

:: For Immediate Release::

Art Museum Announces New Acquisition of Allison Janae Hamilton Sculptural Work



Syracuse, NY-- The Syracuse University Art Museum announces the acquisition of *Black Warrior Mask* (2020), a sculptural work by multi-disciplinary artist Allison Janae Hamilton, acquired in consultation with Marianne Boesky Gallery, New York City.

Through blending land-centered folklore and personal family narratives, Hamilton engages haunting yet epic mythologies that address the social and political concerns of today's changing southern terrain, including land loss, environmental justice, climate change, and sustainability. As stated by Hamilton when speaking of her series of works such as *Black Warrior Mask*, "When I saw the photo of the fencing soldiers, I began thinking about Black American soldiers particularly from the rural south fighting in both world wars who would fight for the country only to return to the same or worse conditions of racial violence and apartheid."

As a continuation of the strategic plan embraced by Syracuse University since its founding in 1870 to collect and preserve works of art as a research tool for scholarship by the university, as well as serve as a community educational space with the power to reflect and shape our society, this sculptural work marks an important shift in the museum's collecting plan. Through a critical examination of the scope of the permanent collection, the museum recognized large gaps in representation of all voices, cultures, and themes practiced in the visual arts. A new initiative beginning with this inaugural acquisition, strives to fill those gaps with works of art that reflect our global community, as well as examine interdisciplinary interests such as science, history, politics, and social justice.

"Black Warrior Mask" will be included in the winter 2021 exhibition, "Being Human: Portraits from the Permanent Collection," a virtual display premiering on the museum website (museum.syr.edu) on February 9, as well as on view for SU and SUNY -ESF affiliated visitors in the Shaffer Art Building. "Being Human" draws out the nuances of portraiture throughout time and place, showing its role in reinforcing or critiquing power, exploring, or crafting identity, and expressing the influence of one's community. A public lecture will be presented on Tuesday, April 20 at 2:15pm, via Zoom.

About the artist

Allison Janae Hamilton (b.1984) is a visual artist working in sculpture, installation, photography, and video. She was born in Kentucky, raised in Florida, and her maternal family's farm and homestead lies in the rural flatlands of western Tennessee. Hamilton's relationship with these locations forms the cornerstone of her artwork, particularly her interest in landscape. Using plant matter, layered imagery, complex sounds, and animal remains, Hamilton creates immersive spaces that consider the ways that the American landscape contributes to our ideas of "Americana" and social relationships to space in the face of a changing climate, particularly within the rural American south.

In Hamilton's treatment of land, the natural environment is the central protagonist, not a backdrop, in the unfolding of historic and contemporary narratives. Through blending land-centered folklore and personal family narratives, she engages haunting yet epic mythologies that address the social and political concerns of today's changing southern terrain, including land loss, environmental justice, climate change, and sustainability. Each work contains narratives that are pieced together from folktales, hunting and farming rituals, African-American nature writing, and Baptist hymns. Drawing from all of these references, she envisions what an epic myth looks and feels like in rural terrain. In this vein, Hamilton's art practice centers on imagination in order to meditate on disruption and magic within the seemingly mundane rituals of natural and human-made environments.

For information on upcoming virtual programs such as gallery talks with the curators of virtual exhibitions and close looking object sessions with museum staff examining artworks from the permanent collection, as well as additional virtual exhibitions and activities, make sure to check the website, museum.syr.edu, as well as follow the social media platforms Instagram, Facebook and Twitter @SUArtMuseum.

About the Syracuse University Art Museum

The Syracuse University Art Museum is the campus art museum of Syracuse University. It strives to be a place of rigorous interdisciplinary research, creative thinking, and mindfulness, as well as an inclusive space that serves as a forum for a broad range of discussions that bring people together, uniting the wider community with students, faculty, and staff. A partner of SU's Coalition of Museum and Art Centers, the museum presents up to 20 exhibitions annually, scores of public programs, and an active schedule of class visits. It also manages the Palitz Gallery at the Syracuse University Lubin House in NYC where up to 6 exhibitions a year are presented. The museum's permanent collection of 45,000 artworks from 3500 BCE to present day includes important holdings from many areas of the world. Over the past 35 years, the museum has shared much of its art collection with peer institutions across the country through its traveling exhibition program.

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