

## BAM Launches the *Robert W. Wilson Mural Project*, A Three-Year Public Art Initiative in Downtown Brooklyn

Omari Douglin, Alanna Fields, and Jean-Pierre Villafañe awarded commissions

Douglin's mural, *Junction*, is the first to debut



Omari Douglin's mural *Junction*. Photo Credit: Julieta Cervantes

**May 20, 2026, Brooklyn, NY**--Today BAM (Brooklyn Academy of Music) is proud to announce the **Robert W. Wilson Mural Project**, a new public art initiative that celebrates the work of three artists with murals displayed successively over three years. The program revitalizes a site on Brooklyn's Lafayette Avenue across from the Howard Gilman Opera House first activated by BAM in 2013 with a mural by **KAWS**. The project creates a new, dynamic platform for public art in the heart of Downtown Brooklyn and launched today with a public ceremony (on Lafayette Ave between Ashland Pl. and St. Felix St.)

The Mural Project supports contributing artists in their first major public art commission in New York City. Public art curator **Alessandra Gómez** assembled an extensive list of artists for consideration in a multi-phased selection process she led with art consultant **Jesse Hamerman**. After considering seven semi-finalists, three artists were ultimately awarded commissions-- **Omari Douglin**, **Alanna Fields** and **Jean-Pierre Villafañe**--and, in that order, their murals will be displayed consecutively from 2026-2028. The mural project's curatorial framework invited the artists to create designs inspired by the BAM Hamm Archives, a rich and publicly available collection of photos, drawings, videos, and documents outlining the deep cultural history of BAM and its Brooklyn neighborhood. All murals will be hand-painted by **Colossal Media**, which first executed the 2013 mural at the site and returns for this new commission cycle.

BAM Artistic Director **Amy Cassello** said, "BAM is proud to celebrate Omari, Alanna, and Jean-Pierre's stunning murals that are intended to spark joy and bolster the neighborhood's vibrant artscape. The accessibility of public art makes it one of New York City's widest-ranging

artistic experiences. We're excited to add new artworks to that unique social sphere, and to celebrate artists who represent our city's broad cultural and creative spectrum."

"As an interdisciplinary curator, I envisioned this series as a way to bring visual artists into dialogue with BAM's archive and its performance history," said Gómez. "It also offers these artists an opportunity to realize their first major public art commissions in New York."

"Over many years, the Robert W. Wilson Charitable Trust has provided vital support for BAM's visual arts program, helping us create accessible opportunities for artistic engagement throughout our campus and for the broader Brooklyn community," said BAM President **Tamara McCaw**. "We are deeply grateful for their enduring partnership and generosity, which have made this exciting new public art initiative possible."

### About the Robert W. Wilson Public Art Initiative

While BAM has a long history of presenting visual art exhibitions, murals, and public art, including large-scale installations by Teresita Fernández, Leo Villareal, KAWS, José Parlá, David Byrne, and, as of 2026, Hank Willis Thomas, the Mural Project focuses on connecting the thousands of individuals who pass through Downtown Brooklyn each day with the work of emerging visual artists. By presenting artists from underrepresented backgrounds prominently at a major thoroughfare, the Project celebrates New York City's rich aesthetic, cultural, and social diversity, providing visitors and the local community with important opportunities to see their identities reflected and to gain a deeper appreciation for other cultures and perspectives.

### About the Murals

The first to debut in 2026, Omari Douglin's mural *Junction* unfolds as a collage of archival images from BAM's *Next Wave Journals*, magazines, posters, and advertisements, primarily from the 1980s and 1990s, reimagined through his distinct painting style. At its center, legendary jazz musician Miles Davis sits in a contemplative pose, drawn from a 1994 GAP advertisement in BAM's *Next Wave Festival Journal*. In the upper right, the model Kim Baker wears a Gucci bag, referencing *Next Wave* advertising material. These appropriated fragments extend Douglin's ongoing inquiry into the porous relationship between artists and brands, where cultural figures circulate across commercial and art historical contexts. The mural's yellow background echoes Keith Haring's 1984 poster for *Secret Pastures*—a landmark performance by Bill T. Jones and Arnie Zane. In layering these references, the mural reflects the cyclical nature of creative exchange, where one artistic discipline informs another, and where curiosity becomes a generative force.

Alanna Fields is a mixed-media artist and archivist whose practice powerfully reimagines Black queer memory through a multidisciplinary engagement with photographic archives. Field's research into BAM's photo archives revealed the central role DanceAfrica has played in shaping both the institution's history and the broader cultural fabric of Fort Greene—a neighborhood deeply rooted in the African diaspora and Black cultural life. Her mural stands as an homage to Alvin Ailey—his enduring legacy as a dancer, choreographer, and director whose work elevated Black life, spiritual expression, and diasporic memory on the concert stage. His commitment to storytelling through movement and his expansive vision of modern dance inform the spirit of this mural. Like Ailey's choreography, the work centers embodied memory, communal resilience, and the transformative power of performance. Celebrating DanceAfrica's 50th Anniversary in 2027, Field's mural will honor his presence at BAM while

affirming dance as a diasporic lineage through which ancestors are remembered, elevated, and called into existence.

Jean-Pierre Villafañe's mural, debuting in 2028, draws inspiration from Carmen Rivera's *La Gringa*, a landmark bilingual play in Latinx theater that follows María Elena Garcia, a New York-born Puerto Rican woman navigating questions of belonging between Puerto Rico and the United States. First performed at BAM in 1998 by Repertorio Español, the play marked a rare moment of institutional visibility for Spanish-language theater at a major American cultural venue. Villafañe translates the play's spatial and emotional language into architectural form, drawing on urban infrastructure and theatrical set design to reflect María's fragmented sense of identity. The mural invites viewers to consider the in-between spaces of cultural inheritance and memory that shape diasporic life in New York.

