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**VMFA Acquires Nari Ward's *Xquisite LiquorsonL* for Its Contemporary Art Collection**  
Work Will Also be Featured in *The Dirty South* Exhibition



Nari Ward, *Xquisite LiquorsonL*, 2009. Collection of Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

Richmond, Virginia — The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (VMFA) announced the recent acquisition of *Xquisite LiquorsonL*, a 2009 installation work by Jamaican-born artist Nari Ward.

Ward uses objects found discarded in his neighborhood in New York City — items like bottles, shopping carts, televisions, shoelaces, oil drums, clothing and strollers — to form his monumental sculptural and sound installations, which address issues related to consumerism, poverty, immigration and race. By transforming these everyday items into complex three-dimensional compositions, Ward effectively creates artworks laden with symbolism and profundity. His approach allows viewers to derive meaning independently and through free association. For *Xquisite LiquorsonL*, constructed from a found neon sign, artificial flowers, shoelaces and wood, Ward transposed the letters and left only the letters “S-O-U-L” illuminated.

“Nari Ward is a masterful historian and storyteller. Rather than the presentation of fixed narratives, Ward allows the material to speak as they are imbued with the residuals of place and personhood. As a practice, his use of assemblage as a contemporary artist allows the museum to build a bridge between those artists deemed as folk artists and those who are academically trained, yet who owe so much to the practice of the former,” said Valerie Cassel Oliver, VMFA’s Sydney and Frances Lewis Family Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art.

*Xquisite Liquor* will be one of approximately 80 compelling works by artists featured in VMFA's upcoming exhibition, *The Dirty South: Contemporary Art, Material Culture, and the Sonic Impulse*, which will be on view from May 22 to Sept. 6, 2021, before traveling to the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Bentonville, Arkansas. This exhibition, curated by Cassel Oliver, will highlight the confluence of southern Black aesthetics found in the sonic expression — gospel, blues, jazz and hip-hop music; material culture; and visual art, and their collective impact on contemporary culture. More information about *The Dirty South* can be found at [www.VMFA.museum](http://www.VMFA.museum).

“VMFA continues to collect, commission and highlight work by Black artists,” said Alex Nyerges, VMFA’s Director and CEO. In 1944, only nine years after opening its doors, VMFA acquired its first work by an African American artist. Last year alone, the museum invested 39 percent of its acquisition funds from private sources in African American art. “In recent years we have been making real strides toward our commitment to diversify our collection. These efforts are especially crucial at this time of necessary historic change.”

Born in St. Andrews, Jamaica, Ward obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree from Hunter College, City University of New York (CUNY) and a Master of Fine Arts degree from Brooklyn College, CUNY. He continues to live and work in New York City. Ward’s work is featured in public and private collections, including the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, N.Y.; Baltimore Museum of Art, Md.; Brooklyn Museum, N.Y.; Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Ark.; Museum of Contemporary Art, Calif.; Museum of Modern Art, N.Y.; Nasher Museum of Art, N.C.; Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington D.C.; Walker Art Center, Minn.; and Whitney Museum of American Art, N.Y.

### **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 nearly 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, and 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 its doors to the public after a transformative expansion, the largest in its history.

**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](http://www.VMFA.museum).**

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