



ALBANY MUSEUM OF ART

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THE ALBANY MUSEUM OF ART *HOMECOMING* EXHIBITION OPENS MAY 12

Exhibition of AMA Permanent Collection Artworks Opens to Public on May 13

[For Release May 4, 2022 – Albany, GA] — After five years, all of the permanent collection of the Albany Museum of Art is back home. Its return is being celebrated with *Homecoming*, a special three-month exhibition in which every gallery of the AMA will feature works from the museum's treasures.

The exhibition opens with a special opening reception for AMA members at **5:30 pm on Thursday, May 12**. *Homecoming* opens to the public on **Friday, May 13**. The AMA is open 10 am-5 pm Tuesdays-Saturdays, and admission is free for everyone.

"This exhibition will highlight in dazzlingly original fashion the broadest array of our permanent collection," Albany Museum of Art Executive Director Andrew J. Wulf, Ph.D., said.

The AMA's permanent collection and touring exhibitions had to be rescued when a powerful storm packing rain and 90-mph straight-line winds devastated Albany and Southwest Georgia on Jan 2, 2017. The storm tore open the museum roof, and the next day AMA staff, Board members, volunteers, and conservators worked tirelessly to rescue the artworks, both those owned by the AMA and those that were on loan for the current exhibitions. Art objects that did not need restoration were taken to the High Museum of Art in Atlanta. Those art objects that needed restoration were taken to the Conservation Center in Chicago. As devastating as the damage to the building was, museum officials proudly note that no art object was destroyed.

The AMA closed for nearly nine months, reopening three downstairs galleries, the classroom, AMAzing Space, and the Willson Auditorium in late August 2017, when it resumed hosting traveling exhibitions, and offering art camps, programming, and event space at the museum.

"It's important to note that the AMA staff worked hard to maintain programming during that summer of 2017," Wulf said. "Our friends at Thronateeska Heritage Center and the Albany Area Arts Council allowed AMA staff to use their space to conduct art camps, enabling the museum to continue serving the public. It is a fine example of the resourcefulness this museum's staff shows even when facing unprecedented circumstances."

Unprecedented circumstances returned in March 2020 when the COVID pandemic forced a three-month closure less than six months after Wulf joined the AMA as executive director. During that temporary shutdown, officials renovated the upstairs vaults, offices, and AMAzing Space area. In late 2020, the AMA acquired about 250 works from Atlanta artist, writer, cartoonist, and musician Tom Ferguson, and *Escape Plan*, a fanciful installation by Athens artist and musician Elinor Saragoussi in the West Gallery that leads to AMAzing Space.

The undamaged artworks generously kept by the High Museum returned in October 2020. The remaining art objects in the permanent collection, which had been painstakingly repaired, restored, and inventoried by the Conservation Center, returned last month.

“The question we have all been asking is: when will the collection return, and, perhaps dramatically, when will our heart beat again?” Wulf said, noting how “strangely haunting” it had been to enter the AMA vaults when they were empty. “That time has arrived and we shall all have the opportunity to celebrate together the return of every single work in our collection—none were lost to the storm—when we take over the entire museum with our newest show, aptly titled, *Homecoming*.”

The task of deciding which pieces to display and where to place them has been taken up by AMA Director of Curatorial Affairs Katie Dillard, who returned to the AMA in August 2021. She was serving in a similar capacity at the museum when the storm hit in 2017 and was deeply involved in the rescue of the artworks.

“The entire process of reorienting myself with the collection has certainly caused some memories of January 2017 to resurface,” Dillard said. “It’s amazing what little hidden details my mind has retained from the past five years and how they’re suddenly coming back now that I can see and hold and even smell these objects again.

“It’s a wonderful, joyous feeling to see these objects in such good condition. I remember how thoroughly soaked some of these pieces were after the storm, but to see them now, appearing as though nothing happened at all is very reassuring. There are many pieces in the collection I remember personally handling, inventorying, or working with in some way, and the overwhelming feeling I’ve had lately is one of joy; like seeing an old friend again—you know, the one you haven’t seen in years.”

Dillard said she often is “filled with delight” at seeing some of the art objects again. “My joy is not just from seeing the works in person again, it’s all my memories associated with them; with whom I bonded over this piece or that, and whether or not that same person is still with us today,” she said.

She said the chance to showcase the permanent collection in a museum-wide exhibition is rare.

“The opportunity to have the museum’s permanent collection completely take over all the galleries is one that is few and far in between, and museum staff wanted to share with our stakeholders, members, and visitors near and far, the joy that we have and the pride that we take in our collection, which in many ways, is a reflection of our community and our history,” Dillard observed. “Guests will be able to view the entire journey this museum has taken throughout the years through the eyes of the collection, beginning in the late 1960s through to the 2020s.

“This exhibition is significant for our growth and our ability to move ever forward. Reflected through the pieces that will be on display, visitors will be able to see that path of institutional growth; the decisions both donors and staff alike have made throughout the years regarding what was collected and why.”

Some parts of the permanent collection have been on display. In addition to *Escape Plan*, which opened in Fall 2020, a nearly four-month retrospective of works by Ferguson opened in January 2021 in the Hodges Gallery, just weeks before Ferguson passed away at age 76. Since December 2021, Dillard has been slowly reintroducing a few pieces at a time. A small number of abstract paintings have been on display in the lobby, and several masquerade masks from Sub-Saharan African nations recently were on exhibition in the Hodges Gallery, giving visitors a bite-size sample of what is held in the full scope of the museum's collection.

"The museum's permanent collection will occupy as many square feet as possible within our five galleries, giving visitors a chance to explore the wide variety of artworks this institution has collected over the years, going back as far as 1967, when the Albany Museum of Art was known as the Southwest Georgia Art Association," Dillard said.

The first artwork accessioned by the AMA, an untitled mixed media on paper work by Alabama artist Howard Goodson that was purchased in 1967, will be in the exhibition. Also on display will be the museum's most recently acquired artwork, *From Cotton to Roses*, an oil painting by Macon artist Cedric Smith, who recently had an exhibition at the AMA.

In addition, works by artists such as Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein, Henry Potthast, Mose Tolliver, Reginald Marsh, Romare Bearden, O.L. Samuels, Joseph Henry Sharp, Robert Rauschenberg, and Francios Flameng will be on display, as well as art objects from Liberia, Nigeria, and Cameroon.

Wulf said he hopes residents in Albany and the region, as well as visitors to the area, will come out to the AMA at 311 Meadowlark Drive to view the museum-wide exhibition.

"On behalf of the AMA Board of Trustees and our dedicated and talented staff, I hope you will join us to explore the inspiring diversity of our permanent collection and discover the many ways art now and forever serves to break down and set aside the illusive barriers and differences we somehow believe can keep us apart," Wulf said.

AMA EXHIBITIONS

- *Homecoming*, which features works from the Albany Museum of Art Permanent Collection, is in all galleries May 12-Aug 13, 2022.

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.

CAPTION INFORMATION

Fête Nocturne, a painting by French artist Francois Flameng that was gifted to the Albany Museum of Art by Mr. and Mrs. Maurice D. Gortatowsky, is one of the artworks that will be part of the three-month

Homecoming exhibition that celebrates the return of the AMA permanent collection. (Photo: Albany Museum of Art)

The Bathing Hour, a 1915 painting by American artist Henry Potthast that was gifted to the Albany Museum of Art by Dr. and Mrs. Henry M. Goodyear at the request of their son, Henry M. Goodyear, Jr., is one of the artworks that will be part of the three-month Homecoming exhibition that celebrates the return of the AMA permanent collection. (Photo: Albany Museum of Art)

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