



MONTCLAIR ART MUSEUM

NEWS RELEASE

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**MONTCLAIR ART MUSEUM'S ADVANCE SCHEDULE OF EXHIBITIONS
THROUGH SUMMER 2018**

**Dynamic Line-up Features
First Museum Retrospective of Philemona Williamson,
First Major Retrospective of Kay WalkingStick,
and Solo Exhibition of Charles E. Burchfield**

MONTCLAIR, NJ, July 10, 2017—The 2017–2018 season at the Montclair Art Museum (MAM) features three solo exhibitions of diverse artistic style.

Philemona Williamson: Metaphorical Narratives is the first museum retrospective of nationally renowned, Montclair-based artist Philemona Williamson (b. 1951). Williamson's mysterious paintings primarily feature adolescents of indeterminate age, gender, and ethnicity, caught in awkward, enigmatic moments, which seduce the viewer into a labyrinth of open-ended questions. Also on view this fall will be the lyrical landscape watercolors and drawings of Charles E. Burchfield (1893–1967), one of the great visionary painters of the 20th century. *Charles E. Burchfield: Weather Event* features expressive depictions of the weather south of Lake Erie, where the artist lived for most of his life. Individual weather events such as sunbursts and storms are examined through both an artistic and a scientific lens.

In spring 2018, MAM is proud to present *Kay WalkingStick: An American Artist*. This exhibition is the first major retrospective of the artistic career of Kay WalkingStick (b. 1935), a citizen of the Cherokee Nation and one of the world's most celebrated artists of Native American ancestry. Montclair Art Museum is the final stop on the American Federation of the Arts' national tour.

Following are descriptions, current as of this date, of the exhibitions.

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Philemona Williamson: Metaphorical Narratives

September 16, 2017–January 7, 2018

“I paint figures depicting individuals of varying ethnicities inhabiting timeless, invented, dream-like environments. I probe the psychological landscape of adolescence, blurring the lines between race, gender, and class.” –Philemona Williamson

About the Exhibition

The Montclair Art Museum will present the first museum retrospective of contemporary artist Philemona Williamson beginning September 16, 2017. Primarily spotlighting her metaphorically rich, narrative paintings, the exhibition is accompanied by two site-specific installations illuminating the artist’s creative process. It will be on view through January 7, 2018.

In Roberts Gallery, a selection of 20 paintings spans Williamson’s career from 1988 to the present. Williamson’s dynamic paintings primarily feature adolescents intermingled and engaged in evocative poses and actions fraught with mystery and universal significance. Of indeterminate age and ethnicities, the figures often seem caught in awkward, enigmatic moments, which seduce the viewer into a labyrinth of open-ended questions. Poetically titled, these works invite the viewers to use their imaginations to interpret their complex, open-ended narratives. The artist’s use of vibrant colors and firmly modeled, yet elemental, generalized forms within timeless, invented spaces is the foundation for her skillful negotiation between abstraction and representation, dream and reality, metaphor and narrative.

In complement to these paintings, two site-specific installations reveal Williamson’s creative process. Full of pentimenti (traces of previous compositions), her large figurative paintings are based on a process of trial and error. She is inspired by her memories and a range of objects in her studio, including a lifelong fascination with dolls. In Laurie Art Stairway, *In the Studio*, a composite photograph on poplin captures Williamson’s “Inspiration Wall” in her studio. In the Constable Rotunda gallery, four large abstracted dolls adopt and transform traditional double-ended folk art dolls. Referred to as Topsy-Turvy dolls, these feature both black and white faces, flipping vertically to reveal one or the other identity.

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“Williamson’s work is spellbinding and beautifully crafted,” said Lora Urbanelli, MAM director. “Viewing her paintings, I find myself entangled in a web of emotions, memories, and thoughts about the nature of a lifetime of social relationships.”

“I have been intrigued with Williamson’s work ever since featuring one of her paintings in the 2003 exhibition at the Montclair Art Museum, *Growing Up: Childhood in American and Native American Art*,” Gail Stavitsky, MAM chief curator adds. “I am so pleased to have the opportunity to delve further into the complexities of her visually and intellectually compelling work.”

The exhibition is co-curated by Lora Urbanelli, MAM director, and Gail Stavitsky, MAM chief curator. A 32-page catalogue will accompany the show, with an essay by Gail Stavitsky.

About the Artist

Philemona Williamson lives in Upper Montclair and maintains her studio in East Orange, NJ. She holds a BA from Bennington College and an MA from New York University. Nationally renowned, she has received a Joan Mitchell Foundation Award, a Pollock-Krasner Award, and a National Endowment for the Arts fellowship in painting, among others. Williamson is represented by June Kelly Gallery in New York. Her work is in numerous private and public collections, including the Mint Museum of Art, Sheldon Museum of Art, and the Hampton University Art Museum. She has also taught at Parsons School of Design, Cooper Union, and other venues.

