

Culture

By Emily Wilson
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Arts/Events

MoAD Celebrates Its 10 Years and Starting Conversations About Race and Culture



Mickalene Thomas, *Sista Sista Lady Blue*, 2007; chromogenic print; Collection SFMOMA, gift of Campari USA;
© Mickalene Thomas / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York; photo: Katherine Du Tiel

San Francisco Supervisors **London Breed**, **Malia Cohen**, **Scott Wiener** and **Jane Kim**, artist **Mickalene Thomas**, and actress **C.C.H. Pounder** were among those who showed up for Champagne, dancing, dinner, and art at [The Museum of the African Diaspora](#)'s gala celebrating its 10th anniversary, with the theme, [Finding the I in Diaspora](#).

"We wanted to show how all we're all connected to the diaspora," said MoAD director Linda Harrison. "Whether you're Afro-Cuban or Afro-Asian or Afro-Mexican, you will find yourself in the diaspora, and we want as many people as possible to come to museum so they discover that."



Drew Altizer Photography. Supervisors London Breed and Malia Cohen on either side of MoAD director Linda Harrison.



Drew Altizer Photography. CCH Pounder and an enthusiastic fan at the MoAD Gala

The night also launched the museum’s emerging artist program — two local artists are chosen to exhibit work reflecting the richness of the African diaspora on MoAD’s themes of origins, movement, adaptation and transformation. The artists **Tim Roseborough** and **Cheryl Derricotte** were chosen, and Roseborough’s *Four Themes* exhibition will be on view Nov. 11 - Jan. 18, with Derricotte’s *Ghost/Ships* from Jan. 27 - April 3. These are concurrent with the upcoming fall and winter exhibits at MoAD: *Alison Saar: Bearing* and *Who Among Us... The Art of Kenyatta A.C. Hinkle*, which open on Nov. 11 and end on April 3.

Harrison says they talked about doing something like this when she came on board a couple years ago and the museum has expanded from one gallery to four, giving them space to show regional artists, for MoAD’s collaboration with SFMOMA, as well as emerging artists.

“We reimagined the museum, and part of the reimagining was what it would look like to be good stewards of finding Bay Area artists,” Harrison said. “We wanted to be an activated museum to come talk about race and culture and the diaspora.”

Harrison says they were delighted to get almost 50 applications for the program. A volunteer with the museum who was working at the gala, Tea Castro, a painter and sculptor herself, thinks the program is something special.

“It’s totally important,” Castro said. “It gives local artists a chance to showcase their art, and as far as I know there aren’t other programs like it, or they’re far and few between.”



Courtesy of Jenkins Johnson Gallery and the Artist

Castro enjoys the art at MoAD — such as pieces by prominent artist Wangechi Mutu — as well as working with the other volunteers.

“Everybody is very supportive,” she says. “There’s a family sense here with staff and volunteers.”

Another one of those volunteers, Alan Hollie, was in a gallery, talking with [SF Noir](#) founder, Hervé Ernest. Like Castro, Hollie thinks the MoAD gives a lot to San Francisco.

“There’s a story to be told — when you get information, it helps you,” he said. “Remember, it’s not only black history, it’s all our history.”



Image courtesy of L.A. Louver, Venice, CA. Weight, 2012, Copyright Alison Saar

As part of making the museum relevant and a place for conversations, Harrison brought on vegan soul chef Bryant Terry as the chef-in-residence. Terry was walking through the gallery, checking out Thomas’ show, *Portraits and Other Likenesses*. Working with the museum fits with what he does as a food justice activist, says the 2015 James Beard Foundation Leadership Award winner.

“For me, what I’m interested in is exploring the intersections of art and culture and food and the African diaspora,” Terry said.

Terry is planning an event next month, “Black Women, Food and Power,” which has already sold out. He’s already thinking of one for the spring that will have to do with foods of the diaspora.

Terry said he was enjoying the celebration of the museum.

“I have to say it’s so exciting being in a space in San Francisco and seeing so many beautiful black faces,” he said. “Folks are here — we’re bringing them together.”

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