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**BEMIS × CENTER**

**Miatta Kawinzi:  
An Alphabet  
of Unfolding**

**+**

**MOTHER TIME:  
Measuring ourselves  
within the landscape**

**Rachel Cox + Rose Marie Cromwell**

**SUMMER EXHIBITIONS**

**June 5–September 13, 2026**

# About

**Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts facilitates the creation, presentation, and understanding of contemporary art through an international residency program, exhibitions, and educational programs.**

## Residency Program

For more than four decades, Bemis has provided artists from around the world dedicated time, space, and resources to conduct research and create new work. Bemis offers artists private live/work studios, financial support, technical/administrative assistance, and opportunities for intellectual discourse about contemporary art. More than 1,000 artists have participated in the Residency Program.

Bemis's Curator-in-Residence Program provides a curator the opportunity to participate in the Bemis Residency Program, serve as a professional resource to Bemis artists-in-residence and the Greater Omaha arts community, and organize exhibitions and public programs at Bemis Center.

Bemis's Sound Art + Experimental Music Program, launched in 2019, includes a special track within the Residency Program for artists working in sound, composition, voice, and music of all genres. Participating artists receive financial, technical, and administrative support, along with dedicated facilities for rehearsing, recording, and performing.

## LOW END

The Sound Art + Experimental Music Program also includes LOW END, a performance venue offering free live shows for the public to experience the latest innovations by local, national, and international sound artists and experimental musicians.

## Exhibition Program

Bemis Center's Exhibition Program features solo and group exhibitions of artwork in all media by local, national, and international artists. Exhibitions are always free, open to the public, and frequently introduce the community of Omaha to the most experimental and provocative art forms today.

## Public Programs

Throughout the organization's history, Bemis Center has offered artist-driven, community-responsive programs that bolster civic engagement in the creation and understanding of art. Through artist-led classes and workshops, ARTalks, open studio events, panel discussions, film screenings, and performances, the community has direct access to artists and to their diverse approaches to artmaking and interpreting the world around us.

