

# The Museum of Modern Art

## MoMA ANNOUNCES ARTIST'S CHOICE: GRACE WALES BONNER—SPIRIT MOVERS, AN EXHIBITION OF WORKS FROM MoMA'S COLLECTION SELECTED BY THE ACCLAIMED DESIGNER, OPENING NOVEMBER 2023

### Exhibition Brings Together Approximately 50 Works From MoMA's Collection That Explore Forms of Black Style, Gesture, Performance, and Sound

**New York, NY, July 17, 2023**—The Museum of Modern Art announces ***Artist's Choice: Grace Wales Bonner—Spirit Movers***, an exhibition of approximately 50 works from MoMA's collection selected by Wales Bonner, the acclaimed London-based designer of her eponymous fashion label. On view in the Museum's street-level galleries from November 18, 2023, through April 7, 2024, the 16th installment of MoMA's celebrated Artist's Choice series will gather artworks with a particular focus on Black cultural and aesthetic practices inspired by the styles, experiences, forms, and sounds of the African diaspora. The works selected embody the idea of "Spirit Movers," which, according to Wales Bonner, evoke multiple histories, inspire contemplation, and conjure new connections between people and places. Artists from around the world and across generations, including Terry Adkins, Moustapha Dimé, Agnes Martin, Man Ray, Betye Saar, and David Hammons, will be featured in the exhibition. *Artist's Choice: Grace Wales Bonner—Spirit Movers* is organized by Grace Wales Bonner with Michelle Kuo, the Marlene Hess Curator, and Dana Liljegren, Curatorial Assistant, Department of Painting and Sculpture.

Wales Bonner has chosen the works that will appear in the exhibition after years of research in MoMA's wide-ranging collection, selecting artworks that touch on themes of musicality, storytelling, and the intersection of cultural narratives. Terry Adkins's *Last Trumpet* (1995), a key work in the exhibition, is a sculptural composite of varying wind instruments, highlighting sound, performance, and elegy. David Hammons's *Afro Asian Eclipse (or Black China)* (1978), which will be on view for the first time at MoMA, combines a makeshift scroll with geometric patterns formed from tufts of hair that the artist collected from barbershop floors. The work references the Duke Ellington album *The Afro-Eurasian Eclipse* (1971) and emphasizes intersections between Afro-Atlantic and Afro-Pacific cultures. Moustapha Dimé's *Lady with a Long Neck* (1992) is a monumental wood carving that incorporates organic, industrial, and reclaimed materials, each sourced from Dakar's urban environment. The sculpture, simultaneously elegant and raw, connects artistic labor to forms of Sufi spirituality and Islamic practices—and speaks to Wales Bonner's exploration of ritual and devotional customs. Together, these works are presented not as static objects or images but as dynamic entities deeply connected to performance, music, bodies, and communion.

"It is an immense honor to engage with the artists and works in MoMA's collection, and I wish to extend my deepest thanks to the museum for allowing me the space to create so



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freely,” said Wales Bonner. “I hope the exhibition and associated publication resound with the spirit of the contributing artists and continue to conjure new dreams and new visions.”

On the occasion of the exhibition, MoMA will publish an artist’s book titled *Grace Wales Bonner: Dream in the Rhythm—Visions of Sound and Spirit in the MoMA Collection*, assembled by Wales Bonner as “an archive of soulful expression.” Through an extraordinary selection of nearly 80 works from the Museum’s collection and archives, this unique volume will draw multisensory connections between pictures and poems, music and performance, hearing and touch, gestures and vibrations, and bodies in motion. Photographs, scores, and performance documentation will be juxtaposed with signal texts by Black authors spanning the past century, including Amiri Baraka, Nikki Giovanni, Langston Hughes, June Jordan, Robin Coste Lewis, Ishmael Reed, Greg Tate, Jean Toomer, Quincy Troupe, and Lynette Yiadom-Boakye.

“Grace Wales Bonner has changed the way we see style—not only as surface but as structure,” said exhibition curator Michelle Kuo. “Every detail of her polymathic designs, publications, exhibitions, and films is related to long histories, deep archives, and cultural identities across the diasporic world. Like her exhibition, this book is a deeply personal meditation on and around modern Black expression—and it reflects Wales Bonner’s commitment to archival research as both a form of spirituality and an aesthetic practice.”

*Artist’s Choice: Grace Wales Bonner—Spirit Movers* is the 16th installment of MoMA’s Artist’s Choice series, in which a contemporary artist organizes an installation drawn from the Museum’s collection. Recent participants in the series, which was inaugurated in 1989, include Yto Barrada (2021), Amy Sillman (2019), Peter Fischli (2018), David Hammons (2017), Trisha Donnelly (2012) and the architects Herzog & de Meuron (2006).

#### **ABOUT GRACE WALES BONNER:**

Grace Wales Bonner lives and works in London. She is the founder and artistic director of Wales Bonner. While she sees herself primarily as a researcher, her expansive artistic practice extends to curation, filmmaking, and publishing. In 2019 she curated her first institutional exhibition, *A Time for New Dreams*, at the Serpentine Gallery, London. She has recently launched a four-year project, *Between Critique and Hope*, at the University of Applied Arts Vienna, where she is lead researcher. The project attempts to use the polyrhythmicity of Afro-Atlantic musical and artistic forms as the organizing principle for an alternative archival practice. For her work at Wales Bonner, she has received numerous awards, including the LVMH Young Designer Prize (2016) and the CFDA International Men’s Designer of the Year (2021). She has also collaborated with brands including adidas Originals, Anderson & Sheppard, and Dior.

#### **SPONSORSHIP:**

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