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BMA PRESENTS EXHIBITION OF WORKS BY SONDHEIM ARTSCAPE PRIZE FINALISTS

BALTIMORE, MD (June 9, 2016)—The Baltimore Museum of Art and the Baltimore Office of Promotion & The Arts present one of the summer’s most highly anticipated exhibitions. The Janet & Walter Sondheim Artscape Prize Finalists exhibition is on display in the Baltimore Museum of Art’s special exhibition galleries from Wednesday, June 22 through Sunday, July 31, 2016. The exhibition showcases artwork by the seven finalists competing for the Janet & Walter Sondheim Artscape Prize, a \$25,000 fellowship given each year to a visual artist or visual arts collaborators living and working in the Greater Baltimore region. The Janet & Walter Sondheim Artscape Prize exhibition is held in conjunction with Artscape and is produced by the Baltimore Office of Promotion & The Arts in partnership with the Baltimore Museum of Art and the Maryland Institute College of Art.

The 2016 finalists are: Theo Anthony, Stephanie Barber, Darcie Book, Larry Cook, FORCE: Upsetting Rape Culture, Eric Kruszewski, and Christos Palios. The winner will be announced at an awards ceremony at the BMA on Saturday, July 9, at 7 p.m. This year’s jurors are: Tim Griffin, Executive Director and Chief Curator at The Kitchen; Rujeko Hockley, Assistant Curator of Contemporary Art at the Brooklyn Museum; and Mia Locks, Co-Curator of The Whitney Museum of American Art’s 2017 Whitney Biennial.

The Janet & Walter Sondheim Artscape Prize exhibition is held in conjunction with Artscape, America’s largest free arts festival, and is produced by the Baltimore Office of Promotion & The Arts. Artscape features more than 150 fine artists, fashion designers and craftspeople; visual art exhibitions, outdoor sculpture, and photography; live concerts on three outdoor stages; a full schedule of performing arts including dance, opera, theater, and experimental music; family events such as hands-on projects, children’s entertainers, and street theater; and an extensive variety of local food and beverage vendors. An exhibition of the semifinalists’ work will be shown in MICA’s Decker and Meyerhoff galleries at 1303 West Mount Royal Avenue July 15 through July 31. Artscape’s total economic impact on Baltimore City is \$25.97 million, according to a 2012 study by the Baltimore Office of Promotion & The Arts.

A team of BMA staff, including members of the conservation, curatorial, education, installation, and registration departments, collaborated to realize the exhibition at the BMA.

The 2016 Janet & Walter Sondheim Artscape Prize is made possible through the generous support of the Abell Foundation, Alex. Brown & Sons Charitable Foundation, Caplan Family Foundation, Charlesmead Foundation, Ellen Sondheim Dankert, France-Merrick Foundation, Hecht-Levi Foundation, Legg Mason, M&T Charitable Foundation, Amy & Chuck Newhall, Henry & Ruth Blaustein Rosenberg Foundation, M. Sigmund & Barbara Shapiro Philanthropic Fund, John Sondheim and The Whiting-Turner Contracting Company.

This exhibition is generously sponsored by Stiles Tuttle Colwill and Jonathan Gargiulo.

Theo Anthony

Filmmaker and photographer Theo Anthony has explored poignant themes and, at times, political subjects in locations that range from his Baltimore home to Africa. The video *Peace in the Absence of War (Baltimore, MD)* considers responses by citizens, law enforcement, and national media to the death of Freddie Gray and the subsequent Baltimore uprising of April 2015. Anthony addresses this topic further in a series of photographic portraits of helmeted police officers.

Imagery of men and boys in helmets continues in photographs of football players and a child living on the streets of Masisi, a city in the conflict-ridden Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. Cultural rites associated with masculinity are further explored in works about bodybuilding and car shows.

Stephanie Barber

Based in Baltimore, Stephanie Barber is a multi-media artist who works most frequently with film, video, and the written word. She explores the narrative and conceptual dimensions of language, as well as its visual qualities; these are exemplified in the *Lawn Poem* on view.

Barber has created an installation which considers the historical, philosophical, and spiritual ways humans grapple with the concept of “nature.” Encapsulated in the idea of nature are divisions and hierarchies between the domesticated and wild that might also be applied to power dynamics in human relationships. Barber states: “a desire to clearly communicate complex ideas, through humor, inquiry, pathos, and unexpected juxtapositions is at the core of much of my writing and film work.”

Visitors are invited to peer through viewfinders or place a quarter in a vending machine to purchase an idea.

Darcie Book

Darcie Book’s work blurs boundaries between painting and sculpture. Rather than a series of brushstrokes, her wall-based work includes passages of poured, folded, and draped paint that have a strong three-dimensional quality. Although these carefully built-up layers of paint are already dry, they still convey the oozing, tactile qualities that artists experience when they squeeze paint from tubes onto their palettes. In other words, Book’s works emphasize the sensation of paint as an inviting material in itself rather than a component of a flat image.

The Baltimore-based artist also creates installations, painstakingly applying gold leaf to walls and then positioning columns enrobed in colors nearby. The vivid surfaces of the columns are reflected in the gold leaf, producing the effect of a painting executed in space rather than on a single plane.

