Winners of the Museum of the African Diaspora
Emerging Artists Program 2024-25

California Artists Mary Graham, Zekarias Thompson, Corinne Smith, Jessica Monette, and Soleé Darrell Awarded Exhibition Space as EAP Winners Beginning March 27th, 2024.

San Francisco (March 4, 2024) – The Museum of the African Diaspora (MoAD) today announced Mary Graham, Corinne Smith, Zekarias Thompson, Jessica Monette, and Soleé Darrell as the winners of the museum’s annual Emerging Artists Program. The San Francisco Bay Area artists were selected from among hundreds of applicants for the opportunity to exhibit at MoAD. Applicants submitted works that address the cultural and artistic richness of the African Diaspora.

Mary Graham is the first artist to exhibit during this season of Emerging Artists with an exhibition entitled Value Test: Brown Paper opening March 27, 2024, followed by Corrine Smith, opening May 29, 2024, Zekarias Thompson, opening July 24, 2024, Jessica Monette, opening November 6, 2024, and Soleé Darrell, opening December 18, 2024.

SELECTED ARTISTS:

Mary Graham
Value Test: Brown Paper
Opening March 27, 2024

Value Test: Brown Paper is an exhibition of portraits depicting fictional Black women rendered in oil on brown paper bags. The eponymous “paper bag tests” were historically conducted amongst the Black upper classes to gauge entry into elite spaces, granting access only to those lighter than the brown paper. Through this work Graham reflects on colorism, classism, and power, and it’s roots in white supremacy. With colorism’s continued prevalence in the contemporary as both an internalized and systemic phenomenon, she attempts in this work to foster conversation, reconciliation, and a level of inter-communal healing.

Rooted in an African-American spiritual tradition, Graham's work begins with the veneration of her own lineage, expanding to encompass themes of generational love, collective human origin, and our relationship to the unknown. Graham works primarily in figuration and portraiture, and is also a classically trained vocalist.

Corinne Smith
Silene Capensis
Opening May 29, 2024

Since early childhood Critty Smitty has been sensitive to the unknown. Suffering from night terrors, sleep paralysis, and, sometimes, a strange difficulty in establishing between what is real and what isn’t. They are of the notion that maybe it all lies

somewhere in between. With the use of Silene Capensis root, the African Dream root, Critty Smitty has been practicing guided meditation and dream re-entry to access powerful dreams that provide knowledge and symbolism to establish further connection to the divine, ancestral lineage and to promote healing. Critty Smitty utilizes dream re-entry, intuitive plant medicine and color as a medium to cultivate a deeper relationship with difficult aspects of self, revealing prolific mythologies in spiritual realms. Paintings, illustrations, risographs, and animations offer a peek behind the curtain at the etheric process to discover self and ancestors, utilizing non-colonial ways of knowledge.

Zekarias Thompson  
**The Meeting Place**  
**Opening July 24, 2024**

This exhibition explores the possibilities of agency for the individual and the collective, within our conceptual, physiological, and geographical landscapes. Diptychs of photographic landscapes embellished with oil paint correspond with eight musical compositions playing continuously in the room, which are translated into a visual score of oil on canvas, while sculptures double as seating arranged to create opportunities for group listening and observation. The relationships created by these overlapping disparate seeming gestures intervene with entrenched ideas about the nature and interpretation of the art object, its authorship, and its viewership. Zekarias Thompson utilizes sonic composition, spatial facilitation, photography, collaborative group practice & performance, writing, and mark-making to intervene with entrenched historical narratives around individual and collective self-deception and embodied trauma. They have presented work at venues including the Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, The Lab, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, Museum of the African Diaspora, and Eternal Now in the Bay area, as well as Associate Gallery and Open in Reykjavik, Iceland.

Jessica Monette  
**Unveiling Histories: A Fabricated Archive**  
**Opening November 6, 2024**

This exhibition is a deeply personal exploration, tracing fragmented pieces of Monette's lineage disrupted not only by the Middle Passage but by ongoing events that challenge her ability to sustain a familial archive. The turbulent terrain of Hurricane Katrina in 2005 further underscored the difficulty of this preservation. From ancient to recent pasts, this collection amalgamates items and information, forming a fabricated archive that documents a colonial and ancestral past reshaped by historical turbulence.
Originally from New Orleans, Jessica Monette's work delves into her heritage, weaving tangible yet elusive threads of ancestral legacies. The work then becomes a gumbo of artifacts that are inherited, found and fabricated. Monette's artistic expression spans the realms of painting, sculpture, installation, and more seamlessly connecting these themes.

