



ALBANY MUSEUM OF ART

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RENAISSANCE ART EXHIBITION AT AMA ENTERS FINAL TWO WEEKS

Three Exhibitions at the Albany Museum of Art Are Open Through Dec 23

[For Release Dec 9, 2021 – Albany, GA] — Three art exhibitions, including *European Splendors: Old Master Paintings from the Kress Collection*, are in their final two weeks at the Albany Museum of Art.

In addition to the exhibition of Renaissance and Baroque paintings on loan from the Columbia Museum of Art in South Carolina, *Horse Power*, featuring work by Georgia artist Cedric Smith, and *Essay Topic: Write Down the Word WOMAN One Hundred Times!*, featuring works by Iranian native Sanaz Haghani will have their final exhibition day on Thursday, Dec 23.

“It has been an honor for the AMA to share these phenomenal art works with the Albany community,” Executive Director Andrew J. Wulf, Ph.D., said. “These three shows serve also as a symbol of the mission of the AMA, to share the arts of the South with the world, and the arts of the world with the South. We hope visitors will take one more opportunity to see these shows before they close.”

For those celebrating the Christmas season as a religious observance, some of the artworks in the exhibition may be of special interest. Religion was a major theme during the Renaissance period, and *European Splendors: Old Master Paintings from the Kress Collection* includes a number of paintings that depict images associated with Christmas. The exhibition includes five paintings of the Virgin and Child, two paintings of the Annunciation to Mary, one of Mary adoring the baby Jesus, and a depiction of the adoration of the Christ Child by the magi.

“These are beautiful works of art that illustrate parts of the familiar Christmas story,” AMA Director of Education and Public Programming Annie Vanoteghem said. “Some visitors may find them particularly inspiring during the Christmas season.”

The masterpieces in *European Splendors: Old Master Paintings from the Kress Collection* date from 1290 to the 1600s and are part of the Columbia Museum’s collection. The artworks were donated to Columbia by the Samuel H. Kress Foundation of New York. The exhibition at the AMA was made possible by the support of the Walter and Frances Bunzl Family Foundation.

A viewer can get more information about each painting by using a smart phone to read the QR code on a painting's object label, which will call up a PDF about the painting in the phone's internet browser.

"We have incorporated *European Splendors*, as well the exhibitions by Cedric Smith and Sanaz Haghani, in our education curriculum for our school and organization visits, as well as our Homeschool Day and Toddler Takeover programs," Vanoteghem said.

"In addition, a grant from the Georgia Council for the Arts enabled us to present a series of lectures about Renaissance art by art historians from Georgia and Alabama colleges," Vanoteghem said. "Those talks were entertaining as well as informative, and they are available online on the AMA website, our YouTube channel and our Facebook page.

"The lectures give you a better understanding of what was going on in society when this tremendous art was being created, which gives you a deeper appreciation of the artworks."

Also, visitors can go to AMA social media to see videos of artworks by Smith and Haghani that are now on exhibition at the AMA, and hear the artists talk about their respective exhibitions. Links to the videos may be found on the artists' respective exhibition pages at the AMA website, www.albanymuseum.com.

Smith's *Horse Power*, showing in the East Gallery, focuses on the overlooked roles that Black American men have played in the nation's equestrian industry. The idea for the exhibition came from a conversation Smith had with a young boy who visited his studio in Macon and remarked he did not know Black people rode horses.

"I've always had fondness for wanting to do things with horses," Smith said in an interview. "When I had that conversation with the little kid and he told me he never knew Black people rode horses, I thought this was the perfect opportunity."

Smith's painting *From Cotton to Roses*, which depicts an African-American jockey employing a cotton stem as a crop while riding in the first Kentucky Derby, is an example of the lost history that Smith researches and illustrates in his paintings.

"This painting is basically showing a slave as a jockey on a horse. Back then, of the original (Kentucky Derby) jockeys, 13 of 15 were Black men who were slaves," Smith explained. "I wanted to have some symbolic form in there by having a stem of cotton, which is behind him, to symbolize the possibility that the days of slavery could be behind him. At the end of the race, the winner in the winner's circle, they always put the wreath of roses around the horse. It's sort of a tribute to the jockeys that didn't really get as much press as a lot of the athletes today get."

In early horse racing, Smith noted, Black jockeys were common.

"They got phased out after the money pots got bigger and bigger for racers," he said. "It's rare that you see Black jockeys in the Kentucky Derby today."

The self-taught artist who was inspired to start his career as a professional artist by William Tolliver, himself a self-taught professional Black artist, says he hopes his work will inspire others.

