

ADW COMPANION GUIDE



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Williams in conversation with artwork by Black artists in Atlanta collections. Trained as an architect, Williams uses her expertise to interrogate systemic racism through the lens of spatial dynamics. The exhibition features watercolor paintings from her series *What Black This You Say?*, which was created in response to the "solid black square" posted by police organizations in 2020. In response, Williams created a range of abstract paintings in the same square format, rich in texture and hue. Williams explores cultural, social, and political dimensions of identity in this series, particularly how Black identity is formed, defined, and erased. Her play with Black vernacular and forge intimacy with Black audiences, turning colloquialisms for critiquing oppressive systems and beauty and complexity of Blackness. Paintings by Amanda Williams are part of the collection, Clark Atlanta University Art collections in Atlanta. Curated by Curator Karen Comer Lowe, *Amanda Williams: This Is* explores the richness of Williams' paintings, featuring contributions from students and the students from the Atlanta Center Art Collective in Atlanta.

This You Say?. The show title emphasizes a foundational aspect of the exhibition: the voices of students of the Atlanta University Center (AUC). Students from Spelman College, Morehouse College, and Clark Atlanta University develop thematic frameworks, engaged with the audio practice, and wrote didactic labels seen in the exhibition. The title also suggests an inquiry into the questions, interpretations, and representations of Blackness. The exhibition likely challenges monolithic views and invites visitors to consider the diverse ways Blackness is lived, experienced, and visualized.

Amanda Williams: *We Say What Black This Is* includes works by Amanda Williams alongside Betty Blayton, Sheila Gillis, Beverly Buchanan, Beauford Delaney, Sam Gilliam, Jacob Lawrence, Deborah Searles, Alma Thomas, and Ming Washington. The exhibition likely explores perspectives on Black identity. Works by Black artists deepen our understanding of the themes present in Williams' paintings, including Blackness, architecture, color, and identity. The exhibition likely encourages visitors to think about how Black identity is lived, experienced, and communicated through this collection.



Welcome to the Spelman College Museum of Fine Art

The Spelman College Museum of Fine Art opened its doors 29 years ago. Since the Museum opened in 1996, it has been recognized for groundbreaking and scholarly exhibitions, which amplify art by Black women artists, from the inaugural *Bearing Witness: Contemporary Works by Black Women Artists* (1996) to this past spring's powerful exhibition, *Amanda Williams: We Say What Black This Is* (2025). This year, for the first time, the Museum has expanded to two gallery spaces, the Cosby Gallery, located on the first floor of the Camille Olivia Hanks Cosby, Ed.D. Academic Center and the newest Bank of America Gallery, located on the first floor of the Mary Schmidt Campbell Center for Innovation & the Arts. Both of these galleries offer the opportunity to expand our mission by presenting fantastically curated exhibitions and empowering programs to you, our students, and the broader public.

On the following pages, you will find information about our current and forthcoming exhibitions for the 2025-2026 school year, in addition to a companion curriculum that will help you scaffold your audio narrative project. This curriculum should help you become acquainted with and learn about the museum while exploring the artwork on view. We want you to feel comfortable in the museum, because this is your museum. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to ask our student ambassadors or any available staff member.

Welcome to the new school year.

Dr. Brandy Pettijohn
Curator of Exhibitions
Spelman College Museum of Fine Art

2025 - 2026 EXHIBITIONS



Nancy Elizabeth Prophet: I Will Not Bend An Inch

September 5 - December 6, 2025

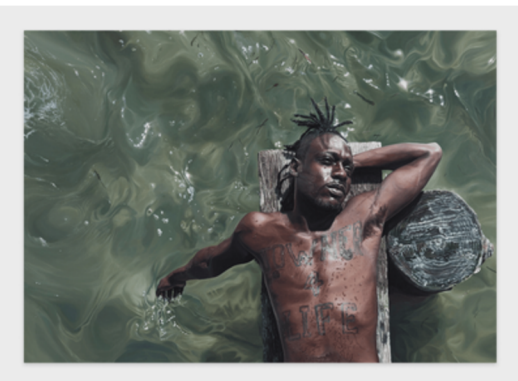
Nancy Elizabeth Prophet is an underrecognized 20th-century sculptor best known for her contributions to expatriate culture in Paris during the interwar period. Prophet was one of the first known women of color to graduate from the RISD, and her work reflects the skills she developed through academic training, characterized by a distinctly Modernist sensibility. This survey will feature three-dimensional sculptures of marble and wood, painted wood friezes, watercolors, and photographic presentations of archival documents and lost or destroyed sculptures.



