



HIGH MUSEUM OF ART ATLANTA

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**HIGH MUSEUM OF ART CELEBRATES 2019 ACHIEVEMENTS
AND PREVIEWS INNOVATIVE 2020 INITIATIVES**

Highlights of 2019 include the Museum’s first acquisitions of paintings by Henri Matisse, Amedeo Modigliani, Henri Fantin-Latour and Alfred Sisley; the organization of a major Romare Bearden exhibition; and cutting-edge initiatives that support inclusion and enhance the visitor experience

Museum to continue to celebrate diverse voices in 2020 while serving audiences and increasing access across the Southeast and beyond

ATLANTA, Jan. 22, 2020 – The High Museum of Art continued to expand its impact in 2019, proactively aligning its initiatives and programming with the needs and interests of the Atlanta community. Its dynamic exhibition program featured solo exhibitions of Romare Bearden, Virgil Abloh and Yayoi Kusama, as well as thematic exhibitions unveiling new narratives in select strengths of the High’s collection, including photography, folk and self-taught art, and Southern art. Commissions and acquisitions of major works continue to drive the momentum of the collection following the success of the 2018 reinstallation and included the first paintings to enter the Museum’s holdings by Henri Fantin-Latour, Henri Matisse, Amedeo Modigliani and Alfred Sisley. Additional innovative initiatives include the launch of Heartmatch, the Museum’s digital tool that creates a personalized interactive map of the Museum, and unparalleled access for all audiences to the High’s exhibitions and programs.

In 2020, the High will further its commitment to engaging new and existing audiences, setting precedents in museum education with an expanded department to spearhead creative aging and lifelong learning programs. The Museum is also dedicated to continuing to embrace changing populations and a shifting cultural landscape. The High will offer audiences an expansive range of exhibitions spanning collecting areas to showcase both global and Atlanta-inspired narratives, from the first U.S. presentation of Magnum Live Lab to “speechless: different by design,” an exhibition exploring new thinking around accessibility and design. The Museum will also realize plans to conserve major works within the permanent collection and will refine plans for future acquisition and exhibition priorities, continuing its stewardship of artworks for the community and its dedication to providing enriching experiences to current and future audiences.

“We concluded 2019 energized by our success and resolved to continue advancing the Museum’s key initiatives to foster growth, inclusivity, collaboration and connectivity,” said Rand Suffolk, the High’s Nancy and Holcombe T. Green, Jr., director. “We remain dedicated to developing exhibitions, programs and our collection to reflect and celebrate the incredible diversity of our city and region.”

2019 Demographics:

The High continued to see strong visitor diversity last year across race/ethnicity, age and socioeconomic background. Through self-selecting surveys, the Museum found that 44 percent of its visitors are non-white. (According to the [Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce’s 2018 statistics](#), approximately 47 percent of metro Atlanta’s population is non-white.) Nearly 50 percent of the Museum’s visitors have less than a bachelor’s degree, 46 percent have a household income of less than \$100,000, and nearly 80 percent are under the age of 55, with the highest percentage falling in the 18-24 age range.

2019 Exhibitions:

The High organized several notable exhibitions in 2019 celebrating diversity and featuring artists with regional significance and international renown. In September, the Museum opened [“Something Over Something Else’: Romare Bearden’s Profile Series”](#) (through Feb. 2, 2020), the first exhibition to bring more than 30 works from Bearden’s seminal series together since their debut nearly 40 years ago. After the High’s presentation, the exhibition will travel to the Cincinnati Art Museum. Currently on view is [“Our Strange New Land: Photographs by Alex Harris”](#) (through May 3, 2020), the latest iteration of the High’s acclaimed [“Picturing the South”](#) commission series, which invites photographers to create new work exploring current perspectives of Southern subjects and themes while building the Museum’s collection of contemporary photography.

Last year, the Museum’s folk and self-taught art and photography departments collaborated to present [“Way Out There: The Art of Southern Backroads,”](#) which celebrated the oft-neglected legacy of unconventional Southern creatives.

The Museum also showcased and supported the talents of local artists with [“Of Origins and Belonging, Drawn from Atlanta”](#) (June-September 2019), the most recent in its series of exhibitions featuring Atlanta-based artists, and [“Supple Means of Connection”](#) (July-September 2019), a commissioned suite of site-specific live art installations by glo founder Lauri Stallings, the Museum’s first choreographer as artist in residence.

The Museum continued to serve family audiences with its popular children’s book art exhibitions, presenting [“The Pursuit of Everything: Maira Kalman’s Books for Children”](#) (June-September 2019), the first in the series to focus on the work of a female artist.

In addition to exhibitions organized by the High, the Museum hosted major traveling exhibitions in 2019, including [“Yayoi Kusama: Infinity Mirrors”](#) (November 2018-February 2019), [“Sally](#)

[Mann: A Thousand Crossings](#)” (October-December 2019) and [“Virgil Abloh: ‘Figures of Speech’”](#) (through March 8, 2020).

