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TORGGLER CELEBRATES AFRICAN AMERICAN ARTISTS AND THEIR STORIES

NEW EXHIBITIONS OFFER FRESH PERSPECTIVE ON IDENTITY, HISTORY, AND CREATIVITY

by [Kelley McGee](#) | September 22, 2025

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Step into the [Mary M. Torggler Fine Arts Center](#) this fall and experience two new and powerful artistic journeys: Gateways, a sweeping survey of African American art from the collection of Smithfield, Virginia, native Eric Key, and Transcendence, a glimpse into the new works of Norfolk, Virginia, artist Luisa Adelfio.

GATEWAYS: AFRICAN AMERICAN ART FROM THE KEY COLLECTION

When Key began collecting art in the early 1990s, he recalls the journey began with the question, “Who am I?”

“It was the arts, art history, and the history of people of African descent that began to give shape to my question,” he said.

Key spent the ensuing decades collecting an array of African American art, which then evolved into a focus on preservation, advocacy, and community building. His collection reflects the dual purpose of both exploring his own identity as a Black man in America, while also providing critical financial support to artists. In essence, Key’s actions opened “gateways” for artists, for African Americans and for conversations about race and identity in America.

The resulting collection reflects the powerful history, prodigious talent, and passionate vision of Black artists, featuring paintings and sculpture by Henry Ossawa Tanner, Jacob Lawrence, and Elizabeth Catlett, among other celebrated artists. Presenting works that range from the self-taught to the sophisticated, and from secular to

sacred, Mr. Key's collection is as diverse, rich, and complex as the community that has inspired his collecting.

In addition to being an avid curator, investor, and collector, Key has served in many leadership roles in the arts community. Ninety works from his vast collection are presented in *Gateways: African American Art from the Key Collection*, on view in the Anne Noland Edwards Gallery at the Torggler from Sept. 13 through Dec. 28. The exhibition is organized and toured by [International Arts & Artists \(IA&A\)](#), a Washington, D.C. based non-profit dedicated to increasing cross-cultural understanding through exhibitions and programs.

LUISA ADELFIGIO: TRANSCENDENCE

Adelfio has worked as an artist since 1984 in places ranging from her current home in Norfolk to her family home in Palermo, Italy. Her works on view in *Transcendence*, presented in both the Anne Noland Edwards Gallery and the William M. Grace Community Gallery, feature a selection of the artist's paintings, drawings, and sculptures over the last five years. Adelfio imbues her work with references to Classical architecture, Renaissance panel painting, and Surrealism. With an emphasis on form, color, and materiality, she juxtaposes celestial cycles with daily life in a calibrated and compelling equilibrium.

On view in the Edwards Gallery are Adelfio's luminous paintings on linen and on panel, rendered with oil, graphite, and both silver and gold leaf, that engage the profound connections between the home and the heavens. The Grace Gallery features the artist's *Corona Chronicles* series. These works on paper portray domestic objects, rendered in pastel on newspaper, in dialogue with jarring headlines from Italian and American newspapers published during the global pandemic.

"We are thrilled to offer two very different but equally compelling exhibitions this fall," said Holly Koons, Executive Director of the Torggler Fine Arts Center. "We invite visitors to explore *Gateways* to engage with more than a century of exceptional African American art, and *Transcendence* to be inspired by the recent works and sublime vision of Luisa Adelfio." As always, all exhibitions at the Mary M. Torggler Fine Arts Center are free and open to the public.

ABOUT THE TORGGLER

Serving the Christopher Newport community, Hampton Roads, and all of Virginia, the Mary M. Torggler Fine Arts Center cultivates extraordinary encounters with the visual arts. The Torggler opened to the public in late 2021 in a stunning new building featuring a rotunda of cascading glass domes. The Torggler presents changing art exhibitions in four galleries as well as year-round classes, workshops, and special events for art enthusiasts of all ages. All Torggler exhibitions are open to the public free of charge. Whether viewing an exhibition, taking a class, or attending a lecture or gallery talk, the Torggler invites you to explore compelling ideas through the transformative lens of art. Learn more at: www.thetorggler.org. The Torggler is open six days per week, Tuesday through Saturday (10 a.m. – 5 p.m.) and Sunday (noon – 5 p.m.).
