

**FOR  
IMMEDIATE  
RELEASE**



350 Spelman Lane  
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[museum.spelman.edu](http://museum.spelman.edu)

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

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**December 18, 2018**

## Amy Sherald's Newest Portraits on View at the Spelman College Museum of Fine Art

**Amy Sherald**

**January 31 – May 18, 2019**



*She had an inside and an outside now  
and suddenly she knew how not to mix  
them, 2018*

Oil on canvas  
54 x 43 inches  
Courtesy the artist and Monique  
Meloche Gallery, Chicago

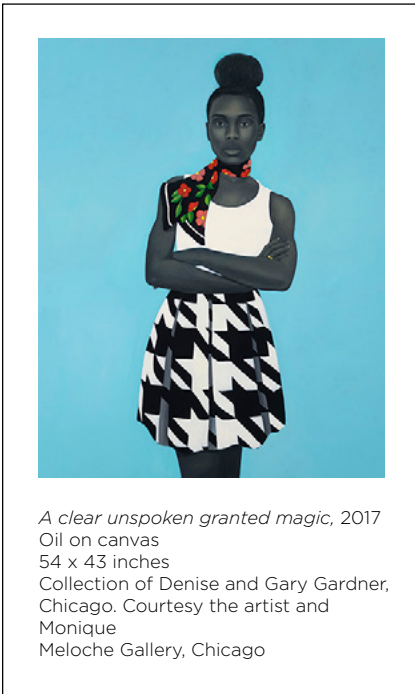
ATLANTA (December 18, 2018) – The Spelman College Museum of Fine Art will present “Amy Sherald,” an exhibition organized by the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, from January 31 through May 18, 2019. For more than 15 years, Amy Sherald has been steadily building her career and earning critical acclaim for her distinctive portraits of African Americans. When she unveiled her portrait of First Lady Michelle Obama at the National Portrait Gallery in February 2018, she instantly rose to international prominence. Spelman College is the final venue for this nationally touring exhibition. Sherald, an alumna of Clark Atlanta University, took her painting classes at Spelman. For this reason, this exhibition is a homecoming of sorts. Spelman’s presentation features two of Sherald’s most recent works, which she has completed since the exhibition opened at CAM in May 2018.

“It is a privilege and an honor to present ‘Amy Sherald’ and share an exclusive selection of her extraordinary, vibrant, sometimes fantastical portraits,” said Andrea Barnwell Brownlee, Ph.D., director of the Spelman Museum. “This exhibition, which provides a deep and rich sense of her artistic practice, is in perfect

alignment with our mission to inspire and enrich the Spelman College community and the general public through art by women of the African Diaspora.”

Sherald’s paintings, which have been presented in several group exhibitions throughout the country, consistently intrigue and captivate visitors. Lisa Melandri, the executive director of CAM, agrees. “It was an honor to organize this exhibition and present Amy’s first major solo museum show at CAM, and I’m thrilled that audiences will experience the work of this extraordinary artist

at Spelman College,” she said. “Amy’s great strength is not only in her remarkable skill as a realist portrait painter, but in her ability to perfectly calibrate the pose, costume, and sensibility of each subject. Her sitters’ style and presence hold court with the viewer and expand the art-historical lineage of portraiture.”



Sherald typically paints portraits of ordinary African Americans she encounters in everyday situations such as on the street or in the grocery store or the airport. She has described her art making as an act to “image the versions of ourselves that thrive when extricated from the dominant historical narrative.” Keenly aware that Black subjects have been largely omitted from the history of art, Sherald recently explained, “My paintings hold up a mirror to the present and reflect real experiences of blackness today and historically, in everyday life and within the historical art canon.”

The artist engages with multiple artistic histories to explore race in portraiture. She paints from her photographs of the model and places the figure in a color-field background, calling to mind 16th-century Northern Renaissance portraiture, in which figures are captured against similarly arresting monochrome colored backgrounds. Sherald spent a year studying with the Norwegian painter Odd Nerdrum, who taught her the classical technique of beginning a portrait by modeling the figure in grisaille—or grayscale. Through her portraits, complete with their signature grayscale skin and descriptive and whimsical titles, Sherald engages in broader dialogues about the complexity and performance of identity and race.