Repossessions

October 17, 2025 - May 1, 2026

Repossessions is a group exhibition inspired by the concept of reparations: the effort to repair the economic and psychological devastation caused by slavery for descendants of enslaved African Americans. It presents the work of six Black artists commissioned to create artworks based on documents from the enslavement and Jim Crow eras in the United States.



Calida Rawles: Away with the Tides

March 30 - September 6, 2026

Spelman College Museum of Fine Art will welcome home her own, Calida Rawles (c'98). Rawles envisions water as a space for Black healing and reimagines the African American community beyond the stories we already know as a part of the United States' collective history. Merging hyperrealism, poetic abstraction, and the cultural and historical symbolisms of water, Rawles creates unique portraits of Black bodies submerged in and interacting with bright and mysterious bodies of water. The water, itself a sort of character within the paintings, functions as an element that signifies both physical and spiritual healing, as well as historical trauma and racial exclusion.

AFRICAN DIASPORA AND THE WORLD MUSEUM CURRICULUM

Week 1 - Introduction

Welcome to the museum. This first week, we will explore the galleries of the Spelman College Museum of Fine Art. A general overview of the gallery's locations, staff, policies, and other details will be provided. Students will learn about the museum as a site of learning, along with an overview of the fall exhibitions.

Week 2 - Assignment - Close Reading

Upon entering the museum, you are surrounded by objects. It can be overwhelming. How do you even know what you are looking at? Part of your assignment is to use your 'ashe' to guide you to an artwork. When you select a piece, do a close reading. Close reading can also be called a visual analysis, inspection, evaluation, or, as MoMA calls it, "Slow Looking," but essentially, what you will do is take time and look and discover what you can about the artwork.

Assignment: Just look and write what you see. Use the worksheet found on the museum.spelman.edu website to conduct a close reading of the object you are looking at. There are no wrong answers.

Week 3 - Seeing Race

Now that you have selected an artwork and have done your close reading worksheet. Does this artwork have a race? How does your positionality inform how you see the artwork? (What is your positionality?)

Assignment: Write the ways you experience the race of the artwork, if any. (Still write if you do not see the work having a race and why.) If you need prompts, find the Race and Gender worksheet on the museum.spelman.edu website.

Week 4 - Gendering Art

The Spelman College Museum of Fine Art is the only museum in the nation dedicated solely to the art by and about women of the African Diaspora. However, that doesn't mean that it is gendered.

Assignment: What makes the chosen artwork gendered, and what is your reaction to the gendering? If you need prompts, find the Race and Gender worksheet on the museum.spelman.edu website.

AFRICAN DIASPORA AND THE WORLD MUSEUM CURRICULUM

Week 5 - Information, Labels & Wall Text

Labels, wall text, and materials contain information such as the artist's name, the date the piece was produced, the location, and the name of the owner or the origin of the piece. A label can also have more contextual information about the artwork.

Assignment: Review the exhibition's information and use it to expand on what you have already gathered about the work. Are there elements in the labels and wall text that confirm your thoughts and feelings? Is there any information that raises more questions about the work? How does the label help you learn or understand more about the work, and in what way does the label work against your understanding of the work?

Pro tip: When listing a specific detail from a label or piece of wall text, please be sure to cite it.

Week 6: Other work in the exhibition

Take a moment to explore the other artworks in the exhibition. Select another two or three items. Use the labels and your “ashe” to guide you.

Assignment: Document the items. What made you select them? What do you notice about them? How are they different, and how are they alike? Are the same materials used? Do the themes feel similar or different?

Week 7: Time & History

Now that you have information about the artist, as well as the time and place that it was created, how does that inform what you know about the artwork?

Assignment: Does the date or title of the work make you think of a historical person or event? Does the time in which a piece of art gives more context to why you have seen it as gendered or raced? Are there colors, tools, or materials that could have been more prevalent at a moment in history? What does the size of a work make you think about when considering the art?

Week 8: Storytelling

You have spent time in the museum gathering your thoughts and findings about the artwork.

Assignment: What are the other things that occurred during your visit? Did you have a conversation with a student ambassador or another guest? Did you visit the museum during any programming events? What other elements in the experience can inform the type of story you want to tell?

