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## **“KERRY JAMES MARSHALL: ONE TRUE THING, MEDITATIONS ON BLACK AESTHETICS” COMES TO THE BALTIMORE MUSEUM OF ART**

**BALTIMORE, MD—(May 10, 2004)** The Baltimore Museum of Art presents a major exhibition of new work by nationally acclaimed artist Kerry James Marshall. On display from June 20 through September 5, 2004, Kerry James Marshall: One True Thing, Meditations on Black Aesthetics examines black history, identity, and cultural tradition through more than 40 works, including paintings, sculpture, photography, installation, and video. Additionally, Marshall will be at the BMA on opening day, June 20, to discuss his work, and he will curate an exhibition this summer at Artscape, Baltimore’s premier arts festival.

A painter, photographer, printmaker, and installation artist, Marshall’s remarkable talent has earned him a coveted MacArthur Fellow “genius” award. Best known for large-scale paintings that reflect his engagement with social history, the civil rights movement, and his experiences as an African American, Marshall is represented in more than 30 public collections, including the Art Institute of Chicago, the Whitney Museum of American Art, San Francisco’s Museum of Modern Art, and The Baltimore Museum of Art.

“We are delighted to bring this highly regarded artist to Baltimore,” said BMA Director Doreen Bolger. “Kerry James Marshall is an important voice in the African-American community, and these are some of his most powerful works to date.”



Kerry James Marshall. Photo by Jeff Sciortino.

Kerry James Marshall: One True Thing, Meditations on Black Aesthetics represents a new direction in Marshall’s work in which he opens a dialogue on the issue of black aesthetics, the practice of being an artist, the question of integration versus assimilation, and notions of race.

“You can’t be born in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1955, and grow up in South Central [Los Angeles] near the Black Panthers headquarters, and not feel like you’ve got some kind of social responsibility,” said Marshall. “You can’t move to Watts in 1963 and not speak about it. That determined a lot of where my work was going to go.”

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The term black aesthetics first emerged within the 1960s civil rights and Black Power movements as a way to raise awareness for black rights, foster black cultural pride, and develop strategies for African Americans to participate more actively in the mainstream of U.S. society. Throughout this exhibition, Marshall has drawn upon the dense and unique layering of language, music, and art characteristic of black expression to infuse Western art-historical styles with the political and social realities of the African-American experience.

Examples of works in the exhibition include:

- *Memento #5*, a glittery 9- by 13-foot canvas commemorating heroes of the civil rights movement Martin Luther King Jr., John F. Kennedy, Malcolm X, and Robert Kennedy.
- *7 am Sunday Morning*, a monumental 10- by 18-foot painting depicting a street scene on the South Side of Chicago interrupted by the prismatic glare of the sun.
- *Garden Party*, a four-minute DVD and corresponding painting that reinterprets Impressionist works like Renoir's *Luncheon of the Boating Party* with African Americans, Asians, and Hispanics enjoying a backyard gathering.
- *The Ladder of Success*, an installation of colorful Plexiglass boxes each listing a traditional western virtue—including honesty and punctuality—and principles of the African-American celebration of Kwanzaa, such as creativity and faith.
- *Africa Restored*, a three-part work that presents the continent as a vast sculpture adorned with medallions that pay homage to Africa as a source of creative inspiration.
- *Dailies*, a continuation of the artist's *RYTHM MASTR* comic series that pits an urban superhero against the Chicago Housing Authority using a combination of futuristic and traditional African accoutrements.

Marshall will also curate an exhibition at Artscape, Baltimore's premier arts festival. Marshall will select six Baltimore-area artists from open submissions, and he will invite six artists from his hometown of Chicago to participate in *Baltimore/Chicago Show*, on display June 20–July 31 at the Decker Gallery in the Station Building at the Maryland Institute College of Art. The Artscape festival runs July 16–July 18.

*Kerry James Marshall: One True Thing, Meditations on Black Aesthetics* was organized by the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, and curated by Elizabeth Smith, James W. Alsdorf Chief Curator, with Tricia Van Eck, Curatorial Coordinator. Major support for the exhibition is provided by the Harris Family Foundation in honor of Bette and Neison Harris. Additional support is provided by The Joyce Foundation, The Rockefeller Foundation, Peter Norton Family Foundation, The Boeing Company, and Loop Capital Markets.

In Baltimore, the exhibition is curated by Chris Gilbert, BMA Curator of Contemporary Art, and is sponsored by Piper Rudnick LLP and Brown Capital Management. Additional support is provided by Dr. Freeman A. Hrabowski III.

Media sponsors are Comcast and *The Afro-American Newspapers*.

#### Catalogue

A 104-page full-color catalogue accompanies the exhibition. "Kerry James Marshall: One True Thing, Meditations on Black Aesthetics" is available for purchase at The BMA Shop for \$29.95.

#### Travel Schedule

The exhibition originated at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, and traveled to the Miami Art Museum before coming to the BMA. It will go on to the Studio Museum in Harlem (October 13, 2004-January 9, 2005) and the Birmingham Museum of Art in Alabama (February 3-April 24, 2005).

