



EMORY

MICHAEL C.  
CARLOS  
MUSEUM

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## The Michael C. Carlos Museum presents *Insistent Presence: Contemporary African Art from the Chazen Collection*



NanaYaw Oduro (Ghanaian, b. 1994), *PHILIP*, 2019, inkjet print, 19 5/8 x 29 1/2 in., Sara Guyer and Scott Straus Contemporary African Art Initiative made possible by the Straus Family Foundation, 2021.28.3

[Atlanta, Georgia, August 2025]—The Michael C. Carlos Museum of Emory University presents ***Insistent Presence: Contemporary African Art from the Chazen Collection*** featuring 24 artists who have lived and worked on the African continent and in the diaspora. Together, their works pose questions about histories, identities, and possible futures. On view from September 13 through December 14, 2025, the exhibition is drawn from the collections of the [Chazen Museum of Art at the University of Wisconsin, Madison](#) and curated by Emory art history PhD candidate Margaret Nagawa.

This groundbreaking show includes works of sculpture, painting, ceramics, and printmaking and spotlights powerful, provocative works by African artists, including celebrated Ugandan sculptor Leilah Babirye, who now lives and works in New York City. *Insistent Presence* examines how artists have reimagined the human figure to explore social and political histories, contested identities, and new opportunities for how we might relate to one another. The artists in the exhibition

think about twenty-first-century ways of being in the world and invite us to reflect on ourselves, our relationships, and the worlds we inhabit.

Nagawa's curation promises an immersive journey through the diversity and dynamism of contemporary African art, offering visitors an inspiring glimpse into the artistic vitality of the last decade.

"Emory University has a long-standing commitment to interdisciplinary research into African art," says Margaret Nagawa. "Bringing *Insistent Presence* to the Carlos Museum creates an opportunity to foster conversations about the body in contemporary African art and the permanent collections of figurative works in the Egyptian, Asian, and Greek galleries. *Insistent Presence* feeds into collaborative research and debates among faculty, students, and staff and serves as a source of inspiration for the larger Atlanta public. All but one of the artists in this exhibition are living artists. I hope audiences will enjoy the compelling works in the exhibition that vividly ask important questions about power, change, and resilience. I urge visitors to follow the artistic lives of these artists and think with them about productive ways to build communities based on unity as a shared ethos."

The Michael C. Carlos Museum hosts the second iteration of *Insistent Presence: Contemporary African Art from the Chazen Collection*, advancing the museum's commitment to interdisciplinary, object-based research and learning at Emory University and to fostering dialogue with the broader Atlanta community.

*This exhibition has been made possible in Atlanta by the generous financial support of the Charles S. Ackerman Fund, the Carlos Museum Endowment, the Carlos Museum National Leadership Board, the Mellon Teaching and Training Endowment, and the Carlos Museum Permanent Collection Conservation Fund.*

*Insistent Presence* was organized by The Chazen Museum of Art at The University of Wisconsin–Madison and curated by Guest Curator Margaret Nagawa. Generous support for this exhibition was provided by the Straus Family Foundation.

### **About the Curator**

Margaret Nagawa is a Ph.D. candidate specializing in contemporary African art. Her research interests focus on sculpture and language, addressing questions about debates surrounding the creation, persistence, and contestation of disciplinary divides separating visual and literary arts. She explores these debates by drawing on colonial museum curators' writings, as well as sculpture and poetry produced by Ugandan practitioners. Nagawa's research shows that artists center the human body in forging alternative definitions to the narrow categorizations of art, craft, and literature envisioned by colonial administrators. In doing so, she troubles the position of figurative sculpture as the canonical object in African art while subverting the assumption that East Africa is insignificant within the history of African art.

### **About the Michael C. Carlos Museum**

Set in the heart of Emory's Atlanta campus, the Michael C. Carlos Museum is a dynamic, interdisciplinary center for the study of art and culture, with collections from Africa; ancient Egypt; Nubia and the Near East; ancient Greece and Rome; the Indigenous Americas; and South Asia; as well as American and European Works on Paper. Through our permanent collection galleries, engaging special exhibitions, and innovative programs for audiences of all ages, the Carlos Museum connects the past with the present and the campus with the community. Curators and faculty develop original exhibitions, engage in interdisciplinary research and teaching, and host touring exhibitions that complement our collections and support the teaching mission of the university. The museum's conservators collaborate with staff, faculty, and students to conduct research and manage preventive care on the museum's varied collections. Museum educators reach across the museum, campus, and city to develop opportunities to engage the intellect and the imagination of university students and faculty, preK-12 students and teachers, and the larger Atlanta community.

The Michael C. Carlos Museum is open from Tuesday to Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and on Sunday from noon to 5 p.m. For more information, visit [carlos.emory.edu/visit](http://carlos.emory.edu/visit), call 404.727.4282, or follow @CarlosMuseum on social media.

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