

Baltimore Museum of Art and Seattle Art Museum to Present 50-Year Retrospective of Boundary-Breaking Artist Joyce J. Scott

Joyce J. Scott: Walk a Mile in My Dreams to feature more than 120 objects
from across the full arc of Scott's prolific and genre-defying career

BALTIMORE, MD (August 8, 2023)—The Baltimore Museum of Art (BMA) and Seattle Art Museum (SAM) have co-organized the 50-year career retrospective of artist Joyce J. Scott, one of the most significant artists of our time. Best known for her virtuosic use of beads and glass, Scott has upended hierarchies of art and craft across a spectrum of media over the course of five decades—from her woven tapestries and soft sculpture of the 1970s and audacious performances and wearable art in the 1980s to sculptures of astonishing formal ingenuity and social force from the late 1970s to the present moment. The artist's works across all media beguile viewers with beauty and humor while confronting racism, sexism, ecological devastation, and complex family dynamics. *Joyce J. Scott: Walk a Mile in My Dreams* was developed in close dialogue with the Baltimore-based artist and her collaborators to reveal the full breadth of Scott's singular vision through more than 120 objects from public and private collections across the United States. The exhibition will encompass significant examples of the artist's sculpture—both stand-alone and wearable pieces—alongside performance footage, garments, prints, and materials from Scott's personal archive. The exhibition will also feature a newly commissioned installation currently in development and an expansive scholarly catalog.

Joyce J. Scott: Walk a Mile in My Dreams will be presented in Baltimore as a special ticketed exhibition from March 24, through July 14, 2024, and in Seattle from October 17, 2024, through January 20, 2025. It is co-curated by Cecilia Wichmann, BMA Associate Curator of Contemporary Art, and Catharina Manchanda, SAM Jon and Mary Shirley Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art, with support from Leslie Rose, Joyce J. Scott Curatorial Research Assistant.

"Joyce J. Scott is a living legend and a pillar of Baltimore's artistic community, whose multi-disciplinary practice has a profound effect on everyone who encounters it," said Asma Naeem, the BMA's Dorothy Wagner Wallis Director. "The BMA has had the honor of engaging audiences with Scott's work for many years through exhibitions, public programs, and acquisitions. We are absolutely thrilled to partner with the Seattle Art Museum to present this comprehensive exhibition that highlights the remarkable range of her career and celebrates the passion, vision, and innovative spirit that pervades her work."

"The collaboration between the Baltimore Museum of Art and the Seattle Art Museum epitomizes the boundless spirit of artistic synergy," said José Carlos Diaz, Susan Brotman Deputy Director for Art at SAM. "By joining forces with Joyce J. Scott, together we amplify the power of her profound art to transcend geographical boundaries and ignite inspiration across diverse communities."

Joyce J. Scott: Walk a Mile in My Dreams draws on the BMA's growing holdings of Scott's work, from the first acquisition of *Nuclear Nanny* (1983-84) in 1984 to several recent acquisitions such as *Lynching Necklace* (1998), *Lynched Tree* (2011/2024), and rare 1970s artwear garments. The exhibition also embraces SAM's recent acquisition of *War Woman III* (2014/2019), a major feat of recent sculpture, as well as Scott's longstanding engagement with audiences and artists in the Seattle region through residencies at such venues as Pilchuck Glass School.

Among the exhibition's highlights are:

- A fashion vignette featuring expressive garments Scott made for herself and friends beginning in the 1970s and sculptural necklaces such as *What You Mean Jungle Music* (1987) and *Hunger* (1991) that bridge performance and sculpture, showing how wearing difficult truths can incite conversations about social justice.
- Significant examples from iconic cycles of work reunited for the first time in many years, including Scott's "Mammy/Nanny" series of the 1980s-90s, riffs on the watermelon trope such as *Man Eating Watermelon* (1986), and works from her "Still Funny" series that show Scott confronting American history and racial violence in the U.S. and abroad by "messing with stereotypes" to spark meaningful debate.
- Ephemera and rare performance footage that bring to life Scott's earliest performance collaborations with Robert Sherman (late 1970s), her legendary "Thunder Thigh Revue" act in collaboration with Kay Lawal-Muhammad (1985-90), and solo theater pieces such as "Walk a Mile in My Drawers" (2006).
- A participatory weaving and storytelling environment, conceived by the artist as a hub for structured and informal programming.

Scott comes from a long line of makers in her family who created functional objects of great beauty in their quest for freedom out of slavery, sharecropping, migration, and segregation. A companion exhibition of Scott's mother's work, [Eyewinkers, Tumbleturds, and Candlebugs: The Art of Elizabeth Talford Scott](#) will be presented at the BMA from November 12, 2023, through April 28, 2024. The exhibition, guest curated by Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA) Curator-in-Residence Emeritus George Ciscle, is also part of a broader community initiative organized by the BMA, MICA, and the Estate of Elizabeth Talford Scott at Goya Contemporary to celebrate Scott's mother's work through activations and events at eight partner sites across Baltimore City from February through May 2024.

