

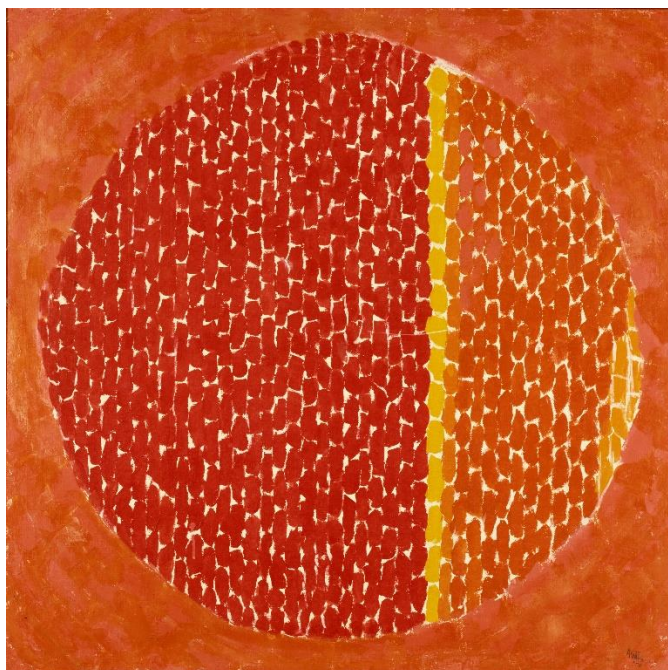


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*Images available upon request.*

***Composing Color: Paintings by Alma Thomas from the Smithsonian American Art Museum***  
**Opens June 27 at Newfields**

*Traveling exhibition displays the breathtaking abstract work from a trailblazing artist*



**INDIANAPOLIS**, June 12, 2025 — Traveling from the Smithsonian American Art Museum, an exhibition of vibrant color, independent style and historical significance is coming to the Indianapolis Museum of Art at Newfields on June 27.

[\*Composing Color: Paintings by Alma Thomas from the Smithsonian American Art Museum\*](#) features 19 works created during Thomas' later, yet most prolific portion of her extensive and impactful career.

"Alma Thomas' creativity knew no bounds – in technique or subject. Her ability to innovate and capture the essence of what is here with us on Earth and what lies beyond in space was ahead of her time," stated Belinda Tate, the Melvin & Bren Simon Director of the Indianapolis Museum of Art. "Thomas was impassioned by creating beauty, and she did so with striking color. We are so pleased to bring this stunning work from such a socially impactful artist to our galleries.

A Washington D.C. resident from her teenage years until her last, Thomas was an integral part of the city's art community. After retiring from a 30-year tenure as an art teacher in D.C. public schools, Thomas turned her focus to her craft full-time. During this period, she developed her unique and iconic style of painting. What may appear simplistic in its execution is based on her extensive formal training as a painter with deep knowledge of color theory. Her deployment of methodical brushstrokes and selective color create compositions that evoke all senses.

In 1972, at age 80, Thomas became the first woman to present a solo exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York — an unprecedented achievement for an African American woman at the time that brought worldwide recognition to her work.

Born in 1891 in Columbus, Georgia, Thomas experienced immense social and technological change throughout her life. Avoidant of being labeled as a creative member of individual artistic groups, nor interested in being a spokesperson for

social movements, Thomas chose instead to express herself and her beliefs through her painting. Drawing inspiration from music, nature and the cosmos, Thomas' overt desire to find the beauty in the world around her remained her creative force, even as poor health began to limit her ability to paint large canvases. *Composing Color* explores these sources of inspiration so that guests are able to see the world through Alma Thomas' eyes and appreciate the beauty all around them.

"Alma Thomas was a sharp observer of the world around her and utilized her brilliant technique to transform her experiences into compositions that vibrate with life. Her dedication to the cultivation of beauty grew beyond the canvas and into her well-tended backyard garden, a source of much of her inspiration. Hosting an exhibition of her work here at Newfields, an institution rooted in the convergence of art and nature, celebrates these foundational sources of her inspiration," said Robin Cooper, Manager of Curatorial Affairs at Newfields.

Newfields will celebrate the opening of *Composing Color* along with other new exhibitions at [Artful Party: Summer](#) on Friday, June 27 from 8-10 p.m. Dress to impress in your summer best and enjoy an evening of music, mingling and curated experiences. Dance to sets by local DJs, sip on seasonal cocktails inspired by each exhibition and indulge in artfully paired hors d'oeuvres.

The Smithsonian American Art Museum has the largest public collection of works by Alma Thomas in the world. Thomas' art first entered SAAM's collection in 1970. The museum acquired more than a dozen works during the artist's lifetime, and thirteen that were bequeathed to the museum by Thomas after her death. *Composing Color: Paintings by Alma Thomas* draws on these extensive holdings to offer an intimate view of Thomas's evolving practice during her most prolific period, 1959 to 1978.

*Composing Color: Paintings by Alma Thomas from the Smithsonian American Art Museum* is organized by the Smithsonian American Art Museum. Generous support has been provided by the Helen Frankenthaler Foundation, Chris G. Harris, the Wolf Kahn Foundation and Susan Talley.

Conceived of by Melissa Ho, Curator of Twentieth Century Art at the Smithsonian American Art Museum, this presentation at Newfields was overseen by IMA Manager of Curatorial Affairs Robin Cooper. The exhibition will be in the June M. McCormack Forefront Galleries on floor 2 of the Indianapolis Museum of Art until its closing on Sept. 28, 2025.

**Image Credit:** Alma Thomas (American, 1891–1978), *Snoopy Sees Earth Wrapped in Sunset*, 1970, acrylic on canvas, 47-7/8 x 47-7/8 in. Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of the artist, 1978.40.4 © 2025 Estate of Alma Thomas (Courtesy of the Hart Family) / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

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### **About Newfields:**

Newfields offers dynamic experiences with art and nature for guests of all ages. The 152-acre cultural campus features art galleries, lush gardens, a historic home, performance spaces, a nature preserve and sculpture park. From inspiring exhibitions in the IMA Galleries, to concerts in The Tobias Theater, to a stroll through The Garden with a glass of something cold, guests are invited to interact with art and nature in exciting new ways. Newfields is home to the Indianapolis Museum of Art, among the ten largest and ten oldest general art museums in the nation; the Lilly House, a National Historic Landmark; The Garden, featuring 40 acres of contemporary and historic gardens, a working greenhouse and an orchard; and The Virginia B. Fairbanks Art & Nature Park, one of the largest art and nature parks in the country. The Newfields campus extends outside of Indianapolis with Miller House and Garden in Columbus, Ind. — one of the nation's most highly regarded examples of mid-century Modernist architecture. For more information, visit [DiscoverNewfields.org](#).

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