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NEW MUSEUM TO OPEN THE FIRST US SURVEY OF JOHN AKOMFRAH AND FIRST NEW YORK SURVEY OF THOMAS BAYRLE IN SUMMER 2018

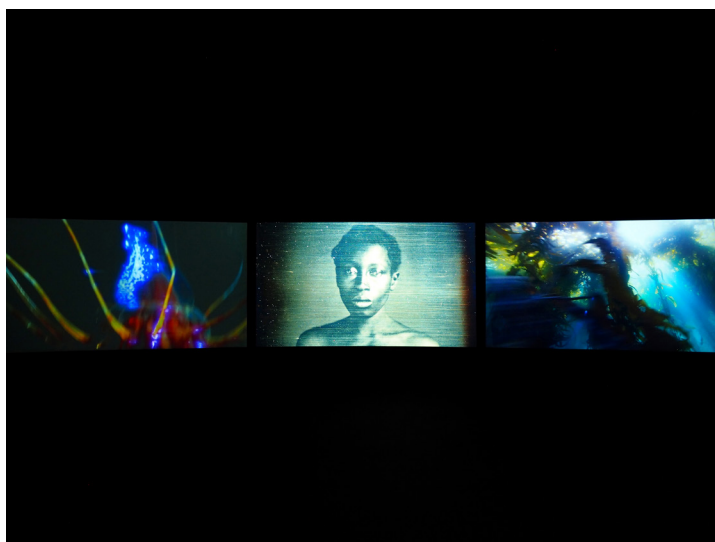
New York, NY...For its summer 2018 season, the New Museum will present the first US survey of British artist, director, and writer **John Akomfrah**, and the first New York survey of the German artist **Thomas Bayrle**, filling the main galleries of the Museum.

“John Akomfrah: Signs of Empire”
June 20–September 2, 2018
Second Floor

The New Museum will present the first American survey exhibition of the work of British artist, film director, and writer John Akomfrah (b. 1957, Accra, Ghana). Since the early 1980s, Akomfrah's moving image works have offered some of the most rigorous and expansive reflections on the culture of the black diaspora, both in the UK and around the world. Akomfrah's work initially came to prominence in the early 1980s as part of Black Audio Film Collective, a group of seven artists founded in 1982 in response to the 1981 Brixton riots. The collective produced a number of films notable for their mix of archival and found footage, interviews and realist depictions of contemporary England, and layered sound collages. In works like *Handsworth Songs* (1986), Akomfrah and Black Audio outlined the political and economic forces leading to social unrest throughout England. Akomfrah and Black Audio's works were remarkable for their trenchant political inquiries and consistently experimental approach. They were also pioneering in their injection of narratives of black British history and culture into popular media through documentaries made for British television.

Throughout the 1990s, Akomfrah's subject matter expanded beyond the social fractures of contemporary British society to focus on a wider historical context, from the persistent legacy of colonialism to the roots of the contemporary in classical literature. Moving into the early 2000s, Akomfrah also produced a series of atmospheric works addressing personal and historical memory. In the past several years, his multichannel video works have evolved into ambitious, large-scale installations and are shown in museums around the world.

Although Akomfrah's work has had a direct and profound influence on subsequent generations of British artists working across media, the importance of his work has yet to be fully felt in America. The centerpiece of the exhibition at the New Museum will be Akomfrah's celebrated three-screen video installation *Vertigo Sea* (2015). The work, which first premiered at the 2015



John Akomfrah, *Vertigo Sea*, 2015 (still). Three-channel HD video installation, color, 7.1 sound; 48:30 min

Venice Biennale and will have its first New York presentation at the New Museum, focuses on the ocean as an environmental, cultural, and historical force, connecting literature and poetry, the history of slavery, and contemporary issues of migration and climate change. The exhibition will also include *The Unfinished Conversation* (2012), Akomfrah's complex reflection on the life and ideas of cultural theorist Stuart Hall; *Expeditions I - Signs of Empire* (1983), the first work produced by Black Audio Film Collective; and a new version of Akomfrah's *Transfigured Night* (2013/2018), a two-channel work looking at the relationship between the US and post-colonial African history.

The exhibition is curated by Gary Carrion-Murayari, Kraus Family Curator, and Massimiliano Gioni, *Edlis Neeson Artistic Director*. It will be accompanied by a fully illustrated catalog featuring essays by Tina Campt, T.J. Demos, Okwui Enwezor, Aram Moshayedi, Diana Nawi, and Zoe Whitley.

