

PRESS RELEASE

JANUARY 22, 2019

Press Contact

Rachel Eggers
Manager of Public Relations
rachele@seattleartmuseum.org
206.654.3151

MIXED-MEDIA ARTIST AARON FOWLER AWARDED THE 2019 GWENDOLYN KNIGHT AND JACOB LAWRENCE PRIZE BY SEATTLE ART MUSEUM

Fowler will receive a \$10,000 award, along with a solo exhibition at SAM opening fall 2019

SEATTLE
ART
MUSEUM

ASIAN
ART
MUSEUM

OLYMPIC
SCULPTURE
PARK

1300 First Avenue
Seattle, WA 98101
206.625.8900

seattleartmuseum.org



SEATTLE, WA - The Seattle Art Museum (SAM) announced the selection of mixed-media artist Aaron Fowler as the recipient of the 2019 Gwendolyn Knight and Jacob Lawrence Prize. Major funding for the prize is provided by the Jacob and Gwendolyn Knight Lawrence Foundation. Fowler will receive a \$10,000 award to further his artistic practice, and his work will be featured in a solo exhibition in SAM's Gwendolyn Knight & Jacob Lawrence Gallery in fall 2019.

Awarded bi-annually since 2009 to an early career Black artist, defined loosely as an artist in the first decade of their career, the Gwendolyn Knight and Jacob Lawrence Prize has become a platform for catapulting artists into the influential vanguard of contemporary artistic practice. Previous recipients of the prize are Titus Kaphar (2009), Theaster Gates (2011), LaToya Ruby Frazier (2013), Brenna Youngblood (2015), and Sondra Perry (2017).

Based in Harlem, Los Angeles, and St. Louis, Aaron Fowler makes large-scale sculptural assemblages composed of a wide range of found materials. With references to American history, Black culture, and real and imagined narratives, each work is densely layered with meaning and materiality. From ironing boards and car parts to hair weaves and videos, Fowler's work is imbued with multivalent narratives that compel the viewer to take their time looking. Employing compositional approaches akin to 19th- and 20th-century American and European paintings, Fowler references family, friends, and himself in works that are at once universal and deeply personal.

Fowler's fall 2019 solo exhibition at SAM will be curated by Sandra Jackson-Dumont, Frederick P. and Sandra P. Rose Chairman of Education at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and SAM's former Deputy Director for Education and Public Programs/Adjunct Curator in Modern and Contemporary Art. "I am thrilled to see what Aaron dreams up for his installation at SAM," says Jackson-Dumont. "Aaron Fowler's sculptural assemblages are infused with personal



meaning while calling attention to a range of complex concerns, issues, and ideas—not the least of which include American history, identity issues, Black experiences, and hip hop. His monumental mixed-media work will consume the galleries, but moreover it will take over viewers’ hearts and minds.”

AARON FOWLER

Aaron Fowler (b. 1988; St. Louis, MO) received his MFA from Yale University School of Art in 2014 and his BFA from the Pennsylvania Academy Fine Arts in 2011. He was an artist-in-residence at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in 2014 and was the recipient of the Rema Host Mann Foundation Emerging Artist Grant in 2015. Fowler has exhibited throughout the United States and abroad, including shows at Saatchi Gallery, SCAD Museum of Art, The Rubell Family Collection, Beeler Gallery, Columbus College of Art and Design (solo), Diane Rosenstein Gallery (solo), and the Studio Museum in Harlem. He lives and works in Harlem, Los Angeles, and St. Louis. For more information, visit aaronfowler.art.

GWENDOLYN KNIGHT AND JACOB LAWRENCE PRIZE AND GALLERY

SAM’s Gwendolyn Knight and Jacob Lawrence Prize is awarded biannually to an early career Black artist, defined loosely as an artist in the first decade of their career who demonstrates artistic commitment and great promise. The prize was created in honor of Gwendolyn Knight and Jacob Lawrence, renowned artists and dedicated teachers who lived and worked in Seattle for much of their lives, who recognized the need for Black artists to have support and advocacy. Nominations are requested from an anonymous and rotating national roster of highly regarded artists, curators, scholars, and arts leaders. A selected group of leading contemporary art curators and a SAM representative then select an award winner from the list of nominees. Funding for the prize is provided by the Gwendolyn Knight and Jacob Lawrence Endowment and the Jacob and Gwendolyn Knight Lawrence Foundation.

PAST WINNERS

2017 Sondra Perry
 2015 Brenna Youngblood
 2013 LaToya Ruby Frazier
 2011 Theaster Gates
 2009 Titus Kaphar

SAM’s Gwendolyn Knight & Jacob Lawrence Gallery honors the legacy of these two renowned artists, their contributions to the artistic landscape, and their support of SAM. The gallery features installations highlighting the work of the Lawrences, contemporary artists of color, and artists sharing their interests, aesthetic values, and creative practices.

Image credits: *Derion*, 2018, hot tub cover, wood, children’s cotton and nylon coats, cotton balls, enamel paint, acrylic paint, broken mirrors, theater seats, concrete cement, 115 x 95 x 28 in. Photo: Robert Wedemeyer. Image courtesy of the artist ©Aaron Fowler. *Donkey Gods*, 2018, oil paint, acrylic paint, enamel paint, vinyl paint, mirror, concrete cement, hair weave, beard weave, screws, Plexiglas, inkjet prints, pegboard, school desk chairs, Doc Martens, sneakers, socks, LED rope lights, paint brush, canvas, Newport, blunts, fake plants, green foam blocks on school desks, digital video, tablet computer, 106 x 200 x 31 in. Photo: Robert Wedemeyer. Image courtesy of the artist © Aaron Fowler

ABOUT SEATTLE ART MUSEUM

As the leading visual art institution in the Pacific Northwest, SAM draws on its global collections, powerful exhibitions, and dynamic programs to provide unique educational resources benefiting the Seattle region, the Pacific Northwest, and beyond. SAM was founded in 1933 with a focus on Asian art. By the late 1980s the museum had outgrown its original home, and in 1991 a new 155,000-square-foot downtown building, designed by Venturi, Scott Brown & Associates, opened to the public. The 1933 building was renovated and reopened as the Asian Art Museum in 1994. SAM’s desire to further serve its community was realized in 2007 with the opening of two stunning new

facilities: the nine-acre Olympic Sculpture Park (designed by Weiss/Manfredi Architects)—a “museum without walls,” free and open to all—and the Allied Works Architecture designed 118,000-square-foot expansion of its main, downtown location, including 232,000 square feet of additional space built for future expansion. The Olympic Sculpture Park and SAM’s downtown expansion celebrated their tenth anniversary in 2017.

From a strong foundation of Asian art to noteworthy collections of African and Oceanic art, Northwest Coast Native American art, European and American art, and modern and contemporary art, the strength of SAM’s collection of approximately 25,000 objects lies in its diversity of media, cultures, and time periods.