

**FOR
IMMEDIATE
RELEASE**



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museum.spelman.edu

The only museum in the nation emphasizing art by women of the African Diaspora

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Selection of Spelman College's Newest Gifts and Latest Acquisitions are Now on View



Mequitta Ahuja
Tress I, 2008
Waxy chalk on paper
96 x 45 inches
Purchased with support from the Friends of the Museum, 2019.1

**Presence: Meditations on the Spelman Collection
January 31 – May 18, 2019**

ATLANTA (February 13, 2019) – “Presence: Meditations on the Spelman College Collection,” a selection of the Spelman College’s newest gifts and latest acquisitions, is now on view at the Spelman College Museum of Fine Art. Organized by the Museum’s Curator of Collections **Anne Collins Smith**, C’96, the exhibition features a selection of works by critically acclaimed artists **Mequitta Ahuja**, **Firelei Báez**, **Fabiola Jean-Louis**, **Nandipha Mntambo**, **Toyin Ojih Odutola**, **Deborah Roberts**, **Berni Searle**, **Carrie Mae Weems**, **Billie Zangewa**, and many others. It also presents a work by **Louisiana Bendolph**, one of the quilters of Gee’s Bend, which is a recent gift from the Souls Grown Deep Foundation. Featuring paintings, textiles, photographs, sculptures, and video, “Presence” will be on view from January 31 through May 18, 2019, concurrently with “Amy Sherald.”

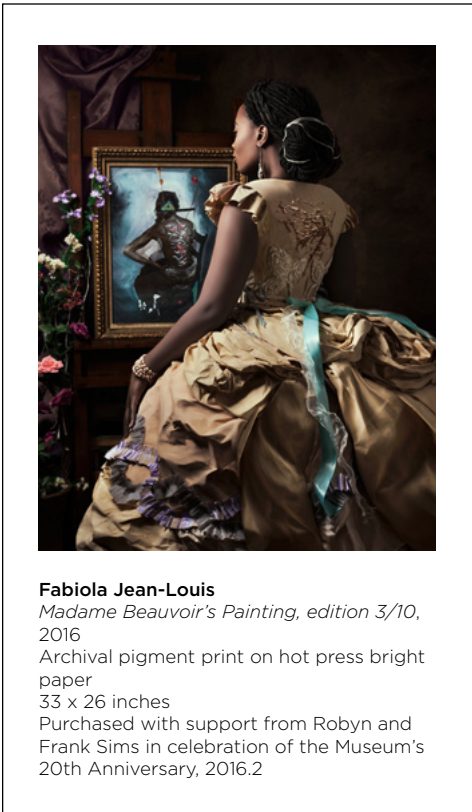
Since it opened in 1996, the Museum has unapologetically foregrounded art by women of the African Diaspora, exhibiting and collecting works by emerging, mid-career, and established artists. To honor this tradition, the Museum regularly acquires at least one work from each original exhibition it presents. Every work that the Museum acquires honors the Museum’s mission to inspire and enrich the Spelman community and the general public primarily through art by women of the African Diaspora.

Like most of the works in the College’s holdings, the works in “Presence” invite audiences to practice deep looking and exercise critical thinking. “Ms. Smith has culled the collection

and selected a group of works that demonstrate how, over the years, the Museum has been quietly and deliberately acquiring compelling, mission-focused works by many of the most important artists working today,” said Museum Director **Andrea Barnwell Brownlee, Ph.D., C’93**. “The featured works are the subject of investigation for students in art history, curatorial studies, African Diaspora and the World, and other courses. Because the artists address relevant and timely concerns, they encourage audiences both within and beyond the campus community to ask probing questions and make salient links to their own lives.”

Smith views the exhibition as an opportunity to explore diverse topics. “‘Presence’ heightens current ideas about otherness, visual culture, placemaking, and soft power,” she explains. “It demands that we all reconsider biases, first impressions, and perceptions. It welcomes introspection and greater appreciation for ourselves.” “Presence” challenges viewers to pause and reflect and invites visitors to give themselves permission to have full experiences with works of art. The works in the exhibition explore a host of ideas including portraiture, divination, agency, and reclamation. While many of the subjects are complicated, performative, and highly charged, they also exude intimacy and vulnerability.

“Presence: Meditations on the Spelman College Collection” is made possible by the Wish Foundation and the LUBO Fund.



RELATED EVENTS

Spelman College Family Weekend: Tour The Museum

Friday, February 15, 2019, 4:00 p.m.

Each year, Spelman College extends a warm welcome to the families of our students to experience all that Spelman has to offer. Gather in the Museum for guided tours led by student, artist, faculty, and staff docents.

Gallery Walk With The Curator

Tuesday, February 26, 2019, 11:00 a.m.

Anne Collins Smith, curator of collections, will lead a tour of “Presence: Meditations on the Spelman College Collection.”

Diversity, Equity, And Inclusion: A Presidential Conversation

Thursday, March 21, 2019, 6:30 p.m.

