



OMAR VICTOR DIOP

PROJECT DIASPORA

FEB. 17 - AUG. 20, 2017

TABLE OF CONTENTS

About SCAD FASH	1
About the Artist	3
About the Curriculum Guide	5
Learning Activities	
1. Analyze qualities of portraiture	6
2. Investigate the aesthetic of cool	8
3. Compose plans for a formal portrait	10
Educational Standards	12
Glossary	13
Curriculum Connections	14
Image Credits	15
Related SCAD Degree Programs	16
Museum Map	18



Small white informational card next to the large portrait.



Small white informational card next to the smaller portrait.

SCAD
FASH

MUSEUM OF FASHION + FILM

ABOUT SCAD FASH

SCAD FASH Museum of Fashion + Film celebrates fashion as a universal language, garments as important conduits of identity, and film as an immersive and memorable medium. Situated within the SCAD Atlanta campus, the museum focuses on the future of fashion design, connecting conceptual to historical principles of dress — whether ceremonial, celebratory or informal — and welcomes visitors of all ages to engage with dynamic exhibitions, captivating films and educationally enriching events.

Fortified by the university's strong global presence and worldwide connections to renowned contemporary fashion designers, filmmakers and creative professionals, SCAD FASH is an integral part of the SCAD educational experience.

Like the award-winning SCAD Museum of Art, SCAD FASH serves as a teaching museum and creative resource for students of all ages and a wellspring of inspiration for visitors. Through programming that engages the university's broad array of academic disciplines — encompassing more than 40 majors and 70 minors — SCAD FASH offers a diverse, year-round program of exhibitions, films, installations,

performances and events that enliven and inspire SCAD students and the greater community. Every program is designed to engage and appeal to visitors with varied backgrounds and interests, from textiles and jewelry to photography and film.

Within nearly 10,000 square feet of elegant and adaptable exhibition space, SCAD FASH brings a distinct schedule of fashion-focused exhibitions and compelling films to the heart of Midtown Atlanta. In addition to gallery talks, lectures, film screenings and exclusive opportunities for museum members, SCAD FASH is an international stage for student and alumni design showcases, fashion shows and exhibitions.

Throughout the year at each of its locations around the world, SCAD hosts a spectacular lineup of thought-provoking, star-studded events that place art and design education front and center. SCAD FASH continues this rich tradition by affording students and professors across all disciplines the opportunity to celebrate works of wearable art and remarkable filmmaking, and to interact with the renowned and emerging professionals who create them.

Left: **Omar Victor Diop**: From left to right: *August Sabac El Cher*, 2014; *Juan de Pareja*, 2014



ABOUT THE ARTIST

SCAD FASH Museum of Fashion + Film presents the first solo museum exhibition by celebrated photographer Omar Victor Diop. *Project Diaspora* is a rich, meticulously crafted essay of 18 works of art that explore the often neglected, but deeply entangled historical relationships between Africa and the rest of the world, including trade, early diplomatic encounters and the legacy of slavery. Diop's photographs focus on the representation of Africans in Western and Asian art history from the 15th to the 19th centuries, as he recreates portraits of individuals who became prominent figures in their unique contexts.

Diop's dynamic recreation of historic images addresses various concerns and influences. He pays close attention to the costumes of his references and adds details, such as colorful patterned backgrounds and adornment. Having left the corporate world to pursue a career in photography, Diop has worked extensively as a fashion photographer, and this experience is evident in the styling and construction of his conceptual bodies of work. The inclusion of sports memorabilia and objects — such as gloves, soccer balls and whistles — seem idiosyncratic, but alludes to the stereotypical representation of the black male in popular culture. The combination of fashion and sport in the images also unravels and comments on perceptions of masculinity.

In *Project Diaspora*, the artist uses himself as subject in a manner that resists a reading of mere self-portraiture and instead serves as a conscious act to transport these iconic images and their significance into the present. Furthermore, the artist exercises agency and control over representation that the original subjects of such historic portraiture might have been denied.

