



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

News media contact

Daniel K. Ackermann

336.721.7372 or DAckermann@oldsalem.org

HOUSE PARTY:

R.S.V.P. B.Y.O.B.

April 22- July 16, 2022

Imaginative Exhibition at MESDA and Old Salem Brings Together Work
by Artists Past and Present

David Drake ● Michelle Erickson ● Theaster Gates
Renee Green ● David Hammons ● Lonnie Holley
David Jarbour ● Todd Johnson ● Glenn Ligon
Alison Saar ● Kara Walker



WINSTON-SALEM, N.C. (March 18, 2022) – Old Salem Museums & Gardens and the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts (MESDA) will present an exhibition of important artists past and present for a “house party” at the Museum. The exhibition is organized by guest curator Michael J. Bramwell with assistance from Old Salem and MESDA’s chief curator Daniel K. Ackermann. The House Party will include work by **David Drake, Michelle Erickson, Theaster Gates, Renee Green, David Hammons, Lonnie Holley, Todd Johnson, Glenn Ligon, Alison Saar, Kara Walker**, and others. House Party will be installed in one of MESDA’s most significant period rooms, a dining room reclaimed from Thomas Porcher’s Berkeley County, South Carolina, plantation house before it was demolished in the 1930s.

“In the 19th century the guests invited to a house party in this space would have been excluded or reduced to a service capacity, but now they bring their own bags to interrogate the material legacies of enslavement and its plantation forms,” says guest curator Michael Bramwell. “The exhibition is at once an acknowledgement and commemoration of the 135 people enslaved by Thomas Porcher at his White Hall plantation and a celebration of the Black craftspeople responsible for the carvings and woodwork in the dining room.” Recent scholarship in *The MESDA Journal* identified some of the Black craftspeople responsible for the woodwork in the room, including men named Sharloe, Jemmy, Jupiter, Jacky, Cyrus, and Dick. “This is what social justice work looks like in cultural space, at least as I think about it,” says Bramwell.

“Since MESDA was founded in 1965, we have always invited researchers and scholars to engage with our collection. Inviting artists and makers to engage with our unique holdings is a natural extension that helps us to continue to see the objects in our care in new and different ways,” says Daniel Ackermann, chief curator of Old Salem and MESDA. “As both a scholar of African diasporic material culture and a contemporary visual artist

himself, Bramwell is uniquely suited to help us see our collection in new ways and spark important conversations between past and present.”

HOUSE PARTY is an extension of Old Salem and MESDA’s Art Out of Bounds initiative launched in 2019. It is part of a long tradition of contemporary art collaborations at the museum, including Fred Wilson’s 1994 residency at Old Salem and his installation *Insight/In Site/In Sight/Incite: Memory*. This project builds on Bramwell’s work as one of Old Salem and MESDA’s inaugural Southern Pathways visiting curators in 2020. House Party expands on the work of Old Salem and MESDA’s nationally recognized Hidden Town, Art Out of Bounds, Study South, Access, and Equity initiatives.

HOUSE PARTY is funded in part by the Chipstone Foundation of Milwaukee and the Wunsch Americana Foundation of New York. “We are thrilled to be working with our partners at Chipstone and the Wunsch Americana Foundation to push forward innovative and inclusive new approaches to curatorial practice in our galleries,” says Frank D. Vagnone, president and CEO of Old Salem and MESDA.

Educational and public programs are planned. Timed admission to the exhibition is included with any Old Salem and MESDA Ticket.

About Visiting Curator Michael J. Bramwell

Michael J. Bramwell is a professional visual artist, educator, and scholar of African diasporic material culture. He has exhibited work and curated installations internationally. He is a PhD candidate at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill where his dissertation focuses on the work of David Drake, an enslaved poet, potter, and abolitionist who worked in the Edgefield District of South Carolina.

About Old Salem Museums & Gardens

Old Salem Museums & Gardens is a unique living history site that shares the rich, authentic, and diverse cultural history of the early South—with special emphasis on the Moravians in North Carolina, enslaved and free people of African descent, and indigenous peoples of the Southern Woodlands—through the preservation and interpretation of material culture, architecture, and cultural landscapes. Its museums—the Historic Town of Salem, the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts (MESDA), and the Gardens at Old Salem—are quickly becoming nationally known for innovative and novel interpretive models and programs.

oldsalem.org

About the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts at Old Salem Museums & Gardens

The Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts (MESDA) is the preeminent center for the research of decorative arts and material culture of the early South. Part of Old Salem Museums & Gardens, MESDA is home to the finest collection of southern decorative arts and related research materials in the country. The museum is internationally recognized for its contributions to the study and understanding of the history, decorative arts, and material culture of the American South.

mesda.org

Image credit: David Hammons (d.1943), *Untitled*, 1983-1985, mixed media, loan courtesy of the collection of Nicolas Rohatyn and Jeanne Greenberg Rohatyn, New York; Workshop of Alexander Petrie, *Salver*, 1742-1768, silver, collection of the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts. Composition by Michael J. Bramwell. Photograph by Daniel Ackermann. Additional images available by request; Installation photography available April 15.

###