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Procession Forms at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts
Site-Specific Mural by Odili Donald Odita Complete and On View



Odili Donald Odita, American, born 1966 (Artist); *Procession*; 2020

Richmond, Virginia — Visitors to the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (VMFA) will notice a large, colorful painting along the elevation of the museum’s Atrium north wall. The expansive new mural, *Procession*, is the work of Nigerian-born American artist Odili Donald Odita. The work, completed on Sept. 20, 2020, can now be viewed in its entirety.

Procession was three years in the making. “The space called out to me when I came to VMFA in 2017,” said Valerie Cassel Oliver, VMFA’s Sydney and Frances Lewis Family Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art. “I remember walking through the Cochrane Atrium with Stephen Bonadies, VMFA’s Senior Deputy Director for Conservation and Collections, who as a means of introduction offered to walk the building and grounds with me. I immediately thought that the Atrium’s large white wall was ripe for a work of art. I imagined a site-specific work that would activate the Atrium’s light-filled architecture, echoing the Sol LeWitt wall drawing in our Marble Hall. And I immediately thought of Odita’s abstract paintings and installations.” Cassel Oliver previously worked with the artist, curating an exhibition of his work while at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston.

In October 2018, Odita visited VMFA to view the space and collection. That visit inspired the work’s design—a captivating composition of color and lines. Two months later, the artist presented a study for the mural and in spring

2019, the museum's Board of Trustees approved its commission. Over the last six weeks from August and into September five artists from the Odita studio drew and then painted *Procession*, a dynamic expanse of colorful lines, complex patterns and striations that bend and illuminate the architecture of the space. Odita's mural heralds the traditions of the Gee's Bend quilts and African textiles as well as mid-20th century paintings that highlight the deeply resonate practices that have persisted within the African and African Diasporic cultures. And while the work does not shy away from the sociopolitical landscape of the moment, it squarely sets its ideals upon the power of creative expression within an ever-evolving society.

"Odita's *Procession* transforms the Atrium," said Alex Nyerges, VMFA's Director and CEO. "This vibrant mural invites viewers to contemplate and have timely, crucial conversations about racial identity and equity, as well as the power of abstract art."

Odita is slated to return to VMFA to discuss his work next spring. Details about this event as well as a time-lapse video of the six-week installation of *Procession* will be made available on VMFA's website, www.VMFA.museum, in the coming weeks.

Odili Donald Odita was born in Enugu, Nigeria in 1966. Fleeing the [Biafran War](#), he came with his family to live in the United States the following year. After earning his BFA and MFA at Ohio State University and Bennington College, respectively, he worked as a critic, editor and writer for art publications and Yale University. He taught at the University of South Florida and Florida State University before taking his current position as associate professor of painting at Temple University's Tyler School of Art in Philadelphia.

Odita has created site-specific temporary and permanent installations for the United States Mission at the United Nations (NY), the George C. Young Federal Building Courthouse (Orlando, FL), the Birmingham Museum of Art (AL) and the city of Philadelphia (PA), among other locations across the country. His work is also found in the collections of several institutions including the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University (NC), the Savannah College of Art and Design (GA), and the New Orleans Museum of Art (LA).

About the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in Richmond, Virginia, is one of the largest comprehensive art museums in the United States. VMFA, which opened in 1936, is a state agency and privately endowed educational institution. Its purpose is to collect, preserve, exhibit and interpret art, and to encourage the study of the arts. Through the Office of Statewide Partnerships program, the museum offers curated exhibitions, arts-related audiovisual programs, symposia, lectures, conferences, and workshops by visual and performing artists. In addition to presenting a wide array of special exhibitions, the museum provides visitors with the opportunity to experience a global collection of art that spans more than 6,000 years. VMFA's permanent holdings encompass nearly 50,000 artworks including the largest public collection of Fabergé outside of Russia, the finest collection of Art Nouveau outside of Paris and one of the nation's finest collections of American art. VMFA is also home to important collections of Chinese art, English silver, French Impressionist and Post-Impressionist art, British sporting art, and modern and contemporary art, as well as renowned South Asian, Himalayan and African art. In May 2010 VMFA opened its doors to the public after a transformative expansion, the largest in its history.

The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts is the only art museum in the United States open 365 days a year with free general admission. For additional information, telephone 804.340.1400 or visit www.VMFA.museum.

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Media Contacts

Jan Hatchette | 804.204.2721 | jan.hatchette@VMFA.museum
Amy Peck | 804.204.2680 | amy.peck@VMFA.museum
Ume Farwa | 804.204.2702 | ume.farwa@VMFA.museum

200 N. Arthur Ashe Blvd., Richmond, VA 23220