

# The Examiner

May 21, 2015

## SFMOMA, MoAD showcase 20th century portraits

By [Anita Katz](#)



COURTESY SFMOMA/CAMPARI USA/MICKALENE THOMAS/ ARTISTS RIGHTS SOCIETY/KATHERINE DU TIEL

- Mickalene Thomas' "Sista Sista Lady Blue" is among the works on view in "Portraits and Other Likenesses From SFMOMA" at San Francisco's Museum of the African Diaspora.

A new show at San Francisco's Museum of the African Diaspora of art works from the African diaspora and Latin America reveals how portraiture – the age-old form of depicting individual identity – has greatly broadened in scope in the past century.

More than 50 works from the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art collection are on view through October in “Portraits and Other Likenesses From SFMOMA,” an exhibit of paintings, sculptures, photographs and multimedia works dating from the 1920s to the present organized by curators of SFMOMA and MoAD.

Portraiture always has meant more than a pretty face, but, traditionally, it was largely limited to representational depictions of an individual’s physical aspects and underlying character and mood. This exhibition examines how, in recent decades, portraiture has expanded to include fictional, political, subversive and conceptual art.

The exhibit also provides an opportunity to see fine work by significant artists addressing black experiences. More than half of these pieces are on display for the first time as part of SFMOMA’s collection.

Highlights include “Three Men” (1966-67), a “montage painting” by Romare Bearden, known for his portraits of 20th-century African American life. Containing printed and painted papers, watercolor and graphite on canvas, the civil-rights-era work features a trio of figures whose collage-style composition suggests a textured, complex existence.

Also noteworthy is “Forever Free” (1933), figurative artist Sargent Johnson’s wood and paint sculpture of an African American mother. Johnson was among the first African American artists in California to achieve national recognition.

Photographers include James Van Der Zee, the sought-after and sometimes experimental Harlem Renaissance artist who took pictures of black New Yorkers. In “Future Expectations (Wedding Day)” (1926), he combines a traditional wedding portrait with an image of a girl he has envisioned as the couple’s future daughter.

Glenn Ligon’s “Narratives” (1993) is a portrait composed of text. Using the format of 19th-century slave narratives, Ligon explores his experiences as a gay black man in the 1990s. Contemporary selections include “Sapphires Under Cotton” (2013), an oil painting by Lynette Yiadom-Boakye, whose realistically presented subjects come completely from her imagination.

The exhibition also includes “Between Ourselves Together” (2015), a recently commissioned installation by Mickalene Thomas. The work combines “Sista Lady Blue” (Thomas’ large-scale photograph from SFMOMA’s collection) with related photographs and a film. The setting resembles a 1970s living room.

Additional featured artists include Consuelo Kanaga, Wifredo Lam, Nicole Miller, Kara Walker, Carrie Mae Weems and others.

“Portraits and Other Likenesses” is part of “SFMOMA on the Go,” an off-site project of SFMOMA, which is currently closed while undergoing expansion.

## **IF YOU GO**

### **Portraits and Other Likenesses From SFMOMA**

**Where:** Museum of the African Diaspora, 685 Mission St., S.F.

**When:** Wednesdays-Sundays; closes Oct. 11

**Admission:** \$5 to \$10, free for ages 12 and under

**Contact:** (415) 358-7200, [www.moadsf.org](http://www.moadsf.org)

# SFMOMA, MoAD exhibit 20th-century portraits

By Anita Katz  
Special to The S.F. Examiner

A new show at San Francisco's Museum of the African Diaspora of art works from the African diaspora and Latin America reveals how portraiture — the age-old form of depicting individual identity — has greatly broadened in scope in the past century.

## IF YOU GO: Portraits and Other Likenesses From SFMOMA

**Where:** Museum of the African Diaspora, 685 Mission St., S.F. **When:** Wednesdays-Sundays; closes Oct. 11 **Admission:** \$5 to \$20, free for ages 12 and under **Contact:** (415) 358-7200, www.moadf.org

More than 50 works from the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art collection are on view through October in "Portraits and Other Likenesses From SFMOMA," an exhibit of paintings, sculptures, photographs and multimedia works dating from the 1950s to the present organized by curators of SFMOMA and MoAD.

Portraiture always has meant more than a pretty face, but, traditionally, it was largely limited to representational depictions of an individual's physical aspects and underlying character and mood. This exhibition examines how, in recent decades, portraiture has expanded to include



Mickalene Thomas' "Sista Sista Lady Blue" is among the works on view in "Portraits and Other Likenesses From SFMOMA" at San Francisco's Museum of the African Diaspora.

fictional, political, subversive and conceptual art.

The exhibit also provides an opportunity to see fine work by significant artists addressing black experiences. More than half of these pieces are on display for the first time as part of SFMOMA's collection.

Highlights include "Three Men" (1966-67), a "montage painting" by Romare Bearden, known for his portraits of 20th-century African American life. Containing printed

and painted papers, watercolor and graphite on canvas, the civil-rights-era work features a trio of figures whose collage-style composition suggests a textured, complex existence.

Also noteworthy is "Forever Free" (1902), figurative artist Sargent Johnson's wood and gold sculpture of an African American mother. Johnson was among the first African American artists in California to achieve national recognition.

Photographers include James

Van Der Zee, the sought-after and sometimes experimental Harlem Renaissance artist who took pictures of black New Yorkers. In "Future Expectations (Wedding Day)" (1934), he combines a traditional wedding portrait with an image of a girl he has envisioned as the couple's future daughter.

Glean Ligon's "Narratives" (1990) is a portrait composed of text. Using the format of 19th-century slave narratives, Ligon explores his experiences as a gay black man in the 1990s.

Contemporary selections include "Sapphires Under Cotton" (2011), an oil painting by Lanette Yvonne-Balage, whose realistically presented subjects come completely from her imagination.

The exhibition also includes "Between ourselves Together" (2010), a recently commissioned installation by Mickalene Thomas. The work combines "Sista Lady Blue" (Thomas' large-scale photograph from SFMOMA's collection) with related photographs and a film. The setting resembles a 1970s living room.

Additional featured artists include Consuelo Kanaga, Waldo Lima, Nicole Miller, Kara Walker, Carrie Mae Weems and others.

"Portraits and Other Likenesses" is part of "SFMOMA on the Go," an off-site project of SFMOMA, which is currently closed while undergoing renovation.