HISTORY HIGHLIGHTS 1914–2020

1914  The BMA is formally incorporated on November 16 by eight civic-minded Balitimoreans.

1923  The Museum’s inaugural exhibition opens at its temporary home in the Garrett mansion at 101 West Monument Street. Attendance tops 6,775 during its first week.

1924  Baltimore’s citizens approve a $1 million loan to construct a municipal museum. Prominent neoclassical architect John Russell Pope is commissioned to design the new building.

1925  One of the finest decorative arts collections in the region begins with the gift of the BMA’s first period room (c. 1700). American decorative arts, especially from Maryland, become a great strength in subsequent years.

1927  Sir Anthony van Dyck’s masterpiece *Rinaldo and Armida* (1629), commissioned for King Charles I of England, was purchased by Jacob Epstein as the centerpiece of the BMA’s European art collection.

1929  The BMA’s John Russell Pope–designed building opens to the public on April 18. The museum is one of the first in the country to house an Education Department to present tours, lectures, and classes.

1930  An internationally renowned collection of master prints from the Garrett Collection becomes the foundation for the BMA’s outstanding holdings of prints, drawings, and photographs, which is particularly strong in 19th-century French art.

1936  The BMA presents one of the nation’s earliest exhibitions of African art and goes on to form one of the most important collections on the East Coast. Several items are internationally known as the best examples of their kind.

1936-37  The BMA brings ancient mosaics from Antioch to Baltimore after participating in archaeological excavations with the Musées Nationaux de France (Louvre), Worcester Art Museum, Princeton University, Harvard University’s Fogg Art Museum, and Dumbarton Oaks, in agreement with the Syrian Department of Antiquities, and subsequently with the Hatay government of Turkey.

1936-57  A magnificent interior court and four wings are added to the original Pope building—Jacobs Wing (1937), Saidie A. May Wing (1950), Woodward Wing (1956), and Cone Wing (1957).

1939  One of the earliest exhibitions of the work of contemporary African American artists in the country opens at the BMA, marking the beginning of a distinguished record of collecting and exhibiting both historical and contemporary works by African American artists.

1949  Claribel and Etta Cone’s extraordinary bequest of 3,000 objects secures the BMA’s international reputation. Considered one of the world’s most important collections of modern art, the Cone Collection includes more than 500 works by Henri Matisse as well as masterworks by Paul Cézanne, Paul Gauguin, Pablo Picasso, and Vincent van Gogh.

1950  The Saidie A. May Young People’s Art Center opened with galleries, classrooms, art studios, and an auditorium. The center made the BMA one of the first museums in the country to have such a large space dedicated to children’s education.
1960  BMA Director Adelyn Breeskin commissions the U.S. Pavilion for the Venice Biennale—the world’s most prestigious international exhibition of contemporary art—with works by Abstract Expressionist artists Hans Hofmann, Franz Kline, Philip Guston, and Theodore Roszak.

1970  *Vincent van Gogh: Paintings & Drawings* draws record crowds and establishes a new demand among the regional public for major art attractions.

1980-88  With the opening of the Alan and Janet Wurtzburger Sculpture Garden—and the adjoining Robert and Ryda H. Levi Sculpture Garden in 1988—the BMA creates an art park in the heart of the city featuring a 100-year survey of modern sculpture amidst 2.7 acres of landscaping.

1982  The BMA inaugurates its new East Wing featuring an auditorium, a restaurant, shop, and galleries for changing exhibitions. The new addition permits the BMA to expand its exhibitions and include performing arts and film, attracting a wider and more diverse audience.

1984  The Joshua Johnson Endowment Fund (later renamed Joshua Johnson Council) is established for the support of exhibitions, programs, and educational activities of interest to the African American community.

1994  The West Wing for Contemporary Art opens with 16 galleries for the display of a diverse and growing collection of post-1945 art, featuring major works by Dan Flavin, Donald Judd, Barbara Kruger, Susan Rothenberg, Mark Rothko, and Andy Warhol.

1996  After being on extended loan to the BMA for more than 60 years, the acclaimed George A. Lucas Collection of 19th-century French art is purchased from the Maryland Institute College of Art through the support of the State of Maryland and the great generosity of numerous individuals in the community.

2001  The BMA unveils completely redesigned galleries for the famed Cone Collection, representing the largest and most significant holding of works by Henri Matisse in the world.

2006  The BMA offers year-round free general admission for the first time in nearly two decades, thanks to initial government support and endowment gifts. Ongoing support is provided from the Cohen Family Fund for Free Admission, Lord Baltimore Capital Corporation, Mary J. and James D. Miller, James S. Riepe Family Foundation, and the DLA Piper Fund.

2007  An unprecedented $10 million promised gift from Miss Dorothy McIlvain Scott endows operations and programs for the BMA’s newly designated Dorothy McIlvain Scott American Wing. This transformational gift is the largest individual gift in the museum’s history.

2008  *In a New Light: The Campaign for The Baltimore Museum of Art* is launched to raise $65 million for the most ambitious philanthropic campaign in the museum’s history, encompassing endowment, capital, immediate impact, annual support, planned giving, and gifts of art.

2010  Thanks to a $10 million multi-year commitment from the State of Maryland, the BMA begins a $28 million renovation of the galleries for three major art collections—Contemporary, American, and African—as well as improving visitor amenities and upgrading essential infrastructure.

2012  The renovated Contemporary Wing reopens with more than 100 objects—including more than a dozen new acquisitions—presented with state-of-the-art lighting, two new interactive galleries, a new black box gallery, and the Museum’s first mobile art guide for smartphones.
The BMA celebrates its 100th anniversary by reopening the Merrick Historic Entrance, which had been closed since 1982, and unveiling dramatic renovations to the Dorothy McIlvain Scott American Wing, Zamoiski East Entrance, East Lobby, and BMA Shop.

The Museum’s renovation is completed with the opening of the 5,000-square-foot Patricia and Mark K. Joseph Education Center featuring a new exhibition space, commons area, art-making studio, docent room, and school group entrance and orientation foyer.

The In a New Light Campaign concludes after raising $81 million and adding more than 4,000 gifts of art to the BMA’s collection.

The BMA co-commissions the U.S. Pavilion for the 57th Venice Biennale with the Rose Art Museum. The presentation of Mark Bradford: Tomorrow Is Another Day in Venice was seen by more than 370,000 visitors from May through November.

The BMA sells seven paintings by Andy Warhol, Robert Rauschenberg, and others through public and private auctions, raising $18.5 million toward acquiring more works by women and artists of color. Acquisitions include works by Isaac Julien, Wangechi Mutu, Amy Sherald, Carrie Mae Weems, Jack Whitten, and Lynette Yiadom-Boakye.

The inaugural Robert E. Meyerhoff and Rheda Becker Biennial Commission debuts with a major installation in the East Lobby by internationally renowned artist Mickalene Thomas. This is the first named public art commission for a U.S. museum and includes a curatorial fellowship to strengthen diversity in the museum field.

In conjunction with the centennial of the Nineteenth Amendment giving women in the U.S. the right to vote, the Museum organizes 2020 Vision, a year of exhibitions, programs, and acquisitions dedicated to celebrating the achievements of female-identifying artists and rebalancing the gender inequity of objects in its collection.

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