# Map

GALLERY 1

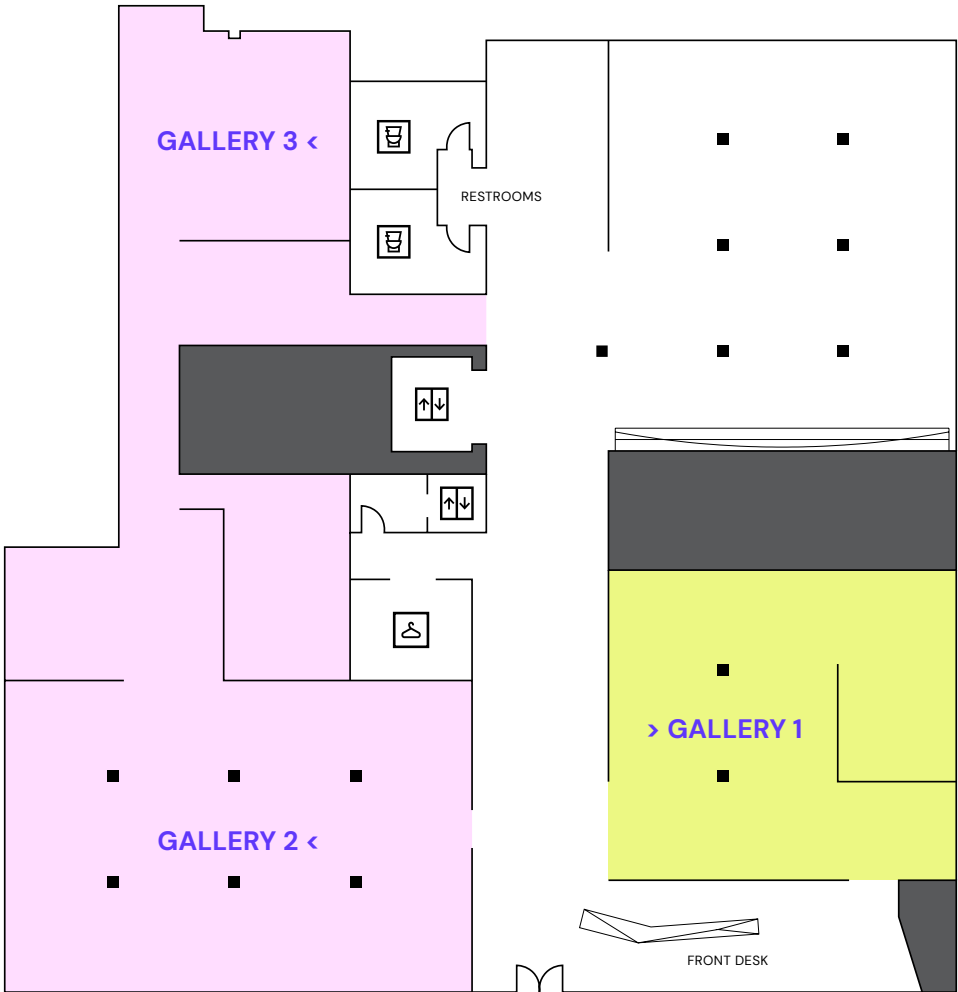


**MOTHER TIME:**  
Measuring ourselves within  
the landscape

GALLERY 2 + 3



**Miatta Kawinzi:**  
An Alphabet of Unfolding





# Miatta Kawinzi: An Alphabet of Unfolding

CURATED BY RACHEL ADAMS, CHIEF CURATOR + DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMS

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*Miatta Kawinzi: An Alphabet of Unfolding* is a multi-gallery exhibition that explores hybridity, memory, and sustenance through mixed-media works, sculpture, video, and text. Kawinzi is a Kenyan-Liberian-American artist, writer, and educator whose work explores hybridity within the African Diaspora and the reimagining of self, identity, place, and culture. Her experimental and multidisciplinary practice searches for spaces of possibility through a broad range of media, including analog and digital film/video, photography, writing, performance, multimedia installation, and site-responsive sculpture. With a fusion of new and recent work, *An Alphabet of Unfolding* is an expansive, multisensory exploration of cultural lineage, ecological interconnection, and the embodied practices through which individuals and communities persist and adapt.

Opposite page:

Miatta Kawinzi, *Listening (sanctuary)*, 2026. Photographic print on fabric. Courtesy of the artist.

## Miatta Kawinzi in Conversation with Rachel Adams

**RA:** Your practice moves fluidly across media—text, video, sculpture, and installation. How has this interdisciplinary approach developed over time, and how does it shape the way you think about storytelling within *An Alphabet of Unfolding*?

**MK:** My work often starts with questions, and then I move through a process of exploring different ways of considering the questions through different mediums. An interdisciplinary approach comes to me intuitively because I feel like different mediums hold invitations to speak in different registers. With this exhibition, the sculptures made from hand-wrapping copper wire in yarn and thread speak a language of softness that is also able to hold structure, to expand in space through a language of delicacy. The title of the exhibition evokes the notion of “unfolding” and I am really at a juncture in my practice where I am uplifting the nature of process, flow, unfolding, becoming, unfurling. Rather than pursuing fixity, I am really interested in considering how a work can be complete while also still being alive and responsive. With some of the works in the exhibition, such as the large-scale sculptural installation *Networks of Protection*, this is reflected in how the work is responsive to the gallery at Bemis in terms of how it is installed and literally unfolds in the space. I’m

really interested as well in how visitors in the gallery then become part of the work’s unfolding.

This exhibition really grew out of me reflecting on questions around what it means to find and forge a sense of home and belonging across multiple spaces. This is informed by how I grew up—moving around often and needing to adapt to different environments. Also with my parents being from Kenya and Liberia, I grew up hearing about homes that were elsewhere that I also had a familial connection to across distance. In this time of accelerated displacement and migration, where the movement of people and communities is affected by the search to sustain livelihoods, to escape war and conflict, to find greater possibility—this idea of home is something I keep coming back to. It also feels important to hold the nuance of this—you may emigrate to find better opportunity in one sense, then be faced with racism and other forms of discrimination in another sense. And your access to ease within movement may be restricted based on who you are or where you are coming from. A work like *A(f)mrkn Dream* is in conversation with this.

