BMA Announces Nekisha Durrett and Jackie Milad Selected for Site-Responsive Commissions in Dialogue with Fred Wilson’s Artemis/Bast

New works will debut in BMA’s European galleries in April 2023

BALTIMORE, MD (September 8, 2022)—The Baltimore Museum of Art (BMA) today announced Nekisha Durrett and Jackie Milad were selected to create new works in dialogue with Fred Wilson’s Artemis/Bast (1992). These two artists responded with compelling proposals that engage with the provocation: “What images and thoughts emerge when myths and histories collide?” This initiative provides an opportunity for the artists to explore critical questions integral to their own practices, while also examining the complex and unresolved legacies in Wilson’s art, which has at key moments intersected with Baltimore’s cultural history. The new installations by Durrett and Milad will be presented in an exhibition with Wilson’s work in the John Waters Rotunda and two adjacent galleries from April 26, 2023, through March 17, 2024.

“We have been exhilarated by the depth and breadth of artistic engagement with questions of history, myth, and public memory in the context of the museum and our city, and we were equally impressed with the deliberative process of our esteemed jury and the seriousness of purpose demonstrated by the artists’ proposals,” said exhibition co-organizers Dave Eassa, Director of Public Engagement, and Cecilia Wichmann, Associate Curator for Contemporary Art. “We are looking forward to discovering the new images and thoughts that emerge for Baltimore audiences as Nekisha Durrett’s and Jackie Milad’s visions take shape alongside Fred Wilson’s powerful sculpture.”

Nekisha Durrett is a Washington, DC-based mixed-media artist whose work leverages unexpected materials to make visible the historical connections and connotations that places and materials embody, but are often overlooked. Whether reimagining pre-colonial landscapes, bygone Black communities, or family lore, Durrett’s expansive, research-driven practice creates contemplative spaces and opportunities for viewers to consider what is revealed or concealed when information is filtered across time. Jackie Milad is a Baltimore City-based artist whose mixed-media abstract paintings and collages address the layers, history, and complexities surrounding multi-ethnic identity. She creates a unique world of her own by blending what appears to be disparate imagery and language from her Egyptian-Honduran immigrant upbringing. Milad’s art tells the story of her individual decisions, inspirations, and personal history, as well as the power of cultural heritage and shifting historical narratives.
Fred Wilson is a conceptual artist whose work investigates museological, cultural, and historical issues that are largely overlooked or neglected by museums and cultural institutions. His *Mining the Museum* exhibition—organized by The Contemporary through the pathbreaking work of George Ciscle and Lisa Corrin—took place at the Maryland Historical Society in 1992. This project lay groundwork for decades of innovative, investigative, and community-centered curatorial practice that have followed in Baltimore and beyond. Ciscle's collaborative approach modeled an ethos of care and truth-seeking that invited a new, more inclusive direction for the museum field. Nearly a decade later, Wilson’s retrospective *Objects and Installations 1979–2000* was organized by the Center for Art, Design, and Visual Culture at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. The BMA has one work by Wilson in its collection, an untitled sculpture that was conceived as part of the same 1992 installation as *Artemis/Bast* and acquired the same year.

“As museums around the world reconsider their structure and purpose, there is enormous value in revisiting Fred Wilson’s prescient work,” said Asma Naeem, BMA Interim Co-Director and The Eddie C. and C. Sylvia Brown Chief Curator. “This project is especially relevant when considering the meaning of Wilson’s work and its pathbreaking approach to marginalized histories and visibility.”

The *Artemis/Bast* commissions and open call process were designed to engage and support emerging and mid-career artists, and to explore the unresolved legacies of Wilson’s sculpture in the context of the museum. After shaping the project provocation with Fred Wilson, and open call structure with consulting adviser George Ciscle, the BMA announced the open call for artists based in Maryland and its contiguous states at the end of May and received 104 responses to the request for qualifications in late June. BMA staff narrowed the selection to six finalists who were invited to submit a detailed proposal. The final decision was made by a panel of four independent jurors with extensive curatorial experience—Angela N. Carroll, Teri Henderson, Ashley Minner, and Ginevra Shay—with consulting advisor George Ciscle, Maryland Institute College of Art's (MICA) Curator-in-Residence Emeritus.

