

RIFFS AND RELATIONS

African American Artists and
the European Modernist Tradition

FEBRUARY 29, 2020-JANUARY 3, 2021

[PRESS RELEASE](#)

[PRESS IMAGES](#)

[CHECKLIST](#)

[WALL TEXT](#)

[PUBLIC PROGRAMS](#)

[UPCOMING EXHIBITIONS](#)

BONNARD TO VUILLARD

The Intimate Poetry of Everyday Life
The Nabi Collection of Vicki and Roger Sant

OCTOBER 26, 2019-January 26, 2020

PHILLIPS

The Phillips Collection

21st and Q, NW

PhillipsCollection.org

Organized by The Phillips Collection, through the generosity of
the permanent collection from Vicki and Roger Sant.

Presented by lead curator
Elizabeth C. George Perry

Through the support of the following organizations:
The Donald and Caroline Bacon Foundation, Mrs. Marion Foxcroft,
George V. and Margaret M. Vladek Foundation, and the C. D. Thorneley.

Additional support provided by the
Jocelyn and Stanley and the William and
Frances McArthur Foundation.

Art installation by
FARRCROW & BATT

UPDATED RELEASE

October 8, 2020

Media Contacts:

Hayley Barton, 202.387.2151 x235

hbarton@phillipscollection.org

Third Eye

Tyler Mahowald, 212.355.9099 x311

tyler@hellothirdeye.com

Online Press Room:

www.phillipscollection.org/press

**THE PHILLIPS PRESENTS *RIFFS AND RELATIONS:*
African American Artists and the European Modernist Tradition**



WASHINGTON—The Phillips Collection is pleased to announce *Riffs and Relations: African American Artists and the European Modernist Tradition*, a pioneering exhibition expanding the narrative of modern art in America by exploring the rich and complex history of 20th– and 21st–century African American artists and their responses to European modernism. Organized by guest curator Dr. Adrienne L. Childs and The Phillips Collection, *Riffs and Relations* will be on view exclusively at The Phillips Collection from February 29, 2020–January 3, 2021.

“We are proud to feature this groundbreaking exhibition at The Phillips Collection, the first museum of modern art in America. Through his support of living artists, our founder Duncan Phillips helped to broaden and shape discussions on modern art by displaying works from various times and places to tell a more comprehensive story,” says **Dr. Dorothy Kosinski, Vradenburg Director and CEO of The Phillips Collection.**

Modern European art has served as a guidepost for many African American artists. *Riffs and Relations* will explore how blackness has often been conceived through the lens of international connections and complex dialogues. The contributions of 53 artists will be on view including Romare Bearden, Robert Colescott, Renee Cox, Leonardo Drew, Hank Willis Thomas, Wangechi Mutu, and more, shown alongside pieces by Henri Matisse, Pablo Picasso, and other European modernists. The 72 works include paintings, photographs, prints, mixed media, and sculpture drawn from private and public collections in the US and Europe. This assembly of compelling objects addresses themes including representations of the female body, modernist “primitivism,” cubism, landscape, and abstraction.

In their efforts to represent African American life and history, artists like Aaron Douglas, Jacob Lawrence, and Hale Woodroff drew inspiration from European traditions and iconography. Others, including Romare Bearden and Robert Colescott, used imagery to question and challenge the supposed authority of European art. Emma Amos and Faith Ringgold have addressed the female form as a site of contention in the history of art, particularly at the hands of Matisse and Picasso. Felrath Hines, Norman Lewis, Martin Puryear, Barbara Chase-Riboud, and Alma Thomas forged new territories as they interrogated abstraction. Many of these artists sought out aesthetics and ideological approaches that were not limited by the restrictive politics of both whiteness and blackness in America.

“This exhibition shows the ways in which many African American artists draw on the substance of European art history to tell their own stories. By exploring this terrain, we hope to enhance the narrative of modern and contemporary art in America by presenting the compelling works born of these riffs and relations,” says **Dr. Adrienne L. Childs, guest curator.**

The continued relevance of these exchanges between African American artists and European modernism resides in the critical and popular reception of contemporary artists, and the exhibition will debut three new engagements. Baltimore painter Mequitta Ahuja responds to Picasso's pivotal *Les Femmes d'Alger* (1907), Los Angeles collage artist Janet Taylor Pickett refashions Matisse's *Interior with Egyptian Curtain* (1948) from the Phillips's permanent collection, and internationally acclaimed photographer Ayana V. Jackson riffs on a source for Manet's *Luncheon on the Grass* (1863). These artworks and others by Titus Kaphar, Mickalene Thomas, and John Edmonds are emblematic of contemporary practice in American art and will influence generations to find new ways of representing the complexities of black identities.

CATALOGUE

The Phillips Collection has published a 208-page illustrated exhibition catalogue authored by Adrienne L. Childs (Associate of the Hutchins Center for African and African American Research, Harvard University) and with contributions by Renée Maurer (Associate Curator, The Phillips Collection) and Valerie Cassel Oliver (Sydney and Frances Lewis Family Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts). The catalogue, published by Rizzoli Electra, also includes several artist's statements.

EXHIBITION CREDITS

The exhibition is organized by The Phillips Collection with guest curator Dr. Adrienne L. Childs.

With lead support provided by The Frauke and Willem de Looper Charitable Fund, Altria Group, and The Mr. and Mrs. Raymond J. Horowitz Foundation for the Arts.

Brought to you by the DC Commission on the Arts & Humanities, The Robert Lehman Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, Eric Richter and Charles Schoener Amanda and Earl W. Stafford, and George Vradenburg and the Vradenburg Foundation.



Altria



In-kind contributions provided by **FARROW & BALL®**

IMAGE GALLERY

High-resolution press images are available upon request. Please contact hbarton@phillipscollection.org or 202.387.2151 x235.

ABOUT THE PHILLIPS COLLECTION

The Phillips Collection, America's first museum of modern art, was founded in 1921. The museum houses one of the world's most distinguished Impressionist and American modern art collections, and continues to grow its collection with important contemporary voices. Its distinctive building combines extensive new galleries with the former home of its founder, Duncan Phillips. The Phillips's impact spreads nationally and internationally through its diverse and experimental special exhibitions and events, including its award-winning education programs for educators, students, and adults; dynamic Phillips Music series; and popular meditation and Phillips after 5 events. The museum contributes to global dialogues with events like Conversations with Artists and Artists of Conscience. The Phillips Collection values its community partnerships with the University of Maryland—the museum's nexus for scholarly exchange and interdisciplinary collaborations—and THEARC—the museum's satellite campus in Southeast DC. The Phillips Collection is a private, non-government museum, supported primarily by donations.

IMAGE: Hank Willis Thomas, *Icarus*, 2016, Quilt, 56 1/2 x 85 1/4 X 2 in. © Hank Willis Thomas. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

List of Artists Included:

Mequitta Ahuja
Charles Alston
Emma Amos
Romare Bearden
Sanford Biggers
Georges Braque
Moe Brooker
Henri Cartier-Bresson
Elizabeth Catlett
Barbara Chase-Riboud
Robert Colescott
Harold Cousins
Renee Cox
Beauford Delaney
Aaron Douglas

Leonardo Drew
David C. Driskell
John Edmonds
Ellen Gallagher
Felrath Hines
Ayana V. Jackson
Jennie C. Jones
Lois Mailou Jones
William H. Johnson
Wassily Kandisky
Titus Kaphar
Wifredo Lam
Jacob Lawrence
Norman Lewis
Henri Matisse
Sam Middleton
Piet Mondrian
Claude Monet
Wangechi Mutu
Pablo Picasso
Janet Taylor Pickett
Martin Puryear
Winold Reiss
Faith Ringgold
Karl Schmidt-Rottluff
Chaïm Soutine
Frank Stewart
Henry Ossawa Tanner
Alma Thomas
Hank Willis Thomas
Mickalene Thomas
Bob Thompson
Maurice Utrillo
Vincent van Gogh
Carrie Mae Weems
James Lesesne Wells
Hale Woodruff
Ossip Zadkine

###





PRESS IMAGES






Riffs and Relations: African American Artists and the European Modernist Tradition

February 29, 2020–January 3, 2021



To request access to images: please call 202.387.2151 x235 or e-mail hbarton@phillipscollection.org.






Please note: Permission to reproduce these images is granted only for publicity in connection with this exhibition. With all reproductions, please include the full credit information for each image. Images may not be cropped, printed over, or altered.

	<p>Mequitta Ahuja <i>Xpect</i> 2018 Oil on canvas 84 x 72 in. Collection of the artist</p>
	<p>Sanford Biggers <i>Negerplastik</i> 2016 Repurposed antique quilt, cotton fabric fragments, tar, and glitter 81 x 76 3/4 in. Courtesy of Massimo De Carlo, Milan/London/Hong Kong, Photo: Todd-White Art Photography</p>
	<p>Georges Braque <i>Still Life with Grapes and Clarinet</i> 1927 Oil on canvas 21 1/4 x 28 3/4 in. © 2020 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC, Acquired 1929</p>
	<p>Moe Brooker <i>The Eyes have it</i> 1991 Pastel, watercolor, and spray paint on paper 41 1/2 x 19 1/2 in. Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, The Harold A. and Ann R. Sorgenti Collection of Contemporary African American Art</p>

	<p>Elizabeth Catlett <i>Ife</i> 2002 Mahogany 19 1/2 x 18 x 38 in. Chrysler Museum of Art, Norfolk, VA, Gift of Walter P. Chrysler, Jr., by exchange, in honor of Andrew S. Fine in recognition of his outstanding service as a Museum Trustee and as Board Chairman, 1999–2002 © 2020 Catlett Mora Family Trust / Licensed by VAGA at Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York</p>
	<p>Harold Cousins <i>Le Matador</i> 1955 Welded steel 47 x 24 x 13 in. Collection of Stephen J. Meringoff, Courtesy of Michael Rosenfeld Gallery LLC, New York, NY © Estate of Harold Cousins</p>
	<p>Aaron Douglas <i>The Negro in an African Setting</i> (later variant of panel 1 of <i>Aspects of Negro Life</i>) 1954 Oil on canvas board 26 1/2 x 30 1/4 in. Collection of Steven L. Jones, Philadelphia and Chicago Schomburg Center, NYPL / Art Resource, NY</p>
	<p>David C. Driskell <i>Still Life with Sunset</i> 1966 Oil on canvas 48 x 32 in. Collection of Joseph and Lynne Horning</p>
	<p>Ayana V. Jackson <i>Judgment of Paris</i> 2018 Archival pigment print on German etching paper 60 x 40 in. Courtesy of the artist and Mariana Ibrahim Gallery, Chicago</p>

	<p>William H. Johnson <i>Cagnes-sur-Mer</i> 1928–29 Oil on canvas mounted on board 20 1/2 x 24 in. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, The John Axelrod Collection— Frank B. Bemis Fund, Charles H. Bayley Fund, and The Heritage Fund for a Diverse Collection</p>
	<p>William H. Johnson <i>Nude</i> c. 1939 Oil on burlap 29 3/4 x 38 1/4 in. Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC, Gift of the Harmon Foundation</p>
	<p>Wassily Kandinsky <i>Sketch I for Painting with White Border (Moscow)</i> 1913 Oil on canvas 39 3/8 x 30 6/8 in. © 2020 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC, Acquired 1944</p>
	<p>Titus Kaphar <i>Pushing Back the Light</i> 2012 Oil and tar on canvas 107 x 77 x 6 1/2 in. © Private Collection</p>
	<p>Henri Matisse <i>Icarus</i>, plate VIII from the illustrated book <i>Jazz</i> 1947 Pochoir Sheet: 16 5/8 x 25 5/8 in. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Lila Acheson Wallace, 1983</p>

	<p>Henri Matisse <i>The Codomas</i>, plate XI from the illustrated book <i>Jazz</i> 1947 Pochoir Sheet: 16 5/8 x 24 3/16 in. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Lila Acheson Wallace, 1983</p>
	<p>Henri Matisse <i>Interior with Egyptian Curtain</i> 1948 Oil on canvas 45 3/4 x 35 1/8 in. The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC, Acquired 1950</p>
	<p>Sam Middleton <i>Table Top Still Life</i> 1996 Mixed-media collage 19 1/2 x 25 in. Courtesy of Spanierman Modern, NY/Miami</p>
	<p>Piet Mondrian <i>Painting No. 9</i> 1939–42 Oil on canvas 31 3/8 x 29 1/4 in. The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC, Gift from the estate of Katherine S. Dreier, 1953</p>
	<p>Claude Monet <i>Woman with a Parasol—Madame Monet and Her Son</i> 1875 Oil on canvas 39 3/8 x 31 7/8 in. National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mello</p>

