

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
January 8, 2025

**Media Contacts**

Darius Sabbaghzadeh | [darius@hellothirdeye.com](mailto:darius@hellothirdeye.com)

Kyle Hinton | [kyle@hellothirdeye.com](mailto:kyle@hellothirdeye.com)

**MoAD Presents *Love + Basketball: My Freedom Got a Rim On It* by Houston Artist  
Ann Johnson, Presenting Her First Solo Museum Show on the West Coast**

**Exhibition Opens Alongside 2025 NBA All-Star Weekend in San Francisco and  
MoAD's Black History Month Programs**



Ann Johnson, *EGYPTIAN COLLAR*, 2002. Beads, gilding, on regulation backboard, with regulation goal, chain net, found objects. Collection of Elliot Perry, Memphis, TN.

**SAN FRANCISCO, CA** – The Museum of the African Diaspora (MoAD) is pleased to announce the exhibition *Love + Basketball: My Freedom Got a Rim On It*, a solo exhibition by Houston-based artist Ann Johnson opening on February 5 and continuing through March 2, 2025. Coinciding with the NBA All-Star Weekend in San Francisco as well as Black History Month, the exhibition will present Johnson's first-ever solo museum show on the West Coast featuring works that closely examine basketball through the lens of consumerism, materialism, success, and aspiration. The exhibition is curated by Key Jo Lee, MoAD's Chief of Curatorial

# MoAD

Affairs and Public Programs, who selected Johnson's submission following a global open call for artists in Fall 2024.

"Alongside the NBA All-Star Weekend and our celebration of Black History Month, *Love + Basketball* is one of the first exhibitions kicking off MoAD's 20th anniversary year," said Monetta White, Executive Director and CEO of MoAD. "Basketball is a story intrinsic to Black America, and offers countless lessons of our excellence, resistance, and economic mobility. Ann Johnson's work, in particular, poignantly covers so much of this experience through her art."

"Though it was originally created to engage 'incorrigible' young white men, in many ways, basketball has become synonymous with Black culture. Because it lives at the intersection of race, politics, economics and popular culture, basketball remains both familiar and fascinating to many artists, whether Barkley L. Hendricks' 1970s canvases, shaped to reflect the various geometries of the basketball court, or Lauren Halsey's, David Huffman's, or Hank Willis Thomas's more contemporary gestures," said Key Jo Lee, MoAD's Chief of Curatorial Affairs and Public Programs. "Ann's work powerfully removes the figure of the player, and thus the Black body, as the object of contemplation. Instead, the artist investigates critical questions about freedom, success and 'uplifts' via bejeweled backboards and ornamented hoops."

With a nearly three decade-long career, Ann Johnson has been working as an interdisciplinary artist, teacher, and community advocate in Houston, having participated in numerous solo and group exhibitions throughout Texas and across the United States. At MoAD she will be presenting a range of new assemblage, video, and sculptural works that explore the complexities of how basketball is seen as a means of social mobility within the Black community, based on her firsthand experience within Houston's inner city wards. On view will be seven *BlingCatcher*s from 2002 through 2024, as part of her series that uses standard basketball hoops affixed with referential signifiers of material success. From these works dangle objects such as Air Jordan sneakers, beads, as well as gold or silver jewelry in the shape of crosses or dollar signs. Importantly, Johnson utilizes the dreamcatcher form, to emphasize the fantasy of basketball and bling as not just aspirational, but also protective.

In relation to the *BlingCatcher* hoops, the show includes a short video titled *My Freedom Gotta Rim On It* in which the central figure repeats the phrase "my freedom gotta rim on it," interrogating basketball's potential to create true autonomy. This directly connects with the sculptural piece *Freedom Dreamin* (2024), as part of Johnson's new, experimental practice involving dye transfer printing onto brick, with depictions of youths from Houston's historically Black Fourth Ward known as Freedmen's Town. In dialogue with her *BlingCatcher* pieces, these works collectively question the complex social forces that temper ambition and inform perceptions of advancement and success.

## 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

# MoAD

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](https://moadsf.org).

## **General Information**

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