

# MMFA

Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## CONTEMPORARY ARTIST LESLEY DILL BRINGS HISTORY TO LIFE IN LATEST EXHIBITION

On view, October 9, 2021 through January 2, 2022, *Lesley Dill, Wilderness: Light Sizzles Around Me* carefully interweaves imagery, text, and historical visionaries into stunning three-dimensional encounters.



Photograph of the 2021 installation of the exhibition *Lesley Dill, Wilderness: Light Sizzles Around Me* at the Figge Art Museum, Davenport, Iowa, Photograph by Ed Robbins

**Montgomery, AL, September 20, 2021** – Artist Lesley Dill, a renowned New York-based artist, brings historical and literary figures from America’s past to life in a new exhibition opening October 9, 2021 and remaining on view until January 2, 2022.

Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts  
One Museum Drive, Montgomery, AL 36117  
334.625.4333 | @MontgomeryMFA | mma.org



Lesley Dill (American, born 1950), *OMNIPOTENCE ENOUGH (EMILY DICKINSON)*, 2017, oil paint on fabric, wooden yoke and shoe lasts, Lent by the artist, © 2021 Lesley Dill, Photograph by Sarah Ingber

*Lesley Dill, Wilderness: Light Sizzles Around Me*, organized by the Figge Art Museum, Davenport, Iowa, features a collection of hand-painted and sewn textile sculptures and banners created by Dill over the past six years. Her work carefully interweaves imagery, text, and historical visionaries into stunning three-dimensional encounters. Gracefully suspended from the ceiling, the clothing of each figure is delicately embellished with words and symbols drawn from their writings and experiences. Hand-painted banners hang on every wall of the gallery with additional texts and imagery elaborating on their incredible stories.

For Dill, there is a personal connection to many of the people represented in the new exhibition. “These personas and their times stir something deep in my own family history and sense of self. I was compelled to explore this period in America’s history when limited access to a diversity of written word ignited the bravery of these figures in response to their times.”

Dill represents fifteen activists, seers, and visionaries—all important figures from United States history: Black Hawk, John Brown, Emily Dickinson, Johnathan Edwards, Nathaniel Hawthorne (and his character Hester Prynne), Anne Hutchinson, Mother Ann Lee, Sister

Gertrude Morgan, Horace Pippin, Mary Rowlandson, Dred Scott, Edward Taylor, Sojourner Truth, and Walt Whitman. Each of the people featured in the exhibition emerged from the “wilderness” of their day, voices raised in response to the troubled and chaotic times each faced. Through her distinctive artwork, Dill’s exhibition brings new life to these people from the past. Their own words are revealed in ways that reacquaint us with important stories of injustices that have been long-woven into the fabric of our history.

Dill's works are a platform for promoting cultural literacy and American history. Her incorporation of language throughout the exhibition links her works to American literary tradition. Dill’s figurative sculptures and banners derive their power from the lives and words of the people her works represent.

Jennifer Jankauskas, Ph.D., Curator of Art, states, “Throughout her work, Dill utilizes language to examine the human condition. In *Wilderness: Light Sizzles Around Me*, each persona that Dill represents played an instrumental part in the formation of our nation’s history. By bringing these historical figures back to life in large-scale figurative sculptures and banners, Dill introduces many of us to their powerful and brave words and actions. Her combination of art and language evokes the fervor and spirituality that drove each of these individuals, providing new ways for us to examine, interpret, and find inspiration not only our past, but our present.”



Headshot of Lesley Dill courtesy of the artist, Photograph by Ed Robbins.

MMFA Director Angie Dodson says "This will be my first encounter with Lesley Dill's work and, personally, I'm really looking forward to just being with it. But, when I think about this exhibition



### **Art After Five**

Tuesday, October 12; 5:30 PM

In Person at MMFA

Free; Cash Bar

Unwind with fellow young professionals, cocktails, and art making inspired by *Wilderness: Light Sizzles Around Me*.

### **Art Ed Central – Professional Development Workshop**

Tuesday, October 12, 2021; 5 PM

In Person at MMFA

Free for Alabama Art Education Association Members

Art educators from the region will enjoy a special tour of *Wilderness: Light Sizzles Around Me* led by curator, Jennifer Jankauskas, Ph.D. Afterward, teachers will work with guest textile artist Helen Smith, to create their own works inspired by the exhibition that they can then take back to the classroom to share with their students.

### **Mashup: A Written Arts Workshop**

Saturday, October 23; 10:30 AM–2:30 PM

In Person at MMFA

\$20 per person

Artist and poet Janelle Green leads this creative writing workshop from a language arts perspective, guiding participants to make original works of art and poems inspired by the exhibition. Register at [mmfa.org](http://mmfa.org).

### **Art+Letters: Horace Pippin**

Saturday, November 6; 10 AM

In Person at MMFA

Free

Join our reading group for a discussion about *Horace Pippin, American Modern* by Anne Monahan. This volume sheds new light on how Pippin, one of the historical figures in *Wilderness: Light Sizzles Around Me*, claimed his place in the art world.

### **The World of Fiber Arts – Homeschool Workshop**

Friday, December 3, 2021; 10AM–3PM

In Person at MMFA

\$15 per family, all materials provided

Homeschool students and their families will learn basic sewing and design skills from the makers at Birmingham's Bib & Tucker Sew-Op. Register at [mmfa.org](http://mmfa.org).

### **On the Mend: Patch Making and Upcycling as a Catalyst for Change – Teen Workshop**

Saturday, December 4, 2021; 10AM to Noon

In Person at MMFA

\$15 per person, all materials provided

Teens are invited to participate in a mending/upcycling workshop, led by Birmingham's Bib & Tucker Sew-Op, that will teach them how to sew their own decorative patch. Register at [mmfa.org](http://mmfa.org).

## **Arts+Activism: The Power of Language**

Saturday, December 4, 2021; 3–5 PM

In Person at MMFA

Free

This program brings together a linguistics professor and two regional artists to discuss how the power of words help to move the needle of progress.

## **Wilderness Inspires**

Tuesday, December 14, 2021; 6–7 PM

In Person at MMFA

Free

Join writers of all genres, from across the River Region and beyond, as they read original works inspired by *Wilderness: Light Sizzles Around Me*.

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## **RELATED EXHIBITION**

### **Turn of Phrase: Words and Images**

October 9, 2021 through January 2, 2022

ArtWorks Gallery, Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts

Artwork created by high school and college students inspired by *Wilderness: Light Sizzles Around Me*.

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## **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: all Museum visitors over the age of five **must wear a mask or face covering** while inside during their visit. **Social distancing is encouraged** and indicated by signage throughout the Garden and the Galleries. Following CDC and ADPH guidelines, we have increased the frequency that we **clean and disinfect high-touch areas**. Additionally, hand sanitizer is readily available for visitors. 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.

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## **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 through 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.

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## GENERAL INFORMATION

**WHAT:** *Lesley Dill, Wilderness: Light Sizzles Around Me*

**WHEN:** October 9, 2021 through January 2, 2022

**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.

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## MEDIA CONTACT

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