

EXHIBIT / THE PRESIDENTIAL SUITE



“Bo Walking the First Family Through the Rose Garden”

# Hail to the chief

Obama-inspired works by Aminah Robinson on display

By Nancy Gilson | For The Columbus Dispatch

**W**hen Barack Obama announced in 2007 that he would run for president of the United States, a central Ohio artist whose great-aunt was a slave was inspired to begin a large body of work.

Aminah Robinson, who died last year at age 75, devoted several years to creating mixed-media works celebrating the nation’s first African-American president even though they contained reminders of the difficult road ahead regarding efforts to eliminate racism and discrimination.

“I knew this young man would become our next president,” Robinson told Marlana Keynes, who owns Hammond Harkins Galleries. Keynes said that, to Robinson — an African-American whose great-aunt Cordelia was born into slavery in Georgia — Obama’s election marked a milestone on par with Martin Luther King Jr.’s work in civil rights.

Just ahead of the final few months of Obama’s two-term presidency, nearly 40 of the 60 works from Robinson’s “The Presidential Suite” are on view at two

**At a glance**

- Works from Aminah Robinson’s “The Presidential Suite” will be displayed through Oct. 9 at Hammond Harkins Galleries, 641 N. High St. (614-238-3000, www.hammondharkins.com) and through December at the Columbus Museum of Art, 480 E. Broad St. (614-221-6801, www.columbusmuseum.org).

- Related to the exhibit, Carole Genshaft, curator-at-large at the Columbus Museum of Art, will give a talk at 7 p.m. Thursday at Hammond Harkins. On Oct. 27, “The Obama Years: A Conversation With Former Mayor Michael B. Coleman” will be held at the museum.

**Columbus locations.**

Through December, the Columbus Museum of Art will showcase seven works; a larger exhibit of 30 pieces can be seen through Oct. 9 at Hammond Harkins.

In addition, the museum

is tentatively planning a traveling exhibit of “The Presidential Suite,” plus a major exhibit in 2020 of Robinson’s whole body of work, said Carole Genshaft, the museum’s curator-at-large.

The largest work in “The Presidential Suite” is a Rag-GonNon (Robinson’s name for her fabric-and-found-materials medium), which measures 27 by 27 feet and hangs from the ceiling to the floor, where it spreads out. The colorful work includes references to the Obama family, African-American history, and national and global events that have occurred during the Obama presidency.

Also on display at Hammond Harkins are more multimedia works, watercolor paintings and woodcut prints that contain a variety of images: Africans and African-Americans from places in the United States and the world where Obama and his wife, Michelle, have lived or worked.

The works at Hammond Harkins are for sale, with the proceeds going to the museum, the beneficiary of Robinson’s estate.

At the museum, the works on view in Gallery 3 include the mixed-media-on-paper

“Wings of Our Ancestors: The Slaves Who Labored and Built the Nation’s Capitol in Washington, D.C.”

The museum also displays the mixed-media “Fishermen Mending Their Nets, Jakarta, Indonesia,” referencing Obama’s years as a child living in Jakarta; the watercolor “South Carolina Cotton Picker 1;” and the delightful mixed-media-on-paper “Bo Walking the First Family Through the Rose Garden,” with the Obama family’s dog leading the procession.

Many of the works at both locations contain Robinson’s trademark use of colorful swatches of clothing and buttons — common, varied objects that she viewed as representing the people whom the president serves.

Genshaft said the works are Robinson’s celebration of the African-American president, and also a reminder that racism and injustice persist.

Genshaft offered a quote from the artist: “This body of work, ‘Presidential Suite,’ is a reminder, a cautionary tale, that the wrongs of the past must not be repeated in the new millennium.”

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MUSIC / BOB MOULD

## Guitarist credits book for reviving his career

By Timothy Finn  
Kansas City Star

Bob Mould sees no future in nostalgia, yet he admits that his autobiography was a catalyst in a career rejuvenation.

Earlier this year, Mould released “Patch the Sky,” his third album since 2012; all three received critical praise and each signified a resurgence from a songwriter who had seemed mired in a state of stasis. This “hot streak,” as he called it in a recent interview, followed the publishing five years ago of his memoir, “See a Little Light: The Trail of Rage and Melody.”

“It was a turning point,” said Mould. “It took a little weight off my shoulders and cleared up some historical stuff and showed people a little more private side of me.”

The irony: Mould isn’t one to indulge in nostalgia, which is one reason he has never considered a reunion of Hüsker Dü, the hardcore punk/rock trio he founded that reigned in the indie/underground world in the early to mid-1980s.

“That was a great experience, a great first band to have,” he said. “But there’s no re-creating that.”

The introspection required for “See a Little Light” led to much-needed clarity that proved to be cathartic.

“It was the first time I had stepped away from myself to see myself more clearly,” he said.

Mould also credited his band mates, bassist Jason Narducy and drummer Jon Wurster, and his friendship with Dave Grohl for stoking his musical hot streak.

Mould says the past five years have been “great” professionally.

“Personally, there has been a lot of loss in my life. I’m the kind of guy who writes what I know. I’m not real good at writing around things. I write and write and discover: There’s a lot of loss in here. That’s what I’m going through.

“So what can I do to offset that? Wrap it in a really bright melody and make it hooky. That’s a technique I’ve used a lot.”



“Wings for Our Ancestors: The Slaves Who Labored and Built the Nation’s Capitol in Washington D.C.”