

# BAMI

Film Press Release



*Marlon Riggs, photo courtesy Signifyin' Works and Frameline Distribution*

**BAM presents *Race, Sex & Cinema: The World of Marlon Riggs*, Feb 6—14, 2019**

**A celebration of the essential queer filmmaker, his influences, and his impact**

**January 8, 2019/Brooklyn, NY**—From Wednesday, February 6 through Thursday, February 14 BAM presents *Race, Sex & Cinema: The World of Marlon Riggs*, the first stop in an ongoing, international celebration of the groundbreaking artist. Riggs (1957—94) was an American filmmaker,

professor, poet, and gay rights activist, who wrote, produced, and directed provocative, formally innovative meditations on representation, race, gender, and sexual identity in American culture. Organized by BAM's senior repertory and specialty film programmer Ashley Clark in collaboration with documentary filmmaker and longtime Riggs collaborator Vivian Kleiman, the series marks the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Riggs' death from AIDS-related complications, and the 30th anniversary of the premiere of his landmark work, *Tongues Untied*, a poetic reflection on the experiences of black, gay men in America.

The series opens with *Tongues Untied* (1989), a radical, poetic essay film on black, gay male identity, made, in its author's own words, to "shatter this nation's brutalizing silence on matters of sexual and racial difference." A lightning rod for both critical acclaim and conservative outrage—a 1991 Pat Buchanan attack ad on George H.W. Bush and the NEA used footage from the film, while referencing "pornographic and blasphemous art"—at the time of release, *Tongues Untied* is now recognized as an essential work of queer cinema. Vivian Kleiman and director Yance Ford will appear for an opening night post-film discussion moderated by historian Tavia Nyong'o.

The program includes Riggs' full body of work, including Riggs' and Peter Webster's *Long Train Running: A History of the Oakland Blues* (1981), Riggs' UC Berkeley thesis film, screening with *I Shall Not Be Removed: The Life of Marlon Riggs* (Everett, 1996); his Emmy-winning solo directorial debut film, *Ethnic Notions* (1986), an exploration of the legacy of black stereotypes in America; the Peabody Award-winning *Color Adjustment* (1992), a companion to *Ethnic Notions* investigating black representation on television; and *Black Is... Black Ain't* (1994), both a meditation on black identity—featuring interviews with Angela Davis and bell hooks—as well as Riggs' own tender and joyful swan song. Riggs' shorts in the series include *Anthem* (1991), *Affirmations* (1990), and *Non, Je Ne Regrette Rien* (1992), portraits of queer and HIV-positive men as aesthetically daring and deeply humane as Riggs' feature works.

Beyond Riggs' own films, *Race, Sex & Cinema* will explore the filmmaker's influences and the contemporaries who informed his work. The visionary writer and intellectual James Baldwin served as a profound influence on Riggs, as can be seen in *James Baldwin Around the World*, an international program of shorts including Horace Ové's *Baldwin's Nigger* (1968), the Istanbul-shot *James Baldwin: From Another Place* (Pakay, 1973), and Terrence Dixon's *Meeting the Man: James Baldwin in Paris* (1971). Films by Riggs' contemporaries include *The Attendant* (1993), a provocative companion to *Tongues Untied's* vision of black, gay love by Riggs' friend, British filmmaker Isaac Julien; Lourdes Portillo and Susana Blaustein Muñoz's *La Ofrenda* (1989) and Trinh T. Minh-ha's *Reassemblage* (1982), experimental documentaries on identity and representation that decenter the colonial gaze; portraits of lesbian adolescence in Su Friedrich's *Hide and Seek* (1996) and Cheryl Dunye's *Janine* (1990); and the convention-exploding *The Complete Electronic Diaries* (1984—96) of artist Lynn Hershman Leeson, screening alongside the experimental *The Man Who Could Not See Far Enough* (Rose, 1981) and *I Saw Jesus in a Tortilla* (1982).

More recent works in the series highlight the barriers to representation that were broken by Riggs' films and the lasting influence they still exert, as in the Harlem Renaissance drama *Brother to Brother* (2004)—a title inspired by the opening lines of *Tongues Untied*—followed by a discussion with director Rodney Evans to celebrate the film's 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary; Barry Jenkins' instant-classic *Moonlight*; and shorts program *Under the Influence*, featuring work by contemporary filmmakers including Martine Syms, Elegance Bratton, and Tiona Nekkia McClodden.

Series guests include journalist Steven W. Thrasher and professor Racquel Gates, professor Herman Gray, filmmaker Katherine Cheairs, artist Kiyan Williams, and more; see schedule below for full details. This series is the launchpad for an international celebration of Riggs' work later this year, with screenings of *Tongues Untied* at venues including San Francisco's Roxie Theater, the African American Museum in Philadelphia, the Counter Narrative Project in Atlanta, the Oakland Museum of California, Oberlin College at the Apollo Theater, the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee, School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Stockholm's Cinema Queer International Film Festival, La Maison de La

Poésie de Rennes, KASHISH Mumbai International Queer Film Festival, and more. Riggs' short film *Affirmations* screens in the art exhibit *Art After Stonewall, 1969—1989*, touring at NYU's Grey Art Gallery, the Leslie-Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art, the Patricia & Philip Frost Art Museum in Miami, and the Columbus Museum of Art. This fall, the UC Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive will present *Tongues Untied*, alongside a retrospective of Riggs' video work.

Series programmer Ashley Clark and program advisor Vivian Kleiman will be available for interviews; please contact Shelley Farmer with requests.

