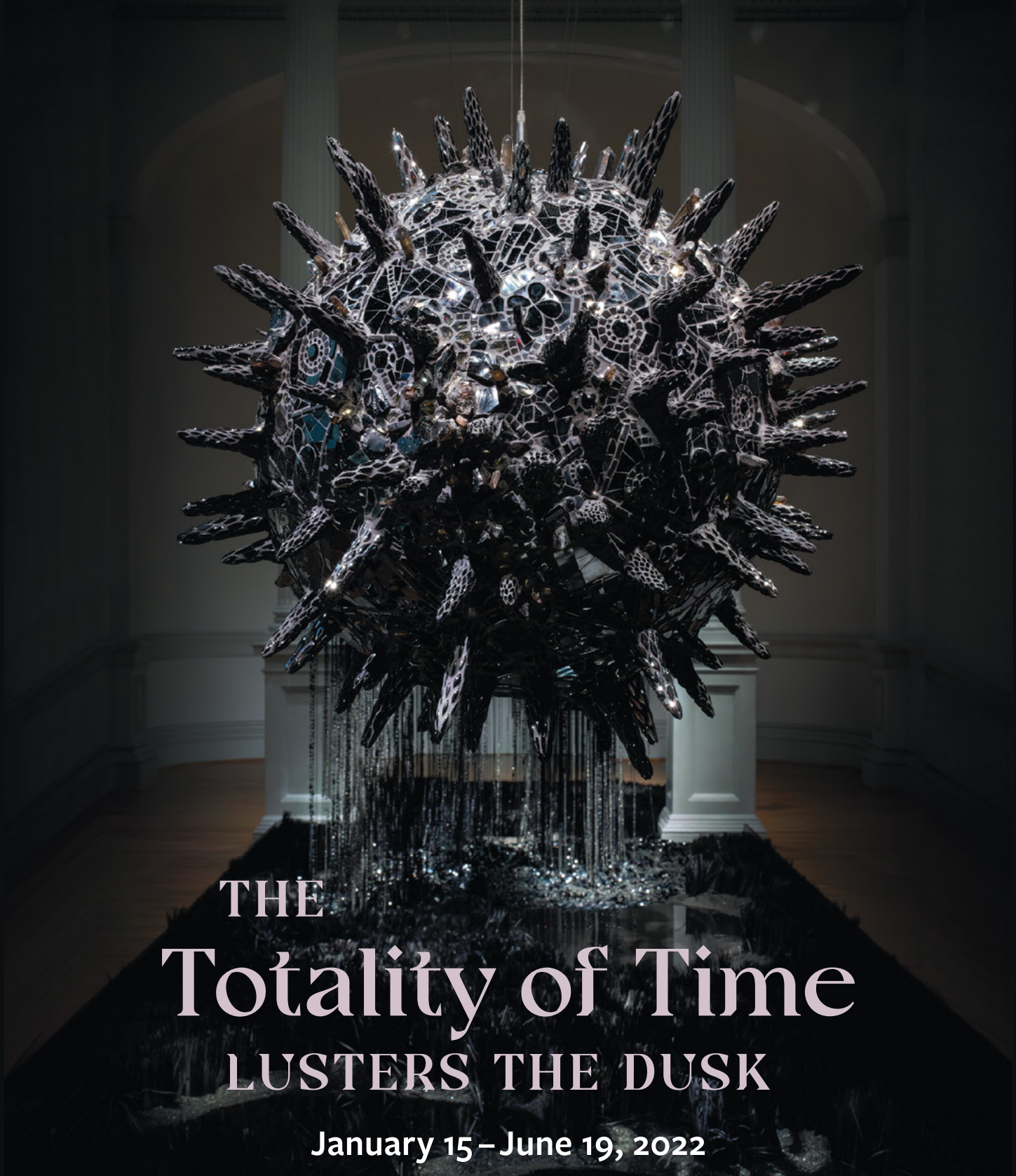
