

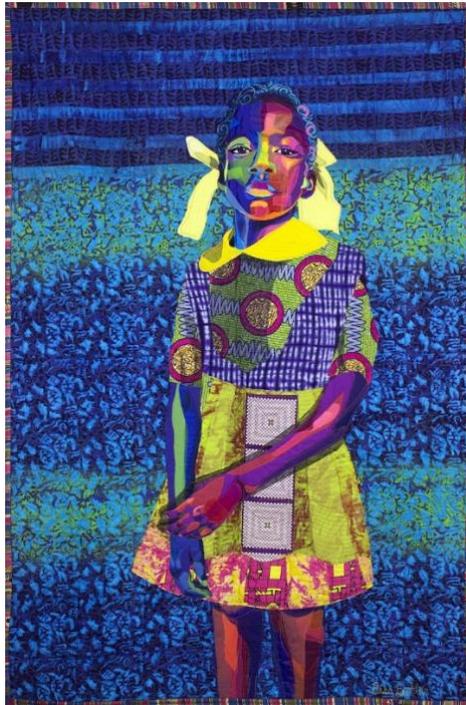


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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 27, 2020



Bisa Butler: Portraits

*Artist's First Solo Exhibition to Debut at the Katonah Museum of Art
Traveling to The Art Institute of Chicago*

Katonah, NY, January 27, 2020 – *Bisa Butler: Portraits* will be the first solo museum exhibition of the artist's work and will feature her vivid and larger-than-life quilts that capture African American identity and culture. The show will be on view at the Katonah Museum of Art (KMA) from March 15 to June 14, 2020 and travel to The Art Institute of Chicago (AIC) from September 5, 2020 to January 24, 2021. The exhibition is being organized by Curator, Michele Wijie at the KMA and by Associate Curator, Erica Warren at the AIC and will feature 26 of Bisa Butler's most important works to date. As described by the artist herself:

“This project is a quilted fabric album of everyday people of African descent inspired by vintage photographs. My goal is to not only provide a simple snapshot of a person but also to communicate an entire story in one piece of artwork. I create portraits of people that include many clues of their inner thoughts, their heritage, their actual emotions, and even their future.”

Butler, a formally trained African American artist of Ghanaian heritage, straddles the line between creating with paint on canvas and creating with fiber by fashioning magnificent quilts and elevating a medium hitherto designated as craft into one that is high art. While quilts have historically been isolated in the history of art as the products of working women, Butler's work not only acknowledges this tradition, but also reinvents it. Continuing with an aesthetic set in motion by artists such as Romare Bearden and Faith Ringgold, Butler forges an individual and expressive signature style that draws upon her own cultural background and experiences.

Her emergence as a quilt artist began humbly when, as a result of a fiber arts class taken at Howard University, she constructed a quilt for her dying grandmother mainly as a means of comfort. As a child Butler had often spent time poring over black and white photographs with her grandmother, who told her stories about the people in each one. This experience of creating narrative and identity informs her quilts. The vibrant portraits of African American life and the tales the quilts tell are largely based on photographs from which Butler takes inspiration.

She creates a story around each image, and, in her choice of fabrics, she uses texture, color and the cultural origin of the cloth as part of a personal iconography that makes statements about society and identity. African painted cotton and mud cloth tells the story of her ancestral homeland, vintage lace and aged satin might demonstrate the delicacy and refinement of times past while multi-colored organza and layered netting can convey a story of someone colorful and multifaceted. The constructed nature of the work with its reliance on piecing and stitching acknowledges the traditions of needlework normally associated with women and domesticity. Butler subverts this notion through her choice of motifs, embellishments, patterning and scale, all drawn from African textiles. What results are stunning works that transform family memories and cultural practices into works of social statement.

Each exhibition will be accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue. *Bisa Butler: Portraits* is made possible in part through the generous support of The Coby Foundation, Ltd.

Artwork Credits:

Bisa Butler

The Princess, 2018

Cotton, chiffon, lace and satin

70 x 46 in. (177.8 x 116.8 cm)

Collection of Bob and Jane Clark

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About the Katonah Museum of Art:

The Katonah Museum of Art promotes the understanding and enjoyment of the visual arts for diverse audiences. The Museum presents exhibitions that explore ideas about art, culture, and society – past and present – through innovative exhibition and education programs.

Museum hours: Tuesday through Saturday from 10 AM – 5 PM, Sunday from 12 PM – 5 PM, closed Monday. General admission: \$10 adults, \$5 seniors and students. Members and children under the age of 12 always enter free. For more information, please call (914) 232-9555 or visit www.katonahmuseum.org.

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