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Thomas Bayrle, *Der Tiger übt* [The Tiger Practices], 1969. Silkscreen print on paper. 19 3/4 x 27 1/2 in (50 x 70 cm). Edition of 50. Courtesy the artist

**“Thomas Bayrle: Playtime”
June 20–September 2, 2018
Third Floor and Fourth Floor**

The New Museum will present a major retrospective exhibition of the works of Thomas Bayrle (b. 1937, Berlin, Germany). This solo exhibition—Bayrle's first major New York museum survey—will bring together works from the last fifty years, highlighting Bayrle's experiments across media and their prescient commentary on the relationship between consumerism, technology, propaganda, and desire.

One of the most important artists to have emerged during the 1960s West German economic boom, Bayrle has received belated recognition for his influential works and processes. Long before the advent of current visual technologies, he foresaw our digital

reality, employing photocopy machines and other midcentury tools in his early works to create analog visualizations of what are now fundamental traits of our digital culture. Bayrle's thematic investigations have ranged from a visual analysis of mass culture and consumerism to reflections on the intersection of technology with global politics.

Presented on the third and fourth floors of the Museum, this comprehensive survey will bring together over 115 works, including paintings, sculptures, drawings, wallpapers and prints, early computer-based art, videos, and 16mm films.

The exhibition will present selections from Bayrle's most iconic series, including several of his rarely exhibited “painted machines”—hand-painted kinetic works inspired by images of Chinese pageants and other mass demonstrations. Bayrle created these works during a period when he was working simultaneously in corporate advertising and for Germany's student protest movement. In his words, he “mixed communist and capitalist patterns without qualm, simply under the aspect of accumulation.” This logic of accumulation would lead to the development of Bayrle's “super-forms,” densely composed images in which smaller units are used to build larger figurative forms. These works, several of which will be on view, take the form of silkscreen prints depicting a variety of figures and objects from consumer culture. The exhibition will also highlight how the artist has expanded these serial patterns beyond traditional artworks into textiles, wallpaper, carpeting, and garments.

Bayrle's work has also looked at the proliferation and uniformity of the global mega-city and its infrastructure networks. The show brings together a number of works created by Bayrle starting in the 1970s that model anonymous grids of city blocks and highways—works he initially envisioned while working as a jacquard weaver and staring into the hypnotic patterns of the thread crossings. Also during this period, Bayrle began to directly address the seductive nature of technology by creating paintings, paper assemblages, and kinetic sculptures that adopt the language of religious icon and symbols. Over the past several decades, his working methods have expanded to

incorporate the sort of digital technologies his earliest work anticipated. He was one of the first artists to experiment with computers, and this presentation will explore his innovations across a variety of media including paintings, films, and tapestries.

The fourth floor of the exhibition will feature a number of large-scale works by Bayrle, including his monumental *Flugzeug (Airplane)* (1984), presented alongside his recent kinetic sculptures made of repurposed automobile parts repeatedly reciting the rosary, as in his much-celebrated inclusion in dOCUMENTA 13 (2012). The five decades' worth of work in this exhibition will demonstrate the critical prescience of Bayrle's output and the profound influence he has had on younger artists working around the world today.

The exhibition is curated by Massimiliano Gioni, *Edlis Neeson Artistic Director*; Gary Carrion-Murayari, Kraus Family Curator; and Helga Christoffersen, Associate Curator. The exhibition will be accompanied by a fully illustrated catalog published by Phaidon, with contributions from Kerstin Brätsch, Mark Godfrey, Alex Kitnick, Oliver Laric, and Christine Mehring, as well as a new interview between the artist and Massimiliano Gioni.

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ADDITIONAL EXHIBITIONS ON VIEW IN SUMMER 2018

"Hiwa K: Blind as the Mother Tongue"

May 2–August 19, 2018

South Galleries

"Anna Boghiguan: The Loom of History"

May 2–August 19, 2018

South Galleries

"Aaron Fowler: Brown Town"

May 2–August 19, 2018

Storefront Window

"The Black School x Kameelah Janan Rasheed"

May 23–September 16, 2018

Fifth Floor

"Naufus Ramírez-Figueroa: The House at Kawinal"

June 6–September 9, 2018

Lobby Gallery

ABOUT NEW MUSEUM

The New Museum is the only museum in New York City exclusively devoted to contemporary art. Founded in 1977, the New Museum is a center for exhibitions, information, and documentation about living artists from around the world. From its beginnings as a one-room office on Hudson Street to the inauguration of its first freestanding building on the Bowery designed by SANAA in 2007, the New Museum continues to be a place of experimentation and a hub of new art and new ideas.

SUPPORT

“John Akomfrah: Signs of Empire”

Lead support for this exhibition is provided by the Friends of John Akomfrah.

The accompanying publication is made possible, in part, by the J. McSweeney and G. Mills Publications Fund at the New Museum.

“Thomas Bayrle: Playtime”

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