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**ESSENCE HARDEN JOINS CALIFORNIA AFRICAN  
AMERICAN MUSEUM AS VISUAL ARTS CURATOR**



Photo: Joyce Kim

(Los Angeles, CA) — The California African American Museum (CAAM) announced today that curator and arts writer Essence Harden will join the Museum's staff as visual arts curator, effective December 13, 2021.

"Essence Harden has been a collaborator and friend to CAAM for years, so we are delighted to now welcome them to the CAAM staff," said Executive Director Cameron Shaw. "Essence is deeply enmeshed in contemporary art communities throughout California, and we look forward to them bringing those experiences, relationships, and passions to the work at CAAM."

"I'm excited to join the CAAM team as a visual arts curator. CAAM has been an incredible point of access for Los Angeles, and I look forward to supporting artists, highlighting the work of collectors and collectives, and cultivating scholarship on Black visual culture and the West," said Harden.

As an independent curator, Harden curated the 2018 solo exhibition *Shinique Smith: Refuge* and co-curated the 2019 group exhibition *Plumb Line: Charles White and the Contemporary*, both at CAAM. Harden has also curated exhibitions at Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE), Museum of the African Diaspora (MoAD), El Segundo Museum of Art, Oakland Museum of California, and at several galleries, and is part of the curatorial team for the Orange County Museum of Art's 2022 California Biennial.

Harden's writings about art and artists have appeared in the *New York Times Magazine* (2022), *Image* magazine, *SSENSE*, *Art21*, *Contemporary Art Review Los Angeles*, *Artsy*, *LALA*, *Cultured Magazine*, *Performa Magazine*, and *SFAQ: International Art and Culture* amongst other publications. They have contributed to catalogues for *Prospect 5: Yesterday we said tomorrow*; *Brave New Worlds: Explorations of Space* at the Palm Springs Art Museum; and *What Needs to Be Said: Hallie Ford Fellows in the Visual Arts* at Willamette University.

A 2018 recipient of the Creative Capital | Andy Warhol Foundation Arts Writers Grant and a 2020 Annenberg Innovation Lab Civic Media Fellow, Harden graduated Magna Cum Laude with a B.A. in History and received their M.A. from the Department of African

American Studies at the University of California, Berkeley. Currently Harden is a Ph.D. Candidate (ABD) in African Diaspora Studies at UC Berkeley.

### **About the California African American Museum**

CAAM explores the art, history, and culture of African Americans, with an emphasis on California and the West. Chartered by the State of California in 1977, the Museum began formal operations in 1981 and is a state-supported agency and a Smithsonian Affiliate. In addition to presenting exhibitions and public programs, CAAM houses a permanent collection of more than 4,000 works of art, artifacts, and historical documents, and a publicly accessible research library. [caamuseum.org](http://caamuseum.org)

### **Visitor Information**

Admission to CAAM is free. All eligible guests (currently 12+) are required to show proof of vaccination. Those with medical or religious exemptions may present a negative COVID-19 test performed within 72 hours. Visitors 18+ must also show a valid photo ID. Children 11 and under are currently exempt from this mandate. Face masks are required for those 2+.

Hours: Tuesday–Saturday 10 a.m.–5 p.m., Sunday 11 a.m.–5 p.m. Closed Mondays (except MLK Day) and Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year’s Day. CAAM is located in Exposition Park at the corner of Figueroa Street and Exposition Boulevard, west of the 110 (Harbor) Freeway. Exposition Park parking is available for \$15 (daytime) at 39th and Figueroa Streets. The Metro Expo line Expo Park/USC station is a five-minute walk through the Exposition Park Rose Garden to the Museum.

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