

MMFA

Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MONTGOMERY MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS CELEBRATES THE CREATIVITY AND CONTRIBUTIONS OF TWO MONTGOMERY-BORN ARTISTS WITH NEW EXHIBITIONS

On view February 13 through May 9, 2021, these exhibitions celebrate the creativity and contributions of two Montgomery natives

Montgomery, AL, February 10, 2021 – New exhibitions celebrating the creativity and contributions of two Montgomery-born artists—*Bethany Collins: My destiny is in your hands* and *Anderson Scott: Photographs*—will open at the Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts on February 13 and be on view through May 9, 2021. While both exhibitions explore aspects of Southern culture—Collins on ideas about race and Scott on the built environment—these artists employ vastly different media and approaches to express their perspectives of the region they once called home.

BETHANY COLLINS: MY DESTINY IS IN YOUR HANDS



Artist Bethany Collins (b. 1984) is a native of Montgomery who currently lives and works in Chicago, IL. Using various media such as drawing and installation, Collins critically explores the interaction of race and language. *Bethany Collins: My destiny is in your hands* includes several bodies of work the artist has created in recent years. These include fourteen pieces from her seminal series, *Southern Review*, 2015-2020, in which she attempts to rewrite a Southern narrative, and two works from her *Conronym* series, including *Certain* (1982), 2015, from the MMFA's Permanent Collection. Accompanying these pieces is *My destiny is in your hands*, 2018, a white on white screen-printed and flocked wallpaper that depicts the official state flowers of the

Bethany Collins (American, born 1984), *Untitled (In His Own Country)*, 2020, charcoal on found paper, Courtesy of the Artist and PATRON Gallery, Chicago, Photo by Evan Jenkins

American South alongside the official flowers of states along Great Migration routes. This installation creates a chapel of sorts for her artist book, *America: A Hymnal* 2017. This book features 100 versions of *My Country 'Tis of Thee* (also known as *America*), each a re-titled and re-written version that articulates an understanding of what it means to be American. Additionally, as part of the exhibition, Collins selects several pieces from the MMFA's permanent collection and arranges them in a florigraphic poem. Florigraphy, or the language of flowers, is a historical tradition that flourished in nineteenth-century Victorian England as covert communication method.



Bethany Collins (American, born 1984), *America: A Hymnal*, 2017, book with 100 laser cut leaves, AP 1, Special Edition of 25, Courtesy of the artist and PATRON Gallery, Chicago, Photo by Tim Johnson

MMFA Curator Jennifer Jankauskas says, “Bethany Collins’ art is both beautiful and subtle. She expertly draws the viewer in, challenging us to not only look closer at her stunning pieces but also, to look within ourselves and challenge how we perceive, use, and think about both the power of language and how we employ it.” Director Angie Dodson continues “Collins’ work centers on many of the histories and matters found at the core of our current national conversation—race and identity, the past and present. In exploring how visual and textual language has been, is, and might be used to describe our personal and shared stories, she redefines ‘text messaging.’ This exhibition provides a space for us to reflect on our world...what we have done, what we have left undone, what we are now called to do about that.”

The MMFA is grateful to lead sponsor Alabama Power Foundation for enabling the MMFA to bring this important exhibition to the River Region. *Bethany Collins: My destiny is in your hands* is also supported by a grant from the Alabama Humanities Foundation, a state partner with the National Endowment for the Humanities.

ANDERSON SCOTT: PHOTOGRAPHS



Anderson Scott (American, 1961–2020), *Fish Hiding, South Carolina*, 2011, archival pigment print on paper, Lent by Amy Miller

A son of Montgomery, Anderson Scott’s (1961–2020) family roots run deep in this community, dating back to the early territorial era prior to statehood. His personality, his character, and his early education were all formed within a childhood steeped in a long-simmering Southern culture. Although also educated as an attorney, he obtained an MFA in photography from Yale in 1987. He pursued photography as passionately as he practiced law. Of his avocation, Scott said “Making photographs is an itch I’ve had to scratch, almost daily, for most of my life.” Over the course of that too-short life, Scott amassed an archive of over 150,000 images. He photographed desolate places,

where people had mostly either come or gone, or had never been at all. Many of the images capture industrial landscapes of the 20th century, imparting a sense of abandonment, obsolescence, desolation, the remains of life silently discarded. In casual observations such as *Round Propane Tank, CT* (c. 1989) the beauty of the vast sky is interrupted by icons of twentieth-century life forged of steel,

that are classics of modern design. The tank itself is a globe that reflects the glow of the sun—its smooth, elegant geometric shape contrasted with the rough, organic shapes of the clouds. The sedan also reflects the blue of the sky and slides comfortably into the earth as if being absorbed by nature.

