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Robert L. Johnson Donates Selections from the Barnett-Aden Collection to the National Museum of African American History and Culture

Robert L. Johnson, founder of The RLJ Companies and Black Entertainment Television (BET), has donated select artworks from his privately owned Barnett-Aden Collection to the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC). The collection includes a terracotta sculpture "Head of a Negro Woman" (1946), by Elizabeth Catlett and paintings from Romare Bearden "A Walk in Paradise Gardens" (1955), Archibald John Motley Jr. "The Argument" (1940), Henry O. Tanner "Flight into Egypt" (1916) and Frederick C. Flemister "Self-Portrait" (1941).

"As a founding council member of the NMAAHC, the artwork I have donated represents pride and dignity and is a celebration of the diverse aspects of African American history," said Johnson. Each piece not only represents the creative genius of the artist but also tells a story and is a tribute to African American art and culture. I identify personally with several pieces from the Barnett-Aden Collection, and I am confident the museum will ensure that the works from such talented artists of early American history are preserved and exposed for educational, cultural and enjoyment by millions of Americans and people from around the world who tour the Museum," he concluded.

"We are delighted to receive such a significant donation from Robert L. Johnson to house as part the museum's permanent collection," said Lonnie G. Bunch, founding director of the NMAAHC. "Mr. Johnson's gift of artworks from the Barnett-Aden Collection marks an important milestone for our visual arts permanent collection."

The Barnett-Aden Collection was established in 1943 by James Herring, founder of the Howard University Department of Art and Alonzo Aden, curator of Howard University's Gallery of Art. The collection of African American art features portraiture, urban genre themes and depictions of

the African American experience.

Since the 1980s, Johnson has assembled a private collection of more than 250 pieces of artwork by 19th- and 20th-century artists. The Barnett-Aden Collection, which documents the struggles, achievements and celebrations of black people in America, was acquired by Johnson in 1998 from the National Museum of African American Art based in Florida, and selections from the Collection were displayed in Washington, D.C., in early 2009.

NMAAHC's Visual Arts Gallery will house various modes of fine art, including painting, sculpture, works on paper, art installations, mixed media, photography and digital media.

About the Museum

The National Museum of African American History and Culture was established by an Act of Congress through legislation signed into law in 2003 by President George W. Bush. Scheduled to open in 2016, the museum is under construction on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., on a five-acre tract adjacent to the Washington Monument. Upon completion, the National Museum of African American History and Culture will become the nation's largest and most comprehensive cultural institution devoted exclusively to exploring and documenting the African American story and its impact on American history.

About The RLJ Companies

The RLJ Companies, founded by Robert L. Johnson, is an innovative business network that provides strategic investments in a diverse portfolio of companies that owns or holds interests in business operating in a publicly traded hotel real estate investment trust, private equity, financial services, asset management, automobile dealerships, sports and entertainment and video lottery terminal gaming.

About the Barnett-Aden Collection

The Barnett-Aden Collection was assembled by the founders of the Barnett-Aden Gallery, James Herring and Alonzo Aden, from the 1940s through the 1960s and was built by the purchase of works shown in the gallery throughout the years. Works by prominent African American artists such as James Porter, Romare Bearden, Archibald Motley, Henry O. Tanner, Dox Thrash, Elizabeth Catlett, and Raymond Barthé were exhibited by the Gallery and are now part of the permanent Barnett-Aden Collection, which currently includes: 54 pieces of African art, 107 paintings, 11 sculptures, and nine drawings, along with 15 pieces of ephemera, photos and the original desk used at the Barnett-Aden Gallery.

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