



MONTCLAIR ART MUSEUM

NEWS RELEASE

3 South Mountain Ave.
Montclair, NJ 07042
973-746-5555
montclairartmuseum.org

Media Contacts

Catherine Mastrangelo, 973-259-5119
cmastrangelo@montclairartmuseum.org

Kate Premo, 973-259-5134
kpremo@montclairartmuseum.org

Online Press Kit: montclairartmuseum.org/presskit

**MONTCLAIR ART MUSEUM PRESENTS
FIRST MUSEUM RETROSPECTIVE OF PHILEMONA WILLIAMSON**

***Metaphorical Narratives* spotlights 20 paintings spanning Williamson's career
and two new site-specific installations**

September 16, 2017–January 7, 2018

MONTCLAIR, NJ, August 14, 2017—Opening September 16, 2017 at the Montclair Art Museum (MAM), *Philemona Williamson: Metaphorical Narratives* is the first museum retrospective of Montclair-based and nationally renowned contemporary artist Philemona Williamson. Primarily spotlighting her metaphorically rich, narrative paintings, the exhibition is accompanied by two site-specific installations illuminating the artist's creative process. The exhibition 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 figures of indeterminate age and ethnicities engaged in evocative actions fraught with mystery and universal significance. Often autobiographically inspired, the paintings do not focus on conveying a story, but rather present an underlying idea or emotion. Poetically titled, these works invite viewers to use their imaginations to interpret their open-ended narratives. The artist's use of vibrant colors and firmly modeled yet generalized forms within timeless, invented spaces is the foundation for her skillful negotiation between 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

—more—

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 topsy-turvy folk art dolls.

"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 curated by Gail Stavitsky, MAM chief curator. A fully illustrated 32-page catalogue will accompany the show, with an essay by Stavitsky.

About the Artist

"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

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.

—more—

Related Programs

A Conversation with Philemona Williamson

Thursday, November 9, 7 p.m.

Join MAM for an engaging conversation between the Museum's chief curator Gail Stavitsky and artist Philemona Williamson. Montclair-based and nationally renowned, Williamson is currently spotlighted at MAM in her first major museum solo exhibition.

Family Day: Exploring Our Environment

Sunday, November 12, 1–4 p.m.

Participate in a day of themed exploration with many dynamic activities reflecting MAM's current exhibitions *Charles E. Burchfield: Weather Event* and *Philemona Williamson: Metaphorical Narratives*.

Master Class: Philemona Williamson

Saturday, November 18, 10:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

How can our personal memories inform the artwork we create today? Take an artist-led tour of *Philemona Williamson: Metaphorical Narratives* and *Charles E. Burchfield: Weather Event* for inspiration. Explore the theme of identity with master artist Philemona Williamson as you create highly personalized narrative works. Recommended for intermediate to advanced artists and art educators with experience in oil, tempera, watercolor, or collage, and those who have a willingness to take creative risks! Bring photos or personal items to add to the class inspiration wall, art supplies, and a bag lunch. A recommended supply list will be available upon registration.

About the Montclair Art Museum (MAM)

The Montclair Art Museum (MAM) boasts a renowned collection of American and Native American art that uniquely highlights art making in the United States over the last 300 years. The Vance Wall Art Education Center encompasses all the Museum's educational efforts, including award-winning Yard School of Art studio classes, lectures and talks, family events, tours, and the mobile MAM Art Truck. MAM exhibitions and programs serve a wide public of all ages, from families and seniors to artists, educators, and scholars.

Address: 3 South Mountain Avenue, Montclair, NJ 07042

Website: montclairartmuseum.org

Phone: 973-746-5555

—more—

Gallery & The Store at MAM Hours: Wednesdays through Sundays, 12–5 p.m.

Free First Thursday Nights: 1st Thursday of the month (October–June), 5–9 p.m.

Student & Senior Fridays: 1st Friday of the month, 12–5 p.m. Free admission for students and seniors with valid ID

Admission:

FREE members

\$12 nonmember adults

\$10 seniors and students with valid ID

FREE children under 12

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.

###