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MADISON MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART PRESENTS FLOYD NEWSUM'S FIRST RETROSPECTIVE: *EVOLUTION OF SIGHT*

MADISON, WI—The Madison Museum of Contemporary Art (MMoCA) will present Floyd Newsum's first large-scale retrospective, *Evolution of Sight*, which will reflect on the Memphis-born artist's entire practice, including his paintings, printmaking, and public art commissions. With a career spanning nearly 50 years, Newsum invites viewers to look closely at his works in order to provoke them into further consideration of the personalized signs and imagery that he utilizes. Each work captures the deeply personal history of the artist with family photographs and symbols veiled by richly layered color and textures that create tactile surfaces. As Newsum explains, "My career covers 50-plus years of creating works of art that are exploring color, marks, and surfaces in various mediums. I call my evolution in creativity a problem-solving event of expression of the soul."

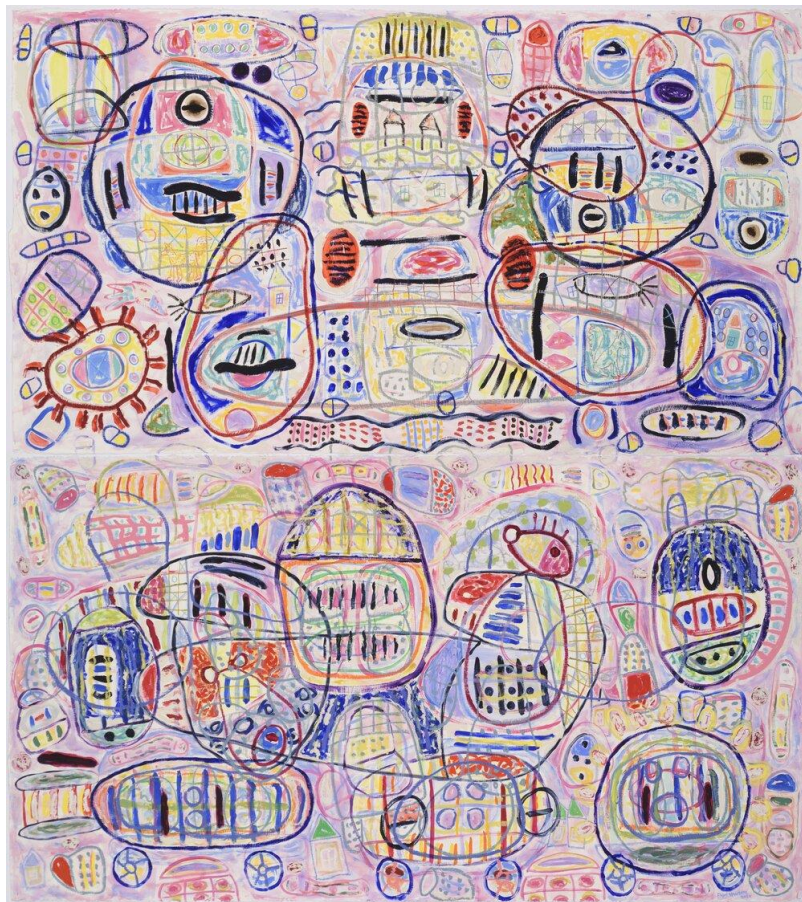
The exhibition will be on view May 20 through October 8, 2023, in the Museum's Main Galleries, with an opening reception May 19, 2023, from 5-8 PM. Newsum will present an artist talk at 6 PM. Admission to MMoCA's galleries is always free.

Floyd Newsum *Evolution of Sight*

On View May 20-
October 8, 2023

Exhibition Celebration
Friday, May 19, 2023
5-8 PM
Artist Talk | 6 PM

Free Admission



>
Floyd Newsum
Four Wagons Sirigu, 2021
Acrylics and oil on paper
Courtesy of the Artist

mmoca.org

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The exhibition will be organized by two guest curators, Dr. Lauren Cross and Mark Cervenka, who will collectively engage in a dialogue that reflects on the depth and extent of the artist's production. Rather than curating a traditional retrospective, Cervenka will look back to Newsum's foundational pieces and Cross will bring attention to work made in the last few unprecedented years. This collaboration will result in a nesting exhibition of early works in conversation with the artist's most recent series.

