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Alum and artist Ayo Scott ('03) honors heritage & cultural bearers in Xavier gallery exhibit, invites community to celebration & reception

New Orleans, La – Before his name was included among the great artists of New Orleans, Ayo Scott ('03) was on a very different path- he began his academic career at Xavier University of Louisiana (XULA) as a biology pre-med major then explored different majors and passions before finding his gifts in art and graphic design. Graduating from Xavier in 2003, he continues to honor his heritage and the bearers of a rich culture through his exhibition “Holding On: Reaching Forward, Selected Works by Ayo Scott” at his alma mater, on display until December 3, 2022.

On Thursday, December 1, all are invited to join for a conversation with Scott and closing reception at 5:30 p.m. in the Xavier University Library Civic Center on the first floor. Scott, Xavier Social Justice and Arts Coordinator Sarah Singh, and Xavier University Art Gallery Director Anne Collins Smith will speak about the relationship between art, legacy and social justice.

“[Because I was] influenced heavily by the disconnecting change that climate, and even technology, evokes upon places and people, my work has also evolved from once creating as a means of release to now creating as a means of holding on to and preserving, especially family and culture,” **stated Scott**. “[My work] colorfully celebrates those unsung heroes as culture warriors and defenders of the undying spirit of the city.”

“Holding On: Reaching Forward, Selected Works by Ayo Scott” is co-curated by Scott, Collins, and Xavier University Collections Manager Daniele S. Gair. Scott’s exhibition will be the last exhibition on view at the Art Gallery before the University’s historic Administration Building undergoes renovation.

Xavier’s Art Collections and Gallery seek to increase the knowledge and understanding of a diverse, global and contemporary culture through the micro-lens of the vast visual histories and cosmologies of the descendant communities of Louisiana. Using the power of art to change communities, the XULA Art Collections and Gallery organizes and produces exhibitions, publications, educational materials, conferences, lectures, workshops and other public programs. In their work, there is a particular emphasis on the study, presentation, preservation

and promotion of art produced by Louisiana-based artists and artists of African descent throughout the world.

As an artist with a strong focus on heritage and social justice, Scott's work advances the mission of both the XULA Art Collections and Gallery and Xavier University's mission to promote a more just and humane society.

A testimony to the artist's heritage and his commitment to passing it on, "Holding On: Reaching Forward, Selected Works by Ayo Scott" features works that the artist has created since 2020. It includes the series "Artifacts of an AfroFuture Continuum, Crowned" and a series of portraits that honor artists and instructors that have shaped Scott's practice. The works examine the importance of community, cultural bearers, and the pivotal role of women and mothers in society.

"Scott's work is a conversation between past, present and future: the past upon whose shoulders we stand, our present reality and the future that we imagine for ourselves and those who follow us," **said Gair.**

A signature work in the exhibition is the self-portrait "Kente Cola." In this painting, the artist is wrapped in kente cloth, a gift of Bishop Moses Anderson. This exhibition represents a full circle moment for the artist because Bishop Anderson christened Scott in the former chapel that now operates as the art gallery. "Kente Cloth" provides a lens through which to experience the exhibition. Special to the display is "Black Butterfly" by Scott's late father, famed New Orleans artist and former Xavier University of Louisiana art professor John T. Scott ('62). Also on display are a handcrafted hobby horse and scooter also created by the elder Scott.

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About Xavier University of Louisiana

Xavier University of Louisiana, America's only historically Black and Catholic University, is ranked among the top three HBCUs (historically Black colleges and universities) in the nation. Recognized as a national leader in STEM and health sciences, Xavier produces more African American students who graduate from medical schools each year than any other university in the United States. Additionally, Xavier's College of Pharmacy is also among the top producers of African American pharmacists in the country.

Established in 1925, by Saint Katharine Drexel and the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament as a place for African American and Native Americans to receive quality education, Xavier has since expanded its programs in art, business, education, biological sciences, chemistry, pharmacy and political science. More recent additions in robotics, bioinformatics, engineering, data science, neuroscience and genetics, in addition to new STEM-based master's programs, have provided Xavier students (2815 undergraduates and 787 graduates) an unbeatable combination of traditional classroom study, hands-on research, service-learning opportunities and life experiences. Xavier students collaborate with world-renowned faculty, who are experts in their fields, to produce award-winning research and notable work. The winning Xavier formula is to provide students with a well-balanced curriculum and an environment that nurtures their intellect

and feeds their souls, thereby facilitating a more just and humane society for all. For more information about Xavier University of Louisiana, visit us online at www.xula.edu or contact Regi Reyes at (504) 520-5240 or rreyes@xula.edu.

About the artist Ayo Scott

Born and raised in and by New Orleans, multimedia artist and painter Ayo Scott is a second-generation visual voice of preservation of a city, its people, and the culture that made him. Son of MacArthur fellow and former Xavier art professor John T. Scott, Ayo spent a large part of his childhood at Xavier University of Louisiana, where he eventually studied art with a focus in graphic design and later continued his graduate studies at The Institute of Design in Chicago. After Hurricane Katrina, he started NOYO Designs Inc., a design company and clothing line, merging his own identity with that of his hometown. Over the years, Ayo's work has shifted from commercial graphic design to creating fine art and incorporating elements of his digital work into the process.