The commission and exhibition are organized by Cecilia Wichmann, BMA Associate Curator of Contemporary Art, and Dave Eassa, BMA Director of Public Engagement.

**Artists**

**Nekisha Durrett** (born 1976, Washington, DC) has exhibited her work throughout the region and nationally. Recent installations include *Up 'til Now*, a solar-powered sculpture that evokes the history of Washington, DC’s landscape and architecture; *Messages for the City* in collaboration with For Freedoms in New York’s Times Square; a wall-mounted public sculpture in Miami, Florida made in collaboration with Hank Willis Thomas; and a permanent installation in the renovated Martin Luther King, Jr. Library in Washington, DC. Durrett’s current works in progress investigate individual and collective histories and instances of erasure in the man-made and natural environments in Arlington, Virginia and West Palm Beach, Florida. A three-dimensional, wall-mounted text-based installation opens at the Duke Gallery at James Madison University in fall 2022. Durrett earned her BFA at The Cooper Union in New York City and MFA from the University of Michigan School of Art and Design as a Horace H. Rackham Fellow. Her work is included in numerous public and private collections, including The National Museum of African American History and Culture and The Phillips Collection in Washington, DC.
Jackie Milad (born 1975, Baltimore, Maryland) has participated in numerous group and solo exhibitions nationally and internationally. Select exhibitions include Harvey B. Gantt Center in Charlotte, NC; Arthur Ross Gallery University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, PA; Loyola University Maryland, The Walters Art Museum, and Baltimore Museum of Art in Baltimore, MD; Academy Art Museum in Easton, MD; and Museo de Arte de Mazatlan in Mazatlan, Mexico and DiFOCUR de Sinaloa Sala de Arte Joven Galleria in Culiacan, Mexico. Milad is a multi-year recipient of the individual Artist Grant from Maryland State Arts Council. In 2019, she was named a Janet & Walter Sondheim Prize Finalist and a Robert W. Deutsch Foundation Ruby Grantee. Milad received her BFA from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts at Tufts University, and her MFA from Towson University. Her work is included in private and public collections, such as the Pizzuti Collection, GLB Memorial Foundation Collection, The Sheridan Libraries at Johns Hopkins University, Robert W. Deutsch Foundation, and Meta Inc.

Fred Wilson (born 1954, Bronx, New York) is a conceptual artist whose work investigates museological, cultural, and historical issues largely overlooked or neglected by museums and cultural institutions. Since his groundbreaking exhibition Mining the Museum at the Maryland Historical Society, Wilson has been the subject of more than 40 solo exhibitions around the globe. His work can be found in several public collections, including The Museum of Modern Art, NY; Whitney Museum of American Art; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Long Museum, Shanghai, Japan; Tate Modern in London; and National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne, Australia. Wilson presented his exhibition Afro Kismet at the 2017 Istanbul Biennial, Turkey, which traveled to London, New York, and Los Angeles. Since 2008, Wilson has been a member of the Board of Trustees at the Whitney Museum of American Art. He represented the U.S. at the Cairo Biennale (1992) and Venice Biennale (2003). His many accolades include the prestigious MacArthur Foundation’s “Genius” Fellowship (1999), Skowhegan Medal for Sculpture (2006), the Ford Foundation’s Art of Change fellowship (2018), and Brandeis University’s Creative Arts Award (2019).

Consulting Advisor and Jurors

George Ciscle mounted groundbreaking exhibitions and taught courses in the fine arts and humanities for close to 50 years. He was the founder and director of the George Ciscle Gallery and The Contemporary, an “un-museum” that challenged existing conventions for exhibiting art in temporary non-traditional sites. From 1997-2017, he served as Curator-in-Residence, consulting on the development of community-based and public programming concentrating on exploring new models for connecting art, artists, and audiences. He introduced and taught MICA’s Exhibition Development Seminar until 2008 and from 2011–16 founded and directed the MFA in Curatorial Practice.