Home, of course, is also food, nourishment, and connection. The smell and taste of a particular dish can dissolve borders and distance. *An Ode to Country Rice* and *An Ode to Cassava (Leaf, Root)* nod to this as well.

In terms of storytelling, I keep coming back to the gesture of reaching. In

this exhibition, I am exploring this through the reaching of painted hands and limbs, the reaching of extensions within soft sculpture and the way that they are installed in space, and the reaching of tree limbs and branches that appear within photography and video. Reaching relates to a desire to find connection across distance.

**RA:** The exhibition brings together new and past works. How do you see your earlier projects informing the ideas of hybridity, memory, and sustenance that are central to this presentation at Bemis?

**MK:** I have recently been reflecting on the notion of the iterative in relation to my practice. There are certain questions I am asking in the work over a long period of time such as: How might the language of softness be used to respond to societal hardness? This considers softness as material (for instance, with my use of yarn in sculpture and installation), softness as a sound (as in how I approach singing in soothing tones, inspired by lullabies), and softness as a way of relating to loved ones through acts like sharing conversation and meals.

In thinking about sustenance, I also have been reflecting on Nebraska's prominent role in national food production and agriculture. When buying food pre-packaged at the grocery store, for instance, it might feel a bit removed from how a plant looks as it grows, the land that sustains it, and the hands and labor that harvest it. I kept thinking about



Miatta Kawinzi, *Listening (growth)*, 2026.  
Photographic print on fabric. Courtesy of the artist.

this while I was making *An Ode to Country Rice*, each step a long process by hand: rolling out clay, extruding lines of clay, cutting small pieces meant to evoke grains of rice, drying them, individually painting each clay grain to seal them. I have been finding solace in long processes of making by hand that really invite a meditation through process. It offers a way to slow down in these times of acceleration. It has also been prompting me to think about how the hand—and time—within certain kinds of processes really can't be replaced.



Miatta Kawinzi, film still from *Lullabies for the Distance/d I: Grain Coast*, 2026. HD color video, 16mm color film transferred to video. Two-channel audio: thumb piano, original song, analog and digital synthesizer. Supported in part by Creative Capital. Courtesy of the artist.

While the exhibition is comprised of mostly new works, two of the works were existing or are reconfigured here. I wanted to include *A(f)mrka* (2021) because it offers an important historical grounding for my ongoing work reflecting on Liberian and US history. And the installation *Networks of Protection* consists of some sculptural elements that were previously exhibited in a different adaptation. Here they are reconfigured and enhanced. I see this sculptural installation as an evolving, ongoing work that is responsive to different environments, and I am excited to adapt it to the space of Bemis.

**RA:** As a Kenyan-Liberian-American, your work often engages the layered identities of the African diaspora. How do you navigate these intersecting histories in your

practice, and how have they evolved in recent years?

**MK:** I am engaged in a long-term process of exploring the African diaspora in my work. In my earliest work, I was considering the African diaspora in a more conceptual sense, then I began to understand that I needed to engage more in embodied research, to expand my understanding through travel, conversations, and embodied encounters. I am grateful for artist residency and fellowship experiences and grants that have enabled me to travel to different geographies with strong Afro-diasporic connections, spanning Africa, the Caribbean/Latin America, and Europe; such as Liberia where I have family roots, Egypt, Nigeria, South Africa, France, Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, and Mexico. I've really been

thinking about how to hold space for the nuance and specificity of different geographies within African and its diasporas, while also understanding points of connection and intersection. I'm also aware of how Black histories and African origins have been and continue to be suppressed in many places. A lot of mainstream discourse still talks about "Africa" as siloed and existing in the past, when in fact I have found Africa to be present and evolving everywhere I have traveled in the world, and it feels important to uplift this, and how this intersects with that idea of hybridity, and what is born from cross-cultural encounters over time and place.

