FULLER CRAFT MUSEUM ANNOUNCES EXHIBITION -
BEAU MCCALL: BUTTONS ON!
March 30, 2024 - February 2, 2025
The first-ever retrospective for creative artist Beau McCall, aka “The Button Man”

Beau McCall, World Spinnin’ on a 45 (B-Side), 2023. Photo: Will Howcroft.

(Brockton, Mass.)
High-resolution images are available here.
Current Museum Hours: Tuesday – Sunday, 10:00 am-5:00 pm.
Please check the website for updates to our hours of admission.

Fuller Craft Museum is thrilled to announce the retrospective exhibition Beau McCall: Buttons On! scheduled to debut on March 30, 2024. Buttons On! showcases wearable and visual art from McCall’s nearly forty-year career, the debut of several new works, and select archival material. Curated by Peter “Souleo” Wright, the exhibition is organized into several themes exploring “The Button Man’s” mastery of the button. McCall hand-sews the everyday fastener onto mostly upcycled fabrics, materials, and objects to comment on topics related to pop culture and social justice.

“As a contemporary craft museum, Fuller Craft explores all facets of skilled making—from the traditional materials of ceramic, metal, fiber, wood, and glass to those that lie beyond these categorizations, such as the button,” said Beth McLaughlin, Artistic Director and Chief Curator, Fuller Craft Museum. “With passion, care, and ingenuity, Beau has spent four decades composing artwork using all manner of buttons, elevating them beyond simple sewing notions to emotionally charged expressions. A career retrospective is long overdue for this extraordinary artist, and Fuller Craft Museum is honored to present Beau McCall: Buttons On! to the public.”
The exhibition is segmented into four themes.

**Buttons on the Body** explores nearly forty years of button-embellished wearable art created by McCall. This section includes a button-inspired plethora of jackets, vests, yokes, shorts, aprons, sneakers, jewelry, and durags.

**Buttons on the Mind** features over ten years of visual art created by McCall using buttons as the primary medium. These works demonstrate how McCall has elevated the button from the practical to the conceptual through pieces such as a 450-pound, button-covered cast iron bathtub that suggests a spiritual and ritualistic sanctuary, a large-scale 45-RPM record adapter snap-in insert inspired by The Staple Singers recording of “We The People,” and an installation of over 100 jars of buttons featuring oral history recordings by button collectors.

**Buttons on the Soul** is a collection of archival materials documenting McCall’s career and evolution. Included are never-before-seen personal photographs, rare press clippings, his sewing supplies and a replica of the jar of buttons he discovered at the age of 19.

**Buttons Off** showcases select items from McCall's forays into wearable and visual art that do not feature clothing buttons, thereby extending his practice into other areas that spotlight his versatility and boundless creativity.

“Buttons are universal and have been used to express differences and similarities in class, political views, and cultural norms,” McCall explains. “I use buttons to create wearable and fine art that provokes deep consideration and reflection. Within my creations, I want people to both engage with the topics of race, class, LGBTQ+ identity and also find joy in the witty and whimsical pieces. Hopefully, viewers are inspired as they consider how one element, in this case, a button, can collectively make a powerful statement.”

The Museum will host an opening reception for *Beau McCall: Buttons On!* on Saturday, March 30, 2024, from 3:00 to 6:00 PM ET. The event, free with admission, will include a public conversation with Beau McCall, the exhibition’s guest curator, Souleo, and Beth McLaughlin, Fuller Craft Museum’s Artistic Director and Chief Curator. McCall will discuss his creative practice, the significance of buttons within his work and the exhibition’s pop culture and social justice themes.

The exhibition is accompanied by a catalog featuring over 100 full-color images and essays by James Claiborne, Senior Vice President of Exhibitions and Programs, Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History (Detroit, MI); Barbara Paris Gifford, Senior Curator of the Museum of Arts and Design (New York, NY); and Petra Slinkard, Director of Curatorial Affairs, The Nancy B. Putnam Curator of Fashion and Textiles, Peabody Essex Museum (Salem, MA). Plus, acclaimed scholars reflect on their favorite pieces with brief commentaries. And, in an intimate and candid interview with Kara Olidge, Associate Director, Collections and
Discovery, Getty Research Institute, McCall tells his story in his own words. The catalog will be available for purchase at Fuller Craft Museum.

Following its debut at Fuller Craft Museum, *Beau McCall: Buttons On!* will travel to the Museum of Craft and Design (San Francisco, CA) from May 10, 2025, through September 14, 2025; the Mattatuck Museum (Waterbury, CT) from October 12, 2025, through January 4, 2026; and the African American Museum in Philadelphia (Philadelphia, PA) from February 8, 2026, through May 23, 2026.

For more information about *Beau McCall: Buttons On!* and related programming, please visit fullercraft.org

ABOUT BEAU MCCALL
Proclaimed by *American Craft magazine* as “The Button Man,” McCall began his career in New York City’s Harlem neighborhood after arriving from his native Philadelphia with nothing more than two hundred dollars, a duffel bag, and a few buttons in his pocket. Circa 1988, he made his professional debut with wearable art at The Harlem Institute of Fashion (HIF) show for HARLEM WEEK. McCall became an established force within HIF’s collective, presenting at their runway and museum shows through circa 1995. Since then, McCall has added visual art to his portfolio and entered the permanent collections of public institutions, including the Museum of Arts and Design (New York, NY), Philadelphia Museum of Art (Philadelphia, PA), Victoria and Albert Museum (London, UK), The Museum at FIT (New York, NY), and the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture (New York, NY). Media outlets featuring McCall and his work include Women’s Wear Daily, PBS, the *New York Times*, *Associated Press*, NPR, and WPIX “Morning News.” For more info: www.beaumccall.com

ABOUT FULLER CRAFT MUSEUM
Fuller Craft Museum offers expansive opportunities to discover the world of contemporary craft. By exploring the leading edge of craft through exhibitions, collections, education, and public programs, we challenge perceptions and build appreciation of the material world. Our purpose is to inspire, stimulate, and enrich an ever-expanding community.

Fuller Craft Museum is located at 455 Oak Street in Brockton, Massachusetts. The Museum is open Tuesday through Sunday, 10:00 am-5:00 pm. Please check the website for updates to our hours of admission. Admission is free for Brockton, MA residents and admission by donation for all guests, (suggested donation $12). For more information on Fuller Craft exhibitions and events, please visit www.fullercraft.org or call 508.588.6000.

Check out our Digital Archive to learn about the objects in Fuller Craft Museum’s permanent collection.

Fuller Craft Museum is New England’s home for contemporary craft.