

Press Release



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Newark Museum's Revitalized Galleries Spotlight American Modern and Contemporary Artists from Georgia O'Keeffe to Matthew Brandt *Opens March 9, 2019*

Newark, NJ: The Newark Museum will reopen its re-envisioned permanent galleries of modern and contemporary American art on March 9. The culmination of a two-year project supported by the Henry Luce Foundation, the new installations create open and inviting spaces to showcase the Museum's world-class collections, and promote a more expansive view of American art.

Titled *Seeing America*, the new modern and contemporary galleries complete the reinstallation of the American collections that began with the addition of *Native Artists of North America* in 2016. Works by well-known American artists such as Max Weber, Andy Warhol and Helen Frankenthaler are spotlighted alongside contemporary works by living artists, including Willie Cole, Mickalene Thomas and many others. The project encompasses an extensive remodeling of the permanent collection galleries, making the space more open and the art work more accessible to visitors. The reopening will also include the unveiling of several new acquisitions and recently conserved major works; bilingual wall labels in English and Spanish throughout the second floor galleries; a special exhibition by Los Angeles photographer and multimedia artist Matthew Brandt; and the publication of two new illustrated catalogues.

Visitors to the new *Seeing America* galleries will be able to view works by seminal American artists and discover an expanded and inclusive view of American art. "This is my first experience with the reopening of a major portion of the Museum. I am proud and excited that the renovated galleries will allow for the display of a broad range of works that demonstrate and engage with genuine diversity," said Linda Harrison, the Museum's CEO and Director. Among the collection highlights are Georgia O'Keeffe's *Abstraction* of 1919 and her celebrated flower paintings; Edward Hopper's *The Sheridan Theatre*, depicting a dramatically lit movie theatre populated by solitary figures; and Joseph Stella's machine-age masterwork, the five-paneled *Voice of the City of New York Interpreted*.

The strengthening of the Museum's holdings of Latin American art is an example of the Museum's efforts to present a broader view of American art. Among the new acquisitions featured will be large-scale works by the Uruguayan modernists Joaquín Torres-García and Francisco Matto, leading figures of the Taller Torres-García. In addition, the new galleries will draw widely from the Museum's global collections, bringing pre-Columbian textiles, folk art, and contemporary craft into conversation with

modern and contemporary painting, sculpture and photography to explore broad and multi-disciplinary themes, including the influence of religion on popular culture, and the connections between Indigenous art and American modernism.

The Museum's selection of mid-century and contemporary art includes Andy Warhol's iconic Pop-art sculpture *Campbell's Tomato Juice* as well as Warhol's 1953 book *A is an Alphabet*; a groundbreaking sculpture by Isamu Noguchi featuring abstract organic forms; and important paintings by Abstract Expressionist and Color Field painters, including Mark Rothko, Robert Motherwell, Norman Lewis, Sam Gilliam and Helen Frankenthaler. Standout works by contemporary artists will also be featured in the new galleries, including the hyper-realistic sculpture *Man on a Mower* by Duane Hanson, photography by Dawoud Bey and Cara Romero, and a monumental mixed media painting by Mickalene Thomas titled *Afro Goddess Looking Forward*, on long-term loan to the Museum.

Community Involvement

To accompany the reinstatement, the Museum developed a companion project titled *American Voices*, inviting distinguished community members to write personal reflections for wall labels to accompany specific pieces displayed in the gallery. Notable individuals participating in the project include Newark Mayor Ras Baraka, Newark Public Schools Superintendent Roger Leon, rap artist Rah Digga (Rashia T. Fisher), poet-critic Robert Pinsky, supermodel Tracey "Africa" Norman, Newark mural artist Layqa Nuna Yawar, co-founder of WGBO radio station Dorthaan Kirk, art historians Midori Yoshimoto and Jonathan Katz, and Imam Wahy-ud Deen Shareef.

Luce-funded Artist-in-Residence

Over the past two years the Luce grant has also supported an Artist-in-Residence, Los Angeles artist Matthew Brandt. Brandt's residency has led to a new body of work, which will be showcased in a special exhibition, *Matthew Brandt: Rocks and Eagles* on long-term view in the *Seeing America* contemporary galleries. A photographer and multi-media artist, Brandt has explored and photographed the New Jersey landscape on extended visits over the past two years. His practice combines photographic techniques with unconventional materials often incorporating natural history and the environment. For *Rocks and Eagles*, Brandt used New Jersey rocks and minerals, crushed to a fine pigment and fused to glass to create large-scale images of the Pine Barrens, an area rich in silica—a material central to glass production. "Matthew's interests in geology and industrial and natural environments led him to create works that are uniquely linked to the New Jersey landscape and to the Museum's collections," said Tricia Laughlin Bloom, the Museum's Curator of American Art. Other materials featured in *Rocks and Eagles* include Fine Silver United States Liberty coins and silver ingots manufactured by the Newark metal refinery Engelhard Industries, melted down to create daguerreotypes.

A workshop with the artist titled *Photograms with Matthew Brandt: An Experiment with Light and Glass* will take place on March 9 from 12:30-4:30pm. For more information, visit the Museum's website at www.newarkmuseum.org.

New Publications

Funding for the project also provided for the publication of two new collection catalogues that will allow for the dissemination of information about, and inspiration from, the Museum's collections to audiences

beyond the metropolitan region. *Seeing America: Native Artists of North America* and *Seeing America: The Arc of Abstraction* each features essays by a diverse and distinguished group of contributors. *Native Artists of North America* documents the Museum's holdings of Native American art, from the 19th century to the present, and is distinguished by contributions from seven Indigenous artists and scholars. *The Arc of Abstraction* includes abstract art in a range of styles and media, also from the late-19th century to the present. The catalogues will be co-published with Lucia Marquand and distributed by Rutgers University Press.

Ongoing transformations

Over the past three years, the Newark Museum has conducted a series of transformative projects to improve its galleries and facilities. First, the Museum implemented a full renovation and reinterpretation of its Native American galleries in 2016. In 2018, the Museum reopened its original front doors on Washington Street and created a fully accessible entrance along with a state-of-the-art welcome center to enhance the visitor experience. The Museum also reinstalled its African and Ancient Mediterranean art collections in newly renovated galleries on its first floor to better showcase the range of its global collections. In addition, a 5,000 square-foot Special Exhibition Gallery was created on the second floor to accommodate popular, large-scale shows such as the upcoming exhibition, *Wendy Red Star: A Scratch on the Earth*, opening on February 23.

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For further information, visit www.newarkmuseum.org.

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