



ELI AND EDYTHE BROAD ART MUSEUM

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**GROUNDBREAKING COMMISSION BY ARTIST ESMAA MOHAMOUD
OPENS SEPTEMBER 14**

*MSU BAM announces inaugural Signature Commission Series
exhibition featuring artist Esmaa Mohamoud's newest work*

East Lansing, MI – *COMPLEX DREAMS*, the inaugural Signature Commission Series exhibition featuring artist Esmaa Mohamoud, opens at the Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum at Michigan State University (MSU BAM) on September 14, 2024.

Developed biennially, the new series invites internationally respected artists to respond directly to the iconic, Zaha Hadid-designed architecture of MSU BAM's Julie and Edward Minskoff Gallery. Mohamoud's work explores the transformative power of art as a way to express resilience and perseverance in the face of great adversity. The artist's commissioned installation for the space places the experiences of young Black girlhood center stage.

Mohamoud is well-known for her multi-disciplinary practice that addresses race, gender, body politics, and many other contemporary issues at the forefront of social awareness today. Recently she has begun to create more immersive installations that are multi-sensorial and that speak to the physical experience of the work in concert with more conceptual dimensions. The

new commission has offered the artist an opportunity to push the envelope further, expanding her repertoire and taking meaningful, calculated risks.

“*COMPLEX DREAMS* takes the viewer into the reality many young Black girls—and subsequently Black women—face daily, the continual psychological effects of being in what feels like captivity for life,” commented Mohamoud. “The work serves as an illustration of how trauma holds you back long after it passes. Despite these realities, the exhibition offers a hopeful sentiment that freedom of the mind is achievable. Through the predominate use of steel, *COMPLEX DREAMS* is a direct reflection of Zaha Hadid’s architectural design choices that cover the exterior of the museum.”

The commission is joined by Mohamoud’s immersive installation *Darkness Doesn’t Rise To The Sun, But We Do* (2020), on view in the adjacent William and Linda Demmer Gallery. This work invites visitors to enter a space filled with hundreds of jet-black, steel-cut dandelions, offering pathways for meandering exploration and opportunities for respite amongst the silhouetted dandelions.

“For the Signature Commission Series, we ask artists to respond in a very direct way not only to the unique architecture of the most iconic gallery in our Zaha Hadid-designed building, but also the geographic and cultural context of our university,” said Steven L. Bridges, interim director of the museum. “It’s an invitation to dream together with us here at MSU—to offer our audiences unparalleled encounters with art—and I could not imagine a more visionary artist to launch this series with than Esmāa Mohamoud.”

Multisensorial and moving, the works on view in *COMPLEX DREAMS* speak to the artist’s powerful vision for the liberation of Blackness from the shadows of art history and society at large.

As a part of MSU BAM’s efforts to provide world-class, unparalleled art experiences, the Signature Commission Series will include engaging events and opportunities for the campus and community. This programming for *COMPLEX DREAMS* launches with an in-gallery artist talk on September 15, from 2–3pm, where Mohamoud will discuss the inspiration and process behind her work. MSU BAM, in collaboration with Angelica Bajos, Community and Sustainability Coordinator at the MSU Beal Botanical Garden and Campus Arboretum, will also host a Black Botany Series in October, November, and January. The Black Botany Series will include tours led by Bajos, as well as workshops led by local makers Candice “The Oracle,” owner of Oracles Apothecary; Hillary Coleman, owner of 1991 Greenery Homestead; and Kelsi Smith, Allen Neighborhood Center.

MSU BAM is open Wednesday–Sunday from 10am–6pm. Admission is always free. Learn more at broadmuseum.msu.edu.

COMPLEX DREAMS (Sep. 14, 2024–Feb. 16, 2025) is organized by the Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum at Michigan State University (MSU BAM) as part of the Signature Commission Series and curated by Steven L. Bridges, Interim Director & Senior Curator and Director of Curatorial Affairs. Major funding for this exhibition is provided by the MSU Federal Credit Union and the Eli and Edythe Broad Endowed Exhibitions Fund.



The Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum at Michigan State University (MSU BAM) connects people with art through experiences that inspire curiosity and inquiry. Presenting exhibitions and programs that engage diverse communities around issues of local relevance and global significance, MSU BAM advances the university values of quality, inclusion, and connectivity. Opened on November 10, 2012, the museum was designed by Pritzker Prize-winning architect Zaha Hadid and named in honor of Eli and Edythe Broad, longtime supporters of the university who provided the lead gift for its creation.

Michigan State University has been working to advance the common good in uncommon ways for more than 150 years. One of the top research universities in the world, MSU focuses its vast resources on creating solutions to some of the world's most pressing challenges, while providing life-changing opportunities to a diverse and inclusive academic community through more than 200 programs of study in 17 degree-granting colleges.

Image: Esmaa Mohamoud, *How Sweet It Would Be If I Found I Could Fly*, 2024. Photo courtesy of the artist

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MSU BAM representatives are available for interview.

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