

LIVING  
ARTS

## COMMUNAL POWER

As co-directors of the Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit (MOCAD), Jova Lynne and Marie Madison-Patton strive to curate an innovative institution that honors diversity in all its forms.

By Nell Rainer

Mike Kelley, "Mobile Homestead" exterior view (2013)

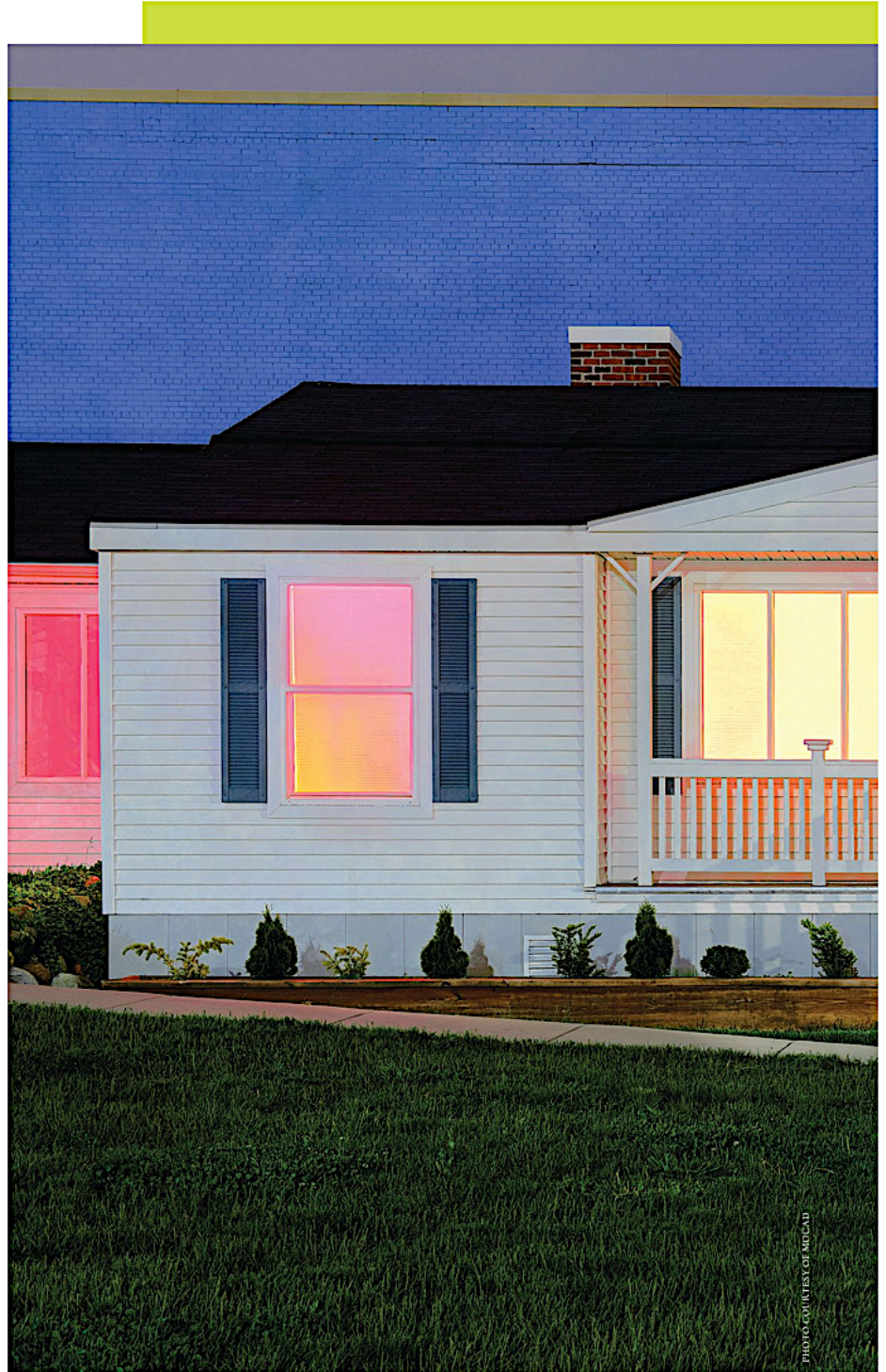
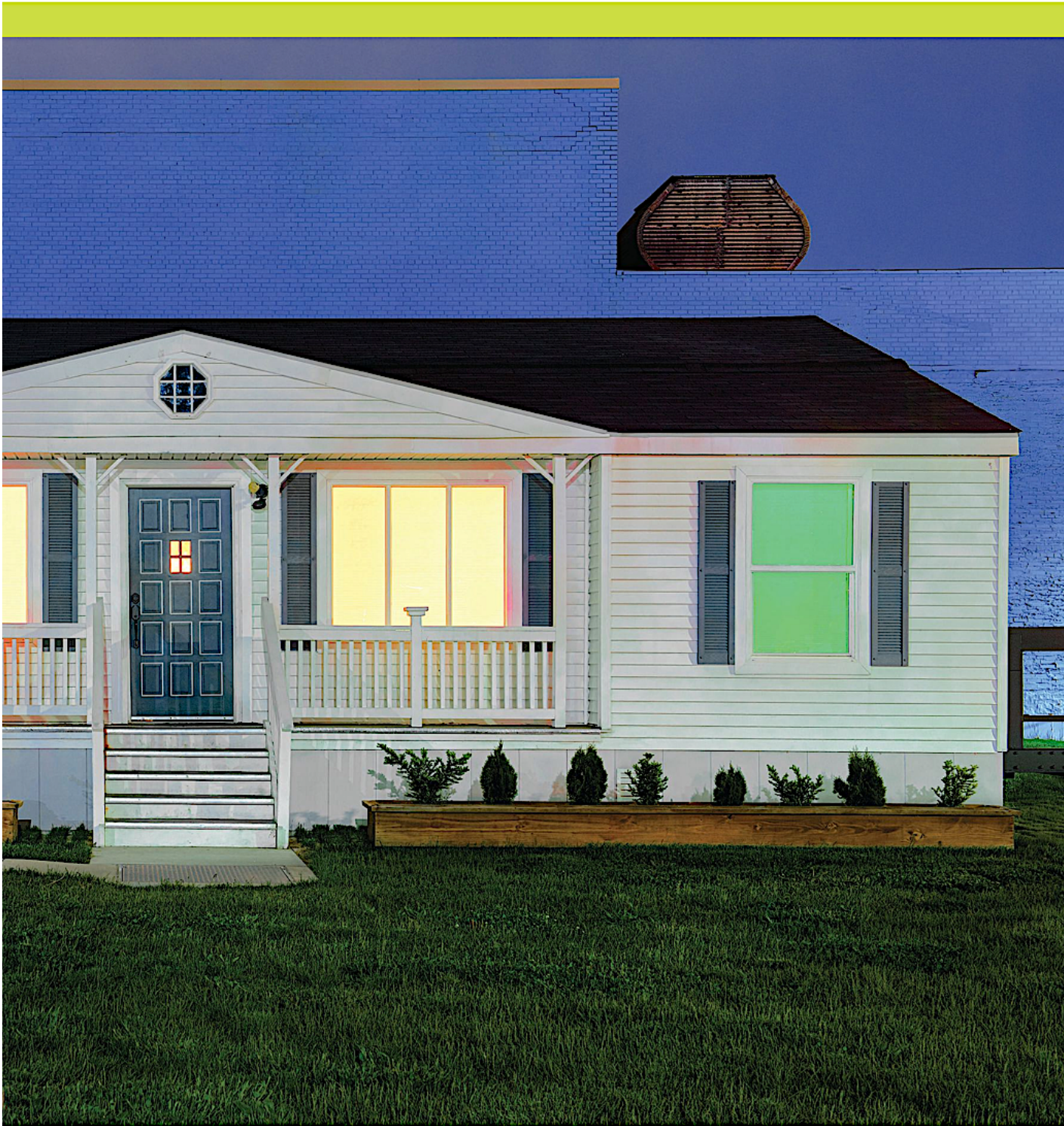


