

The Museum of Modern Art

MoMA ANNOUNCES *ODILI DONALD ODITA: SONGS FROM LIFE*—A NEW COMMISSION CREATED SPECIFICALLY FOR THE MUSEUM’S MAIN LOBBY—OPENING IN APRIL 2025

NEW YORK, February 24, 2025—The Museum of Modern Art announces ***Odili Donald Odita: Songs from Life*** a new site-specific commission in the Museum’s main lobby opening on April 8, 2025 and on view for a year. For this project, Odita and his team will work from February to April to envelop the entire lobby in bright stripes of interweaving colors. Visitors will have the opportunity to see the artist at work during public hours, as well as scan a QR code to listen to an accompanying playlist Odita used as primary sources of inspiration for the commission. *Odili Donald Odita: Songs from Life* is organized by Ugochukwu-Smooth Nzewi, The Steve and Lisa Tananbaum Curator, Department of Painting and Sculpture with Elizabeth Wickham, Curatorial Assistant, Department of Painting and Sculpture.

“Odita’s work reflects the history of abstract painting, African and African American textile traditions, and the indigenous mural art of his Nigerian heritage,” said Nzewi. “Drawing references from music and art history, he transforms MoMA’s main lobby into a grand opera of brilliant colors and geometric patterns that enrich the museum visitors’ experience. We are delighted by this commission, the artist’s largest to date.”

“I am inspired by a wide range of cultural and personal references, drawing from both African and Western aesthetics, historical associations, as well as contemporary design and architectural influences,” said Odita. “Through abstraction, I aim to reflect the complexities of the human experience, creating patterns and rhythms that resonate on both visual and emotional levels to get the viewer to reflect upon their own circumstances with respect to the artwork’s engagement through theme and construction.”

Executed with flat acrylic latex paint, the floor-to-ceiling installation will cover the Museum’s lobby in a cascading kaleidoscope of colors, which, for the artist, are expressions of freedom and change. Music—the primary source of inspiration for this commission—is also crucial to Odita’s practice, as it allows him to think through problems in his paintings and connect with the passion and community it creates among people.

Each section of *Songs from Life* is anchored by a selection of songs by far-ranging musical influences, including Led Zeppelin, Michael Jackson, Marvin Gaye, the Talking Heads, Bill Withers, Fela Anikulapo Kuti, and many more. The selected songs expand upon the artist’s consideration of MoMA’s main lobby as a gathering space for people from different walks of life confronting life’s challenges and finding redemption. Visitors will be able to scan a QR code allowing them to listen to the artist’s playlist while taking in the immersive installation.

ARTIST BIO:

Odili Donald Odita (b. 1966, Enugu, Nigeria) is an abstract painter who currently lives and works in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Odita received his BFA with Distinction from Ohio State University, and his MFA from Bennington College, Vermont. In 1998, he earned an ART/OMI International Art Residency. Since 2006, Odita has been a Professor of Painting at the Tyler School of Art at Temple University in Philadelphia.

Odita's recent solo exhibitions and public commissions include Abroms-Engel Institute for the Visual Arts, Alabama (2024); The Contemporary Dayton, Ohio (2022); Stanley Museum of Art, Iowa (2022); Boca Raton Museum of Art, Florida (2021); Penn Medicine's Pavilion, Pennsylvania (2021); Philadelphia Museum of Art, Pennsylvania (2021); Virginia Museum of Fine Art, Virginia (2020); Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami, Florida (2019); Sarasota Museum of Art, Florida (2019); Newark Museum, New Jersey (2017); City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program, Pennsylvania (2015); Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University, North Carolina (2015); and Yale Art Gallery, Connecticut (2015).

Notable group exhibitions include Brooklyn Museum, New York (2024); Philadelphia Museum of Art, Pennsylvania (2021); Laumeier Sculpture Park, Missouri (2020); Baltimore Museum of Art, Maryland (2019); Boca Raton Museum, Florida (2021); Cleveland Triennial, Ohio (2018); New Orleans Triennial, Louisiana (2017); Venice Biennale, Venice (2007).

Odita's work is in the permanent collections of the Baltimore Museum of Art, Maryland; Mississippi Museum of Art, Mississippi; Nasher Museum of Art, North Carolina; Pérez Art Museum, Florida; Philadelphia Museum of Art, Pennsylvania; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, California; Sheldon Museum of Art, Nebraska; Studio Museum, New York; and United States Mission to the United Nations, United Nations, New York.

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