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THE AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSEUM IN PHILADELPHIA PRESENTS
“Cotton: The Soft, Dangerous Beauty of the Past”
OPEN TO THE PUBLIC SEPTEMBER 14, 2018 THROUGH JANUARY 21, 2018

Philadelphia, PA - [August 13, 2018] - Starting Friday, Sept. 14 through Monday, Jan. 21, The African American Museum in Philadelphia (AAMP) will open its newest fall exhibition, “Cotton: The Soft, Dangerous Beauty of the Past.” The exhibit, which features 35 medium size, to large-scale photographs, installations, and altarpieces by Philadelphia based artist John E. Dowell, explores the contrast between the beauty of the plant, and its prolonged relationship with American slavery.

Dowell’s cotton filled visuals evoke the most overlooked aspects of U.S. slavery including its history in the North and the impacts of cotton as a symbol to channel ideas, dreams, fantasies, and a portal to communicate with ancestors and the spectator.

“The origin of this body of work came to me in a dream. I knew there was a story to tell, and not quite sure what it was, I felt compelled to uncover it. I began to photograph cotton, and its floating, near-spiritual beauty came to represent lost souls and our relationship to our past. We can only learn from our past if we remember it. These works are a visual exploration of the role of cotton in shaping that past, as well as our present,” said John Dowell.

Dowell's nationally recognized art prints, paintings and photographs were featured in more than 50 one-person exhibitions and represented in the permanent collections of 70 museums and public collections, including the Museum of Modern Art in New York City, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, France. He is a Professor Emeritus of Tyler School of Art at Temple University for more than four decades.

“The African American Museum in committed to providing a platform for artists like John Dowell, whose work is of national and even international consequence. Dowell’s “Cotton”



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exhibition is especially powerful as it provides a visually compelling exploration of a topic that is central to African American history. Our visitors will find this unique exhibit to be both aesthetically and intellectually engaging” said Patricia Wilson Aden, President of AAMP.

AAMP will be celebrating the opening of the exhibit at a reception on Friday, Sept. 14 from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Guests can RSVP to attend the free opening reception at the following link: <https://50068.blackbaudhosting.com/50068/Cotton-The-Soft-Dangerous-Beauty-of-the-Past-Open-Reception>

This exhibition has been made possible by our sponsors, PECO and Winston and Carolyn Lowe.

A full listing of related public programs can be found at <https://www.aampmuseum.org/>.

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About The African American Museum in Philadelphia: Founded in 1976 in celebration of the nation's bicentennial, the African American Museum In Philadelphia is the first institution funded and built by a major municipality to preserve, interpret and exhibit the heritage of African Americans. The mission of the museum is to bring together diverse communities in greater appreciation of the Black experience through the combined narrative of art, history and culture. Throughout its evolution, the museum has objectively interpreted and presented the achievements and aspirations of African Americans from pre-colonial times to the current day.