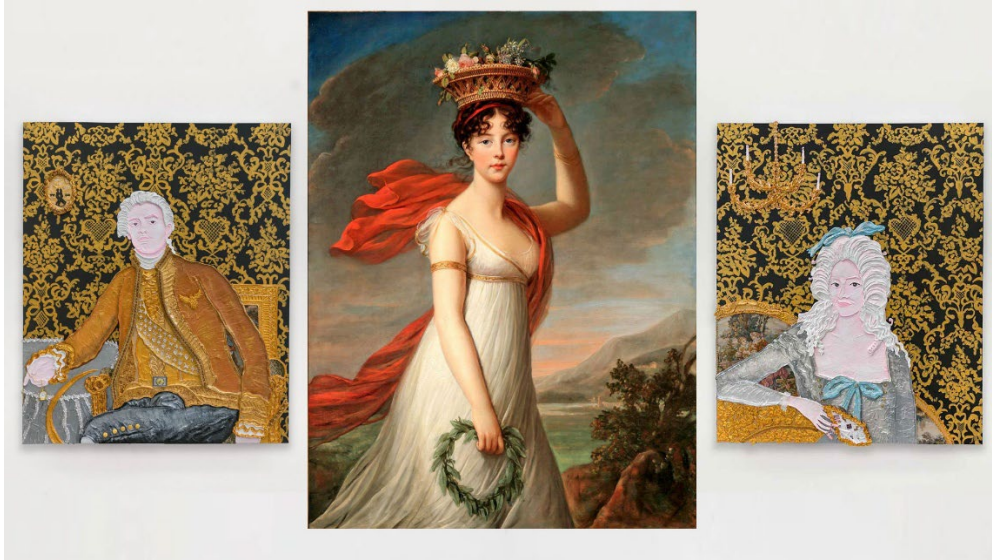


# MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS ST. PETE

## THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, ST. PETERSBURG LAUNCHES *ART UNBOUND: A VISIONARY TRANSFORMATION* OF THE MUSEUM EXPERIENCE



Following a March Kickoff with Artist Yvette Mayorga, the MFA Unveils a Bold Strategic Framework and Outlines a Phased Rollout to Reimagine its Collection Galleries, Launch a Creativity Commons, and Expand Art Beyond Gallery Walls, Beginning June 20 in the Great Hall

ST. PETERSBURG, FL (June 10, 2026) – The Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg (MFA) proudly announces ***Art Unbound: The Future of the MFA, St. Petersburg***, a comprehensive institutional strategy and framework designed to transform the museum into a dynamic cultural hub with a vital “third space” for the Tampa Bay region.

Building on the legacy of founder Margaret Acheson Stuart, who conceived of the MFA as a world-class “place for the people,” *Art Unbound* marks a profound, multi-phase evolution of the museum, including its permanent collection, indoor galleries and transitional spaces, and outdoor campus. The initiative introduces a human-centered visitor journey that invites curiosity and reflection. Designed to be accessible, the reimagination of the MFA will encourage visual conversations across time, culture, and geography to reveal the universal human themes connecting our shared world.

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***Art Unbound*** transforms the MFA into a community-centered artistic space, ensuring the collection, exhibitions, programs, and campus continue to inspire, educate, and connect Tampa Bay's community in meaningful, globally minded ways. Together with community leaders, educators, artists, and stakeholders, the transformed museum experience positions the MFA as a regional and national leader in museum innovation, scholarship, and civic engagement.

"*Art Unbound* marks an ambitious transformation of the MFA, opening our doors wider to new ideas, new voices, and new ways of connecting through art," said Claudio Rodriguez, Executive Director & CEO of the Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg. "By breaking down traditional barriers between art and audience, we are reimagining not only how people experience art but also the museum's role in this community. We are creating a dynamic cultural hub that is a place of curiosity, creativity, and belonging. *Art Unbound* reflects our fundamental belief that art is not a luxury for a few, but an essential human experience for all."

## **The Launch: Yvette Mayorga and the Historic Great Hall**

Following the extraordinary public response to the March 2026 installation of Yvette Mayorga's outdoor sculpture, ***Magic Grasshopper***, directly in front of the MFA, ***Art Unbound*** moves inside the museum walls on June 20, 2026, with ***Yvette Mayorga: Goddesses of the Great Hall***. Mayorga's immersive installation activates the museum's historic 1965 entrance hall, serving as the first in a series of exhibitions to inaugurate ***The Great Hall Project***, a brand-new curatorial initiative designed to engage the MFA's spaces through contemporary art interventions.

Developed in direct dialogue with the museum's 1799 painting *Julie as Flora, Roman Goddess of Flowers* by Élisabeth Vigée-LeBrun, Mayorga's exhibition creates a striking conversation between historical ornamentation and contemporary explorations of femininity, excess, cultural memory, and power. Central to the presentation will be Mayorga's own self-portrait inspired by Vigée-LeBrun, alongside major works generously on loan. These paintings serve as key anchors within the installation and exemplify Mayorga's ongoing engagement with the visual language of eighteenth-century portraiture, creating a compelling visual and conceptual bridge between historical and contemporary representations of identity and self-fashioning.

"Yvette Mayorga is the perfect choice as the inaugural artist for *The Great Hall Project*," said Senior Curator of Contemporary Art Katherine Pill. "She is a deeply research-based artist who expands the traditional art historical canon. Her work creates an exciting juxtaposition of time periods that we will emulate across the entire museum campus."

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## **The Great Hall Project: Opening Day Event**

To celebrate the launch of *Art Unbound* and *The Great Hall Project*, the MFA will host a conversation on the opening day of the installation.

