

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts Celebrates Black History Month Through
Exciting Art and Programs**

Art, exhibitions and programs showcase Black artists and their contributions



Town of Hope, 1927, Archibald John Motley Jr. (American, 1891–1981), oil on canvas. Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, J. Harwood and Louise B. Cochrane Fund for American Art, 2017.206

Richmond, VA — This month the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (VMFA) celebrates [Black History Month](#) with an exciting array of exhibitions, art installations and special events honoring African American artists and community makers.

“The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts welcomes the community to participate in the incredible programs we have planned for Black History Month,” said Director and CEO Alex Nyerges. “While the museum offers exhibitions, educational programs and events spotlighting Black artists throughout the year, we highlight works in our collection and offer special programs every February to further recognize the significant contributions they have made artistically and to our collective history.”

Among the must-see works from early American to modern and contemporary Black artists that are on view in VMFA’s galleries are [Town of Hope](#) (1927) by Archibald John Motley Jr. (American, 1891–1981); [Cattfish Row](#) (1947) by

Jacob Lawrence (American, 1917–2000); [Screaming into the Ether](#) (2020) by Gary Simmons (American, born 1964); and [Untitled from the installation Crossroads](#) (1989) by Allison Saar (American, born 1956).

On view at VMFA through March 9, 2025, [Wonder Working Power](#) is a site-specific installation of ceramic sculptures by the Chicago-based multidisciplinary artist Theaster Gates (American, born 1973). Multiple works are arranged on and around a steel plinth. Their presence exudes power as they occupy the spaces upon and around the altar-like structure. Gates invites viewers to come forward to experience the power of his handiwork and embrace the traditions of the divine.

Special programs planned for Black History Month at VMFA include an open studio art workshop led by artist Hamilton Glass; an African American Read-In program in the galleries; a curator's talk with Dr. Ndubuisi Ezeoluomba, the museum's Curator of African Art, about the recent historic loan of an African sculpture to Lusanga, Democratic Republic of Congo; and the 7th annual RVA Community Makers 2025 recognition program.

VMFA is the only art museum in the U.S. open 365 days a year with free general admission. For more information about Black History Month-related exhibitions, events and programs at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, visit www.VMFA.museum.



RVA Community Makers is held each year at VMFA. Photo by Sandra Sellars, © 2024 Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

Upcoming Black History Month Programs at VMFA

[Virtual 3 in 30: The Sensory Experience of African Art](#) | Feb. 6 | Free; [registration via Zoom required](#)

Educator for the African art collection Karen Getty will share the experiential power and multisensory dimensions of three objects in VMFA's African art collection.

[First Friday Concert: Tiara & Andrew](#) | Feb. 7 | Free; no tickets required

February's First Friday event celebrates Black History month with alternative folk-pop performers Tiara & Andrew with special guest artist Charli Ra.

[Dominion Energy Jazz Café](#) | Every Wednesday Evening | Free; no tickets required

This popular live performance series by some of the area's best jazz musicians happens each week at VMFA. This month, catch performances by Bobby Blackhat, WSB3, and Jon Greenberg's Jazz Warriors.

[RVA Community Makers 2025](#) | Feb. 13–March 31 | Free; no ticket required

In this community-based art project, four outstanding African American leaders in the Richmond area — David Marion, Tiara Green, Taylor Scott and Corey Taylor — will be honored with ceramic vessels by artist Kourtenay Plummer. The works will be displayed in the Cochrane Atrium after being unveiled at a program hosted by WWBT's Ashley Hendricks on the evening of February 13. Ceramics created in a collaborative public workshop led by artist Hamilton Glass will also be on view.

[Making the Ground Talk: Documenting Black Cemeteries with Brian Palmer](#) | Feb. 16 | \$8 (VMFA members \$5)

Visual journalist and educator Brian Palmer and Dr. Sarah Kennel, the Aaron Siskind Curator of Photography and Director of the Raysor Center for Works on Paper at VMFA, will discuss how Palmer documents efforts to restore Black gravesites following years of neglect.

[Collection Connection: Black History Month](#) | Feb. 19 | Free; no ticket required

Join Dr. Leo Mazow, VMFA's Louise B. and J. Harwood Cochrane Curator of American Art, in honoring Black History Month by exploring VMFA's American art galleries. This program takes a closer look at a recently acquired sculpture by the Mississauga Ojibwe and African American artist Edmonia Lewis.

[African American Read-In](#) | Feb. 20 | Free; no ticket required

This powerful display of storytelling pairs evocative and powerful works by African American artists and authors. Visitors will see and hear notable figures from the greater Richmond community deliver readings in the galleries.

[VMFA's History-Making Art Loan to Lusanga, Democratic Republic of Congo](#) | Feb. 27 | \$8 (VMFA members \$5)

Last year, VMFA became the first major U.S. art museum to lend a work from its permanent collection to a sub-Saharan African institution. Curator of African Art Dr. Ndubuisi Ezeoluomba will explain how this historic collaborative engagement came about and recount the long and fascinating journey that he and the sculpture, *Chief's or Diviner's Figure Representing the Belgian Colonial Officer Maximilien Balot*, made.

About the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in Richmond, Virginia, is one of the largest comprehensive art museums in the United States. VMFA, which opened in 1936, is a state agency and privately endowed educational institution. Its purpose is to collect, preserve, exhibit and interpret art, and to encourage the study of the arts. Through the Office of Statewide Partnerships program, the museum offers curated exhibitions, arts-related audiovisual programs, symposia, lectures, conferences, and workshops by visual and performing artists. In addition to presenting a wide array of special exhibitions, the museum provides visitors with the opportunity to experience a global collection of art that spans more than 6,000 years. VMFA's permanent holdings encompass more than 50,000 artworks, including the largest public collection of Fabergé outside of Russia, the finest collection of Art Nouveau outside of Paris and one of the nation's finest collections of American art. VMFA is also home to important collections of Chinese art, English silver, French Impressionist, Post-Impressionist, British sporting and modern and contemporary art, as well as renowned South Asian, Himalayan and African art. In May 2010, VMFA opened the James W. and Frances G. McGlothlin Wing I after a transformative expansion, previously the largest in its history. A new expansion, the McGlothlin Wing II, is planned to open in 2028. Comprising more than 170,000 square feet, it will be the largest expansion in the museum's history and will make VMFA the fourth largest comprehensive art museum in the United States.

Recently named one of the 20 best art museums in the U.S. by *The Washington Post*, the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts is the only art museum in the United States open 365 days a year with free general admission. For additional information, telephone (804) 340-1400 or visit www.VMFA.museum.



Chief's or Diviner's Figure Representing the Belgian Colonial Officer Maximilien Balot, circa 1931, Unknown artist (Pende, Democratic Republic of the Congo), wood (possibly *Alstonia Boonei*) with metal repair staples. Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Aldine S. Hartman Endowment Fund, 2015.3. Photo by Travis Fullerton, © 2015 Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

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