I am very interested in the multiplicities and hybridities that intersect with diasporic identities and experiences. Sometimes it feels as though, here in the US in particular, the mainstream society seeks to distill complex identities into singular identities that can easily translate to a legible box to be checked on a form. However, so many of our identities far exceed this over-simplification. I was born and raised in the southern US to parents from Liberia and Kenya. And Liberia and Kenya are both multicultural countries with long histories of migration and cross-cultural encounters that precede colonization, and then that also have been very shaped by their particular histories of colonization. For instance, on my Liberian side, I am aware of familial heritage that spans West Africa, North America, the Caribbean, and Europe. I find it important to

hold this multiplicity, learning more about the threads I can trace, and also understanding that there are certain threads that I can only trace through other forms of knowing and remembering that come from an internal, ancestral space. Recently I have been sitting with the unresolved nature of diaspora—within my own diasporic experience, I am holding space for the gaps, the unresolved, the curiosity, the yearning, the loss, the celebration, and the connection, all at once.

**RA:** Across the exhibition, there is a strong sense of continuity—between places, materials, and generations. How do you envision your work contributing to broader conversations about resilience, adaptation, and care within the African diaspora?



Miatta Kawinzi, *Networks of Protection* (detail), 2026. Copper wire hand-wrapped in yarn. Courtesy of the artist.



Miatta Kawinzi, *Listening (lizard)*, 2026. Photographic print on fabric. Courtesy of the artist.

**MK:** My work grows out of a deep investment in finding and forging spaces of possibility and connection across place, space, and time. Diasporic experiences can be marked by displacement and loss, yet I am also curious about what grows from the gaps. For me, the idea of soothing has become a touchstone in my practice in consideration of the ways in which sociopolitical structures shape not only material realities, but also the internal landscapes and psyches of the people living within them. How might a low-sung note hold the heart when it is in need of comfort?

There have been many conversations about representation (and the limits of representation) in contemporary

art, yet there are certain kinds of representation I have not yet encountered, even as someone who regularly visits exhibitions. So for me to, for example, integrate Liberian Creole English into my work is also to affirm it as an important language that deserves to be highlighted and shared, as in the mixed-media work *Fight for your pekin* and within the video *Lullabies for the Distance/d I: Grain Coast*. For context, “pekin” means “children” and is pronounced something akin to “bee-gin.” In Liberia, there are multiple ethnic groups such as the Vai, Bassa, Kpelle, and Kissi, and this Creole English has been a way to communicate across different ethnic languages, while also incorporating elements from them. In other parts of West Africa you might hear similar words. I also integrate Black American English into this work as in previous work, again as a way of honoring the creativity and innovation that is part of it. For instance, I use the phrase “maybe some past ain’t even past yet.” To me this has more heft than phrasing it another way.

In the mixed-media works on canvas, I sew shapes of wax print fabric into the compositions, which nods to a quilting tradition in Liberia that embodies a hybridization of Southern US and West African symbols and aesthetics. The wax print fabric comes in many varieties and is widely worn throughout Liberia and other parts of the continent. *Fight for your pekin* incorporates this, and the painted letters in this piece are in a palette of red, white, and blue.



Miatta Kawinzi, film still from *Lullabies for the Distance/d I: Grain Coast*, 2026. HD color video, 16mm color film transferred to video. Two-channel audio: thumb piano, original song, analog and digital synthesizer. Supported in part by Creative Capital. Courtesy of the artist.

While these are the national colors of the US, they are also the national colors of Liberia tracing back to its colonial history.

A few years ago, someone asked me what my favorite art material was, and I said “the alphabet.” I think about the alphabet in terms of language and letters as building blocks, and also visually in terms of symbols and shapes that don’t always need a fixed meaning; they can continue to unfold, shift, accumulate, and respond over time. With this exhibition, I’ve been thinking about the different elements and materials I’m working with as building blocks that combine to uplift this idea of multiplicity as a continuous process of becoming. This relates to the experience of diasporic existence as a process rather than a fixed state. I think there

is freedom to be found in embracing mutability, and in embracing an ongoing unfolding as a way of being and relating in the navigation of a shifting world.

The full interview between Rachel Adams and Miatta Kawinzi can be found at [bemiscenter.org/interview-miatta-kawinzi](https://bemiscenter.org/interview-miatta-kawinzi).