THE ART OF LOOKING CLOSELY



Beverly Buchanan
The Williams House, 1998
Acrylic, foam core
Collection of Spelman College Museum of Fine Art,
Gift of Ruth Shack

Upon entering the museum, you are surrounded by objects. It can be overwhelming. How do you even know what you are looking at? Part of your assignment is to use your 'ashe' to guide you to an artwork. Once you are there, take a moment to consider the elements of what you are looking at. This is referred to as conducting a visual deep dive of your image. This deep dive is an in-depth analysis of an artwork, examining its structure, color palette, and visual patterns. There are no wrong answers, just your observations. Do not worry about not being an artist, or even if you've never stepped foot in a museum. The point of this assignment is for you to honor and acknowledge your perspective about a work that you are drawn to.

Recommended Reading:

Sturken, Marita, and Lisa Cartwright. *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture* /
. Oxford University Press, 2001.

Chapter 3: Modernity: Spectatorship, Power, and Knowledge

Looking Closely

What colors do you see?

What shapes/patterns do you see?

What materials do you notice (cloth, wood, metal, beads)?

Does this piece have texture (smooth, pebbly, rough)?

How does this piece make you feel? (Happy, sad, mad, inspired?)

Does this piece evoke any memories, smells, and/or songs for you?

SEEING RACE & GENDER IN ART



Sheila Pree Bright
Suburbia Series, Untitled 7, 2008
Chromogenic print Collection of Spelman College
Museum of Fine Art

The next step in this analysis is asking yourself, “Does this piece of art have a race or gender?” Consider your positionality, or the social factors (race, gender, class, the school you attend, where you grew up) that help you understand the world, and the art that you are looking at.

Recommended Resources:

Berger, Martin A. “Race, Visuality, and History.” *American Art*, vol. 24, no. 2, June 2010, pp. 94–99,

hooks, bell. *Black Looks: Race and Representation*. Routledge, 2015.
The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators

Youtube: The white lie we’ve been told about Roman statues, Vox Media
<https://youtu.be/4jmMWohs1XM?si=IU250b-MpwlhblwL>

Seeing Race/Gender

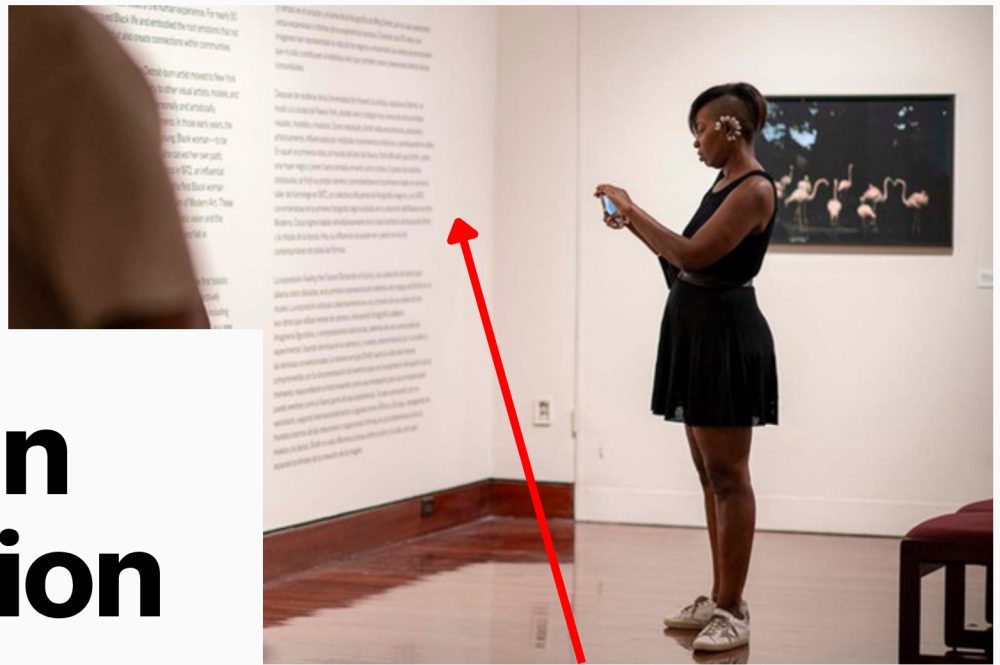
Write a positionality statement and explain how you think it informs your understanding of the race and gender of this particular artwork.

What race/gender do you think this artwork has?

What elements make this piece have a race/gender?
Review your “Looking Closely” sheet.

Is it important for this piece to have a race/gender? Why?

Exhibition Information



Exhibition details
(about the artist and
purpose of the exhibition)

Labels, wall text, and materials contain information such as the artist's name, the date the piece was produced, the location, and the name of the owner or the origin of the piece. A label can also have more contextual information about the artwork.

