BMA’s Contemporary Wing Forefronts Artists with Ties to Baltimore and the Region

How Do We Know the World? galleries showcase recent acquisitions and present ideas of relevance to visitors’ everyday experiences

BALTIMORE, MD (July 17, 2023)—With the latest reinstallation of its contemporary collection, now open to the public, the Baltimore Museum of Art (BMA) has expanded the number and range of featured works by artists with ties to Baltimore and the region. In fall 2021, the BMA significantly changed its approach to presenting its contemporary holdings by departing from the standard museum focus on chronology and the evolution of style to an emphasis on how artists observe, understand, and respond to our everyday circumstances, whether shared or personal. Rotations of the contemporary collection are presented under the umbrella title, How Do We Know the World?, with approximately half of the works changing every six months. The latest iteration dedicates the front room gallery to specifically highlight the dynamism and experimentation of Baltimore artists for the next 12 months, and incorporates works by many others from the city and region in adjacent galleries.

How Do We Know the World? offers a meaningful way to experience and connect with the art on view, by engaging audiences with topics, ideas, and happenings that are relevant and resonant in their lives. The installation also captures the development of the BMA’s collection over the past several years, as the museum has acquired more works by women and artists of color and deepened scholarship about artists whose contributions have not been articulated in the dominant narratives of art history.

“How Do We Know the World? is co-curated by Jessica Bell Brown, BMA Curator of Contemporary Art, and Leila Grothe, BMA Associate Curator of Contemporary Art. They have dedicated the first gallery of the contemporary wing to artists who powerfully represent the creative life force of Baltimore with large-scale paintings, drawings, and mixed-media works by Erin Fostel*, Mary Hambleton*, Grace Hartigan*, Jackie Milad*, Charles Mason III*, and Lavar Munroe*. Nearby,
the collective ethos of artists affiliated with the legacy of The Washington Color School is demonstrated by works from Timothy Corkery*, Sam Gilliam*, Alma W. Thomas*, and Anne Truitt*. The central gallery of the contemporary wing explores how artists challenge and reclaim identity through assertions of self-possession, a topic of increasing urgency as the U.S. grapples with issues of identification, belonging, and acceptance. Works by Lindsay Adams*, Mequitta Ahuja*, Amoaka Boafo, Lucy Bull, Sasha Gordon, Shikeith, and Andy Warhol are among the artists featured. A gallery dedicated to worldbuilding—making sense of the world around us or approaching it with fresh eyes—is considered through works by Ernie Barnes*, Hulda Guzmán, Valerie Maynard*, Kenny Rivero, and Monsieur Zohore*.

The BMA’s Black Box Gallery screens Annexation Tango (2020) by Baltimore-born artist Kandis Williams*. Produced as a site-responsive commission for the Institute for Contemporary Art at Virginia Commonwealth University, the video features aerial footage of fields that formerly belonged to the Lorton Reformatory and the Virginia State Prison Farm superimposed with a dancer performing a tango for one, providing an uncanny convergence of past and present architectures of oppression.

(* indicates artists with ties to Baltimore or the region.)

Adjacent galleries in the contemporary wing feature Martha Jackson Jarvis: What the Trees Have Seen, a new body of work by the Washington, DC-based artist on view through March 24, 2024, and Tiona Nekkia McClodden: Play Me Home, opening on September 13, 2023. Exhibitions of works by artists with ties to the region in other areas of the museum include Matsumi Kanemitsu: Figure and Fantasy, on view through October 8, 2023, and Histories Collide: Jackie Milad x Fred Wilson x Nekisha Durrett, on view through March 17, 2024.

How Do We Know the World? is supported by Transamerica, Michael Sherman and Carrie Tivador, the Suzanne F. Cohen Exhibition Fund, and The Dorman/Mazaroff Contemporary Endowment Fund.

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 to 9 p.m. on Thursdays. 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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