

## Tang Museum Presents Njideka Akunyili Crosby's Portrait Series *Predecessors*

*Exploring her Nigerian Heritage, American Immigration, and Postcolonial Identity*

October 14 – December 30, 2017

SARATOGA SPRINGS, NY (June 8, 2017) — Internationally renowned for her large-scale multimedia works depicting domestic scenes and daily life, Nigerian artist Njideka Akunyili Crosby will collaborate with Tang Teaching Museum and the Contemporary Arts Center in Cincinnati for a solo exhibition, *Opener 30: Njideka Akunyili Crosby — Predecessors*. The exhibition will unite for the first time works from her *Predecessors* series, an exploration of heritage and identity through intimate and complex portraits of her family, providing a powerful perspective on the African diaspora and an important counter-narrative of postcolonial culture.



Njideka Akunyili Crosby, *Mama, Mummy and Mamma (Predecessors #2)*, 2014. Photo by the New Church Museum, Cape Town, South Africa.

In *Predecessors*, Akunyili Crosby depicts her late mother, who was a prominent Nigerian politician, her sister, and herself within compositions of her grandmother's home. The psychologically powerful, monumental works examine her relationship with loved ones, her Nigerian upbringing, subsequent immigration to America, and marriage to a white Texan. Through the utilization of collage, printmaking, painting, drawing, and photo transfer, Akunyili Crosby creates a sophisticated visual language that draws upon her Igbo tribe's customs, Nigeria's British colonial past, and tropes of Western art. In *Predecessors*, personal themes transcend individual experience and speak to universal themes of family, love, domesticity, and enters the global discussion of postcolonial cultural exchange.

"Akunyili Crosby's work, in stunning detail, subverts preconceived notions of artistic representation. Through layering different methods and at times unexpected materials, she presents an alternative to stereotypical perceptions about Western art and the lives of contemporary Africans," said Tang Teaching Museum Dayton Director Ian Berry. "It is a pleasure to collaborate with Njideka and the Contemporary Arts Center in Cincinnati to present her series *Predecessors* at the Tang, and we are excited to have her join us on campus this fall."

*Opener 30: Njideka Akunyili Crosby — Predecessors* is organized by Berry and Contemporary Arts Center Curator Steven Matijcio, in collaboration with the artist. The exhibition will be on view at the

Contemporary Arts Center in Cincinnati, Ohio, from July 14 to October 1, 2017, and the Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at Skidmore College from October 14 to December 30, 2017.

The annual Opener Series surveys the work of emerging and mid-career artists in what is for many, their first solo museum exhibition. Past exhibitions have surveyed the work Amy Sillman, Los Carpinteros, and most recently Jeff Sonhouse. The Opener series is supported by New York State Council on the Arts, Overbrook Foundation, Beverly Beatson Grossman '58, and Friends of the Tang.

#### **About Njideka Akunyili Crosby**

Akunyili Crosby (b. 1983, Enugu, Nigeria) moved to the United States in 1999, and earned degrees in biology and studio art from Swarthmore College and an MFA in painting from Yale University School of Art. Her work has been exhibited in solo museum exhibitions at the Hammer Museum and Art + Practice, both in Los Angeles, and the Norton Museum of Art, West Palm Beach, Florida, and has been featured at San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and the Whitney Museum. Her work is in the collections of museums around the world. Awards include the Pollock-Krasner Foundation Inc. Grant; the Joyce Alexander Wein Artist Prize, Studio Museum in Harlem; The James Dicke Contemporary Artist Prize Smithsonian Museum; and the Carol Schlosberg Memorial Prize for Excellence in Painting, Yale University.

#### **About the Tang Teaching Museum**

The Tang Teaching Museum at Skidmore College is a pioneer of interdisciplinary exploration and learning. A cultural anchor of New York's Capital Region, the institution's approach has become a model for university art museums across the country—with exhibition programs and series that bring together the visual and performing arts with fields of study as disparate as history, astronomy, and physics. The Tang has one of the most rigorous faculty-engagement initiatives in the nation, the Mellon Seminar, and robust publication and touring exhibition initiatives that extend the institution's reach far beyond its walls. The Tang Teaching Museum's building, designed by architect Antoine Predock, serves as a visual metaphor for the convergence of ideas and exchange the institution catalyzes. More information at <http://tang.skidmore.edu>.

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