



# BAM To Unveil New Outdoor Art Installation *Let Freedom Ring*, Jan 15

Brooklyn visual artists use art to encourage their communities to reflect on notions of FREEDOM in 2021

New and existing work by Derrick Adams, Alvin Armstrong, Laylah Amatullah Barrayn, Lizania Cruz, Kameelah Janan Rasheed, Hank Willis Thomas, and Jasmine Wahi

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## ***Let Freedom Ring***

Curated by Larry Ossei-Mensah

Art by Derrick Adams, Alvin Armstrong, Laylah Amatullah Barrayn, Lizania Cruz, Kameelah Janan Rasheed, Hank Willis Thomas, & Jasmine Wahi

January 15—21, 2021

**The BAM sign screen** (corner of Flatbush Ave & Lafayette Ave)

Run time: Looped continuously

FREE

**January 11, 2020/Brooklyn, NY**— Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM) will unveil its new outdoor art installation, ***Let Freedom Ring***, on **January 15, 2021**. On view for a limited time, the digital billboard-based project is a provocative exploration of the notion of freedom and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr's legacy, featuring new and existing image and text-based work by Brooklyn artists. Harnessing the scale of BAM's outdoor digital signpost as a vehicle for public art, the project aims to spark civic discourse in Brooklyn and encourage viewers to reflect on what freedom truly means in 2021.

Timed to coincide with the nation's annual commemoration of Dr. King and the historic 2021 Presidential and Vice Presidential inauguration, BAM will present the installation, located at the corner of Lafayette and Flatbush Avenues, from January 15-21, 2021. The visual art project is a part of BAM's *35th Annual Brooklyn Tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.* Visit [BAM.org](http://BAM.org) for information.

Spearheaded by BAM Curator-at-Large Larry Ossei-Mensah, *Let Freedom Ring* features artists who are deeply engaged in an ongoing dialogue about the artists' role in art, social justice, equity, and inclusion. The artists are **Derrick Adams, Alvin Armstrong, Laylah Amatullah Barrayn, Lizania Cruz, Kameelah Janan Rasheed, Hank Willis Thomas, and Jasmine Wahi.**

*Let Freedom Ring* is an extension of **For Freedoms'** Awakening initiative, a collaboration between For Freedoms and Unfinished, featuring artist-designed billboards throughout the United States. The year-long campaign launched in October 2020 and responds to For Freedoms' themes of healing, listening, justice, and awakening. Visit [BAM.org](http://BAM.org) for more information.

For press information, contact Cynthia Tate at [ctate@bam.org](mailto:ctate@bam.org)

### **Editor's Notes**

**Derrick Adams** was born in Baltimore, MD in 1970 and currently lives and works in Brooklyn, NY. His work spans painting, collage, sculpture, performance, video, and sound installations. He received his MFA from Columbia University, BFA from Pratt Institute, and is an alumnus of the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture and the Sharpe-Walentas Studio Program. He is a recipient of a Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Residency, Gordon Parks Foundation Fellowship, Joyce Alexander Wein Artist Prize, and Louis Comfort Tiffany Award. Adams' solo exhibitions include *Buoyant* at Hudson River Museum; *Where I'm From* at The Gallery in Baltimore City Hall; *Patrick Kelly: The Journey* at Studio Museum in Harlem satellite Countee Cullen Library, NY; *Sanctuary* at Museum of Arts and Design, NY; *Transmission* at Museum of Contemporary Art, Denver; *Network* at California African American Museum, Los Angeles; and *The Channel* at Brooklyn Academy of Music. His work is in the permanent collections of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Studio Museum in Harlem, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Birmingham Museum of Art, and the Whitney Museum of American Art.

**Alvin Armstrong** was born in San Diego, CA, and currently lives and works in Brooklyn, NY. He is a painter whose work explores the social and political landscape of Black American culture. His paintings are often filled with real and fictional subjects, culled from black and white archival material, his community, and lived experiences. Armstrong received an MS in Oriental Medicine and is a licensed acupuncturist. He's lived in Hawaii, Japan, and California all of which have informed his art practice. His solo exhibition *This Place Looks Different* was held at Medium Tings, a gallery and project space in September 2020 and he was just recently selected as a resident for Pioneer Work's 2021 class.

**Laylah Amatullah Barrayn** is a documentary photographer. Barrayn is a frequent contributor to The New York Times and has been published in Le Monde, National Geographic, Vogue, NPR, VOX, Vanity Fair, among other publications. Her work was recently nominated for a 2020 News and Documentary Emmy. She is the co-author of the book *MFON: Women Photographers of the African Diaspora*. She is a member of Kamoinge, a pioneering collective of African American photographers founded in 1963. She was included as one of the Royal Photographic Society's (UK) Hundred Heroines.

