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VMFA Showcases African-American Artists for Black History Month

Longtime initiative to collect works by African-American artists enriches collections

In honor of Black History month, VMFA will showcase both visual and performing African American artists. Maggie Ingram and the Ingramettes will perform on Feb. 6 from 6 to 8 p.m. for the First Fridays program at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. Since the 1940's VMFA has sought works by African-American artists for the 19th, 20th, and 21st century collections. Some of these works are featured in the permanent galleries as well as in *Fusion: Art of the 21st Century*.

“The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts is dedicated to representing African-American artists throughout the entire year,” Director Alex Nyerges said. “We are honored to join in the nation’s celebration of African-American history and the cultural arts.”



Maggie Ingram

Known as the “Gospel Queen” of Richmond, Maggie Ingram and her family have performed at the Kennedy Center, the National Folk Festival, and the Richmond Folk Festival. The group has received numerous awards including the Virginia Heritage Award (2009) for a lifetime of excellence in the folk and traditional arts. The Ingramettes are partially comprised of three generations of the Ingram family. Maggie, 84, is joined on vocals by her daughter Almata, her granddaughter Cheryl Beaver, and their close family friend Valerie Stewart. This year marks the Ingramettes’ 59th and Maggie’s 65th year in gospel music.

Collections

VMFA has strived to increase the representation of African-American artists in its permanent collection, with more than 135 works, acquired during every decade since the 1940s. Featured artists currently on view include:

- Radcliffe Bailey: *Vessel*, 2012
- Edward Mitchell Bannister: *Moonlight Marine*, 1885
- Leslie Garland Bolling: *Cousin-on-Friday*, 1935
- Elizabeth Catlett: *Standing Mother and Child*, 1978
- Thomas Day: *Center Table* and *Dressing Bureau*, ca. 1850s
- Beauford Delaney: *Greene Street*, 1946, and *Marian Anderson*, 1965
- Aaron Douglas: *The Prodigal Son*, ca. 1927

More

- Robert Seldon Duncanson: *The Quarry*, ca. 1855-63
- Trenton Doyle Hancock: *The Former and the Ladder or Ascension and a Cinchin'*, 2012
- Barkley Hendricks: *Sisters (Susan and Toni)*, 1977
- Jacob Lawrence: *Catfish Row*, 1947
- Julie Mehretu: *Stadia III*, 2004
- Enrico Riley: *Giant Steps*, 2004
- Chuck Stewart: *James Brown*, 1966
- Henry Ossawa Tanner: *Christ and His Disciples on the Sea of Galilee*, ca. 1910
- Hank Willis Thomas: in collaboration with Sanford Biggers: *Zero Hour* from the *Wayfarer* series, 2012
- Mickalene Thomas: *Interior: Two Chairs and Fireplace*, 2011
- Jack Whitten: *Necklace for Mary*, 1980

In addition, the museum has one of the nation's leading collections of art from the African continent, from antiquity to the 21st century. Combined works in the Ancient (Egypt, Nubia, Coptic) and African department holdings of some 1,500 objects.

Programs

VMFA's popular *3 in 30* program is a short tour featuring three objects in 30 minutes. February's theme, *Traditions in Contemporary Art*, explores how contemporary artists have refashioned and implemented historical visual content from Africa in their own works to bring greater cultural significance to the meaning. These free tours will be offered on Feb. 3 at 11 a.m. and Feb. 5 at 6:30 p.m.

A weekly Thursday favorite since 2010, the free Jazz Café program is collaboration with the Richmond Jazz Society, showcasing regional African-American jazz artists.

February 5: *Lani Bass*

Vocalist Lani Bass sings Jazz, Blues and everything in-between with Lee Covington on piano; Randall Pharr on bass; Todd Woodson on drums.

February 12: *Butcher Brown*

Butcher Brown is a soul fusion quartet comprised of young musicians with old souls, rooted in the tradition of Jazz while striving for progressive sounds in new music with Keith Askey on guitar; Devonne Harris AKA "DJ Harrison" on keyboards; Andrew Randazzo on bass; Corey Fonville on drums.

February 19: *Billy Williams*

Drummer Billy Williams leads this quartet playing fresh takes on Jazz classics and World Music featuring Ayinde Williams on piano, Trey Sorrells on alto sax, and Jason Jenkins on bass.

February 26: *Hotel X*

For 23 years Hotel X has performed an eclectic blend of Jazz improvisation with funky African grooves heavily tinged with music from Brazil, Cuba, and the Caribbean featuring Tim Harding on alto sax, Chris Vasi & Charles Nill on guitars, Charles Hunter on keyboards, Carter Blough on bass;

Hunter Duke on drums, and James McDonald and Adrien Bayo on percussion.

A teacher workshop, *African-American Dreams: Poets, Painters, Singers*, will delve into word and image in this consideration of the African-American experience as represented by works in the American galleries. Paintings and sculptures take on deeper meaning when coupled with primary sources, poems, essays, speeches, and song lyrics. The workshop explores authors including Phyllis Wheatley, Frederick Douglass, W.E.B. Du Bois, as well as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and will be on Feb. 19 from 4:30 to 7 p.m.

About the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

VMFA's permanent collection encompasses more than 33,000 works of art spanning 5,000 years of world history. Its collections of African, Art Nouveau and Art Deco, English silver, Fabergé, and the art of South Asia are among the finest in the nation. With acclaimed holdings in American, British Sporting, Impressionist and Post-Impressionist, and Modern and Contemporary art – and additional strengths in Ancient, East Asian, and European – VMFA ranks as one of the top comprehensive art museums in the United States. Programs include educational activities and studio classes for all ages, plus lively after-hours events. VMFA's Statewide Partnership program includes traveling exhibitions, artist and teacher workshops, and lectures across the Commonwealth. VMFA, a certified Virginia Green attraction, is open 365 days a year and general admission is always free. For additional information, telephone 804-340-1400 or visit www.vmfa.museum.

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