



March 17, 2023

Collaborative Exhibition “Rising Sun: Artists in an Uncertain America” Debuts Art From 20 Artists at Two Philadelphia Museums

Open to the public on March 23, the new exhibition hosted by the African American Museum in Philadelphia and the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts will explore a reoccurring question in American history.

PHILADELPHIA – The African American Museum in Philadelphia (AAMP) and the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (PAFA) have partnered to host the joint exhibition, *Rising Sun: Artists in An Uncertain America*, which will open on March 23, 2023. Featuring 20 artists at two locations, the exhibition will debut a collection of mixed-media art that responds to the question “is the sun rising or setting on the experiment of American democracy?”

Curated collaboratively by AAMP and PAFA, *Rising Sun* is inspired by two independent references of the metaphorical rising sun of America. One from Benjamin Franklin during the 1787 Constitutional Convention where he famously contemplated whether the sun carved in George Washington’s chair was rising or setting and is reported to have said at the end of the Convention, “...But now at length I have the happiness to know that it is a rising and not a setting sun.” More than 100 years later, the symbol of the rising sun appeared again and lives on in James Weldon Johnson’s poem and hymn “Lift Every Voice and Sing,” also known as the “The Black National Anthem,” in the line “...Facing the rising sun of our new day begun, let us march on ‘till victory is won.”

“The exhibition challenges racial assumptions and also assesses the beauty of what this country could be if we dared to place our collective past under a microscope,” said Dejay Duckett, Vice President of Curatorial Services at AAMP.

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“The *Rising Sun* artists provoke us to think deeply about where the country is today and what we value about democracy both as individuals and as members of a community,” said Judith Tannenbaum, Project Curator at PAFA. “Franklin’s question is as relevant and resonant today as it was 235 years ago. Despite the undeniably divisive state of the country today, the fact that we are grappling with Franklin’s question provides a glimmer of hope as we move forward.”

Rising Sun invites guests to join the artists in exploring the themes, issues, and realities of the question – *is the sun rising or setting on the experiment of American democracy?* – through an immersive art experience. The multi-venue exhibition will feature audio recordings, visual projections, full gallery installations, sculptures, and large-scale paintings, drawings, and prints. The exhibit will feature commissioned work from esteemed artists John Akomfrah CBE, La Vaughn Belle, Mark Thomas Gibson, Martha Jackson Jarvis, Demetrius Oliver, Dread Scott, Renée Stout, Hank Willis Thomas, and Deborah Willis at AAMP; and Shiva Ahmadi, Tiffany Chung, Lenka Clayton, Petah Coyne, Eamon Ore-Giron, Dyani White Hawk, Alison Saar, Rose B. Simpson, Sheida Soleimani, Wilmer Wilson IV, and Saya Woolfalk at PAFA.

At AAMP, the exhibition will be featured throughout the entire museum, utilizing each of its four existing gallery spaces, while at PAFA the exhibition will be hosted in the Historic Landmark Building, which was emptied for the first time in 50 years for this exhibition. With just a 15-minute walk separating the two museums, AAMP and PAFA have partnered with the Philadelphia Visitor Center to offer joint, reduced admission tickets to *Rising Sun*, which are now available to purchase online through the Philadelphia Visitor Center. Both institutions will also host a special series of collaborative programming that will complement *Rising Sun* by spotlighting the artists, their inspirations, and approaches to tackling the exhibit’s leading question. Additional programming will be community-orientated and will engage civic, social justice, and other art organizations to address the present-day issues and topics that arise in the artist’s interpretative works.

The first event, Multiple Suns, is the first of six *Rising Sun* Artist/Curator Panel series and will feature a discussion with artists Mark Thomas Gibson and Eamon Ore-Giron on March 24th at AAMP. For more information on *Rising Sun: Artists in An Uncertain America*, including artist bios, upcoming events, tickets, and an interactive exhibit map, visit risingsunphilly.org.

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About the African American Museum in Philadelphia

Founded in 1976 in celebration of the nation's Bicentennial, the African American Museum in Philadelphia is the first institution funded and built by a major municipality to preserve, interpret and exhibit the heritage of African Americans. The museum is committed to telling the story of African Americans in all its permutations: family life, the Civil Rights movement, arts and entertainment, sports, medicine, architecture, politics, religion, law and technology. Learn more at aampmuseum.org.

About the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts

Founded in 1805, the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts is America's first school and museum of fine arts. A recipient of the National Medal of Arts, PAFA offers fine art degrees and exhibitions of historic and contemporary American art. The PAFA Museum aims to tell the sweeping story of American art, expanding who has been included in the canon of art history through its collections, exhibitions, and programs. The Museum amplifies a wide range of voices with the public, and the College and extended classes of the School of Fine Arts educate artists with a deep understanding of traditions and the ability to challenge conventions. Learn more at pafa.org.