

The Bronx Museum of the Arts Announces 50th Anniversary Program Celebrating Museum's History of Social Justice

Major Solo Presentations of artists Shaun Leonardo and Wardell Milan, A Group Exhibition Exploring Feminist Visions of Futurity, and a Hallmark Retrospective of LGBTQi+ Ball Culture



Lizzie Borden, Film Still from *Born in Flames*, 1983. Courtesy of the Artist.

(NEW YORK, NY – JUNE 17, 2021) – Founded in 1971 by community leaders and activists at a time when the borough was in crisis, for half a century **The Bronx Museum of the Arts** has carved an identity as a museum dedicated to social justice. In addition to championing the people of The Bronx and sharing the rich, local culture that has influenced contemporary artists and audiences across the city and beyond, for the past five decades the Museum has organized hundreds of exhibitions featuring works by culturally diverse and under-represented artists from across the globe. To mark this significant milestone, the Museum presents ***Our Stories, Our Voices***—a series of exhibitions and public programs organized around the idea that visibility is a tenet of social justice.

“As we take off into our next fifty years, we will reaffirm our mission as an admission-free, liberated space for communities to come to enjoy our exhibitions, public and educational programs while having important conversations. We continue to be a leader in supporting and advancing art, social justice and equal opportunity,” said Executive Director, **Klaudio Rodriguez**.

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“Now in our 50th year, we continue to commit ourselves to our founding ethos and investment in our local communities—including people of color, women, LGBTQ communities—and the belief that art and culture are essential on the path to achieving social justice and equity,” said Deputy Director, **Shirley Solomon**.

“Taking a lateral curatorial approach, we are collaborating with artists in an effort to amplify their voices, furthering our mission to create an equitable community space and champion artists who have been historically and systemically left out of the conversation,” said Holly Block Social Justice Curator, **Jasmine Wahi**.

“In our anniversary year we are building on our history of using educational programming to make the Museum a welcoming and inclusive place where all feel able to learn and create, and where our communities can see themselves reflected and celebrated,” said Director of Education and Public Engagement, **Patrick Rowe**.

To learn more about the Bronx Museum’s leadership at 50 years, [click here](#).

[Shaun Leonardo: The Breath of Empty Space](#)

January 21, 2021 – May 30, 2021

Currently on view through May 30th is *Shaun Leonardo: The Breath of Empty Space*, a solo exhibition of drawings considering how mediated images of systemic oppression and police violence against black and brown young men in contemporary American history have shaped our fear, empathy, and perception.

[Born In Flames: Feminist Futures](#)

April 28, 2021 – September 12, 2021

Born In Flames: Feminist Futures dives into the speculative, globally informed visions of artists who explore the possibilities of new futures. This group exhibition of femme-identified artists critically examines current struggles for equity by exploring strategies for justice and equality through multifaceted futurisms. Including works created over the last five decades, the show demonstrates not only the artists’ place within a futurist lineage, but also exposes the ongoing impulse to imagine new realities on their own terms. Artists Include: Caitlin Cherry, Chitra Ganesh, Clarissa Tossin, Huma Bhaba, Firelei Baez, Lizzie Borden, Maria Berrio, Pamela Phatsimo Sunstrum, Rose B. Simpson, Saya Woolfalk, Shoshanna Weinberger, Tourmaline, and Wangechi Mutu.

[Wardell Milan: Amerika. God Bless You If It’s Good To You](#)

June 23, 2021 – October 24, 2021

Also this spring, the Museum will debut *Amerika. God Bless You If It’s Good To You*—an exhibition of flat works and performance collaborations of twelve new and recent drawings and mixed media collages by Harlem-based artist Wardell Milan. Split into two parts, the exhibition explores the undergirding of contemporary America. The first portion of the exhibition, comprising new works on paper, explores the insidious normalcy of White supremacy in America. At the heart of the exhibition is the question: “What do terrorists do when they’re not terrorizing?” This inquiry pushes the artist’s assertion that racial violence is interwoven into the

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fabric of American life, and is an indiscriminate presence in public and private realms—from the Bayou to the Bronx. The second section of the show, which is housed in a site-specific chapel structure, designed by Billy Ray Morgan, explores the idea of “Safe Space” for communities that have been historically oppressed. This chapel space, modeled after the Rothko Chapel, will set the stage for a series of collaborative performances, choreographed by Milan and Zachary Tye Richardson, and unpack the need for safety interlinked through histories of violence; to be affirmed and celebrated. Within this chapel, these irrepressible bodies cannot be flattened but must be reckoned with.

