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Latest News in African American Art: Ntozake Shange Has Died, Torkwase Dyson at Colby College, Dutch Pavilion at 2019 Venice Biennale & More

by VICTORIA L. VALENTINE on Oct 31, 2018 • 11:58 pm

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Artist Torkwase Dyson. | Photo by Gabe Souza

The following review of the past week or so presents a snapshot of the latest news in African American art and related culture:

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Nigeria is planning a new Benin Royal Museum to [display historic bronze sculptures](#) looted from Benin by British troops in 1897 and now in European public collections. According to The Art Newspaper, “The Benin Dialogue Group, bringing Nigerian representatives together with museum officials from Austria, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK, said they agreed on a three-year time-frame for a permanent display in a new museum at a meeting in the Dutch city of Leiden on Oct. 19.”

Two black artists [have been selected](#) for a joint presentation in the Dutch Pavilion at the 58th edition of the Venice Biennale in 2019. **Remy Jungerman**, who was born in Suriname, and Amsterdam, Netherlands-born **Iris Kensmil** (both at right), are mounting an exhibition called “The Measurement of Presence” that explores transnational attitudes. The concept stems from the notion that “the permanent flow of people and artifacts break boundaries and produce new identities outside and separate from nation states. Places and societies are becoming ever more interconnected in our globalized world. But, on the whole, globalization also causes alignment, and imposes prevailing principles. As a result, we risk losing the specific.”

Samuel Herbert [wants to replace](#) a bust of Martin Luther King Jr., in MLK Park in Buffalo, N.Y. The local activist says the public sculpture looks nothing like the civil rights leader and claims he has gathered more than 6,000 signatures on a petition in support of its removal. Herbert is seeking 10,000 signatures to submit to government officials. A North Carolina artist has offered to create a replacement.

A year after the opening of the Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa (Mocaa) in Cape Town, which has been likened to South Africa’s answer to the Tate Modern (albeit a private one), a local [art critic is raising questions](#) about the museum’s leadership, finances, and curatorial and education programs, and by extension, how it is serving the public.

The Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD) is launching a paid internship program focused on undergraduate students from underrepresented communities. AAMD [announced the 10 museums](#) it is partnering with to host the interns: Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, N.Y.; Anchorage Museum, Anchorage, Alaska; Chazen Museum of Art, University of Wisconsin-Madison; McNay Art Museum, San Antonio, Texas; Mississippi Museum of Art, Jackson, Miss.; Missoula Art Museum, Missoula, Mont.; Montclair Art Museum, Montclair, N.J.; Portland Art Museum, Portland, Ore.; San Jose Museum of Art, San Jose, Calif.; and The Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University, Durham, N.C.



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Where My Girls At? 20 Black Female Artists with Solo Exhibitions on View this Fall

ELECTION 2018: ARTISTS AND MUSEUMS ARE SHINING A LIGHT ON DEMOCRACY, FREEDOM, AND THE IMPORTANCE OF VOTING

LIVES

Ntozake Shange, the playwright, spoken-word artist and author, [died Oct. 27](#) in Bowie, Md. She was 70. A decade ago, she had a pair of strokes that left her in fragile health. A rare bird and infinitely creative spirit, Shange was best known for writing “For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide/When the Rainbow is Enuf.” The canonical play opened on Broadway when she was only 27. Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Suzan-Lori Parks said Shange was in New York at a brunch event for playwrights in September. “I saw Ntozake enter the room,” Parks told the New York Times, “and I stood up, and the younger playwrights said, ‘What’s the matter? Why are you standing?’ And I said, ‘The queen has just entered the room.’”



“

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— Suzan-Lori Parks



TODAY IS ELECTION DAY, VOTE WITH YOUR ART

PROJECTS & UNVEILINGS

Black Lunch Table, a collaboration between artists **Heather Hart** and **Jina Valentine**, is hosting a series of events at the Staten Island Museum Nov. 7-10, including a [Wikipedia Edit-a-Thon](#) on Nov. 10, focused on documenting

