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NEWS RELEASE
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Oletha DeVane: Spectrum of Light and Spirit
Center for Art, Design and Visual Culture
September 22 – December 17, 2022



UMBC's [Center for Art, Design and Visual Culture](#) presents *Oletha DeVane: Spectrum of Light and Spirit*, on display from September 22 through December 17, 2022.

Oletha DeVane: Spectrum of Light and Spirit is the first full retrospective honoring Maryland-based artist Oletha DeVane. A prominent presence in the Baltimore area arts scene for many decades, DeVane is an artist who works in all media, including public sculpture, as well as an active educator, arts administrator, and curator. Organized by curator **Lowery Stokes Sims**, *Spectrum of Light and Spirit* will trace DeVane's extensive career, from her early paintings and works on paper to video artworks and interactive sculpture on view for the first time at the Center for Art, Design, and Visual Culture (CADVC) at UMBC.

"Oletha DeVane is a way finder and a story teller," said curator Lowery Stokes Sims. "Over the last five decades as she has traveled in Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean, she has been inspired by the stories and characters she encounters, bringing the unexpected to light, while finding new nuances in the old and familiar, and unexpected correlations among those varied cultures."

"I look at the ways that Black culture has become global," said DeVane, whose large-scale carved sculpture *Nkisi Woman-Universal Nkisi* (2021–22) will be activated over the course of

the exhibition by visitors who are invited to add beads to its surface. DeVane continues, "I've always been fascinated by how materials convey meaning and reemerge as myths and memories." The nkisi is a Kongo cultural figure invested with sacred energy, and this sculpture is one of the highlights of the exhibition, which will catalyze communion and community-building.

The exhibition also celebrates Oletha DeVane's collaborative activities. Her longstanding collaboration with writer and media personality Tadia Rice, *Beyond Bars: Prison Women Speak*, will be updated for the exhibition in the form of new video works.

"Oletha DeVane is a prolific artist who has spent decades learning and making art about the most profound phenomena of our human condition: spirituality, mythology, and transformative experience, including experiences of hardship," said Rebecca Uchill, CADVC director. "It is our absolute honor to host her career retrospective, *Spectrum of Light and Spirit*, and the many events that will celebrate this monumental exhibition."

Public Programs

Oletha DeVane: Spectrum of Light and Spirit will be accompanied by several public programs:

Thursday, **September 22**, 5 to 7 p.m. — **Opening Reception**

Tuesday, **September 27**, 5 to 7 p.m. — An "Art from Inside" **panel discussion** in association with the exhibition *Prison Nation* at UMBC's [Albin O. Kuhn Library Gallery](#)

Thursday, **October 6**, 12 p.m., Saturday, **October 8**, 3 p.m., and Saturday, **October 29**, 3 p.m. — Periodic **activations of *Nkisi Woman-Universal* Nkisi** sculpture with guest facilitators

Thursday, **October 13**, 4 to 6:30 p.m. — A College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences **Colloquium Panel on Resilience** will be followed by extended hours at the CADVC

Thursday, **December 8**, 6 to 7:30 p.m. — Closing **panel discussion** at the CADVC

About Oletha DeVane

For the last four decades, DeVane has been a prominent presence in the Baltimore area art scene as an arts administrator, curator and educator in the arts. She began her undergraduate studies at the Maryland Institute College of Art in 1968, where she studied with poet/artists David Franks and Joe Cardarelli, who in her words "fed" her "curiosity about poetry and language as they relate to visual art." In 1973 DeVane went to the University of Massachusetts, Amherst to pursue her graduate degree, where her advisor was painter Nelson Stevens, a key figure in the AfriCobra group. She also took advantage of a course on Black Women and African Studies, offered by Johnnetta Cole and Esther Terry, which provided her with "a wealth of knowledge and challenge in thinking about the role of women and claiming self-determination."



After receiving her MA, DeVane taught and worked for over a decade as an administrator for the Maryland Council on the Arts for 13 years, before taking a position at the McDonogh School in Owings Mills in 1993, where she was Director of the Tuttle Gallery and head of visual arts in the Upper Level. In 2007 she was the recipient of the Rollins/Luetkemeyer Chair for Distinguish Teaching. DeVane started a mosaic in Camp Coq, Haiti with the help of local artisans and students in 2017.

DeVane has received grants, awards, and fellowships from the Ruby Foundation, Art Matters, the Trawick Prize, and other honors. In addition to her 2016 residency in Abu Dhabi, DeVane has also been an Artist in Residence in Banff, Canada, and in Lecce, Italy. DeVane counts among the artistic cohort she has formed over the years: art historian/artist Leslie King Hammond, former graduate dean at MICA, bead and glass artist Joyce J. Scott, poet Charles Fox, as well as a women's artistic collaborative known as the Girls of Baltimore, which includes King Hammond, Scott, Patti Tronolone, Ellen Burchenal, and Linda DePalma.

Visitor Information

The CADVC is located on the first floor of UMBC's Fine Arts Building, and is open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday. Admission to the gallery and to public programs is free.

Free evening and weekend parking is available in nearby Lot 8. Daytime metered parking is available in several nearby visitor parking area.

Images in this release:

Garden of the Heart, 2021, mixed media, 47 x 36 inches. Photo by Mitro Hood.

Harriet the Raven, 2019, digital media, solar etching and graphite on paper, 30 x 40 inches. Photo by Mitro Hood.

[Additional images are available for the media.](#)

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