[Bronx Calling: The Fifth AIM Biennial](#)

October 20, 2021 – January 16, 2022

This fall, the Museum will showcase *Bronx Calling: The Fifth AIM Biennial*, an exhibition series highlighting artists from the Bronx Museum’s AIM professional development fellowship program. Since its inception, AIM has supported over 1,200 artists, including Diana Al-Hadid, Firelei Báez, Njideka Akunili Crosby, Abigail DeVille, LaToya Ruby Frazier, Glenn Ligon, Sarah Oppenheimer, Jacolby Satterwhite, and Lucia Hierro. The fifth iteration of *Bronx Calling* will showcase the work of 69 New York City-based emerging artists from the 2018 and 2019 cycles.

Walk For Me (A History of Ballroom)

February 16, 2022 – June 26, 2022

Next winter, the Museum will debut a hallmark retrospective on the history of Ballroom culture. Entitled, *Walk For Me (A History of Ballroom)*, it is the first comprehensive U.S. exhibition dedicated to the art form, culture, and community of Ballroom and examining the past, present, and future of this important queer cultural phenomenon as it changed from an underground scene to an ever-growing part of mainstream and consumer culture. *Walk For Me* celebrates this singular and vibrant scene, and critically examines the impact of cooptation, exploitation, and erasure of queer culture.

EXHIBITION SCHEDULE:

Shaun Leonardo: The Breath of Empty Space

January 21, 2021 – May 30, 2021

Curated by John Chaich, Independent Curator

What We Call Home: Teens Curate the Collection

February 10, 2021 – April 11, 2021

Organized by Jasmine Wahj, Holly Block Social Justice Curator; Patrick Rowe, Director of Education and Public Engagement; The Bronx Museum of the Arts’ Teen Council; and Teen Council Educators Edwin Gonzalez and Ingrid Raphael

Born In Flames: Feminist Futures

April 28, 2021 – September 12, 2021

Curated by Jasmine Wahj, Holly Block Social Justice Curator

Wardell Milan: Amerika, God Bless You If It's Good To You

June 23, 2021 – October 24, 2021

Curated by Jasmine Wahj, Holly Block Social Justice Curator

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Bronx Calling: The Fifth AIM Biennial

October 20, 2021 – January 16, 2022

Curated by Ian Cofre of the PS 122 Gallery and Eva Mayhabal Davis

Walk For Me (A History of Ballroom)

February 16, 2022 – June 26, 2022

Curated by Jasmine Wahj, Holly Block Social Justice Curator

The Bronx Museum of the Arts 50th Anniversary Program has been made possible in part by Major Donors to the Museum's 50 @ 50 Anniversary Campaign including: Anonymous; Agnes Gund; Bloomberg Philanthropies; Donald A. Pels Charitable Trust; Sciame Construction, LLC; and, the Bronx Museum's Board of Trustees. List in formation.

NOTES TO EDITORS:

About The Bronx Museum of the Arts:

The Bronx Museum is one of the only major NYC museums with free admission, making it a vital resource not just for residents in The Bronx, but thousands of residents from all five boroughs and tourists visiting NYC annually. Today an internationally-recognized cultural destination, for the past five decades, The Bronx Museum has presented hundreds of exhibitions featuring works by culturally diverse and under-represented artists.

The Museum's permanent collection of 2,000+ works preserves and documents artists who are not typically represented within traditional museum collections by showcasing work by artists of African, Asian, and Latin American ancestry, as well as artists for whom the Bronx has been critical to their development. Now in its 50th year, the Bronx Museum continues to promote its mission of the arts accessible to all audiences. Current exhibitions include **Sanford Biggers: Code Switch** (Sept 9, 2020 - April 5, 2021); and **Shaun Leonardo: The Breath of Empty Space** (Jan 21, 2021 - May 30, 2021).

Recent critically acclaimed exhibitions include **José Parlá: It's Yours** (2020-2021); **The Life and Times of Alvin Baltrop** (2019-2020); **Henry Chalfant: Art vs. Transit, 1977-1987** (2019-2020); **Rochelle Feinstein: Image of an Image** (2018); **Diana Al-Hadid: Delirious Matter** (2018); **Eddie Martinez: White Outs** (2018); **Gordon Matta-Clark: Anarchitect** (2017); **Angel Otero: Elegies** (2017-2018); **Martin Wong: Human Instamatic** (2015-2016); **¡Presente! The Young Lords in New York** (2015); and **Sarah Sze: Triple Point (Planetarium)** (2014).

VISIT THE MUSEUM:

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