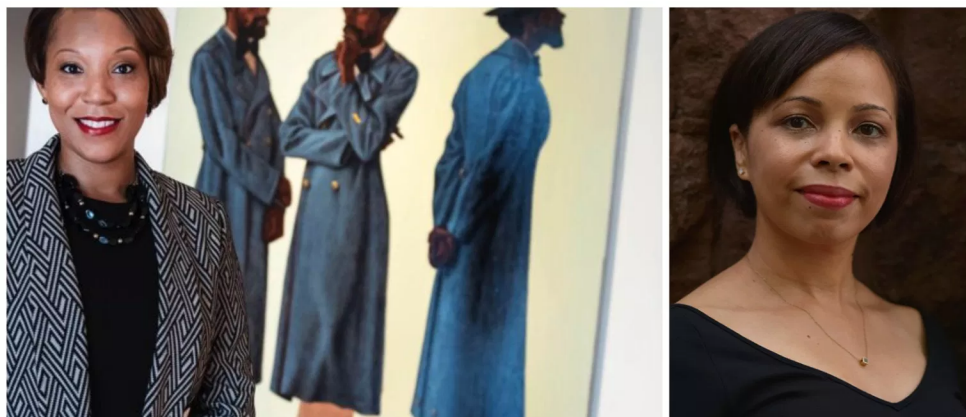
“important but underrepresented Staten Island and New York area visual artists of the African Diaspora.”

A new Studio Museum in Harlem initiative is bringing art into the schools, libraries and service centers in the surrounding neighborhood. [Find Art Here](#) places reproductions of art from the museum’s collection on display in the partner institutions, including Countee Cullen Library and P.S. 154 Harriet Tubman Elementary School. The works by a multigenerational slate of artists—Benny Andrews, Jordan Casteel, Glenn Ligon, and Mickalene Thomas, among them—date from 1954 to 2016.

The Aspen Art Museum (AAM) has been partnering with the Aspen Ski Company since 2005 to improve upon the white paper lift tickets hanging off of ski jackets all around town. The idea came from Heidi Zuckerman, AAM director and chief curator, who saw the tickets as blank canvases and an opportunity for “contemporary artists to participate directly in the cultural life of the valley.” **Hank Willis Thomas** [designed the 2018-19 tickets](#), based on text-based cigarette advertisements from the 1960s-80s. The 2013-14 tickets were created by Mark Bradford.



WE THE PEOPLE: THIS ELECTION SEASON, ART AND THE POLITICS OF SOCIAL JUSTICE ARE ON VIEW



From left, Tamara Holmes Brothers. | Photo by J. Caldwell; Wendi Parson. | Courtesy Museum of Arts and Design



AMID RISING CALLS FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE IN AMERICA, THE CLENCHED FIST IS APPEARING IN ARTWORK AND MUSEUMS

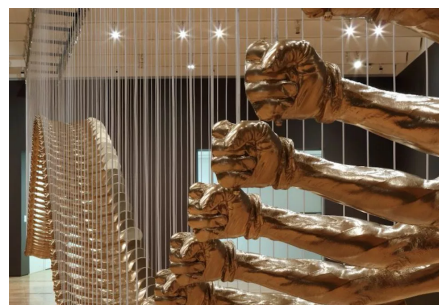
APPOINTMENTS

Torkwase Dyson is the [latest visiting artist](#) at the Lunder Institute for American Art at Colby College in Waterville, Maine. Her appointment is concurrent with *Nautical Dusk*, an exhibition of new site-specific work on view at the Colby College Museum of Art (Oct. 4, 2018-Jan. 6, 2019). The institute has had three visiting artists, Dyson, poet Richard Blanco, and Theaster Gates, the inaugural visiting artist in 2017.

Naomi Beckwith, senior curator at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, and **Deborah Willis**, photographer, art historian, and chair of the Department of Photography & Imaging at the Tisch School of the Arts at New York University, [joined the board](#) of the Andy Warhol Foundation. With a focus on advancing the visual arts, the foundation manages a vital grants program and preserves Andy Warhol’s legacy through thoughtful licensing policies and catalogue raisonné projects. The foundation announced a new chair, Julián Zugazagoitia, director and CEO of the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City, Mo., and three new board members (Beckwith, Willis, and Cary J. Davis) earlier this month.

The Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University [announced the appointment](#) of **Tamara Holmes Brothers**, who is joining the museum as director of development. She comes to the Nasher from Fayetteville State University and brings 17 years of fundraising experience and a deep interest in museums. When she was an undergraduate student at Hampton University, Brothers served as a curatorial intern at the Hampton University Museum & Archives. During her four-year tenure, she helped with the traveling exhibition “To Conserve a Legacy: American Art from Historically Black Colleges and Universities,” which was co-curated by Duke Art Historian Richard J. Powell.

