

The Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) Supports the Launch of Tavares Strachan's ENOCH to Space

(Los Angeles—November 13, 2018) The Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) is pleased to announce that LACMA Art + Technology Lab grant recipient Tavares Strachan will soon be launching his project *ENOCH* into space. The anticipated launch date is November 19, 2018. Created in collaboration with LACMA, Strachan's *ENOCH* is centered around the development and launch of a 3U satellite that brings to light the forgotten story of Robert Henry Lawrence Jr., the first African American astronaut selected for any national space program. In this new body of work, Strachan combines hidden histories, traditions of ancient Egypt, Shinto rituals and beliefs, and the history of exploration.

Lawrence died in 1967 while training a junior pilot in landing techniques at Edwards Air Force Base, and his aspirations to go to space were never realized. He was an accomplished Air Force pilot, the first doctorate-holding aerospace researcher to be selected as an astronaut, and the developer of the "flare" technique, now a critical maneuver of space shuttle landing. Despite his belated recognition in 2017, in which NASA leaders honored his many contributions on the 50th anniversary of his death, Lawrence remains virtually invisible amid the commemorative culture of space exploration.

To honor the astronaut's legacy, Strachan created a 24-karat gold canopic jar with a bust of Lawrence. The canopic jar nods to a practice employed by the ancient Egyptians to protect and preserve organs of the deceased for use in the afterlife. The canopic jar was blessed at a Shinto shrine in Fukuoka, Japan, and was recognized as a container for Lawrence's soul. Named in the ritual blessing as "Robert Lawrence – Enoch" the object incorporates three religious traditions, all of which center on the agency of objects and the potential of a person's spirit to endure. The name Enoch refers to a biblical figure (present in Jewish, Christian, and Muslim sacred texts) who never experienced mortal death, instead ascending directly into the afterlife. Strachan's work integrates ancient belief systems with our current faith in technological progress—while rendering that progress inseparable from the efforts of the unrecognized lives that built our contemporary world.

The satellite containing the canopic jar is contracted to launch via Spaceflight's SSO-A: SmallSat Express mission from Vandenberg Air Force Base on a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket. The sculpture will circle the earth for seven years in a sun-synchronous orbit.

"Tavares Strachan's *ENOCH* exemplifies the LACMA Art + Technology Lab's mission to foster conversations between talented artists and leading technology companies to realize collaborations that would not be otherwise possible ." said Michael Govan, LACMA CEO and Wallis Annenberg Director. "Launching an artwork into space is a spectacular result of the program. More importantly, Tavares's project justly honors an under recognized pioneer of NASA's space program."

SpaceX is a founding sponsor of the LACMA Art + Technology Lab. In May 2014, Strachan met with SpaceX President and COO Gwynne Shotwell, an advisor to LACMA's Art + Technology Lab, to explore how technology could push his art practice in new directions. Under the premise of the artist's Bahamian Aerospace and Sea Exploration Center (BASEC), Strachan worked with small-scale rockets made from Bahamian natural resources from his home country (glass from beach sand and fuel from sugarcane), launching them and collecting their fallen remnants to exhibit as sculpture. Propelled by these conversations, Tavares embarked on an exploratory project that unfolded into two parts, the *Chalkboard Drawings* (2015) and *ENOCH*.

For the *Chalkboard Drawings*, SpaceX engineers discussed scientific concepts of interstellar space with to a group of children, ages 7–10, from LACMA's NexGen program using a dry-erase board to illustrate. Strachan has often engaged children in the production of his artworks and has previously worked with students in the Bahamas and the United States. The illustrations generated by the discussion were then interpreted and annotated by Strachan and incorporated into artworks embossed in large slabs of chalk. These works and others will be featured in a future solo exhibition of Strachan's work at LACMA.

About Tavares Strachan

Tavares Strachan was born in 1979 in Nassau, Bahamas. After studying painting and liberal arts at both College of the Bahamas in Nassau and at Brown, he received a BFA from the Rhode Island School of Design, where he studied glass, and an MFA in sculpture from Yale University. Recurring themes in Strachan's work include invisibility, displacement (both physical and metaphorical), and the capacity of both persons and matter to withstand inhospitable environments. Aeronautical and astronomical science,

deep-sea exploration, and extreme climatology are but some of the thematic arenas out of which Strachan creates monumental performative allegories that tell of cultural displacement, human aspiration, and mortal limitation.

