

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Museum of the African Diaspora Announces Group Design Exhibition
Liberatory Living: Protective Interiors & Radical Black Joy, Opening October 2, 2024**

**Exhibition Will Showcase Contemporary African Diasporic Designers Who Construct
Spaces of Care, Alongside Immersive Interiors and Domestic Environments**



Image credit: Michael Bennett for Studio Kër, *Pews*, 2023. Soft Leather & Angelin Wood. 94.0 x 33.6 x 34.0 in. Photo courtesy of William Stuart.

SAN FRANCISCO, CA – The Museum of the African Diaspora (MoAD) is pleased to announce *Liberatory Living: Protective Interiors & Radical Black Joy*, a group exhibition of innovative furnishings, wall treatments, lighting, and more by contemporary African diasporic designers, on view October 2, 2024 through March 2, 2025. International artists, ceramicists, and furniture-makers across all three floors of the museum will present domestic technologies, products, and environments that center safety, belonging, and the preservation of the Black radical tradition. *Liberatory Living* will also show how Black Joy has historically emerged from

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these interior spaces, celebrating the revolution of design alongside the design of revolution. Tickets to visit the exhibition will become available at moadsf.org/tickets.

“This special exhibition is the first of its kind at MoAD, highlighting luminaries from the field of design while critically centering how Black domestic and home interiors serve as sites of care and rest,” said Monetta White, Executive Director. “As we do with our contemporary art exhibitions, it’s our hope that engaging with decor and ornament demonstrates the multiple ways we uphold and bring visibility to different creative practices of the African diaspora.”

Organized by Key Jo Lee, Chief of Curatorial Affairs and Public Programs, *Liberatory Living* will unite the late feminist theorist bell hooks’ concept of “homeplace” with scholar Elizabeth Alexander’s notion of the “Black interior.” Both ideas sustain a sense of belonging and incubation of Black liberatory thought, serving as the throughline for the exhibition. Eye-catching and inventive design objects, furnishings, fine art, and more by **Malene Barnett, Michael Bennett, Sheila Bridges, dach&zephir, Andile Dyalvane, Sandra Githinji Studio, Angela Hennessey, King Houndekpinkou, Kapwani Kiwanga, Chuma Maweni, Nandipha Mntambo, Zanele Muholi, Zizipho Poswa, Cheryl Riley, Norman Teague** and **Lina Iris Viktor** will give form to these urgent concepts from hooks and Alexander.

“Working across disparate mediums, geographies, and philosophies, the designers and artists in *Liberatory Living* respond to the enduring need to construct a space of one’s own,” said Key Jo Lee, Chief of Curatorial Affairs and Public Programs. “Their practices insist upon safe-keeping and harnessing joy against diasporic histories of uprootedness, dwelling within the restorative power of inhabiting beauty.”



Image credit: (left) Lina Iris Viktor, *from dawn to dusk, the soil is rich within us*, 2024. 24 carat gold, acrylic, gesso, raffia, silk, banana silk, jute, dyed silk cocoons on wood panel. 215 x 140 x 14 cm, 84 5/8 x 55 1/8 x 5 1/2 in. Courtesy of the Artist, and Pilar Corrias, London. (right) detail of Chuma Maweni, *Imbizo Dining Table II*, 2023. Kiaat, glazed stoneware. 29.9 x 94.5 x 43.3 in. Courtesy of Hayden Phipps/Southern Guild.

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The first floor of the museum will include *Love Quest* (2022) by multidisciplinary artist Nandipha Mntambo, a concave, basin-like chair constructed from leather and timber. The work cradles its sitter—almost like a second skin—within ruffled, textured leather folds. A sculptural floor lamp by Sandra Githinji Studio nearby also makes reference to corporeality and pre-colonial values. The textural, wooden body of the lamp references African hairstyles, with the light source symbolizing communing with the divine realm. Along the corridor, framed archival pigment prints from Kapwani Kiwanga’s *Greenbook* series center a history of movement for African Americans. The works on paper are reproductions of annual state-by-state listings published in a guidebook from 1936 to 1966, detailing safe places to lodge and dine for African-American motorists traveling throughout the country.

In the second floor’s Dignity Health Gallery, designer and social practice artist Norman Teague will exhibit his large-scale “cabinet of curiosities,” which recalls their function as a precursor to modern museums; behind this will be a special wallpaper by Zanele Muholi, which wields black-and-white self-portraiture to radically depict Black existence. Near one of Teague’s playful, kinetic *Sinmi Stool* pieces will be a four-foot tall bronze sculpture by Zizipho Poswa titled *Mam’uNoSekshin* (2023), which represents nature’s bounty and life-affirming role. Designer Sheila Bridges will exhibit wallpaper using her renowned “Harlem Toile du Jouy” and “Zwarte Piet” patterns, which reexamine and sharply recast the Toile du Jouy pattern from 18th century France and the folkloric Dutch holiday imagery of Sinterklaas and his servant, respectively. Sculptural furniture by designer Michael Bennett and ceramics by Franco-Beninese artist King Houndekpinkou imbue traditional forms with newly imagined sacred qualities. Bennett’s *Pews* (2023) seating brings together five rounded, abstract shapes inspired by African diasporic gatherings, while King’s glazed stoneware vessels reference altars of the Voodoo tradition in Benin. In a similar approach, multidisciplinary artist and textile designer Malene Barnett will debut new ceramic tiles, vessels, and wallpaper in the Bates Gallery. Inspired by her grandmother’s and mother’s love of ornament, she uses vintage and various forms of clay to create unique wall tiles and pots that venerate craft as a devotional practice and pay tribute to kinship.

The third floor will feature ceramic furniture by Chuma Maweni from his *Imbizo Ibanjiwe* series, where sophisticated finishes, patterns, and shapes celebrate communal gathering. Advancing methods from traditional Nguni pottery, Maweni will exhibit a hand-crafted dining table and chairs symbolizing a modern-day “imbizo,” a forum or meeting called by a traditional Xhosa or Zulu leader. Also guided by his spiritual connection to Xhosa legacy and culture is Andile Dyalvane, whose earthenware works bond with both the land and his ancestry. Further embracing the interplay between the natural world and the indoors, French design duo dach&zephir will present brass lighting sources inspired by tropical plant leaves found along the rivers in the Guadeloupe islands in the Caribbean. A deep consideration of organic forms also influences “Paw Paw’s” dining chair from Bennett, which uses African Sapele wood and augmented proportions to challenge rigid domestic norms found throughout Western furniture design. In a separate gallery, inventive furniture by Cheryl Riley and intricate mixed-media works by Lina Iris Viktor and Angela Hennessy will use everyday domestic materials like silk, wire, or

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fabric to illuminate forgotten histories, often excavating tradition to envision futures based upon care and place-making.

ABOUT MoAD

MoAD (Museum of the African Diaspora) 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 MoAD's website at moadsf.org or call 415.358.7200. MoAD is located at 685 Mission Street (at Third), San Francisco, CA.