

**SFMOMA ANNOUNCES WORLD PREMIERE OF  
*AMY SHERALD: AMERICAN SUBLIME***

**Sherald’s First Major Survey Exhibition Opens This Fall  
Museum Announces Acquisition of Sherald’s Landmark Painting  
*For Love, and for Country***



**November 16, 2024 to March 9, 2025**

**Press Preview: November 13, 2024**

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (April 2, 2024, updated August 23, 2024)—The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) today announced *Amy Sherald: American Sublime*, the global debut of the artist’s first mid-career survey. The largest and most comprehensive presentation of Sherald’s work to date, *American Sublime* will bring together over 50 paintings made from 2007 to the present—from her poetic early portraits to the incisive, moving figure paintings for which she is best known. Iconic portraits of Michelle Obama and Breonna Taylor—arguably the most recognizable and impactful paintings made in the U.S. in the last 50 years—will be joined by early works never or rarely seen by the public and new works created

specifically for the exhibition, on view for the first time. Another highlight of the exhibition is *For Love, and for Country* (2022), a landmark painting recently acquired by SFMOMA for its permanent collection.

Organized by SFMOMA and curated by Sarah Roberts, SFMOMA's Andrew W. Mellon Curator and Head of Painting and Sculpture, *Amy Sherald: American Sublime* will premiere in San Francisco on November 16, 2024, and will be on view through March 9, 2025, before traveling to the Whitney Museum of American Art from April 9 to August 3, 2025.

The exhibition will consider the important impact of Sherald's work on contemporary art and on American culture, as she addresses the omission of Black figures from the history of figure painting. She has described her paintings as offering a resting place, an opportunity to see Black figures not in contention, not racialized or politicized, but simply being. The resulting body of work is a deeply resonant ode to everyday people and a convincing testament that, as Sherald believes, images can change the world.

"Amy Sherald is one of the most important artists working today and we are honored to present her first mid-career survey at SFMOMA," said Christopher Bedford, Helen and Charles Schwab Director of SFMOMA. "Amy's vision deeply resonates with the museum's goals to share and to champion a more expansive art history in our galleries. Amy's unique and exquisite renderings of her subjects encourage close looking, curiosity, and awe. We greatly look forward to sharing this important exhibition with our community."

"By creating images of Black men, women and children at ease, with few markers of place, time or context beyond the clothes they wear, Sherald has invented an entirely new form of figurative painting. Her approach goes beyond portraiture to enact new conditions for seeing, feeling, and understanding shared humanity," said Roberts. "In the spirit of great American artists like Edward Hopper, Alice Neel and Kerry James Marshall, Sherald's works reframe our understanding of American culture. Her paintings invite viewers to recognize and move beyond preconceived ideas and engage in more expansive thinking about race, representation and the wide-open possibilities and complexities of every individual."

*American Sublime* and the accompanying publication will consider for the first time Sherald's work within the context of American realist and figurative painting. Gallery texts and catalogue essays will elucidate Sherald's unique artistic process—inviting individuals she meets or sees on the street to be photographed, then transforming the photos into imaginative figure paintings that act as more than representative portraits. The exhibition also will illuminate how she selects garments and positions her subjects to further the objective of each work as well as her choice to render faces and skin in shades of gray—the centuries' old painting technique which dates back to the early Renaissance—to highlight race as a construct. The exhibition is the first to explore Sherald's references to historical precedents in visual art, which range from W.E.B. Dubois's photographs of African Americans made for the Paris Exposition of 1900, to the paintings of Caspar David Friedrich, to Alfred

Eisenstadt's famous image of a sailor kissing a woman in Times Square in 1945.



#### **ABOUT AMY SHERALD**

Born in Columbus, Georgia, and now based in the New York City area, Amy Sherald documents contemporary African American experience in the United States through arresting, intimate portraits. Sherald engages with the history of photography and portraiture, inviting viewers to participate in a more complex debate about accepted notions of race and representation, and to situate Black life in American art.

Sherald received her MFA in painting from Maryland Institute College of Art and her BA in painting from Clark-Atlanta University. In 2016, Sherald was the first woman and first African American to ever receive the grand prize in the Outwin Boochever Portrait Competition from the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C.; she also received the 2017 Anonymous Was A Woman award; and the Smithsonian Ingenuity Award, the Pollock Prize for Creativity and the David C. Driskell Prize in 2018. In 2018, Sherald was also selected by First Lady Michelle Obama to paint her portrait as an official commission for the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C.

Sherald's work is held in public collections such as the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, AR; Embassy of the United States, Dakar, Senegal; the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), Los Angeles, CA; Museum of Fine Arts Boston, Boston; Nasher Museum of Art, Durham, N.C.; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA), San Francisco, CA; Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, Washington, D.C.; Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery, Washington D.C.; and Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

#### **CATALOGUE**

*Amy Sherald: American Sublime* is accompanied by an eponymous publication—the artist's

first comprehensive monograph—representing the broad sweep of Sherald's painting practice as well as her key influences and inspirations. Contributors include exhibition curator Sarah Roberts, as well as Elizabeth Alexander, Dario Calmese, Rhea Combs and Rujeko Hockley. *Amy Sherald: American Sublime* is published by the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art in association with Yale University Press.

**VENUES + DATES**

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art: November 16, 2024, to March 9, 2025

Whitney Museum of American Art: April 9 to August 3, 2025

**ORGANIZATION**

*Amy Sherald: American Sublime* is organized by the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) and curated by Sarah Roberts, Andrew W. Mellon Curator and Head of Painting and Sculpture at SFMOMA.

**SUPPORT**

Lead support for *Amy Sherald: American Sublime* is provided by the Mimi and Peter Haas Fund and Diana Nelson and John Atwater. Presenting support is provided by the Evelyn D. Haas Exhibition Fund. Major support is provided by Sir Deryck and Lady Va Maughan, KHR McNeely Family Fund, Katie and Matt Paige, Stephanie and Mark Robinson, and Shelagh Rohlen, in memory of Tom Rohlen. Significant support is provided by Maria Manetti Shrem and Jan Shrem, Jessica Moment, Deborah and Kenneth Novack, and Sonja Hoel Perkins and Jonathan Perkins. Meaningful support is provided by Alka and Ravin Agrawal, Dolly and George Chammas, Jessica and Matt Farron, Maryellen and Frank Herringer, Alison Pincus, Komal Shah and Gaurav Garg, Gary Steele and Steven Rice, Susan Swig and Barbara and Stephan Vermut. Meaningful support is also provided by Fashion Partner Max Mara.

**San Francisco Museum of Modern Art**

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