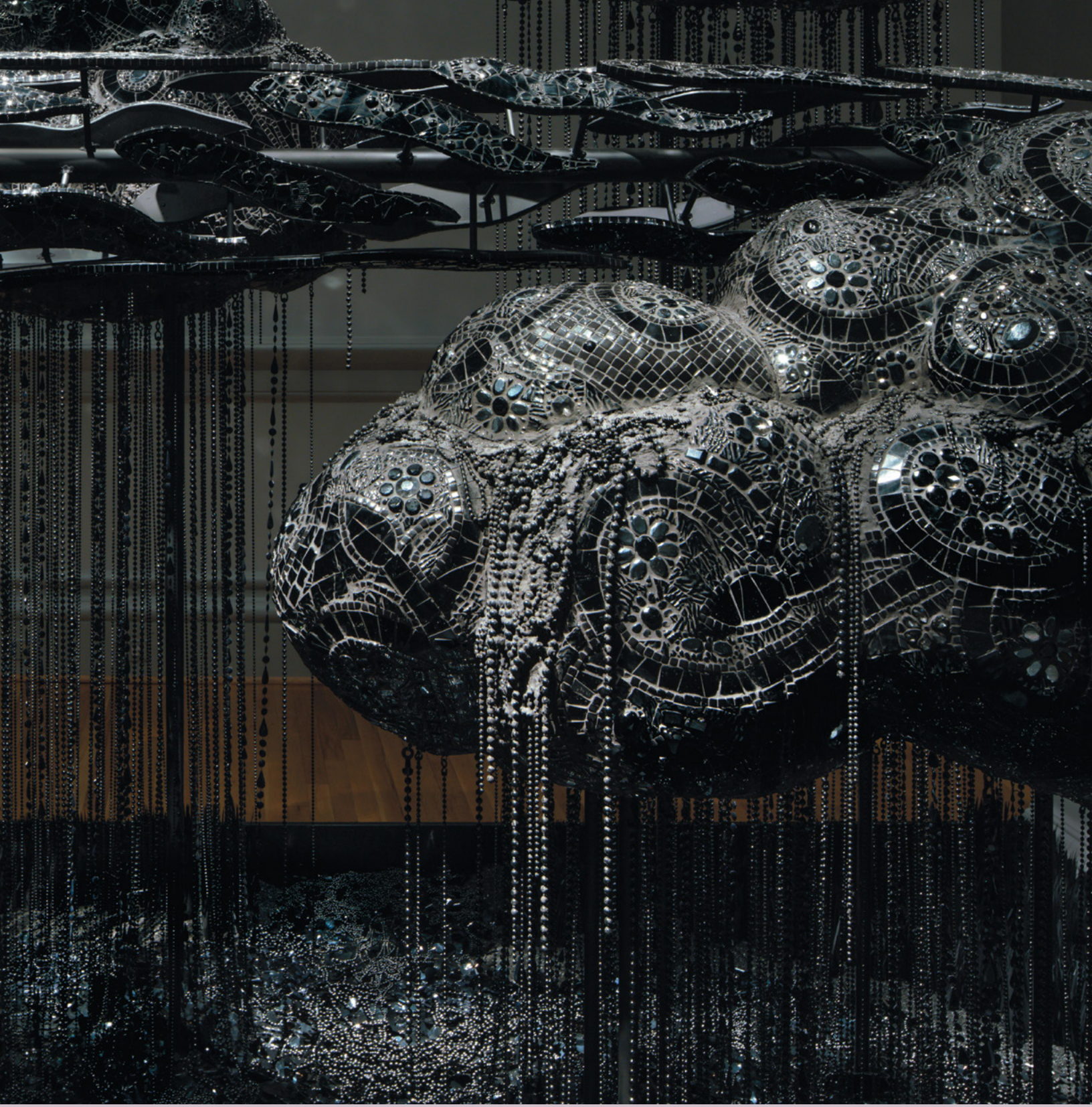


