Bold New Season Kicks Off: Welcomes Culture Lovers Back to Boca Raton Museum of Art with Timely Messages

— “My Thirteen Presidents” highlights three new exhibitions opening October 7 —
— “Glasstress 2021” among three more new shows that debut January 26 —

The Boca Raton Museum of Art continues leading the way forward, presenting a bold new season of art that caps off this year’s unprecedented journey for cultural institutions. During the earlier months of shelter-in-place because of the pandemic, the Museum’s education team was heralded for providing innovative new online art initiatives for children at home, and for people of all ages. These efforts shine the global spotlight on the community, reminding people all over the world that South Florida, even in the face of the pandemic, is a cultural destination to be reckoned with. The Museum re-opened on June 3, providing a safe haven with the kind of respite that only art can sustain. Two of the shows that were extended beyond the quarantine will continue until January 3: Edward Steichen: In Exaltation of Flowers, and Works on Paper: Drawn from the Collection.

Now, six major new exhibitions will launch the Museum’s new season (three new shows debut on October 7, and three more will open on January 26). The Museum welcomes visitors back with beautifully designed new architectural renovations to the entrance lobby, front desk, and the dazzling new Wolgin Education Center.

**Highlights to See in the Galleries**

Must-sees include *My Thirteen Presidents, by Benjamin Patterson*, a founding member of the Fluxus art movement (the only Black member of Fluxus). His wry presidential portraits strike a curious chord during the present-day election cycle. He juxtaposes the presidents that served during his lifetime (1935-2009, from Roosevelt to Obama) in typical Fluxus fashion: exposing the convergence of their circumstances and the decisions they each made during their presidency.

*He draws the foundation of each president’s character through popular astrology, extending to the cosmos and nature.* Patterson was an accomplished orchestral musician, but he felt forced to leave the U.S. in 1960 to live abroad because no symphonies would hire an African American. The artist said: “America was not yet ready for a Black symphony musician.” Patterson died shortly after President Obama took office — leaving us to wonder how his ironic presidential depictions might have evolved today.
On view from October 7 through January 3, the new exhibition My Presidents and Other Recent Acquisitions features works by seven artists that were chosen to highlight the latest additions to the Museum’s collection. Curated by the Museum’s Assistant Curator, Kelli Bodle, these works explore diverse themes — from Benjamin Patterson’s astrological analysis of thirteen presidents to Jeanne Silverthorne’s sculpted fire extinguishers.

“The Boca Raton Museum of Art’s collection continues to evolve during our 70-year history, and our current initiative is to acquire works by women and by artists of color,” said Irvin Lippman, the Executive Director of the Museum. “Visitors will enjoy works by Kiki Smith, Arlene Shechet, Edouard Duval Carrie, Takuro Kuwata, Charles McGill, Phyllis Galembo, King Houndekpinkou and Gustavo Pérez among the eighty-five works recently added to the collection. Visitors can explore how these artists inspire and challenge us to see the world anew.”

More Highlights to See in the Galleries

The Signing, by Renee Cox (above) was selected by the museum’s Senior Curator, Kathleen Goncharov, as a spotlight work to also showcase how today’s artists tackle thorny subjects.
**The Signing** will be on special loan from the artist, on view this fall. **Renee Cox is a photographer, artist, lecturer, and political activist** who lives in New York and was born in Jamaica. Her work is a revisionist look at one of America’s most historic events during the founding of the nation. The massive, 15-foot long photograph **shows people of color in the place of the founding fathers**. Her interpretation of Howard Chandler Christy’s iconic painting *Scene at The Signing of the Constitution of the United States* leaves visitors spellbound. Some of her subjects wear clothes from the 1700s, some wear today’s clothes, and others are elegantly robed in traditional African garb. This large-scale work was first staged at the American Museum of Natural History. She is a specialist in film and digital portraiture, using light, form, digital technology, and her own signature style to capture the identities and beauty within her subjects. Her photos have provoked conversations at the intersections of cultural work, activism, gender, and African studies.

**More Highlights in the Galleries**

**The Mask**, by the video artist **Trine Lise Nedreaas**, eerily shows the clown character gradually creating his mask. In her series, the mask is used for physical and spiritual protection. The Mask video touches upon who we choose to be and how we are involved in our own destiny. “I make films that portray individuals, often alone. Determined and driven — but always trying,” said Nedreaas. She is known for illuminating strange varieties of human endeavors. Through the mask, human emotions are reflected and ventilated.
Trine Lise Nedreaas: The Entertainers is a new exhibition curated by Kathleen Goncharov, the Senior Curator of the Museum, on view from October 7 to January 3. The films comment on our desire for fame and admiration from others, reflecting our compulsions with social media. The eight video installations by the Norwegian filmmaker include clowns, a contortionist, a sword swallower, a hula-hoop champion, a ventriloquist dummy, a maestro of smoke-filled bubbles, and an elderly woman singing off-key to Frank Sinatra’s I Did it My Way. Her performers are filmed while they are removed from the audiences that usually surround them, left in a timeless space with only themselves and their performance act remaining.

Also opening on October 7 is the presentation of Out of Nature, ceramics by Jeff Whyman. He is based in South Florida, in Delray Beach (part of a continuing series by artists in the region).

Unlike most ceramicists who add and subtract elements over time, Whyman creates his works all in one moment while the clay is still wet. He uses the wheel to throw his vessels while spontaneously adding a mix of materials: sea glass, Chinese crystals, mineral oxides, and more to create unorthodox forms that call to mind rock formations or objects found on the ocean floor.

Three More New Exhibitions in January Continue to Launch the New Season

Glasstress Boca Raton 2021 headlines the second wave of three new shows that open January 26. A sequel to the acclaimed 2016 Glasstress exhibition, the 2021 edition features new artists and thirty-three new works created since the first Boca Glasstress. The Museum’s Senior Curator, Kathleen Goncharov handpicked new works by some of the world’s leading contemporary artists who were paired with master glass artisans at Berengo Studio on the island of Murano in the Venetian lagoon.
Ai Weiwei (pictured left), at the Glasstress studios in Murano next to his spectacular Blossom Chandelier sculpture that will travel by boat from Italy to Boca Raton for Glasstress 2021.

The show-stopper bursts with unexpected shapes emanating from white glass flowers, to surprise the eye: menacing handcuffs, twitter birds, security cameras, and the artist’s hands flashing his middle finger (the latter is his angry response to the Chinese government that imprisoned him).

The title Blossom mirrors the same title that Ai Weiwei gave to his 2014 installation at the notorious federal prison on the island of Alcatraz.

Also opening on January 26, the Museum debuts two more exhibitions for its new season with An Irresistible Urge to Create: The Monroe Family Collection of Florida Outsider Art and Paul Gervais: Faces and Forms. Read more about all of the upcoming shows at bocamuseum.org/art/upcoming-exhibitions.

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About the Boca Raton Museum of Art

Celebrating our 70th anniversary in 2020, the Boca Raton Museum of Art encompasses a creative campus that includes the Museum in Mizner Park, and the Art School. As the “Official Art Museum of the City of Boca Raton,” the Museum has provided seven decades of cultural and artistic service to the community, and to many visitors from around the world. To view a list of current precautions for Covid-10, please visit bocamuseum.org/visitor-policies. Museum hours and more visitor information available at bocamuseum.org/visit.

News media inquiries: Jose Lima and William Spring, editorial@newstravelsfast.com, 305-910-7762.