The tradition of West African studio photography — and its well-known proponents such as Malian photographers Seydou Keïta and Malick Sidibé — is also an important influence in *Project Diaspora* and other work by Diop. It is within these studio environments, with their fashionable and proud sitters, that the visual languages and the embodiment of an African modernity and emancipation emerged since the 1950s, amid a period of independence and liberation from colonial oppression.

The exhibition is curated by Storm Janse van Rensburg, SCAD head curator of exhibitions.

Left: Portrait of Omar Victor Diop



ABOUT THE CURRICULUM GUIDE

SCAD curriculum guides provide learning opportunities that fulfill the requirements of educational standards and are designed for use within the museum's exhibition spaces and in classrooms. The guides enhance understanding of art and design through investigations that reveal relevant personal, historical and cultural connections while promoting cross-disciplinary links necessary for today's innovative careers.

Recognizing the guides' overall design excellence and ingenuity, the American Alliance of Museums' Museum Publications Design Competition twice awarded SCAD curriculum guides first place in the education category, in 2015 and 2016.

This Omar Victor Diop guide focuses on the historical and personal aspects of artistic criteria as well as the exploratory and investigative process of creation. Diop's examinations of self-identity and representation provide the basis for standards-based activities that explore the art of portraiture in its historical and contemporary guises.

Left: *Project Diaspora* at SCAD FASH

Educational standards are listed on page 12.

Highlighted glossary terms may be found on page 13.

Additional learning resources are located in the Curriculum Connections section on page 14.

Artist image credits are listed on page 15.

1 Analyze qualities of portraiture

“I always say, and I do believe it, the best way to share a future is to start with sharing a past.”

Omar Victor Diop



Omar Victor Diop, *Juan de Pareja*, 2014

Omar Victor Diop's *Project Diaspora* originated with the artist's search for portraits of African leaders from 15th- to 19th-century classical paintings, engravings and sculptures. Diop discovered many examples of Africans whose inspiring life stories were absent from historical narratives. As he relates, “I felt like this needed to be shared with a language people could relate to nowadays.”

His conviction resulted in *Project Diaspora*, a series in which he acts as photographer and model, taking on the role of 18 African luminaries. Visit the image credits page to read biographies of the people he portrays throughout this guide. Diop's reinterpretations of their portraits include modern soccer paraphernalia as props, symbolizing a parallel between these leaders and the dual lives of today's black athletes — glorified yet excluded.

Although he acknowledges that these works appear to be self-portraits, he firmly insists they are not. He describes his work on behalf of the overlooked Africans' legacies as an effort to “bring them back to life and invite them in the current conversation about the role of Africa and Africans in the whole human experience.”

Art historian Erwin Panofsky's writings lend insight to the significance of *Project Diaspora's* distinctive approach to portraiture:

“A portrait aims by definition at two essential and, in a sense, contradictory qualities: individuality, or uniqueness; and totality, or wholeness. On the one hand, it seeks to bring out whatever it is in which the sitter differs from the rest of humanity ... On the other hand, it seeks to bring out whatever the sitter has in common with the rest of humanity and what remains constant in him regardless of place and time...

All portraitists, then, must balance these two postulates, and the manner in which this balance is achieved depends upon period, nationality and personal inclination. Very roughly speaking, it may be said that an emphasis on individuality or uniqueness ... leads to a descriptive and static approach. ... Conversely, an emphasis on totality or wholeness ... leads to an approach interpretive and dynamic: the sitter tends to be depicted as a representative example of humanity in general, full of vitality. ... We are face to face, not so much with the mere appearance of an individual as with his very core or essence, unique yet independent of place and time ...”

2 Investigate the aesthetic of cool

“I wanted to show them in a conquering posture while underlining the similarity of challenges faced by African diasporas ...”

Omar Victor Diop

The title of Omar Victor Diop's *Project Diaspora* refers to the forced dispersion of Africans from their ancestral lands to other parts of the globe. Dating back to the 15th century, the African diaspora has an expansive, complicated history that encompasses many cultures, as Diop makes evident through the diversity of his subjects. The broadly *analogous* diasporic experiences of these Africans, which is shared by their descendants, includes racial oppression and a divided sense of self. Diop's motivation in focusing on these individuals — most of whom were born or sold into slavery and, later, made noteworthy achievements — is revealed in his stated themes of representation and identity. Diop represents these little known role models to inspire others to build similarly resilient self-identities.