Her work has been exhibited nationally and internationally, with solo exhibitions at The Museum of the African Diaspora San Francisco, The Taubman Museum of Art (VA), MAK Gallery (Venice + London), and the Museum of Contemporary African Diasporic Arts (NY). Her work has been shown collectively at the MANIFESTA Biennale (Italy); Brighton Photo Biennial (UK); The Museum of Contemporary Photography (Chicago). Barrayn is currently working on a book on contemporary Black photographers. [www.LaylahBarrayn.com](http://www.LaylahBarrayn.com)

**Lizania Cruz** is a Dominican participatory artist and designer interested in how migration affects ways of being and belonging. Through research, oral history, and audience participation, she creates projects that highlight a pluralistic narrative on migration. Cruz has

been an artist-in-residence and fellow at the Laundromat Project Create Change (2018-2019), Agora Collective Berlin (2018), Design Trust for Public Space (2018), Recess Session (2019), IdeasCity: New Museum (2019), Stoneleaf Retreat (2019), Robert Blackburn Workshop Studio Immersion Project (SIP) (2019), A.I.R. Gallery (2020—2021), BRIClab: Contemporary Art (2020—2021), and Center for Books Arts (2020—2021).

**Larry Ossei-Mensah** uses contemporary art as a vehicle to redefine how we see ourselves and the world around us. The Ghanaian-American curator and cultural critic has organized exhibitions and programs at commercial and nonprofit spaces around the globe from New York City to Rome featuring artists such as Firelei Baez, Allison Janae Hamilton, Brendan Fernandes, Ebony G. Patterson, Modou Dieng, Glenn Kaino, Joiri Minaya and Stanley Whitney to name a few. Moreover, Ossei-Mensah has actively documented cultural happenings featuring the most dynamic visual artists working today such as Derrick Adams, Mickalene Thomas, Njideka Akunyili Crosby, Federico Solmi, and Kehinde Wiley.

A native of The Bronx, Larry Ossei-Mensah is also the co-founder of ARTNOIR, a 501(c)(3) and global collective of culturalists who design multimodal experiences aimed to engage this generation's dynamic and diverse creative class. Ossei-Mensah currently serves as Curator at Large at BAM, where he curated the inaugural exhibition *When A Pot Finds Its Purpose* featuring the work of Glenn Kaino at the Rudin Family Gallery. He will be co-curating with Omsk Social Club 7th Athens Biennale in Athens, Greece in 2021. Ossei-Mensah was named to Artnet's 2020 Innovator List. Ossei-Mensah has had recent profiles in such publications as the *New York Times*, *Artsy*, and *Cultured Magazine*, which recently named him one of seven curators to watch in 2019.

**Kameelah Janan Rasheed** (b. 1985) grapples with the poetics, politics, and pleasures of the unfinished. With interests in the generative qualities of incompleteness, leakage, dispersal, and syncretism, Rasheed works across an ecosystem of iterative and provisional projects. These projects include sprawling, architecturally-scaled Xerox-based collages; large-scale text banner installations; publications; digital archives; lecture-performances; library interventions; poems/poetic gestures; and other forms yet to be determined. Rasheed has had national and international solo exhibitions and projects at the New Museum, NY (two-person); Transmissions Gallery, Glasgow, UK; Rice University, Houston, TX; Brooklyn Public Library, NY; Brooklyn Historical Society, NY; and Brooklyn Museum, in addition to public installations with Public Art Fund and For Freedoms / Times Square Arts. Her work has also been exhibited at the 2017 Venice Biennale and will be included in the Glasgow International, UK (2021) and Prospect.5 (2021). She is the author of two artist books, *An Alphabetical Accumulation of Approximate Observations* (Endless Editions, 2019) and *No New Theories* (Printed Matter, 2019).

**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 the Museum of Modern Art in New York; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Brooklyn Museum, New York; High Museum of Art, Atlanta, and National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C. His collaborative projects include *Question Bridge: Black Males, In Search Of The Truth (The Truth Booth)*, *Writing on the Wall*, and the artist-run initiative for art and civic engagement *For Freedoms*, which was awarded the 2017 ICP Infinity Award for New Media and Online Platform. Thomas is also a recipient of the Gordon Parks Foundation Fellowship (2019), Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship (2018), Art For Justice Grant (2018), AIMIA |

AGO Photography Prize (2017), Soros Equality Fellowship (2017), and is a former member of the New York City Public Design Commission.

**Jasmine Wahi** is the Holly Block Social Justice Curator at the Bronx Museum of the Arts, and the Founder + Co-Director of Project for Empty Space, a Newark, NJ-based non-profit organization that supports artists who are interested in social discourse and activism. Her practice predominantly focuses on issues of femme empowerment, complicating binary structures within social discourses, and exploring multi-positional cultural identities through the lens of intersectional feminism. In 2019, Wahi joined the TED speaker family with her first TEDx talk on intersectionality and visibility, entitled All The Women In Me Are Tired. Wahi is a Visiting Core Critic at Yale University and a faculty member at the School of Visual Arts: MFA Fine Arts department. Wahi received her Masters in Art History from New York University's Institute of Fine Arts.

Founded in 2016, **For Freedoms** began as an investigation into how art can shape ideas, attitudes, and democratic institutions in American society. For Freedoms believes in the vital role of culture and transforming our social and political systems and that citizenship is defined by participation, not by ideology. Through anti-partisan nationwide programming, they use art as a vehicle to deepen public discussions on civic issues and core values. In essence, For Freedoms is a hub for artists, partner organizations, and citizens who want to be more engaged in public life.

### **Credits**

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