One of Strachan's most iconic projects, *The Distance Between What We Have and What We Want* (2006), consisted of a 4.5-ton block of ice. Harvested in a river near Mount McKinley, then shipped Federal Express to the Bahamas, it was exhibited in transparent, freezer at a primary school in Nassau, where solar power kept it frozen. Over the past decade, Strachan's explorations have expanded to both outer space and under water. A major focus has been orthostatic tolerance—the body's ability to circumvent hypotension and withstand pressure during gravitational stress, often caused by quick changes of altitude, or the more extreme circumstances of being launched into the earth's stratosphere or submerged to the oceans' depths.

Strachan's research on the topic has extended to hands-on training at the Yuri Gagarin Russian State Science Research Cosmonaut Training Center in Star City, Russia; a journey to the Arctic in commemoration of the 1909 journey of African-American explorer Matthew Henson; and a residency at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he worked with some of the institution's cutting-edge scientists. It also led to the establishment of the nascent Bahamian Aerospace and Sea Exploration Center in the Bahamas (BASEC). In the course of working with BASEC, Strachan has made several rockets wholly from Bahamian natural resources (glass from beach sand, and fuel from sugarcane) and launched them 15 to 20 miles into the earth's stratosphere, before collecting and presenting their fallen remnants as sculptural relics.

In 2011, Strachan exhibited a survey exhibition of past and present works at an undisclosed location in New York City that was deliberately closed to the general public. While access to *Tavares Strachan: Seen/Unseen* was restricted to the organizers, the exhibition itself was fully documented with a website and an illustrated catalogue designed by Stefan Sagmeister. Strachan's solo exhibitions include : *Always, Sometimes, Never*, Frye Art Museum, Seattle, WA (2018) *You Belong Here, Prospect 3. Biennial*, New Orleans, LA (2013); *The Immeasurable Daydream*, Biennale De Lyon, Lyon, France (2013); *Orthostatic Tolerance: It Might Not Be Such a Bad Idea if I Never Went Home Again*, MIT List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge, MA (2010); *Orthostatic Tolerance: Launching from an Infinite Distance*, Grand Arts, Kansas City, MO (2010); *Tavares Strachan: Orthostatic Tolerance*, the Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia (2009); *Where We Are is Always Miles Away*, The Luggage

Store, San Francisco, CA (2006); and *The Difference Between What We Have and What We Want*, Albury Sayle Primary School, Nassau, The Bahamas (2006).

Strachan lives and works in New York City and Nassau.

About the Art + Technology Lab

Inspired by the spirit of LACMA's original Art and Technology program (1967–71), which paired artists with technology companies in Southern California, the Art + Technology Lab at LACMA supports artist experiments with emerging technology. Through sponsors, the Lab provides grants, in-kind support, and facilities at the museum to develop new artist projects. To date, more than 20 artists from around the world, including Ghana, Ireland, Korea, Mexico, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States, have received awards through the Art + Technology Lab.

Free Public Programs at the Art + Technology Lab

The Art + Technology Lab hosts free public programs throughout the year, featuring the work and processes of the grant recipients. The public is invited to engage with the Art + Technology Lab artists and learn more about their projects and ideas. To receive information on upcoming Art + Technology Lab projects, contact lab@lacma.org.

Credit

The Art + Technology Lab is presented by:



The Art + Technology Lab is made possible by Accenture, Snap, Inc., and DreamWorks Animation. Additional support is provided by SpaceX and Google.

The Lab is part of The Hyundai Project: Art + Technology at LACMA, a joint initiative exploring the convergence of art and technology.

Seed funding for the development of the Art + Technology Lab was provided by the Los Angeles County Quality and Productivity Commission through the Productivity Investment Fund and LACMA Trustee David Bohnett.

About LACMA

Since its inception in 1965, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) has been devoted to collecting works of art that span both history and geography, mirroring Los Angeles's rich cultural heritage and uniquely diverse population. Today LACMA is the largest art museum in the western United States, with a collection of over 135,000 objects that illuminate 6,000 years of art history from new and unexpected points of view. A museum of international stature as well as a vital cultural center for Southern

California, LACMA shares its vast collection with the Greater Los Angeles County and beyond through exhibitions, public programs, and research facilities that attract over 1.2 million visitors annually, in addition to serving millions more through community partnerships, school outreach programs, and creative digital initiatives. LACMA's main campus is located halfway between the ocean and downtown, adjacent to the La Brea Tar Pits and Museum and the future home of the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures. Dedicated to serving all of Los Angeles, LACMA collaborates with a range of curators, educators, and artists on exhibitions and programs at various sites throughout the County.

Location: 5905 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA, 90036. lacma.org

Connect with LACMA

[@lacma](#) [#EnochinSpace](#) [#ArtPlusTech](#)