

## **FESTIVAL: A Celebration of African Art at the Fitchburg Art Museum**

On View through December 3, 2026



*FESTIVAL: A Celebration of African Art at the Fitchburg Art Museum* is the first of FAM's Centennial exhibitions featuring works of art from our Permanent Collection of over 8,000 objects held in trust for the people of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. It honors FAM founder Eleanor Norcross and her goal to bring the experience of art to the people of Fitchburg. *FESTIVAL* is organized loosely around the ideas of African Masquerade, Ceremonial Life, Ritual Life, and Domestic Life. The works on display are just a sampling from over 1000 artworks from across the African continent that make up FAM's African collection.



The exhibited works include terra cottas dating from the first millenium BCE and contemporary work by transnational Nigerian artists such as Sokari Douglas Camp's *Drummers*, 1987 (top) and Yinka Shonibare's *Hybrid Mask - k'peliye'e*, 2021. These contemporary artworks book-end works that are best described as "traditional" or "iconic" dating from the 19th and 20th centuries, although they reflect much older practices. "Iconic" African art includes masks and sculptures used in many different cultures and contexts across the continent, and are what most people picture when they think of African art. However, we cannot pretend that the exhibition represents all African cultures. It does represent many ideas and practices that were widely shared and expressed in material form even as the art demonstrates the diversity of people's visions. *FESTIVAL* is an invitation for you to immerse yourself in this richness.

This exhibition was organized by Consulting Curator for African, Oceanic, and First Peoples Arts, Jean Borgatti and designed by Curator Emily Mazzola and Terry and Eva Herndon Assistant Curator Sarah Harper.



**Image Credit for Pages 1 and 2 (in order of appearance)**

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Sokari Douglas Camp (Nigerian (Buguma, Kalabari Ijo), b. 1958), *Drummers*, 1987, metal, wood, paint. Museum purchase (Margaret Simonds Sinon Collection Fund and Louise I. Doyle Collection Fund), 2011.33

Ethiopia (Amhara or Tigray regions), *Seven Coptic Crosses*, 17th – 20th centuries, metal or wood. Gifts of Lillian Montalto Bohlen (2023.316, 317, 318) and Dwight B. and Anna C. Heath in memory of their son David B. Heath (2017.167, 284, 285, 299)

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Chokwe artist, Democratic Republic of the Congo (Urunda area), *Initiation Mask (cihongo)*, 2nd quarter of the 20th century, mixed media. Gift of Helen Donis-Keller, 2021.196

Nok culture, Nigeria (Kaduna State), *Seated Male Figure*, c. 900 BCE - 300 BCE, terra cotta. Gift of Lillian Montalto Bohlen, 2023.314

## About the Fitchburg Art Museum (FAM)

**The Mission of the Fitchburg Art Museum is to inspire creativity and learning, and to contribute to the well-being of our diverse communities in Fitchburg, North Central Massachusetts, and New England.**

To accomplish this mission, we organize exhibitions of the work of New England contemporary artists and artworks from our art historical collections, offer programs for learners of all ages, support public art projects, invite community participation and partnerships, and stimulate the creative economy – all in the spirit of inclusivity.

The Fitchburg Art Museum serves the cities of Fitchburg and Leominster and the surrounding communities in North Central Massachusetts and Southern New Hampshire. Founded in 1925, FAM plays a vital role in the cultural life of the region and has recently repositioned itself to focus on community access and service. FAM uses its artistic and educational resources to aid in the economic revitalization of Fitchburg, and the Museum maintains active educational partnerships with the local school systems, as well as Fitchburg State University. FAM is an engine for creativity, education, community building, and fun!

### **Hours**

Wednesday through Friday: 12:00 PM – 4:00 PM

Saturday through Sunday: 11:00 AM – 5:00 PM

FAM at Night: 12:00 PM – 7:00 PM\*

\*Hours for FAM at Night at subject to change; please see the most up-to-date hours on FAM's website.

### **Museum Website**

[www.fitchburgartmuseum.org](http://www.fitchburgartmuseum.org)

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