In addition to these odes to the quietly desolate, the work in *Anderson Scott: Photographs* also reveals the photographer's interest in life's oddities and scenes that are, at once, both somber and surreal. A particularly wondrous series of photographs of Putnam County Georgia's *Tama-Re*, a compound of buildings and monuments once inhabited by the United Nuwaubian Nation of Moors, vividly illustrates Scott's fascination with the abandoned...and the absurd. The images, made in 2006 after the cult's 476-acre compound was abandoned and shortly before it was completely demolished, show how the Nuwaubians turned their corner of the South into a version of Egypt as showy and impermanent as a Mardi Gras float. At *Tama-Re*, pyramids, sphinxes, temples rose above the Georgia pines and mobile homes painted to resemble stone temples and a ranch house accessorized with towers and domes reminiscent of exotic Islamic architecture were nestled amidst groves of artificial palm trees. Captivated by this place—only an hour from his Atlanta home but also worlds away—Scott captured it all.

About the exhibition MMFA Curator Margaret Lynne Ausfeld remarks "It is a bit disquieting to realize that the absurdity which resonates throughout these photographs seems somehow entirely normal, somehow entirely Southern. Southerners, and particularly this Southern photographer, knew better than to take absurdity too seriously." And, to that, Director Angie Dodson adds "As a daughter of the New South, someone who's drawn to images of its landscape and built environment, and one who appreciates a good dose of quirk and whimsy every now and again, I find myself drawn to this work, mesmerized by it, in fact. *Anderson Scott: Photography* is one of those exhibitions where access points abound, where most everyone will find something resonant that attracts their attention then holds it."

Anderson Scott: Photography was made possible in part by a grant from the Alabama State Council on the Arts. We thank them for helping us realize this exhibition and enabling us to share it with the Region's residents and visitors.

RELATED PROGRAMS

While we are glad to welcome visitors back to the Museum, we also maintain our commitment to supporting and keeping connected with those who are not yet ready to return to the Museum and those who've come to value their online access to the Museum. With this in mind, the programs associated with these exhibitions will all be accessible online.

Creative Conversations: Bethany Collins

Thursday, February 11; 5:30 PM

Facebook Live Event (facebook.com/montgomerymfa)

Free



Anderson Scott (American, 1961–2020),
Standing Female Statue, Tama-Re, 2005,
archival pigment print on paper, Lent by
Amy Miller

MMFA Curator Dr. Jennifer Jankauskas will speak with artist Bethany Collins about the exhibition.

Montgomery Chorale Performance

Saturday, February 13; 11:00 AM to 3:00 PM

In Person and Facebook Live Event (facebook.com/montgomerymfa)

Free

Bethany Collins' *America: A Hymnal* will be performed by the Montgomery Chorale, under the leadership of conductor Dr. James Seay. This performance will occur in the galleries of the exhibition. The event will also be live-streamed on Facebook for those who prefer to enjoy it from the comfort of their homes.

Creative Conversations: The History of Lynching

Wednesday, March 24; 5:30 PM

Facebook Live Event (facebook.com/montgomerymfa)

Free

Dr. Joan R. Harrell, Journalism Lecturer and Diversity Coordinator at Auburn University School of Communication and Journalism will moderate a discussion among artist Bethany Collins, Kiara Boone, Deputy Director for Community Education at the Equal Justice Initiative, and Dr. Derryn Moten, Chair of the Department of History and Political Science at Alabama State University. Their conversation will examine the importance of telling the history of lynching through cultural expressions such as the work of art, *My destiny is in your hands*.

