

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Masterworks Museum of Bermuda Art Presents *NOT ALL HAS TO BE AS IT WAS*

Exhibition by Gherdai Hassell featuring collaborations with Yesha Townsend and Essence Aikman opens to the Public on September 28, 2024

HAMILTON, Bermuda – September 3, 2024 – Masterworks Museum is thrilled to announce the opening of its next major exhibition, *NOT ALL HAS TO BE AS IT WAS*, featuring the innovative works of multidisciplinary contemporary artist, creative director, designer, and storyteller, Gherdai Hassell. Currently based in the UK, Hassell will return home to Bermuda for her first-ever exhibition at Masterworks Museum.

NOT ALL HAS TO BE AS IT WAS is Hassell's inaugural collaborative exhibition, blending her unique vision with pieces from the Masterworks Permanent Collection and collaborations from fellow Bermudian artists Yesha Townsend and Essence Aikman. Inspired by the landscapes found in the Masterworks Collection, *NOT ALL HAS TO BE AS IT WAS* seeks to conceptually and materially reimagine the painted Bermuda landscape.

The exhibition will address issues of identity, gender, and post-colonial perspectives. Hassell draws meaning and inspiration from her personal history, Bermuda's history, and mythology. Through the use of non-traditional materials and media, including textiles, soft sculpture, costumes, fabric-ink paintings, and collage, Hassell re-imagines her 'Alibii' figures, a reoccurring motif in her artwork who have become the voice through which she expresses thoughts of her own, imagined thoughts of others, and of possibilities – of herself, her community, and her home. Within her visionary 'onion-spawn' landscapes, her 'Alibii' figures are constructed as 'Land Lords,' or caretakers of the land and guardians of the 'Onion Seed,' a concept inspired by Bermudian author Nellie Musson and her book *Mind the Onion Seed*.

“Through a blend of myth, fantasy, historical fact, and fiction, *NOT ALL HAS TO BE AS IT WAS* aims to heal and re-enchant the landscape by offering new narratives and perspectives,” states Hassell. **“Each piece in this collection serves as a portal into alternative histories and imagined futures where ‘Alibii’ women are not only present but are central figures in the story of the land.”**

Featured in the Butterfield Gallery, the core exhibition will include bespoke works by Hassell, alongside selected works from the Masterworks Permanent Collection. The Screening Room inside the Butterfield Gallery will house a short film entitled *Finding Soft Ground* directed by Essence Aikman and produced by Hassell. *Holy Ground*, the collaboration between Hassell and Yesha Townsend, will feature in the Mezzanine Gallery and include a participatory installation to which the artists invite the public to contribute.

Curated by Masterworks' Museum and Gallery Exhibitions Officer Jasmine Lee, the exhibition invites visitors to explore a reimagined Bermuda landscape through Hassell's vibrant amalgamation of myth and historical fact. **"Gherdai Hassell's work is a bridge between the past and the present, inviting viewers to embark on a journey of rediscovery and**

reconnection," says Lee. **"I am thrilled for our community to experience both Hassell's innovative vision and the Masterworks Permanent Collection in a new and exciting way, as this exhibition promises to offer fresh perspectives and inspire deeper engagement with our shared heritage."**

NOT ALL HAS TO BE AS IT WAS will open for a Members' Preview on Friday, September 27, from 5:30-7:30 pm, coinciding with the Bermuda Tourism Authority's Art Month, and open officially to the public on Saturday, September 28. The exhibition will be on view until February 22, 2025.

The exhibition is curated by Jasmine Lee, Museum & Gallery Exhibitions Officer. Support for this exhibition is graciously provided by an Anonymous Donor.

Related Events

Members' Preview

Friday, September 27 | 5:30 – 7pm

Public Opening

Saturday, September 28 | 10am – 2pm

ARTIST TALK with Gherdai Hassell, Yesha Townsend and Essence Aikman

Saturday, September 28 | 2 – 3:30pm

CURATED CONVERSATIONS with Yesha Townsend, Featured Artist and Lecturer

Thursday, October 24 | 5:30 – 7pm

For further information, please visit:

Exhibition Page: www.masterworksbermuda.org/not-all-has-to-be-as-it-was/

Artist Website: www.gherdaihassell.com

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