	<p>Wangechi Mutu <i>Mwotaji (The Dreamer)</i> 2016 Polished bronze; hand carved Carrara marble, on steel base 10 x 13 x 5 1/2 in. Courtesy of Elizabeth Wingate and Carolina Nitsch</p>
	<p>Pablo Picasso <i>Reclining Figure</i> 1934 Oil on canvas 18 1/4 x 25 3/4 in. © 2020 Estate of Pablo Picasso / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC, Gift of the Carey Walker Foundation, 1994</p>
	<p>Pablo Picasso <i>Le dejeuner sur l'herbe, after Manet I</i> 1962 Linoleum cut Sheet: 24 3/8 x 29 5/8 in. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, The Mr. and Mrs. Charles Kramer Collection, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Kramer, 1979</p>
	<p>Martin Puryear <i>Face Down</i> 2008 White bronze 14 x 28 x 11 in. Courtesy of the artist and Matthew Marks Gallery © Martin Puryear</p>
	<p>Winold Reiss <i>African Phantasy: Awakening</i> c. 1925 Ink, watercolor, and gouache on paper 19 3/4 x 14 7/8 in. Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC, Museum purchase</p>






	<p>Faith Ringgold <i>Picasso's Studio</i> 1991 Acrylic on canvas with printed and tie-dyed fabric 73 x 68 in. Worcester Art Museum, MA, Charlotte E. W. Buffington Fund © 2020 Faith Ringgold / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York, Courtesy ACA Galleries, New York</p>
	<p>Chaïm Soutine <i>Landscape at Cagnes</i> 1923 Oil on canvas 25 3/4 x 32 1/8 in. Columbus Museum of Art, OH, Gift of Howard D. and Babette L. Sirak, the Donors to the Campaign for Enduring Excellence, and the Derby Fund</p>
	<p>Janet Taylor Pickett <i>And She was Born</i> 2017 Acrylic on canvas with collage 30 x 30 in. The Phillips Collection, Dreier Fund for Acquisitions</p>
	<p>Alma Thomas <i>Watusi (Hard Edge)</i> 1963 Acrylic on canvas 47 5/8 x 44 1/4 in. Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, Gift of Vincent Melzac, 1976</p>
	<p>Hank Willis Thomas <i>Icarus</i> 2016 Quilt 56 1/2 x 85 1/4 in. Collection of Debbie and Mitchell Rechler © Hank Willis Thomas, Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery</p>
	<p>Bob Thompson <i>Homage to Nina Simone</i> 1965 Oil on canvas 48 x 72 1/8 in. Minneapolis Institute of Art, The John R. Van Derlip Fund</p>

	<p>Carrie Mae Weems <i>After Manet</i> 2002 (printed 2015) Chromogenic print 31 x 31 in. National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, Alfred H. Moses and Fern M. Schad Fund</p>
	<p>Hale Woodruff <i>The Card Players</i> 1930 Oil on canvas 23 1/2 x 29 3/8 in. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, George A. Hearn Fund, 2015</p>







CHECKLIST







Riffs and Relations: African American Artists and the European Modernist Tradition







February 29, 2020–January 3, 2021

<p>Mequitta Ahuja <i>Xpect</i> 2018 Oil on canvas 84 x 72 in. Collection of the artist</p>	
<p>Charles Alston <i>Symbol</i> 1953 Oil on canvas 47 15/16 x 35 7/8 in. Minneapolis Institute of Art, The Ethel Morrison Van Derlip Fund and Gift of Billy E. Hodges</p>	
<p>Emma Amos <i>Malcolm X Morley, Matisse And Me.</i> 1993 Acrylic on linen with African fabric borders and photo transfer 74 x 61 in. Private Collection, Delaware, courtesy of RYAN LEE Gallery and Art Finance Partners, New York</p>	
<p>Romare Bearden <i>Odysseus: Poseidon, The Sea God-Enemy of Odysseus</i> 1977 Collage on fiberboard 43 3/8 x 31 3/8 in. The Thompson Collection, Indianapolis, IN</p>	
<p>Romare Bearden <i>Mecklenburg Autumn: Heat Lightning Eastward</i> 1983 Collage and oil on fiberboard 31 x 40 in. Collection of Ginny and Conner Searcy</p>	
<p>Sanford Biggers <i>Negerplastik</i> 2016 Repurposed antique quilt, cotton fabric fragments, tar, and glitter 81 x 76 3/4 in. Courtesy of Massimo De Carlo, Milan/London/Hong Kong</p>	

<p>Georges Braque <i>Still Life with Grapes and Clarinet</i> 1927 Oil on canvas 21 1/4 x 28 3/4 in. The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC, Acquired 1929</p>	
<p>Moe Brooker <i>The Eyes have it</i> 1991 Pastel, watercolor, and spray paint on paper 41 1/2 x 19 1/2 in. Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, The Harold A. and Ann R. Sorgenti Collection of Contemporary African American Art</p>	
<p>Henri Cartier-Bresson <i>Giacometti</i> n.d. Gelatin silver print 13 3/4 x 9 1/4 in. The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC, Acquired 1964</p>	
<p>Henri Cartier-Bresson <i>Matisse</i> 1944 Gelatin silver print 9 7/8 x 14 3/4 in. The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC, Acquired 1964</p>	
<p>Elizabeth Catlett <i>Ife</i> 2002 Mahogany 19 1/2 x 18 x 38 in. Chrysler Museum of Art, Norfolk, VA, Gift of Walter P. Chrysler, Jr., by exchange, in honor of Andrew S. Fine in recognition of his outstanding service as a Museum Trustee and as Board Chairman</p>	
<p>Barbara Chase-Riboud <i>Matisse's Back in Twins</i> 1967/1994 Polished bronze and silk on painted steel base 75 1/4 x 39 x 18 in. Courtesy of the artist</p>	

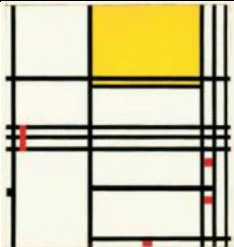





<p>Robert Colescott <i>Sunday Afternoon with Joaquin Murietta</i> 1980 Acrylic on canvas 72 x 84 in. Collection of Arlene and Harold Schnitzer</p>	
<p>Harold Cousins <i>Le Matador</i> 1955 Welded steel 47 x 24 x 13 in. Collection of Stephen J. Meringoff; Courtesy of Michael Rosenfeld Gallery LLC, New York</p>	
<p>Renee Cox <i>Cousins at Pussy Pond</i> 2001 Archival digital chromogenic print mounted on aluminum panel 48 x 60 in. Collection of Sydney and Walda Besthoff</p>	
<p>Beauford Delaney <i>Untitled</i> c. 1958 Oil on canvas 57 1/2 x 45 in. Courtesy of Michael Rosenfeld Gallery LLC, New York</p>	
<p>Aaron Douglas <i>The Negro in an African Setting</i> (later variant of panel 1 of <i>Aspects of Negro Life</i>) 1954 Oil on canvas board 20 x 24 in. Collection of Steven L. Jones, Philadelphia and Chicago</p>	
<p>Leonardo Drew <i>Number 192</i> 2016 Wood, paint, and Conte crayon 59 x 59 x 12 in. Collection of Robert and Patti Bleicher</p>	







<p>David C. Driskell <i>Still Life with Sunset</i> 1966 Oil on canvas 48 x 32 in. Collection of Joseph and Lynne Horning</p>	
<p>John Edmonds <i>tête d'homme</i> 2018 Archival pigment photograph 24 x 30 in. Courtesy of the artist and Company, New York</p>	
<p>Ellen Gallagher <i>Odalisque</i> 2005 Gelatin silver print with watercolor and gold leaf, edition of 15 7 3/4 x 7 in. Collection of Larry Gagosian</p>	
<p>Vincent van Gogh <i>The Road Menders</i> 1889 Oil on canvas 29 x 36 1/2 in. The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC, Acquired 1949</p>	
<p>Felrath Hines <i>Yellow and Gray</i> 1976 Oil on linen 51 1/4 x 48 in. Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC, Gift of the Barbara Fiedler Gallery</p>	
<p>Ayana V. Jackson <i>Judgment of Paris</i> 2018 Archival pigment print on German etching paper 40 x 60 in. Courtesy of the artist and Mariane Ibrahim Gallery, Chicago</p>	





<p>William H. Johnson <i>Cagnes-sur-Mer</i> 1928–29 Oil on canvas mounted on board 20 1/2 x 24 in. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, The John Axelrod Collection—Frank B. Bemis Fund, Charles H. Bayley Fund, and The Heritage Fund for a Diverse Collection</p>	
<p>William H. Johnson <i>Nude</i> c. 1939 Oil on burlap 29 3/4 x 38 1/4 in. Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC, Gift of the Harmon Foundation</p>	
<p>Jennie C. Jones <i>Recording Red, Gray Distortion (For Elvin Jones)</i> 2016 Acoustic absorber panel and acrylic paint on canvas 48 x 54 in. Collection of Miyoung Lee and Neil Simpkins</p>	
<p>Loïs Mailou Jones <i>Africa</i> 1935 Oil on canvas board 24 x 20 in. The Johnson Collection, Spartanburg, SC</p>	
<p>Loïs Mailou Jones <i>Place du Tertre</i> 1938 Oil on canvas 18 1/4 x 22 5/8 in. The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC, Acquired 1944</p>	
<p>Wassily Kandinsky <i>Sketch I for Painting with White Border (Moscow)</i> 1913 Oil on canvas 39 3/8 x 30 6/8 in. The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC, Gift from the estate of Katherine S. Dreier, 1953</p>	







<p>Titus Kaphar <i>Earth and Sky</i> 2012 Oil and tar on canvas 30 x 40 in. Collection of Bennet H. Grutman</p>	
<p>Titus Kaphar <i>Pushing Back the Light</i> 2012 Oil and tar on canvas 107 x 77 x 6 1/2 in. Courtesy of MARUANI MERCIER Gallery</p>	
<p>Wifredo Lam <i>Siren of the Niger</i> 1950 Oil on charcoal on canvas 51 x 38 1/8 in. Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, Gift of Joseph H. Hirshhorn, 1972</p>	
<p>Jacob Lawrence <i>Going Home</i> 1946 Gouache on Paper 22 x 30 1/4 in. Collection of Linda Lichtenberg Kaplan, Promised Gift to The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC</p>	
<p>Norman Lewis <i>Landscape (Land Echoes)</i> 1955 Oil on canvas 50 x 40 in. Courtesy of Michael Rosenfeld Gallery LLC, New York</p>	
<p>Henri Matisse <i>Studio, Quai Saint-Michel</i> 1916 Oil on canvas 58 1/4 x 46 in. The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC, Acquired 1940</p>	







<p>Henri Matisse <i>Large Seated Nude</i> 1922–1929, cast 1930 Bronze 30 3/16 x 31 5/8 x 14 in. Baltimore Museum of Art: The Cone Collection, formed by Dr. Claribel Cone and Miss Etta Cone of Baltimore</p>	
<p>Henri Matisse <i>The Horse, the Rider and the Clown</i>, plate V from the illustrated book <i>Jazz</i> 1947 Pochoir Sheet: 16 5/8 x 25 13/16 in. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Lila Acheson Wallace, 1983</p>	
<p>Henri Matisse <i>The Codomas</i>, plate XI from the illustrated book <i>Jazz</i> 1947 Pochoir Sheet: 16 5/8 x 24 3/16 in. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Lila Acheson Wallace, 1983</p>	
<p>Henri Matisse <i>Icarus</i>, plate VIII from the illustrated book <i>Jazz</i> 1947 Pochoir Sheet: 16 1/2 x 25 3/16 in. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Lila Acheson Wallace, 1983</p>	
<p>Henri Matisse <i>Interior with Egyptian Curtain</i> 1948 Oil on canvas 45 3/4 x 35 1/8 in. The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC Acquired 1950</p>	
<p>Sam Middleton <i>Table Top Stil Life</i> 1996 Mixed-media collage 19 1/2 x 25 in. Courtesy of Spanierman Modern, New York</p>	

<p>Piet Mondrian <i>Painting No. 9</i> Between 1939 and 1942 Oil on canvas 31 3/8 x 29 1/4 in. The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC, Gift from the estate of Katherine S. Dreier, 1953</p>	
<p>Claude Monet <i>Woman with Parasol—Madame Monet and Her Son</i> 1875 Oil on canvas 39 3/8 x 31 7/8 in. National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon</p>	
<p>Wangechi Mutu <i>Mwotaji (The Dreamer)</i> 2016 Polished bronze; hand-cut Carrara marble Appr. 10 x 13 x 5 1/2 in. Courtesy of Elizabeth Wingate and Carolina Nitsch</p>	
<p>Pablo Picasso <i>Pierrot and Harlequin</i> 1920 Gouache on paper 8 1/4 x 10 3/8 in. Private collection</p>	
<p>Pablo Picasso <i>Bullfight</i> 1934 Oil on canvas 19 5/8 x 25 3/4 in. The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC, Acquired 1937</p>	
<p>Pablo Picasso <i>Reclining Figure</i> 1934 Oil on canvas 18 1/4 x 25 3/4 in. The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC, Gift of the Carey Walker Foundation, 1994</p>	