In her book *The Birth of Cool*, Carol Tulloch explores the relationship between the diasporic experience and the quality known as “cool.” She cites research establishing cool's origins in West African cultures, which value a collection of personal attributes — among them, poised calm, faithfulness to one's ideals and sophisticated originality. She maintains that the continued existence of the *aesthetic* of cool in the Black Americas demonstrates its effectiveness as response to the diasporic experience. Expressed through personal style and attitude, cool exudes an assured presence in the face of *marginalization*, unifies a divided self through the creative *assimilation* of diverse influences and communicates *autonomy* in a manner that captivates rather than confronts.



Omar Victor Diop, *Dom Nicolau*, 2014

How does your understanding of the African diaspora and the evolution of the aesthetic of cool inform your understanding of Diop's work? For instance, how do these two concepts relate to Diop's twin themes of representation and identity?

Tulloch describes cool as a style, which she defines as "the construction of self, through the assemblage of garments and accessories, hairstyles and beauty regimes that may, or may not, be 'in fashion' at the time of use..." Based on this definition, explain the nuances that distinguish "cool," "style" and "fashion." For instance, is cool always stylish? Is being fashionable the same as being cool? In the space below, write a response that describes the relationship of cool to both style and fashion.

3 Compose plans for a formal portrait

“Part of me wants to reinvent the great heritage of elaborate studio photography that we have in Africa ...”

Omar Victor Diop



Raised in Senegal’s capital of Dakar within a middle class family of corporate achievers, Omar Victor Diop was well on his way to a similarly successful career when he purchased his first camera. He began experimenting with street photography, recording his homeland’s notably diverse culture and its fusion of contemporary aesthetics and centuries-old customs. As his artistic career progressed, Diop produced staged compositions that echoed traditional African studio photography. His preparations for these works involve numerous decisions — from a photographer’s concerns regarding lighting and framing, to a stylist’s selection and adjustment of poses, color themes, wardrobe, backdrops and props.

Omar Victor Diop: Left to right: *Jean-Baptiste Belley*, 2014; *Omar Ibn Saïd*, 2014

In the earliest days of photography, carefully staged portraits arose due to long **exposure times** that required subjects to remain motionless. As late as the 20th century, opportunities to make photographic portraits were relatively special occasions, imparting a formality that influenced sitters and portrait makers alike. Despite the ease with which we now make selfies, past portrait conventions remain today. Consider the tradition of high school senior portraits. Like their early predecessors, they typically include steady, stable poses that communicate a sense of constancy and facial expressions that depict a calm certainty. The subject of the portrait is usually centered, facing forward, in profile or at a point halfway between these two.

*Create a detailed plan for a portrait of yourself that follows traditional conventions and combines your skills as a stylist and model. Set your phone’s camera to a 4:3 **ratio** with the grid enabled to match the drawing spaces on the facing page. Ask a friend to photograph you in varying poses that communicate constancy and certainty. Using the images above as references, sketch three different poses in the upper row of spaces on the facing page. Select one, then consult with friends for feedback on decisions regarding color themes, wardrobes, backdrops and props. Record the specifics of your choices as well as the rationales for them. For instance, describe the props you will need and why you chose them. On the lower right portion of the page, sketch a detailed plan that will guide the production of your portrait.*

Color themes:

Wardrobe:

Backdrops:

Props:

EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS

National Core Arts Standards – High School

Activity 1

Responding 9.1

Anchor: Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work.

HSI: Establish relevant criteria in order to evaluate a work of art or collection of works.

HSII: Determine the relevance of criteria used by others to evaluate a work of art or collection of works.

HSIII: Construct evaluations of a work of art or collection of works based on differing sets of criteria.

Activity 2

Responding 8.1

Anchor: Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.

HSI: Interpret an artwork or collection of works, supported by relevant and sufficient evidence found in the work and its various contexts.

HSII: Identify types of contextual information useful in the process of constructing interpretations of an artwork or collection of works.

HSIII: Analyze differing interpretations of an artwork or collection of works in order to select and defend a plausible critical analysis.

