

# M\_O\_A\_D



Art historian, curator, and rising star Key Jo Lee appointed Chief of Curatorial Affairs and Public Programs at the Museum of the African Diaspora

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Art historian, curator, and rising star Key Jo Lee appointed Chief of Curatorial Affairs and Public Programs at the Museum of the African Diaspora**

**(San Francisco, CA, October 28, 2022)** — The Museum of the African Diaspora (MoAD) announces the appointment of Key Jo Lee as Chief of Curatorial Affairs and Public Programs, a newly created leadership position at MoAD supported by a grant from the Mellon Foundation to elevate the Museum's presence as a global leader within the contemporary art world in presenting and celebrating art from a uniquely African Diasporic perspective. Lee will begin in her new role January 2023.

Lee comes to MoAD from The Cleveland Museum of Art (CMA), where she is Associate Curator of American Art. Lee joined the CMA in 2017 as Assistant Director of Academic Affairs. She was promoted in 2020 to Director of Academic Affairs and Associate Curator of Special Projects and later to Associate Curator of American Art. Lee's expertise is in American art history, histories and theories of photography, and African American studies, as well as museum education. She has been responsible for curatorial and publication projects that highlight the intersection of scholarly work and public audiences and that illuminate works by artists of the Black Diaspora.

"Key Jo Lee is a major up-and-coming talent in the field, and we are absolutely thrilled to be bringing her on board to move MoAD towards becoming a global leader in the space of contemporary art of the African Diaspora," says Monetta White, Executive Director, MoAD. "It took us a year to find the right person for this role, and it was so worth the wait. With her bold vision, insightful scholarship, wide-ranging museum experience, and can-do attitude, Key Jo Lee is not only a perfect fit for MoAD, but will be a gamechanger. We are thankful to the Mellon Foundation for the opportunity."

Lee's recent 2022 exhibition at the CMA, *Currents and Constellations: Black Art in Focus*, put 25 emerging and mid career Black artists including Dawoud Bey and Lorna Simpson in dialogue with CMA's permanent collection and introduced a series of permanent gallery interventions meant to broaden visitors' notions of the relevance and impact of Black art. Lee also has experience as an independent curator. She co-curated the exhibition *Somethin' to Say* in 2021 with artist Felandus Thames at Galerie Myrtis in Baltimore, Maryland. The exhibition featured ten Southern Black artists and opened a conversation on the South as a creative incubator.

As Director of Academic Affairs at the CMA, Lee designed and implemented museum programs to inspire scholarly engagement with the collection; created and tracked opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students' exposure to humanities fields and museum careers; oversaw and further developed the museum's internship and fellowship programs; consulted upon and designed faculty programs; developed and led symposia and colloquia; developed and oversaw the CMA's academic institutional partnerships; and developed and led the museum's first student guide program, among other duties.

Lee's forthcoming publication, *Perceptual Drift: Black Art and an Ethics of Looking* (2022, Yale University Press), with contributions from leading Black scholars Erica Moiah James, Robin Coste Lewis, and Christina Sharpe, draws on four key works of Black art in the CMA's collection to challenge the limits of canonic art history, proposing a new interpretive model that seeks to transform how art history is written, introduce readers to complex objects and theoretical frameworks, illuminate meanings and untold histories, and simultaneously celebrate and open new entry points into Black art.

In Cleveland, Lee demonstrated her commitment to and investment in the local arts ecosystem, serving on the board of Twelve Literary Arts from 2018 – 2020 and as current Board President of SPACES, an international contemporary arts venue in Ohio City. She has also served on multiple curatorial advisory committees and juries.

Lee is a PhD candidate in both History of Art and African American Studies at Yale University. She also holds a B.A. in Art History from Douglass College at Rutgers University and a dual M.A. in History of Art and African American Studies from Yale.

"What excites me about seeing Key Jo Lee occupy this new position is a matter of scale," says Ashley James, Associate Curator, Contemporary Art, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. "How on the one hand she can articulate the big picture, high level stakes of Black art and its multiple narratives, while at the same time attending to the details and specificities, even the very *physics* of art. Hers is an enthusiasm for artists and artworks that extends from the macro- to the molecular level. MOAD is lucky to have a leader who not only sees these multi-levels but cultivates them with great skill, care, and possibility."

"I am honored and delighted to embark on this new endeavor at MoAD as its Chief of Curatorial Affairs and Public Programs, especially at this moment of growth and experimentation," says Lee. "I believe deeply in MoAD's mission to highlight art and artists of the Black Diaspora, and I think it is the perfect place to express and expand my curatorial vision, which centers on innovative, multisensorial, and rigorous exhibitions that make visible and accessible our complex global histories. I am truly in awe of the talented leadership and staff at MoAD, and I can only hope to amplify the existing collaborative spirit. My practice has always been collaborative and community-informed, and I look forward to spending significant time learning about and contributing to local and regional conversations already in progress."

In 2021, MoAD was awarded a 2-year grant from the Mellon Foundation to support the Museum's first-ever professional and scholarly Chief of Curatorial Affairs and Public Programs. Lee will oversee the design of a strategic direction for the Museum's exhibitions and programs; lead globally on identifying and promoting emerging artists from the African Diaspora; and expand MoAD's reach and influence locally, nationally, and internationally. The position is responsible for the overall management and execution of the Museum's curatorial vision, including its exhibitions, publications, and public and educational programs, as well as playing an important role in outreach, communications, and digital strategy.

MoAD produces and presents more than 10 exhibitions annually, including commissioned installations and both original and traveling exhibitions. The Museum's public programs give scholarly interpretation to the exhibitions, as well as tell the story of the African Diaspora through varied artistic disciplines such as dance, music, poetry, and literature. Its education programs connect youth, educators, and the public to the historical, cultural, and intellectual contributions of the worldwide African Diaspora. MoAD's international web audience, which grew by 300% during the pandemic, will continue to drive the development of innovative online programming.

## **ABOUT MoAD**

The Museum of the African Diaspora (MoAD) is a contemporary art museum whose mission is to celebrate Black cultures, ignite challenging conversations, and inspire learning through the global lens of the African Diaspora. MoAD is one of only a few museums in the United States dedicated to the celebration and interpretation of art, artists, and cultures from the African Diaspora. The Museum presents exhibitions highlighting contemporary art and artists of African descent and engages its audience through education and public programs that interpret and enhance the understanding of Black art. Founded in 2005, the Museum continues to be a unique, cultural arts staple in the San Francisco Bay Area community.

For more information about MoAD, visit The Museum's website at [moadsf.org](http://moadsf.org).

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