<p>Pablo Picasso <i>Le dejeuner sur l'herbe, after Manet I</i> 1962 Linoleum cut Sheet: 24 3/8 x 29 5/8 in. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, The Mr. and Mrs. Charles Kramer Collection, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Kramer, 1979 (1979.620.5)</p>	
<p>Martin Puryear <i>Face Down</i> 2008 White bronze 14 x 28 x 11 in. Courtesy of the artist and Matthew Marks Gallery, New York</p>	
<p>Winold Reiss <i>African Phantasy: Awakening</i> c. 1925 Ink, watercolor, and gouache on paper 19 3/4 x 14 7/8 in. Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC, Museum purchase</p>	
<p>Faith Ringgold <i>Picasso's Studio</i> 1991 Acrylic on canvas with printed and tie-dyed fabric 73 x 68 in. Worcester Art Museum, MA, Charlotte E. W. Buffington Fund</p>	
<p>Karl Schmidt-Rottluff <i>Three at a Table</i> 1914 Woodcut Sheet: 22 x 17 3/16 in. National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, Rosenwald Collection, 1951</p>	
<p>Chaïm Soutine <i>Landscape at Cagnes</i> 1923 Oil on canvas 25 3/4 x 32 1/8 in. Columbus Museum of Art, OH, Gift of Howard D. and Babette L. Sirak, the Donors to the Campaign for Enduring Excellence, and the Derby Fund</p>	

<p>Frank Stewart <i>Alma Thomas</i> 1975 (printed 2019) Gelatin silver print 11 x 14 in. Collection of the artist</p>	
<p>Frank Stewart <i>David Driskell</i> 1980 (printed 2019) Gelatin silver print 14 x 11 in. Collection of the artist</p>	
<p>Frank Stewart <i>Hale Woodruff</i> 1980s (printed 2019) gelatin silver print 14 x 11 in. Collection of the artist</p>	
<p>Frank Stewart <i>Jacob Lawrence</i> c. 1986 (printed 2019) Gelatin silver print 14 x 11 in Collection of the artist</p>	
<p>Frank Stewart <i>Romare Bearden</i> 1980s (printed 2019) gelatin silver print 11 x 14 in. Collection of the artist</p>	
<p>Henry Ossawa Tanner <i>Haystacks</i> c. 1930 Oil on canvas 26 1/4 x 21 in. Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC, Gift of Irwin M. Sparr</p>	

<p>Janet Taylor Pickett <i>And She Was Born</i> 2017 Acrylic on canvas with collage 30 x 30 in. The Phillips Collection, Dreier Fund for Acquisitions</p>	
<p>Alma Thomas <i>Watusi (Hard Edge)</i> 1963 Acrylic on canvas 47 5/8 x 44 1/4 in. Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, Gift of Vincent Melzac, 1976</p>	
<p>Hank Willis Thomas <i>Icarus</i> 2016 Quilt 56 1/2 x 85 1/4 in. Collection of Debbie and Mitchell Rechler</p>	
<p>Mickalene Thomas <i>Le Déjeuner sur L'herbe: Les Trois Femmes Noires</i> 2010 Color photograph and paper collage on cardboard 10 x 12 in. Collection of the artist</p>	
<p>Bob Thompson <i>Homage to Nina Simone</i> 1965 Oil on canvas 48 x 72 1/8 in. Minneapolis Institute of Art, The John R. Van Derlip Fund</p>	
<p>Maurice Utrillo <i>Place du Tertre</i> 1911 Oil on cardboard 21 3/8 x 28 7/8 in. The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC, Acquired 1953</p>	

<p>Carrie Mae Weems <i>Framed by Modernism (Seduced By One Another, Yet Bound by Certain Social Conventions; You Framed The Likes of Me & I Framed You, But We Were Both Framed By Modernism; & Even Though We Knew Better, We Continued That Time Honored Tradition of The Artist & His Model)</i> 1997 Gelatin silver print, sandblasted glass triptych Each: 20 x 20 in. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York</p>	
<p>Carrie Mae Weems <i>After Manet</i> 2002 Chromogenic print 31 x 31 in. National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, Alfred H. Moses and Fern M. Schad Fund</p>	
<p>James Lesesne Wells <i>Primitive Girl</i> 1929 Linoleum cut 7 1/2 x 7 in. David C. Driskell Collection, Permanent loan to the David C. Driskell Center at the University of Maryland, College Park</p>	
<p>Hale Woodruff <i>The Card Players</i> 1930 Oil on canvas 23 1/2 x 29 3/8 in. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, George A. Hearn Fund, 2015</p>	
<p>Hale Woodruff <i>Africa and the Bull</i> 1958 Oil on canvas 44 1/4 x 52 3/4 in. The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, Gift of E. Thomas Williams and Auldlyn Higgins Williams</p>	
<p>Ossip Zadkine <i>Forms and Light (Mother and Child)</i> 1918 Marble 23 5/8 x 16 1/2 x 8 in. Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, Gift of Joseph H. Hirshhorn, 1966</p>	

WALL TEXT

Riffs and Relations: African American Artists and the European Modernist Tradition

February 29, 2020–January 3, 2021

Riffs and Relations explores the rich, multifaceted, and sustained dynamic between African American art and European Modernism. African American artists have interrogated and immersed themselves in European modernist art since its rise to prominence in the early 20th century. This period also saw a critical growth of professional African American artists, many of whom engaged modernist styles and sensibilities as they claimed the power to represent and define themselves, their histories, and their cultures.

In the early part of the century, African American artists were nourished by the advances of Post-Impressionist, Cubist, and expressionist art. They contributed to modernism's new languages of form, liberated use of color, and complex engagement with the arts of Africa. But in later years, artists began challenging master narratives. Using humor and satire, they created "riffs" to question the supposed superiority of European art, exposing its fraught association with people of color. The push and pull of these relationships became a distinct tradition in African American artistic practice.

The African American and European artists in this exhibition have engaged modernism in different time periods and varied artistic and social contexts. The cross-cultural, international, and intergenerational exchanges assembled here offer a fascinating glimpse into dialogues that have evolved over the 20th and 21st centuries. Fittingly, The Phillips Collection was founded on the idea that works from various moments could be brought together to show enduring relationships that help broaden discussions on art history. These paintings, sculptures, photographs, and works on paper enhance the story of modern and contemporary American art by presenting compelling works born of these riffs and relations.

Section Panel

GAZING BACK AT MANET

Édouard Manet's *Luncheon on the Grass (Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe)* has been a lightning rod of controversy since its premiere in Paris in 1863. Executed in an abrupt style, this outdoor scene of a contemporary gathering with a nude female gazing out at the viewer was based on historic compositions by Raphael and Titian. Manet's approach challenged tradition and the scandalous painting became a catalyst for modern art that continues to inspire critical responses.

Riffs and Relations assembles seven works that consider Manet's *Luncheon* in different ways. By inserting black bodies into the iconic composition, the African American artists enter into a complex and often confrontational dialogue with Manet in particular and modernism in general. Some claim a place in the art historical lineage of Manet's image using humor and irony. Others produce subversive quotations that celebrate the sexuality of black women and female power. These strategies expose the marginalization of black bodies in the history of art and propose new interpretations.

EXTENDED LABELS

AYANA V. JACKSON

(b. 1977, Livingston, NJ)

Judgment of Paris

2018

Archival pigment print on German etching paper Courtesy of the artist and Mariane Ibrahim Gallery, Chicago

“Manet’s Luncheon on the Grass is a painting that was considered laughable when it was [first exhibited]. I thought there might be a correlation between the supposed absurdity of the painting itself and the idea of a black woman’s body during the same period being seen as anything other than a laboring body. In Judgment of Paris, I believe that I share with other female artists who have responded to Manet a desire to ‘call out’ the canon [and use] the same stroke to highlight the systematic absence of black bodies and center them at the same time.”—Ayana V. Jackson

In the title for her photograph, which makes its premier at this exhibition, Ayana V. Jackson references Marcantonio Raimondi’s *The Judgment of Paris* (1510–20), an engraving after Raphael, which was one of Manet’s sources for *Luncheon on the Grass* (1863). Jackson sees Paris’s choices—between Hera, who represents power; Athena, who represents might; and Aphrodite, who represents beauty—as elements she associates with black womanhood. The three figures in the photograph are all self-portraits of the artist. They wear 19th-century clothing and recall studio photographs that present black people as urbane individuals in elegant attire. Her focus on leisure and beauty offers a counternarrative to historical readings that have interpreted the black body as colonized, enslaved, or impoverished.

RENEE COX

(b. 1960, Colgate, Jamaica)

Cousins at Pussy Pond

2001

Archival digital chromogenic print mounted on aluminum panel Collection of Sydney and Walda Besthoff

Largely through self-portraits, Renee Cox’s body of work contends with the culture and politics of racism and sexism. Her irreverent feminist artistry gained attention with controversial images such as *Yo Mama’s Last Supper* (1996) in which she portrayed a nude female Christ figure. Cox states that during this period many of her works aimed to “raid art history.” *Cousins at Pussy Pond* employs satire and irony to respond to Manet’s *Luncheon on the Grass* (1863). Cox confidently inhabits the posture of Manet’s infamous female nude, positioning herself as the scandalous provocateur, staring down the viewer. The men’s spears speak to stereotypes of African primitives that informed modernism. Shot on location at Pussy’s Pond in the Hamptons, New York, the work satirizes the sexual suggestiveness of Manet’s painting through a play on stereotypes of race and sexuality.

MICKALENE THOMAS

(b. 1971, Camden, NJ)

Le Déjeuner sur L’herbe: Les Trois Femmes Noires

2010

Color photograph and paper collage on cardboard

Collection of the artist

“My message is about claiming—not reclaiming—a space that doesn’t necessarily exist, putting my images in the same room or aligned with, like, a Manet or a Matisse because I want my work to have the same dialogue and discourse.”—Mickalene Thomas

Mickalene Thomas has created a vast body of work that imagines black female identities and sexualities

through dazzling interpretations of modernist images. For her “riff” on Manet’s *Luncheon on the Grass* (1863), Thomas staged a photograph in the Museum of Modern Art’s sculpture garden featuring three glamorous women in 1970s inspired fashion who gaze at us, welcoming us into their version of the infamous gathering. The models are self-possessed and assertive emblems of black female power and beauty. Thomas transformed the photograph into several different artworks, including this intimate Cubist-like photo collage.

ROBERT COLESCOTT

(b. 1925, Oakland, CA; d. 2009, Tucson, AZ)

Sunday Afternoon with Joaquin Murietta

1980

Acrylic on canvas Collection of Arlene and Harold Schnitzer

“My version of Déjeuner sur l’herbe . . . puts into question the ownership of the idea. . . . I turn Manet’s nude black, and paint her as a strong, lithe, cat-like creature. I’m talking about her power as a female, her physical power, and her political power.”—Robert Colescott

The art of Robert Colescott is known for its bawdy resistance to convention, its irony, satire, and clever use of stereotypes. Colescott challenged the history of art as he exposed the fraught racial and sexual dynamics in American culture. *Sunday Afternoon* is a defiant revival of Manet’s *Luncheon on the Grass* (1863) that replaces the original characters with the Mexican born Joachim Murietta, a fabled Gold Rush outlaw, his compatriot, and an unidentified nude black woman. By disrupting Manet’s scandalous *Luncheon*, Colescott addresses the taboos that often frame the image of the black female nude.

PABLO PICASSO

(1881, Málaga, Spain; d. 1973, Mougins, France)

Le déjeuner sur l’herbe, after Manet I

1962

Linoleum cut

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, The Mr. and Mrs. Charles Kramer Collection, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Kramer, 1979

For inspiration, Pablo Picasso frequently looked to the work of artists who preceded him. In 1929, he wrote: “When I see Manet’s *Luncheon on the Grass*, I tell myself there is pain ahead.” Nearly 30 years later, Picasso began what he called his “dialogues” or “riffs” on Manet’s infamous canvas, well-known pieces that likely influenced many artists who studied his style and methods. Between 1959 and 1962, Picasso created 27 paintings, 140 drawings, sculptures, prints, and more after Manet’s *Luncheon*. This series is Picasso’s largest dedicated to revisiting historical works and reassessing the central theme of the nude in this context.

CARRIE MAE WEEMS

(b. 1953, Portland, OR)

After Manet

2002 (printed 2015)

Chromogenic print

National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, Alfred H. Moses and Fern M. Schad Fund

The female body, history, memory, and beauty are among the many themes in the work of photographer Carrie Mae Weems. Her performances and photographs range from intimate psychological portraits to epic reflections on history. *After Manet* is part of her *May Days Long Forgotten*

series in which Weems evokes the promise of spring through the leisure of young black girls. Like the principal figures in Manet's *Luncheon on the Grass* (1863), the young girls are in repose in an outdoor setting, but rather than repeating the scandalous nude, Weems provides a space for new narratives of black beauty, youth, and leisure. Weems intensified the historical character of the work by presenting it in a tondo (a Renaissance term for circular format) and printing the photograph in sepia tones.

ELIZABETH CATLETT

(b. 1915, Washington, DC; d. 2012, Cuernavaca, Mexico)

Ife

2002

Mahogany

Chrysler Museum of Art, Norfolk, VA, Gift of Walter P. Chrysler, Jr., by exchange, in honor of Andrew S. Fine in recognition of his outstanding service as a Museum Trustee and as Board Chairman

Elizabeth Catlett's inspiration for her art grew out of a desire to represent the dignity and the struggles of African Americans through depictions of strong women, working people, and families. Catlett's aesthetic reflects her wide interests, which included African art, Mexican modernism, European modernism, and pre-Columbian art. One of Catlett's most important influences was Russian-born School of Paris sculptor Ossip Zadkine, with whom she worked in 1942 and 1943 in New York, and who urged her to experiment with abstraction by observing African art. Zadkine was one of the European modernists mentioned by philosopher Alain Locke in his anthology *The New Negro*, which encouraged African American artists to search for ways to create a visual language rooted in African art.

