



Stanley Museum of Art

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NEWS RELEASE

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Stanley Museum of Art’s Newest Exhibition Explores the Black Midwest Alongside Extensive Community Engagement Programs

Iowa City, Iowa – The University of Iowa Stanley Museum of Art will open its latest exhibition, *it’s a fine thing*, on February 13, 2025, offering an exploration of the Black Midwest and a series of community engagement programs. Curated by Katherine Simóne Reynolds and supported by the Terra Foundation for American Art, the exhibition runs through July 2025 and invites dialogue and reflection on the region's often-overlooked history and vibrant artistic landscape.

it’s a fine thing explores themes of erasure, community, and the complex relationship between Black Midwesterners and the land through a range of artistic mediums, including painting, sculpture, photography, video, and performance. The exhibition features work by renowned artists such as LaToya Ruby Frazier, Mitchell Squire, Helen LaFrance, and Reynolds herself, alongside pieces from the Stanley Museum of Art's collection. Visitors will encounter thought-provoking installations, such as a large -scale recreation of Maurice L. Tracy's powerful poem *No Other Gods* and ephemera related to the historic Black coal mining town of Buxton, Iowa, prompting reflection on the erasure of Black history in the region.

“*it’s a fine thing* invites viewers to ask questions about the Black Midwestern experience,” said Reynolds, “I hope that through this show, visitors are able to form their own unique interpretation around what Black Midwestern life can be and has been.”

Beyond the exhibition, the Stanley Museum of Art is committed to engaging in community outreach through a robust series of programs. Anchoring these efforts is the NEA Big Read program, featuring Toni Morrison's novel, *Beloved*. Free copies of the book will be distributed to the public, encouraging a community-wide reading experience and discussions surrounding the novel's themes, which resonate deeply with the exhibition's focus on the Black Midwest. Curator of Special Projects at the Stanley Museum of Art, Derek (DK) Nnuro has worked closely with Reynolds to ensure the community wide impact of the show through this special programming.

“*Beloved* offers an important historical anchor to the show,” says Nnuro, “through the NEA Big Read program, we aim to engage in a more comprehensive conversation about the Black Midwest, connecting the past to the present.”

In addition to the NEA Big Read, the Stanley Museum will host a variety of other community-focused events, including film screenings, panel discussions, and workshops, all designed to complement the exhibition and broaden its reach. These programs will provide opportunities for community members to connect with the art, with each other, and gain a deeper understanding of the complex narratives of the Black Midwest.

“It’s been an honor to work with Katherine on this exhibition, which has provided an opportunity for all of us here at the Stanley to learn about our collection, and about the historical and contemporary experiences of Black people in the Midwest” said Lauren Lessing, director of the Stanley Museum of Art. “We are tremendously grateful to Katherine for the insight and wisdom she brought to this beautiful project, and to the Terra Foundation for making it possible.”

Reynolds’s vision for *it’s a fine thing* extends beyond the traditional boundaries of the Midwest to include the Rust Belt, highlighting the shared experiences of Black communities in these regions. Her curatorial approach, deeply rooted in poetry and meditation, invites viewers to contemplate the subtle nuances of the Black Midwestern experience through language and evocative imagery.

it’s a fine thing is the second of two guest-curated shows organized by the Stanley Museum of Art and supported by the Terra Foundation for American Art. The first show, titled *Drawn Over: Reclaiming Our Histories*, was on view from August 2023 through January 2024 and centered on the museum’s collection of Native American ledger drawings. These exhibitions aim to showcase a diverse and inclusive collection and invest in communities that have been historically underrepresented in museum spaces.

Reynolds was supported by a five-person curatorial cohort of advisors, including Kemi Adeyemi, Angel Bat Dawid, Ashley Howard, Mpho Matsipa, and Terrion L. Williamson, whose expertise enriched the exhibition's development.

it’s a fine thing is generously supported by the Terra Foundation for American Art, the Members Special Exhibition Fund and Dr. Jon J. Tanja.

