



# Marie Amegah reflects: *Meredith*

Marie Amegah’s paintings capture the rhythms of body language. The way a subject’s eyes relax in the safety of a familiar embrace. How a shoulder dips while shifting positions in a chair. The way someone’s upright posture can confirm either confidence or defiance. Her contemporary portraits shimmer with sequins, color, and beads, adding an unexpected electricity to these quiet, intimate moments.

In the BMA’s Cone Wing, Simone Leigh’s 2020 sculpture *Meredith* also underscores the power of subtle gestures, while conversing with Edgar Degas’ famous statue *Little Dancer, Aged Fourteen*. *Meredith* adopts the same stance as her predecessor—hands clasped behind her back, face forward,

chin high. With *Meredith*, a new history is told in a gallery of modern art and her presence is felt immediately. She towers in the room, commanding space. Her radiant figure is crafted from glazed stoneware over metal and she wears a skirt made of raffia, a reference to the conical thatched roof houses built by Batammariba architects in northern Togo and Benin.

This unexpected play between placement, color, and texture captivated the Baltimore-based Amegah, who was born in Togo and raised in Prince George’s County, Maryland. “The contrast between the skin tone and the lower half of the sculpture is really jarring,” she said. “That mimics the contrast of *Meredith* even being in that room [in the Cone Wing], in that

environment, which sits in contrast to everything else on the walls.”

Leigh’s sculpture honors collaborator Aimee Meredith Cox and their partnered efforts to introduce young Black girls to the Afro-diasporic choreography of dance legend Katherine Dunham. For Amegah, a sacred space exists in the physical body and its connection to others. She sees that reflected in *Meredith*, a work that embodies various sacred spaces created to support the artistic expression of Black women and girls. Amegah’s current paintings combine illustration and collage accented with glitter, fabric, and beadwork to affirm the tenderness shared between Black queer people.

“I’m trying to depict solace and how people spend time



together, how we show care, how we hold each other, and how to be at ease in one’s body,” she said. “I’m interested in how figures interact on the picture plane and how I can use body language to drive home the themes of care and love.”

**Top:** Installation view of Simone Leigh’s *Meredith* (2020) in the Cone Wing. From the collection of Michael Sherman and Carrie Tivador, Los Angeles, on extended loan to the Baltimore Museum of Art. © Simone Leigh. **Above:** Marie Amegah, 2023. Photo by Anne-Sophie Amegah