Review the exhibition's information and use it to expand on what you have already gathered about the work. Are there elements in the labels and wall text that confirm your thoughts and feelings? Is there any information that raises more questions about the work? How does the label help you learn or understand more about the work, and in what way does the label work against your understanding of the work?

Artist name
and date of birth

Title and
creation date

Wayne Thiebaud (b. 1920)

Diagonal Freeway, 1993

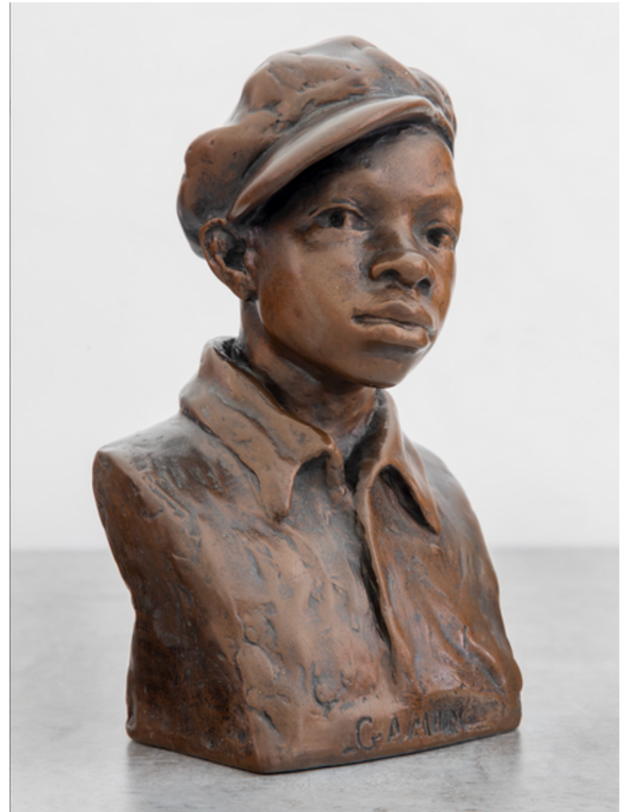
Acrylic on canvas

medium

Partial gift of Morgan Flagg in memory of his son Lawrence J. Flagg
1998.186

who owns/lent the artwork

HISTORICAL CONTEXT



Augusta Savage, United States, 1892 – 1962
Gamin, c. 1930
Painted plaster 9 1/8 x 5 3/4 x 4 1/4" / 23.2 x 14.6 x 10.8
Terra Foundation for American Art and Spelman College
Museum of Fine Art co-acquisition in honor of Mary Schmidt
Campbell, Ph.D., 10th President of Spelman College

What does the year that an artwork is made tell you about it?

Are certain materials more resonant during specific periods?

What is the role of artifacts in art making?

Are there particular themes more prevalent during specific periods?

Are there politics embedded in a piece of art?

Who were the thinkers, other artists, and musicians in the period in which the piece was made?

What does this tell you about the artwork?

STORYTELLING



You have spent time in the museum gathering your thoughts and findings about the artwork.

What are the other things that occurred during your visit?

Did you have a conversation with a student ambassador or another guest?

Did you visit the museum during any programming events?

What other elements in the experience can inform the type of story you want to tell?

AFRICAN DIASPORA AND THE WORLD MUSEUM CURRICULUM RESOURCES

Berger, Martin A. "Race, Visuality, and History." *American Art*, vol. 24, no. 2, June 2010, pp. 94–99, <https://doi.org/10.1086/656461>.

Bloomberg Connects App: Spelman College Museum of Fine Art

hooks, bell. *Black Looks: Race and Representation*. Routledge, 2015.
The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators

Pierre, Alix. "Decoding Black Iconography: The Art Museum and the Acquisition of Visual Culture Literacy in Diaspora Studies in College"

Sturken, Marita, and Lisa Cartwright. *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture I*. Oxford University Press, 2001.
Chapter 1: Images, Power, and Politics

YouTube: *The white lie we've been told about Roman statues*, Vox Media
<https://youtu.be/4jmMWohs1XM?si=IU250b-MpwlhblwL>

Nancy Elizabeth Prophet

Nancy Elizabeth Prophet: I Will Not Bend An Inch (Woodruff Library Resources)

Rhode Island School of Design (RISD)
Nancy Elizabeth Prophet Reading List
<https://risdmuseum.org/art-design/projects-publications/articles/nancy-elizabeth-prophet>