**Solé Darrell**  
**Opening December 18, 2024**

Solé Darrell's hope with this exhibition is to create an environment that facilitates introspection through abstraction and color. The show will contain six silk velvet paintings along with a triptych, soundscape and offering/altar stand. The triptych will be large enough to allow the viewer to be fully enveloped by color and texture. The sound element will be a recording of sounds taken from moments of Darrell's life in which she feels most grateful to be alive. There will be a stand that has a flower arrangement and candle as an offering to the universe, as well as a seating area to allow the viewer to rest with the work. Solé Darrell (1989) is a Bermudian born artist based in Northern California. She is self taught and her work is purely intuition-driven. She explores the experience and depth of being a human in this world while connecting with other worlds through practice and meditation. Each stroke encompasses color, vulnerability, passion, texture, and complete faith in the universe. Her hope is to bring some optimism to the viewer and bridge the gap between the intuitive world and the physical world.

**PANELISTS:**

**Natasha Becker**

Born and raised in Cape Town, South Africa, Natasha Becker is an independent curator and writer of contemporary art based in New York. With expertise in contemporary African art, her research, writing, and curatorial practice focuses on politically engaged art. She is one of the founding curators of Assembly Room a curatorial platform dedicated to the professional empowerment of independent women curators. This year she co-curated “For Which It Stands” launched by the esteemed Ford Foundation Gallery and presented by Assembly Room, and “Living in America” at the renowned International Print Center New York; she also organized “A Perfect Storm” as Curator in Residence at Faction Art Projects in Harlem, New York. Previously she co-curated “Radical Love” and “Perilous Bodies” at the distinguished Ford Foundation Art Gallery (New York, 2019), co-founded and co-organized a curator-driven commercial platform “The Underline Show” at the Museum of African Art and Design (Johannesburg, 2019). She also co-curated “Present Passing” with Patrick Flores for the Osage Art Foundation (Hong Kong, 2019) and curated the first solo show of artist LeAndra LeSeur “Girls Girls Girls” at Assembly Room (New York, 2019). Natasha Becker is passionate about philanthropy and is a founding member and volunteer.
mentor at Art for Action South Africa, a student-led organization dedicated to raising funds to support local people making a difference in their communities. Launched in 2020, the organization’s first fundraising campaign was a successful art auction offering artworks generously donated by art students, emerging and established artists in South Africa and internationally.

Paul Henderson
Paul Henderson is a nationally recognized speaker, veteran prosecutor and champion for social justice. Henderson has spent his entire professional career working in public service for the city of San Francisco and most recently was appointed Director of the Department of Police Accountability, where he and his legal team are tasked with investigating all complaints regarding police use of force and misconduct. Henderson has developed curricula and conducted trainings for legal professionals, public agencies and elected officials across the country. Known for his commitment and dedication to public service, Henderson was recently awarded California’s Lawyer of the Year by the California Association of Black Lawyers. His combination of legal experience and an informed perspective have made Henderson a nationally sought after speaker and on-air personality. In 2016, he was also honored to be part of a select group invited to the White House to participate in a national forum addressing justice reform. Henderson sits on the editorial board for California Lawyer Magazine and is a contributing writer to Politico.com. He also appears regularly on MSNBC, CNN, PBS and is the on-air legal analyst for the SF affiliate of CBS news. A native of San Francisco, Paul earned a BA from UCLA and a JD from Tulane University where he also served as class president.

Mildred Howard
Mildred Howard (b. 1945, San Francisco, CA) is best known for her multimedia assemblage work and installations. Howard completed her Associates of Arts Degree & Certificate in Fashion Art at the College of Alameda, Alameda, CA in 1977 and received her M.F.A. from Fiberworks Center for the Textile Arts at John F. Kennedy University in Berkeley, CA in 1985. In 2015, she received the Lee Krasner Award in recognition of a lifetime of artistic achievement. She has also been the recipient of the Nancy Graves Grant for Visual Artists (2017), the Joan Mitchell Foundation Award (2004/5), a fellowship from the California Arts Council (2003), the Adaline Kent Award from San Francisco Art Institute (1991), and, most recently, received the Douglas G. MacAgys Distinguished Achievement Award at San Francisco Art Institute (2018). Her large-scale installations have been mounted at: Creative Time in New York, InSITE in San Diego, CA; the Museum of Glass in Tacoma, WA; the National Museum of Women in the Arts; the New Museum in New York, the City of Oakland; and the San Francisco Arts Commission and International Airport. Her works reside in the permanent collections of: the Berkeley Art Museum, Berkeley, CA; the de Young Museum, San Francisco, CA; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA; the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, San Diego, CA; the Museum of Glass and Contemporary Art, Tacoma, WA; the Oakland Museum, Oakland, CA; SFMOMA, San Francisco, CA; and the San Jose Museum of Art, San Jose, CA, among others.

