



BAM/Robert W. Wilson Public Art Initiative announces artist commissions

Teresita Fernández, Leo Villareal, and Hank Willis Thomas to create work for four BAM locations

August 6, 2019/Brooklyn, NY—The BAM/Robert W. Wilson Public Art Initiative, made possible by a \$3.5MM gift from the Robert W. Wilson Charitable Trust, announces three artists commissioned to create site-specific works on the BAM campus—Teresita Fernández, Leo Villareal, and Hank Willis Thomas. Teresita Fernández’s large-scale sculptural form, *Paradise Parados*, is designed for the outdoor terrace atop the new Rudin Family Gallery at BAM Strong. Leo Villareal’s LED sculpture, *Light Matrix*, will fill the third-story windows of the BAM Fisher, and Villareal’s *Volume (BAM)*, a large scale light installation, will be mounted in the soon-to-be-constructed BAM Karen spaces at 300 Ashland Place. With an ongoing investment in the framing of history through the use of archival material, Hank Willis Thomas will create an original work for the rear wall of BAM’s Peter Jay Sharp Building, facing BAM Fisher, as a way to examine the site’s specific history and highlight how the past continues to be present.

An existing work by Villareal, *Stars*, which animates the arched façade windows of BAM’s Peter Jay Sharp Building, also becomes part of the BAM/Robert W. Wilson Public Art initiative. One additional artist commission will be awarded for the creation of site-specific works on the BAM campus. Together these six works of art will serve to define and connect the institution’s venues and bring new public art to its vibrant community.

BAM President Katy Clark said, “This is a dynamic period for BAM in the visual arts, including the addition of our first dedicated exhibition space, The Rudin Family Gallery. Commissioning public art by three artists forging exciting new paths underscores our commitment to the visual arts and celebrates the breadth of our organization. We are delighted to welcome two new pieces by Leo Villareal—whose work with light and digital coding has already brought us his iconic *Stars*. We look forward to commissioning our first work by Brooklyn resident Teresita Fernández, whose use of materials will provide a signature, interactive work for the new terrace at BAM Strong, as well as our first work by Hank Willis Thomas, an artist with a unique vision and a singular approach to the commission process. We are grateful to the Robert W. Wilson Charitable Trust for creating this exciting opportunity for BAM and its community.”

Richard G. Schneidman, a trustee of the Trust, added, “Robert W. Wilson was deeply committed to the performing and visual arts and so this gift to BAM is especially meaningful to the Trust. We are thrilled to see these important contemporary art commissions come to life on the BAM campus as part of the BAM/Robert W. Wilson Public Art Initiative. We feel the art will both delineate and unify the campus as it realizes the vision of Robert W. Wilson.”

Teresita Fernández (originally from Miami, FL; lives and works in Brooklyn, NY) is a conceptual artist best known for her monumental public projects that expand on notions of landscape and place. Her work, often inspired by natural phenomena—meteor showers, fire, and the night sky—invites experiential engagement with the work and the space it occupies.

Fernández places particular importance on her choice of materials such as gold, graphite, and other minerals that have loaded histories, often tied to colonialism, history, land, and power. Her work is characterized by a quiet unraveling of place, visibility, and erasure that prompts an intimate experience for individual viewers. In 2015, Fernández installed her largest public art project to date, *Fata Morgana*, in New York's Madison Square Park. The work was composed of overhead, mirrored canopies above all of the park's walkways, and its title refers to mirages that hover right above the horizon.

Fernández is a 2005 MacArthur Foundation Fellow and the recipient of a number of rewards including the Aspen Award for Art in 2013, the 2003 Guggenheim Fellowship, and the Louis Comfort Tiffany Biennial Award in 1999. Appointed by President Obama, she was the first Latina to serve on the US Commission of Fine Arts, a 100-year-old federal panel that advises the president and Congress on national matters of design and aesthetics. Her upcoming museum retrospective, *Teresita Fernández: Elemental*, will tour throughout the United States (starting at Pérez Art Museum Miami in October) and will survey over 20 years of work.

Fernández's recent site-specific commissions include *Vínales (Mayombe Mississippi)*, New Orleans Museum of Art, Sculpture Garden, New Orleans, LA (2019); *Island Universe*, Ford Foundation, New York, NY (2019); *Autumn (...Nothing Personal)*, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA (2018); *Stacked Waters*, Blanton Museum of Art, University of Texas, Austin, TX (2009); *Blind Blue Landscape*, Benesse Art Site, Naoshima, Japan (2009); and *Seattle Cloud Cover*, Olympic Sculpture Park, Seattle, WA (2006).