"Joyce J. Scott's sophisticated and virtuosic use of a wide range of materials brings beauty and biting irony to bear on subjects ranging from the traumatic to the transcendental," said co-curators Wichmann and Manchanda. "Her intergenerational practice is radical in its commitment to community and place while building self-awareness and empathy. Those who already know Scott's intimate and revelatory work will be delighted to see the many facets of her practice brought together—and those who encounter her work for the first time can expect to be blown away."

Catalog

A fully illustrated 300-page catalog—co-published by SAM and BMA and distributed by Yale University Press—is envisioned as a critical resource that introduces the richness and complexity of Scott's work across five decades through new scholarship, artist reflections, and a selection of vital out-of-print source materials. In addition to an introduction co-authored by Manchanda and Wichmann, the publication features two thematic interviews with the artist by Dr. Leslie King Hammond, Dean Emeritus of the Maryland Institute College of Art, and Valerie Cassel Oliver, Sydney and Frances Lewis Family Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. Essays on key aspects of Scott's work are contributed by established and emerging scholars Tiffany E. Barber, Angela N. Carroll, Henry J. Drewal, Ashley Minner Jones, and Lowery Stokes Sims. A cross-generational group of artists—Oletha DeVane, Sonya Clark, Kay Lawal-Muhammad, Jeffrey Gibson, Malcolm Peacock, and William Rhodes—reflect in prose and poetry on Scott's influential role as artist, mentor, and educator.

Joyce J. Scott

Joyce J. Scott (b. 1948, Baltimore, MD) and her work have been the subject of numerous exhibitions, books, and articles. She has received commissions, grants, awards, residencies, and honors from the National Endowment for the Arts, Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation, Anonymous Was a Woman, American Craft Council, National Living Treasure Award, Lifetime Achievement Award from the Women’s Caucus for the Arts, Mary Sawyers Imboden Baker Award, MacArthur Foundation Fellowship (2016), Smithsonian Visionary Artist Award, National Academy of Design Induction, and Moore College Visionary Woman Award, among others. Major solo exhibitions include *Joyce J. Scott: Kickin’ It with the Old Masters* at the Baltimore Museum of Art (2000); *Maryland to Murano: The Neckpieces & Sculpture of Joyce J. Scott* at the Museum of Arts and Design in New York (2014-15); *Joyce J. Scott: Truths and Visions* at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Cleveland (2015); and *Joyce J. Scott: Harriet Tubman and Other Truths* at Grounds for Sculpture in Hamilton, NJ (2018). Scott’s work is included in major private and public collections, including the Baltimore Museum of Art, MD; Brooklyn Museum of Art, NY; National Museum of African American History and Culture, Washington, DC; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, CA; Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY; Museum of Art and Design, NY; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX; Philadelphia Museum of Art, PA; Reginald F. Lewis Museum, Baltimore, MD; Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, CT; National Museum of American Art, Washington, DC; and Seattle Art Museum, WA; among many others.

Scott earned her Bachelor of Fine Arts from the Maryland Institute College of Art, and a Master of Fine Arts from the Instituto Allende in Mexico. In 2018, she was awarded an honorary fellowship from NYU, as well as honorary doctorates from both MICA and the California College of the Arts. In 2022, she was awarded an honorary doctorate from Johns Hopkins University.

Baltimore Museum of Art

Founded in 1914, the Baltimore Museum of Art (BMA) inspires people of all ages and backgrounds through exhibitions, programs, and collections that tell an expansive story of art—challenging long-held narratives and embracing new voices. Our outstanding collection of more than 97,000 objects spans many eras and cultures and includes the world’s largest public holding of works by Henri Matisse; one of the nation’s finest collections of prints, drawings, and photographs; and a rapidly growing number of works by contemporary artists of diverse backgrounds. The museum is also distinguished by a neoclassical building designed by American architect John Russell Pope and two beautifully landscaped gardens featuring an array of modern and contemporary sculpture. The BMA is located three miles north of the Inner Harbor, adjacent to the main campus of Johns Hopkins University, and has a community branch at Lexington Market. General admission is free so that everyone can enjoy the power of art.

Seattle Art Museum

As the leading visual art institution in the Pacific Northwest, SAM draws on its global collections, powerful exhibitions, and dynamic programs to provide unique educational resources benefiting the Seattle region, the Pacific Northwest, and beyond. SAM was founded in 1933 with a focus on Asian art. By the late 1980s the museum had outgrown its original home, and in 1991 a new 155,000-square-foot downtown building, designed by Venturi, Scott Brown & Associates, opened to the public. The 1933 building was renovated and rededicated as the Asian Art Museum in 1994, and it reopened on February 8, 2020, following an extensive renovation and expansion. SAM’s desire to further serve its community was realized in 2007 with the opening of two stunning new facilities: the nine-acre Olympic Sculpture Park (designed by Weiss/Manfredi Architects)—a “museum without walls,” free and open to all—and the Allied Works Architecture designed 118,000-square-foot expansion of its main,

downtown location, including 232,000 square feet of additional space built for future expansion. The Olympic Sculpture Park and SAM's downtown expansion celebrated their tenth anniversary in 2017. From a strong foundation of Asian art to noteworthy collections of African and Oceanic art, Northwest Coast Native American art, European and American art, and modern and contemporary art, the strength of SAM's collection of approximately 25,000 objects lies in its diversity of media, cultures, and time periods.

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