Related Programs

A Conversation with Philemona Williamson

Thursday, November 9, 2017

7 p.m.

Master Class: Philemona Williamson

Saturday, November 18, 2017

10:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

A full listing of related programs will be available at montclairartmuseum.org.

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Charles E. Burchfield: Weather Event

September 16, 2017–January 7, 2018

“To me, the artist, interested chiefly in weather—all weather is beautiful, and full of powerful motion.” –Charles E. Burchfield, 1943

About the Exhibition

Opening September 16, 2017 at the Montclair Art Museum, *Charles E. Burchfield: Weather Event* is an exhibition of more than 40 of the renowned artist’s lyrical landscape watercolors and drawings that trigger the memories and moods inspired by weather and climate changes. His works invite the viewer to personally experience the environments in Ohio and New York to the south of Lake Erie through the artist’s eyes. The exhibition will be on view through January 7, 2018.

Individual weather events are examined through both an artistic and a scientific lens. Weather refers to the state of the atmosphere for a given time and place, while climate is the sum of weather events that describes a place or region. Burchfield’s works capture both, with “all day sketches” conveying snapshots of past weather on specific days as well as later watercolors painted over a number of years conveying the character of a place.

The exhibition is organized around themes that inspired Burchfield: the sky, changing seasons, haloed moons, sunbursts and cloudbursts, heat waves, and wild weather. The works convey the artist’s emotional responses to the weather and his desire to portray the invisible aspects of nature, such as sounds and heat waves, by means of visible signs and symbols.

“Burchfield saw nature as a source of spirituality and was especially awed by the changing of the seasons,” said Gail Stavitsky, MAM chief curator. “His works are a reminder that we constantly experience a glorious transformation of the seasons, and a celebration of the skies.”

This exhibition was organized by The Burchfield Penney Art Center at Buffalo State College, Buffalo, NY. It was curated by Tullis Johnson, curator and manager of archives at The Burchfield Penney Art Center, and Dr. Stephen Vermette, climatologist and professor in the Department of Geography and Planning at Buffalo State College. It is arranged at the Montclair Art Museum by Gail Stavitsky, MAM chief curator.

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About the Artist

Charles E. Burchfield (1893–1967) was one of the great visionary modern painters of the 20th century. Burchfield started his artistic career at the Cleveland School of the Arts in 1915. His artistic influences include the stylized, simplified forms and vibrant colors in Japanese prints by Hokusai and Hiroshige, Chinese scroll paintings, and Cleveland modernists Henry Keller and William Sommer. Moving to Buffalo in 1921, Burchfield's foray into realism at this time was inspired by what he saw as the uniquely American aspects and romantic picturesque qualities of Buffalo and its environs. In the 1940s, Burchfield returned to more abstract forms of his earlier landscapes, following this artistic vision until the end of his life.

Related Programs

31st Annual Julia Norton Babson Lecture

Charles E. Burchfield: Wind, Sunshine, and Sky

Tullis Johnson, Stephen Vermette, and Martha J. Fleischman

Thursday, October 19, 2017

7 p.m.

Share your stormy skies, cool breezes, and sunbursts! Visitors are invited to post photos of their own weather events with **#MAMweather**. Selected photos will be displayed in the gallery and on MAM's social media @MAMmontclair.

The exhibition is accompanied by interpretative materials, including an audio tour with simulated weather broadcasts for days that Burchfield's paintings were made between 1915–1917, a family guide, and Family Learning Lab. A full listing of related programs will be available at montclairartmuseum.org.

Kay WalkingStick: An American Artist

February 3–June 17, 2018

"My present paintings of mountains and sea are vistas of memory—our America the beautiful. They are meant to glorify our land and honor those people who first lived upon it." –Kay WalkingStick

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About the Exhibition

The Montclair Art Museum will be the final stop of the American Federation of the Arts' national tour of *Kay WalkingStick: An American Artist*. The exhibition is the first major retrospective of Kay WalkingStick (b. 1935), a citizen of the Cherokee Nation and one of the world's most celebrated artists of Native American ancestry. It will be on view at MAM February 3–June 17, 2018.

Featuring more than 60 of WalkingStick's most notable paintings, drawings, small sculptures, notebooks, and the diptychs for which she is best known, the exhibition traces her career over more than four decades and culminates with her recent paintings of monumental landscapes and Native places. Her distinctive approach to painting emerged from the cauldron of the New York art world, poised between late modernism and postmodernism of the 1960s and 1970s. Over decades of intense and prolific artistic production, she sought spiritual truth through the acts of painting and metaphysical reflection. Organized chronologically around themes that mark her artistic journey, *Kay WalkingStick: An American Artist* traces a path of constant invention, innovation, and evolving artistic and personal growth through visually brilliant and evocative works of art.

