

MOODY CENTER FOR THE ARTS ANNOUNCES ITS SPRING 2020 SEASON
FEATURING CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN ART



Omar Victor Diop, *Jean-Baptiste Belley*, 2014, Diaspora Series, © Omar Victor Diop, Courtesy Galerie MAGNIN-A, Paris

HOUSTON, TX [November 12, 2019] - Alison Weaver, the Suzanne Deal Booth Executive Director, announced today that the Moody Center for the Arts' spring exhibition will be *Radical Revisionists: Contemporary African Artists Confronting Past and Present*, opening Friday, January 24, 2020. The program will feature artists from Africa and the Diaspora who problematize Eurocentric tropes of race, representation and the colonial past. Weaver says, "We look forward to engaging with these timely and provocative topics, concurrently with the University's broader initiatives in the areas of African and African American studies."

In support of Rice's newly formed Center for African and African American Studies (CAAS) and scheduled to be on view during Houston's FotoFest Biennial 2020 — *African Cosmologies: Photography, Time, and the Other*, opening in March — the exhibition will showcase a diverse body of work addressing themes of the colonial past and post-colonial present. Featured artists include Sammy Baloji, Serge Attukwei Clottey, Njideka Akunyili Crosby, Omar Victor Diop, Adama Delphine Fawundu, Zanele Muholi, Robin Rhode, Yinka Shonibare CBE, Mary Sibande, and Pascale Marthine Tayou. In keeping with the Moody's mission to foster critical conversation through

the arts, the exhibition is interdisciplinary in its framework, with an emphasis on each artist's unique perspective. Featuring photography, mixed media, a virtual reality installation, and sculpture, the show revisits received narratives and invites viewers to re-examine both past and present. As the rich resources of the African continent continue to be of great interest to powers around the globe, the selected works speak to the ways in which outside intervention during the colonial past and postcolonial present have deeply affected both its people and its natural resources.

Concurrent with the exhibition, the Moody's Leslie and Brad Bucher Artist-in-Residence will be **Robin Rhode** (b. 1976, Cape Town, South Africa). Rhode's work is informed by his youth in a newly post-apartheid South Africa and includes elements of hip-hop, film, and the manipulations of everyday materials. Rhode's process often involves artistic interventions in public spaces, including interacting with his signature wall sketches as if they were three-dimensional objects, encouraging his audience to actively respond to his visual tableaux. As the spring season artist-in-residence, Rhode will spend several weeks in Houston, engaging with both the campus and the broader Houston community.

In the Central Gallery, the Moody will commission a new work by **Serge Attukwei Clottey** (b. 1985, Accra, Ghana), who will create a site-specific installation. Clottey is best known for his large-scale works that incorporate repurposed materials and often involve participatory public performances. Reusing plastic gallon jugs that are prominent across the African continent, Clottey has coined the term 'Afrogallonism' to describe his larger project. He challenges viewers to consider the powerful agency of everyday objects as a vehicle for exploring issues of migration, colonial trade routes, and gender stereotypes.

A virtual reality installation by **Mary Sibande** (b. 1982, Barberton, South Africa) will be presented in the Media Gallery. Sibande is a multimedia artist living and working in Johannesburg whose art often addresses the intersection of race, class and gender in post-apartheid South Africa. In *A Crescendo of Ecstasy* (2018) Sibande activates sculptural forms through an immersive VR experience, blending fantasy with reality as viewers are invited into the enigmatic world of the artist's alter-ego.

The Brown Foundation Gallery will feature photographs by Sammy Baloji, Omar Victor Diop, Adama Delphine Fawundu, Zanele Muholi, and Robin Rhode, as well as sculptures by Yinka Shonibare CBE, and mixed media work by Pascale Marthine Tayou. A work by Njideka Akunyili Crosby will be installed on the façade of the Moody building.

The exhibition is co-curated by independent scholar Rachel Kabukala, Alison Weaver and Associate Curator Frauke V. Josenhans. Kabukala says, "*Radical Revisionists* invites us to acknowledge and investigate our shared colonial past through the work of influential artists who are addressing the violent erasure of marginalized histories and reinterpreting familiar themes through contemporary, Afrocentric lenses."

Sammy Baloji's (b. 1978, Lubumbashi, Democratic Republic of Congo) work is influenced by his experience growing up in the heavily mined Katanga province of the Democratic Republic of Congo. In his *Kolwezi* series (2011), Baloji juxtaposes landscape photography emphasizing the area's postcolonial decline with highly idealized scenes, raising important questions about the ongoing impact of colonialism and Western consumption and exploitation of natural resources from this region.

Njideka Akunyili Crosby (b. 1983, Enugu, Nigeria) is a Los Angeles-based artist whose diverse practice includes painting and collage, in which she incorporates items like fabric and photos from her native Nigeria. Her dense, multi-layered approach to image making (depicting domestic scenes through richly complex compositions) serves as a nuanced way of investigating the amalgamation of social spaces and cultures she experiences as an African who has claimed America as a second home. In 2017, Akunyili Crosby was awarded

the distinguished MacArthur Fellowship from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. At the Moody, her work will welcome visitors to campus on the exterior of the building.

