

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 5, 2025

Media Contacts

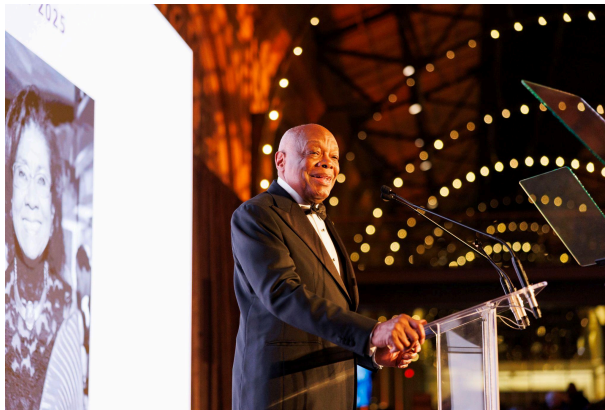
Darius Sabbaghzadeh | darius@hellothirdeye.com

Kyle Hinton | kyle@hellothirdeye.com

MUSEUM OF THE AFRICAN DIASPORA MARKS 20TH ANNIVERSARY WITH 2025 AFROPOLITAN BALL, RAISING OVER \$1 MILLION FOR OPERATIONS, EXHIBITIONS, AND PROGRAMS

Executive Director and CEO Monetta White Announces Major Grant from the Mellon Foundation to Expand Curatorial Team

MoAD Community Joins in Tribute to Legendary Supporter Belva Davis, MoAD's First Board President



SAN FRANCISCO, CA – Celebrating its 20th anniversary year, the Museum of the African Diaspora (MoAD) held its 2025 Afropolitan Ball at the San Francisco Ferry Building on the evening of October 4, 2025, raising record sums for the museum, its programs, and its global mission. In total, over \$1 million was raised at the event, in addition to further grants and support announced from the museum's patrons and affiliate organizations. Guests from the fields of art,

MoAD

entertainment, fashion, and philanthropy came together at the black tie-affair, forming the capstone event of the second annual **Nexus: SF/Bay Area Black Art Week**. Highlights from the seated program included unique culinary offerings by Foxtail Catering & Events, and special remarks honoring the late **Belva Davis**, the museum's first board president who played a critical role in founding MoAD in 2005. The evening concluded with dancing and a genre-spanning set from **DJ Novena Carmel**.

During the special evening, initial remarks were provided by Board Chair **Eric McDonnell**, who hosted the event and spoke about the museum's accomplishments across the past two decades. Event chair **Peggy Woodford Forbes** reflected on Davis's long-time involvement as a MoAD board member, acknowledging the museum's staff and board from its early days who laid the foundations for its future success.

Executive Director and CEO **Monetta White**—in a custom outfit designed by **Brandin Vaughn**—provided further remarks during dinner, sharing MoAD's new mission to place the African Diaspora at the center of the contemporary art conversation.

"We step boldly into the future with a new mission, to place contemporary art and artists of the African Diaspora at the center of the global cultural conversation," said Monetta White, Executive Director and CEO during the seated portion of the gala. "Alongside this new mission, we also claim MoAD is where the African Diaspora shapes contemporary art. This is not just a statement, it is a charge. A charge to lift up the voices of artists from the African Diaspora and to make sure their contributions are not at the margins, but at the very center of culture."

In her remarks, White announced that the museum received a major grant from the Mellon Foundation, which will enable it to expand its curatorial team with two new roles. These will handle all aspects of exhibition logistics, publication development, and provide essential support and operational assistance to the Chief Curator.

A major point of focus for the evening was dedicated to the memory of **Belva Davis**, MoAD's first board president and the first African American female television reporter on the West Coast. MoAD's inaugural Executive Director **Denise Bradley-Tyson** spoke to Davis's legacy, reflecting on how MoAD was a place where she dedicated the entirety of her heart and soul. Further reflection on her legacy was shared by former San Francisco Mayor, the Honorable **Willie L. Brown Jr.**, who spoke to Davis's unwavering dedication to the museum and her trailblazing spirit.

CommonSpirit Health CEO **Wright Lassiter III** took the stage to underline the company's sustained partnership with MoAD, pledging a gift of \$750,000 to be dispersed throughout the coming years. 2024 Emerging Artist Program (EAP) artist **Mary Graham** also discussed MoAD's integral role in platforming emerging artistic voices, helping to create key milestones in her own career.

MoAD

Following remarks, Benefit Auction Specialist **Naomi Lewis** led an energetic live auction of three lots: tickets to next year's Afropolitan Ball, a wine tour and tasting at The Donum Estate in Sonoma, and a dinner for 8 at MoAD with Monetta White and Key Jo Lee. The auction helped contribute to the overall \$1 million raised from the special evening for MoAD's operations, exhibitions, unique programs, and education initiatives.

Following the auction was a performance from **Alonzo King LINES Ballet**. Their captivating movements offered a preview of the company's upcoming program in April 2026 that will feature a thrilling collaboration with Grammy Award-winning musician Esperanza Spalding.

The 2025 Afropolitan Ball featured a variety of notable attendees and guests from art, fashion, entertainment, and philanthropy. In attendance was MoAD leadership including Executive Director and CEO **Monetta White**, Chief of Curatorial Affairs and Public Programs **Key Jo Lee**, Board Chair **Eric McDonnell**, Board Vice Chair and Afropolitan Ball Event Chair **Peggy Woodford Forbes**; notable figures including San Francisco Director of Cultural Affairs **Ralph Remington**; **Willie L. Brown Jr.**, **Irwin Federman**, **China Forbes**, **Maya Forbes**, **George McCalman**, **Joy Ofodu**, and **Brandin Vaughn**; artists, institutional and gallery figures including **Zully Adler**, **Francesco Dama**, **Cheryl Derricotte**, **Ashara Ekundayo**, **Mary Graham**, **Marta Thoma Hall**, **Mildred Howard**, **David C. Howse**, **Ayana V. Jackson**, **Yasmin Lambie-Simpson**, **Gustavo Nazareno**, **Mikael Owunna**, **Ramekon O'Arwisters**, **Jeremy Patricia Stone** and **Lava Thomas**.

Headline image credits (clockwise from top left): Executive Director and CEO Monetta White during her remarks; performance by Alonzo King LINES Ballet; Ashara Ekundayo, Ramekon O'Arwisters, Brandin Vaughn, Mary Graham, Key Jo Lee, Gustavo Nazareno, Marta Thoma Hall, Monetta White, Yasmin Lambie-Simpson, Ayana V. Jackson, Mildred Howard, Lava Thomas, George McCalman, and Cheryl Derricotte; former San Francisco Mayor Willie L. Brown Jr. delivering remarks. All images by Drew Altizer, Mahelly Ferreira, and Jessica Monroy for Drew Altizer Photography, courtesy of MoAD.

ABOUT MoAD

San Francisco's Museum of the African Diaspora (MoAD) is a contemporary art museum whose mission is to place the contemporary art and artists of the African Diaspora at the center of the global cultural conversation. 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 cultural beacon where the African Diaspora shapes contemporary art 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.