A seminal work by WalkingStick, *Night*, was borrowed from MAM's collection for the national tour, including stops at the National Museum of the American Indian, Heard Museum, Dayton Art Institute, Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, and Gilcrease Art Museum, concluding at the Montclair Art Museum.

"Much of Kay's work deals with dualities in contemporary life and she often uses diptychs as a way of unifying this duality," said Gail Stavitsky, MAM chief curator. "In *Night*, the two portions represent two kinds of knowledge of the earth. One is visual, a memory of a stream bed near Tucson, Arizona, and the other is more spiritual."

The exhibition is co-curated by NMAI curator Kathleen Ash-Milby (Navajo) and associate director David W. Penney, in close collaboration with the artist. Ash-Milby and Penney are also co-editors and authors of a substantial companion catalogue, the first of its kind, which also features writings by Margaret Archuleta (Tewa/Hispanic), Jessica Horton, Robert Houle (Saulteaux), Lucy Lippard, Erica WalkingStick Echols Lowry (Cherokee), Miles Miller

(Yakama/Nez Perce), Kate Morris, Judith Ostrowitz, Lisa Seppi, and Kay WalkingStick. Generous support for this project is provided by the National Council of the National Museum of the American Indian. The exhibition is organized at the Montclair Art Museum by Gail Stavitsky, MAM's chief curator.

About the Artist

Kay WalkingStick (Cherokee, b. 1935) is an acclaimed artist best known for painting. She received her BFA from Beaver College (now Arcadia University) and MFA at Pratt Institute, supported by a Danforth Foundation Graduate Fellowship for Women. Her first solo exhibition in New York City was in 1969. She has since exhibited her work in more than 30 groundbreaking solo exhibitions and numerous group exhibitions nationally and internationally, culminating in the major traveling retrospective *Kay WalkingStick: An American Artist*. She was also the first Native American artist to appear in H.W. Janson's "History of Art" (fifth edition, 1995).

WalkingStick's work is represented in the collections of several museums, including the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian, the National Gallery of Canada, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Montclair Art Museum. She has received many awards, including grants from the Pollock-Krasner Foundation, the Joan Mitchell Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts and the Eiteljorg Fellowship for Native American Fine Art (2003). She is a faculty emerita at Cornell University where she was a professor in the Department of Art, retiring in 2005. Currently she resides with her husband in Easton, Penn.

Related Programs

The exhibition will be accompanied by education programs, announced in late 2017 on montclairartmuseum.org.

About the Museum

The Montclair Art Museum, a notable, community-based institution with an international reputation, boasts a renowned collection of American and Native American art that uniquely highlights art making in the United States over the last three hundred years. The collection includes more than 12,000 objects: paintings, prints, original works on paper, photographs, and sculpture by American artists from the 18th century to the present, as well as traditional and contemporary Native American art and artifacts representing the cultural developments of peoples from all of the major American Indian regions.

The Vance Wall Art Education Center, launched in 2016, encompasses all the Museum's educational efforts, from the established Yard School of Art to newly minted MAM Art Truck. MAM programs serve a wide public of all ages and bring artists, performers, and scholars to the Museum on a regular basis. The Yard School of Art offers a multitude of comprehensive courses for children, teens, adults, seniors, and professional artists and has been recognized in the Discover Jersey Arts People's Choice Awards as the Favorite Adult Art Class and Favorite Art Camp three years in a row.

The Montclair Art Museum is located at 3 South Mountain Avenue in Montclair, N.J. Information and directions are available on the Museum website, montclairartmuseum.org, or by calling 973-746-5555.

MAM is open Wednesdays through Sundays, Noon–5 p.m., and on the first Thursday night of the month (October–June), from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. It is closed on Mondays, Tuesdays, and major holidays. Museum admission is \$12 for nonmember adults, \$10 for senior citizens and students with I.D., and free for members and children under 12. Free First Thursday Nights are free for everyone. Student and Senior Fridays offer free general admission to students and seniors with valid ID on the first Friday of the month. The Store at MAM is open during gallery hours and has extended hours until 9 p.m. on Free First Thursday Nights.

All Museum programs are made possible, in part, by the New Jersey State Council on the Arts/Department of State, a Partner Agency of the National Endowment for the Arts, and by funds from the National Endowment for the Arts, Carol and Terry Wall / The Vance Wall Foundation, the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, and Museum members.

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