BMA to Present Artist Tiona Nekkia McClodden’s Genre-Defying, Multidisciplinary Installation *Play Me Home*

Recently acquired by the BMA, the work features a four-channel video and sculptural objects that explore the artist’s family history and Southern funerary traditions.

BALTIMORE, MD (July 17, 2023)—On September 13, the Baltimore Museum of Art (BMA) will open *Tiona Nekkia McClodden: Play Me Home*, a poignant, genre-defying installation that features a four-channel video, sculptural objects, and a feature-length screenplay. McClodden’s multidisciplinary practice weaves together personal and communal contours of biography and myth-making. *Play Me Home* is the result of a three-year journey of research and creation during which the artist examined her own family history and funerary traditions in the South. Commissioned for the Prospect 5 Triennial, the work beautifully captures McClodden’s distinct approach and was recently acquired by the BMA as part of the museum’s effort to expand its canon of American art and time-based media. The presentation of *Play Me Home* also amplifies the BMA’s recent reinstallation of its contemporary art galleries, which emphasizes how artists observe, understand, and engage with the world around them. The installation will remain on view through May 12, 2024.

“Tiona Nekkia McClodden’s brilliant work reveals the interconnectedness of human experience and highlights the ways in which the past and future inform, shape, and alter each other,” said Asma Naeem, BMA Dorothy Wagner Wallis Director. “We were delighted to bring her installation into our collection as a gift of the artist and VIA Art Fund, and we are thrilled to share it with our community as part of our vision to present cutting-edge work that also provides new pathways for understanding and dialogue.”

*Play Me Home* embraces fictional and non-fictional narratives, documentary form, and sculpture to express several distinct but related threads of experience. One channel—a focal point in the installation—features a filmic portrait of the commonly named four o’clock flower, which is known for its ability to propagate and thrive in hostile environments. Growing wild throughout the Delta region, on the same lands where the artist’s family settled as some of the earliest Black sharecroppers and where they still own farmland, the exploration of the flower in *Play Me Home* offers a lens through which to consider the relationships between Black communities and land.

An adjacent gallery includes three additional nonlinear channels, capturing scenic views of McClodden’s family lands and the artist burying and planting the same dying four o’clock flower in the Lower Ninth Ward. The final channel offers closely cropped footage of the artist interviewing family members and moving through county archives in Mississippi and Louisiana. The installation also includes sculptural objects such as trumpets and four o’clock flower seeds, as well as a closed leather-bound,
feature-length narrative screenplay for *Play Me Home*. The text—in progress for over a decade and the starting point for this installation—traces the story of Genie, an aging former female jazz musician, who aspires to travel back to New Orleans for her own homegoing and second-line celebration. The work’s title references a reckoning with mourning and grief, alluding to Black musical funerary traditions and honoring lesser-acknowledged sites and notions of home for Black people in the United States.

*Tiona Nekkia McClodden: Play Me Home* is curated by Jessica Bell Brown, BMA Curator and Department Head of Contemporary Art.

**Tiona Nekkia McClodden**

Tiona Nekkia McClodden (b. 1981, Blytheville, Arkansas) is a visual artist, filmmaker, and curator. McClodden’s interdisciplinary approach traverses documentary film, experimental video, sculpture, and sound installations. Her works have been included in presentations at the Kunsthalle Basel (Switzerland); The Institute of Contemporary Art at the University of Pennsylvania; Philadelphia Museum of Art; Museum of Modern Art and MoMA PS1 (New York); Whitney Museum of American Art (New York); New Museum (New York); Haus der Kulturen der Welt (HKW)—Berlin; and MOCA LA. She is the recipient of the 2021-2023 Princeton Arts Fellowship, a Bucksbaum Award for her work in the 2019 Whitney Biennial, and a Guggenheim Fellowship in Fine Arts (2019), among others. Her writing has been featured on the Triple Canopy platform, in *Artforum*, *Cultured Magazine*, *ART 21 Magazine*, and many other publications. She is the recipient of a 2021 Andy Warhol Foundation Arts Writers Grant. She lives and works in North Philadelphia and is represented by White Cube Gallery.

**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. 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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