

# California African American Museum



**For Immediate Release: August 31, 2016**

**Contact:**

Emma Jacobson-Sive, 323-842-2064, emma@ejs-media.com  
Stacey Ravel Abarbanel, 310-736-5300, srabarbanel@gmail.com

**THE CALIFORNIA AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSEUM OPENS ITS FALL SEASON ON OCTOBER 19,  
PRESENTING FOUR NEW EXHIBITIONS**

**Media Preview: October 19, 5:30–7 pm followed by CAAM’s Fall Bash from 7–9 pm**



(Los Angeles, CA) — The California African American Museum today announced that its fall season of exhibitions will open to the public on October 19, 2016, celebrating the work of several generations of contemporary artists and historical figures.

This season, the exhibitions consider a range of subjects, from works by contemporary artists in Los Angeles and elsewhere in the United States to the intriguing history of the 1936 Olympics in Nazi Germany and the African American athletes who competed there. Also on view is the Los Angeles debut of Hank Willis Thomas’s celebrated video, *Black Righteous Space*, and the latest installment of the Museum’s selections from the permanent collection. These new exhibitions and the public programs planned in conjunction with them are overseen by Deputy Director Naima J. Keith, who joined CAAM in February 2016 after holding

curatorial positions at The Studio Museum in Harlem and Hammer Museum.

George O. Davis, Executive Director of the California African American Museum said, “Whether presenting emerging artist Genevieve Gaignard, offering a focused look into the history of the 1936 Olympics, delving into a range of contemporary concerns and formal issue with contemporary African artists, or showcasing the range of work available in our permanent collection, these exhibitions examine unique facets of American history and contemporary art.”

**CAAM’s fall exhibitions are:**

***The Ease of Fiction***

October 19, 2016–February 19, 2017

In *The Ease of Fiction*, works by four contemporary African artists living in the United States serve as a foundation for a critical discussion about history, fact, and fiction. Recent paintings, drawings, and sculptural works by ruby onyinyechi amanze (b. 1982, Nigeria), Duhirwe Rushemeza (b. 1977, Rwanda), Sherin Guirguis (b. 1974, Egypt), and Meleko Mokgosi (b. 1981, Botswana) explore power, memory, personal agency, and play.

The exhibition's title evokes the idea that people are often more comfortable accepting or believing what is told to them by those in power, rather than challenging and investigating the authenticity of information presented as historical fact. Interweaving their personal experiences and memories into broader historical contexts, these artists create works that are in strident opposition to passive acceptance. The artists' cultural backgrounds and geographic diversity offer a provocative examination of varied perspectives of the truth. Although these artists are from four different African countries their work addresses universal issues that are relevant across all borders.

This exhibition is organized by the Contemporary Art Museum Raleigh | CAM Raleigh and curated by independent curator Dexter Wimberly. CAAM's presentation is organized by Mar Hollingsworth, Visual Arts Curator and Program Manager. *The Ease of Fiction* is made possible by generous support from AV Metro, Newmark Grubb Knight Frank, Citrix, Hodge & Kittrell Sotheby's International Real Estate, and the Betty Eichenberger Adams Society. CAM Raleigh is funded in part by the City of Raleigh based on recommendations of the Raleigh Art Commission.



#### **Related public programs with featured artists:**

In Conversation: *The Ease of Fiction*  
Thursday, October 20, 2016 7–9 pm

Location: Art + Practice, 4339 S. Leimert Blvd, Los Angeles

This special edition of In Conversation takes place at Art + Practice in Leimert Park and bring together artists ruby onyinyechi amanze, Meleko Mokgosi, Duhirwe Rushemeza, and Sherin Guirguis and exhibition curator Dexter Wimberly on the occasion of the opening of *The Ease of Fiction*.

In Conversation: Sherin Guirguis and Anuradha Vikram  
Thursday, December 1, 2016 7– 9 pm

Los Angeles-based artist Sherin Guirguis joins curator and writer Anuradha Vikram, artistic director at Santa Monica's 18<sup>th</sup> Street Art Center and senior lecturer at Otis College of Art and Design, for an intimate conversation exploring the relationships between social structures, cultural identity, and women's agency.



