

BMA HOSTS CONVERSATION WITH ARTISTS MARK BRADFORD AND STEPHEN TOWNS

March 7 event held in conjunction with opening of Stephen Towns: Ruminations and a Reckoning



BALTIMORE, MD (February 9, 2018) —The Baltimore Museum of Art (BMA) today announced it is hosting a conversation between internationally acclaimed artist Mark Bradford and Baltimore-based artist Stephen Towns on Wednesday, March 7, in conjunction with the opening of *Stephen Towns: Ruminations and a Reckoning*. The event will focus on how each artist explores the boundaries of painting through a variety of materials and forms, as well as mines U.S. history in their recent work. The conversation will take place from 7 to 8:30 p.m. in the BMA's newly renovated Meyerhoff Auditorium. Additionally, the BMA will keep the Stephen Towns exhibition open until 7 p.m. that day so attendees will have an opportunity to see it prior to the

conversation. Admission to the museum and the event are free. Seating is limited and provided on a first-come, first-served basis.

"I am thrilled to bring these two very talented artists together for what will no doubt be a lively conversation," said BMA Dorothy Wagner Wallis Director Christopher Bedford, who will also moderate the conversation. "Mark's innovative, multi-layered abstract paintings with paper, seen most recently in *Pickett's Charge* at the Smithsonian Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, and Stephen's extraordinary textile works on view at the BMA are evidence that these new modes of contemporary painting can produce artworks as compelling as those created using more traditional methods."

Stephen Towns: Ruminations and a Reckoning is the first museum exhibition dedicated to the stunning textile work of artist Stephen Towns. On view March 7 through September 2, 2018, the exhibition features 10 luminous quilts constructed in fabric, glass beads, metallic threads, and translucent tulle that delve into the perspectives of women, people of color, and the institution of slavery in American history. The centerpiece is the artist's monumental installation, *Birth of a Nation* (2014), which represents the abstracted figure of a black woman nursing a white infant against the backdrop of the first official flag of the United States. The quilt is suspended above a mound of earth and surrounded by Towns' ongoing *Story Quilts* series (2016–), a cycle of seven works that narrate the life of Nat Turner and his 1831 rebellion. The exhibition also includes a pair of quilted oval portraits of Nat and Cherry Turner.

MARK BRADFORD

Mark Bradford was born in 1961 in Los Angeles, where he lives and works. He received a BFA (1995) and MFA (1997) from the California Institute of the Arts in Valencia. Best known for his large-scale abstract paintings that examine the class-, race-, and gender-based economies that structure urban society in the United States, Bradford's richly layered and collaged canvases represent a connection to the social world through materials. Bradford uses fragments of found posters, billboards, newsprint, and custom-printed paper to simultaneously engage with and advance the formal traditions of abstract painting. Solo exhibitions include *Tomorrow Is Another Day* commissioned for the U.S. Pavilion at the 57th Venice Biennale (2017), *Scorched Earth* at the Hammer Museum (2015), *Sea Monsters* at the Rose Art Museum (2014), *Maps and Manifests* at Cincinnati Art Museum (2008), and *Neither New Nor Correct* at the Whitney Museum of American Art (2007). In 2009, Mark Bradford was the recipient of the MacArthur Foundation 'Genius' Award. In 2010,

a large-scale survey of his work organized by Christopher Bedford was presented at the Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, before traveling to the Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Dallas Museum of Art; and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Bradford's work has been included in group shows at Los Angeles County Museum of Art (2014), Whitney Museum of American Art (2013), the 12th Istanbul Biennial (2011), Seoul Biennial (2010), the Carnegie International (2008), São Paulo Biennial (2006), and Whitney Biennial (2006). He recently opened *Pickett's Charge*, a monumental commissioned cyclorama of paintings at the Smithsonian's Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington, D.C.

STEPHEN TOWNS

Stephen Towns was born in 1980 in Lincolville, South Carolina and lives and works in Baltimore. He trained as a painter with a BFA in studio art from the University of South Carolina, and has also developed a rigorous, self-taught quilting practice. Towns draws visual inspiration from the history of sacred painting, 19th-century photography, and Dutch wax print fabrics, in addition to African American story quilts. His work has been exhibited at Arlington Arts Center, Galerie Myrtis, Gallery CA, and Goucher College's Rosenberg Gallery, among other venues. Towns won the inaugural travel prize of the Municipal Art Society of Baltimore City in 2016, traveling to Ghana and Senegal to visit historical sites that mark the Transatlantic Slave Trade. He is also the recipient of a 2015 Ruby Artist Project Grant from the Greater Baltimore Cultural Alliance.

THE BALTIMORE MUSEUM OF ART

Founded in 1914, The Baltimore Museum of Art is a major cultural destination recognized for engaging diverse audiences through dynamic exhibitions and innovative educational and community outreach programs. The BMA's internationally renowned collection of 95,000 objects encompasses more than 1,000 works by Henri Matisse anchored by the famed Cone Collection of modern art, as well as one of the nation's finest holdings of prints, drawings, and photographs. The galleries showcase an exceptional collection of art from Africa; important works by established and emerging contemporary artists; outstanding European and American paintings, sculpture, and decorative arts; significant artworks from China; ancient Antioch mosaics; and exquisite textiles from around the world. The 210,000- square-foot museum is also distinguished by a grand historic building designed in the 1920s by renowned American architect John Russell Pope and two beautifully landscaped gardens featuring an array of 20th-century sculpture. The BMA is located in Charles Village, three miles north of the Inner Harbor, and is adjacent to the main campus of Johns Hopkins University. General admission to the BMA is free so that everyone can enjoy the power of art.

VISITOR INFORMATION

General admission to the BMA is free. Special exhibitions may be ticketed. The BMA is open Wednesday through Sunday from 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. The museum is closed Monday, Tuesday, New Year's Day, July 4, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. 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.

Connect with us: #ARTBMA • [Blog](#) • [Facebook](#) • [Twitter](#) • [Instagram](#) • [YouTube](#)

#

Image: Stephen Towns and Mark Bradford. Photography by Glenwood Jackson.