Angela N. Carroll is an artist-archivist, writer, and curator whose critical essays have been published in Sugarcane Magazine, Black Art in America, BmoreArt, and Hyperallergic, among others, as well as in several museum exhibition catalogues. Her latest curatorial project, Exploring Presence: African American Artists in the Upper South, a traveling exhibition, catalogue, and short-film surveys underrecognized artists in Baltimore and Washington, DC. Carroll received her MFA in Digital Arts and New Media from the University of California at Santa Cruz and teaches intermittently in the Department of Art at American University and the First Year Experience program at MICA.
Teri Henderson is a Baltimore-based independent curator, the Arts and Culture Editor of Baltimore Beat, and the author of Black Collagists: The Book. Her writing has been published in BmoreArt, All SHE Makes, Artforum, Justsmile Magazine, Kinfolk Travel, and the St. James Encyclopedia of Hip Hop Culture. She is on the Board of Directors of the Maryland Volunteer Lawyers For The Arts and previously served as their Art Law Clinic Director. Henderson holds a Bachelor of Science in Psychology from Texas Christian University.

Ashley Minner is a community based visual artist from Baltimore and an enrolled member of the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina. In addition to maintaining her artistic practice, Ashley works as an Assistant Curator for History and Culture at the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, DC. She earned her MFA in Community Arts from Maryland Institute College of Art and her PhD in American Studies from University of Maryland College Park.

Ginevra Shay is an artist and curator based in New York City. Shay is currently the curator of Rose Arcade and served as Artistic Director of The Contemporary in Baltimore from 2013–2018. They received a 2021 National Endowment for the Arts Our Town Award for Baltimore Living Archives, a 2020 Maryland Creativity Award for Phone Call presented by the BMA, and a 2018 Maryland Individual Artist Award. Shay has presented solo exhibitions at Pentimenti Gallery in Philadelphia, PA and NO/ Gallery in Ghent, Belgium; and exhibited their work nationally and internationally. Shay received their MFA from the Milton Avery School at Bard College.

About Artemis/Bast
Artemis/Bast (1992) juxtaposes two mythological characters from divergent cultures of origin: The Egyptian cat goddess Bast and the Greek goddess Artemis the huntress, exposing their shared symbolism of protection and fertility. The sharp contrast of a deep ebony feline head and a white, heavily draped Neoclassical body, combined with the shards of plaster at the feet of Wilson’s creation, shatters perceived knowledge of the ancient world, and reminds us that Africa was a present and equally compelling source of intellectual, philosophical, and social advancement in the time of antiquity. Wilson first presented this work as part of his installation Panta Rhei - A Gallery of Ancient Classical Art at Metro Pictures in 1992. It is currently on view in How Do We Know The World?, a multi-year reinstallation of the BMA’s contemporary wing. It has also been exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art, NY; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Cleveland Museum of Art; Institute of Jamaica, W.I.; Museum of World Cultures, Sweden; and British Museum. Artemis/Bast is on extended loan to the BMA from the Collection of Karen Reiner, Potomac, Maryland.

Baltimore Museum of Art
Founded in 1914, the Baltimore Museum of Art (BMA) inspires people of all ages and backgrounds through exhibitions, programs, and collections that tell an expansive story of art—challenging long-held narratives and embracing new voices. Our outstanding collection of more than 97,000 objects spans many eras and cultures and includes the world’s largest public holding of works by Henri Matisse; one of the nation’s finest collections of prints, drawings, and photographs; and a rapidly growing number of works by contemporary artists of diverse backgrounds. The museum is also distinguished by a
neoclassical building designed by American architect John Russell Pope and two beautifully landscaped gardens featuring an array of modern and contemporary sculpture. The BMA is located three miles north of the Inner Harbor, adjacent to the main campus of Johns Hopkins University, and has a community branch at Lexington Market. General admission is free so that everyone can enjoy the power of art.

**Visitor Information**

General admission to the BMA is free. The BMA is open Wednesday through Sunday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., with extended hours on Thursdays until 9 p.m. Timed reservations are required for all visitors to the galleries. The Sculpture Gardens are open Wednesday through Sunday, 10 a.m. to dusk. The museum and gardens are closed New Year’s Day, Juneteenth, July 4, Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas Day. 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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