Activity 3

Creating 3.1

Anchor: Refine and complete artistic work.

HSI: Apply relevant criteria from traditional and contemporary cultural contexts to examine, reflect on and plan revisions for works of art and design in progress.

HSII: Engage in constructive critique with peers, then reflect on, re-engage, revise and refine works of art and design in response to personal artistic vision.

HSIII: Reflect on, re-engage, revise and refine works of art or design considering relevant traditional and contemporary criteria as well as personal artistic vision.

GLOSSARY

aesthetic *n.* A set of principles underlying the work of a particular artist, artistic movement or culture

analogous *adj.* Similar in some respects, comparable

assimilation *n.* The process of absorbing new ideas and information

autonomy *n.* Freedom from external control or influence

criteria *n.* Guiding principles used to evaluate specific qualities of a work of art

diaspora *n.* The movement of a people away from a homeland, especially involuntarily

exposure time *n.* The quantity of time that camera film or digital sensor needs to be exposed to light in order to produce the desired image

luminary *n.* A person whose achievements inspire others

marginalization *n.* Treatment of a person, group or concept as insignificant

ratio *n.* The quantitative relation between two amounts, such as width and length

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

pp. 6-7 1. Analyze qualities of portraiture

- Additional Resources** **Website** This illustrated combination of biography, interview and portfolio provides a condensed review of Diop's life and career. www.magnin-a.com/en/artistes/presentation/1199/omar-victor-diop
- Video** Omar Victor Diop speaks about the genesis, process and artistic intent behind *Project Diaspora*. www.vimeo.com/139558086
- Quote** p. 6 "Omar Victor Diop talks about 'Project Diaspora.'" *Vimeo*, uploaded by Art Base Africa, 3 April 2016, www.vimeo.com/139558086.
- Citations** "Omar Victor Diop." *Vimeo*, uploaded by Paris Photo, Nov. 2016, www.vimeo.com/190321094. Accessed 3 April 2017.
- Parker, Nick and Daisy Carrington. "Omar Victor Diop: The newbie photographer who went pro." *CNN*, 5 Aug. 2015, www.cnn.com/2015/08/05/arts/omar-victor-diop-photography-career/. Accessed 3 April 2017.
- Panofsky, Erwin. "Jan van Eyck's Arnolfini portrait image." *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, vol. 64, no. 372, March 1934, pp. 117-119; 122-127. *Monoskop*, www.monoskop.org/File:Jan_van_Eyck_Arnolfini_Portrait.pdf. Accessed 3 April 2017.

pp. 8-9 2. Investigate the aesthetic of cool

- Additional Resource** **Website** Reflect further on qualities of coolness with this summary of the *Aesthetic of the Cool: Afro-Atlantic Art and Music*, authored by the preeminent scholar of the cool, Robert Farris Thompson. www.caareviews.org/reviews/2613#.WOLf_IXyuHs
- Quote** p. 8 deDieu, Jean-Philippe. "African Diasporas, Playing With the Past." *The New York Times*, 5 Dec. 2014, www.lens.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/12/05/african-diasporas-playing-with-the-past. Accessed 3 April 2017.
- Citation** Tulloch, Carol. *The Birth of Cool: Style Narratives of the African Diaspora*. Bloomsbury Academic, 2016.

pp. 10-11 3. Compose plans for a formal portrait

- Additional Resources** **Website** Explore the official website of African photographer Seydou Keita, one of the photographers who influenced Diop. www.seydoukeitaphotographer.com/#10
- Website** Learn how another of Diop's inspirations, photographer Malick Sidibé, started and developed his career. www.lensculture.com/articles/malick-sidibe-interview-with-malick-sidibe
- Quote** p. 10 Diop, Omar Victor. Interview with Sean O'Hagan. "Omar Victor Diop: 'I want to reinvent the heritage of African studio photography.'" *The Guardian*, 11 July 2015, www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2015/jul/11/mar-ictor-ioi-want-to-reinvent-great-heritage-of-african-studio-photography. Accessed 3 April 2017.

