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

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**Spelman College Museum of Fine Art and Art Papers Present
ART PAPERS LIVE: Theaster Gates in conversation with
Linda Johnson Rice**



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ATLANTA (Feb. 20, 2020) The Spelman College Museum of Fine Art and Art Papers are collaborating once again to present the most notable voices in the art world. ART PAPERS LIVE: Theaster Gates will provide a special opportunity to delve into the evolution of *Black Image Corporation*; the power and agency of images of Black people; the unique and important ways that Theaster Gates' practice promotes the equitable dissemination of those images; and the enduring significance of this living archive. Gates will be joined by Linda Johnson Rice, the daughter of John H. and Eunice W. Johnson and CEO of Johnson Publishing Company, and Gail O'Neill, writer, broadcast journalist, and former model, for this landmark conversation on Thursday, April 2, 2020.

Through *Black Image Corporation*, Gates reimaged and redeployed a selection of iconic images of Black women from the Johnson Publishing photographic archives. The exhibition includes images by African American photographers, including Moneta Sleet Jr. (1926 - 1996), the heralded photographer whose photograph of Coretta Scott King at

her husband's funeral won a Pulitzer Prize in 1969, and Isaac Sutton (1923 - 1995), a studio photographer and artist whose fashion photography and iconic photographs of Muhammad Ali, Michael Jackson, Aretha Franklin and many others earned him international acclaim.

"For decades, Ebony and Jet magazines were staples in the households of countless Black Americans. Spelman College is privileged to present the United States premiere of *Theaster Gates: Black Image Corporation*, which is on view through May 16, 2020," said Mary Schmidt Campbell, Ph.D., president of Spelman College. "Visitors from the Spelman community and beyond have become enraptured as they explore an exhibition that activates the Johnson Publishing archives and invites their creative intervention. We are honored to welcome Theaster Gates and Linda Johnson Rice, who will provide rich context and meaningful texture to this important exhibition."

Iterations of *Black Image Corporation* were previously presented at the Fondazione Prada in Milan in 2018 and Gropius Bau in Berlin in 2019. One of the exciting additions to Spelman's presentation is the inclusion of Gates' "Facsimile Cabinet of Women Origin Stories (2018)," which includes photographs by several Johnson Publishing staff photographers. It was shown for the first time in the U.S. at the Colby Museum of Art at Colby College with an extensive program by the Lunder Institute for American Art.

In this participatory exhibition, visitors are invited to put on archival gloves, handle this extensive visual archive, and engage directly with the compelling and varied photographs. The more than 1,500 photographs by Sleet, Sutton, and other Johnson Publishing staff photographers document and capture Black women in their everyday lives, during historical moments and in studio settings.

ART PAPERS LIVE: Theaster Gates is free and open to the public. Capacity is limited and registration is required. Register at bit.ly/APLiveTheasterGates beginning **Thursday, February 27, 2020, at 9:00 a.m.**

Black Image Corporation is on view at the Spelman College Museum of Fine Art through May 16, 2020.

ABOUT THEASTER GATES

Theaster Gates is an artist based in Chicago. Internationally renowned for his interdisciplinary practice, his work has been exhibited and performed in institutions including Tate Liverpool (Liverpool), Haus der Kunst (Munich), Palais de Tokyo (Paris), Kunstmuseum Basel (Basel, Switzerland), dOCUMENTA 13 (Kassel, Germany) and the National Gallery of Art (Washington, D.C.). Public collections include Tate Modern, London, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, Museum of Modern Art, New York, and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago. He is the recipient of several awards including the Légion d'Honneur (2017), the Nasher Prize for Sculpture (2018), the Urban Land Institute, J.C. Nichols Prize for Visionaries in Urban Development (2018), and the World Economic Forum Crystal Award (2020). Gates is the founder and executive director of Rebuild Foundation, as well as distinguished artist and director of artistic initiatives at the Lunder Institute for American Art at Colby College.