Fernández's ***Paradise Parados*** is designed to reflect the changing light of the day and seasons, passersby, street activity, and the dynamic urban surroundings. The work's title is a play on the words "paradise" (which originally meant "walled or enclosed garden") and "parados" (a term used in Ancient Greek theater meaning "side entrance" or "entrance from the wings of the stage"). Her organic design transforms the terrace into a three-sided enclosed garden, perched on the side of the Harvey Theater. The meandering form of the design is derived from the iconic, ivy-covered brick walls ubiquitous throughout Brooklyn's urban landscape. The mirror-polished, metallic quality of the work maximizes available sunlight to create more light in the deep and narrow terrace space. The work is envisioned as an immersive experience where viewers walk underneath and around the work, seeing their own optically-shifting reflections in the myriad, metallic weave patterns. Fernández will refine the design before it is presented to the community board and submitted to the Public Design Commission later this year; fabrication will commence shortly thereafter.

Leo Villareal is a light artist based in New York City. Over the last 20 years, he has exhibited widely in the United States and abroad. His work is in the permanent collections of museums including the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY; Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; Naoshima Contemporary Art Museum, Kagawa, Japan; and National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC. In addition to being represented by Pace Gallery, Villareal also creates permanent, site-specific works including: *Volume*, Dallas Cowboys Headquarters, Frisco, TX; *Buckyball*, the Exploratorium, San Francisco, CA; *Light Matrix*, MIT, Cambridge, MA; *Volume (Renwick)*, Renwick Gallery at the Smithsonian, Washington, DC.; *Radiant Pathway*, Rice University, Houston, TX; *Cosmos*, Johnson Museum, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY; *Multiverse*, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.; *Diagonal Grid*, Borusan Center for Culture and Arts, Istanbul, Turkey; *Stars*, Brooklyn Academy of Music, Brooklyn, NY; and *Hive*, for the Metropolitan Transportation Authority at the Bleecker Street subway station in Manhattan. On March 5, 2013, Villareal inaugurated *The Bay Lights*, a monumental 1.8 mile-long installation of 25,000 white LED lights on San Francisco's Bay Bridge. Currently, he is working on *Illuminated*

River which encompasses 15 bridges in central London, from Tower to Albert Bridge into a single monumental work of public art. Villareal premiered the first four bridges of the artwork in July 2019.

Villareal was born in Albuquerque, NM and grew up in El Paso, TX and Juarez, Chihuahua. He attended Portsmouth Abbey School in Portsmouth, RI and went on to receive his BA in sculpture from Yale University in 1990 and finally his master's degree in Interactive Telecommunications from New York University in 1994. After graduating from NYU, Villareal moved to San Francisco to work for three years at Paul Allen's private research lab, Interval Research, in Palo Alto. Since 2004, Villareal has served on the board of the Ballroom in Marfa, TX, a dynamic, contemporary cultural arts space, and in 2011 Villareal joined the board of the Burning Man Project. He currently lives in downtown Manhattan with his wife Yvonne Force Villareal and his two children, Cuatro and Lux.

Light Matrix (LEDs, stainless steel, and custom software; 14' x 34') is an array of over 3500 individually addressable LEDs to be installed in the third story windows of BAM Fisher. While this arrangement of lights follows the rectangular grid created by the windows, the patterns displayed will be radial, further reinforcing the connection to *Stars*, Villareal's existing work in the arched windows of the Peter Jay Sharp Building. By using mirrored stainless steel, the artwork reflects its surroundings, integrating itself into its environment and virtually disappearing when viewed from within. *Light Matrix* will be installed at BAM Fisher this fall, to coincide with the start of BAM's Next Wave Festival.

Volume (BAM) (LEDs, stainless steel, and custom software; 21' x 21')

Villareal created *Volume (BAM)* for installation at the coming BAM Karen spaces at 300 Ashland Place. Hung from the ceiling on the second floor with windows on three sides, this artwork consists of over 11,000 LEDs embedded within 441 mirrored stainless steel rods. With a prominent location facing onto Flatbush Ave, Lafayette Ave, and Ashland Pl, the artwork fully activates the space, maximizing its impact. From both up close and from afar, the optically potent combination of materials, that both reflect and emit light, create an ephemeral field of light floating overhead.

Hank Willis Thomas is a conceptual artist working primarily with themes related to perspective, identity, commodity, media, and popular culture. His work is included in numerous public collections including New York's Museum of Modern Art; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum; Whitney Museum of American Art; and Brooklyn Museum; High Museum of Art, Atlanta; and the National Gallery of Art, Washington DC. His collaborative projects include *Question Bridge: Black Males, In Search of the Truth (The Truth Booth)*, *The Writing on the Wall*, and *For Freedoms*, the first artist-run initiative for art and civic engagement. In 2017, *For Freedoms* was awarded the ICP Infinity Award for New Media and Online Platform. Thomas is also a recipient of the Gordon Parks Fellowship (2019), Guggenheim Fellowship (2018), AIMIA | AGO Photography Prize (2017), Soros Equality Fellowship (2017), and is a member of the New York City Public Design Commission. Thomas' first comprehensive survey *Hank Willis Thomas: All Things Being Equal...* will open in October 2019 at the Portland Art Museum in Portland, OR.

For press information and renderings contact Sandy Sawotka, ssawotka@BAM.org or 718.636.4190

Credits

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