“As the exhibition of the work of an artist of the stature of Amy Sherald illustrates, the Spelman College Museum of Fine Art is a major asset for the city of Atlanta, the Westside community, and the academic programs of the College,” said Mary Schmidt Campbell, Ph.D., president of Spelman. “Particularly, with the launch of the new Atlanta University Center Collective for the Study of Art History and Curatorial Studies, the Museum expands its role as a valued academic resource.”

“Amy Sherald” was organized for CAM by Lisa Melandri. The exhibition and catalogue are presented by Jane and Bob Clark. Additional support is provided by Nancy and David Frej, Ann Ruwitch and John Fox Arnold.

The Museum’s presentation of “Amy Sherald” is made possible by the Wish Foundation and the LUBO Fund. Program support is provided by the Spelman College Office of the President.

## RELATED EVENTS

### **Conversations with Contemporary Artists**

Wednesday, February 6, 2019, at 7:00 p.m.

Join us for a lively conversation between Driskell Prize winners **Amy Sherald** and **Andrea Barnwell Brownlee, Ph.D.**, director of the Spelman College Museum of Fine Art, at the Rich Auditorium at the High Museum of Art. Capacity is limited and registration is required. Click [HERE](#) to register.

### **ART PAPERS LIVE: Amy Sherald**

Thursday, February 7, 2019, at 7:00 p.m. (Auditorium doors open at 6:30 p.m.)

Do not miss **ART PAPERS LIVE: Amy Sherald**, a special artist talk organized in partnership with Art Papers. A reception and an opportunity to view “Amy Sherald” follow. “Amy Sherald,” the recently published catalogue by the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, will be available. Capacity is limited and registration is required. Tickets will be available on January 17, 2019. Click [HERE](#) for more information.

For more information about the Museum see [museum.spelman.edu](http://museum.spelman.edu).



*She always believed the good about those she loved, 2018*  
Oil on canvas  
54 x 43 inches  
Courtesy the artist and Monique Meloche Gallery, Chicago

## ABOUT AMY SHERALD

Amy Sherald (b. 1973, Columbus, Georgia) lives and works in Baltimore. In 2018, Sherald’s official portrait of First Lady Michelle Obama was unveiled at the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C. Sherald received the Driskell Prize for African American Art and Art History from the High Museum in 2018. In 2016, Sherald was the first woman to win the Outwin Boochever Portrait Competition grand prize; an accompanying exhibition, *The Outwin 2016*, has been on tour since 2016 and opened at the Kemper Museum, Kansas City, Missouri, in October 2017. Sherald has had solo shows at venues including Monique Meloche Gallery, Chicago (2016); Reginald F. Lewis Museum, Baltimore (2013); and University of North Carolina, Sonja Haynes Stone Center, Chapel Hill (2011). Group exhibitions include “Fictions, Studio Museum in Harlem” (2017–18), “Southern Accent,” Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University, Durham, North Carolina (2016), which traveled to Speed Museum of Art, Louisville, Kentucky (2017); and “Face to Face: Los Angeles Collects Portraiture, California African American Museum,” Los Angeles (2017). Public collections include Embassy of the United States, Dakar, Senegal; National Museum of Women in the Arts,

Washington, D.C.; Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, Washington, D.C.; Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery, Washington, D.C.; The Columbus Museum, Columbus, Georgia; Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City, Missouri; and Nasher Museum of Art. Sherald was recently appointed to the Board of Trustees at the Baltimore Museum of Art. Sherald received her Master of Fine Art in painting from Maryland Institute College of Art (2004) and Bachelor of Arts in art from Clark Atlanta University (1997), and was a Spelman College International Artist-in-Residence in Portobelo, Panama (1997).

## 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](http://museum.spelman.edu).

## ABOUT THE CONTEMPORARY ART MUSEUM ST. LOUIS

The Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis (CAM) presents, supports, and celebrates the art of our time. It is the premier museum in St. Louis dedicated to contemporary art. Focused on a dynamic array of changing exhibitions, CAM provides a thought-provoking program that reflects and contributes to the global cultural landscape. Through the diverse perspectives offered in its

exhibitions, public programs, and educational initiatives, CAM actively engages a range of audiences to challenge their perceptions. It is a site for discovery, a gathering place in which to experience and enjoy contemporary visual culture. CAM is located in the Grand Center Arts District.

## 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](http://www.spelman.edu).