ABOUT LINDA JOHNSON RICE

Linda Johnson Rice has made an indelible mark on the media, beauty and fashion industries. The chairman and CEO of Johnson Publishing Company earned her business prowess through study and sacrifice under the tutelage of her legendary entrepreneurial parents, John H. and Eunice W. Johnson. After receiving her bachelor's degree from the University of Southern California Annenberg School of Journalism, she took her place beside them as arbiters of black culture, beauty, art and style demonstrated through JPC's iconic brands - Ebony and Jet magazines, global beauty brand Fashion Fair Cosmetics, and the Ebony Fashion Fair traveling fashion show featuring Black models in stunning haute couture from France and Italy. Johnson Rice, the recipient of numerous professional and civic awards, serves on the board of directors of Omnicom Group and Grubhub. In addition to serving on the board of the Chicago Public Library, she is a founding member of the Adweek Diversity and Inclusion Council. Johnson Rice is also a council member of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, and Northwestern Memorial Corporation and a trustee at the Art Institute of Chicago.

ABOUT GAIL O'NEILL

Gail O'Neill is a writer for ArtsATL.org, where she covers arts and culture in Atlanta. She is the host and co-producer of "Collective Knowledge," a weekly series of conversations with artists, entrepreneurs and thought-leaders, which can be viewed on various platforms including YouTube, Facebook and TheA Network. And NPR listeners know her voice thanks to guest appearances on WABE's "City Lights with Lois Reitzes" and "A Closer Look with Rose Scott." Most recognizable for her work in fashion, Gail spent 10 years circling the globe as a model before finding her voice on-camera as a features reporter for CBS News in New York City. She relocated to Atlanta in 2000

to write and host “Travel Now,” a weekly television series for CNN, and subsequently hosted several series and specials for HGTV including “Mission: Organization,” “Christmas at the White House” and “Behind the Design of HGTV’s Dream Home.” A native New Yorker, Gail is a graduate of Wesleyan University who divides her time between homes in Atlanta and Manhattan.

ABOUT SPELMAN COLLEGE MUSEUM OF FINE ART

The Spelman College Museum of Fine Art, which was established in 1996, inspires and enriches the Spelman College community and the general public through art by and about women of the African Diaspora. In “Six Reasons to Love Atlanta,” CNN.com praised the Museum for its “fantastically curated exhibitions.” As the Museum’s 25th anniversary approaches in 2021, the institution is even more focused on its priorities: continuing its legacy of presenting thought-provoking exhibitions such as *Amy Sherald* (organized by the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, 2019), *PRESENCE: Meditations on the Spelman College Collection* (2019), *Zanele Muholi: Somnyama Ngonyama, Hail the Dark Lioness* (organized by Autograph London and curated by Renée Mussai, 2018), *Deborah Roberts: The Evolution of Mimi* (2018), and *Mildred Thompson: The Atlanta Years, 1986 – 2003* (curated by Andrea Barnwell Brownlee, Ph.D., and Melissa Messina, 2019) that have garnered critical and popular attention; organizing dynamic and empowering programs; and expanding its relevant collection.

The Museum’s milestones include being selected as the first institution from the United States that jointly (along with the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston) represented the nation at the 2012 Havana Biennial in Havana. In 2015, with support from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Museum, in collaboration with Spelman’s Department of Art & Visual Culture, launched a Curatorial Studies Program, a pilot initiative to prepare and develop the next generation of curators. With enthusiastic support from the Walton Family Foundation, this program has expanded and in 2018, Spelman established the Atlanta University Center Art History + Curatorial Studies Collective, currently supported by the Alice L. Walton Foundation. For more information about the Museum, visit museum.spelman.edu.

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. 57 among all liberal arts colleges, No. 22 for undergraduate teaching and No. 6 for both innovation and social mobility among liberal arts colleges, and No. 1 for the 13th year among historically Black colleges and universities. The Wall Street Journal ranked the College No. 3, nationally, in terms of student satisfaction. Recent initiatives include a designation by the Department of Defense as a Center of Excellence for Minority Women in STEM, a Gender and Sexuality Studies Institute, the first endowed queer studies chair at an HBCU, and a program to increase the number of Black women Ph.D.s in economics. New majors have been added, including documentary filmmaking and photography, and partnerships have been established with MIT’s Media Lab, the Broad Institute and the Army Research Lab for artificial intelligence and machine learning. 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.