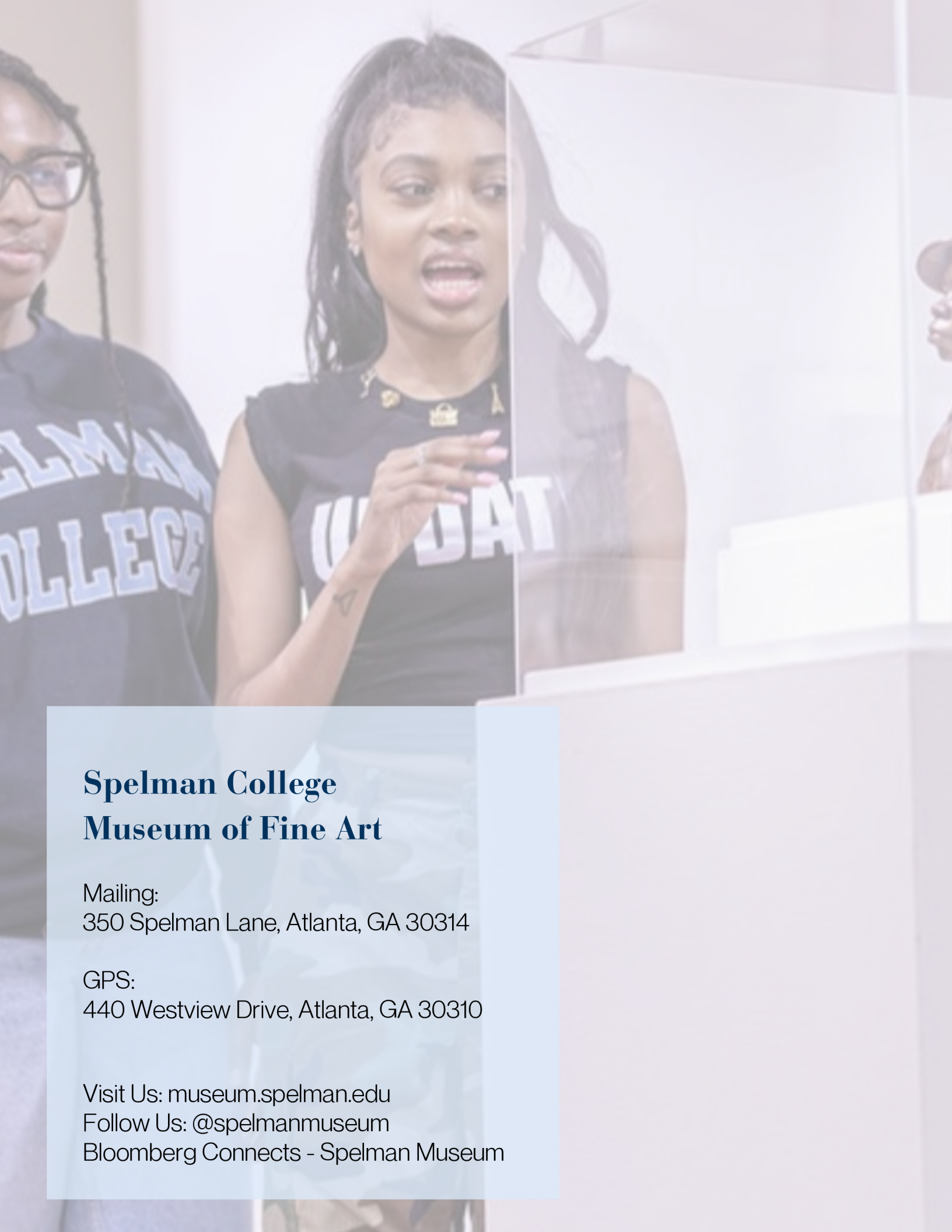
YouTube: *Art As We See It | The Art and Life of Nancy Elizabeth Prophet*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TI4puZ5jTs8>

REPOSSESSIONS

Eisner, Sarah & Randy Quarterman. *The Reparations Project. A Story of Friendship and Repair Work by Linked Descendants of Enslavement*. 2024.

Callahan, S. (2022). *Art + Archive: Understanding the Archival Turn in Contemporary Art*. United Kingdom: Manchester University Press.

Berry, M.F. (2005). *My Face is Black is True: Callie House and the Struggle for Ex-Slave Reparations*. New York: Random House US.



Spelman College Museum of Fine Art

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440 Westview Drive, Atlanta, GA 30310

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