

IOWA

Stanley Museum of Art

UI Stanley Museum of Art Acquires Work by Celebrated Portrait Painter Amy Sherald

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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“Hope is the Thing with Feathers (The Little Bird)” appears in museum’s inaugural exhibition

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IOWA CITY, Iowa—The University of Iowa’s Stanley Museum of Art has acquired Amy Sherald’s 2021 print “Hope is the Thing with Feathers (The Little Bird),” which the museum has incorporated into its three-year inaugural exhibition, “Homecoming.” Sherald, known for painting former First Lady Michelle Obama’s official portrait for the National Gallery in Washington, DC, will join Elizabeth Catlett, Sam Gilliam, Faith Ringgold, and Alma Thomas on the list of important Black American artists whose work is featured in the Stanley’s collection.

Sherald was the first woman and Black person to win the National Portrait Gallery’s Outwin Boochever Portrait Competition. Her artwork examines the intricacies of public Blackness in the United States. She is a New York-based artist whose work is represented in the collections of institutions such as New York City’s Whitney Museum of American Art, Boston’s Museum of Fine Arts and Washington’s Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture. “Hope is the Thing with Feathers (The Little Bird)” is a color screen print after her 2020 painting of the same name.

Sherald’s print was acquired with support from the Craig A. Subler and Mary Jo Arnoldi Contemporary Print Fund. Within the Stanley Museum’s “Homecoming” exhibition, which opened last August, it can be seen in “Generations,” an installation displaying art primarily from Europe and the Americas. Stanley Museum Senior Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art Diana Tuite, who oversaw the installation, notes that “Hope is the Thing with Feathers (The Little Bird)” shares its title and symbolism with an 1891 Emily Dickinson poem. The print portrays a member of New York City’s Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater whose smock is patterned with a soaring bird. Tuite views it as an ideal companion to another of the museum’s recent acquisitions: “Glory,” Elizabeth Catlett’s 1981 bust of the dancer and activist Glory Van Scott. “In each work,” she says, “we see a female artist lifting up the accomplishments of other women in the arts.”

The print’s premiere in “Homecoming” coincides not only with Women’s History Month but also anticipates the Stanley’s forthcoming collection catalog, *In a Time of Witness*. Slated for a fall 2023 release, the catalog will anthologize responses by Iowa Writers Workshop and International Writing Program alumni to works from the Stanley’s permanent collection. Like

the anthology, Tuite explains, Sherald's work is emblematic of the dialogue the museum hopes to foster between visual art and the written word: "I can think of no better object to embody the cross-disciplinary exchanges that drive an academic museum than this print."

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About the University of Iowa Stanley Museum of Art

Established in Iowa City in 1969, the University of Iowa Stanley Museum of Art reopened its doors in August 2022 after a closure of over a decade. The Stanley Museum of Art is a dynamic and innovative teaching and learning resource for the university and its surrounding communities. Its collections include significant holdings of African art, twentieth-century painting and sculpture by artists such as Joan Mitchell, Jackson Pollock, Sam Gilliam, and Isamu Noguchi, works on paper, textiles, and ceramics.