The mask-like face of the elegant reclining nude in *Ife* is a distillation of Catlett's study and synthesis of these sources. According to Yoruba mythology, the ancient Nigerian kingdom of Ile-Ife was where human civilization was born, and works by their craftsmen are considered important examples of classical African art.

EMMA AMOS

(b. 1937, Atlanta, GA d. 2010, Bedford, NH)

Malcolm X Morley, Matisse and Me.

1993

Acrylic on linen with African fabric borders and photo transfer Private collection, Delaware, Courtesy of RYAN LEE Gallery and Art Finance Partners, New York

At 23, pioneering activist artist Emma Amos was the only woman member of "Spiral," the important African American artist's collective founded by Romare Bearden, Charles Alston, Norman Lewis, and Hale Woodruff, all of whom are featured in this exhibition. Impacted by the Civil Rights and feminist movements of the 1950s and 60s, Amos addressed women's empowerment, race in America, and her role as a female artist of color in her imagery.

In *Malcolm X Morley, Matisse and Me.*, Amos conducts a visual conversation with Malcolm Morley (a British-American painter known for reworking images from popular culture) and Henri Matisse. Painted on linen and bordered with African textiles, Amos quotes Morley's *El palenque* (1988–89) and Matisse's *Large Seated Nude* (1922–29) and *Blue Nude* (1907). Also included is a transfer of a photo by George Shively, a photographer who documented scenes of black life in the American South during the 1930s and 40s. The title implies that one of the images represented might be a self-portrait of Amos. Well aware of Matisse's interest in African art and his powerful place in the history of modernism,

Amos is in dialogue about art, gender, and power with this influential artist.

HENRI MATISSE

(b. 1869, Chateau-Chambr sis, France; d. 1954, Nice, France)

Large Seated Nude

1922–29, cast 1930

Bronze

Baltimore Museum of Art: The Cone Collection, formed by Dr. Claribel Cone and Miss Etta Cone of Baltimore

An ambitious sculpture created in Nice, *Large Seated Nude* epitomizes Henri Matisse’s ability to synthesize the relationships he found in his work with the influences of Michelangelo and African sculpture. It presents dancer and painter Henriette Darricarr re as a reclining nude, a theme that the artist revisited in paintings, works on paper, and other media throughout his career. Through the sculpted form, Matisse emphasizes the drama and power of the figure and her striking pose, as she leans back to survey her spectators.

Since its first US display in 1931, *Large Seated Nude* has made an impact on audiences. Artist Emma Amos likely saw a version of it in 1992 at the Museum of Modern Art’s *Henri Matisse: A Retrospective*, the most comprehensive exhibition ever held of the artist’s work. This sculpture is among the sources that Amos engages with in her work *Malcolm X Morley, Matisse and Me*. (1993), on view nearby.

CLAUDE MONET

(b. 1840, Paris, France; d. 1926, Giverny, France)

Woman with a Parasol—Madame Monet and Her Son

1875

Oil on canvas

**National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC,
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon**

Claude Monet painted *Woman with a Parasol* in a single session over several hours outdoors. With a vivid palette and a loaded brush, he freely rendered in paint the gentle intimacy shared between a mother and son on a glorious, bright and windy day. Its spontaneity was praised when the picture appeared in the Second Impressionist Exhibition in Paris in 1876. Monet’s attention to recording the leisure pursuits of modern Parisians, his open brushwork, and his illusionistic approach to light and atmosphere were seen as revolutionary art practices during the 19th century. But they also created a veil of beauty that contemporary artist Titus Kaphar seeks to challenge. Using black tar to interrupt the landscape, his *Pushing Back the Light* (2012), on view nearby, uses Monet’s *Woman with a Parasol* as a point of departure for an ongoing critique of European art history.

TITUS KAPHAR

(b. 1976, Kalamazoo, MI)

Pushing Back the Light

2012

Oil and tar on canvas

Courtesy of MARUANI MERCIER Gallery

“We look at these Impressionist paintings as beautiful pictures of the world, and to a degree they are. But what I am struck by is how much revolution is happening on the planet at the same time that we are

looking at these beautiful pictures of people picnicking on the grass. . . . While we are talking and thinking about color in this different kind of way, there are people on the other side of the world who are suffering because of their color.”—Titus Kaphar

Titus Kaphar’s practice often taps into art history in order to call attention to its absences and blind spots. In *Pushing Back the Light*, Kaphar samples Claude Monet’s *Woman with a Parasol—Madame Monet and Her Son* (1875), on view nearby, a typical subject of modern life executed with the lush color and bright light for which Impressionism is celebrated. Kaphar disturbs Monet’s luminous landscape with black tar that erupts from behind the figures, literally pushing the canvas to the border of the painting and exposing what he sees as the underbelly of Impressionist art—a movement which flourished during a critical moment in history when black lives were impacted by European colonialism in Africa and racial oppression in America after the Civil War.

Section Panel

AFRICAN ART AND MODERNISM

Early in the 20th century, African art, displayed at ethnographic museums in Europe and circulated in publications, came to the attention of artists as source material for new and exciting possibilities. Yet the objects that arrived in Europe by way of colonialism were interpreted mainly through visual cues and without proper context. This set up an uneven power dynamic and a false dichotomy between “civilized” European and “primitive” African cultures. The European fascination with the art of Africans and other non-Western cultures became known as “Modernist Primitivism.”

In the 1920s and 30s, Harlem Renaissance cultural leader Alain Locke advised in *The New Negro* and other writings that African American artists draw upon European aesthetic models (including Cubism and German Expressionism) indebted to African art. He also encouraged artists to learn more about Africa to help define their modern identity. In their studies, they looked to photographs of African art featured in Locke’s publications and others and attended exhibitions, including the Museum of Modern Art’s 1935 *African Negro Art*, which encompassed over 600 objects primarily from European and American collections. For many of these artists, engaging with African art sprang from a desire to celebrate their own ancestral culture. Contemporary artists have continued to critically engage with this fraught history.

EXTENDED LABELS

LOÏS MAILOU JONES

(b. 1905, Boston, MA; d. 1998, Washington, DC)

Africa

1935

Oil on canvas board

The Johnson Collection, Spartanburg, SC

In vivid color and bold style, teacher, painter, and fabric designer Loïs Mailou Jones created an image of three striking figures with otherworldly, mask-like faces informed by African art and Art Deco design trends. This 1935 painting was based on her cover illustration for a 1928 issue of *Opportunity: A Journal of Negro Life*. She interprets Africa’s critical role in the various formations of black identity and cultural politics that were being espoused by African American cultural leaders like Alain Locke. Here, Jones

presents a stylish, nonspecific, and romanticized view of the African body.

WINOLD REISS

(b. 1886, Karlsruhe, Germany; d. 1953, New York, NY)

African Phantasy: Awakening

c. 1925

Ink, watercolor, and gouache on paper

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC, Museum purchase

An immigrant from Germany, artist and illustrator Winold Reiss made a great impact on the visual culture of the Harlem Renaissance. Reiss illustrated Alain Locke's *The New Negro*, a publication in which modern black identities were explored and imagined. Reiss's 1920s modernist style was inflected with the latest Art Deco trends as well as the European modernist vogue for African art. *African Phantasy: Awakening* was published in the first edition of *The New Negro*. In an imaginative African setting, Reiss depicts a black couple dancing among patterns and symbols that recall a mythical African past. In spite of some stereotypical aspects, Reiss's Jazz Age fantasy was of its time. His illustrations in numerous publications had an indelible influence on the development on African American modernists, especially his student Aaron Douglas, whose work is on view nearby.

JAMES LESESNE WELLS

(b. 1902, Atlanta, GA; d. 1993, Washington, DC)

Primitive Girl

1929

Linoleum cut

David C. Driskell Collection, Permanent loan to the David C. Driskell Center at the University of Maryland, College Park

James Lesesne Wells was a painter, printmaker, and illustrator whose works reflected the modern sensibilities forged during the Harlem Renaissance in the early 20th century. In *Primitive Girl*, Wells's engagement with German Expressionism and African art merges with the popular but controversial "modernist primitivism." He employed expressionist printmaking techniques, as seen in the work of Karl Schmidt-Rotluff on view nearby, in which the rough cut lines give the print a dramatic, sculptural feel. *Primitive Girl* features a young woman in profile reminiscent of Egyptian art, an important influence in New Negro iconography. The elegant, self-composed figure suggests the artist's desire to redefine "primitive" in his own terms.

HALE WOODRUFF

(b. 1900, Cairo, IL; d. 1980, New York, NY)

The Card Players

1930

Oil on canvas

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, George A. Hearn Fund, 2015

Hale Woodruff was among several African American artists who studied in Paris in the 1920s and 30s, where African art was central to the culture of modernism. In 1921, his encounter with Carl Einstein's influential book *Afrikanische Plastik* sparked his lifelong interest in African art. He explained: "This was my initial introduction to African art. I used to see African art in the galleries and in the shops in Paris . . . I bought a piece or two. . . . On seeing the work of Paul Cézanne I got the connection. Then I saw how Cézanne, Picasso, and the African had a terrific and unique sense of form."

This painting responds to Cézanne's *Card Players* (1890–92), which was exhibited in Paris in 1930. Woodruff's "riff" likely depicts his own social experiences in Paris. The figures have elongated heads that suggest African sculpture, and the style is influenced by Cézanne's brushwork, geometric forms, and spatial dynamics. Woodruff's *Card Players* toured the United States in 1931 as an example of a new, expressive aesthetic being developed by African American artists.

KARL SCHMIDT-ROTTLUFF

(b. 1884, Chemnitz, Germany; d. 1976, Berlin, Germany)

Three at a Table

1914

Woodcut

National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, Rosenwald Collection, 1951

A founding member of the influential German Expressionist group "Die Brücke," Karl Schmidt-Rottluff drew inspiration from displays he saw in ethnographic museums and translated his response into paintings, works on paper, and sculpture of rare intensity. By 1911, Schmidt-Rottluff had moved to Berlin and woodcuts dominated his printed work. Increasingly exposed to African and Oceanic art, his prints grew more abstract, defined by angular lines and flattened shapes, as seen in the mask-like features of the figures in *Three at a Table*. German Expressionism was an influential movement that informed the work of many artists featured in this exhibition, including Hale Woodruff, James Lesesne Wells, Winold Reiss, and David C. Driskell.

JOHN EDMONDS

(b. 1989, Washington, DC)

tête d'homme

2018

Archival pigment photograph

Courtesy of the artist and Company, New York

"In tête d'homme, I juxtapose a model with a decorative African art object borrowed from the home of a black family in my neighborhood of Crown Heights, Brooklyn. Quoting Man Ray's black-and-white photograph Noire et Blanche, I use mahogany tones that echo the skin of the model, the wooden object, and the backdrop, which only partially covers the set within the frame. It is the artifice of camerawork that I am interested in . . . to show how identity has been, and continues to be, constructed through the intervention of the camera. Here, the photographer's studio becomes a place of becoming, where subjects are invited to sit, pose, act, and think through, along with the artist, what it means to be framed by modernism."—John Edmonds

As a "riff" on Surrealist artist Man Ray's iconic *Noire et blanche* (1926), *tête d'homme* recasts the role of the white female with a black queer male. For both Man Ray and Edmonds, there is no stake in the authenticity of the African objects. While Man Ray presented the mask as an incongruous foil to white beauty, Edmonds used the decorative mask to complement the black body.

SANFORD BIGGERS

(b. 1970, Los Angeles, CA)

Negerplastik

2016

Repurposed antique quilt, cotton fabric fragments, tar, and glitter

Courtesy Massimo De Carlo, Milan/London/Hong Kong

Negerplastik engages with the influential 1915 publication of the same name by Carl Einstein which includes a compendium of black-and-white photos of 94 different African sculptures. Some of the objects are stripped of their original embellishments to emphasize the quality and aesthetics of the wood sculpture. There is no effort to contextualize the works within their respective cultures. The photographs, highly influential to modernists such as Karl Schmidt-Rottluff and Winold Reiss, present African sculptures as decidedly modern objects that transcend the specifics of their production.

Biggers's *Negerplastik* considers the crosscurrents of history and cultural exchanges across time around the power of African art. Biggers layers a fabric cutout of a generic African power figure and its shadow painted in glittered tar onto a 19th-century American quilt. He explains: "The really interesting point of the analysis of Carl Einstein's *Negerplastik* on my part was learning about [the book's] . . . influence on the European modernists and the changing of the notion of African art. In fact, this was the book that posited that it was art at all. While my *Negerplastik* is a critique of sorts, I find some of it liberating. We often get bogged down about these ideas of authenticity and provenance and who made it, when was it done, and where was it from. That is not solely the point of these objects or any cultural product. Our need to have that information versus our ability to experience the object and be informed by the object directly is the issue."

