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Art by African American Artist Bill Traylor Donated to VMFA
Nine Works will be Included in *The Dirty South* Exhibition Opening in May



Left: B.K. Fulton and Jackie Stone; Center: Bill Traylor (American, 1853-1949), *Dance*, undated. Collection of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, gift of B.K. Fulton and Jackie Stone; Right: Bill Traylor (American, 1853-1949), *Nothin' to Somethin' – Freedom*, undated. Collection of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, gift of B.K. Fulton and Jackie Stone

Richmond, Virginia — The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (VMFA) announced today the gift of nine captivating works on paper created with paint, graphite and colored pencils by the iconic African American artist Bill Traylor. This generous donation is from the collection of B.K. Fulton and Jackie Stone.

“These two groups of artworks are significant additions to VMFA’s collection,” said Alex Nyerges, VMFA’s Director and CEO. “We are striving to expand the museum’s collection of art by African Americans, and Traylor’s work documents the Black experience in the South. We are appreciative of these invaluable additions.”

Bill Traylor was born into slavery in Benton, Alabama in 1853 and spent much of his post-emancipation life as a sharecropper on a plantation. He moved to Montgomery, Alabama in 1928 where at the age of 85, he began creating abstract, stylized drawings of people in his community and of recollections of his past experiences using materials at hand — crayons and paint on discarded cardboard and poster paper. Traylor told unique and complex visual stories through silhouetted figures, animals, plants and symbols. The artist was prolific, producing nearly 1,500 works between 1939 and 1942.

“I am delighted to be able to donate these significant works of art to the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts,” said B.K. Fulton. “My hope is they will shed new light and add more content to our interpretations of the African American South.”

Works from the two series, *Dance* and *Nothin' to Somethin' – Freedom*, will be on view in VMFA’s upcoming exhibition *The Dirty South: Contemporary Art, Material Culture, and the Sonic Impulse*. “Traylor is an iconic artist whose works provide a glimpse into the African American South of his day. The multimedia works have their own visual tonality that pulsates with a vibrant energy. They are significant additions to VMFA’s collection,” said exhibition organizer Valerie

Cassel Oliver, VMFA's Sydney and Frances Lewis Family Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art. "This collection of art will also serve as foundational markers that show the influences of such artists in the capturing and shaping of Black southern sensibilities."

On view from May 22 to September 6, 2021, *The Dirty South* explores the aesthetic legacies and traditions of Black culture in the African American South as seen through the lens of contemporary Black musical expression. With more than 140 works of art, the exhibition features an intergenerational group of artists working in a variety of genres from sculpture, painting and drawing to photography and film as well as sound pieces and large-scale installation works. More information about the exhibition *The Dirty South: Contemporary Art, Material Culture, and the Sonic Impulse* can be found at www.VMFA.museum.

About the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in Richmond, Virginia, is one of the largest comprehensive art museums in the United States. VMFA, which opened in 1936, is a state agency and privately endowed educational institution. Its purpose is to collect, preserve, exhibit, and interpret art, and to encourage the study of the arts. Through the Office of Statewide Partnerships program, the museum offers curated exhibitions, arts-related audiovisual programs, symposia, lectures, conferences and workshops by visual and performing artists. In addition to presenting a wide array of special exhibitions, the museum provides visitors with the opportunity to experience a global collection of art that spans more than 6,000 years. VMFA's permanent holdings encompass nearly 50,000 artworks, including the largest public collection of Fabergé outside of Russia, the finest collection of Art Nouveau outside of Paris, and one of the nation's finest collections of American art. VMFA is also home to important collections of Chinese art, English silver, and French Impressionist, Post-Impressionist, British sporting, and modern and contemporary art, as well as renowned South Asian, Himalayan and African art. In May 2010, VMFA opened its doors to the public after a transformative expansion, the largest in its history.

The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts is the only art museum in the United States open 365 days a year with free general admission. For additional information, telephone 804.340.1400 or visit www.VMFA.museum.

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