

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Preview, Thursday, Oct. 16 at 2 p.m.

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**THE SCAD MUSEUM OF ART PRESENTS
THE DIVINE COMEDY: HEAVEN, PURGATORY AND HELL REVISITED
BY CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN ARTISTS**



Image captions below.

Exhibition Features Work By Artists Jane Alexander, Kendell Geers, Nicholas Hlobo, Julie Mehretu, Wangechi Mutu, Yinka Shonibare MBE and Many Others

First U.S. Presentation of Traveling Exhibition is On View Oct. 17, 2014 to Jan. 25, 2015

SAVANNAH, GEORGIA — Sept. 29, 2014 — The SCAD Museum of Art presents the major exhibition *The Divine Comedy: Heaven, Purgatory and Hell Revisited by Contemporary African Artists*. A traveling exhibition that is being shown at SCAD for the first time in the United States, it is organized by internationally acclaimed curator **Simon Njami**. The exhibition explores thematic sequences of Dante Alighieri's epic poem through new works by more than 40 contemporary artists from 19 African countries and the African diaspora.

Through a variety of media, the exhibition demonstrates how concepts visited in Dante's poem transcend Western traditions and resonate with diverse contemporary cultures, belief systems and political issues. Overall, the exhibition provides a probing examination of life, death and the continuing power of art to express the unspoken and intangible.

The exhibition will be on view at SCAD Museum of Art from Friday, Oct. 17, 2014, through Sunday, Jan. 25, 2015, occupying the Museum's entire 20,000-square-foot exhibition space. It will extend to the Museum's 80,000-square-foot outdoor courtyard and to SCAD's Pei Ling Chan Gallery, both located along Savannah's Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard Corridor.

Originally presented by the Museum für Moderne Kunst Frankfurt/Main (MMK) in Frankfurt, Germany, where it was on view from March through July 2014, the exhibition will also travel to the National Museum of African Art at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., where it will be on view from Apr. 8 to Aug. 2, 2015.

The SCAD Museum of Art presentation of the exhibition will include many works on view for the first time, which were not shown in Germany: neon work by **Kendell Geers**, books by **Bili**

Bidjocka, a photo series by **Youseff Nabil**, large-scale works on paper by **Christine Beatrice Dixie**, a sound installation by **Frances Goodman** incorporating bridal fabrics cascading from the ceiling, an outdoor calligraphy garden by **Moataz Nasr** and a collage by **Wangechi Mutu**.

On opening night, Thursday, Oct. 16, curator **Simon Njami** will moderate a panel discussion at the Museum featuring artists **Joël Andrianomearisoa**, **Bili Bidjocka**, **Ingrid Mwangi** and **Moataz Nasr**. The 5 p.m. panel will be followed by a 6 p.m. reception, both free and open to the public.

“The concern here is not with the *Divine Comedy* or Dante,” explains Njami, “but with something truly universal. Something that touches us all to the very core, regardless of our beliefs or convictions: our relationship to the afterlife. In other words, it’s about our relationship to life and—thus—also to death.”

Laurie Ann Farrell, SCAD executive director of exhibitions who organized the SCAD Museum of Art presentation of the exhibition, adds that, “the exhibition creates a powerful and culturally layered dialogue between timeless questions and the voices of exceptional contemporary artists.”

“Our hope is that the exhibition will inspire the SCAD community of artists and designers, the Savannah community and audiences from around the world to consider significant philosophical and ethical questions from entirely new and varied perspectives,” said Farrell, who previously worked as a curator at the New African Center (formerly the Museum of African Art) in New York City.

Featured Artists

Jane Alexander (South Africa)
Ghada Amer (Egypt)
Joël Andrianomearisoa (Madagascar)
Kader Attia (France)
Bili Bidjocka (Cameroon)
Wim Botha (South Africa)
Zoulikha Bouabdellah (Russia)
Mohamed Bourouissa (Algeria)
Edson Chagas (Angola)
Kudzanai Chiurai (Zimbabwe)
Christine Beatrice Dixie (South Africa)
Dimitri Fagbohoun (Benin)
Franck Abd-Bakar Fanny (Ivory Coast)
Jellel Gasteli (Tunisia)
Kendell Geers (South Africa)
Frances Goodman (South Africa)
Nicholas Hlobo (South Africa)
Mouna Karray (Tunisia)
Amal Kenawy (Egypt)
Kiluanji Kia Henda (Angola)
Jems Robert Koko Bi (Ivory Coast)

Abdoulaye Konaté (Mali)
Ndary Lo (Senegal)
Ato Malinda (Kenya)
Pascale Marthine Tayou (Cameroon)
Julie Mehretu (Ethiopia)
Myriam Mihindou (Gabon)
Nandipha Mntambo (Swaziland)
Aïda Muluneh (Ethiopia)
Hassan Musa (Sudan)
Wangechi Mutu (Kenya)
Mwangi Hutter (Kenya, Germany)
Youssef Nabil (Egypt)
Lamia Naji (Marocco)
Moataz Nasr (Egypt)
Cheikh Niass (Senegal)
Maurice Pefura (France)
Zineb Sedira (France)
Yinka Shonibare, MBE (England, Nigeria)
Guy Tillim (South Africa)
Andrew Tshabangu (South Africa)
Minnette Vári (South Africa)

About Curator Simon Njami

Njami is an independent curator, lecturer, art critic and essayist. He is co-founder and editor-in-chief of the cultural magazine *Revue Noire*. Previously, Njami was the artistic director of the Bamako photography biennial from 2000 to 2010, co-curator of the first African pavilion at the 52nd Venice

Biennale in 2007 and artistic director of the Luanda and Douala triennials and the Lubumbashi biennial. He has curated numerous exhibitions, including *Africa Remix* (an international touring exhibition 2004-2007), *A Collective Diary* (2010), *A Useful Dream* (2010) and the Johannesburg Art Fair (2008). Njami is author of two biographies (James Baldwin, 1991 and Léopold Sédar Senghor, 2007) and has contributed essays for the catalogues for the Sydney Biennale, Documenta and others. *The Divine Comedy* is Njami's third collaboration with SCAD. He previously curated *Le Miroir (The Mirror)* in 2012, an exhibition of Mohamed Bourissas's work, which was on view at the SCAD Museum of Art as well as SCAD galleries in Atlanta, Lacoste and Hong Kong. He also served as the keynote speaker at the university's 2010 Art History Symposium: *Africa on My Mind*.

About the Savannah College of Art and Design

The Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD) is a private, nonprofit, accredited institution conferring bachelor's and master's degrees at distinctive locations and online to prepare talented students for professional careers. SCAD offers degrees in more than 40 majors. Visit SCAD scad.edu

Join the "Divine Comedy" conversation on Twitter and Instagram by mentioning @SCADMOA and using the #DivineComedySCAD hashtag when posting about the exhibition.

Listings Information:

SCAD Museum of Art

<http://www.scadmoa.org/>

601 Turner Blvd., Savannah, Georgia.

Open Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Thursdays from 10 a.m. until 8 p.m.; Saturday and Sunday from 12 p.m. to 5 p.m.; closed Mondays.

<https://www.facebook.com/scadmoa>

<http://www.twitter.com/scadmoa>

<http://scadmoa.tumblr.com/>

Image Captions (Left to Right):

Zoulikha Bouabdellah, *Silence*, 2008-2014. Courtesy of artist.

Aida Muluneh, *The 99 Series*, 2013. Courtesy of the artist.

Yinka Shonibare MBE, *How to Blow Up Two Heads at Once (Gentlemen)*, 2006. Courtesy of the artist and Coleção Sindika Dokolo, Luanda.

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