

THE BMA PRESENTS *OLETHA DEVANE: TRACES OF THE SPIRIT*

BMA Latrobe Spring House Displays Work of Acclaimed Baltimore-Based Artist

BALTIMORE, MD (April 25, 2019)—The BMA’s Spring House is transformed this summer with a multimedia installation by Baltimore-based artist Oletha DeVane. On view June 19 through October 20, 2019, *Oletha DeVane: Traces of the Spirit* features a selection from the artist’s ongoing *spirit sculpture* series. Seven works are displayed in an altar-like setting with the sound of water, referencing both the cooling spring that once ran through the Spring House’s structure and the forced Atlantic migration of the enslaved persons who labored in it.

“This exhibition illuminates Oletha DeVane’s quest to communicate her vision of the painful and troubled specificities of black American history side-by-side with her embrace of a pan-spiritual relationship to the divine,” said Christopher Bedford, BMA Dorothy Wagner Wallis Director. “We are delighted to present these extraordinary works, which reflect an awareness of global artistic practices and a strategic use of American craft sensibilities that is situated within her profound roots in the local Baltimore creative community.”



DeVane is an accomplished multimedia artist whose paintings, prints, sculpture, and video draw upon diverse spiritual and African diasporic traditions to reference narratives of memory, transformation, and loss. She derives her inspiration from the Baha’i faith, Greek mythology, Yoruba religious practices, Buddhism, Haitian Vodou, and biblical references, among others. The five intricate sculptures in this exhibition, dated from 2007 to 2018, are made of vessels richly adorned with beads, figurines, sequins, wood, and fabric. Snakes, birds, saints, and mermaids populate the dense surfaces, suggesting the transition between worlds or states of existence. The installation also includes two large new paintings. The Baltimore-based collective strikeWare produced the ambient sound of water recorded in Haiti that plays as part of the installation.

The circa 1812 Spring House (located on the west side of the BMA grounds) was designed by renowned American architect Benjamin Henry Latrobe for U.S. Senator Robert Goodloe Harper’s Oakland estate in North Baltimore. The Greek revival Spring House was moved from Oakland to its current site in 1932. It was restored in 2003 with support from the Richard C. von Hess Foundation and housed the exhibition of works by Baltimore-based artist Richard Cleaver in 2005 and an installation by Ann Veronica Janssens in 2018.

Oletha DeVane: Traces of the Spirit is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue with essays by scholars Dr. Lowery Stokes Sims and Dr. Leslie King-Hammond and an interview with the artist by BMA Curator of American Art Virginia Anderson.

This exhibition is curated by BMA Curator of American Art Virginia Anderson.

Oletha DeVane

Oletha DeVane (b. 1950, Baltimore) received her BFA from the Maryland Institute College of Art and MFA in painting from the University of Massachusetts in Amherst. Her first major exhibition was at the Springfield Museum of Art in

Massachusetts in 1976. Since then, her work has been featured in numerous solo and group exhibitions in the greater Baltimore/Washington DC region and throughout the U.S. In 2003, the Reginald F. Lewis Museum of African American History and Culture in Baltimore commissioned DeVane to create a permanent video installation documenting Maryland's history of lynching. DeVane is also an educator and the former head of visual arts at McDonogh School in Maryland and current director of the school's Tuttle Gallery. She was honored at McDonogh School in 2007 as a recipient of the Rollins/Luktemeyer Chair for Distinguished Teaching.

THE BALTIMORE MUSEUM OF ART

Founded in 1914, The Baltimore Museum of Art is a major cultural destination recognized for engaging diverse audiences through dynamic exhibitions and innovative educational and community outreach programs. The BMA's internationally renowned collection of 95,000 objects encompasses more than 1,000 works by Henri Matisse anchored by the famed Cone Collection of modern art, as well as one of the nation's finest holdings of prints, drawings, and photographs. The galleries showcase an exceptional collection of art from Africa; important works by established and emerging contemporary artists; outstanding European and American paintings, sculpture, and decorative arts; significant artworks from China; ancient Antioch mosaics; and exquisite textiles from around the world. The 210,000- square-foot museum is also distinguished by a grand historic building designed in the 1920s by renowned American architect John Russell Pope and two beautifully landscaped gardens featuring an array of 20th-century sculpture. The BMA is located in Charles Village, three miles north of the Inner Harbor, and is adjacent to the main campus of Johns Hopkins University. General admission to the BMA is free so that everyone can enjoy the power of art.

VISITOR INFORMATION

General admission to the BMA is free. Special exhibitions may be ticketed. The BMA is open Wednesday through Sunday from 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. The museum is closed Monday, Tuesday, New Year's Day, July 4, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. The BMA is located at 10 Art Museum Drive, three miles north of Baltimore's Inner Harbor. For general museum information, call 443-573-1700 or visit artbma.org.

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Image: Oletha DeVane. *Spring*. 2018. Courtesy of the artist.