This robust exhibition program welcomed new visitors to the Museum and resulted in a 8.5 percent increase in member households, providing a strong foundation for continued success in 2020.

2020 Exhibitions:

The High’s 2020 exhibition schedule exemplifies the Museum’s dedication to diversity and inclusivity while also highlighting the strengths of the collection, including photography and contemporary design.

In March, the High will be the first U.S. venue to present [Live Lab](#) (March 16-April 19, 2020), a photography residency and related exhibition organized in collaboration with the international photographic cooperative Magnum Photos. The project will feature American photographer Carolyn Drake and South African photographers Lindokuhle Sobekwa and Mikhael Subotzky, whose photographs will explore themes relevant to Atlanta. The collaboration is a testament to the strength of the Museum’s photography department and the High’s commitment to supporting the creation of new work and offering innovative ways for its audience to connect with their museum and with the greater community.

This spring, the High will open [“speechless: different by design”](#) (April 25-Sept. 6, 2020), a groundbreaking exhibition co-organized with the Dallas Museum of Art. Through immersive installations by six leading international designers, the exhibition explores the spectrum of sensory experience, aligning with the Museum’s ongoing and evolving commitment to access and to providing new experiences with art.

Other exhibitions slated for the coming months include [“Paa Joe: Gates of No Return”](#) (Feb. 29-May 31, 2020), featuring the work of the celebrated Ghanaian artist; the next iteration of the High’s popular series dedicated to children’s book authors and artists, [“Picture the Dream: The Story of the Civil Rights Movement Through Children’s Books”](#) (June 20-Sept. 20, 2020); [“Dawoud Bey: An American Project”](#) (June 27-Oct. 18, 2020), the photographer’s first full career retrospective in 25 years; and [“Monir Farmanfarman: A Mirror Garden”](#) (opening in August 2020), the first exhibition for the renowned Persian artist since her death in 2019.

Collection Milestones:

2019 marked the anniversary of the major reinstallation of the High’s collection, which initially focused on showcasing recently acquired artworks, including key holdings of artists of color and women artists. Over the past year, the High embarked on phase two of the project, which included additional interpretive elements and ongoing collection rotations. In 2020, the Museum will present an installation of artworks by contemporary female artists to commemorate the 100th anniversary of women’s suffrage.

The Museum received significant gifts to strengthen its collection in 2019. In August, Atlanta-based philanthropists **Doris and Shouky Shaheen donated their entire impressionist, post-impressionist and modernist painting collection, totaling 24 artworks, to the Museum.** The Shaheen gift is one of the most significant groups of European paintings ever to enter the Museum's collection, rivaled only by the Samuel H. Kress Foundation donation in 1958, which established the core of the High's European art holdings. This marks the High's first acquisition of paintings by renowned artists such as Henri Fantin-Latour, Henri Matisse, Amedeo Modigliani and Alfred Sisley and includes works by Claude Monet, Camille Pissarro, Pierre-Auguste Renoir and many other masters. The paintings are now on view in the Doris and Shouky Shaheen gallery in the Museum's Stent Family Wing.

Atlanta philanthropist Frances B. Bunzl made a \$2.5 million bequest to the High in 2019, part of which will be used to establish an acquisition fund for European art. The Museum's European art curator position and administrative building are named for Bunzl, a longtime supporter of the Museum.

Last year, the High was the recipient of a **Bank of America Art Conservation Project grant to conserve artwork by renowned American contemporary artist Thornton Dial (1928-2016).** The High holds the largest public collection of Dial's work, including paintings and assemblages spanning his entire 30-year career, representing a cornerstone of the Museum's folk and self-taught art department. With the grant funds, the Museum will conduct a full assessment of 10 Dial works in the collection to capture each work's intricacy and to create a baseline understanding of Dial's fabrication practices and how his materials have deteriorated over time. The groundbreaking conservation project, under the direction of Katherine Jentleson, the High's Merrie and Dan Boone curator of folk and self-taught art, began in November 2019 and will be completed by November 2020.

Education and Access Initiatives:

The High examined and renewed its gallery interpretation in 2019 to engage dynamically with visitors through new channels and experiences, including its new app, [Heartmatch](#). The Museum continues to serve wide-ranging audiences, from young visitors to older adults, through its redesigned and expanded Greene Family Learning Gallery and public programs, including new offerings to support lifelong learning.

Heartmatch:

Referred to as "Tinder, but for art," [Heartmatch](#) is an online app the Museum developed to help visitors fall in love with artworks in the collection. When users open the app, they can swipe right if they like the image of an artwork or swipe left if they don't. Swiping right on a work adds it to a customized map so the visitor can find the artwork in the Museum and experience it in person.

The app has three main goals: to demonstrate the collection's diversity, direct visitors to works of art in the galleries, and gather data on visitor tastes, which is used to develop educational programming.