ARTIST IMAGE CREDITS

Cover Omar Victor Diop, *Pedro Camejo*, 2014, pigment inkjet print on Hahnemühle paper, edition of 8 + 2 APs. Courtesy of the Artist and Magnin-A, Paris, France.

Pedro Camejo (1790-1821) Initially a slave serving in the royalist army during Venezuela's fight for independence, Pedro Camejo switched allegiance to the rebel army lead by Simón Bolívar. He became known as "Negro Primero," or "The First Black," both for his role as the only black officer in that army and his presence at the forefront of every battle.
www.ahorasecreto.blogspot.com/2011/12/black-venezuelan-hero-in-simon-bolivars.html

Activity 1 Omar Victor Diop, *Juan de Pareja*, 2014, pigment inkjet print on Hahnemühle paper, edition of 8 + 2 APs. Courtesy of the Artist and Magnin-A, Paris, France.

Juan de Pareja (c.1606-1670) Juan de Pareja was born into slavery and inherited by the Spanish painter Diego Velázquez. Set to work in the great painter's studio, Pareja became his principle assistant and a skilled painter in his own right. Velázquez freed Pareja in 1654, around the time he painted his widely recognized masterpiece, *Juan de Pareja*.
www.blogcritics.org/velzquez-and-the-soul-of-juan

Activity 2 Omar Victor Diop, *Dom Nicolau*, 2014, pigment inkjet print on Hahnemühle paper, edition of 8 + 2 APs. Courtesy of the Artist and Magnin-A, Paris, France

Dom Nicolau (c.1830-c.1860) Nicolau de Agua Rosada de Sardonia, Prince of the Kongo, is considered the earliest African leader to publish a formal protest against colonial commercial, political and military activity in his home country. Before his adoption of this visionary resistance tactic, the most common channel for protest was armed rebellion.
www.kwekudee-tripdownmemorylane.blogspot.com/2012/10/prince-dom-nicolau-of-kongoone-of.html

Activity 3 Omar Victor Diop, *Jean-Baptiste Belley*, 2014, pigment inkjet print on Hahnemühle paper, edition of 8 + 2 APs. Courtesy of the Artist and Magnin-A, Paris, France.

Jean-Baptiste Belley (c.1746-1805) A native of Senegal, Belley was abducted around the age of two and sold into slavery in Saint-Domingue, now Haiti. Despite this, Belley educated himself, purchased his own freedom, and built an impressive military and civic career. He served with French forces in the American Revolution and fought at the Siege of Savannah, Georgia. Elected to represent his island, he became the first man of African descent to hold elective office in the French Republic.
www.blog.catherinedelors.com/citizen-jean-baptiste-belley-from-slavery-to-the-convention-nationale
www.dawninggenealogy.blogspot.com/2015/04/les-chasseurs-volontaires-de-saint.html

Omar Victor Diop, *Omar Ibn Saïd*, 2014, pigment inkjet print on Hahnemühle paper, edition of 8 + 2 APs. Courtesy of the Artist and Magnin-A, Paris, France.

Omar Ibn Saïd (c.1770-1864) Omar Ibn Saïd, an Islamic scholar, was taken from his village in West Africa at the age of 37. Sold to a man he described as "wicked," Saïd fled, was jailed and purchased again by a man who appreciated his steadfast faith in God. Saïd's autobiography is the only known example of a first-person account of American slavery written in Arabic.
www.blackpast.org/aah/said-omar-ibn-1770-1864

RELATED SCAD DEGREE PROGRAMS

Fashion

At both the undergraduate and graduate level, SCAD fashion students prepare to lead in the ever-evolving world of fashion through a rigorous curriculum anchored by creative thinking and dynamic technology. Guided by professors with extensive industry experience, students explore fashion from the conceptual to the commercial and merge technical dexterity with personal vision to develop original fashion collections. Studio courses culminate in the creation of garments and complete collections that serve as important career-making evidence in graduates' portfolios. Strong connections to the professional realm help students land valuable internships while completing their courses of study. Students have secured coveted internships with The Row, *Teen Vogue* and Tory Burch. Graduates have gone on to rewarding careers at Diane von Furstenberg, *ELLE* magazine, Marc Jacobs and Opening Ceremony.