AARON DOUGLAS

(b. 1899, Topeka, KS; d. 1979, Nashville, TN)

The Negro in an African Setting

(later variant of panel 1 of *Aspects of Negro Life*)

1954

Oil on canvas board

Collection of Steven L. Jones, Philadelphia and Chicago

Aaron Douglas's early career defined the images of the New Negro movement. By synthesizing Alain Locke's charge to combine African arts and modernist style, he created a new idiom through which African American stories could be told. His aesthetic was heavily influenced by his teacher German modernist Winold Reiss who also advised him to study the arts of Africa.

Douglas is highly regarded for his epic four-panel mural cycle, *Aspects of Negro Life* (1934), commissioned by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) for the 135th Street branch of the New York Public Library. Adopting aspects of Cubism, he employed his signature aesthetic to chronicle the movement of African Americans from an African setting through slavery and Reconstruction to the vagaries of modern identity. *The Negro in an African Setting*, a variant of the first panel in the mural cycle, features many of the same elements of the original mural—men and women dancing and playing instruments, an African styled sculpture, and a border of lush foliage—all animated by concentric circles that radiate outward. New to the scene is a lone female observing from the margins.

Section Panel

CUBIST LINEAGES

With Cubism, Georges Braque and Pablo Picasso broke free of European tradition, which insisted that art should copy nature. They invented a flattened, geometric style that emphasized the two-dimensionality of the art surface. Their experiments were informed by the fragmented forms found in African art on view in Paris museums like the Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro. Their work defined an aesthetic language that evolved in the hands of other artists and spread over time and around the world to become one of the most important and recognizable innovations in 20th-century art.

In New York, the Museum of Modern Art organized major exhibitions such as *Cubism and Abstract Art* (1936) and *Picasso: Forty Years of His Art* (1939), allowing Cubism to gain a strong foothold in the United States. In Washington, DC, Museum Founder Duncan Phillips assembled a Braque “unit” of 11 works, drawn to the artist’s personal vision. Influenced by travels in the US and abroad, many African American artists developed their own modernist aesthetic inspired by Cubism and its many derivations.

EXTENDED LABELS

OSSIP ZADKINE

(1888, Viciebsk, Belarus; d. 1967, Paris, France)

Forms and Light (Mother and Child)

1918

Marble

Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, Gift of Joseph H. Hirshhorn, 1966

A sculptor associated with the School of Paris, Ossip Zadkine drew on Cubism to “construct the human object, represent its architecture as a totality of lines and forms which, as a totality, provokes emotions.” *Forms and Light (Mother and Child)* is a prime example of his dedication to direct carving, which emphasizes the elemental qualities of the stone, seen here in the reduction and restructuring of informal shapes.

An important teacher, Zadkine mentored several African American artists, and his work was highlighted by philosopher Alain Locke in his influential 1925 essay “The Legacy of the Ancestral Arts” in *The New Negro* anthology. Locke encouraged black American artists to consider examples by key European modernists—including Picasso, Matisse, Zadkine—as a way of examining how to incorporate African art and modernism into the spirit of their own work. This suggestion was heeded by Elizabeth Catlett who studied with Zadkine in New York between 1942 and 1943, and Harold Cousins, who studied with the sculptor in Paris beginning in 1949. Examples by Catlett and Cousins are on view nearby.

NORMAN LEWIS

(b. 1909, New York, NY; d. 1979, New York, NY)

Landscape (Land Echoes)

1955

Oil on canvas

Courtesy of Michael Rosenfeld Gallery LLC, New York

Abstract painter Norman Lewis made inroads into the New York avant-garde art world in the 1940s and 50s. Lewis was the only African American member of the seminal “Studio 35” collective that included the pioneers of Abstract Expressionism. While he saw abstraction as a universal language, his work often touched upon political issues of the moment.

A frequent visitor to the Museum of Modern Art, Lewis, who attended the *Cubism and Abstract Art* show, was steeped in the history of modernism and informed by the work of Wassily Kandinsky and Paul Klee. In his library, Lewis kept a copy of the 1938 MoMA catalogue *Bauhaus 1919–1928*; in it he transcribed the instructions for Kandinsky’s “analytical drawing” course. Lewis’s library also included three publications on Klee’s art, including his *Pedagogical Sketchbook* (1944). In a nod to both artists, Lewis layers diffuse areas of dark and light color to form a moody and atmospheric conceptual landscape.

DAVID C. DRISKELL

(b. 1931, Eatonton, GA – d. 2020, Washington, DC)

Still Life with Sunset

1966

Oil on canvas

Collection of Joseph and Lynne Horning

As an art student at Howard University in the 1950s, David C. Driskell began visiting The Phillips Collection, where he encountered works by American and European modern painters. He eventually became a renowned art historian, curator, and collector, while also maintaining a career as an artist. He explained: “Like most artists I know, I have looked to the past as often as I have tried to project a new visual perspective for the future. To a certain extent, that is how modernist ideas are born. *Still Life with Sunset* follows this axiom, being informed by the art of Georges Braque, Juan Gris, and other French modernists who used Cubism as a viable means of empowering ordinary forms. . . . I used still life subjects as an avenue to seeing a union of household objects as beautiful forms blending in with the natural world.”

CHARLES ALSTON

(b. 1907, Charlotte, NC; d. 1977, New York, NY)

Symbol

1953

Oil on canvas

Minneapolis Institute of Art, The Ethel Morrison Van Derlip Fund and Gift of Billy E. Hodges

Charles Alston spent most of his career in New York City where he was a major figure in the African American art scene from the 1930s to the 70s. He was a teacher and arts organizer, led the Harlem Arts Workshop, and founded the influential “306” arts collective. A painter, muralist, illustrator, and sculptor, Alston had a decidedly modernist aesthetic. He was involved with the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and supervised the Harlem Hospital murals, becoming the first African American to direct a New Deal mural project.

In both form and content, Alston’s Cubist painting *Symbol* demonstrates his interest in the work of Picasso. Picasso’s powerful anti-war painting *Guernica* (1937) toured the United States extensively between 1939 and 1952 and was often exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art. The screaming figure holding a dead bird in *Symbol* echoes the agonized mother and child in *Guernica*. Alston adds an ionic column from antiquity to his dramatic work, perhaps alluding to the tragedy of wars that have plagued the history of Western civilization.

HALE WOODRUFF

(b. 1900, Cairo, IL; d. 1980, New York, NY)

Africa and the Bull

c. 1958

Oil on canvas

The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, Gift of E. Thomas Williams and Auldlyn Higgins Williams

As he moved through Cubism to abstraction, Hale Woodruff continued to explore the power of Africa and its relationship to modernism. *Africa and the Bull* draws upon the iconography of Europa and the bull, one of the oldest and most widely known Greek myths. Here, Woodruff reframes the myth by depicting a nude female as Africa, rather than Europa, spirited away on the back of the bull among a cascade of flowers. By centralizing Africa in this origin tale of European culture, Woodruff may be referring to the role it played in the development of modernism.

WIFREDO LAM

(b. 1902, Sagua La Grande, Cuba; d. 1982, Paris, France)

Siren of the Niger

1950

Oil and charcoal on canvas

Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, Gift of Joseph H. Hirshhorn, 1972

Active in an international vanguard of modernist and surrealist artists and writers, Afro-Cuban artist Wifredo Lam synthesized European, African, and Caribbean sources in a unique way. *Siren of the Niger* is emblematic of Lam's signature aesthetic that features mythic beings with hybrid bodies of natural and fantastic formations. Lam combines the Greek mythological figure of the siren with a reference to the Niger River in West Africa.

GEORGES BRAQUE

(b. 1882, Argenteuil, France; d. 1963, Paris, France)

Still Life with Grapes and Clarinet

1927

Oil on canvas

The Phillips Collection, Acquired 1929

Balancing structure and lyricism, Georges Braque's canvases from the latter half of the 1920s reveal his personal vision and his continuity with French still life tradition. For this painting, Braque re-interpreted the layering of pictorial elements found in collage. He also alluded to the sense of touch, seen in the marble and wood grain surfaces he simulated in paint. Museum Founder Duncan Phillips, mesmerized by these effects and striving to secure a strong group of Braque paintings, acquired 11 examples, hosted the artist's first US solo show, and in the 1940s devoted a room in the museum to Braque's art. This Braque "unit" has influenced many artists, including David C. Driskell, who formed close ties to the museum.

PABLO PICASSO

(1881, Málaga, Spain; d. 1973, Mougins, France)

Pierrot and Harlequin

1920

Gouache on paper

Private collection

This work reflects Picasso's intense interest in the tradition of the theater and the figure of the harlequin, which functioned as a type of alter ego for the artist. The artist was drawn to the life of the performer—part acrobat, part prankster—who as a social outsider lived by his wits. The harlequin first appeared in Picasso's art in Paris in 1901, then assumed a prominent role during his Rose Period and in his Cubist works. This dynamic gouache—created with inconsistently layered flat planes of color—also includes an oval table, a motif frequently explored in Cubist still lifes by Picasso and Georges Braque and reinterpreted in contemporary examples by David C. Driskell and Sam Middleton on view nearby.

PABLO PICASSO

(1881, Málaga, Spain; d. 1973, Mougins, France)

Bullfight

1934

Oil on canvas

The Phillips Collection, Acquired 1937

During 1933–34, inspired by a trip to Barcelona, Picasso produced a series of paintings, drawings, and etchings devoted to the bullfight. This work was painted in his studio in Château Boisgeloup, France, on July 27, 1934. It is related to other colorful and gestural works from this moment that show the vicious battle of a lanced bull savaging a frightened horse that rears on its hind legs. Picasso often identified with the bull, a symbol of cruelty and creativity.

This painting had its first major US showing at the *Picasso: Forty Years of His Art* exhibition organized by the Museum of Modern Art and the Art Institute of Chicago in 1939–40. With over 300 objects, it was considered the greatest exhibition of Picasso's work ever assembled at the time; half of the lenders were from the United States, showing the artist's great presence in American collections. Picasso was one of the key modernists that Alain Locke encouraged African American artists to study.

SAM MIDDLETON

(b. 1927, New York, NY; d. 2015, Schagen, The Netherlands)

Table Top Still Life

1996

Mixed-media collage

Courtesy of Spanierman Modern, New York

In the 1950s abstractionist Sam Middleton circulated among Beat Generation artists and musicians in Greenwich Village. Seeking more opportunities for creative production, he moved to Europe in 1962 and lived largely in the Netherlands until his death. He developed an aesthetic that combined calligraphic and expressive painting, drawing, and collage and was driven by his abiding love of jazz music. In *Table Top Still Life*, Middleton pays homage to Picasso's oval collage *Still Life with Chair Caning* (1912).

HAROLD COUSINS

(b. 1916, Washington, DC; d. 1992, Brussels, Belgium)

Le Matador

1955

Welded steel

Collection of Stephen J. Meringoff, Courtesy of Michael Rosenfeld Gallery LLC, New York

Howard University graduate Harold Cousins went to Paris in 1949 where he studied in the private studio of Cubist sculptor Ossip Zadkine. He was impressed by the various materials and methods he encountered in French museums, particularly the metalwork of Spanish sculptor Julio González, and began to work in welded steel. *Le Matador* is an abstract Cubist sculpture that draws upon the theme of the bullfighter, a favorite subject of Picasso. Cousins spent the remainder of his life working and exhibiting in Europe.

JACOB LAWRENCE

(b. 1917, Atlantic City, New Jersey; d. 2000, Seattle, Washington)

Going Home

1946

Gouache on paper

Collection of Linda Lichtenberg Kaplan, Promised Gift to The Phillips Collection

Inspired by Harlem Renaissance artist Charles Alston as well as his own research, Jacob Lawrence illustrated African American history through colorful, narrative paintings. *Going Home* is a quintessential

work, completed five years after his notable *Migration Series* (1940–41, on view on the second floor). Lawrence's observations of daily life led to compositions of great complexity, bold color, expressive line, and rhythmic movement. *Going Home* filters the traditions of European and African art that he encountered in New York museums with his own aesthetic vision. It also reflects his development as a teacher in 1946 at the experimental Summer Institute at Black Mountain College in North Carolina, which was led by German abstractionist Josef Albers. Lawrence explained: "It was a wonderful experience. It was almost like a continuation of the centers in Harlem . . . there was no break in my art education." Guided by Albers's approach to modernism, Lawrence began to create more Cubist-inspired images, using flattened, angular forms, strong diagonals, and dynamic contrasts of light and shadow.

BOB THOMPSON

(b. 1937, Louisville, KY; d. 1966, Rome, Italy)

Homage to Nina Simone

1965

Oil on canvas

Minneapolis Institute of Art, The John R. Van Derlip Fund

Bob Thompson is perhaps the earliest African American artist to take on the history of European art in a large body of work that reimagines the canon through quotations and "riffs." Part of the late 1950s and 1960s Beat Generation, Thompson left the Greenwich Village art scene in 1961 for Europe, where he lived until his untimely death in 1966. He studied and interpreted the historical works he encountered in museums across Europe. His style, however, remained decidedly modernist, with its bright colors, expressionist brushwork, and flat surfaces. In color and form that recalls Post-Impressionism, *Homage to Nina Simone* celebrates the brash and disruptive power of the renowned black jazz musician while its composition is derived from Baroque painter Nicolas Poussin's *Bacchanal with a Guitar Player* (c. 1627).

