



FLINT INSTITUTE OF ARTS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

African American Art Opens FIA's 2020 Exhibitions *Wonderfully Made* and *Community* Celebrate Black Expression

Flint, MI – Two new exhibitions at the Flint Institute of Arts celebrate African American culture, community, and visual and poetic expression.

Wonderfully Made: The Artis Collection of African American Art, which opens on Saturday, January 18, 2020, presents selections assembled by Flint residents Anthony J. and Davida J. Artis, who began collecting African American art in 2009. Focusing on themes of faith, family, and faces, the couple "want people to be moved and inspired" by their collection, which will have its first museum showing through this exhibition.

Opening on January 26, 2020, *Community* features work in a variety of mediums by African American artists in the FIA collection. The exhibition explores themes of community, such as history and place, identity and representation, and social justice and self-expression, in works by some of the most important artists from the 19th century to the present day, including Romare Bearden, Elizabeth Catlett, Jacob Lawrence, and Kara Walker.

Community serve as the focus of the 2020 Community Gala, a diversity initiative begun in 2008. This year's event, on Saturday, January 25, 2020 opens with a presentation by Detroit native Dr. Kelli Morgan, Associate Curator of American Art, Indianapolis Museum of Art at Newfields. Morgan's lecture, "A Manner of Space: Black Modality in African American Art," affirms Black humanity as a central tenet of African American art and recognizes the fusion of elements used by Black artists to assert the meaning of Black lives in a world hostile toward and indifferent to the lived realities of Black people. Highlighting works from the exhibition, Morgan discusses ways African Americans have strategically used place, space, and community to humanize their experiences. In addition to the lecture, the Community Gala features a preview of *Community*, a strolling dinner, and live entertainment.

Programming around both exhibitions includes a performance by author, dramatist, playwright, and educator Semaj Brown, who was recently appointed as Flint's first Poet Laureate and a collector's talk by Anthony Artis. On Sunday, January 26 at 1:30 PM, Brown performs poetry inspired by work featured in *Community*, most notably *Marie Laveau* by Renee Stout and *Epoch* by Whitfield Lovell. On Saturday, February 15 at 2 PM, Artis discusses the Anthony and Davida Artis Collection of African American Fine Art from which the exhibition, *Wonderfully Made*, was drawn. Both the poetry performance and the Collector's Talk are free and open to the public. Another unique feature of *Community* is the opportunity that visitors have to vote for one of three potential new works, on loan from the artists, not currently in the FIA collection. Those interested in voting may do so from January 26 through March 8, 2020. Using funds raised by the Community Gala, the work with the largest number of votes will be purchased by the museum. The voting process and subsequent purchase reinforce the notion that the FIA's collection belongs to the public.

For more information about *Wonderfully Made*, the Community Gala, *Community*, the Semaj Brown poetry performance, or the Anthony Artis collector's talk, to preview either exhibition before opening, or to interview anyone connected with these exhibitions or events, please contact Chene Koppitz, FIA Communications Coordinator, via email at ckoppitz@flintarts.org or by phone at 810.237.7387.

ABOUT THE FLINT INSTITUTE OF ARTS

The Flint Institute of Arts is Michigan's second largest art museum and one of the largest museum art schools in the nation. The FIA's mission is to advance the understanding and appreciation of art for all through collections, exhibitions, and educational programs.

The FIA is located at 1120 East Kearsley Street in the Flint Cultural Center. The museum is open Mon–Sat 10 AM-5 PM and Sun 1-5 PM. Gallery admission is free for all Genesee County residents, FIA members, and children under 12; Adults are \$10; Senior Citizens and Students with I.D. are \$8. Saturdays are free for all visitors thanks to Huntington Bank.

For more information, please visit www.flintarts.org