

The Museum of Modern Art

MoMA ANNOUNCES *ARTIST'S CHOICE: ARTHUR JAFa—LESS IS MORBID*, OPENING ON NOVEMBER 22, 2025

Exhibition Will Include Nearly 100 Works from MoMA's Collection, Selected by Jafa, That Have Shifted the Paradigm of Modern Art

New York, NY, April 30, 2025— The Museum of Modern Art announces *Artist's Choice: Arthur Jafa—Less Is Morbid*, an exhibition featuring nearly 100 works from MoMA's collection selected by artist and filmmaker Arthur Jafa (b. 1960). On view from November 19, 2025, through July 5, 2026, the exhibition reflects Jafa's distinctive approach to reexamining history, visual art, and popular culture. As an artist, Jafa's work crisscrosses the worlds of art, film, and music, consistently tapping into the emotional power of association in the collages that make up his signature binders of clippings and the montages of his films and videos. Through his selections, Jafa reflects on works that have shifted the paradigm of modern art—in particular in its relationship to Blackness, Black makers, and Black life. *Artist's Choice: Arthur Jafa—Less Is Morbid* is organized by Arthur Jafa, with Thomas Lax, Curator, and Lilia Rocio Taboada, former Curatorial Associate, Department of Media and Performance. With thanks to Cam McEwen, Studio Museum/MoMA Fellow, and Kennedy Hollins Jones, former Black Arts Council 12-Month Intern, Department of Media and Performance.

Jafa seeks out and highlights unexpected juxtapositions, inviting viewers to explore the many facets that define the richness and paradoxes of Black life. The exhibition features works spanning generations and mediums, including pieces by Romare Bearden, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Lygia Clark, Mark Rothko, Cameron Rowland, Ming Smith, Lynette Yiadom-Boakye, and many others. Commenting on the curatorial process, Jafa said, "My selections are not a rational thing but are an intuitive response to works with a strident millenarian aspect to them. They have to do with shifts—large-scale shifts, paradigm shifts, emancipations from previously occupied realms. That's what these works suggest to me."

"All of his years of coming in and out of museums and galleries, and of watching other Black artists do the same, are compressed and accelerated in the way Jafa sees," said Lax. "His acts of looking are then splayed out topographically, creating a map or score of unlikely connections. These proximities were never meant to occur in the formal space of a modern art museum, but were also somehow there in lived experience all along."

Artist's Choice: Arthur Jafa—Less Is Morbid is the 17th 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 Grace

Wales Bonner (2023), Yto Barrada (2021), Amy Sillman (2019), Peter Fischli (2018), David Hammons (2017), Trisha Donnelly (2012), and the architects Herzog & de Meuron (2006).

FILM SERIES

The film program accompanying the exhibition continues Jafa's exploration of unexpected juxtapositions as a means of seeing differently or anew. Selected by Jafa, the series pairs films that have been formative to his work and thinking. The program includes titles by Oscar Micheaux, Wong Kar-wai, Jean Rouch, Jean-Luc Godard, Charles Burnett, Michael Roemer, Francis Ford Coppola, and Andrei Tarkovsky. Together, these films serve as a nonlinear survey of Jafa's influences and interests, providing formal and thematic connections across the works of seemingly disparate auteurs.

ABOUT ARTHUR Jafa

Arthur Jafa (*1960, Tupelo, Mississippi) lives and works in Los Angeles. Jafa's films have been presented at the Los Angeles, New York, and Black Star film festivals, and recent solo exhibitions of his artwork have been held at Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (2024), LUMA Foundation, Arles (2023), Louisiana Museum, Humlebæk, and Glenstone, Potomac, MD (both 2021), Fundação Serralves, Porto, and Musée d'art contemporain de Montreal (both 2020), Moderna Museet, Stockholm (2019), Museum of Contemporary Art, Denver, and Julia Stoschek Foundation, Berlin (both 2018), and Serpentine Gallery, London (2017). Selected group exhibitions have been held at Fondation Beyeler, Riehen; the Modern Art Museum, Fort Worth; and Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt am Main (all 2024), Smithsonian American Art Museum; Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich; Baltimore Museum of Art; and 14th Gwangju Biennale (all 2023), Musée national des beaux-arts, Québec; Aspen Art Museum; and Bangkok Art Biennale (all 2022), and Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Brooklyn Museum, New York; New Museum, New York; and Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston (all 2021). In 2019 he received the Golden Lion at the 58th Venice Biennale.

SPONSORSHIP:

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