See below for full schedule, and visit [BAM.org](http://BAM.org) for film descriptions.

For press information, please contact:

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## [DOWNLOAD PRESS RELEASE AND SCHEDULE](#)

### Marlon Riggs Full Schedule

#### Wed, Feb 6

7:30pm: *Tongues Untied: 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Screening\**

\* Post-screening discussion with Riggs collaborator Vivian Kleiman and filmmaker Yance Ford, moderated by historian Tavia Nyong'o

#### Thu, Feb 7

7pm: *Ethnic Notions\**

9:10pm: *Color Adjustment\*\**

\* Post-screening discussion with journalist Steven W. Thrasher and Racquel Gates, assistant professor of cinema and media studies at the College of Staten Island, CUNY, moderated by series programmer Ashley Clark

\*\* Introduction by Herman Gray, professor of sociology at UC Santa Cruz

#### Fri, Feb 8

7pm: *Black Is... Black Ain't\**

9:15pm: *Long Train Running: A History of the Oakland Blues + I Shall Not Be Removed: The Life of Marlon Riggs*

\* Introduction by Katherine Cheairs, filmmaker and founding member of What Would the HIV Doula Do? Collective

#### Sat, Feb 9

7pm: *Moonlight + Affirmations*

9:30pm: *Tongues Untied + Anthem + The Attendant*

#### Sun, Feb 10

2pm: *Amazon Reel Impact: Marlon Riggs and AIDS Activism\**

5pm: *Shorts Program: James Baldwin Around the World\*\**

7:30pm: *Black Is... Black Ain't*

\* Post-screening discussion with journalist Steven W. Thrasher, multidisciplinary artist Kiyan Williams, and Katherine Cheairs, moderated by writer Darnell Moore

\*\* Introduced by writer Tobi Haslett

#### Mon, Feb 11

7pm: *La Ofrenda + Reassemblage*  
9:15pm: *Tongues Untied + Anthem + The Attendant*

**Tue, Feb 12**

7pm: *Brother to Brother: 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Screening\**  
\* Post-screening discussion with Rodney Evans

**Wed, Feb 13**

7pm: *Hide and Seek + Janine*  
9:15pm: *The Complete Electronic Diaries + Shorts*

**Thu, Feb 14**

7pm: *Shorts Program: Under the Influence\**  
\* Post-screening discussion with various filmmakers, moderated by scholar Vivian Crockett

**About BAM Cinema**

Since 1998 BAM Rose Cinemas has been Brooklyn's home for alternative, documentary, art-house, and independent films. Combining new releases with year-round repertory program, the four-screen venue hosts new and rarely seen contemporary films, classics, work by local artists, and festivals of films from around the world, often with special appearances by directors, actors, and other guests. BAM has hosted major retrospectives of filmmakers like Spike Lee, Chantal Akerman, John Carpenter, Manoel de Oliveira, Luis Buñuel, King Hu, and

Vincente Minnelli (winning a National Film Critics' Circle Award prize for the retrospective), and hosted the first US retrospectives of directors Arnaud Desplechin, Hong Sang-soo, Andrzej Zulawski, and Jiang Wen. Since 2009 the program has also produced BAMcinemaFest, New York's home for American independent film, and has championed the work of filmmakers like Janicza Bravo, Andrew Dosunmu, Lena Dunham, and Alex Ross Perry. The 12-day festival of New York premieres, now in its eleventh year, runs from June 12—23, 2019.

**Credits:**

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Delta Air Lines is the Official Airline of BAM

The Brooklyn Hospital Center is the Official Healthcare Provider of BAM

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Committee Chair Julissa Ferreras, Cultural Affairs Committee Chair Jimmy Van Bramer, Councilmember Laurie Cumbo, and the Brooklyn Delegation of the Council; and Brooklyn Borough President Eric L. Adams. BAM would like to thank the Brooklyn Delegations of the New York State Assembly, Joseph R. Lentol, Delegation Leader; and New York Senate, Senator Velmanette Montgomery.

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General Information:

BAM Howard Gilman Opera House, BAM Rose Cinemas, and BAMcafé are located in the Peter Jay Sharp building at 30 Lafayette Avenue (between St Felix Street and Ashland Place) in the Fort Greene neighborhood of Brooklyn. BAM Harvey Theater is located two blocks from the main building at 651 Fulton Street (between Ashland and Rockwell Places). Both locations house Greenlight Bookstore at BAM kiosks. BAM Fisher, located at 321 Ashland Place, is the newest addition to the BAM campus and houses the Judith and Alan Fishman Space and Rita K. Hillman Studio. BAM Rose Cinemas is Brooklyn's only movie house dedicated to first-run independent and foreign film and repertory programming. BAMcafé, operated by Great Performances, offers varied light fare and bar service prior to BAM Howard Gilman Opera House evening performances.

Subway: 2, 3, 4, 5, Q, B to Atlantic Avenue – Barclays Center (2, 3, 4, 5 to Nevins St for Harvey Theater) D, N, R to Pacific Street; G to Fulton Street; C to Lafayette Avenue  
Train: Long Island Railroad to Atlantic Terminal – Barclays Center  
Bus: B25, B26, B41, B45, B52, B63, B67 all stop within three blocks of BAM  
Car: Limited commercial parking lots are located near BAM. Visit BAM.org for information.

For ticket information, call BAM Ticket Services at 718.636.4100, or visit BAM.org.

**For further press information, please contact:  
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