The Museum of Arts and Design (MAD) named **Wendi Parson** chief external affairs officer. [She joins MAD](#) from the Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum. Nanette L. Laitman, MAD’s director said: “Her multifaceted engagement with design and her outreach expertise with a variety of audiences will serve us well as we usher the Museum into the next phase of its future, helping us to pose the important questions and shape the conversation around—and direction of—art and design in the twenty-first century.”



POST ELECTION, TO REALIZE OUR FUTURE, WE HAVE TO ‘DO MORE AND DO BETTER’

Kapwani Kiwanga - The 2018 Sobey Art Award



A finalist for the 2018 Sobey Art Award, Kapwani Kiwanga explains the sources for the ideas that drive her rigorous and imaginative practice. | Video by National Gallery of Canada

AWARDS & HONORS

Tavares Strachan was selected for the [2018 Frontier Art Prize](#), a \$100,000 award presented by the VIA Art Fund and The World Frontiers Forum (WFF). For the past year, Strachan has been focused on WFF's 2018 Convergence Project, "joining scientific pioneers from the medical and bio-tech fields along with social entrepreneurs in working with the government of Sierra-Leone to develop an impact initiative targeting improved access to food, healthcare, creative learning and economic mobility."



Kapwani Kiwanga is among [five artists shortlisted](#) for the 2018 Sobey Art Award. An exhibition of the artists's works is on view at National Gallery of Canada in Ontario (Oct. 3, 2018–Feb. 10, 2019). The winner of the \$100,000 award recognizing new developments in Canadian contemporary art will be announced Nov. 14.

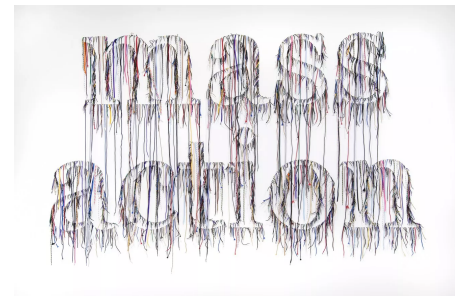
Lavaughan Jenkins is [one of four recipients](#) of the 2019 James and Audrey Foster Prize Exhibition recognizing Boston-area artists. A painter, printmaker, and sculptor, Jenkins lives and works in Roxbury, Mass. He "uses the materiality of paint to build up two- and three-dimensional works that merge figuration with abstraction." A group exhibition of their work will be on view at the Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston Aug. 21, 2019-Jan. 5, 2020.

Kellie Jones is among the [2018 American Book Award winners](#), selected by the Before Columbus Foundation in Oakland, Calif. Jones won the Walter & Lillian Lowenfels Criticism Award for "[South of Pico: African American Artists in Los Angeles in the 1960s and 1970s](#)." The awards recognized the literary achievement of 20 people, including trailblazing book publisher Charles F. Harris (1934-2015) and Tiya Miles, author of "[The Dawn of Detroit: A Chronicle of Slavery and Freedom in the City of the Straits](#)," and among others.

The Massachusetts College of Art and Design (MassArt) [announced its annual alumni awards](#) today. Artist **Dana Chandler** (at right), who earned an undergraduate degree in teacher education in 1967, is among the three recipients. Each year, MassArt recognizes outstanding alumni who have "excelled in their fields and who epitomize the creative spirit and fearless determination that radiates throughout the MassArt community." A retired educator, Chandler was a professor at Simmons College for more than 30 years (1971-2004). In 1978, he founded the African American Master Artist in Residence Program (AAMARP) at Northeastern, which has [recently been in the news](#). The 2018 Alumni Awards will be presented Nov. 4.



Kara Walker is giving the [annual Annenberg Lecture](#) at the Whitney Museum of American Art on Nov. 1. The event is sold out but will be [livestreamed](#) on Facebook.



ELECTION FERVOR: FOR 40 YEARS, 'TEENIE' HARRIS PHOTOGRAPHED PITTSBURGH'S AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY, INCLUDING MAJOR POLITICAL MOMENTS



FOR FAITH RINGGOLD, THE AMERICAN FLAG HAS ALWAYS BEEN A POTENT AND POWERFUL SYMBOL



IN NEBRASKA, EXHIBITIONS AND PROGRAMMING EXPLORE INTERSECTION OF ART, RACE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

The Pratt Institute in Brooklyn honored artist **William T. Williams** at its annual Legends scholarship benefit dinner and awards ceremony on Oct. 25. Courtney J. Martin, deputy director and chief curator at the Dia Art Foundation, presented the award to Williams, who earned a BFA from Pratt in 1966.

