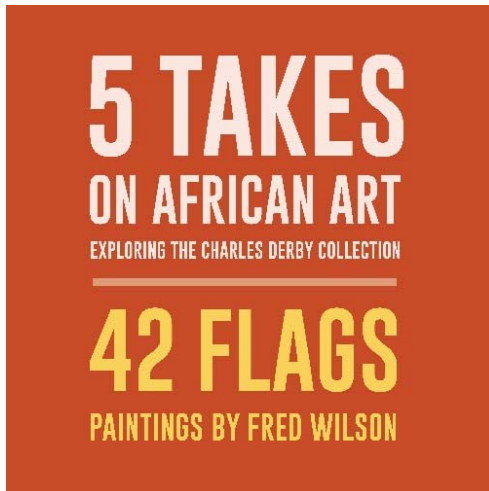




UNIVERSITY MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART  
University of Massachusetts Amherst

## PRESS RELEASE



**RUN EXTENDED!**

**Sep 27 – Dec 10, 2017**

**Jan 23 – Apr 29, 2018**

**CONTINUING A TRADITION** of hosting challenging, exploratory exhibitions organized by student curatorial

teams, this year's team of graduate students curate an exhibition of African art drawn from the collection of Charles Derby, a UMass alumnus who has been collecting African art since the 1970s, in tandem with an exhibition of *Flags of Africa* by the renowned African American artist Fred Wilson. The five curators come from a variety of disciplines and contribute a multiplicity of viewpoints to the curatorial process. Working with a private collection, a collector, and a contemporary artist, this project offers a new model in exhibition curation, particularly in the way the conversation about African art is shared among the various disciplines on our campus, and how an artist can participate and inform the project in an innovative way.

Imo Imeh, a professor of African and African American art at Westfield State University, served as advisor, mentor, and co-curator of the exhibition.

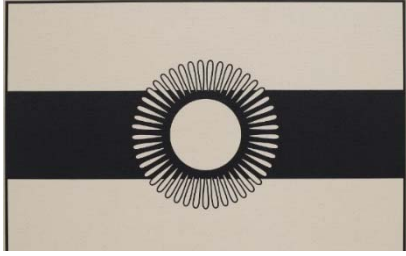
The exhibition invites visitors to see objects on display not only as visually compelling works of art in their own right, but also as objects of encounter that can “tell” stories about the broader social contexts and often fraught global histories through which they have journeyed. They bring the “telling” of African stories into the museum experience and draw out resonances among the objects on view.

One of the goals of the exhibition is to ask the viewer to recognize that changes in context can create changes in meaning, but without losing the object's “aura” and emotional impact. How do we shape interpretations of historical truth *as well as* artistic merit? What distinguishes African art as a body of work to study in and of itself, given the fact that objects from the



Baule people, Côte d'Ivoire;  
Red-faced Mask; Wood, black paint;  
height: 33.02 cm (13"); From the  
Collection of Charles Derby

African continent have been brought into the museum and gallery context only within the last 100 years? How do we convey intrinsic concepts about ethnicity, authorship, the spiritual, the metaphysical, or the utilitarian? It is our hope that this exhibition will probe these questions and



Fred Wilson, *Untitled (Malawi)*, 2009;  
Acrylic on canvas 27-1/8" x 40-1/8";  
Photograph by Kerry Ryan McFate,  
courtesy Pace Gallery

initiate a dialogue that is important and meaningful within our larger community.

The exhibition is divided into five sections — or “5 Takes” — by the five curators, each highlighting a different aspect of Charles Derby’s collection. Encircling “5 Takes” are Fred Wilson’s “Flags of Africa”, paintings which the artist stripped of color, thereby questioning how flags work, what they signify, and to what extent do they represent the people, history, and geography of a land that was delineated by a colonial master.

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*Exhibition Curators:* Yingxi Lucy Gong; Kiara Hill; Imo Imeh; Vick Quezada; and Elizabeth Upenieks

*Exhibition Design:* Joseph Krupczynski, The Center for Design Engagement; Randy Crandon, Design Assistant

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We thank the following UMass campus partners for their support: Friends of the Fine Arts Center; Interdisciplinary Studies Institute; Department of Art History; History Department

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