Cosby Auditorium

Join us for a conversation with **Dr. Mary Schmidt Campbell**, President, Spelman College, and **Dr. Johnnetta B. Cole**, President Emerita of Spelman College, about diversity, equity, accessibility, inclusion, and preparing the next generation of museum professionals. Moderator: **Dr. Andrea Barnwell Brownlee**. A reception and book signing follow.

The Archive Of Black Women’s Memory

Practicing Our Politics: Black Women Making Revolution Irresistible

The 17th Biennial Toni Cade Bambara Scholar-Activist Conference

Saturday, March 23, 2019, 11:00 a.m.

Join **Anne Collins Smith**, curator of collections, **Makeba Dixon-Hill**, C’2003 curator of education, and **Holly Smith**, Spelman College archivist, for a discussion about the historical and contemporary presence of Black women in archives and museums.



Billie Zangewa
The Dreamer, 2016
Silk tapestry
54.3 x 50 inches
Courtesy the artist and Afronova Gallery,
Johannesburg, South Africa

ABOUT ANNE COLLINS SMITH

Anne Collins Smith, C'96, is the curator of collections at the Spelman College Museum of Fine Art. She is a cultural curator, art historian, and cultural worker in the literary, visual, and performing arts. Smith received a bachelor's of art degree in English and art from Spelman College and a master's of art degree in visual arts administration from New York University. Smith was a Romare Bearden Fellow at the Saint Louis Art Museum and the Andrew W. Mellon Curatorial Fellow at the Davis Museum and Cultural Center at Wellesley College where she curated "The Space Between: Artists Engaging Race and Syncretism" (2003). She has curated the permanent collection exhibitions "Showcase & Tell" (2009) and "Multiple Choice: Perspectives on the Spelman College Collection" (2013). "Maren Hassinger . . . Dreaming" (2015) and "Howardena Pindell" (2015) are among the other exhibitions she has co-organized. Smith has participated in the Art Leaders of Metro Atlanta; Independent Curators International's Curatorial Intensive; Getty Leadership Institute's Museum Leaders: The Next Generation; Association of Art Museum Curator's Mentorship program, and the BURNAWAY Art Writers Mentorship program. She serves on

the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA) Arts Council and the board of trustees of the Association of Art Museum Curators.

ABOUT SPELMAN COLLEGE MUSEUM OF FINE ART

The Spelman College Museum of Fine Art inspires and enriches the Spelman College community and the general public primarily through art by women of the African Diaspora. In "Six Reasons to Love Atlanta," CNN.com praised the Museum for its "fantastically curated exhibitions" that focus on art by and about women of the African Diaspora. Since the Museum opened in 1996, it has established an impressive track record for organizing first-rate, mission-specific, art exhibitions that expand art offerings in Atlanta and the southeast region. It has garnered a reputation for organizing exhibitions that merit national and international attention. Milestones include being selected as the first institution from the United States that jointly (along with the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston) represented the United States at the 2012 Havana Biennial in Havana, Cuba. In 2015, with support from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Museum, in collaboration with the Department of Art & Visual Culture, launched a Curatorial Studies Program, a pilot initiative to prepare and develop the next generation of curators. The Museum is poised to continue its trajectory of pursuing ambitious relevant projects that have a lasting impact. For more information, visit museum.spelman.edu.

ABOUT THE SPELMAN COLLEGE PERMANENT COLLECTION

Ethnographic, African, three-dimensional, polychrome, and wooden artifacts comprise the largest part of the permanent holdings. The collection of African art includes works by peoples of Cameroon, Ghana, the Ivory Coast, Liberia, Mali, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone. In addition, the collection is comprised of works by celebrated African-American artists, including Beverly Buchanan, Elizabeth Catlett, Faith Ringgold, Jacob Lawrence, Nancy Elizabeth Prophet, Henry Ossawa Tanner, Hale Woodruff, and many others. María Magdalena Campos-Pons, Lalla Essaydi, Ingrid Mwangi Robert Hutter, and Nandipha Mntambo are amongst the roster of artists whose works are also represented in Spelman College's growing collection. To honor its unique mission, the Spelman College Museum of Fine Art acquires art that highlights the wide spectrum of works that women artists of the African Diaspora create.

ABOUT SPELMAN COLLEGE

Founded in 1881, Spelman College is a leading liberal arts college widely recognized as the global leader in the education of women of African descent. Located in Atlanta, the College's picturesque campus is home to 2,100 students. Spelman is the country's leading producer of Black women who complete Ph.D.s in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). The College's status is confirmed by U.S. News and World Report, which ranked Spelman No. 51 among all liberal arts colleges and No. 1 among historically Black colleges and universities. The Wall Street Journal ranked the College No. 3, nationally, in terms of student satisfaction. Outstanding alumnae include Children's Defense Fund Founder [Marian Wright Edelman](#), Starbucks Group President and COO [Rosalind Brewer](#), former Acting Surgeon General and Spelman's first alumna President [Audrey Forbes Manley](#), global bioinformatics geneticist [Janina Jeff](#) and authors [Pearl Cleage](#) and [Tayari Jones](#). For more information, visit www.spelman.edu.