



SMART MUSEUM OF ART
THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

Calling on the Past: Selections from the Collection

On view March 21, 2023–February 4, 2024 | Public reception Tuesday, April 11, 6–9 pm

**Multiple histories collide in this long-term display drawn from
the Smart Museum of Art's collection**



The University of Chicago's **Smart Museum of Art** showcases several recent acquisitions and the breadth and depth of its holdings through the new exhibition *Calling on the Past: Selections from the Collection* (March 21, 2023–February 4, 2024). The exhibition forgoes traditional ways of displaying art—such as by chronology, geography, or media—to reimagine artists in active conversations across centuries and cultures. Installed in imaginative groupings based on visual symmetry, objects are paired to reveal wide-ranging themes including identity, expressivity, love, innovation, reclamation, and loss.

The exhibition opens with works by **Kerry James Marshall** and **Auguste Rodin**—a pairing that speaks to physical and art historical voids. Elsewhere in the galleries, visitors are invited to reflect upon the luminous use of color in **Mark Rothko's** *No 2*. (1962) and **Luca Cambiaso's** *Madonna and Child with Saint John the Baptist and Saint Benedict* (circa 1562); landscapes by **Léon-Augustin Lhermitte** and **Derrick Woods-Morrow** that probe the politics of rest and recreation; a collection of architectural fragments from the ancient world, medieval churches, and **Frank Lloyd Wright's** Midway Gardens; and artistic traditions that connect the mended forms of a thirteenth-century

Korean stoneware vessel and **Yeesookyung's** *Translated Vase* (2007). Throughout, the exhibition reveals the ways in which the Smart Museum's collection has expanded in recent years to encompass a diverse array of contemporary art practices, including works on view for the first time by **Rasheed Araeen, Amir H. Fallah, Ivy Haldeman, Whitfield Lovell, Lauren Quin, and Kishio Suga.**

"*Calling on the Past* is an invitation to experience the Smart's collection anew," said **Jennifer Carty**, Associate Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art. "The show borrows its title from a 2018 painting by the artist Amir H. Fallah that raises questions about portraiture and the historical systems used to identify and represent ourselves. In a similar vein, this exhibition seeks to shake up standard approaches to permanent collection displays while inviting new readings and narratives."

"*Calling on the Past* offers a compelling selection of artworks from the Smart Museum's collection. These pairings—of old and new, time and place, color and form, familiar and unfamiliar—showcase the collection as a dynamic resource for reflection and conversation across fields of study," said **Vanja V. Malloy**, Dana Feitler Director of the Smart Museum. "I'm thrilled to welcome our community to again experience the strengths of our holdings, and to join in considering the further potential for teaching, learning, and engagement with the collection as the Smart moves toward our 50th anniversary in 2024."

The Smart Museum celebrates *Calling on the Past* with a special **reception on Tuesday, April 11, from 6–9 pm.** The evening event is free and open to the public and features a curator-led walkthrough, gallery talks, and performances that engage with works on view by puppetry artist **Samuel J. Lewis II** and poet **Audrey Petty**. The program is presented in conjunction with EXPO ART WEEK and EXPO CHICAGO.

About the exhibition

"Knowing the past is as astonishing a performance as knowing the stars. Astronomers look only at old light. There is no other light for them to look at. This old light of dead or distant stars was emitted long ago and it reaches us only in the present."—George Kubler

Calling on the Past is inspired in part by art historian George Kubler's seminal text *The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things* (1962), which argues the art of the past is in constant conversation with the present. Kubler replaces the notion of art historical styles with the understanding that time is both linear and looped, and artists have been revisiting the same sets of questions across the ages. Rather than emphasizing objects' original context, the exhibition inserts them into imaginative groupings, unraveling historical hierarchies and encouraging visitors to see the Smart Museum's collection with fresh eyes.

In total, *Calling on the Past* features more than 40 works in different media from across the Smart's collection. Due to light sensitivity, select works on paper will be rotated in and out of display over the course of the year-long exhibition.

About

Calling on the Past: Selections from the Collection is curated by Jennifer Carty, Associate Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art. Support for this exhibition has been provided by the Smart Museum's Joan & Stanley Freehling Fund for Arts, Helen and Jack Halpern Fund, Janis Kanter and Thomas McCormick Endowment, Eloise W. Martin Fund, Inge and Edward Maser Memorial Fund, and the Museum's SmartPartners.

The exhibition is presented in the Richard and Mary L. Gray Gallery and the Elisabeth and William M. Landes Gallery.

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Images

Sam Gilliam, *Rim*, 1970, Oil and epoxy on unstretched canvas. Smart Museum of Art, The University of Chicago, Gift of Debra and Robert N. Mayer from the Robert B. Mayer Memorial Loan Collection, 1983.45.

Amir H. Fallah, *Calling on the Past*, 2018, Acrylic on canvas. Smart Museum of Art, The University of Chicago, Gift of the 2018 Northern Trust Purchase Prize, 2018.46.

About the Smart Museum of Art

The Smart Museum of Art at the University of Chicago is a site for rigorous inquiry and exchange that encourages the examination of complex issues through the lens of art objects and artistic practice. Through strong community and scholarly partnerships, the Museum incorporates diverse ideas, identities, and experiences into its exhibitions and collections, academic initiatives, and public programming. The Smart Museum will celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2024. Admission is always free.

Smart Museum of Art

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