READ  
MORE



# MOTHER TIME: Measuring ourselves within the landscape

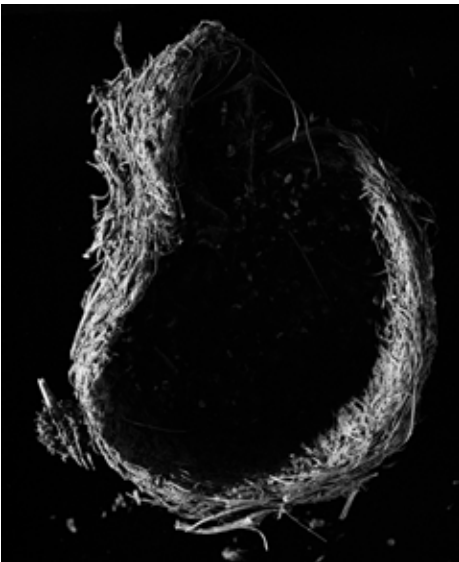
CURATED BY RACHEL ADAMS, CHIEF CURATOR + DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMS

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*MOTHER TIME: Measuring ourselves within the landscape* brings together photographers Rachel Cox and Rose Marie Cromwell, whose distinct yet overlapping practices explore the complexities of closeness—emotional, physical, and spatial. Cox turns her lens toward the tenderness and vulnerability found within familial and personal relationships, offering portraits that balance empathy with candor. Cromwell weaves together personal and political narratives, tracing the fluid boundaries between public life and private experience. Together, their works create a dialogue about existing within the varied landscapes of the United States, what it means to witness and to be witnessed, and unveiling intimacy not as a fixed state but as a shifting terrain of connection, memory, and care.

# Maternal Landscapes and the Shape of Softness

Complex histories of motherhood, of landscape, and of caretaking flow through this exhibition. Our bodies act as landscapes themselves: porous, changing, carrying with them traces of memory, labor, violence, and love. In Natalie Diaz's poem "The First Water Is the Body," she writes: "Back to the body of earth, of flesh, back to the mouth, the throat, back to the womb, back to the heart, to its blood, back to our grief, back back back."<sup>1</sup> The line collapses the distinctions between body and environment, between personal and collective histories. Both artists in this exhibition understand that to care for a body is also to care for a landscape, and vice versa.



Rachel Cox, *Untitled (the second nest I found)*, 2026. Silver gelatin print. Courtesy of the artist.

*MOTHER TIME: Measuring ourselves within the landscape*, a two-person exhibition with Rachel Cox and Rose Marie Cromwell is a delicate yet powerful representation of motherhood and feminism highlighted through lens-based media. It walks us through the tenacity and tenderness found in the variedness of reproduction, the quietness of play, in the idea of home within the landscape, and how caretaking never stops. The exhibition showcases the cyclical, intergenerational and multidimensional nature of motherhood.

Artist mothers and the act of mothering have been the subject of many exhibitions over the past decade. This focus comes from many factors, including the 2016 and 2024 elections of Donald Trump and specifically his policies regarding reproductive rights, curators who themselves are mothers and caretakers and want representation in museums and galleries, the outcome of parenting during the COVID-19 pandemic, along with many more. Representations of motherhood and family life have always been a focus of visual art, but so much of what is seen is through a male lens and male gaze. Artists such as Vincent van Gogh, Pablo Picasso, Diego Rivera, Jacob Lawrence, Duane Hansen and more have made work about mothering. And while they have every right to depict acts of motherhood and caretaking, I recently saw a post on Mother's Day

<sup>1</sup> Natalie Diaz, "The First Water Is the Body," in *Postcolonial Love Poem* (Minneapolis: Graywolf Press, 2020), 46-47.

that simply stated “Fun fact: the only people on Earth are mothers and their children.” This exhibition reshapes the conversation through the lens of feminism.

