

The Gibbes Museum of Art to Exhibit “Black Refractions: Highlights from The Studio Museum in Harlem”

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Faith Ringgold – Echoes of Harlem, 1980. Acrylic on canvas. 79 ½ x80 ½ in. The Studio Museum in Harlem; Gift of Altria Group, Inc. 2008.13.10© 2018 Faith Ringgold. Courtesy: American Federation of Art

The Gibbes Museum of Art will present Black Refractions: Highlights from The Studio Museum in Harlem, a major traveling exhibition organized by the American Federation of Arts (AFA) in collaboration with The Studio Museum in Harlem this spring. The exhibition presents nearly a century of works by artists of African descent. The Gibbes’ showing of Black Refractions includes over 70 works by more than 50 artists across all media dating from the 1920s to the present and will be on display at the museum from May 24–August 18, 2019. More than a dozen artists in the exhibition have lasting connections to the American South including Romare Bearden, Thornton Dial, Sam Gilliam, Clementine Hunter, Kerry James Marshall, Alma Thomas and Bill Traylor.

Black Refractions is a landmark initiative that explores the vital contributions of artists of African descent, proposing a plurality of narratives of black artistic production and multiple approaches to understanding these works. Through its pioneering exhibitions, public programs, artist residencies and bold acquisitions, The Studio Museum in Harlem has served as a nexus for artists of African descent locally, nationally, and internationally since its founding in 1968

“Black Refractions is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for the Charleston community to experience these incredible works of art,” said Angela Mack, the Gibbes Museum of Art’s executive director. “At the Gibbes, we focus on diversifying and expanding our permanent collection to include works from a number of artists with differing perspectives. In the last 10 years, we are proud to have doubled the number of works by African American artists and look forward to continuing to build our collection to reflect Charleston’s diverse population.”

Artists featured in the Gibbes Museum’s presentation:

Njideka Akunyili Crosby, Charles Alston, Benny Andrews, Romare Bearden, Dawoud Bey, Chakaia Booker, Frank Bowling, Jordan Casteel, Elizabeth Catlett, Eldzier Cortor, Noah Davis, Beauford Delaney, Thornton Dial, Leonardo Drew, Melvin Edwards, Sam Gilliam, David Hammons, Lyle Ashton Harris, Maren Hassinger, Barkley L. Hendricks, Richard Hunt, Clementine Hunter, Juliana Huxtable, Isaac Julien, Titus Kaphar, Jacob Lawrence, Hughie Lee-Smith, Norman Lewis, Glenn Ligon, Kalup Linzy, Tom Lloyd, Whitfield Lovell, Al Loving, Kerry James Marshall, Adia Millett, Wangechi Mutu, Kori Newkirk, Otobong Nkanga, Odili Donald Odita, Lorraine O’Grady, Jennifer Packer, Faith Ringgold, Betye Saar, Jacolby Satterwhite, Gary Simmons, Lorna Simpson, Shinique Smith, Alma Thomas, Mickalene Thomas, Hank Willis Thomas, Bill Traylor, James VanDerZee, Nari Ward, Carrie Mae Weems, Jack Whitten, Kehinde Wiley, William T. Williams, Fred Wilson, Hale Woodruff and Lynette Yiadom-Boakye.

Publication

Black Refractions is accompanied by a new publication of the same title co-published by the American Federation of Arts and Rizzoli Electa. The richly illustrated volume includes essays by Connie H. Choi and Kellie Jones; entries by a range of writers, curators and scholars (among them Lauren Haynes, Ashley James, Oluremi C. Onabanjo, Larry Ossei-Mensah and Hallie Ringle) who contextualize the works and provide detailed commentary; and a conversation among Choi, Thelma Golden, and Jones that draws out themes and challenges in collecting and exhibiting modern and contemporary art by artists of African descent.

Curator

Connie H. Choi is Associate Curator, Permanent Collection, at The Studio Museum in Harlem, where she has worked on the exhibitions *Regarding the Figure* (2017), *Fictions*, and *Their Own Harlems* (both 2017–18). Prior to joining the museum in 2017, Choi was the Assistant Curator of American Art at the Brooklyn Museum. She is a PhD candidate in art history at Columbia University, and holds a BA in the history of art from Yale University and an EdM in arts education from Harvard University.