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OAKLAND MUSEUM OF CALIFORNIA ANNOUNCES NEW MAJOR EXHIBITION EXPLORING AFROFUTURISM THROUGH ART, CULTURE, HISTORY, AND COMMUNITY

Mothership: Voyage Into Afrofuturism Imagines the World Through a Black Cultural Lens Through Contemporary Artwork, Music, Literature, Film, Photography, Historical Objects, and More

After Over a Year of Remaining Closed to the Public Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, Mothership Will Debut in OMCA's Great Hall Beginning August 7, 2021

(OAKLAND, CA) July 7, 2021—On August 7 2021, **Oakland Museum of California (OMCA)** will present ***Mothership: Voyage Into Afrofuturism***, a timely and relevant exhibition as the Museum welcomes its community back after over a year of sheltering in place, and in the wake of historic civil unrest due to ongoing police violence towards Black people.

***Mothership* explores Afrofuturism as a strategy that imagines the world through a Black cultural lens and strives for a more just present and future.** Thought-provoking and moving, OMCA's multidisciplinary exhibition will bring together art, music, literature, film, and more that **express a present and future where Black voices are centered.**

Press images available [here](#).

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, *Mothership* had originally scheduled to open in October of 2020. After many months of coordinated efforts to reschedule, this much-anticipated exhibition continues OMCA's commitment to elevating stories and ideas that inspire a more expansive future by exploring the ways Afrofuturism **re-envision the past and imagines new possibilities.** *Mothership* will showcase central figures of this cultural phenomena—**author Octavia E. Butler, avant-garde jazz musician Sun Ra, and filmmaker Kahlil Joseph**—as

well as **contemporary artworks, original artist commissions, a Dora Milaje costume from the film *Black Panther*, photography, music, and historical objects.**

Mothership is an **original exhibition** curated by **OMCA Curator Rhonda Pagnozzi** and **Consulting Curator Essence Harden**, in partnership with over 50 artists, historians, musicians, and collaborators whose work examines Afrofuturism and Black culture.

“*Mothership: Voyage Into Afrofuturism* has been under development at OMCA since 2019 and was originally supposed to open in 2020, so I’m thrilled for visitors to finally experience this exhibition through the art, film, music, and stories of more than 50 talented Black creatives,” said OMCA Curator Rhonda Pagnozzi. “Afrofuturism aligns with OMCA’s mission to inspire all Californians to create a more vibrant future for themselves and their communities.”

“In particular, *Mothership* is rooted in Black feminist thought, acknowledging a range of visual, academic, and everyday scholarship of Black pleasure, critique, and liberation,” said Consulting Curator, Essence Harden. “As a strategy, Afrofuturism fosters an infinite course of actions. *Mothership* offers not the whole but certainly an evocative and sincere gesture within the multidimensional world that Afrofuturism dares to create.”

The exhibition is organized into four main sections beginning with a first section, titled *Dawn*, inspired by **Octavia E. Butler’s seminal writings**. This section will introduce visitors to some of the main concepts of Afrofuturism and its connections to Black feminism and queer culture. Visitors will enter through an immersive, planetarium-like mural by **Bay Area artist Sydney Cain** evoking African ancestral themes of wisdom and healing, paired with an original soundscape composed by **Nicole Mitchell**, both inspired by Butler’s *Parable of the Sower* series. Other elements will include **photographs, journals, books, and a film interview with Butler.**

A second section, *Rebirth*, will highlight stories and artworks that confront anti-Black racism and present Black-centered visions of beauty and wisdom. This section will include the scientific and medical legacy of **Henrietta Lacks**, Bay Area journalist and author **D. Scot Miller’s** evocative poem the ***Afrosurreal Manifesto*** which examines the lived Black experience, and artworks and multimedia installations by nationally-recognized visual artists **Wangechi Mutu, David Huffman, Chelle Barbour, Wayne Hodge, and Mohau Modisakeng** that explore ancestral roots and legacies of trauma.

The exhibition’s third section, *Sonic Freedom*, will feature a **replica of the Mothership itself—musical ensemble Parliament Funkadelic’s Afrofuturistic vessel**—where visitors can enjoy an immersive music experience featuring a **curated playlist by DJ Spooky**. Other elements will include **photographs and videos of the Oakland-filmed movie *Space is the Place* starring Sun Ra**, a pioneer in Afrofuturist thought and music, as well as a Dora Milaje

warrior **costume from the popular 2018 film *Black Panther***, amplifying the exhibition's focus on Black feminist thought.

A final section of the exhibition, *Earthseed*, will consider present and past historical moments that rejoice in simple pleasures of the mundane, foster Black spaces of well-being, and celebrate Black lives, such as the **Black Panther Party's Survival Programs**, the **Black Lives Matter** movement, and present-day **Black-owned businesses and artist spaces in Oakland**. This area will also include a multimedia component highlighting the impact of Black media including **Kahlil Joseph's fugitive newscast *BLKNWS***[®] and **Black Twitter** with galvanizing hashtags like #BlackLivesMatter, #BlackGirlMagic, #Moms4Housing, and #BlackJoyIsRevolutionary, offering a view of news media shaped by Black culture.

As part of the Museum's commitment to visitor and staff safety, the exhibition is **designed to accommodate physical distancing and contactless activities** for the safe enjoyment of all visitors. Multimedia presentations, such as music installations, will be **available as Spotify playlists** should visitors prefer to listen on their own headphone devices. For more information on steps the Museum is taking to ensure visitor and staff safety, please visit museumca.org/reopening.

