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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Ayana Ross Named 2026 Duncanson Artist-in-Residence, Marking the Competitive Program's 40th Anniversary



Credit: Carol Rose of Colurwrk Photography.

CINCINNATI, OH—June 17, 2025—The Taft Museum of Art has selected visual artist Ayana Ross as the 2026 Duncanson Artist-in-Residence. The award-winning residency is known for its competitive application and review process. The 40th anniversary celebrates the program's long-standing cultural significance, elevating the profile of contemporary artists across a variety of disciplines. Ross's residency will include an exhibition of her work at the Taft Museum of Art as well as engagement with the community, leading public programs, teaching workshops, and visiting schools across Greater Cincinnati in spring 2026.

"For four decades, the Duncanson Program has honored the enduring legacy of Robert S. Duncanson by uplifting artists whose work challenges, inspires, and transforms. As we celebrate this milestone, we reflect on the artists who have shaped our cultural landscape and look ahead with pride and purpose to the next generation of creative visionaries."—Kareem Simpson, Taft Museum of Art Duncanson Program manager.

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Ayana Ross is a visual artist whose work combines traditional oil painting methods, using figurative realism, with the elaborate treatment of patterns and decorative design as a visual language to evoke nostalgia, elevate her subjects, and provide greater context into her work. Often autobiographical in nature, Ross's paintings employ layered narratives from past and present to examine social issues, such as identity, race, equity, and a general assessment of value systems, while aiming to illuminate the greater lessons that can be learned from everyday people and moments.

Ross holds a Master of Arts degree in painting from Savannah College of Art and Design (2021) and a Master of Arts degree in liberal arts from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (2014). She has been recognized as the 2021 winner of The Bennett Prize, the 2022 recipient of the National Black Art Festival Award in visual arts, the Pittsburgh Foundation's Eben Demarest Fund Award in 2024, and was a 2024 Mellon Arts & Practitioner Fellow through the Yale Center for the Study of Race, Indigeneity and Transnational Migration.

To learn more about the Duncanson Program and the annual residency, visit taftmuseum.org/Duncanson-Program. Additional details to be announced.

About the Duncanson Program

Established in 1986 by the Taft Museum of Art and the Robert S. Duncanson Society, the award-winning Duncanson Program honors the achievements of contemporary artists working in a variety of disciplines—year-round—including the annual Duncanson Artist-in-Residence each spring. The program honors the relationship between Black American painter Robert S. Duncanson and his patron, Nicholas Longworth, who commissioned Duncanson to paint landscape murals in the foyer of his home about 1850–52, now the Taft Museum of Art.

Many nationally and internationally acclaimed artists spanning an array of fields have been selected for the residency. This includes visual and performance artist Vanessa German, choreographer Stafford Berry, and the esteemed poet Nikki Giovanni (the inaugural Duncanson Artist-in-Residence in 1986).

Support

Exhibition support generously provided by Ellen and George Rieveschl Endowment, Warrington Exhibition Endowment, Chellgren Family Endowment, and Sallie Robinson Wadsworth Endowment for Exhibitions.

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Duncanson Program sponsors include the Carol Ann and Ralph V. Haile, Jr. Foundation, the P&G Fund of the Greater Cincinnati Foundation, and Fifth Third Bank. Artist-in-Residence media sponsor: Paloozanoire. Duncanson Artist-in-Residence accommodations generously provided by Morgan and Eddie Rigaud.

Operating support is provided by the museum's season funders ArtsWave, the Ohio Arts Council (supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts), The H.B., E.W., and F.R. Luther Charitable Foundation, Fifth Third Bank, N.A., Trustee, and the Western & Southern Financial Group; the Art Bridges Foundation's Access for All program enables the museum to offer free admission on Mondays; the Western & Southern Financial Group enables the museum to offer free admission on Sundays.

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About the Taft Museum of Art

The Taft Museum of Art offers a unique, multi-sensory experience that immerses audiences in spaces to learn, create, and connect—within and beyond its walls.

The museum's 200-year-old historic house was once home to notable Cincinnatians such as Nicholas Longworth and museum co-founders Anna Sinton Taft and Charles Phelps Taft. The one-of-a-kind landmark is now a destination of international cultural significance. The museum's collection of more than 800 objects includes important Chinese porcelains, European decorative arts, French Renaissance enamels, American furniture, and masterpiece paintings by Thomas Gainsborough, Francisco Goya, Rembrandt van Rijn, John Singer Sargent, J. M. W. Turner, and James McNeill Whistler. Eight monumental landscape murals by Robert S. Duncanson, the first Black American artist to achieve global acclaim, also adorn the walls of the museum's foyer.

Visitors can also enjoy special exhibitions, events, and programming for all ages, a beautiful outdoor garden, the Museum Shop, the Taft Café—and so much more. Learn more at taftmuseum.org.