



SMART MUSEUM OF ART
THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

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Solidary & Solitary: The Joyner/Giuffrida Collection

Presented by The Helis Foundation

January 29–May 19, 2019

Smart Museum of Art presents large-scale exhibition of abstract art by African American artists

Commissions new work by Chicago-area artists Bethany Collins, Samuel Levi Jones and Amanda Williams

Honors Pamela Joyner during gala award dinner on April 6, 2019



On the heels of the “brash, vibrant, politically engaged” (*Artforum.com*) and “eye-opening” (*Chicago Sun-Times*) exhibition *The Time Is Now! Art Worlds of Chicago’s South Side, 1960–1980*, the Smart Museum of Art at the University of Chicago opens 2019 with another major show that offers new perspectives on the significant contribution that Black artists have made on the evolution of visual art in the modern era. On view in Chicago from January 29 to May 19, 2019, *Solidary & Solitary: The Joyner/Giuffrida Collection* is highlighted by the premiere of new commissions from Chicago-area artists **Bethany Collins**, **Samuel Levi Jones**, and **Amanda Williams** that are set in dialogue with works made by generations of African American artists and artists of the African diaspora, including **Kevin Beasley**, **Leonardo Drew**, **Charles Gaines**, **Sam Gilliam**, **Norman Lewis**, **Serge Alain Nitegeka**, **Shinique Smith**, and **Lynette Yiadom-Boakye**, among others.

Solidary & Solitary is presented by The Helis Foundation and organized by The Baltimore Museum of Art and The Ogden Museum of Southern Art. The exhibition is drawn from the collection of **Pamela Joyner** and **Alfred Giuffrida**.

“*Solidary & Solitary* is an exhibition of great art that is deeply aligned with the Smart Museum’s commitment to tell a more diverse story through our exhibition program and collecting practices,” said **Alison Gass**, Dana Feitler Director of the Smart Museum. “The Joyner/Giuffrida Collection is an

unparalleled resource and the exhibition challenges us to look again at the history of modern and contemporary art through the creative lens and vital experience of Black artists. We're thrilled to have found a partner who shares our canon-correcting mission and to make this important body of work accessible to our neighbors, students here at the University, and everyone in Chicago."

The Smart Museum will celebrate Pamela Joyner and this presentation of *Solidary & Solitary* during the **Joseph R. Shapiro Award Gala** on Saturday, April 6, 2019 at the University of Chicago. Established in 1995, the award honors collectors whose vision, connoisseurship, and advocacy have been instrumental in advancing understanding through the visual arts and sustaining cultural communities in Chicago and beyond. Proceeds from the award celebration support the Smart's exhibitions and collections, academic initiatives, and public programming, helping keep the Museum free and open to all.

Solidary & Solitary is curated by art historians **Christopher Bedford** and **Katy Siegel** and reveals a rich and complex 70-year history woven from the threads of artistic debates about how to act as a Black artist. Told in a series of solos and duets, the exhibition plays on the tension between the "solitary"—being specifically, uniquely and only oneself—and the "solidary" of collective social identity. The exhibition places a spotlight on individual artists' pursuit of creative freedom in different eras and geographical contexts. A central theme is the power of abstract art as a profound political choice, rather than a stylistic preference for generations of African American artists. The exhibition demonstrates how the freedoms of postwar abstraction took on specific urgency in resisting the imagery of racist mainstream culture on the one hand, and pressures to create prescribed, positive representations of black Americans on the other, in order to create new forms that proposed new ways of being.

The exhibition premiered at the Ogden Museum in New Orleans in September 2017. The national tour includes stops at the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University (Spring 2018); the Snite Museum of Art at the University of Notre Dame (Fall 2018); The Baltimore Museum of Art (Summer 2019); and the Pérez Art Museum Miami (Spring 2020).

About the Joyner/Giuffrida Collection

The Joyner/Giuffrida Collection was started in 1999 by Pamela J. Joyner and Alfred J. Giuffrida and originally focused on abstract work by post-war and contemporary African American artists. Comprised of hundreds of works spanning four generations of artists, the collection ranges from pieces dated 1945 to the present day.

About the exhibition

Solidary & Solitary: The Joyner/Giuffrida Collection is presented by The Helis Foundation and organized by The Ogden Museum of Southern Art and the Baltimore Museum of Art. Support for this exhibition has been provided by the Smart Museum's Feitler Center for Academic Inquiry Fund and by Principal Sponsor Mary Smart and the Smart Family Foundation of New York. Support for Bethany Collins's commission has been provided by Lead Sponsor Barbara Fosco. Support for Amanda Williams's

commission has been provided by Lead Sponsor the Ziegler-Orloff Family Fund. Additional support has been provided by the Museum's SmartPartners.

The exhibition is co-curated by Christopher Bedford, Dorothy Wagner Wallis Director of the Baltimore Museum of Art and Katy Siegel, Senior Curator for Research and Programming at The Baltimore Museum of Art and inaugural Eugene V. and Clare E. Thaw Endowed Chair in Modern American Art at Stony Brook University. The Smart Museum presentation and commissions are overseen by Alison Gass, Dana Feitler Director, and Jennifer Carty, Associate Curator of Modern & Contemporary Art.

Solidary & Solitary presenting sponsor The Helis Foundation is a Louisiana private foundation, established and funded by the William G. Helis Family. The Art Funds of The Helis Foundation advance access to the arts for the community through contributions that sustain operations for, provide free admission to, acquire works of art, and underwrite major exhibitions and projects within the Greater New Orleans area.



The exhibition is presented in the Smart Museum's Robert and Joan Feitler Gallery, Richard and Mary L. Gray Gallery, Elisabeth and William M. Landes Gallery, and Joel and Carole Bernstein Gallery.

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Images

Sam Gilliam. *After Glow*. 1972, The Joyner/Giuffrida Collection. © Sam Gilliam, Courtesy of the artist.

Kevin Beasley. *Bronx Fitted*. 2015, The Joyner/Giuffrida Collection. © Courtesy of the artist and Casey Kaplan, New York; photo by Jean Vong.

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 first opened in 1974. Admission is always free.

Mission

The Smart Museum of Art at the University of Chicago opens the world through art and ideas.

Smart Museum of Art

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Hours

Tuesday–Sunday, 10 am–5 pm
Thursday evenings until 8 pm

Galleries are closed Mondays and holidays.

Admission is always free. All are welcome.