#### About the Artist

Kerry James Marshall was born in 1955 in Birmingham, Alabama, and raised in Los Angeles. He lives in Chicago where he has been a professor since 1993 at the School of Art and Design and the University of Illinois, Chicago. He received his BFA from the Otis Art Institute in Los Angeles in 1978 and an honorary doctorate in 1999. In 1997 Marshall was awarded the prestigious John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Fellowship. Marshall's work has been included in such group exhibitions as the 2003 Venice Biennale; the 1999/2000 Carnegie International; the 1997 Whitney Biennial at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York; and documenta X in Kassel, Germany, in 1997. In 1998, Marshall's work was the subject of a major exhibition organized by the Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago that traveled to such venues as the Brooklyn Museum of Art in New York, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and the Institute for Contemporary Art in Boston. He was an artist-in-residence at the Studio Museum in Harlem in 1985. He recently completed a seven-week residency at The University of Texas at Austin.

In addition to his painting career, Marshall has been the production designer for the films *Daughters of the Dust* and *Praise House* directed by Julie Dash, *Sankofa* directed by Haile Gerima, and *Hendrix Project* directed by Arthur Jafa. He is married to the actress Cheryl Lynn Bruce.

#### PROGRAMS

##### Panel Discussion

##### Meditations on Black Aesthetics

Sunday, June 20, 2 p.m.

Free with Museum admission

On the opening day of *Kerry James Marshall: One True Thing, Meditations on Black Aesthetics*, a panel of prominent artists and curators will explore the concept of black aesthetics. Panelists includes artists Kerry James Marshall and Nayland Blake, Thelma Golden, Deputy Director for Exhibitions and Programs at the Studio Museum in Harlem, and BMA Curator of Contemporary Art Chris Gilbert. Art historian Leslie King-Hammond, Dean of Graduate Studies at the Maryland Institute College of Art, will moderate.

This program is sponsored in part by the Joshua Johnson Council at The Baltimore Museum of Art.

Gallery Talks

With Chris Gilbert, BMA Curator of Contemporary Art

Thursday, June 24, 1 p.m.

With a Museum Docent

Thursday, July 1, 2 p.m.

Thursday, August 12, 2 p.m.

Sunday, August 29, 2 p.m.

Hands-On: Comic Book Consciousness

Sunday, June 27, 2-4 p.m.

All ages

In *RYTHM MASTER*, artist Kerry James Marshall transforms heroes and gods from West African culture into inspiring and powerful comic book characters. Use pen and colored ink to invent a superhero or *-sheroe* who reflects your culture of origin or solves a social problem.

The Baltimore Museum of Art

Founded in 1914, The Baltimore Museum of Art is Maryland's largest art museum with more than 90,000 objects. The BMA presents a variety of major exhibitions each year, as well as special installations that showcase the Museum's outstanding collection. The BMA's pre-eminent holding of Post-Impressionist and Modern art—The Cone Collection—includes a group of 500 works by Matisse, considered the most comprehensive collection in the world, as well as major examples by Picasso, Cézanne, Gauguin, van Gogh, and Renoir. The BMA's West Wing for Contemporary Art houses 16 galleries featuring works by Andy Warhol, Sol LeWitt, and Grace Hartigan, as well as more contemporary works by Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Glenn Ligon, and Kara Walker.

In 1939, The Baltimore Museum of Art presented one of the first exhibitions of works by African-American artists in the country, the first step in a distinguished record of presenting and collecting African-American art. In recent years the BMA has added more than 30 works by both historical and contemporary artists—including Henry Ossawa Tanner, Lorna Simpson, and Kara Walker. Also featured in the collection are examples of painting and sculpture by Romare Bearden, Elizabeth Catlett, and Kerry James Marshall, as well as works on paper by Gordon Parks and Carrie Mae Weems. Among the Baltimore-based artists represented are Tom Miller and Joyce J. Scott.

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The BMA's collection also includes grand European paintings and sculpture from Old Masters through the 19<sup>th</sup> century; an extensive collection of prints, drawings, and photographs from the 15<sup>th</sup> century to the present; notable American decorative arts and Maryland period rooms; and African, Asian, Native American, and Oceanic art. The BMA's sculpture gardens feature 34 works of art on nearly three landscaped acres in the heart of the city.

Visitor Information

The Baltimore Museum of Art is open Wednesday through Friday, 11 a.m. until 5 p.m.; Saturday and Sunday, 11 a.m. until 6 p.m.; and during the first Thursday of every month (except major holidays), 11 a.m. until 8 p.m. The Museum is closed Monday, Tuesday, New Year's Day, July 4, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. Admission is \$7 for adults; \$5 for seniors ages 65 and over and college students; and free for children 18 & under. Admission is free on the first Thursday of every month and for related Free First Thursday activities. The BMA is located on Art Museum Drive at North Charles and 31<sup>st</sup> Streets, three miles north of Baltimore's Inner Harbor. For general Museum information, call 410/396-7100 or visit the BMA's web site at [www.artbma.org](http://www.artbma.org).

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