That was the inspiration that showed me it was possible," he said. "That's the root of my painting. If you can see it, you can be it, in a sense. If people can see there are Black jockeys, maybe that's an inspiration to a kid who has a fondness for horses and never knew about that.

The Rodeo, another work in the exhibition, was the result of the artist learning that “a lot of Black men back then invented a lot of the things they use today in the rodeo, but I don’t know if they get much credit. This is something that can spark a conversation for a kid or anyone for that matter to dig deeper and learn more of the American history that’s not really placed in books.”

Haghani, who came to Georgia via Minnesota after she and her husband moved from Iran, has her screen-print artworks on exhibition at the AMA. Her work examines the roles of women in Iranian culture, and how the hijab, social class and other forces keep women’s freedom and behavior in check.

The exhibition is named for its title piece, *Essay Topic: Write Down the Word WOMAN One Hundred Times!* That artwork, which repeatedly loops from the ceiling rafters to the floor of the upstairs McCormack Gallery, is on a single 100-foot-long stretch of Kozo-shi paper. On a dark background, a woman’s image is repeated 100 times, along with the word “woman” in red in Persian script.

A graphic artist who has an MFA from the University of Georgia, Haghani said she and her brother were encouraged by their father from an early age to find the talents they had inside and to pursue them.

“When I was making the piece, I was thinking about the title as well,” Haghani said in an interview. “For this piece, I think the title talks about the whole piece. It’s about the essay and homework, and someone asks you to write down an essay. When you write an essay, you need to use your own imagination. You need to use your own words.”

“But it (the artwork) gives you the exact word, and you just need to repeat it. It is like there is no imagination, there is no creativity and it’s like education. That is how I grew up. That is how our society treats women. They give you some rules, and you have to follow them, even if you don’t believe in those rules.”

The rules of the society in which she grew up determined many of the facets of women’s lives.

“They decide about your life,” she said. “They decide when you have to get married, about your children, even about how you should go out, how you should be in society. They dictate your life, and you have to follow it. That is what I wanted to show. When I made that piece, I wrote down the word ‘woman’ one-hundred times.”

Still, Haghani said she wanted to show some creativity in the piece. “It’s going up and coming down,” she said. “And it is two-sided. I wanted to show you cannot control other people’s imagination. Even if society forced you to control your thoughts, you always find some way to be creative and to find your own way to live. That is what I wanted to show with this.”

Over the years, Haghani, who describes herself as “a dreamer,” heard stories from women who gravitated to her parent’s home. Both her mother and father were from big families, so there was a great deal of interaction. Many of those stories inspire her work.

“When I grew up, I was surrounded by many different people,” she said. “Some of them were part of our family, some of them were friends.” Her mother, who was a teacher, always had people over and they shared their stories, some of which Haghani heard. She began asking them questions about their work if they had a job, and their lives.

“Because I am a dreamer, I always place myself in their life stories,” she said. “I lived them (the experiences) when they talked about them and shared their stories. All those stories remained in my mind unconsciously. I didn’t notice that. Now, each time I want to make a new piece, I remember one

of those women. ... I think all Middle Eastern women have a unique story (about which) you can make a book."

Haghani takes photos of women she knows and meets, and with their permission incorporates the images into her art. The image used for *Essay Topic: Write Down the Word WOMAN One Hundred Times!* is that of a friend of hers.

The Albany Museum of Art is located at 311 Meadowlark Drive, just off Gillionville Road and adjacent to Albany State University's West Campus. The AMA is open to the public 10 am-5 pm Tuesdays through Saturdays, and admission is always free.

CURRENT AMA EXHIBITIONS

- *European Splendors: Old Master Paintings from the Kress Collection* is in the Haley Gallery Aug 26-Dec 23, 2021.
- *Horse Power: Works by Cedric Smith* is in the East Gallery July 10-Dec 23, 2021.
- *Essay Topic: Write Down the Word WOMAN One Hundred Times, New works by Sanaz Haghani* is in the McCormack Gallery July 10-Dec 23, 2021
- *Escape Plan*, installation by Elinor Saragoussi, is in the West Gallery.

ABOUT THE ALBANY MUSEUM OF ART

The Albany Museum of Art is located at 311 Meadowlark Drive in Albany, Ga., adjacent to Albany State University West Campus just off Gillionville Road. The museum is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums. The Albany Museum of Art is open to the public 10 am-5 pm Tuesdays through Saturdays. Admission is free.

For more information about the AMA please visit our website, www.albanymuseum.com or call 229.439.8400. Be sure to follow the @AlbanyArtMuseum on Twitter, AlbanyMuseum on Instagram and AlbanyMuseumOfArt on Facebook.

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