WASSILY KANDINSKY

(b. 1866, Moscow, Russia; d. 1944, Neuilly-sur-Seine, France)

Sketch I for Painting with White Border (Moscow)

1913

Oil on canvas

The Phillips Collection, Gift from the estate of Katherine S. Dreier, 1953

Wassily Kandinsky's memories of his native Moscow are powerfully reflected in this preparatory oil. Here, a blue rider gallops at lower right, extending his white lance to attack a dragon. The rider is associated with Saint George, the patron saint of Moscow, whose battle with the dragon was often set before the Kremlin, the red and white arches at upper right.

Kandinsky was a pioneer of abstract art and one of the founders of the avant-garde group in Munich known as "the Blue Rider." His treatises on abstract painting *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (1910) and *Point and Line to Plane* (1926) emphasized the spiritual and symbolic dimensions of art. These texts influenced many artists including Moe Brooker, who read them as a student and explored the potential of color and abstract form in his work. Brooker's painting is on view nearby.

MOE BROOKER

(b. 1940, Philadelphia, PA)

The Eyes have it

1991

Pastel, watercolor, and spray paint on paper

Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, The Harold A. and Ann R. Sorgenti Collection of Contemporary African American Art

Following his training at the Tyler School of Art and the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in the early 1970s, Moe Brooker decided to move from figurative to abstract painting. He defines his canvases by overlapping three to four distinct paint layers. He then integrates fuzzy swatches of color against denser background hues, applied in stripes or other patterns, giving each work an underlying structure. He also adds linear doodles that appear to meander across the painted surface.

Brooker explained how Wassily Kandinsky's art and his books *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (1910) and *Point and Line to Plane* (1926) were influential: "I had never studied color. The academy didn't teach color, and when I got to graduate school, no one was teaching me color, so I decided to find out about color myself. And in reading these books, particularly *Concerning the Spiritual*, I began to learn issues of color, began to do some experimentation in color for myself and develop my own sense of color."

WILLIAM H. JOHNSON

(b. 1901, Florence, SC; d. 1970, Central Islip, NY)

Cagnes-sur-Mer

1928–29

Oil on canvas mounted on board

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, The John Axelrod Collection—Frank B. Bemis Fund, Charles H. Bayley Fund, and The Heritage Fund for a Diverse Collection

William H. Johnson lived in Europe between 1926 and 1938, absorbing the form and color found in canvases by Paul Cézanne, Chaïm Soutine, and Vincent van Gogh. In 1927, Johnson spent time in Paris and likely saw Soutine's first solo exhibition at Galerie Bing that featured the artist's expressive portraits and undulating landscapes of southern France. By fall 1927, Johnson followed in Soutine's footsteps and left Paris for Cagnes-sur-Mer. Johnson revisited the streets of the coastal town, creating numerous canvases with dramatically turbulent views. The jewel tones, textured brushstrokes, and distortions of space in Johnson's sun-drenched paintings demonstrate the influence of what he called the "real spirited modern painters" that he encountered in Europe. He explained: "I am not afraid to exaggerate a contour, a form, or anything that gives more character and movement to the canvas."

CHAÏM SOUTINE

(b. 1893, Smilavichy, Belarus; d. 1943, Paris, France)

Landscape at Cagnes

1923

Oil on canvas

Columbus Museum of Art, OH, Gift of Howard D. and Babette L. Sirak, the Donors to the Campaign for Enduring Excellence, and the Derby Fund

Influenced by Claude Monet, Vincent van Gogh, and Paul Cézanne, Chaïm Soutine's depictions of distorted landscapes, psychological portraits, and tactile still lifes forged a new, powerful visual language that defined the School of Paris. In 1923, when this canvas was painted, Soutine had moved from Céret in the Pyrenees Mountains to Cagnes-sur-Mer on the coast, where he would live and work for the next two years, embarking on a series inspired by the towns and countryside he encountered in the south of France. Using a newfound sense of swirling space and expressive color, Soutine produced some of his

strongest paintings, which brought him critical appeal and notoriety.

LOÏS MAILLOU JONES

(b. 1905, Boston, Massachusetts; d. 1998, Washington, DC)

Place du Tertre

1938

Oil on canvas

The Phillips Collection, Acquired 1944

During 1937–38, Loïs Mailou Jones, funded by a fellowship, took a sabbatical from teaching art at Howard University to study at the prestigious Académie Julian in Paris. There, she befriended Post-Impressionist painter Émile Bernard, who encouraged her work. As with Henry Ossawa Tanner and other African American artists before her, Jones exhibited at the Paris salons, specifically the Société des Artistes Français and the Société des Artistes Indépendants. Her training in Europe gave her a sense of freedom that was still unknown to her in Washington, DC, in the 1930s.

Jones painted in her studio and in the streets of Paris. *Place du Tertre* captures a popular square in the 18th arrondissement, only a few streets away from the hilltop church towers on Montmartre. She explained: “I would set up my [easel] on location. By 11 am I would have my scene, blocked in with a brush drawing. . . . Working as an impressionist I would sometimes have to return to the same spot several times. . . . I always had many spectators.” Museum Founder Duncan Phillips admired Jones’s modernist aesthetic. He acquired two paintings by the artist, which he exhibited at the museum and also lent to local institutions like the Howard University Gallery of Art and the Barnett Aden Gallery, the first black-owned commercial art space in the US.

MAURICE UTRILLO

(b. 1883, Paris, France; d. 1955, Dax, France)

Place du Tertre

1911

Oil on cardboard

The Phillips Collection, Acquired 1953

Growing up in the milieu of Edgar Degas, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, Maurice Utrillo took up painting to chronicle bohemian life and the urban landscape of Paris. In 1909–10, he began a series known as his White Period, which featured views of Gothic churches and street scenes derived from postcards. Over a sketch he used a palette knife and a brush to apply heavy layers of opaque paint on hard, thick cardboard.

By 1912, he had earned the admiration of avant-garde artists and had exhibited with Paul Cézanne, André Derain, Matisse, and Picasso. In 1926, Duncan Phillips took interest in Utrillo’s White Period pictures. Fond of this site, he acquired Utrillo’s impression of Place du Tertre for his museum, almost 10 years after he purchased Loïs Mailou Jones’s interpretation, on view nearby, which shows the same square from a different vantage point.

VINCENT VAN GOGH

(b. 1853, Zundert, Netherlands; d. 1890, Auvers-sur-Oise, France)

The Road Menders

1889

Oil on canvas

The Phillips Collection, Acquired 1949

In October 1888, Vincent van Gogh was admitted to a mental hospital in Saint-Rémy. On excursions

from the hospital in 1889–90, van Gogh witnessed the repair of boulevard Mirabeau, a subject that inspired this painting. He wrote to his brother Theo, “The last study I have done is a view of the village, where they were working under enormous plane trees repairing the pavement. So there are heaps of sand, stones, and gigantic trunks—the leaves are yellowing.”

By the 1930s, van Gogh had posthumously made an impact on American audiences. He was given his first US solo show at the Museum of Modern Art, an English edition of his biography by noted art historian Julius Meier-Graefe was released, and Irving Stone’s popular book based on the letters between Vincent and Theo was published. In 1953, international museums celebrated the centennial of van Gogh’s birth. Beauford Delaney, who was working in Paris at the time and had shifted from figurative compositions to studies of brilliant color and light, was inspired by van Gogh’s thick paint layers, vivid palette, and energetic brushwork. Delaney, whose work is on view nearby, would have been among the visitors to the popular 1954 exhibition *Van Gogh and the Paintings of Auvers-sur-Oise* at the Musée de l’Orangerie.

Section Panel

REFRAMING IMPRESSIONISM

When the Impressionist artists first exhibited their work in Paris in 1874, their loose brushwork and focus on modern life was considered radical by the art establishment. But by the 20th century, the visual language of Impressionism had gained practitioners and collectors and had become a beloved style that was essential to the development of modernism. Here, we feature three African American artists with different relationships to this important and influential movement. Expatriate artist Henry Ossawa Tanner worked in an Impressionist style in the early 20th century. Also in Paris, mid-century artist Beauford Delaney was so deeply impacted by the brushwork in Claude Monet’s late paintings that he transformed his approach to abstraction. On the other hand, in the 21st century, Titus Kaphar disrupts the romantic notion of the Impressionist landscape to urge us to see what lies beneath its beautiful surfaces.

EXTENDED LABELS

HENRY OSSAWA TANNER

(b. 1859, Pittsburg, PA; d. 1937, Paris, France)

Haystacks

c. 1930

Oil on canvas

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC, Gift of Irwin M. Sparr

Henry Ossawa Tanner traveled to Europe in 1891 in hopes of studying art with a freedom not readily available to African Americans in the United States. He forged a successful career and spent the remainder of his life in France. He became a respected and decorated French artist and an inspiration to African Americans in search of a modern and liberated artistic community.

Known for his atmospheric paintings of religious subject matter, Tanner was influenced by French Impressionist techniques, in particular the style of the revered Claude Monet. It is likely that Tanner’s canvas pays homage to Monet, whose haystack paintings were exhibited in Paris in 1891, the year Tanner arrived.

TITUS KAPHAR

(b. 1976, Kalamazoo, MI)

Earth and Sky

2012

Oil and tar on canvas

Private Collection

In Titus Kaphar's *Earth and Sky*, tar disturbs a bucolic Impressionist landscape. Kaphar uses tar as a symbolic force to disrupt and reveal the turmoil that lies beneath beautiful surfaces. Kaphar stated: "I wanted to do something that felt as though it was a gesture of peeling back this idea of 'Impressionism as pretty picture' to reveal something else underneath, to reveal some of the kind of guttural nature of what was happening across the pond and other places as well."

BEAUFORD DELANEY

(b. 1901, Knoxville, TN; d. 1979, Paris, France)

Untitled

c. 1958

Oil on canvas

Courtesy of Michael Rosenfeld Gallery LLC, New York

While studying art in Boston in 1926, Beauford Delaney encountered the work of Claude Monet and was impressed by his ability to capture light and color with expressive form. Delaney's own boldly colorful and emotional artistry developed while he was part of the Abstract Expressionist circles in New York.

In 1953, Delaney left the vibrant Greenwich Village art scene for a short trip to Paris that ended up lasting his lifetime. The year that Delaney moved to Paris, the Musée de l'Orangerie reopened its installation of Monet's waterlily paintings, bringing Delaney renewed exposure to Monet's abstract, dematerialized surfaces. The color yellow that dominates Delaney's abstraction is not simply pigment, but a constant motif that speaks to spirituality, joy, and light, themes also found in the influential paintings of Vincent van Gogh.

Section Panel

RECKONING WITH PICASSO AND MATISSE

With notable works that inspire reverence and resistance, Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse were unquestionably major forces in the development of modernism in Europe and its influence in America. Their provocative images of women were often marked by figural flatness and mask-like facial compositions that referenced African art, associating the black body with something new, mysterious, and unmistakably modern. Picasso exploited the faceted treatment of forms he saw in African art in his efforts to define Cubism—notably through his provocative *Les Femmes d'Alger* (1907)—while Matisse sought to meld Western and African influences in his use of color, line, and form. *Riffs and Relations* features nudes by Picasso and Matisse and a sampling of contemporary African American female artists who respond directly to their characterizations of the female body. Some mount spectacular acts of defiance, while others propose their own vision of the female body.

EXTENDED LABELS

MEQUITTA AHUJA

(b. 1976, Grand Rapids, MI)

Xpect

2018

Oil on canvas

Collection of the artist

Throughout her body of work, Mequitta Ahuja employs the self-portrait as a means to express how a woman of color negotiates the ongoing discussion about representation and the history of art. In *Xpect*, a canvas created for this show, the artist depicts herself pregnant and reclining in her studio, holding a sonogram image of her unborn son. Hanging behind her is *Le Damn* (2018), her remake of Picasso's iconic *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. R. Version O)* (1907) in which she replaces Picasso's figures with her own body. By featuring the black female figure here, Ahuja responds to Picasso's use of African objects in the development of Cubism, and reclaims territory that Picasso borrowed from black creative production. Ahuja explains, "I offer my work as both a form of respect for the artistic and canonical value of the influential precedent Picasso gave us and as a form of intervention into the space his work occupies, an intervention into the canon of art history."

HENRI MATISSE

(b. 1869, Cateau-Chambrésis, France; d. 1954, Nice, France)

Interior with Egyptian Curtain

1948

Oil on canvas

The Phillips Collection, Acquired 1950

Created in the south of France, *Interior with Egyptian Curtain* is one of Henri Matisse's last paintings. Featuring the view from a window of a thriving palm tree, it celebrates the Mediterranean springtime, and the artist's longing for energy and renewal. Framing the window is a beautiful appliquéd textile, known as *khayamiya*, used in Egypt to decorate tents. Matisse travelled to North Africa in 1912 and 1913, owned this textile, and used its bright colorful forms to inspire both the two dimensional design of this painting and his later cutouts.