Mothering is a creative act. In fact, it is much more than the person it names; it includes the act, the supporting act, and the description. This word is often used indiscriminately and interchangeably with the word care, in a somewhat complex way. Both Cox and Cromwell complicate and expand our understanding of care by positioning the body and the landscape as deeply intertwined sites of vulnerability, labor, memory, and survival. Their photographs are deeply sensitive and poetic, moving between moments of tenderness and self-reclamation, awareness and also the complete unawareness that happens with small children. The works ask us to consider how care is embedded into everyday gestures and into the environments we move through.

Through personal memory, environmental anxiety, and motherhood, Cromwell engages with her daughter, her mother, and herself throughout the American West. The romantic notion of the desert as a site of freedom and self-enlightenment lives freely in her representations. In her images, there is reverence, but there is also liberty. By photographing three generations of her family performing within these remote landscapes, Cromwell reframes the traditionally masculine history of western



Rachel Cox, *The Seventh Nest I Found*, 2026. Silver gelatin print. Courtesy of the artist.

landscape photography through a maternal perspective. The land is not separate from the body; it is an extension of it. Her images showcase the intersection of bodies in tune with their surrounding landscape, that become feminist meditations on our uncertain yet imaginable future. The works acknowledge the past exploitation of these lands while still searching for spiritual connection and the possibility of repair.

Cox's photographs similarly position both the body and the natural world as contested terrain while referencing the cyclical nature of life. Rooted in experiences of infertility, birth, and caretaking, her photographs confront the cultural expectations placed upon women's bodies while simultaneously reclaiming agency through intimacy and self-representation. She asks

difficult questions about the value of women beyond reproduction, while also refusing to flatten reproductive experiences into singular narratives of grief or empowerment. Instead, her photographs hold contradiction. There is dismay alongside devotion, vulnerability alongside defiance, softness alongside immense strength. Through the making of images, Cox transforms the camera into both witness and collaborator, using it as a tool for self-reclamation and for repositioning conversations around reproductive rights and care.

The exhibition also understands caregiving as something deeply unstable and emotionally complex. As Lucy Ives wrote in her article “Motherload,” “How do you simultaneously represent the joy a person may feel that care can be given freely and the terror a

person can feel that care *is* given freely, the terrifying vulnerability of the need to care?”<sup>2</sup> That tension pulses throughout these works. Care can be sustaining and exhausting, grounding and frightening. It requires immense openness. To mother, to nurture, to support survival in any form is to exist in a constant state of vulnerability.

Recently, I had “Do not mistake our softness for weakness” tattooed on my arm. This phrase was the title of an 2018 exhibition by artist and mother Shasti O’Leary Soudant. As a mother of a young boy, as a curator who pours herself into supporting artists throughout their careers, and as a woman who values the importance of care and kindness above all else, I was drawn to this idea that softness is most certainly strength.

What emerges most powerfully throughout *MOTHER TIME* is not fragility, but endurance. These artists remind us that softness is not passive. It is active, deliberate, and resilient. Softness is the willingness to remain open despite grief. It is the act of continuing to care within systems that devalue care. It is holding tenderness alongside anger, joy alongside fear, exhaustion alongside hope. In these works, softness becomes a form of resistance, one capable of reshaping how we understand motherhood, feminism, the body, and the landscapes we inhabit.

–Rachel Adams  
Chief Curator + Director of Programs



Rose Marie Cromwell, *The Tree*, 2025. Archival inkjet print. Courtesy of the artist.

<sup>2</sup> Lucy Ives, “Motherload,” *Art in America* (Winter 2025): 83.

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

## **Miatta Kawinzi:** **An Alphabet of Unfolding**

### CURATOR

Rachel Adams, Chief Curator +  
Director of Programs

## **MOTHER TIME:** **Measuring ourselves** **within the landscape**

### CURATOR

Rachel Adams, Chief Curator +  
Director of Programs

### ARTISTS

Rachel Cox + Rose Marie Cromwell

## **Exhibitions** **Acknowledgments**

### EXHIBITIONS MANAGER

Jillian Schley

### INSTALLATION TECHNICIANS

Matt Bauer + Brad Marr

### EXPERIENCE ASSOCIATES

Hana Brock + Parker Herout

### TRANSLATION

Roxana Corral

EXHIBITIONS ARE GENEROUSLY  
SUPPORTED, IN PART, BY:



MATERIALS FOR *MOTHER TIME*  
GENEROUSLY PROVIDED BY:



**ROCKY'S**  
**STONE+**  
**DESIGN**

# Public Programs

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Friday CELEBRATION

## 5 Opening Reception

June  
7–9 PM

This festive evening—with exhibiting artists in attendance—includes complimentary drinks, light bites, and music mix by Kobrakyle.