"Floyd Newsum is a leading artist whose work has been shown and represented in major institutions and collections across the United States," says Cross, an artist, independent curator, and Assistant Professor at the University of North Texas. "Newsum's powerful message of hope transcends time and space and has remained relevant both historically and into the present. In this way, I am excited to connect Newsum's dynamic work and practice with the Madison community through this survey of his work. The interrelationship between Newsum's style over time: his past figurative works, public art career, and metaphorical abstract paintings all tell different stories that I believe visitors will connect with today. His productivity and ambition to create monumental work through a global pandemic showcases Newsum's desire to reinvent new ideas and connect historical moments within our culture to the lived experiences of every-day people."

Cross's curatorial practice delves into the untold narratives that are within an artist's career and examines how they reflect back on our society. She will be approaching Newsum's work with a fresh perspective yet has been aware of his work for many years. Cervenka, on the other hand, curated an exhibition of Newsum's at the O'Kane Gallery at the University of Houston-Downtown in 2018 and is currently working on a catalogue documenting the artist's long career.



^ Floyd Newsum, *Reverend*, 1972
Watercolor. Courtesy of the Artist.

"A comprehensive museum exhibition of Floyd Newsum's art is long overdue. With a career emerging from the heart of the Civil Rights Movement in Memphis in the 1960s, Newsum's layered works have consistently included both overt and subtle responses to civil rights issues. Newsum's father, one of the first African-American firefighters in the South, set an example and provided the impetus for one of Newsum's primary symbols in the form of a ladder," says Cervenka, O'Kane Gallery Director and Professor at the University of Houston-Downtown. "A bold often intensely colored palette, sometimes offset with collaged elements, provides a foundation both for works addressing broad cultural observations and those seeking the more intimate focus of spiritual awareness and a profound recognition of love and family."

Newsum has been a trailblazer in the field, breaking barriers in academia, arts institutions, and community engagement. As a co-founder of Project Row Houses, Newsum worked with James Bettison, Bert Long, Jr.,

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Jesse Lott, Rick Lowe, Bert Samples, and George Smith to build an integral part of the arts community in the Third Ward of Houston, Texas, utilizing dilapidated row houses that were once modest homes for a rising affluent Black community. Suffering from the impacts of institutional racism and the rise of gentrification in the Third Ward, the co-founders established programs that not only support Black art and culture, but also build community.

As part of the MMoCA exhibition, Newsum will engage Dane County-area youth and communities through Art Cart, MMoCA's summer outdoor art-making program. Additional educational program details will be made available at mmoca.org.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Floyd Newsum graduated from Memphis College of Art, Tennessee, with a BFA in 1973 and from Temple University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, with an MFA in 1975. His public art projects in Texas include the Wheeler Avenue Baptist Church, two Houston Metro Light Rail Station art designs, seven sculptures for Houston's Main Street Square Station, four paintings in the Commerce Building of the University of Houston-Downtown, a suspended sculpture for the lobby of the Acres Home Multi-Service Center in Houston, and five suspended sculptures for the lobby of the Hazel Harvey Peace Building in Fort Worth, Texas. His paintings and prints are in private collections, public museums, universities, and other public institutions, including: University of Maryland, College Park; Museum of Fine Arts Houston, Texas; Xavier University, New Orleans, Louisiana; and Philadelphia Museum of Art, among others. He was one of ten artists to receive the 2008 Artadia Artist Grant from New York. He is the former coordinator of the art studio sections in the Department of Arts and Communication at the University of Houston-Downtown and teaches courses in drawing, painting, and art appreciation.



ABOUT MMOCA

The Madison Museum of Contemporary Art is always admission-free. Its vision is to be an organization that fosters the exchange of ideas and creates experiences that will inspire a wide audience; be a nexus for the work of emerging and established regional, national, and international artists; serve as a catalyst for the continued development of a vigorous community of artists; and provide a forum that will encourage people to be challenged by, reflect on, and make connections between art and the world around them. The Museum includes four galleries and The Shop, a space to provide interactive contemporary art experiences and educational workshops to the community.

The Rooftop Sculpture Garden provides an urban oasis with an incredible view which serves as a lovely venue for weddings, art openings, and cinema. The adjacent Rooftop Lounge is

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used for community and collaborative art pop-ups, as well as a reception area for Museum events. Please visit mmoca.org to learn more.

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