Interior with Egyptian Curtain and *Studio, Quai Saint-Michel*, also on view, were both loaned to *Henri Matisse: A Retrospective*, a major exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in 1992. Many artists were influenced by this show, including Janet Taylor Pickett, who created *And She Was Born*, on view nearby, as a direct response to *Interior with Egyptian Curtain*.

JANET TAYLOR PICKETT

(b. 1948, Ann Arbor, MI)

And She Was Born

2017

Acrylic on canvas with collage

Collection of the artist

After seeing Matisse's *The Red Studio* (1911) at the Museum of Modern Art in the early 1970s, Janet Taylor Pickett began a creative conversation with Matisse that not only expanded and enhanced her own visual vocabulary but became integral to her voice as an African American female artist. Taylor Pickett found Matisse's daring use of color and the vibrancy of his line hypnotic and transformative for her own work.

And She Was Born responds to Matisse's *Interior with Egyptian Curtain* (1948) and was created for *Riffs and Relations*. Taylor Pickett combines a collaged image of an East African woman wearing a botanical headdress with the border design borrowed from Matisse's work. For Taylor Pickett the dress

is a vessel for the art of domesticity and female spirituality. She explains, “For me, these non-Western notions of beauty, coupled with the natural and organic design, felt like part of my own visual vocabulary. *And She Was Born* came out of a very individual statement of beauty out of blackness, contained somewhat by the white line of design.”

ROMARE BEARDEN

(b. 1911, Charlotte, NC; d. 1988, New York, NY)

Mecklenburg Autumn: Heat Lightening Eastward

1983

Collage and oil on fiberboard

Collection of Ginny and Conner Searcy

“Manet is one of my most favorite artists. One of the last painters to be able to truly paint in the grand manner—after him, art was to be more informal. . . . Had we lived in the same time I am sure we would have been friends. Art is a continuation.”—Romare Bearden

Beginning in the 1940s and throughout his career, luminary artist Romare Bearden often engaged sources from European art as he fashioned new aesthetic approaches to narratives of African American life. This 1983 collage painting is a nod to Manet’s controversial *Luncheon on the Grass* (1863). Here, the nude woman with an African masked face and the clothed man she is sitting next to suggest the two principal figures in *Luncheon*. Bearden’s emphasis on the eroticism of the masked nude might allude to Picasso’s masked prostitutes in *Les Femmes d’Alger* (1907), another transgressive modernist icon. Bearden references European modernist sources to fashion a sensuous exchange between a black man and a woman lounging in the electric heat of the American South.

FAITH RINGGOLD

(b. 1930, New York, NY)

Picasso’s Studio

1991

Acrylic on canvas with printed and tie-dyed fabric

Worcester Art Museum, MA, Charlotte E. W. Buffington Fund

“It’s the African mask straight from African faces that I look at in Picasso’s studio and in his art. He has the power to deny what he doesn’t want to acknowledge. But art is the truth, not the artist. Doesn’t matter what he says about where it comes from. We see where every time we look in the mirror.”—Faith Ringgold

In *French Collection*, Ringgold’s series of story quilt paintings, her alter ego Willia Marie Simone embarks on a fantastical journey in which she travels back in time and navigates modernist circles in 1920s Paris. Through the series, Simone, who is an artist and a model, interacts with historical figures such as Matisse, Gertrude Stein, Sojourner Truth, and more. In *Picasso’s Studio*, Simone is the central figure, modeling nude for Picasso who is pictured at the left margin at his easel. His controversial painting *Les Femmes d’Alger* (1907) is prominently featured behind the lounging Simone. In the story written in the border of Ringgold’s work, African objects, the inspiration for Picasso’s Cubist breakthroughs, speak to Simone about slavery and colonization but urge her not to fear the power of Picasso. With her study of Picasso and her clear understanding of how blackness informed primitivism in modern art, Ringgold takes ownership of that fraught history.

HENRI MATISSE

(b. 1869, Cateau-Chambrésis, France; d. 1954, Nice, France)

Studio, Quai Saint-Michel

1916

Oil on canvas

The Phillips Collection, Acquired 1940

In this austere image, Henri Matisse contemplates the themes of the artist's studio, the picture within a picture, the artist and his model, and the open window. Radically simplified verticals and horizontals suggest the architecture of his apartment in the heart of Paris where the artist painted during the late winter and early spring months of World War I. His favorite model at the time, Laurette, whom he recorded in almost 50 works, reclines on the couch. The mask-like contours of her face and the geometric approach to her form may have been shaped by his studies of African objects and his experiences in North Africa. Matisse's presence in the studio is implied by the propped picture on the chair, which acts like an easel.

In the United States, Matisse's reputation grew steadily during the 1920s, and by 1930 he was featured on the cover of *Time* magazine. In 1931, Matisse was the subject of the Museum of Modern Art's first monographic exhibition, the most comprehensive presentation of the artist's work held in the US at the time. Also that year, the artist's son, Pierre, opened his own gallery. By organizing exhibitions and placing his father's works within prominent museum collections, including the Phillips, Pierre and others made great efforts to promote Henri Matisse's art in the US, solidifying his relevance to younger generations of artists.

WILLIAM H. JOHNSON

(b. 1901, Florence, SC; d. 1970, Central Islip, NY)

Nude

c. 1939

Oil on burlap

Smithsonian Museum of American Art, Gift of the Harmon Foundation

William H. Johnson was one of the first African American modernists to depict the nude as a black female. Johnson lived in Europe between 1926 and 1938 and developed an expressionist aesthetic informed by the modernist painterly styles of the European avant-garde. The recumbent black woman is depicted in a familiar pose drawn from the European tradition of the reclining nude. Her direct gaze recalls Manet's *Olympia* (1863), a painting that Johnson likely encountered in Paris at the Louvre. The bouquet of flowers in the background may reference the bouquet held by Olympia's black maid who has replaced her mistress as the subject of desire in Johnson's "riff." A rare depiction of a black nude by an African American artist before 1960, Johnson's painting boldly anticipates the feminist reclamation of the black female body by artists such as Faith Ringgold and Carrie Mae Weems, whose works are on view nearby.

PABLO PICASSO

(1881, Málaga, Spain; d. 1973, Mougins, France)

Reclining Figure

1934

Oil on canvas

The Phillips Collection, Gift of the Carey Walker Foundation, 1994

Although drawn from a long art historical tradition, the motif of the reclining nude in this work embodies something different, a collision between the classical and the surreal. In a few expressive brushstrokes, Picasso depicts model and lover Marie-Thérèse Walter sensually sprawled on a couch set

before a decorative screen. She seems lost in her own world, oblivious to the viewer's attention. The shape and structure of Picasso's sculptural interpretations of Walter may have been visually informed by the Grebo and Nimba masks in his African art collection.

ELLEN GALLAGHER

(b. 1965, Providence, RI)

Odalisque

2005

Gelatin silver print with watercolor and gold leaf, edition of 15 Collection of Larry Gagorian

Ellen Gallagher's practice often includes conscripting existing material and building it into her artistry. She modifies it by adding her own interpretive layers to propose alternative meanings. By combining a 1928 photograph of Matisse and his model Zita with a 1938 photograph of Sigmund Freud, *Odalisque* offers an irreverent look into the mythology surrounding Matisse. The original photograph of Matisse is a well-known document of his studio practice in which he often worked with lounging female models posed as exotic harem women, or "odalisques." With humor, Gallagher replaces the model's face with her own and Matisse's with Freud's. Gallagher's cheeky sideways glance questions the notion of creative genius, power, and authority that the Matisse/Freud character represents.

CARRIE MAE WEEMS

(b. 1953, Portland, OR)

Framed by Modernism (Seduced By One Another, Yet Bound by Certain Social Conventions; You Framed The Likes of Me & I Framed You, But We Were Both Framed By Modernism; & Even Though We Knew Better, We Continued That Time Honored Tradition of The Artist & His Model)

1997

Gelatin silver print, sandblasted glass triptych

Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

The question of the male artist and his relationship to the female body within the context of modernism is at the center of this collaboration between Carrie Mae Weems and Robert Colescott. In 1997, when Colescott represented the United States at the Venice Biennale, he asked Weems to create his official portrait. What resulted was not a traditional composition, but a meditation on art making and sexual politics. Weems stated that "as opposed to trying to figure out how to make a work about Bob specifically, it might be more interesting to make a work around the work that I make, which is based on the critical intersection between art and practice, men and women, and gender and identity." Weems presents Colescott as the tortured male artist and implicates his complex relationship to the female form. Here, Weems and Colescott are both artists and models, engaged in a negotiation of artistry, gender, and power.

BARBARA CHASE-RIBOUD

(b. 1939, Philadelphia, PA)

Matisse's Back in Twins

1967/1994

Polished bronze and silk on painted steel base

Courtesy of the artist

Artist, poet, and novelist Barbara Chase-Riboud expatriated to France in 1960 and has lived between Paris and Rome ever since. She is best known for combining cast bronze and fiber to create transcendent sculptural abstractions. *Matisse's Back in Twins* is a stele, or commemorative pillar dating

back to ancient cultures. Chase-Riboud was interested in how Matisse abstracted the female torsos in his series *The Back* (1908–31). She states, “I continued the process of abstraction from the Cubist to the pure abstraction in forms and planes to a new level, using in addition the light and reflection of the polished bronze, as well as the duality of the soft . . . twisted and knotted threads.”

WANGECHI MUTU

(b. 1972, Nairobi, Kenya)

Mwotaji (The Dreamer)

2016

Polished bronze and hand-cut Carrara marble

Courtesy of Elisabeth Wingate and Carolina Nitsch

Wangechi Mutu is known for her mythic images of black female bodies. *Mwotaji*, meaning “dreamer” in Swahili, is a self-portrait. The work evokes *Sleeping Muse* by influential modernist sculptor Constantin Brancusi and could be considered her response to his absorption of the simplified, formal qualities he found in African art. Both an artist and a dreamer, Mutu is a radical interloper into the history of modernism, reframing its often problematic relationships to Africa through her powerful creative process.

ROMARE BEARDEN

(b. 1911, Charlotte, NC; d. 1988, New York, NY)

Odysseus: Poseidon, The Sea God-Enemy of Odysseus

1977

Collage on fiberboard

The Thompson Collection, Indianapolis, IN

In 1977, Romare Bearden debuted a series of 20 collages and watercolors that reimagined the ancient Greek epic *The Odyssey* by Homer with black characters. Bearden rejected the notion that human cultures exist in isolation and often combined his artistry and his abiding love of literature to tell stories rooted in African American life that also embrace universal themes. What has been dubbed as Bearden’s “Black Odyssey” also opens up the possibility that Greek mythology actually reflects the racial and cultural diversity of the ancient Mediterranean world out of which these myths emerged.

Poseidon, The Sea God-Enemy of Odysseus portrays the powerful god of the oceans who is Odysseus’s nemesis. A large and menacing figure rising from the ocean, Bearden’s Poseidon is an African masked deity with a penetrating gaze. Throughout the series, Bearden draws upon Matisse’s cutout aesthetic from the 1940s and 50s, including *Jazz*, which Bearden owned, in which colorful, flat, abstracted shapes define his animated compositions.

HENRI MATISSE

(b. 1869, Cateau-Chambrésis, France; d. 1954, Nice, France)

Plate V: The Horse, the Rider, and the Clown

Plate VIII: Icarus

Plate XI: The Codomas

(from the illustrated book *Jazz*)

1947

Pochoir

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Lila Acheson Wallace, 1983

These are three of the 20 plates that illustrate Henri Matisse's extraordinary printed book *Jazz* (1947). The project began with Matisse cutting and arranging colored papers. He described the process: "Instead of drawing the contour and filling in the color—one modifying the other—I draw directly into the color." The cut-outs were then translated into print using a stencil technique to emulate the palette, texture, sharp edges, and layers of the originals. The book's title, text, and colorful plates evoke rhythm, repetition, and improvisation. The subjects of the prints were inspired by the circus, theater, mythology, and the artist's travels, including visits to the United States.

In 1961, the Museum of Modern Art mounted *The Last Works of Henri Matisse: Large Cut Gouaches*, which featured the Jazz album. This show was so influential to Alma Thomas that soon after she developed her mature style of bright, flat colors informed by Matisse's palette. Inspired by the same series, in 2017, Hank Willis Thomas incorporated motifs from *Jazz*, including the form of *Icarus*, on view nearby, into his *Beautiful Game* series of quilts and sculptures.