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Saturday TOUR

## 6 Exhibiting Artists Miatta Kawinzi, Rachel Cox, and Rose Marie Cromwell

June  
3 PM

Kawinzi will reflect on her exploration of intimacy, memory, and the African diaspora through layered photographic and sculptural forms, while Cox and Cromwell will discuss their nuanced portraits that foreground tenderness, vulnerability, and the quiet complexities of close relationships.

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Thursday TOUR

## 11 Curator-Led

June  
7 PM

An in-depth look at the themes, artists, and ideas that shape the current exhibitions.

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Thursday RESIDENCY

## 18 Meet + Eat

June  
6–8 PM

Meet our current artists-in-residence, learn about their practices and aspirations, and enjoy pizza and drinks on us (while supplies last!)

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Saturday TOUR

## 27 Exhibitions Highlights

June  
3 PM

A focused thirty-minute tour through key works in the current exhibitions.

Saturday TALK

## 11 OMA ARTalks

July  
3 PM

Explore the exhibitions from the perspective of Omaha-based artists, creatives, and community leaders. Featuring Beaufield Berry, Sara Gentzler of Flatwater Free Press, and Leah Wambui Keinama of the Nebraska Journalism Trust.

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Saturday RESIDENCY + MORE

## 18 Open House / Open Studios

July  
1–5 PM

Discover Bemis's upper floors, where you can visit with artists-in-residence to see their studios and view their works in progress. Plus: An all-ages, hands-on photo collage activity led by Omaha artist Amelia Broussard; guided tours of the exhibitions at 1:30 and 3 PM; and at 4 PM, an experimental music performance by artists Stacey Barelos and Jay Kreimer.

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Saturday TOUR

## 8 Exhibitions Highlights

August  
11 AM  
+ 2 PM

A focused thirty-minute tour through key works in the current exhibitions.

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Thursday TALK

## 13 In Conversation: Miatta Kawinzi with Chrislyn Laurore\*

August  
7 PM

Miatta Kawinzi and Haitian-American anthropologist Chrislyn Laurore will focus on diasporic identity, material memory, and how storytelling can function as an embodied archive.

Thursday TOUR

**20**

August  
7 PM

**Curator-Led**

An in-depth look at the themes, artists, and ideas that shape the current exhibitions.

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Saturday TOUR

**29**

August  
2 PM

**Exhibitions Highlights**

A focused thirty-minute tour through key works in the current exhibitions.

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Saturday TALK

**29**

August  
3 PM

**Panel Discussion:  
Rachel Cox, Rose Marie  
Cromwell, and Michelle  
Millar Fisher\***

Panelists will explore photography's role in constructing personal and political memory, focusing on motherhood in considering how images become repositories for emotion, trauma, and care across time.

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Thursday TALK

**10**

September  
7 PM

**Lecture with Yasmina  
Price, Yale University\***

Yasmina Price, PhD, will situate both of Bemis's exhibitions within contemporary critical discourse, addressing how artists engage memory as both a site of rupture and possibility.

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\*FUNDING FOR THESE PROGRAMS  
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Admission to all programs is free, thanks to the generosity of our supporters.

# Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts

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## Gallery Hours

Wednesday	11 AM–5 PM
Thursday	11 AM–9 PM
Friday	11 AM–5 PM
Saturday	11 AM–5 PM
Sunday	11 AM–5 PM

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## Admission

Thanks to the generous support of individual donors and foundation, government, and corporate partners, Bemis Center offers free admission to all of its exhibitions and public programs.

## Photo Policy

Visitors are welcome to take photographs without flash. Please refrain from photographing other visitors without their permission. Tag us on Instagram @bemiscenter or #bemiscenter or on Facebook @Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts.

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