The Art of Seeing: A Photography Workshop

Saturday, April 17; 10:30–11:30 AM

Sunday, April 18; 10:30–11:30 AM

Saturday, April 24; 10 AM to noon

Cost: \$30 for the series; MMFA members save 25%

Materials: Digital camera or smartphone

This series of virtual meetings will help you see the environment in a fresh way and learn how to create a visual masterpiece through the lens of your own digital camera or smartphone. Led by local photographer Warren Simons, this workshop will take place as three separate Zoom meetings where you will learn about Anderson Scott's photography; discuss the art of seeing, how to view the world as your studio, and apply those techniques to your own photography; and engage in a friendly critique to review participants' photos taken from prompts during the workshop.

FOR YOUR SAFETY | COVID-19

We remain committed to serving our members and visitors in a safe and responsible manner, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

To this end: To facilitate **social distancing**, we have limited the number of people allowed in the building and established new traffic patterns; To address **cleaning and disinfection** of our facility, we have implemented new practices in accordance with CDC, EPA, and OSHA guidelines. Additionally, hand sanitizer will be available for visitors; And, all Museum visitors over the age of six are required to **wear a mask or face covering** during their visit. Please stay at home if you are feeling ill or have been

exposed to COVID-19 in the fourteen (14) days prior to your visit. All Museum staff have their temperature taken each day and are required to wear masks.

MMFA BACKGROUND

The Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts was founded in 1930 by a group of local artists as a place for both exhibiting art and space for art education. The original intentions of our founders—to exhibit and teach—continue to inspire and inform every action and activity here at the Museum which, since 1988, has shared the 277-acre Blount Cultural Park with our partners across the lake at the celebrated Alabama Shakespeare Festival.

Today's MMFA visitors stroll art-studded grounds and permanent collection galleries. They see compelling changing exhibitions and learn about art by playing in our interactive gallery, Artworks, making art in its bustling studios, or by participating in other engaging events and programs. And, as of late September 2018, MMFA visitors can now relax and recharge in the serenity of our stunning new three-acre sculpture garden.

While the Museum's collection is still home to the art of many of the regional artists who first established it, over time, it has become known for its strength in American art and Old Master Prints. Recent, important acquisitions of art made by African American and Asian artists and works inspired by images and themes related to the experiences of these groups represent the breadth and depth of the lives and concerns of those who now call Montgomery and the River Region home. Through the exhibition of this work as well as the programs and events that help connect our communities with it, the MMFA is recognized as a leading arts and cultural resource here in the state and Southeastern region.

The MMFA is a department of the City of Montgomery and is supported by funds from the City of Montgomery, with additional funds from the Montgomery County Commission and the Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts Association. Programs are made possible, in part, by grants from the Alabama State Council on the Arts.

GENERAL INFORMATION

WHAT: *Bethany Collins: My destiny is in your hands*
Anderson Scott: Photography

WHEN: Both exhibitions: February 13 through May 9, 2021
Creative Conversations: Thursday, February 11, 2021, 5:30 PM
Bethany Collins with Curator Jennifer Jankauskas
Chorale Performance: Saturday, February 13, 2021, 11:00 AM– 3:00 PM
Collins' America: A Hymnal by the Montgomery Chorale
Creative Conversations: Wednesday, March 24, 2021, 5:30 PM
Bethany Collins with EJI's Kiara Boone, ASU's Dr. Derryn Moten,
moderated by AU's Dr. Joan R. Harrell
Photography Workshop: Saturday, April 17, 10:30–11:30 AM; Sunday, April 18,
10:30–11:30 AM; and Saturday, April 24, 10 AM to noon
Led by local photographer Warren Simons

WHERE: Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts
Wynton M. Blount Cultural Park

One Museum Drive
Montgomery, AL 36117

INFORMATION: mmfa.org
334.625.4333
@MontgomeryMFA

HOURS:
Galleries, Mondays, Closed
Sculpture Garden, Tuesdays–Saturdays, 10 AM–5 PM
Terrace, and Store: Sundays, Noon to 5 PM
Last entry at 4:45 PM

ADMISSION: Free! With ample, free parking.

###

MEDIA CONTACT

Stephen Hayes: shayes@mmfa.org | 334.625.4347