Students interact with and are inspired by breathtaking creations on a daily basis at the SCAD Museum of Art in Savannah and SCAD FASH Museum of Fashion + Film in Atlanta, where the university premieres couture exhibitions such as *Oscar de la Renta* and *Carolina Herrera: Refined Irreverence*. The university's permanent collection includes more than 1,000 signature and historic garments.

SCHOOL OF FASHION

BACHELOR OF FINE ARTS **A H S**

MASTER OF ARTS **A S e**

MASTER OF FINE ARTS **A S e**

Art History

SCAD art history students view the world through art and artifacts, and learn from distinguished scholars who hold outstanding credentials, extraordinary research experience and active artistic practices that inform their teaching. The university's global locations grant art history students the unique opportunity to study, intern and work around the world, including the chance to hold exclusive docent positions within SCAD museums and galleries.

Undergraduate students examine the art and design of diverse periods and media, and each student develops a thesis that plunges into history, theory and criticism. The graduate program emphasizes the critical analysis and interpretation of works of art and culminates in original research. More than 70 elective options — covering a panoply of topics from cave art to 1980s punk photography — are integral to the course of study and permit students to customize their degrees. At both levels, students engage in enriching lecture series, symposia and events, including SCAD deFINE ART, where they connect with renowned artists including Alfredo Jaar and Carrie Mae Weems, and influential scholars and critics Jerry Saltz of *New York* magazine, Pulitzer Prize-winning author Louis Menand and others.

SCHOOL OF LIBERAL ARTS

BACHELOR OF FINE ARTS **S**

MASTER OF ARTS **S**

A SCAD Atlanta

H SCAD Hong Kong

S SCAD Savannah

e SCAD eLearning

Photography

Through a comprehensive program at SCAD, students learn the full spectrum of photography — from historic and analog processes to the newest digital technologies professionals use today. Students gain fluency with a variety of camera systems, digital workflows, color and black-and-white techniques, and studio and location lighting, developing expertise through tailored study and faculty mentorship.

Coursework is designed to help students realize a unique creative vision, master visual literacy and launch their careers. Undergraduate students cultivate their skills through concentrations in commercial, documentary and fine art photography. At the graduate level, M.A. students engage in advanced study and complete a unified body of work in the form of a dynamic final portfolio. M.F.A. students practice advanced research toward their thesis projects and careers in both professional photography and academia.

A strong emphasis on internships encourages students to gain real experience outside the classroom. Photography students have served as interns for Annie Leibovitz, Ford Models, Hearst Magazines, Turner Broadcasting and others. Photography alumni work for companies including *Harper's Bazaar*, Google, *Popular Mechanics* and Facebook.