#### **Genevieve Gaignard: *Smell the Roses*** October 19, 2016–February 19, 2017

CAAM presents the first museum exhibition of the work of Los Angeles artist Genevieve Gaignard, who deftly uses installation, photographic self-portraiture, and sculpture to explore race, femininity, and class—and their various intersections. The daughter of a black father and white mother in a Massachusetts mill town, Gaignard's youth was marked by a strong sense of invisibility. Was her family white enough to be white? Black enough to be black? In this new, immersive installation she invokes post-Katrina New Orleans shotgun houses and white

picket fences to address questions of "passing," positioning her own female body as the chief site of exploration and challenging viewers to navigate the powers and anxieties of intersectional identity.

Influenced by the soulful sounds of Billy Stewart, the kitschy aesthetic of John Waters, and the provocative artifice of drag culture, Gaignard employs lowbrow pop sensibilities to create dynamic visual narratives. From the identity performance ritualized in "selfie" culture to the gender displays of hyper-femme footwear, Gaignard

blends humor, persona, and popular culture to reveal the ways in which the meeting and mixing of contrasting realities can feel like displacement.

Gaignard received her BA in Photography from Massachusetts College of Art and Design (2007) and an MFA in Photography from Yale University (2014).

This exhibition is curated by CAAM's Deputy Director, Naima J. Keith.

**Related public program with featured artist:**

Thursday, November 3, 2016 7–9 pm

In Conversation: Genevieve Gaignard and Naima J. Keith

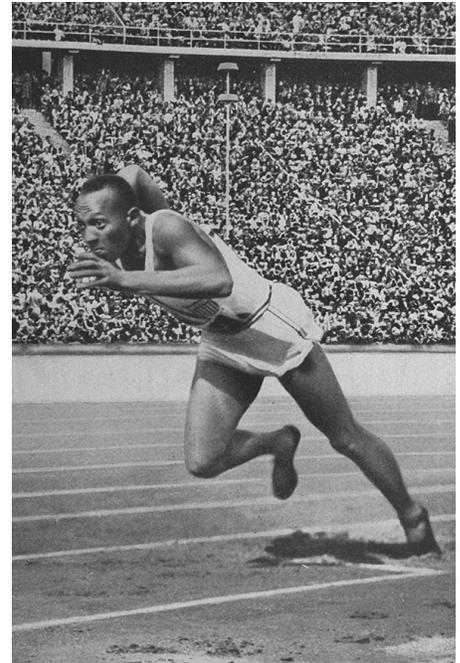
A walkthrough of the exhibition is followed by an artist talk and audience Q & A.

***Politics, Race, and Propaganda: The Nazi Olympics, Berlin 1936***

October 19, 2016–February 26, 2017

For two weeks in August 1936, Adolf Hitler's dictatorship masked its racist, militarist character while hosting the Olympic Games. To divert attention from its anti-Semitic agenda and plans for territorial expansion, the regime exploited the Games to dazzle spectators with a false image of a peaceful, tolerant Germany.

Prior to the Games a controversial proposed boycott was hotly debated—especially in the United States—due to the racial discrimination of the Nazi regime. Yet once the International Olympic Committee quelled concerns about the safety of black athletes in Nazi Germany, most African American newspapers opposed a boycott. Many journalists underscored the hypocrisy of pro-boycotters who did not first address discrimination against black athletes here at home. In the end, eighteen African American athletes, including Jesse Owens, Mack Robinson, and Ralph Metcalfe, competed for the United States at the 1936 Berlin Olympics.



*Politics, Race, and Propaganda: The Nazi Olympics, Berlin 1936* features historic photographs and documents, riveting films, Olympics promotional materials, and first-person accounts that tell the stories of athletes who were barred because of their ethnic heritage, those who boycotted the Games in protest, and the African Americans who competed and won a total of fourteen medals, refuting the Nazi myth of “Aryan” supremacy. The exhibition, organized by United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, will be presented in Los Angeles for the first time and will feature a number of key additions, including one of the gold medals Jesse Owens earned during the 1936 Games.

