



100 W. 14th Avenue Pkwy
Denver, CO 80204-2788
DENVERARTMUSEUM.ORG

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NEWS FROM THE DENVER ART MUSEUM

PRESS OFFICE
pressoffice@denverartmuseum.org

Images available upon request.

Denver Art Museum welcomes *Composing Color: Paintings by Alma Thomas from the Smithsonian American Art Museum* in fall 2024

The iconic American artist created a style of her own with dazzling interplays of patterns and vibrant colors



DENVER – February 7, 2024 – The Denver Art Museum (DAM) will welcome *Composing Color: Paintings by Alma Thomas from the Smithsonian American Art Museum*, a traveling exhibition that explores the life of the groundbreaking American artist and educator. *Composing Color* invites visitors to see the world through Thomas's eyes, drawing on the extensive holdings of her paintings at the Smithsonian American Art Museum (SAAM).

Composing Color highlights Thomas's distinct abstract style, where color is symbolic and multisensory, evoking sound, motion, temperature and even scent. This exhibition is organized around the artist's favorite themes of space, earth and music.

Her constant source of inspiration was nature, whether seen through her kitchen window or from outer space. Throughout politically charged times in American history and life, Thomas maintained her belief in the healing power of beauty and dedicated her life to its cultivation and expression through art. *Composing Color* will be on view at the DAM from Sept. 8, 2024,

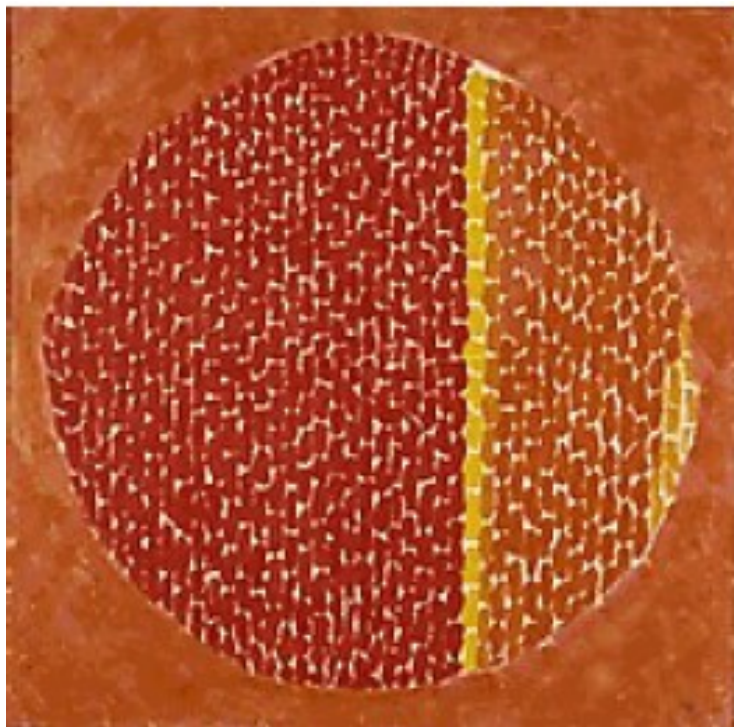
to Jan. 12, 2025, in the Gallagher Family Gallery on level 1 of the museum's Hamilton Building and will be included with general admission.

"Alma Thomas was a fearless American artist who boldly broke out of every confine her environment ever tried to impose on her, overcoming barriers and forging new paths for black women artists," said Christoph Heinrich, Frederick and Jan Mayer Director of the DAM. "Following up on impactful shows by Jordan Casteel, Shantell Martin and Senga Nengudi, this exhibition is the next of many presentations highlighting the creativity and artistic contributions of Black women artists."

Alma Woodsey Thomas was born in 1891 in Columbus, Georgia, and moved to Washington, D.C., with her family when she was a teenager. She became Howard University's first student to earn a degree in fine art in 1924 and went on to teach art in D.C. public schools for more than 30 years, as well as serving as vice-president of the Barnett Aden Gallery, one of the nation's first racially integrated and Black-owned art galleries.



At the age of 80, in 1972, Thomas presented solo exhibitions at both the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., and the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, earning her unprecedented recognition for a Black woman artist.



"Thomas's exuberant art shows her love of how living things grow, change and renew themselves," said Rory Padeken, Vicki and Kent Logan Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art for the DAM and local curator of *Composing Color*. "Her art practice blossomed in the 1960s and her vibrant artworks transcended established genres, reflecting the ever-changing colors and sounds of her surroundings. Her artistic evolution reflected her belief in the need for new art expressions to represent a new era of world history."

Thomas's work first entered the Smithsonian American Art Museum's collection in 1970 and SAAM now has the largest public collection of works by Thomas in the world. *Composing Color*

draws on these extensive holdings to offer an intimate view of Thomas's evolving practice during her most prolific period, 1959 to 1978.



This exhibition is organized by Melissa Ho, curator of twentieth-century art at the Smithsonian American Art Museum, with support from Maria Eipert, curatorial assistant.

Composing Color: Paintings by Alma Thomas is organized by the Smithsonian American Art Museum. Generous support has been provided by: Helen Frankenthaler Foundation, Chris G. Harris, Wolf Kahn Foundation and Susan Talley.

Planning Your Visit

The most up-to-date information on planning a visit to the Denver Art Museum can be found online under the [Plan Your Visit](#) tab. Use this page to find details on ticket pricing, public transit options and access information. General admission for museum members is free every day. Youth aged 18 and under receive free general admission every day, thanks to the museum's Free for Kids program. Free for Kids also underwrites free admission for school and youth group visits.

About the Denver Art Museum

The Denver Art Museum is an educational, nonprofit resource that sparks creative thinking and expression through transformative experiences with art. Its mission is to enrich lives by sparking creative thinking and expression. Its holdings reflect the city and region—and provide invaluable ways for the community to learn about cultures from around the world. Metro residents support the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District (SCFD), a unique funding source serving hundreds of metro Denver arts, culture and scientific organizations.

For museum information, visit www.denverartmuseum.org or call 720-865-5000.

Media Resources

Online Newsroom: www.denverartmuseum.org/press

Facebook: www.facebook.com/denverartmuseum

Instagram: www.instagram.com/denverartmuseum/

Museum B-roll: www.denverartmuseum.org/broll

Media Contacts

Andy Sinclair/Press Office

Denver Art Museum

720-913-0096/719-761-9390

asinclair@denverartmuseum.org or

pressoffice@denverartmuseum.org

Image Credits:

Image 1 Alma Thomas, *The Eclipse*, 1970, acrylic on canvas, 62 in. × 49 3/4 in. (157.5 × 126.4 cm), Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of the artist, 1978.40.3

Image 2: Alma Thomas, *Red Abstraction*, 1960, oil on canvas, 36 1/4 x 30 in. (92.1 x 76.2 cm.), Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of the artist, 1978.40.1

Image 3: Alma Thomas, *Snoopy Sees Earth Wrapped in Sunset*, 1970, acrylic on canvas, 47 7/8 x 47 7/8 in. (121.6 x 121.6 cm.), Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of the artist, 1978.40.4

Image 4: Alma Thomas, *Grey Night Phenomenon*, 1972, acrylic on canvas, 68 7/8 x 53 1/8 in. (175.0 x 134.8 cm), Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of Vincent Melzac, 1975.92.1