



Baltimore Museum of Art to Open *Amy Sherald: American Sublime* in November 2025

Exhibition enhances existing museum plans to honor Sherald with one of two “Artist Who Inspires” awards at its 2025 BMA Ball in November

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BALTIMORE, MD (September 3, 2025)—On November 2, the Baltimore Museum of Art (BMA) will open *Amy Sherald: American Sublime*, as the third venue for the artist’s acclaimed mid-career survey. The exhibition is the most comprehensive presentation of Sherald’s work to date, illuminating the arc of her career from 2007 to 2024 through approximately 40 paintings. From foundational early works to some of her most iconic and recognizable paintings and rarely seen examples, *American Sublime* captures the power and poignancy of Sherald’s artistry and traces her ascendance as one of the most influential figurative painters of our time. The exhibition will remain on view in Baltimore through April 5, 2026.

The presentation of *American Sublime* at the BMA is especially meaningful as Amy Sherald has deep ties to Baltimore and the museum had already planned to honor her with one of its “Artist Who Inspires” awards at the [2025 BMA Ball](#) on November 22. Sherald spent many formative years of her career in the city—both earning her M.F.A. in painting from the Maryland Institute College of Art and achieving national recognition while living here—so this exhibition represents a momentous homecoming for her. The BMA began championing Sherald’s work when it acquired her painting *Planes, Rockets, and the Spaces in Between* in 2018, the year it was made, and has since featured her in several group exhibitions and programs. She will be honored at the BMA Ball along with artist Wangechi Mutu and the Sherman Family Foundation. More details about the BMA Ball and After Party will be shared as originally planned later in September.

"I've had the great pleasure and joy of knowing Amy Sherald for a decade. In that time, she has become a cultural force, capturing the public imagination through works that are powerful and resonant in their profound humanity. Amy's story is also deeply intertwined with Baltimore. Beyond her education and time lived in our beloved city, Baltimore is rooted in her subjects, on her canvases, and in her titles," said Asma Naeem, the BMA's Dorothy Wagner Wallis Director. "Presenting *American Sublime* at the BMA is a celebration of our creative community and a joyful reunion with those shaped by Amy's extraordinary power to connect. We're thrilled to share her transformational work with our visitors."

Exhibition highlights include Sherald’s Outwin Boochever Portrait Competition-winning painting *Miss Everything (Unsuppressed Deliverance)*, the portrait of former First Lady Michelle Obama, the sweeping triptych *Ecclesia (The Meeting of Inheritance and Horizons)* created for this exhibition, the acclaimed memorial portrait of Breonna Taylor, and the monumental painting *Trans Forming Liberty*, among many other works.

Of the BMA's presentation Sherald said, "Baltimore has always been part of my DNA as an artist. Every brushstroke carries a little of its history, its energy, its people, and my time there. To bring this exhibition here is to return that love."

Amy Sherald: American Sublime is organized by the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) and curated by Sarah Roberts, SFMOMA's former Andrew W. Mellon Curator and Head of Painting and Sculpture. It premiered at SFMOMA in fall 2024 and traveled to the Whitney Museum of American Art in spring 2025. The BMA's presentation is organized by Asma Naeem, Dorothy Wagner Wallis Director, with Cecilia Wichmann, Curator and Department Head of Contemporary Art; Antoinette Roberts, Assistant Curator of Contemporary Art; and Dylan Kaleikaumaka Hill, Meyerhoff-Becker Curatorial Fellow.

Tickets for *American Sublime* will go on sale October 1 for BMA members and October 8 for the general public. Prices are \$18 for adults, \$16 for seniors, \$14 for groups of 7 or more, and \$10 for students with ID. BMA members, individuals ages 17 and under, and student groups are admitted for free. Free admission is also available on Thursdays from 5 to 9 p.m., and on opening day, Sunday, November 2, as well as all day on Thursday, January 15, and Thursday, February 19.

Exhibition Overview

The exhibition leads visitors through Sherald's poignant early works to the grandly scaled paintings for which she has gained significant renown. Sherald's paintings rework the Anglo-European traditions of portraiture in their evocation of everyday people existing in the contexts of everyday life. The exhibition focuses on the artist's experimentation over the course of her career with the conventions of portraiture; her gifts for storytelling through color, pose, and dress; and her unflagging commitment to seeing individuals for who they are. Visitors will come away understanding the journey of Sherald as an artist as she hones her métier as one of the preeminent figurative painters of our time.

Sherald's works reflect the world in which she wishes to exist, where a shared humanity is elevated. Her sitters vary in age, gender, and identity and are often presented in roles that intersect with myths or ideas of American individuality and history, such as farmer, cowboy, and friends at the beach. These images challenge preconceived notions of race, focusing on interior life, imagination, and the universality of many experiences and narratives. Her signature gray palette for skin tones furthers this approach, inviting visitors to look beyond their immediate reactions to how someone appears on the outside to see the commonalities between all of us.

Photography is an important element of Sherald's creative process, serving as her sketchbook and the foundation for her compositions. With the exception of her two commissioned portraits of former First Lady Michelle Obama and Breonna Taylor, the artist selects each sitter based on her observations of their inherent qualities, such as poise, style, or wit—what she calls their "ineffable spark." During photoshoots, Sherald lets her models pose organically, allowing for the synergy to build between them so that she can authentically capture their essence. She then curates each scene and styles the subjects in clothing that speaks to the narrative she wishes to craft, creating a sense of magical realism.

For the titles of her paintings, Sherald often draws inspiration from Black women writers and poets like Toni Morrison and Lucille Clifton, reinterpreting their poetry to develop different contexts around the

interior worlds of her subjects. Through her explorations, Sherald redefines common beliefs about American identity, weaving a broader visual story of history and belonging.

Catalog

Amy Sherald: American Sublime is accompanied by an eponymous publication—the artist’s first comprehensive monograph—representing the broad sweep of Sherald’s painting practice as well as her key influences and inspirations. Contributors include exhibition curator Sarah Roberts, as well as Elizabeth Alexander, Dario Calmese, and Rhea Combs. *Amy Sherald: American Sublime* is published by the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art in association with Yale University Press.

About Amy Sherald

Born in Columbus, Georgia, and now based in the New York City area, Amy Sherald documents contemporary African American experience in the United States through arresting, intimate portraits. Sherald engages with the history of photography and portraiture, inviting viewers to participate in a more complex debate about accepted notions of race and representation, and to situate Black life in American art. Sherald received her M.F.A. in painting from Maryland Institute College of Art and her B.A. in painting from Clark-Atlanta University. Sherald was the first woman and first African American to ever receive the grand prize in the Outwin Boochever Portrait Competition from the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C. In 2018, she was selected by First Lady Michelle Obama to paint her official portrait for the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C. The same year, she was also awarded the Pollock Prize for Creativity by Pollock-Krasner Foundation, as well as the David C. Driskell Prize from the High Museum of Art. Sherald’s work is held in public collections such as Baltimore Museum of Art; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Nasher Museum of Art, Durham, N.C.; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; National Museum of African American History and Culture, Washington, D.C.; National Portrait Gallery, Washington D.C.; and Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

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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