*Politics, Race, and Propaganda: The Nazi Olympics, Berlin 1936* is produced by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, presented by the Southern California Committee for the Olympic Games, and sponsored by the Foundation for Global Sports Development.

***Taking Place: Selections from the Permanent Collection***

October 19, 2016–February 26, 2017

For centuries artists have rendered landscapes—both real and imagined—to consider issues of history, belonging, disenfranchisement, and more. Landscapes can bear witness to stories from the past and offer powerful lessons in the present. *Taking Place: Selections from the Permanent Collection* includes photographs and paintings that depict urban scenes, rural landscapes, and visions of the African diaspora, all of which speak to notions of history and home among African Americans.

Richard Mayhew's abstract paintings epitomize love and respect for the land, while works by Frank Williams and Dewey Crumpler celebrate its sheer beauty and spiritual connotations. Landscapes by Robert Duncanson and Edward Bannister assert the artists' existence and claim ownership for future generations. The California landscape is reflected in breathtaking photographs of the town of Allensworth, and unexpected stories of Los

Angeles appear in the works of Dominique Moody and Sadie Barnette.

This exhibition is curated by Mar Hollingsworth, Visual Arts Curator and Program Manager.

In addition to the new exhibitions noted above, CAAM will also continue to present the California premiere of this interactive video work:

**Hank Willis Thomas: *Black Righteous Space***

July 7, 2016–February 19, 2017

In *Black Righteous Space*, artist Hank Willis Thomas examines race through the lens of pop culture, advertising, and media. Dazzling motion graphics appear amidst a looping soundtrack that includes songs, speeches, and dialogue from more than fifty noted black figures including Malcolm X, James Baldwin, Richard Pryor, and Gil-Scott Heron. At random intervals the soundtrack goes silent, allowing visitors to approach a microphone and add their own voices to the conversation.

**About the California African American Museum**

CAAM explores the art, history, and culture of African Americas. Chartered by the State of California in 1977, the Museum began formal operations in 1981 and is a state-supported agency and a Smithsonian Affiliate. In addition to presenting exhibitions and public programs, CAAM houses a permanent collection of more than four thousand works of art, artifacts, and historical documents, and a publicly accessible research library containing more than twenty thousand volumes.

**Visitor Information**

Admission to the California African American Museum is free. Visit [caammuseum.org](http://caammuseum.org) for current exhibition and program information or call 213-744-7432 for tours or additional assistance.

Hours: Tuesday–Saturday 10 a.m.–5 p.m., Sunday 11 a.m.–5 p.m. Closed Mondays and national holidays. The California African American Museum is located in Exposition Park at the corner of Figueroa Street and Exposition Boulevard, west of the 110 (Harbor) Freeway. Easy parking is available for \$12 (cash only) at 39<sup>th</sup> and Figueroa Streets. The Metro Expo line stop Expo Park/USC is a five-minute walk through the Exposition Park Rose Garden to the Museum.

###

Images:

Page 1: ruby onyinyechi amanze, *Kindred*, 2014; graphite, ink, pigment, enamel, photo transfers, glitter on paper; 80" x 78"; photo courtesy of Tiwani Contemporary, London and the artist.

Page 2: Sherin Guirguis, *Untitled (lahzet zaman)*, 2013, mixed media on hand-cut paper, 108 x 72 inches, photo courtesy of The Third Line Gallery, Dubai and the artist.

Page 2: Genevieve Gagnard, *Extra Value (After Venus)*, 2016, chromogenic print, 24 x 36 in, courtesy the artist and Shulamit Nazarian, Los Angeles.

Page 3: American Olympic athlete Jesse Owens runs his historic 200-meter race at the 11th Olympiad in Berlin. Owens won the race with a time of 20.7 seconds, establishing a new Olympic record. Courtesy of Library of Congress.