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About Kathrine Simóne Reynolds

Katherine Simóne Reynolds is an artist, scholar, and curator who investigates emotional dialects and psychogeographies of Blackness. Her art physicalizes emotions and experiences through portrait photography, video, choreography, and sculpture. Reynolds has exhibited and performed work at the Pulitzer Arts Foundation and The Luminary in St. Louis and at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, among others. Solo exhibitions include the Jacob Lawrence Gallery, Seattle, and the Graham Foundation. She has lectured widely, including at the Contemporary Art Museum and The Saint Louis Art Museum. Reynolds is also a member of the Black Midwest Initiative at the University of Minnesota. Alongside her visual art practice, she has embarked on curatorial projects at The Luminary, SculptureCenter, and exhibitions for Counterpublic 2023 and the Clyfford Still Museum.

About the Terra Foundation for American Art

In partnership with organizations and individuals locally and globally, the Terra Foundation fosters intercultural dialogues and encourages transformative practices to expand narratives of American art.

Learn more at terraamericanart.org

About the National Endowment for the Arts Big Read

The NEA Big Read annually presents a selection of novels, poetry collections, short story collections, memoirs, and/or books of essays that inspire conversation and creative responses. Funding is then provided to nonprofit organizations around the country to host dynamic community-wide reading programs designed around one of these books and in collaboration with local partners to develop and conduct engaging events and activities. Organizations apply for funding through a grants program managed by Arts Midwest.

Learn more at <https://www.arts.gov/initiatives/nea-big-read/about-big-read>

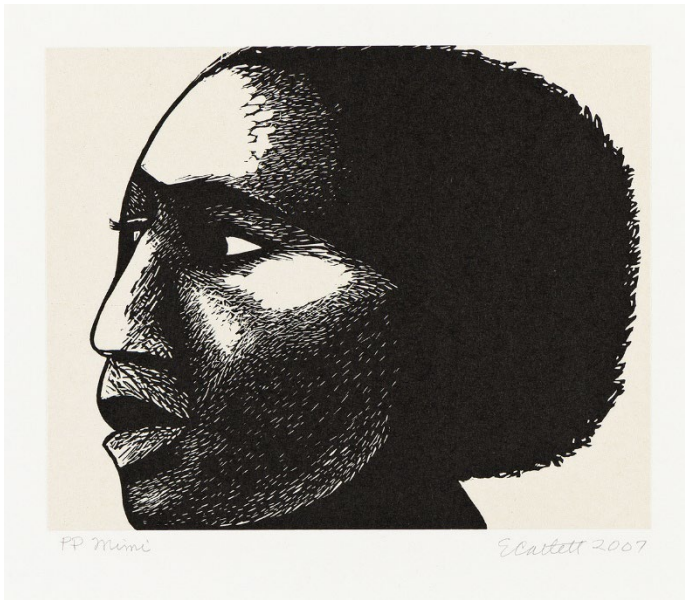
About the University of Iowa Stanley Museum of Art

The University of Iowa Stanley Museum of Art is a leading university art museum that serves as a focal point for members of the public as well as a multi-disciplinary tool and creative hub for students across campus. The Stanley has one of the most important university-owned art collections in the country, including significant holdings of African art, 20th-century painting and sculpture, works on paper, textiles, and ceramics. Their world-class collection began with acquisitions made in the 1930s to support the nation's first Master of Fine Arts program. The collection continued to evolve as generations of UI faculty and students, including Grant Wood, Elizabeth Catlett, Miriam Schapiro, Philip Guston, and Ana Mendieta, shaped the field of American art.

For more information, visit stanleymuseum.uiowa.edu.



Katherine Simóne Reynolds,
'The Last Place They Thought Of,'
2023
Fiber/rag inkjet print
30 x 45 in.
Courtesy the artist



Elizabeth Catlett
Mimi
2007
Linoleum cut mounted on Iwami paper
15 x 16 in. (38.1 x 40.64 cm)
Leola N. Bergmann Print Fund 2013.5
Stanley Museum of Art



Elizabeth Catlett
Singing Their Songs from For My People
1992
Lithograph
22 3/4 x 18 3/4 in. (57.79 x 47.63 cm)
Museum Purchase, 2006.74C
Stanley Museum of Art



**Photograph from the Patrobas Cassius
Robinson Papers**
UI Libraries Special Collections and Archives



Mitchell Squire
Aloft Inside an Empty Room
2021
Digital image
Courtesy the artist

For high-resolution images, contact
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