Genevieve Hyacinthe
Genevieve Hyacinthe is an Assistant Professor of History of Art and Visual Culture and a member of the MFA Fine Art Faculty at California College of the Arts in San Francisco. Her West African and Haitian dance and drumming practices intersect with her academic work. She extends phenomenological and self-critical explorations of the body as a cultural and sensorial locus point into her research, writing, and teaching. Dedicated to D. Soyini Madison’s “loving ethnography,” Hyacinthe views research and writing as critical and heartfelt artistic practice that exposes blind spots and shortcomings as opposed to maintaining closed, authoritative positions. Hyacinthe’s recent book, Radical Virtuosity: Ana Mendieta and the Black Atlantic was published by MIT Press in 2019. Her current book project is about contemporary Black sculpture. Hyacinthe is continually wondering about risk in art practice, privileging but not limited to writing, research, dance, and forms of abstraction and poetry across media.

Tahirah Rasheed
Born in West Oakland, CA, Tahirah Rasheed is an artrepreneur and founder of “Fresh Made Productions” (arts content promotion and production), and “See Black Women” (a movement to be led by activists, curators, artists, writers, photographers and poets). See Black Women is a new venture focusing on triumph over the twin parallels of invisibility and hyper-visibility of black women through a platform dedicated to elevating the work of black women, political campaigns, and events. As an internationally traveled Disc Jockey, former medical lab assistant, and published researcher, Tahirah lends her many talents and experiences to each venture in service of community. She is focused on using art and business to fortify broader movements for justice. Her passion for the arts grows with every exploration of possibility. Tahirah is working toward a day in which her ventures are part of the sustainable support of black art in service of black freedom, black love, and black prosperity.
ABOUT MUSEUM OF AFRICAN DIASPORA (MOAD)
Museum of the African Diaspora (MoAD) is an arts and cultural institution dedicated to preserving the stories of our common African heritage and sharing those stories with audiences from around the world. Situated in the heart of the Yerba Buena Arts District in San Francisco, MoAD is actively engaged in building a community that inspires, educates and connects people of all ages and backgrounds.

MoAD seeks to build a deeper understanding of the African Diaspora through art, programs and events that cultivate wonder and excitement about the ways in which our personal histories are connected. As a nonprofit organization, the museum’s operations and programs are supported by grants and contributions from public and private sources.

As a Smithsonian Institution affiliate, MoAD has access to the Smithsonian Institution’s 136 million artifact collection for research, exhibits and programming. MoAD joins a network of more than 180 organizations in 45 states, Puerto Rico and Panama with a shared goal of creating lasting experiences that educate, inspire and broaden perspectives on science, history, world culture and the arts. To learn more and to support MoAD, visit www.moadsf.org.

###

CALENDAR EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE:
Mary Graham: Value Test: Brown Paper—opening March 27, 2024;
Corinne Smith—opening May 29, 2024;
Zekarias Thompson—opening July 24, 2024;
Jessica Monette—opening November 6, 2024;
Soleé Darrell—opening December 18, 2024;

WHAT:
MOAD PRESENTS FIVE NEW EMERGING ARTISTS EXHIBITIONS

WHERE:
Museum of the African Diaspora (MoAD) 685 Mission Street (at 3rd).
San Francisco, CA 94105

WHEN:
March 27, 2024 | May 29, 2024 | July 24, 2024 | November 6, 2024 | December 18, 2024

HOURS:
Mon-Tues – Closed
Wed-Sat – 11am-6pm
Sun – 12-5pm
Closed on the following holidays: Juneteenth, Fourth of July, Thanksgiving & The Day After Thanksgiving, Christmas Day, Boxing Day, New Years Day

ADMISSION:
General Admission: $12
Students/ Seniors/ Educators: $6
MoAD Members/Active Duty Military/Children 12 & Under: Free
Admission is FREE on the second Saturday of each month thanks to KP Thrive!

FOR MORE INFO:
Please visit moadsf.org and follow @moadsf on Facebook, Twitter & Instagram.

###