# THE Totality of Time LUSTERS THE DUSK

**January 15 – June 19, 2022**

**Lauren Fensterstock's** room-size installation invites visitors to come face to face with a dark and ominous cosmic landscape. A black comet—encrusted with a dazzling mosaic of glass, crystals, and stones, including onyx and hematite—hovers at eye level and bursts through a collection of dark clouds. Rain falls in streams of glass and crystal beads, pooling on the ground into puddles of reflective black Plexiglas and surrounded by an earthy black landscape dotted with paper plant forms.



Lauren Fensterstock reflects on how human beings have manipulated the natural world to express their cultures, views, and values. This work explores how weather and celestial activity have been used as metaphors, an especially potent idea in our current age of extreme weather and social upheaval. Although this direction in her work came before COVID-19, the foreboding and destabilizing beauty of Fensterstock's work takes on additional meaning amidst the devastating global pandemic.

# Q&A WITH THE ARTIST

**Chrysler Museum of Art:** Why did you choose to use an all-black color palette?
**Lauren Fensterstock:** It sounds dramatic, but I love darkness. Black has a quiet power that draws you in. It forces your eyes to adjust to its limited light, and once your eyes have adapted, you become aware of things that were previously hidden.

**CMA:** What are the inspirations for this particular work, especially the image of the comet?
**LF:** I was inspired by a sixteenth-century German manuscript, *Das Wunderzeichenbuch* (The Book of Miracles). It is full of incredible imagery: burning logs falling from the sky, rains of blood, glorious rainbows, and numerous comets. Each picture has a caption that describes the event and, at times, draws correlations between the event and human activity. The authors have projected portentous narratives onto each weather event, from horrible omens to the causes of famines and political upheaval. Humans are constantly looking for narratives. We tell ourselves stories to make sense of our experience.

**CMA:** Why did you choose to create this sculpture using the medium of mosaic?
**LF:** There is something magical about taking isolated bits and pieces and uniting them into a holistic new whole. Because the work includes a variety of materials—gemstones, glass, natural crystals—I am bringing together fragments from different origins. It's like making an introduction, where sometimes things connect and sometimes they don't, and having to find the right pairing. When it clicks, it is like magic and I end up with something greater than its parts. I see mosaic as a metaphor for individuals coming together in an interconnected reality.

**CMA:** What is the significance or meaning of the artwork's title, *The Totality of Time Lusters the Dusk?*
**LF:** We tend to think in terms of human lifespans or generations. I believe the present is much more expansive. Our daily lives are interwoven with forces set in motion millennia past, while our current actions will create the archeology of the future. I wanted the title and the artwork to have a sense of now and forever intertwined.

Thinking about this massive scope of time can make a human life seem insignificant, but like a tiny tile of mosaic, I see each life as an inspiring part of a larger and glitteringly beautiful reality. The lustering of the dusk is perhaps an apocalyptic gesture but one filled with awe. I imagine a force beyond us, beyond time, that will bring beauty in even the most catastrophic of circumstances.

## ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Lauren Fensterstock received her Bachelor of Fine Arts from Parsons School of Design in 1997 and her Master of Fine Arts from SUNY-New Paltz in 2000. She has taught in various academic settings, including the Rhode Island School of Design's graduate Jewelry + Metalsmithing department, the Lamar Dodd School of Art, and Maine College of Art. Her work has been included in numerous group and solo shows. Most recently, she was one of four artists selected for the Renwick Invitational at the Smithsonian American Art Museum, a prestigious biennial series that aims to introduce the work of exceptional artists who are established in their respective craft fields yet are worthy of greater recognition.

## PROGRAMMING

### Artist Talk with Lauren Fensterstock

**Sunday, May 1, 2022 • 3 p.m. • Kaufman Theater • Free**

Learn about Fensterstock's techniques and multifaceted inspiration, which ranges from climate change and scrying to early literary sources.

### Chrysler Book Club: Oryx and Crake

**Sunday, May 8, 2022 • 3 p.m. • Zoom • Free**

Margaret Atwood is a master of dystopian visions that feel plausible and not too distant. *Oryx and Crake* is the first book of the MaddAddam Trilogy that explores a world where we are invited to navigate an urban landscape transformed into an almost unrecognizable wilderness in the aftermath of a plague. During this virtual discussion, we will find points of connection between this science fiction novel and Fensterstock's apocalyptic vision that transcends heavenly and earthly realms.

For more information, visit chrysler.org.

ARTWORK: **Lauren Fensterstock** (American, b. 1975), ***The Totality of Time Lusters the Dusk,*** 2020, Glass, Swarovski crystal, quartz, obsidian, onyx, hematite, paper, Plexiglas, wood, cement, lath, and mixed media; Commissioned by The Renwick Galleries of the Smithsonian American Art Museum for the 2020 Renwick Invitational, on loan from Claire Oliver Gallery, NY and the artist.; PHOTOGRAPHY: All photographs by Albert Ting or Ron Blunt, courtesy of The Renwick Galleries of the Smithsonian American Art Museum; ILLUSTRATION: Unknown author, active near Augsburg, Germany. ***Augsburger Wunderzeichenbuch,*** ca. 1552, gouache and watercolor. Folio 28: "In 1007 a wondrous comet appeared. It gave off fire and flames in every direction. It was seen in Germany and Welschland and it fell onto the earth."

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