SCHOOL OF FINE ARTS

BACHELOR OF ARTS **A S e**

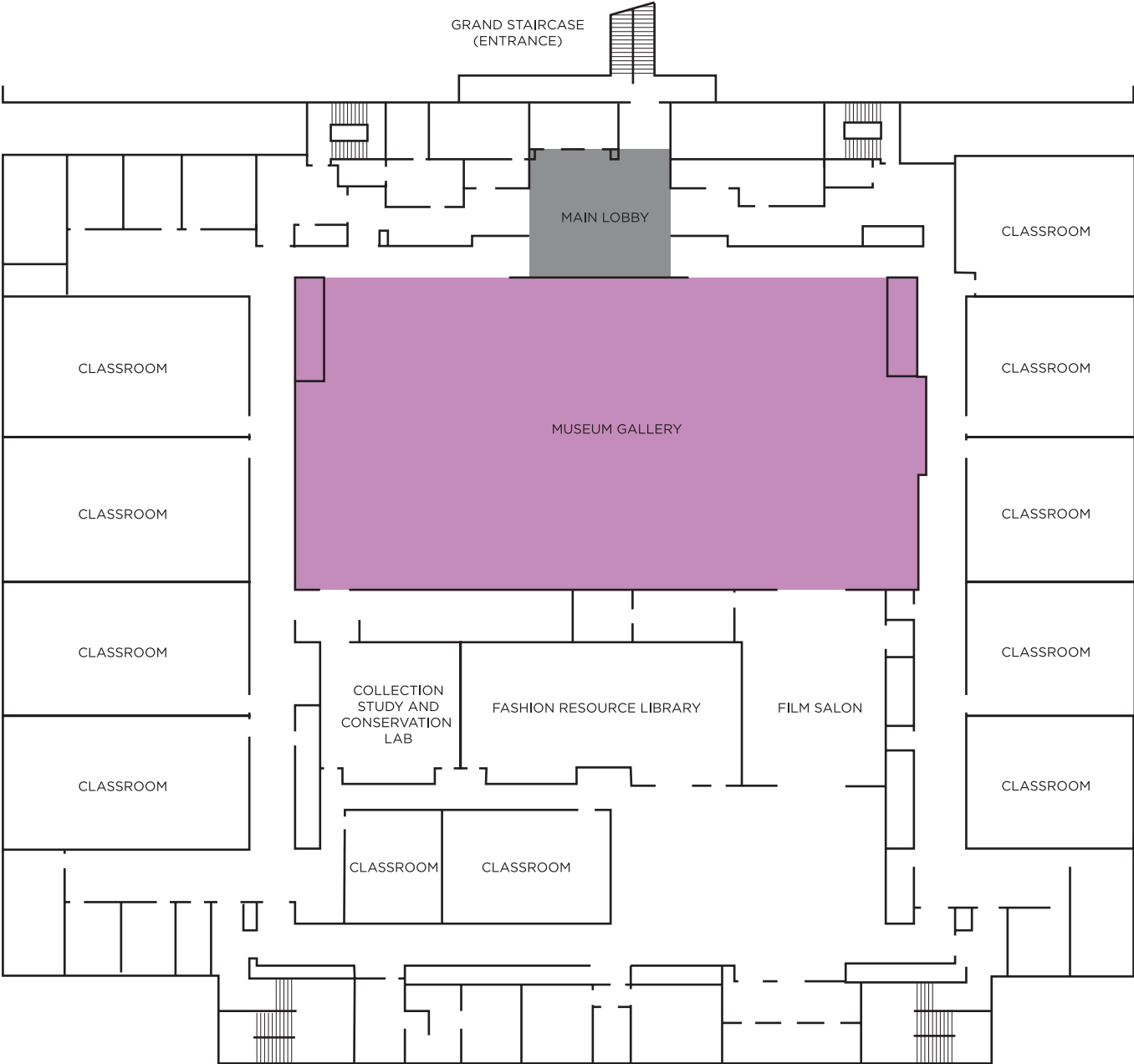
BACHELOR OF FINE ARTS **A H S**

MASTER OF ARTS **H S e**

MASTER OF FINE ARTS **A H S e**



Museum Map



CURRENT AND UPCOMING EXHIBITIONS

- S** **Lineages** • Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian
Jan. 31, 2017 – Aug. 6, 2017
- S** **Roots** • José Parlá
Feb. 7, 2017 – July 16, 2017
- S** **Florida Living** • Hernan Bas
Feb. 14, 2017 – Aug. 20, 2017
- S** **With You ... Us** • Glen Fogel
Feb. 21, 2017 – May 28, 2017
- S** **Infinity Lines** • Chiharu Shiota
Feb. 21, 2017 – Aug. 6, 2017
- S** **Blind Memory** • Hank Willis Thomas
Feb. 21, 2017 – Aug. 20, 2017
- S** **Chroma** • Carlos Cruz-Diez
Feb. 21, 2017 – Aug. 20, 2017
- S** **Freedom Isn't Always Beautiful** • Hank Willis Thomas
Feb. 21, 2017 – Aug. 20, 2017
- S** **Chaos Pacific** • Jedd Novatt
March 27, 2017 – June 4, 2017
- A** **Shoes: Pleasure and Pain**
April 11, 2017 – Aug. 13, 2017



1600 Peachtree St. NW
Atlanta, Georgia
404.253.3132
scadfash.org

Support for deFINE ART has been generously provided by Ann Tenenbaum and Thomas H. Lee, the Jacob and Gwendolyn Knight Lawrence Foundation, Artacruz and the Cruz-Diez Art Foundation.