community Arts Partnerships with Baltimore's Child First Authority, which operates after-school programs at inner-city schools. Scott will be an artist-in-residence in the spring of 2000 with Child First programs at Eutaw-Marshburn and George Kelson Elementary. Scott will work with children and their families to create a permanent site-specific installation. Maryland Institute students are developing programs in conjunction with the exhibition at these sites.

### **Catalogue**

An illustrated 108-page catalogue produced by the Maryland Institute accompanies the exhibition. The catalogue features curator's statement by George Ciscle describing the collaboration between the Maryland Institute and the BMA. A critical biography of Joyce Scott written by Leslie King-Hammond, Dean of Graduate Studies at the Maryland Institute, describes the importance of the artist's life and family in her work. Author and commentator on contemporary culture Mel Watkins places Scott's role as a performer and humorist within the historical context of African-American humor. Keith Morrison, scholar, curator, and Dean of the College for Creative Arts, San Francisco State University, considers Scott's work in the retrospective within the context of contemporary art. Mary Jane Jacob, curator and writer, explores the polarities of “art” and “craft,” how they have shaped contemporary attitudes toward art, and the ways that Scott's work shatters preconceptions about these dichotomies. Please refer to the **Catalogue Fact Sheet** for more details.

**Joyce J. Scott Kickin' It with the Old Masters** is a collaboration between The Baltimore Museum of Art and Maryland Institute, College of Art. This project is supported by AT&T, JoAnn and Joseph Hickey, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Open Society Institute, The David and Lucile Packard Foundation, and the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund.

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

Founded in 1914 by civic leaders, The Baltimore Museum of Art is Maryland's largest art museum. Its permanent collection includes more than 85,000 objects ranging from ancient mosaics to contemporary art. The Cone Collection—the BMA's preeminent holdings of Post-Impressionist and modern art—is the cornerstone of the Museum's permanent collection. Altogether, approximately 3,000 objects form this impressive collection, assembled by two Baltimore sisters, Dr. Claribel Cone (1864-1929) and Miss Etta Cone (1870-1949). The highlight of The Cone Collection is a group of 500 works by Henri Matisse, considered among the most important and comprehensive of its kind in the world. The Collection also includes major examples by Picasso, Cézanne, Gauguin, van Gogh, Renoir, and other icons of early 20<sup>th</sup>-century French art. Other areas of strength include: modern and contemporary arts, the arts of Africa, Old Master paintings and sculpture, European and American decorative arts, textiles, and works on paper from the Renaissance to the present day.

### **MARYLAND INSTITUTE, COLLEGE OF ART**

Maryland Institute, College of Art, which celebrates its 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary in fall 2000, has consistently been named among the top four visual arts colleges in the nation by *U.S. News & World Report*. In addition to its academic standing, it is recognized throughout the region as a cultural resource, sponsoring many public and community-outreach programs, including exhibitions, artists residencies, film series, lectures, literature and poetry readings. The host institution for Artscape exhibitions, the Maryland Institute is the only major visual arts institution in Baltimore where all exhibitions are free and open to the public. It is located at 1300 Mount Royal Avenue in Baltimore. For information about the Maryland Institute, call 410/225-2300 or visit its web site at [www.mica.edu](http://www.mica.edu).

### **BMA VISITOR INFORMATION**

The Baltimore Museum of Art is open Wednesday through Friday, 11 a.m. until 5 p.m.; **FREESTYLE**, first Thursday of every month, 5 until 9 p.m.; Saturday and Sunday, 11 a.m. until 6 p.m. The Museum is closed Monday, Tuesday, New Year's Day, July 4, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. Admission to **FREESTYLE** and all related **FREESTYLE** activities is free. The BMA is located on Art Museum Drive at North Charles and 31<sup>st</sup> Streets, three miles north of Baltimore's Inner Harbor. To obtain general Museum information, call 410/396-7100. Visit the BMA's Web site at [www.artbma.org](http://www.artbma.org).

**###**