Demonstrating the app's ability to engage and empower visitors, audience surveys found that 87 percent of users feel more comfortable walking around the Museum after using the app. Respondents also report that the app sparks conversations, particularly between caregivers and children, and helps them discover artworks and new areas of the Museum. The number of users continues to grow as the High refreshes the featured artworks to introduce new discoveries to returning visitors.

Greene Family Learning Gallery:

To mark the 50th anniversary of its commitment to family spaces, the High debuted a total redesign of its Greene Family Learning Gallery with new interactive environments in 2018. Located adjacent to the Robinson Atrium in the Stent Family Wing, the Greene Family Learning Gallery expanded to include a 2,000-square-foot space across the hall from its previous footprint. The design, informed by years of visitor observation, community expert input and research, offers a welcoming, safe and fun environment that is child-centered and directed with age-appropriate activities for kids ranging from babies to 8-year-olds. The open-ended, intuitive, multisensory elements, designed to be inclusive for all, combine cutting-edge technology with hands-on activities. In 2019, these spaces remained extremely popular with families, with lines to enter the gallery during the Museum's busy Second Sunday events.

Creative Aging and Lifelong Learning:

In addition to serving families, the High is **expanding its commitment to lifelong learners, including older adult audiences**, from empty nesters to retirees, who represent a growing population in Atlanta. [A study by the Atlanta Regional Commission](#) estimates that by 2030, approximately one in four people in the city will be over the age of 60. To better serve this audience, the Museum is restructuring its education department and has filled a dedicated full-time position to spearhead the High's Creative Aging initiative. The Head of Creative Aging and Lifelong Learning is working with senior leadership to develop signature programs for visitors aged 55+, including art appreciation courses and art-making workshops, informed by research in the field. In November 2020, the High will host the National Convening on Museums and Creative Aging with the American Alliance of Museums, bringing together experts from across the country to explore how the field can better engage older adults and activate aging communities.

Teens Programs:

2019 marked the ninth anniversary of the High's [Teen Team](#), a group of dynamic high school students from around Atlanta who bring varied perspectives and life experiences to the High. Teen Team is a paid, one-year program that includes participating in an eight-week summer intensive, which is designed to cultivate a pipeline of talented, diverse students interested in

pursuing museum careers. Among the goals of the Teen Team is to ensure the Museum's exhibitions and programs are inclusive and relevant for the diverse communities it serves. Teen Team members plan the monthly Friday Night Kickback events for teens and the annual Teen Night event, give monthly tours in the galleries and conduct Art Talks Back, a partnership developed with Emory University's Ethics and Arts Program. Since its inception, Teen Team has fostered 140 teen employees and served 38,079 teens through special events and initiatives organized and inspired by the Teen Team members. On March 14, 2020, the High and the Teen Team will host **Teen Convene**, an event designed for museums and organizations that will focus on developing teen curriculum. Attendees will include teens and professionals from statewide and regional museums that have a teen program or have aspirations to create a teen program and local organizations with missions and programs that serve teens.

Mellon Fellowship Programs:

In 2019, the High, Emory University's art history department and the Michael C. Carlos Museum received a \$1 million grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to continue the [Mellon Object-Centered Curatorial Research Fellowship Program](#) for the next five years. Launched in 2012, the program offers Emory University art history doctoral candidates the opportunity to pursue object-based curatorial study under the direction of a collaborative team of curators, scholars and conservators from the partnering institutions. The fellowship culminates with a scholarly paper on a primary object, which is published as part of a digital publication series at the High to enable broader access to the students' research. Since 2012, 15 fellows have completed the program.

This past fall, the High welcomed the sixth class of fellows designated for [The Andrew W. Mellon Undergraduate Curatorial Fellowship Program](#), a collaboration with the Art Institute of Chicago; the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA); the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (MFAH); the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art; and the Philadelphia Museum of Art. The two-year, hands-on fellowship provides specialized training to students across the United States from historically underrepresented groups in the curatorial field and supports the goal of promoting inclusive, pluralistic museums.

About the High Museum of Art

Located in the heart of Atlanta, the High Museum of Art connects with audiences from across the Southeast and around the world through its distinguished collection, dynamic schedule of special exhibitions and engaging community-focused programs. Housed within facilities designed by Pritzker Prize-winning architects Richard Meier and Renzo Piano, the High features a collection of more than 17,000 works of art, including an extensive anthology of 19th- and 20th-century American fine and decorative arts; major holdings of photography and folk and self-taught work, especially that of artists from the American South; burgeoning collections of modern and contemporary art, including paintings, sculpture, new media and design; a growing collection of African art, with work dating from prehistory through the present; and significant holdings of European paintings and works on paper. The High is dedicated to reflecting the diversity of its communities and to offering a variety of exhibitions and educational programs

that engage visitors with the world of art, the lives of artists and the creative process. For more information about the High, visit www.high.org.

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