HANK WILLIS THOMAS

(b. 1976, Plainfield, NJ)

Icarus

2016

Quilt

Collection of Debbie and Mitchell Rechler

"Sport is often said to be a proxy for warfare—an 'appropriate' channel for our inclinations toward division based on arbitrary signifiers such as tribe, nationality, skin color, class, etc. . . . In Icarus, I connect this divisive impulse to football (soccer), the most popular and among the most lucrative sports in the world. It is a sport that relies heavily on the labor and skill of international players, frequently of the African diaspora. With Icarus's reference to the works of Henri Matisse, one of the standard-bearers of European modernism, I also connect the movement's development to European contact with Africa."—Hank Willis Thomas

Through his work, conceptual artist Hank Willis Thomas examines, explores, and interrogates issues of race, justice, culture, and history on a global scale. *Icarus* is part of his series *The Beautiful Game* in which he uses quilts, sculpture, and photography to explore sports and colonialism, creating images that allude to clashes in culture and history as well as conflicts on the playing field. In *Icarus*, Thomas quilts American sports jerseys and draws upon the fabric appliqué designs of Asafo flags from the Fante people of Ghana as well as Matisse's 1947 *Jazz* series, on view nearby.

PIET MONDRIAN

(b. 1872 Amersfoort, Netherlands; d. 1944, New York City, New York)

Painting No. 9

Between 1939 and 1942

Oil on canvas

The Phillips Collection, Gift from the estate of Katherine S. Dreier, 1953

Piet Mondrian began work on *Painting No. 9* in London and perhaps completed or retouched it after his move to New York City in 1940. Impressed by his new surroundings, Mondrian responded to the speed and energy of the city through the pulse and rhythm he conveyed in this canvas. While in New York, Mondrian also took inspiration from the syncopated beat and improvisational aesthetic of jazz. This composition is a striking interplay of carefully balanced horizontal and vertical lines, white areas that

appear as flat surfaces or limitless space, and colors near the painting's edge that draw the eye away from the center. As a result, the overall image appears to hover, as though weightless. Many contemporary artists have found inspiration in Mondrian's complex grids, including Leonardo Drew, who contemplates order in chaos in his constructed sculptural reliefs, like *Number 192*, on view nearby.

LEONARDO DREW

(b. 1961, Tallahassee, FL)

Number 192

2016

Wood, paint, and Conte crayon

Collection of Robert and Patti Bleicher

"What can I say about [Piet] Mondrian—he's the man. And as far as the grid and composition, obviously I am working off of him and standing on the shoulders of giants. The grid system for me was not just a system . . . but a way of building a composition. Mondrian was definitely one of the innovators of how you sort of bring all these elements together. . . . The grid is just a formal structure for realizing that. Looking close enough, you realize that there has to be some understructure. The grid allows you to expand and continuously expand systematically. As different as my work looks, Mondrian actually is right in there, so it's undeniable."—Leonardo Drew

Using the processes of oxidation and burning, Leonardo Drew transforms natural materials into massive sculptures that engage with the transience of the human condition. He meticulously arranges cotton, timber, rope, steel, and more to offer subtle social commentary on the Civil Rights struggle and the decline of America's industrial past. But for Drew, each piece functions as an emotive "mirror" that reflects the viewer's experience. At first glance, the work may appear as decaying detritus, but close looking reveals a beautiful, poetic structure that has firm roots in European modernism.

ALMA THOMAS

(b. 1891, Columbus, GA; d. 1978, Washington, DC)

Watusi (Hard Edge)

1963

Acrylic on canvas

Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, Gift of Vincent Melzac, 1976

After seeing the 1961 Museum of Modern Art exhibition *The Last Works of Henri Matisse: Large Cut Gouaches*, Alma Thomas began to closely consider the art of Matisse and move increasingly toward abstraction. She reacted directly to his use of vivid colors and flattened shapes. In *Watusi*, Thomas used a different color palette and a slightly altered composition to "riff" on Matisse's *Snail* (1953). Her response references the Watusi peoples of Central Africa, or perhaps the popular 1960s Watusi dance craze. Like many of the African American artists in this exhibition, Thomas exposes the African roots of European modernism with wry humor.

FELRATH HINES

(b. 1913, Indianapolis, IN; d. 1993, Silver Spring, MD)

Yellow and Gray

1976

Oil on linen

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC,

Gift of the Barbara Fiedler Gallery

In 1945, Felrath Hines began his training at the Art Institute of Chicago. After deciding to concentrate on design, Hines worked in fashion and studied at New York University and the Pratt Institute. In 1963, Romare Bearden invited Hines to join “Spiral,” a group of African American artists who initially met in response to the Civil Rights Movement. Despite his involvement with the group, Hines wanted his imagery to remain universal. Vibrant color and hard-edge abstract forms define this oil, with a composition that shows Hines’s interest in the art of Piet Mondrian. Hines became a prominent conservator and worked for the Museum of Modern Art, the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, and artist Georgia O’Keeffe.

JENNIE C. JONES

(b. 1968, Cincinnati, OH)

Recording Red, Gray Distortion (For Elvin Jones)

2016

Acoustic absorber panel and acrylic paint on canvas

Collection of Miyoung Lee and Neil Simpkins

Over the course of her career, Jennie C. Jones has explored two facets of modernism: the sonic and the visual. By superimposing acoustic panels onto the surface of canvases, she metaphorically reverberates aspects of sound and tonality, then enlivens these mostly monochromatic paintings with vibrant pops of color. Through her art, Jones recovers historically significant black avant-garde musicians; jazz drummer Elvin Jones is referenced in this work. Jones describes her approach as “revisionist and neo-modernist . . . using strategies of collage and sampling to play with how modernist history was constructed. That history can become the source, it can become content, but it is deconstructed and reconstructed.”

MARTIN PURYEAR

(b. 1941, Washington, DC)

Face Down

2008

White bronze

Courtesy of the artist and Matthew Marks Gallery

“Most sculptors working today, even those who may not be aware of it, owe a debt to [Constantin] Brancusi. Artists who feel no influence from Brancusi on their own work still exist, but relate to a cultural landscape which was indelibly touched by his work. . . . I saw the first recreation of Brancusi’s studio and took lots of pictures. . . . It was an important thing for me to see. Brancusi was a person working with his own hands. I saw all his tools in the studio. This was crucial to me. I felt I was doing the same with my work.”—Martin Puryear

Through his meticulous craftsmanship of natural materials, Martin Puryear distills sculpture practices from across the globe into his own elegant aesthetic. *Face Down* is part of a series of similar works in different sizes and media in which a head-like form is face down on a surface. Puryear’s sculptures recall Brancusi’s smooth surfaces and reduced forms yet remain completely original objects that create meaning through the individual interaction with the viewer.

Section Panel

FRANK STEWART AND HENRI CARTIER-BRESSON

"In order to give meaning to the world, one has to feel involved in what one frames through the viewfinder. It is by economy of means that one arrives at simplicity of expression."—Henri Cartier-Bresson

New York artist-photographer Frank Stewart has chronicled African American life, music, and art for more than 50 years. As the official photographer for Jazz at Lincoln Center, he has documented the American jazz world with spontaneity, style, and sensitivity. He also knew and photographed many of the artists featured in this exhibition. This grouping reveals Stewart's intimate, candid images of important African American artists in their homes and studios, where he has captured their artistic environment and spirit. Stewart's work is informed by the modernist aesthetics of French photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson who developed the concept of the "decisive moment" in photography. He defined it as "the simultaneous recognition, in a fraction of a second, of the significance of an event as well as of a precise organization of forms which gave that event its proper expression." Cartier-Bresson created formidable portraits of artists including Henri Matisse and Alberto Giacometti, and his ideas forever shaped the medium, setting a standard that remains an inspiration to photographers.

HENRI CARTIER-BRESSON (b. 1908, Chanteloup-en-Brie, France; d. 2004, Céreste, France)

Giacometti, n.d.

Gelatin silver print

The Phillips Collection, Acquired 1964

HENRI CARTIER-BRESSON (b. 1908, Chanteloup-en Brie, France; d. 2004, Céreste, France)

Matisse, 1944

Gelatin silver print

The Phillips Collection, Acquired 1964

FRANK STEWART (b. 1949, Nashville, TN)

Alma Thomas, 1975 (printed 2019)

Gelatin silver print

Collection of the artist

FRANK STEWART (b. 1949, Nashville, TN)

David Driskell, 1980 (printed 2019)

Gelatin silver print

Collection of the artist

FRANK STEWART (b. 1949, Nashville, TN)

Jacob Lawrence, c. 1986 (printed 2019)

Gelatin silver print

Collection of the artist

FRANK STEWART (b. 1949, Nashville, TN)

Romare Bearden, 1980s (printed 2019)

Gelatin silver print

Collection of the artist

FRANK STEWART (b. 1949, Nashville, TN)

Hale Woodruff, 1980s (printed 2019)

Gelatin silver print

Collection of the artist

PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Riffs and Relations: African American Artists and the European Modernist Tradition

February 29, 2020–January 3, 2021

The information below was updated October 2020 and is subject to change.

Please visit www.phillipscollection.org/events for the most up-to-date programming information.

PHILLIPS TALKS October 27 5:30–6:30 pm	LOÏS MAILOU JONES AND DAVID C. DRISKELL: INTERSECTING LEGACIES ONLINE EVENT Dr. Adrienne Childs, guest curator for <i>Riffs and Relations</i> , and Rebecca VanDiver, Assistant Professor of African American Art at Vanderbilt University, discuss the work of David C. Driskell and Loïs Mailou Jones. <i>Free. Reservation required to access Zoom information.</i>
PHILLIPS TALKS November 12 5:30–6:30 pm	IN CONVERSATION: HANK WILLIS THOMAS AND BOMANI JONES ONLINE EVENT As a follow up to their article in Vanity Fair, join Hank Willis Thomas and Bomani Jones as they discuss race and the appropriation of the black body in art, sports, and advertising. <i>Free. Reservation required to access Zoom information.</i>

New Hours: Thursday-Sunday, 11 am-6 pm

The safety of our visitors, staff, and community is our top priority, and we have adjusted our visitor guidelines to ensure a safe and rewarding experience. Tickets are released on Mondays—at 10 am for members and noon for general admission—for the following Thursday-Sunday.

The museum is closed on Mondays, New Year's Day, Independence Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Eve, and Christmas Day.

###

UPCOMING EXHIBITIONS

The information below was updated **October 2020** and is subject to change.
All exhibitions are organized by The Phillips Collection, unless otherwise noted.

CENTENNIAL EXHIBITIONS

Seeing Differently: The Phillips Collects for a New Century

February 12–September 20, 2021

Drawn from its growing collection of over 4,700 works, *Seeing Differently* will highlight over 200 works by artists from the 19th century to the present, including paintings, works on paper, prints, photographs, sculptures, quilts, and videos. Spread throughout the entire museum, the exhibition will explore the complexities of our ever-changing world through themes of identity, history, place, and the senses. *Seeing Differently* marks the first major celebration of the museum's permanent collection in over 10 years.

Jacob Lawrence: American Struggle

June 26–September 19, 2021

Jacob Lawrence (1917–2000) was one of the greatest narrative artists of the 20th century. His revolutionary 30-panel series *Struggle...From the History of the American People*, painted between 1954 and 1956, invited a new way of chronicling erased histories about America's founding. For the first time since 1958, the series is reunited, presenting a new opportunity to address these panels not simply as history painting, but as new portals of perception and time.

David Driskell: Icons of Nature and History

October 16, 2021–January 9, 2022

David Driskell: Icons of Nature and History offers the first comprehensive examination of the paintings, prints, and drawings of a celebrated American artist, art historian, and educator. Driskell's legacy in the history of American art is unparalleled: through his curatorial work, his writing, and his teaching, he pushed audiences to consider the American story to be inclusive of the art of Black people.

Alma W. Thomas: Everything is Beautiful

October 30, 2021–January 23, 2022

Alma W. Thomas: Everything is Beautiful provides a fresh perspective on the artist's dynamic long life (1891–1978) and multifaceted career that was defined by constant creativity. This major retrospective traces her journey from semi-rural Georgia to Washington, DC, to international acclaim and demonstrates how her artistic practices affected every facet of her life—from community service and teaching to gardening and dressmaking. Coinciding with the 55th anniversary of her first retrospective at Howard University, *Everything is Beautiful* features diverse artworks and archival materials that reveal Thomas's complex, deliberate artistic existence.

INTERSECTIONS PROJECTS

Marley Dawson: ghosts

May 20 – September 5, 2021

For his Intersections project, Dawson will produce a new body of work, including a site specific hanging installation in the Goh staircase and will riff on the wooden barrel chairs in the House parlor galleries. Using chemistry, mechanics and construction techniques, Marley Dawson creates sculptures and installations that highlight aspects of our world and selves that can be uncanny, surreal and

Page 2—Upcoming Exhibitions

extraordinary. He has long been fascinated with machinery, as seen in his previous exhibit at Hillyer Art Space, in which he rigged a vintage moped to revolve around a center post, tracing a circular smudge.

Sanford Biggers: Mosaic

October 16, 2021 – January 2, 2022

The Phillips Collection commissioned Sanford Biggers to produce a new body of work, including a site specific floor installation made with sand; a large quilt; and a marble sculpture. While the colors and patterns of the sand floor will reflect those in the quilts, its shape and size will fit the gallery's rectangular configuration. This will be completed on site with art student-assistants from the University of Maryland, our academic partner. Accompanied with a number of smaller quilts made by Biggers and interspersed on the walls with the Gee's Bend quilts, the installation will generate a vibrant, cross-road space where the past and the present meet.

###