Mothership: Voyage Into Afrofuturism will be on view in OMCA's Great Hall beginning from August 7, 2021 through February 27, 2022. There is a \$5 charge for OMCA special exhibitions in addition to regular Museum admission.

Timed ticketing will be in place with 30 minutes time slots starting at 11 am and ending 1 hour before closing.

Mothership: Voyage Into Afrofuturism is supported in part by the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, the Oakland Museum Women's Board, Blue Shield of California, Dolby Laboratories, and the Black Employee Network at Dolby Laboratories, Obsidian.

UPCOMING

Edith Heath: A Life in Clay

Great Hall

November 13, 2021 - June 26, 2022

Trailblazer. Rebel. Revolutionary. Discover the story of Edith Heath, founder and designer of Heath Ceramics. Heath transformed the ceramics industry, creating dinnerware from California clay for "Sunday best" and everyday use. Driven by the power of good design, and a commitment to her craft, Heath's vision continues to live on through her stoneware and tile over 70 years later. Durable, not delicate, simple, yet stylish, Heath Ceramics is an icon of American design.

ON VIEW

You Are Here: California Stories on the Map

Gallery of California Natural Sciences

Ongoing through February 28, 2022

We all use maps in our everyday lives—to navigate public transportation, find places to eat, and visualize big data like weather patterns or political opinions. But have you ever considered the deeper stories maps tell us? In *You Are Here: California Stories on the Map*, you'll discover there's more to maps than meets the eye. Showcasing a diverse range of maps from Oakland, the Bay Area, and California—from environmental surroundings and health conditions to community perspectives and creative artworks—experience how maps can be a powerful tool to share unique points of view and imagine a better future. Explore new perspectives of familiar places through maps made by the community, and mark your own stories on the community map inside the exhibition.

Dorothea Lange: Photography as Activism

Gallery of California Art

Ongoing

Experience the iconic life and work of Dorothea Lange, world-renowned documentary photographer, with an expanded installation of her works in the Gallery of California Art. Through the lens of her camera, Lange documented American life with riveting photographs that captured some of the most powerful moments of the 20th century. Drawn from Lange's personal archive, which was gifted to OMCA over 50 years ago, and in response to the popular 2017 exhibition *Dorothea Lange: Politics of Seeing*, a number of newly added photographs will illustrate the power of photography as social activism. See how Lange's work continues to resonate with millions and inspire new generations of artists and activists.

Black Power

Gallery of California History

Ongoing

Uncover the history of the Black Power movements in California with a compelling addition to the Gallery of California History. In response to the widely-popular 2016 exhibition *All Power to the People: Black Panthers at 50*, this new installation will illustrate the creative ways black anti-racist activists in California supported their communities and challenged the U.S. government. Focusing on the example of the Black Panther Party, *Black Power* will bring to light the tensions between a culturally and socially progressive California and examples of economic racism and oppression in the state. This moment in California history will be represented through historic photographs, provocative objects, iconic posters, paintings and interactive prompts that encourage visitors to take action out in the world. Learn more about the Bay Area role in this national story, and the impacts this history continues to have today.

Question Bridge: Black Males

Gallery of California Art

Ongoing

Hailed as one of the Bay Area's Top Exhibitions by the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Question Bridge: Black Males* returns to the Oakland Museum of California's Gallery of California Art. Immerse yourself in intimate videos—woven together and arranged to simulate face-to-face conversations between participants—among a diverse group of over 160 Black men across the United States. Hear these men answer each other's questions with exceptional honesty and vulnerability, and share stories, beliefs, and values in a personal portrayal of their lives. Encompassing themes of family, love, interracial relationships, community, education, and wisdom, *Question Bridge: Black Males* presents nuanced portraits of past, present, and future of Black men in American society. Listen, watch, learn, and start your own conversations with this profoundly moving installation.

Question Bridge is an innovative and widely exhibited video installation from artists Chris Johnson and Hank Willis Thomas in collaboration with Bayeté Ross Smith and Kamal Sinclair. Joining the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture and the Brooklyn Museum, OMCA is proud to acquire this groundbreaking and poignant work for its collection.

ABOUT THE OAKLAND MUSEUM OF CALIFORNIA

The Oakland Museum of California (OMCA) tells the many stories that comprise California, creating the space and context for greater connection, trust, and understanding between people. Through its inclusive exhibitions, public programs, educational initiatives, and cultural events, OMCA brings Californians together and inspires greater understanding about what our state's art, history, and natural surroundings teach us about ourselves and each other. With more than 1.9 million objects, OMCA brings together its multi-disciplinary collections of art, history, and natural science with the first-person accounts and often untold narratives of California, all within its 110,000 square feet of gallery space and seven-acre campus. The Museum is a leading cultural institution of the Bay Area and a resource for the research and understanding of California's dynamic cultural and environmental heritage for visitors from the region, the state, and around the world.

VISITOR INFORMATION

The Oakland Museum of California (OMCA) is at 1000 Oak Street, at 10th Street, in Oakland. Museum admission is \$16 general; \$11 seniors and students with valid ID, \$7 youth ages 9 to 17, and free for Members and children 8 and under. There is a \$5 charge in addition to general admission pricing for special exhibitions. OMCA offers onsite underground parking and is conveniently located one block from the Lake Merritt BART station, on the corner of 10th Street

and Oak Street. The accessibility ramp is located at the 1000 Oak Street main entrance to the Museum. museumca.org

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