### **In Conversation: Yvette Mayorga and Katherine Pill**

Sat, June 20, 11am-12pm, Marly Room

In this intimate conversation, Senior Curator of Contemporary Art Katherine Pill sits down with multidisciplinary artist Yvette Mayorga, whose work links feminized labor and the aesthetics of celebration to colonial art history and racialized oppression “through the guise of using pink as a weapon of mass destruction.”

## **The Phased Rollout of *Art Unbound***

*Art Unbound* unfolds as a continuous journey, systematically removing traditional barriers between the public and the creative process through a series of seasonal milestones.

### **Spring 2026: Inaugural Public Art Activation**

Marking the official kickoff of *Art Unbound*, the museum extended its footprint into the civic sphere by placing Yvette Mayorga’s vibrant *Magic Grasshopper* directly on Beach Drive, outside the museum walls. This critical first step breaks down traditional barriers and signals a new commitment to accessibility, transforming the museum’s exterior into a literal “front porch” for the city that welcomes residents and tourists alike.

### **Summer 2026: The Great Hall Project**

The initiative moves indoors, using the historic 1965 entrance hall as a platform for contemporary artist interventions. Yvette Mayorga’s site-specific installation creates a visual and conceptual bridge between 18th-century portraiture and modern identity.

### **Fall 2026: Reimagining the Collection Galleries and Visitor Spaces**

Rooted in curatorial scholarship and designed to be accessible to everyone from the seasoned scholar to the first-time visitor, the collection galleries shift to a thematic model that encourages visual conversations. Visitors will experience historical works from across cultures in intentional dialogue with modern and contemporary works. By moving beyond traditional chronological and geographical frameworks, universal human themes are revealed in a shared history. Layered interpretation and digital storytelling provide deeper context for a diverse community of learners, sparking conversation rather than just providing facts. By treating galleries as a modular canvas, the MFA will rotate holdings frequently, providing a compelling reason for visitors to return repeatedly. The MFA Shop and Café Clementine will also be redesigned to reflect this world-class, cohesive vision.

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## Winter 2026: Creativity Commons

The Creativity Commons, the MFA's third space, will consist of two new areas—the Education Gallery and the MFA Studio Classroom—designed for creative learning, informal gatherings, story times, and artist meetups. The spaces foster connection across generations, bring together artists and learners through hands-on collaboration, and respond to the fundamental human need for shared creative activity and intellectual stimulation.

- Located in the current upstairs gallery of the museum, the Education Gallery is a free, welcoming environment that removes cost barriers and positions art as something visitors can touch, shape, and build together. The gallery will include a local artist-in-residence as well as space that supports collaborative community projects.
- Currently housed in an area inaccessible to the public, the MFA Studio Classroom will be a fully equipped, flexible makerspace classroom designed to ignite creativity and strengthen the region's artistic community, bringing together educators, local artists, and people of all ages. By combining professional instruction with a space built for experimentation and innovation, the classroom empowers participants to move from being observers of art to being makers of art.

## Spring 2027: Beyond the Gallery Walls

By placing art in accessible spaces, the MFA becomes a place to live with art, not just view it. The Mary Alice McClendon Conservatory becomes a hub for digital and experimental art forms as well as redefined spaces that are comfortable and inviting, transforming seamlessly from a brunch vibe to meeting spot to jazz night. Beyond the walls of the museum, public art transforms outdoor areas around the museum into welcoming, community-gathering spaces. These non-gallery spaces create a radical sense of welcome that begins at the city's edge and carries the visitor through every touch point at the museum.

For more information about **Art Unbound**, exhibition information, and to view the launch video, [click here](#). For press images and credits, [click here](#).

Images:

Yvette Mayorga (American, b. 1991), *Rhinestone Vaquero After Élisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun*, 2025, textile, rhinestones, buttons, belt buckle, gold flakes, silver flakes, glitter, and acrylic piping on canvas, 72 x 60 inches

Élisabeth Vigée-LeBrun (French, 1755-1842), *Julie as Flora, Roman Goddess of Flowers*, 1799, Oil on canvas, 50.9 x 38.5 inches

Yvette Mayorga (American, b. 1991), *Self Portrait of the Artist After Élisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun*, 2025, textile, collage, stickers, gold flakes, silver flakes, pen, lace, buttons, acrylic nails, nail charms and acrylic piping on canvas, 72 x 60 inches

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## **About the Museum of Fine Arts St. Petersburg**

As the first art museum in St. Petersburg, the Museum of Fine Arts serves as the cultural anchor of a vibrant arts city, uniting a diverse community of artists, residents, and international visitors. The Museum's global collection, spanning nearly 5,000 years, acts as a catalyst for connection and conversation. By bridging historical perspectives with contemporary discourse, the Museum broadens the artistic canon while elevating the voices and stories of historically marginalized artists. Within the Museum's holdings are exemplary works by Georgia O'Keeffe, Claude Monet, Berthe Morisot, Auguste Rodin, Kehinde Wiley, and Élisabeth Vigée-LeBrun. The Museum also houses one of the largest and most well-respected photography collections in the Southeast, featuring iconic visionaries such as Ansel Adams, Edward Steichen, Julia Margaret Cameron, Carrie Mae Weems, James Van Der Zee, and Aaron Siskind. Through dynamic exhibitions and inclusive programming, the Museum engages with more than 100,000 people annually, including thousands of students through a dedicated partnership with Pinellas County Schools. Committed to fearless creativity, the Museum fosters a welcoming environment where all are empowered to explore untold stories and challenge conventions.

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