Beat: Arts

Baltimore Museum of Art set to debut exhibit

Curated By Its Security Guards

Baltimore, Maryland, 08.04.2022, 11:31 Time

USPA NEWS - Ricardo Castro went from guarding art exhibits to curating one. Castro is a security officer at the Baltimore Museum of Art, and likes meeting visitors and pointing them in the right direction. "I enjoy the interaction, especially when you can tell that people are really moved by something hanging on the wall," he told the Washington Post.

Security guards "spend more time with the art than anyone," Baltimore Museum of Art trustee Amy Elias said, and in February 2020, during a dinner with chief curator Asma Naeem, an idea was formed to have guards curate their own exhibit. "For the past few years, the Baltimore Museum of Art has tried to bring in new voices that haven't been heard before," Naeem told the Post. "Our guards are always looking at the art and listening to people as they talk about the art. We wanted to see things from their perspective."

In 2021, 17 of the museum's 45 security guards spent the year learning about what it takes to put on an exhibition. They were able to choose up to three pieces from the museum's vast collection that resonated with them, and worked with the librarian to research the items and write their descriptions. Castro selected three objects created by unidentified Indigenous artists, because he wanted to see more works of art on display from early cultures.

The exhibit, titled “Guarding the Art,” will run from March 27 to July 10, 2022. Some of the items haven't been seen by the public in decades, and many of the pieces selected have a social justice theme. One guard, Ben Bjork, picked out Jeremy Aldean's "50 Dozen," a chair made entirely out of pencils, because after a day on his feet, sometimes all he can think about is sitting down. "I'm excited to see everyone's reaction to what I picked for the show," Castro told the Post. "And I'm really looking forward to a proud moment when I see my co-workers shine."

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Source: Washington Post

Article online:
https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-20410/baltimore-museum-of-art-set-to-debut-exhibit.html

Editorial office and responsibility:
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