Omar Victor Diop (b. 1980, Dakar, Senegal) draws upon the rich tradition of African studio photography in his portraits. In the *Diaspora* series (2014-15), Diop recreates historical portraits of prominent figures of African descent from the 15th-19th centuries, giving them a new existence outside of the expectations of their time. By incorporating elements of contemporary sport into the images, Diop draws viewers into present day conversations surrounding concepts of freedom, immigration, and inclusion.

Adama Delphine Fawundu (b. 1971, Brooklyn, New York) was born to parents from Sierra Leone and Equatorial Guinea. Fawundu's art engages issues of identity, heritage, and the global Black community. Her deeply personal works often portray the artist as subject and include narrative elements with universal resonance that evoke a sense of connectivity across time and space. In the *Passageways* series (2017), Fawundu uses portraits of women in her family to consider how elements of knowledge and culture are passed down through generations and across the Diaspora.

A self-described "visual activist," **Zanele Muholi** (b. 1972, Umlazi, South Africa) gives voice to the experiences of Black, queer and trans people in South Africa, in particular. Muholi's arresting black and white portraits in the *Somnyama Ngonyama* series (2012-2018) center on aspects of identity like gender and sexuality and reflect the artist's self-representation and self-expression as a response to various political and historical moments.

Yinka Shonibare CBE (RA) (b. 1962, London, United Kingdom), who spent his early life in Nigeria, is well-known for his unique ability to employ humor and whimsy to spark inquiry about our preconceived notions and ways of viewing the world within the context of an increasingly globalized society. Shonibare's sculpture *Nelson's Ship in a Bottle (maquette)* (2007) and photograph *The Sleep of Reasons Produces Monsters (Africa)* (2008) employ visual elements like Dutch wax fabric to confront complex notions of power and colonial histories, whereas the life-size model *Girl on Globe* (2011) references the pressing issue of climate change.

Pascale Marthine Tayou (b. 1966, Yaounde, Cameroon) works in a variety of diverse media such as found objects, crystal, and plastic bags. Tayou's installation of crumpled paper flags representing the 54 African countries entitled *Jpegafrica/Africagift* (2006) raises questions about how geographical territories were imposed on these nations. His mixed media work *Plastic Tree* (2018) uses brightly colored plastic bags placed on tree branches to evoke ideas of migration across space and class.

Radical Revisionists: Contemporary African Artists Confronting Past and Present will open **Friday, January 24** with a free public reception from **6:00 – 8:00 p.m.** and will be on view through May 16, 2020.

Additional programs featuring panel discussions between artists and historians, dance and music, and film screenings will be scheduled throughout the season. The Moody's annual public Spring Fling concert will be **Friday, February 28**.

This exhibition is made possible by the Moody Center for the Arts Founder's Circle with additional support from the Moody Foundation and the Leslie and Brad Bucher Artist-in-Residence fund.

About the Moody Center for the Arts

Inaugurated in February 2017, the Moody Center for the Arts at Rice University is a state-of-the-art, non-collecting institution dedicated to transdisciplinary collaboration among the arts, sciences, and humanities. The 50,000-square foot facility, designed by acclaimed Los Angeles-based architect Michael Maltzan, serves as an experimental platform for creating and presenting works in all disciplines, a flexible teaching space to encourage

new modes of making and a forum for creative partnerships with visiting national and international artists. The Moody is free and open to the public year-round.

Website: moody.rice.edu
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Address: Moody Center for the Arts at Rice University
6100 Main Street, MS-480, Houston, TX 77005
(University Entrance 8, at University Boulevard and Stockton Street)

Hours & Admission:

The exhibition spaces are open to the public and free of charge Tuesday through Saturday from 10am to 5pm, and closed Sundays, Mondays, and holidays. Events and programs are open to the public through an advance reservation system. For schedule, tickets and prices, visit moody.rice.edu.

Directions & Parking:

The Moody Center for the Arts is located on the campus of Rice University, and is best reached by using Campus Entrance 8 at the intersection of University Boulevard and Stockton Street. As you enter campus, the building is on the right, just past the Media Center. There is a dedicated parking lot adjacent to the building. Payment for the Moody Lot is by credit card only.

For campus maps, visit www.rice.edu/maps.

About Rice University

Located on a 300-acre forested campus in Houston, Rice University is consistently ranked among the nation's top 20 universities by U.S. News & World Report. Rice has highly respected schools of Architecture, Business, Continuing Studies, Engineering, Humanities, Music, Natural Sciences and Social Sciences and is home to the Baker Institute for Public Policy. With 3,879 undergraduates and 2,861 graduate students, Rice's undergraduate student-to-faculty ratio is 6-to-1. Its residential college system builds close-knit communities and lifelong friendships, just one reason why Rice is ranked No. 1 for quality of life and for lots of race/class interaction and No. 2 for happiest students by the Princeton Review. Rice is also rated as a best value among private universities by Kiplinger's Personal Finance. Read "[What they're saying about Rice.](#)"

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