

THE BMA DIVERSIFIES ITS COLLECTION, STRENGTHENING ITS HOLDINGS TO ENHANCE VISITOR EXPERIENCE

Recent Acquisitions and Deaccessioning Repetitive Works Redefine the Museum's Contemporary Art Collection

BALTIMORE, MD (April 13, 2018) —The Baltimore Museum of Art (BMA) announced today that its Board of Trustees has approved plans to deaccession seven works from its contemporary collection, following an extensive analysis of the museum's holdings in this area. The funds raised will be used exclusively for the acquisition of works created from 1943 or later, allowing the museum to strengthen and fill gaps within its collection. During the same meeting, the trustees approved the acquisition of nine works by contemporary artists Mark Bradford, Zanele Muholi, Trevor Paglen, John T. Scott, Sara VanDerBeek, and Jack Whitten, several of which are the first by the artist to enter the collection.

The BMA regularly reviews its holdings to ensure that it is serving its mission and its community through its collections and exhibitions. Following this careful examination of the collection, BMA Dorothy Wagner Wallis Director Christopher Bedford and the BMA's curatorial staff discovered areas of repetition among its holdings, identifying the seven works that will be sold at auction or through private sale, following approval from the board and accessions committee. In each case, the museum currently holds stronger works by the same artist, and in some cases, more significant versions from the same series or stage of the artist's career. The BMA has entered into an agreement with Sotheby's to offer the works beginning in May.

"The BMA, like any civic museum, must undergo a continuous process of reviewing its collection and identifying areas for growth and refinement with the goal of building a collection that is more relevant to the community it serves," said Christopher Bedford. "The sale of these works, identified by our curators after a very thorough process, will allow us to do just that, and strengthen our collection of contemporary art."

The works being deaccessioned are:

- Franz Kline's *Green Cross*, 1956, oil on canvas
- Kenneth Noland's *Lapis Lazuli*, 1963, acrylic on canvas
- Kenneth Noland's *In-Vital*, 1982, acrylic on canvas
- Jules Olitski's *Before Darkness II*, 1973, acrylic on canvas
- Robert Rauschenberg's *Bank Job*, 1979, mural consisting of solvent transfer images and fabric collage with colored mirror
- Andy Warhol's *Oxidation Painting*, 1978, acrylic paint containing metallic pigment with portions oxidized by urine
- Andy Warhol's *Hearts*, 1979, synthetic polymer paint and silkscreen ink on canvas

Throughout this process, the BMA has followed the guidelines established by the American Alliance of Museums and the Association of Art Museum Directors.

Recent Acquisitions

The BMA has increased its already strong holdings of contemporary works by women and artists of color through acquisitions approved in February. These works span a range of media that complement the BMA's holdings of contemporary art—from mid-20th-century American abstraction to the art of today—and demonstrate the museum's ongoing commitment to expanding the narrative of art history through the representation of diverse artists. These acquisitions are not dependent on the sale of the other works.

Mark Bradford's *Untitled (Buoy)* (2014) is part of a series of sculptures titled *Sea Pigs* that are made from salvaged inflatable fenders used to protect the hulls of docked cargo ships. This work complements the museum's 2017 additions of a monumental painting and a signature video work by Bradford, commemorating the collaboration between the BMA, co-organizer of the U.S. Pavilion at the 2017 Venice Biennale, and Bradford, the 2017 representative for the U.S. and enabling the BMA to show three key areas of the artist's practice—painting, video, and sculpture.

The first works by the late African American artist Jack Whitten to enter the museum's collection are the painting on paper *Form (3rd Set) 2* (1965) and the drawing *Study for Greek Alphabet Series #2* (1978). Made one-year after Whitten moved from his native Alabama to New York City, *Form (3rd Set) 2* is a diptych of mysterious and haunting images built on the tension between figuration and abstraction with two smoky forms emerging from the surrounding darkness. *Study for Greek Alphabet Series #2* is a symphony of visual noise with the artist abrading and scratching into the layered surface of graphite applied over a chalk ground. The occasional stroke of color pencil subtly enhances the monochromatic palette. Together, these works show the breathtaking range of Whitten's work.

Blue Lace for Sister Sarah (1991) by the late African American sculptor John T. Scott is a stunning example of painted sculptures in welded metal that earned the artist a MacArthur "Genius Grant" in 1992. Comprised of multiple interconnecting and counterbalanced parts, the sculpture is at once delicate and grand at eight-feet high. Its sky blue surfaces, accented with cobalt, orange-yellow, green, pink, and red, function as an integral sculptural element that invites viewers to imagine the sculpture as a dancer wrapped in color.

Two gelatin silver prints by South African artist Zanele Muholi explore issues of gender, race, and identity. *Collen Mfazwe. August House, Johannesburg* (2012) is from the artist's *Faces and Phases* series documenting black lesbian and transgender communities. *MaID x, Durban* (2016) shows the artist transforming her appearance through her dress, accessories, and hair style. It is part of the series *Sonmnyama Ngonyama (MaID)*, which translates to *Hail, the Lion Darkness (My Identity)*.

Trevor Paglen's *A Man (Corpus: The Humans) Adversarially Evolved Hallucination* (2017) is the first work by the recent MacArthur Fellow to enter the BMA's collection. This work was produced by an Artificial Intelligence trained to identify humans through image sets that ranged from details of eyes to faces licking ice cream. The result is a large-scale digital hallucination that prompts viewers to examine the ways in which abstraction operates throughout the realms of art, science, and technology. *White Nude* (2013), a digital C print by Sara VanDerBeek, was inspired by the iconic Matisse nude's in the BMA's collection, which she often visited during her childhood in Baltimore. The contrast of angular shapes created by dark areas of negatives pace and subtle white-on-white feminine curves give the composition a strong formal presence and bring to mind debates about the validity of archetypes of femininity and objectification of the female body in art.

ABOUT 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 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 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.

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