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**T**he Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit (@mocadetroit) has entered a new frontier of leadership. Jova Lynne, inaugural artistic director, and Marie Madison-Patton, COO, have been co-directors since 2023. In the wake of COVID-19, the Black Lives Matter movement and multiple waves of cultural upheaval, Lynne and Madison-Patton's co-directorship has addressed questions of equity, sustainability and accessibility. While working on opposite sides of the house, this collaborative management model allows both women to understand all aspects of the museum deeply. They are making space for conversations that bolster the mission and longevity of the organization.

MOCAD is one of a few art museums whose leadership reflects the city's demographics. Yet, the co-directors have had to go above and beyond to prove they deserve a voice, a task that has constantly challenged Black women in the arts. In Detroit and worldwide, Lynne and Madison-Patton continue to fight to open doors for Black women and all minorities in arts leadership.

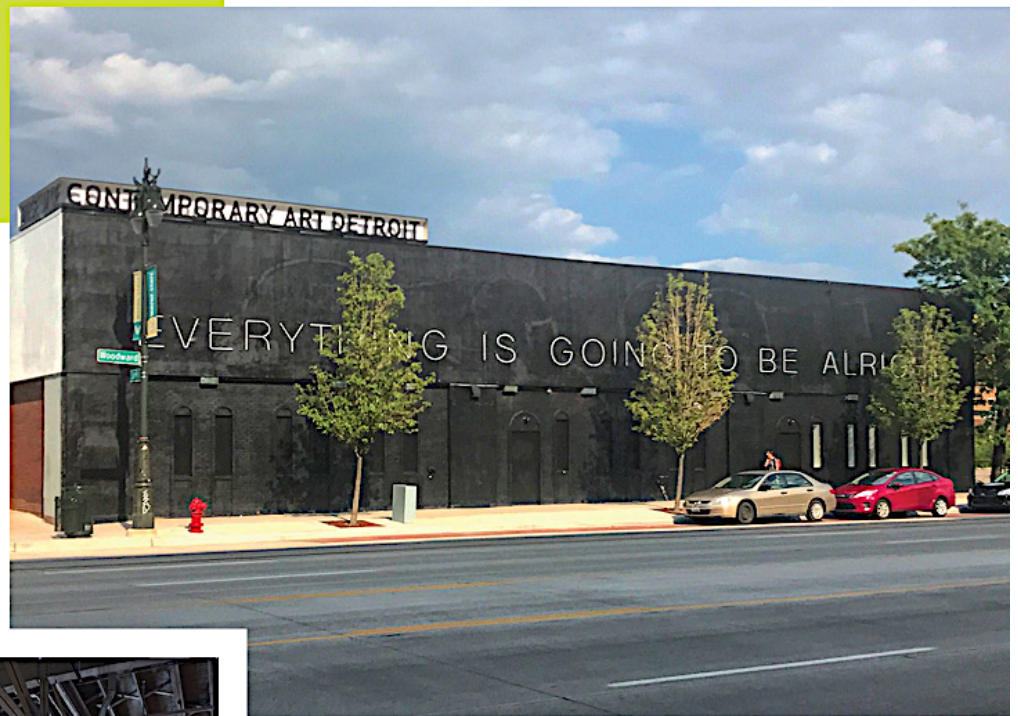
The diversity of Detroit, as well as the strong sense of artist culture, feeds into the mission of MOCAD and the goals of this co-directorship. "The Detroit community is so intertwined with a Black culture of creativity, and what better way to enhance those voices than to have people who look like them in these roles," says Madison-Patton. Taking charge of the edgy museum has been a welcome



Jova Lynne and Marie Madison-Patton, co-directors of MOCAD

PHOTO BY BREANNA WHITE/COURTESY MOCAD

From top: Exterior view of MOCAD in 2017; Sanford Biggers, "Subjective Cosmology" installation view (2017).



PHOTOS COURTESY OF MOCAD

challenge for these women, who want to make MOCAD an accessible resource that champions the city. "At the crux of MOCAD, we center art as a practice for learning, a practice for growing as human beings," says Lynne.

The institution's architectural landscape indicates MOCAD'S originality, as the building is a restored warehouse in the heart of Detroit. MOCAD has formed a unique sense of community and is working to bridge the educational disparities gap in the city. Lynne and Madison-Patton are creating a space that invites all people to engage with the artwork

regardless of their level of artistic knowledge. Not only this, but MOCAD is a multifunctional museum with a full-service bar, museum store and wide array of community programs.

"Contemporary art speaks to the present," Lynne shares, and MOCAD's artistic direction reflects this truth. MOCAD incorporates creatives of all kinds, from writers to musicians and even DJs, expanding on the traditional expectations of museum exhibitions. Furthermore, the co-directors uplift artists in all stages of their professional careers, creating diversity not just in race but in all walks of life. ■