#### About the Artists:

**Omari Douglin** lives and works between Brooklyn, New York and Los Angeles, California. In 2019, Douglin received an MFA from the Milton Avery Graduate School of the Arts, Bard College. He received his BFA from The Cooper Union in 2015. Solo and two-person exhibitions include *No Pigs*, Ramiken, New York (2025); *Art Basel Miami Beach*, Matthew Brown and Ramiken, Miami, FL (2024); *boutique O*, Matthew Brown, Los Angeles (2024); *Four Paintings*, Sebastian Gladstone, Los Angeles (2023); *Scam Likely*, with Lukas Quietzs, Ramiken Crucible, New York (2023); *Wave Gods 2*, Ramiken Crucible, New York (2023); *The People of Micki Meng*, Nicki Meng, San Francisco (2022); *Montage Ontology Domain*, Theta, New York (2022).

Recent group exhibitions include *Once Within a Time: 12th SITE Santa Fe International*, SITE, Santa Fe (2025); *The Reminiscence Bump*, Braunsfelder, Cologne (2025); *Recent Acquisitions*, Rubell Museum, Miami, FL (2024); *PROGRAM*, Matthew Brown, New York (2024); *Averard*, Ramiken Crucible, London (2022); *Apple in the Dark*, Harkawik, New York (2022); *Their private worlds contained the memory of a painting that had shapes as reassuring as the uncanny footage of a sonogram*, Matthew Brown, Los Angeles (2022); *Stanley and Marta's Holiday Fête*, Stanley's, Los Angeles (2021); *Mother and Child*, Friends Indeed, San Francisco (2021); and *Deathbound and Sexed*, Theta, New York, NY (2021). Instagram Handle: @omaridouglin

**Jean-Pierre Villafañe** earned his Master's in Architecture from Columbia University in New York in 2019, following a Bachelor's degree in Architecture from SCAD, where he completed his final year of studies in Hong Kong. His work has been exhibited internationally, including at *Embajada*, Puerto Rico (2025); *Charles Moffett*, New York (2024); *Diablo Rosso*, Panama City (2023); *The Armory Fair*, New York (2023); *Nino Mier Gallery*, New York (2023); *Galerie Hussenot*, Paris (2022); *Hoffmann Maler Wallenberg*, Nice (2022); *The Yale School of Architecture*, New Haven (2022); and *Museo de Arte y Diseño*, San José (2021); among others.

In 2024, he was selected as a resident artist for the year-long Silver Arts residency program at 4 World Trade Center in New York City, and in 2023 he was awarded the TPC Art Finance Prize for the most exceptional and innovative presentation at The Armory Fair. That same year, he completed three large-scale permanent murals for the restaurant Cecchi's in the West Village, which have since been featured in publications including *The New York Times*, *Forbes*, *The New Yorker*, *New York Magazine*, and *Vogue*. His work was recently featured on

the cover of the winter issue of *Art in America*, and his studio practice is based in New York's Chinatown. Instagram Handle: @Jeanpierre.villafane

**Alanna Fields** is a mixed-media artist and archivist whose work has been presented at major art fairs including Paris Photo, The Armory Show, Art Basel Miami Beach, and Expo Chicago, and featured in exhibitions at renowned institutions such as The Brooklyn Museum, The High Museum of Art, The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, MoCADA, and the Silver Eye Center for Photography. Fields has mounted solo exhibitions at Plug-In Institute of Contemporary Art and Baxter Street CCNY, and has exhibited with esteemed galleries including Yancey Richardson, Yossi Milo, and David Castillo. A graduate of Pratt Institute's MFA program in Photography, Fields has lectured at ICP, Penumbra Foundation, Stanford University, and others. She is a Gordon Parks Foundation Scholar and Pollock-Krasner Foundation grantee, with residencies at Light Work, Fountainhead Arts, Silver Art Projects, and TILT.

Fields has held professorships in Photography at Pratt Institute and currently at Howard University. Fields' work has been commissioned and published by The New York Times, The Atlantic, and Aperture. She has been commissioned for major public art projects, most notably a billboard installation for CONTACT Photo Festival in Toronto. In 2025, she published her debut monograph, *Unveiling*, a landmark exploration of Black queer photographic archives which has been shortlisted for the Aperture Paris Photo, First Photobook Award. Instagram Handle: @Alannafields

#### About the Curator

**Alessandra Gómez** is a contemporary art curator whose practice operates at the intersection of performance and visual art. Her curatorial approach centers on interdisciplinary collaboration and the commissioning of new work that challenges conventional boundaries between performance, visual art, and public space. For over a decade, she has developed ambitious artistic programs, commissioning more than 100 works across visual art, dance, theater, performance, and music.

She currently serves as Consulting Public Art Curator at BAM and Head Art Curator at the Wythe Hotel in Williamsburg, where she directs the hotel's art program, including site-specific performances and visual art acquisitions. She is also a curator for Sugar Sugar!, a free outdoor performance series in Domino Park, and a co-curator of Offerings, a monthly performance series held at St. Mary the Virgin Church in the heart of Times Square. Previously, Gómez was part of the founding curatorial team at The Shed and served as a curator for the revived Luna Luna, the world's first art amusement park. She has independently curated exhibitions and performances for Pratt Institute (2026), Nike (2024), Columbia University (2019), the Center for Performance Research (2024, 2017–18), Knockdown Center (2018), and the Queens Museum (2017). She holds an MA from Columbia University and a BFFAH from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. <https://alessandragomez.com> Instagram: @alessandrraaa

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