

## THE BALTIMORE MUSEUM OF ART AND MARYLAND INSTITUTE COLLEGE OF ART PARTNER WITH FOR FREEDOMS TO DELIVER CREATIVE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMMING

### *MICA Appoints For Freedoms Co-Founder Hank Willis Thomas as its First Creative Citizenship Fellow*

BALTIMORE, MD, October 4, 2018—The Baltimore Museum of Art (BMA) and Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA) today announced their participation in For Freedoms, a national platform for creative civic engagement, discourse, and direct action. Through its *50 State Initiative*, For Freedoms is bringing together a multiplicity of voices to spark a national dialogue about art, education, commerce, and politics. Members of the public are invited to join in the conversation during a reception and artist talk with For Freedoms co-founder Hank Willis Thomas on Wednesday, October 17, 5–7:30 p.m. at MICA’s Falvey Hall.

In conjunction with the program, MICA announced the appointment of Thomas as its first Creative Citizenship Fellow. In spring 2018, MICA, along with the California College of the Arts (CCA) worked with For Freedoms ([www.forfreedoms.org](http://www.forfreedoms.org)) to establish the For Freedoms Residency in Creative Citizenship. At its core, this joint residency is an artistic and organizational strategy for the two colleges to build frameworks for democratic participation on their respective campuses and in their local communities, and to extend this work to other colleges, universities, and arts organizations at a national level.

Since fall 2017, the BMA has been encouraging communities throughout Baltimore to come together for creative conversations by hosting *The Necessity of Tomorrow(s)*, public event series on art, race, and social justice and imagining the future. The October 17 reception and artist talk with Thomas is the third event in the series.

These initiatives reflect the commitments of the BMA and MICA to programs and initiatives that take community-based and publicly engaged approaches to art, contemporary discourse, and art and design education.

Hank Willis Thomas will be an artist in residence at MICA October 17–19. His multi-event engagement includes:

- **For Freedoms Town Hall: *The Role of Institutions in Civil Society*** – Wednesday, October 17, 3–5 p.m. at MICA’s Falvey Hall, co-sponsored and co-organized with the BMA. In addition to Hank Willis Thomas, speakers include: Samuel Hoi (MICA), Peter Zellner (Free School of Architecture), Christopher Bedford (BMA), Melani Douglas (National Museum of Women in the Arts), Heidi Daniel (Enoch Pratt Free Library) and Jenny Ferretti (MICA), who will discuss the role of institutions in contemporary civil society. ***The panel discussion is open to invited guests only.***
- **The Necessity of Tomorrow(s): Reception & Artist Talk with Hank Willis Thomas** – Wednesday, October 17, 5–7:30 p.m. at MICA’s Falvey Hall, co-sponsored and co-organized with the BMA. Thomas will discuss the relationship of his artistic practice, civic engagement, community building and the role of the creative community in fostering a more civil society during the talk at 6 p.m. The reception begins at 5 p.m. The event is free and open to the public. ***Seating is limited, and is available on a first come, first served basis.***

- **For Freedoms Exhibitions** – Thomas will collaborate with MICA’s Curatorial Practice graduate students on Thursday, October 18, to develop exhibitions related to For Freedoms that will be on display January–March 2019. Thomas’s second visit to MICA for the closing of the exhibition in March 2019, includes a panel discussion with José Ruiz, Director of the MFA program in Curatorial Practice; Gerald Ross, Director of Exhibitions; and one Curatorial Practice student about the exhibition.
- **For Freedoms Billboards** – Two billboards designed by artist and BMA Trustee Adam Pendleton and artist Steve Locke respectively will be installed in two locations in Baltimore City: on Erdman Avenue, north of North Point Boulevard, and on North Avenue, east of Howard Street.
- **For Freedoms Curriculum** – MICA is developing a curriculum that will reside on the For Freedoms Web Platform that includes workshops, assignments, and other resources that will be available, open-source, to anyone interested.
- **For Freedoms AICAD Panel Discussion & Luncheon** – MICA, CCA, and For Freedoms will hold a panel discussion on *Artists, Designers, Citizens* and luncheon at the Association of Independent Colleges of Art and Design (AICAD) Symposium in Chicago on November 9, 2018. The purpose of these presentations will be to engage other art and design institutions and organizations in this initiative.

**About For Freedoms:** Inspired by American artist Norman Rockwell’s paintings of Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Four Freedoms (1941)—Freedom of Speech, Freedom of Worship, Freedom from Want, and Freedom from Fear—For Freedoms’s exhibitions, installations, and public programs use art to deepen public discussions on civic issues and core values, and to advocate for equality, dialogue, and civic participation. As a nexus between art, politics, commerce, and education, For Freedoms aims to inject the anti-partisan, critical thinking that fine art requires into the political landscape through programming, exhibitions, and public artworks. The For Freedoms *50 State Initiative* is the largest creative collaboration in U.S. history, with a network of over 300 artists and 200 institutional partners. MICA is the *50 State Initiative*’s Higher Education Coordinator for the State of Maryland.

**About Hank Willis Thomas:** Thomas is a conceptual artist, who often works with photography to explore themes related to identity, history, and popular culture. He received a B.F.A. in photography and Africana studies from New York University, an M.F.A./M.A. in photography and visual criticism from the California College of Arts, and an honorary doctorate from MICA. Thomas’s monograph, *Pitch Blackness*, was published by Aperture. He has exhibited internationally at such venues as the International Center of Photography, New York; Public Art Fund, New York; The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, Bizkaia, Spain; Studio Museum in Harlem; Musée du Quai Branly, Paris; and the Cleveland Museum of Art.

**About *The Necessity of Tomorrow(s)*:** *The Necessity of Tomorrow(s)* is one of the many ways the museum is connecting art to contemporary issues and broadening its appeal to African American audiences in Baltimore. Previous events have included artist Mark Bradford at Union Baptist Church (November 2017) and writer Ta-Nehisi Coates at the BMA (May 2018). The series borrows its title from an [essay by science fiction author Samuel Delany](#), who argues for the role of creative speculation in making a more just future. The Necessity of Tomorrow(s) is generously sponsored by Suzanne F. Cohen and the Cohen Opportunity Fund.

**About Maryland Institute College of Art:** Founded in 1826, Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA) is the oldest continuously degree-granting college of art and design in the nation. The College enrolls over 3,000 undergraduate, graduate and continuing studies students from 49 states and 65 countries in fine arts, design, electronic media, art education, liberal arts, and professional studies degree and non-credit programs. With art and design programs ranked in the top 10 by U.S. News and World Report, MICA is pioneering interdisciplinary approaches to innovation, research, and community and social engagement. Alumni and programming reach around the globe, even as MICA remains a cultural cornerstone in the Baltimore/Washington region, hosting hundreds of exhibitions and events annually by students, faculty and other established artists.

**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 museum is located three miles north of Baltimore's Inner Harbor in a park-like setting in the heart of Charles Village, 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.

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