

Nigerian-American Artist Victor Ekpuk to Create Site-Specific Drawing at the North Carolina Museum of Art

Large-scale chalk drawing will be focal point in expanded African art gallery

Raleigh, N.C.—From June 5 through 9, the North Carolina Museum of Art (NCMA) hosts Nigerian-American and D.C.-based artist Victor Ekpuk to create a 30-by-18-foot site-specific wall drawing in the Museum's new, expanded African art gallery. The ephemeral chalk drawing will be on view for a full year, beginning when the gallery opens at the end of June. Ekpuk's creation will be fully documented during its installation and deinstallation, including streaming live online for the public to watch remotely.

"We are honored that internationally acclaimed artist Victor Ekpuk will contribute to and be prominently featured in our reinstalled African art gallery," says Lawrence J. Wheeler, director of the NCMA. "The large-scale installation will highlight the grandeur of the new East Building gallery and emphasize the NCMA's commitment to accentuating Africa's role as a nexus of contemporary art."



The NCMA's expanded African art gallery incorporates African and African diasporic modern and contemporary art, so that visitors can enjoy African creativity spanning 16 centuries, from 600 to present day.

Following a soft opening of the new gallery in June, the Museum will host a series of summer and fall programs celebrating African art, culminating in a large community event in September. The event series, which will be announced soon, features family activities, performing arts, and panel discussions, one for which Ekpuk will return to the NCMA to participate.

During Ekpuk's visit he will meet with 10 emerging artists in a two-day NCMA college workshop. Using Ekpuk's work as inspiration, the students will work with artist and UNC-Chapel Hill professor Lien

Truong to create mixed-media works that explore transcultural identity and experience. On the second day of the workshop, the emerging artists, local artists, reinstallation curator, and educators will attend a lunch and discussion with Ekpuk.

Guided by the aesthetic philosophy of *nsibidi*—in which sign systems are used to convey ideas—Ekpuk reimagines graphic symbols from diverse cultures to form a personal style of mark making that results in the interplay of art and writing. Ekpuk has said, "The subject matter of my work deals with the human condition explained through themes that are both universal and specific: family, gender, politics, culture, and identity." Ekpuk has been a featured artist in multiple international art events, including solo and group exhibitions in London, Amsterdam, Paris, Cuba, Korea, Sweden, China, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, and around the U.S.

In June 2018 Ekpuk's large-scale drawing will be washed off the wall. The process will be documented and will provide another moment for the North Carolina community to think about the meaning of memory and artistic expression.

Reinstallation curator Elizabeth Perrill sees the ephemeral nature of Ekpuk's installation as "a poetic tie to both the history of many Africa art forms and the conceptual nature of contemporary art practice."

"In the NCMA reinstallation," Perrill says, "visitors have the chance to see ephemeral masquerades from Burkina Faso in a video shown in the gallery. The 15-foot-tall masquerades could never be owned by a museum, but they are some of the most spectacular performances in Western Africa. Ekpuk's installation echoes traditions of deliberately poetic and ephemeral art; it also asks what memory is and to think about the trace artists leave on our society."

More information on the NCMA's African art gallery reinstallation can be found at ncartmuseum.org/africangallery.

Related Event:

Panel Discussion on Contemporary Diaspora Art
Thursday, July 20, 7 pm
East Building, SECU Auditorium
Free; ticket required

A lively conversation on the relationship between African art and the global art community. The panel includes Nigerian-American artist Victor Ekpuk and other artists of African descent, and the moderator is Richard J. Powell, the John Spencer Bassett Professor of Art and Art History at Duke.

Press visits and interviews:

Members of the media are invited to visit the NCMA on Thursday, June 8, to interview Ekpuk and document his large-scale drawing installation with prior arrangement. Please contact Emily Kowalski to coordinate a visit or interview. A time-lapse video of the installation process produced by the Museum will also be available.

Image caption:

Victor Ekpuk works on *Meditation on Memory* in 2015 at the Havana Biennial.

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About the North Carolina Museum of Art

The North Carolina Museum of Art's permanent collection spans more than 5,000 years, from ancient Egypt to the present, making the institution one of the premier art museums in the South. The Museum's collection provides educational, aesthetic, intellectual, and cultural experiences for the citizens of North Carolina and beyond. The 164-acre Museum Park showcases the connection between art and nature through site-specific works of environmental art. The Museum offers changing national touring exhibitions, classes, lectures, family activities, films, and concerts.

The Museum opened West Building, home to the permanent collection, in 2010. The North Carolina Museum of Art, Lawrence J. Wheeler, director, is located at 2110 Blue Ridge Road in Raleigh. It is the art museum of the State of North Carolina, Roy Cooper, governor, and an agency of the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, Susi Hamilton, secretary.