Aperture's Oct. 30 gala celebrated the role of photography in "expanding our vision of family." Mother and son Deborah Willis and Hank Willis Thomas were honored along with Agnes Gund, Catherine Gund, and artist Catherine Opie. Performances included Kathy Sledge, one of the siblings from the group Sister Sledge.

Expanding the Walls



Students talk about their experiences participating in the Studio Museum in Harlem's Expanding the Walls program. | Video by Studio Museum in Harlem

OPPORTUNITIES

Expanding the Walls: Making Connections Between Photography, History and Community is an eight-month photography program for high school and GED students. Selected participants work with arts professionals and learn about artistic practices and the fundamentals of photography, connecting image making to representation, storytelling, and cultural literacy via workshops, group discussions, and field excursions. The application deadline is Friday, Nov. 16.

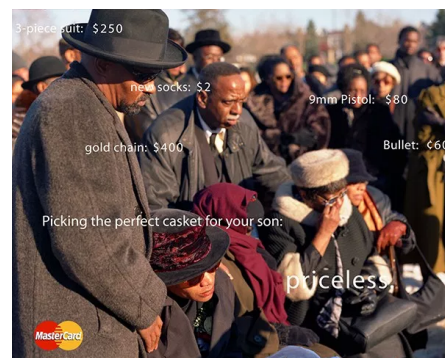
The Tate Americas Foundation is seeking a new executive director. The foundation "is an independent U.S. charity that supports the work of Tate by acquiring works of art and raising funds to support exhibitions, scholarships and education programs." Collector and philanthropist **Pamela Joyner**, who serves as chair of the board of trustees, characterized the role as a "career-defining opportunity." The foundation is working with executive search firm Perrett Laver to identify candidates. The application period closes Tuesday, Nov. 6.

“We are looking for an exceptional person to lead the Foundation: someone who will enhance our links with emerging and established artists, collectors and galleries across the Americas, increasing our impact for Tate.”
— Pamela Joyner

Artist Theaster Gates and architect David Adjaye are helping Bono raise funds to fight AIDS. | Courtesy Sotheby's

PHILANTHROPY & FUNDRAISING

Theaster Gates and **David Adjaye** are the latest creatives to team up with Bono to raise funds to fight AIDS. The artist and architect are curating a collection of art and design that will be auctioned by Sotheby's on Dec. 5. Wangechi Mutu, Marilyn Minter, and Frank Gehry, are among those donating works to the auction with the



MIXED MEDIA: \$2 MILLION FLAG BY DAVID HAMMONS IS A WORK OF ART, POLITICAL STATEMENT, AND ART WORLD COMMODITY



LATEST NEWS IN AFRICAN AMERICAN ART: NTOZAKE SHANGE HAS DIED, TORKWASE DYSON AT COLBY COLLEGE, DUTCH PAVILION AT 2019 VENICE BIENNALE & MORE



CULTURE TYPE: THE YEAR IN BLACK ART 2017



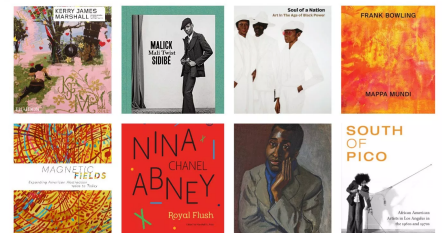
proceeds benefitting the Global Fund to Fight AIDS. Gates and Adjaye are also contributing works created specifically for the sale. The auction coincides with Art Basel Miami Beach and Design Miami and will be held at the Moore Building in Miami.

Robert F. Smith gave \$1 million to the Cultural Performance Center at the Denny Farrell Riverbank State Park in Harlem. In recognition of the gift, Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo announced the center is to be renamed the Robert Frederick Smith Center for the Performing Arts. The founder, chairman, and CEO of Austin, Texas-based Vista Equity Partners, Smith is chairman of Carnegie Hall's board of trustees and the top donor to the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture. **CT**

TOP IMAGE: Torkwase Dyson with installation view of "Nautical Dusk," 2018. | Photo by Gabe Souza



CULTURE TYPE PICKS: THE 14 BEST BLACK ART BOOKS OF 2017



BLACK ART HISTORY: 10 CHILDREN'S BOOKS ILLUMINATE THE LIVES OF IMPORTANT AFRICAN AMERICAN ARTISTS AND PHOTOGRAPHERS



A LOOK BACK: FOR 8 YEARS, PRESIDENT OBAMA TOUTED MERITS OF ART FOR CHANGE

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