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MoAD Announces Group Exhibition *Unruly Navigations* Curated by Key Jo Lee

Ten International Artists Trace Migration Across History, Narrative, and Geography, Opening March 27



Morel Doucet, *Black Maiden in Veil of Midnight*, 2022, slip-casted white earthenware (image courtesy of Galerie Myrtis)

SAN FRANCISCO, CA – The Museum of the African Diaspora (MoAD) is pleased to announce *Unruly Navigations* curated by Key Jo Lee, Chief of Curatorial Affairs and Public Programs, on view from March 27 to September 1, 2024. Twenty-two artworks from ten international artists trace historical, familial, and/or individual migrations, capturing trajectories across time and across geographies, and refusing the tyranny of linear narratives, or stories told in a way that eliminate inconvenient or troublesome truths in favor of cohesion. Instead, the works presented in *Unruly Navigations* favor methods and materials that privilege heterogenous and contingent, multi-sensory and embodied knowledges as a means of asserting authority over the expansion and deepening of our collective understanding of history, the present, and the future.

Participating artists include **Myrlande Constant, Morel Doucet, vanessa german, Nadine Hall, M. Scott Johnson, Samuel Levi Jones, Anina Major, Oluseye. Winfred Rembert, and Nafis M. White.**

“Unruly Navigations testifies to the urgent, disorderly, rebellious, and nonlinear movements of people, cultures, ideas, religions, and aesthetics that define diaspora. Whether it is one of Morel Doucet's delicate porcelain busts, vanessa german's provocative multimedia sculptures, or Nadine Hall's hand-molded paving blocks, this exhibition's twenty-two artworks, including four

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site-specific installations, capture multidimensional trajectories through time, across geographies, and through complex spiritual landscapes,” said Key Jo Lee. “In doing so, they augment and deepen, and at times completely refute, conventional accounts of diasporic experience which have historically misrepresented, mischaracterized, and misplaced stories from the perspective of the enslaved, the forcibly displaced or otherwise disenfranchised.”

Jamaican sculptor **Nadine Hall** animates archival logs of people and goods circulating the Caribbean Sea, while recalling her own path to and from the island in *Legacy and Redemption and Queen Abi*. Consisting of hand-molded paving blocks made of sugar, coconut, water and peanuts or concrete, the artist blends her personal history with colonial plantation history and histories of tourism. The exhibition will also feature Nigerian Canadian artist **Oluseye's** *Eminado* series which “embod[ies] the movement of the Black diaspora.” These collections of assembled objects mark the artist’s transatlantic travels during which he collects his materials. In the Toni Rembe Freedom Theatre, Bahamian artist **Anina Major**—whose immersive installation will reshape the theater in surprising ways—will present new work that reflect on fragmented histories of migration and tourist culture in the Caribbean. In **Nafis M. White's** clever and blithe *Self-Portrait*, a large grouping of black licorice filled crystal jars symbolize the artist’s identity over time and space. For the artist, licorice, like manifestations of Black culture, is much varied and incredibly polarizing among its consumers. White invites visitors to a variety of tastes and textures as they interact with the work. Also featured here is a monumental oculus created by White that merges Victorian era hair art and funerary practices, examples of which populate American and European archives, but which do not often include Afro-textured hair, with Black women’s embodied knowledge symbolized by their hair.

On the second floor, the largest gallery will feature tooled leather paintings by self-taught African American painter **Winfred Rembert** alongside a heavily sequined and embroidered tapestry from the hand of Haitian textile artist, **Myrlande Constant**. Both artists use unconventional materials to create textural accounts of subtle transformations. This gallery will also feature delicate ceramic busts by **Morel Doucet** who “explores narratives of vulnerability, isolation, and alienation within various cultures across the globe.” He says of his labor-intensive floral-laden busts, “I merge my Afro-Caribbean culture with flora and fauna and draw from the collective consciousness of my community.” Also speaking to his intimate knowledge of African and African American religious practices, **M. Scott Johnson's** Neo Negro sculptures also speak to a “Black collective unconscious.” His ponderous stone carvings simultaneously reflect an ancient past and a multitude of possible futures. As Doucet gestures towards the deep knowledge of nature and the terrestrial, Johnson points to a cosmic Black collectivity. Also in this gallery, two of **vanessa german's** potent assemblages attest to the artist’s deep self-reflexivity. They embody the full claiming of the labor and rest for her body, mind, and power to control how—and by whom—she is seen. The exhibition will also feature a signature work by **Samuel Levi Jones**, whose practice of pulping law and medical textbooks, encyclopedias, textiles like the American flag, and other materials produces sculptural paintings that according to the artist represent “a desire to create a space where information, that encompasses all, coexists, without fear, so that the pendulum stops its violent swing from one extreme perspective and back again.” Together, this assembly of objects will attest to the many strategies that these artists employ to visualize

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historical, geographical, political, and autobiographical migrations.

Included Artists:

Nafis M. White <https://www.cadetompkinsprojects.com/artists/68-nafis-m.-white/biography/>

Nadine Hall <https://www.linkedin.com/in/nadine-hall-art/>

M. Scott Johnson <https://www.mscottjohnsonart.com/>

Winfred Rembert <https://www.fortgansevoort.com/artists/winfred-rembert-estate/cv>

Myrlande Constant <https://www.laweekly.com/enter-the-fantastical-world-of-myrlande-constant-at-the-fowler/>

vanessa german <https://www.instagram.com/vanessalgerman/?hl=en>

Morel Doucet <https://www.moreldoucet.com/>

Oluseye <https://www.olu-seye.com/>

Anina Major <https://www.aninamajor.com/>

Samuel Levi Jones <https://www.samuellevijones.com/>

ABOUT KEY JO LEE

Key Jo Lee is chief of curatorial affairs and public programs at the Museum of the African Diaspora (MoAD) in San Francisco. In this role, Lee utilizes her expertise in art history and visual culture to produce contemporary art exhibitions that historicize the present in unique and compelling ways. Beyond her creative input, Lee also oversees the strategic direction for the museum's exhibitions and programs; leads globally on identifying and promoting emerging artists from the African diaspora; and works to expand MoAD's reach and influence locally, nationally, and internationally. She is responsible for the overall management and execution of the museum's curatorial vision, including its exhibitions, publications, and public and educational programs, and plays an important role in the organization's outreach, communications, and digital strategy. Lee holds a master's degree from Yale University, where she is currently a PhD candidate in History of Art and African American Studies. Her first book, *Perceptual Drift: Black Art and an Ethics of Looking*, was published by Yale University Press and The Cleveland Museum of Art in January 2023. Her essay, "Gesturing Towards Infinitude: Painting Blue/Black Cosmologies," was included in exhibition catalogue for *Going Dark: The Figure at the Edge of Visibility* in December 2023, published by Guggenheim Museum Publications.

ABOUT MoAD

The Museum of the African Diaspora (MoAD) is a contemporary art museum whose mission is to celebrate Black cultures, ignite challenging conversations, and inspire learning through the global lens of the African Diaspora. MoAD is one of only a few museums in the United States dedicated to the celebration and interpretation of art, artists, and cultures from the African Diaspora. The Museum presents exhibitions highlighting contemporary art and artists of African descent and engages its audience through education and public programs that interpret and enhance the understanding of Black art. Founded in 2005, the Museum continues to be a unique, cultural arts staple in the San Francisco Bay Area community. For more information about MoAD, visit The Museum's website at moadsf.org.

General Information



For general information, the public may visit The Museum's website at moadsf.org or call 415.358.7200. MoAD is located at 685 Mission Street (at Third), San Francisco, CA.

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