Larry Cook

Larry Cook, a conceptual artist living in Landover, MD, alters pre-existing text, images, audio, and video in order to illustrate the evolution of racism in America. Using a variety of devices, he captures the attention of visitors and prompts them, whatever their ethnicity, to confront their personal racial biases and the circumstances of contemporary black Americans.

Cook's video *Stockholm Syndrome* juxtaposes film footage from several sources. Images of slaves, taken from the TV series *Roots* (1970) and the movie *Twelve Years a Slave* (2013) are seen alongside footage of the diverse crowd attending Barack Obama's 2008 acceptance speech upon his election as the country's first black president—an event that led to the premature declaration of a post-racial America. The work takes its name from psychological phenomena that cause kidnapping victims to develop empathy for their captors, sometimes even defending them. *Some of My Best Friends are Black*, realized in white neon, takes issue with the frequently heard defense against the charge of racism or white privilege, and encourages us to reflect on the possibility that despite our best intentions, the subconscious may not be immune to the racial biases perpetuated by the media.

FORCE: Upsetting Rape Culture Co-Founded by Hannah Brancato and Rebecca Nagle

FORCE: Upsetting Rape Culture describes itself as a “creative activist effort to upset the culture of rape and promote a culture of consent.” The organization was founded in 2010 by Hannah Brancato and Rebecca Nagle, community organizers and artists living in Baltimore. The group deploys its messages against sexual violence through public art projects and events, as well as through the Internet and media campaigns.

On view is a small portion of FORCE's The Monument Quilt, a growing compilation of the stories of survivors of sexual violence presented on 8-foot by 8-foot squares of red fabric. In 2017, FORCE seeks to bring 6,000 of these quilt squares (produced in workshops across the country) to the National Mall in Washington, D.C., where they will spell out the equally cautionary and consoling phrase “Not Alone.” Accompanying the quilt squares at the BMA is video footage documenting earlier presentations of the quilt. FORCE will also conduct a public awareness program as part of its Sondheim exhibition contribution.

Eric Kruszewski

Eric Kruszewski, a photographer and filmmaker based in Washington, D.C., has undertaken an in-depth exploration of the pioneering LEAD ministry initiated by Saint Matthew Catholic Church in Baltimore. LEAD (LGBT Educating and Affirming Diversity) supports the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender members of its parish and the broader community. In addition to documenting the work of LEAD's director, Father Joseph Muth Jr., Kruszewski conducted interviews with a variety of members of the Saint Matthew Community to reveal the varied backgrounds that have led to their participation in LEAD.

Kruszewski presents his footage as a video altarpiece, surrounded by reclaimed pews. The stories of the individuals involved in LEAD are further detailed in videos presented on digital tablets within the church-like installation. The filmmaker has observed that “LEAD offers a safe place for the diverse LGBT community to congregate, share, and find comfort amidst a larger church environment that does not fully accept them.”

Christos Palios

Christos Palios, a first-generation Greek-American living in Baltimore, photographs both the United States and the country of his ancestors. As long as he can remember, Palios has made regular trips to Greece to spend time with family. While the international media often focuses on the country's economic and refugee crises, the artist offers layered perspectives on contemporary Greek society.

The concrete structures that appear in *Un-Finished // Contemporary Ruins* are abandoned construction projects that punctuate today's Greek landscape. Arranged in a grid, the images call to mind the work of Bernd and Hilla Becher, 20th-century photographers renowned for their dispassionate depiction of water towers, grain elevators, and other industrial buildings. Framed against the grey sky, the skeletal structures of Palios' work are emblematic of Greece's financial troubles. At the same time, they evoke the celebrated temples of Greek antiquity.

In his still life series *Conversations*, Palios photographs tabletops at the close of a meal. The remnants are evidence of the time-honored tradition of gathering with family and friends for nutritional and social sustenance. The inclusion of cell phones and smart phones adds a contemporary time-stamp to the still lifes, calling to mind the benefits of global connectivity, as well as the stresses and distractions of 21st-century living.

THE BALTIMORE MUSEUM OF ART

The Baltimore Museum of Art is home to an internationally renowned collection of 19th-century, modern, and contemporary art. Founded in 1914 with a single painting, the BMA today has 95,000 works of art—including one of the most comprehensive public holdings of works by Henri Matisse in the world. Throughout the museum, visitors will find an outstanding selection of American and European painting, sculpture, and decorative arts; prints and drawings from the 15th century to the present; works by established and emerging contemporary artists; highly regarded objects from Africa; and the Asian art collection with a strength in Chinese ceramics. Two beautifully landscaped gardens display an array of 20th-century sculpture. The 210,000-square-foot museum is distinguished by a grand historic building designed in the 1920s by renowned American architect John Russell Pope. The BMA's \$28 million multi-year renovation has transformed galleries for contemporary, American, African, and Asian art; created an innovative new education center; and improved infrastructure and visitor amenities. Since 2006, the BMA has provided free general admission so that everyone can enjoy the power of art.

Visitor Information

The Baltimore Museum of Art is open Wednesday through Friday, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.; Saturday and Sunday, 11 a.m. – 6 p.m. The museum is closed Mondays, Tuesdays, New Year's Day, July 4, Thanksgiving, and Christmas.

The BMA is located at 10 Art Museum Drive at North Charles and 31st Streets, three miles north of Baltimore's Inner Harbor. For general museum information, call 443-573-1700 or visit artbma.org.

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